

TRIP REPORTS

There Be Bee's!

Breathing Cave has to be one of the classic caves that has everything you could possibly want. The new parking area is really nice with a really wide shoulder to park on. And the path is clearly marked. With this said I planned a trip to Breathing cave for the 20th of September but as I was looking at the closure list for Virginia I realized the 20th was after the yearly closure. So the trip had to be changed to the 13th of September. I put out an invite to several grottos and I had 13 people respond. Course that meant some of the people who wanted to go would not go because of one thing or another. We were to meet at RT 42 and RT 250 in the parking lot of Tastee Freeze. Well the group was Eric Berge, Adam Nelson, Tom Griffin, Cassidy Griffin, David Marcenaro, Samantha Last name I don't remember, Todd Zimmerman, Scott Zagrodny and three other people I don't know their names. That's the problem with caving with a lot of new people and forgetting to have everyone sign my cave log. Well we all met at Churchville and drove to the cave.

Like I said in the beginning the new parking area is perfect. The main reason for the trip to Breathing was to go to the waterfall at the end of the serpentine passage and use a cable ladder to go down the right side of the waterfall which has a mud slope. We split up the gear which each person had to have a harness and a QAS. I laid out two cable ladders and 100 foot of rope. I went down the same slope maybe 12 years ago and I did not remember how long a drop it was so with all the gear split up down the new path we all went.



Well about 300 yards from the road I saw on the right side a ground hornets' nest that had been dug open with a swarm of very angry hornets. We walked on by and no one was stung then about 200 feet from the nest Samantha got stung on her little finger on her right hand. Well about another 5 yards I got stung on my right arm and about another 200 yards I got stung on my left arm but not as bad as the right. Well the rest of the hike was uneventful except for the uphill climb which is always fun. We made a quick stop at the old truck that has been on the path for who knows how many years, after catching our breath off we go. We made it to the road and out of the woods popped two small dogs which were full of pep. They ran around us and jumped and just wanted to play all the way to the cave. At the entrance we geared up and took photos and watched the dogs run around the top of the cave amazed they did not fall down the entrance.

Down into the throat of the cave we went to the first crawl on the right. I sat back and took some photos. It's always fun to watch people get into the first crawl. The first time I went there was years ago and I was camping in the cave at the camping spot. Well that trip you could have dragged a 5 gallon bucket behind you but now it would be hard pressed to it, seems the passage has filled in a little. With everyone through the crawl we went to the wooden ladder which has a rope tied to it to keep it from falling back. You would think this would be an easy ladder to climb but think again it is hanging by the rope without any footing on the ground and course if you move wrong the ladder will move with you. With everyone up the ladder we went down the passage to where the register is and I tried to sign in but the register was missing.

We took a look at the formations in this section and it is amazing how nice they are and yet being so close to the entrance. Off we went again and tom Griffin had made some very nice markers and he started placing them at the turns. It was not that we were afraid of getting lost it is when you are ready to leave let's leave. At the ships prow we all went down the crack on the left wall and made it the corkscrew passage that leads to the nut cracker. The nut cracker is a beautiful area of the cave lots of formations. There were a lot of photos taken. The

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nut cracker is a cool passage that will live up to its name if you slip going thru it. Well I was first and took a look at the floor on the other side and found a pool of water about 9 inches deep. So if you want to stay out of the water you better keep your feet on the wall on the other side of the nut cracker and do a quick stoop and crawl thru what some people call a set of teeth (formations on the floor and ceiling). Well, all went well with no mishaps. The next part of Breathing is basically straight passageways that go up and down and over breakdown. The ceilings in this area are very tall 30 to 40 feet. One passage way reminds me of walking thru a pyramid because the walls are so straight and wide. At the bottom of this passageway is a crawl and then another walking passage but the area starts to get wetter and a little muddier. A few more hundred yards you end up walking in a stream bed. After a few twist and turns you come to a really nice natural bridge. A little further down this passage you come to the serpentine passageway. Well the serpentine passage lives up to its name, it is tight in some spots and slick with a few small waterfalls you have to step down. The whole passageway in downhill. At the end is a room and the top of a waterfall. Well the waterfall was more of a drip today but it was neat to look down the hole at the bottom where the water pools.

Tom Griffin and I talked about where to rig and we decided to tie the rope to a natural tie off on the right side of the room. In to our harness's and QAS (quick action safety) attached to the harness we started. The tie off is the start of a mud slope that goes down at a 45 degree angle. Tom tied the rope off and we started unraveling the rope (rope got a little tangled when it was carried through the cave) and Tom went down the slope and he tied in a butterfly knot and attached the cable ladder to it. With the cable ladder dropped over the slope Tom could not see if it was long enough. Just in case the 32 foot ladder was not long enough I brought a second ladder. While we were working on the mud slope Adam Nelson was checking a lot of people's harness. As with a lot of cave trip you find out a lot of people have not had experience with a harness and QAS or have not climbed a cable ladder before. Well Tom went over the edge using the ladder and found the ladder did reach the floor.

