

AMAZING MAZE CAVE – 17-19 FEBRUARY 2007

text by Philip Rykwald and Peter Sprouse



Bev Shade sketching in Amazing Maze. Alexander Klimchouk photo.

Participants: Bill Bentley, Aimee Beveridge, Stephen Bryant, Geoff Hoese, Alexander Klimchouk, Philip Rykwald, Geary Schindel, Bev Shade, Vickie Siegel, Peter Sprouse, Bill Stephens, Pete Strickland

This goal of this trip was to continue with the resurvey of Amazing Maze Cave, and to provide a chance for visiting Ukrainian cave geologist, Alexander Klimchouk, to see the cave. Since this was a