Well after Tom was on the bottom he took up the position as bottom belayer and spotter. I started having the group come down the mud slope on a self-belay with the QAS and once they got to me (I was sitting at the top of the cable ladder) I explained how to use a cable ladder. Well Adam Nelson had a figure 8 and when he got to me he repelled down the slope and there I was the last person. I had a micro rack so I just rappelled down behind him. What a nice drop, right after the slope it drops straight down for about 20 feet. Well Tom told me it



took 2 and half hours for everyone to get down. It felt a lot shorter than that to me (I was worried the whole time). At the bottom of the waterfall the area in muddy and wet and the passage get narrow and twisty. The Walls are somewhat scalloped. At the end of the water passage the ceiling drops down to a crawl and Adam started crawling and he said he backed out of the crawl when it got so low his helmet would not fit. Well as others were exploring a lot of people in the group wanted to start the climb out and Tom went up first to assist people to transition from ladder to rope (you have to pass the butterfly knot). Well going up was a lot quicker than going down. Well I was last up and coiled the excess rope and butterflyed it to the rope so I would not have to fight pulling the QAS up the rope (I kept the rope tight for everyone else). Well I got to Tom and we started de-rigging. Well off the mud slope and out of the harness I decided to eat lunch.

Well a few minutes later we all started back up the serpentine passage. Going out is a lot harder because gravity is working against you. Well out of the serpentine and back into the main passageways. I decide to let other people lead out (remember Tom

was placing markers as we were going in). Well going out is quicker than going in and were at the nut cracker in no time. Going through the nut cracker in reverse is a little tricky but we all made it without mishap. This is where I do a climb rather than go back up the cork screw passage. Half the group went up the cork screw and the other half went up a nice chimney. To get to the ships prow you have to do a reverse climb on your back to come out the crack on the right wall. Well I got some good photos of the group coming out. From there we made it to the passage where we climbed up the ladder held up by rope and I went straight down the passage. If you go straight down the passage you come to a small crawl on the right which brings you out near the camping area. Well through the first crawl we all went and the climbed out of the throat of the cave. Well I took the after cave shots.

Well the path going back to the parking lot is mostly downhill but it seemed to take forever. I was tired we had just finished a 7 hour cave trip and it was time to go and eat. Well one of the members of the group locked there keys in the car. I took a while to get into the car, and I told Tom we can forget about going to a sit down restaurant. We all decided to just head to our homes, well Adam Nelson, Scott Zagrodny and I stopped at a Burger King outside of Bridgewater and the burger was great. I do know I made it home at 1:30 am. It was a great trip and I just might do it again in the spring. I hope the bees have made a new home somewhere else.





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All photos by Eric Berge

Caving with a Childhood Friend

I recently went caving with a friend who I went to church with when I was a kid. Her name was Sandy Roberts.

I got a call from an old TSG member of a few years ago, Tim Jordan. He said that he had some friends who wanted to go rappelling. He also said that they might want to go caving too.

In the meantime Sandy called me & said that they wanted to go rappelling. She also said that Tim mentioned caving. I told her that we could take her caving & rappelling at the same time. She said that would be great. She also said that could be as many as 8 because 6 people were coming from New Jersey. We set a date & it trip was set.

I contacted Tom Griffin & he was ready to go help out. He also said that his wife Terry, his son Mason, his daughter Cassidy, her husband Jared would also be helping out. We had 15 helmets that the grotto lends out and between Tom & JC Fisher we figured to have enough harnesses & racks.

On Sat, Sep 27th we all met at Whittings Neck & headed into the cave. Besides the above mentioned people, 3 actually came down from NJ, Teresa Zanelli, her brother, & her 13 year old daughter. We met 2 women coming out of the cave. As we got to the pit there was another group preparing to come up the pit. There were 8 in all, 5 women & 3 men. It took them almost 2 hr to prepare & climb out and derig the pit.

Tom rigged the pit while Mason & Jared helped put on the harnesses. Cassidy rappelled down to be a bottom belay. Once everyone was ready I helped to attach and rig the racks and gave instructions on the techniques needed to rappel.

Teresa's daughter rappelled first, then Teresa, & Jared. No one else went to the bottom due to the amount of time spent in the cave waiting.

Everyone climbed out using a safety. We derigged and headed out of the cave.

Everyone had a great time & Teresa's daughter can't wait to do it again!

Bob 21847



Teresa's 13 year old daughter



Teresa



Teresa's Daughter



Jared



Teresa



Tim




Cassidy



CAVIN CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 7TH - OCTOBER 18TH



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Sep 7 GRAND PARENT'S DAY	Sep 8	Sep 9 National Groundwater Day	Sep 10  Meeting 7pm	Sep 11 PATRIOT'S DAY	Sep 12	Sep 13 Kayak trip - 11am - see John DiCarlo Breathing Cave - see Eric Berge
Sep 14	Sep 15	Sep 16	Sep 17	Sep 18	Sep 19	Sep 20
Sep 21	Sep 22	Sep 23  EQUINOX	Sep 24	Sep 25	Sep 26	Sep 27
Sep 28	Sep 29	Sep 30	Oct 1	Oct 2	Oct 3	Oct 4
Oct 5	Oct 6	Oct 7	Oct 8  Meeting 7pm Annual Auction	Oct 9 Fall TAG Cave-In	Oct 10 Fall VAR, Rich Mt Battlefield Fall MAR, Rupert Cave Fall TAG Cave-In	Oct 11 Fall VAR, Rich Mt Battlefield Fall MAR, Rupert Cave Fall TAG Cave-In
Oct 12 Fall VAR, Rich Mt Battlefield Fall MAR, Rupert Cave Fall TAG Cave-In	Oct 13 COLUMBUS DAY	Oct 14	Oct 15	Oct 16	Oct 17	Oct 18 Bridge Day

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Todd welding the gate to Donaldson Cave



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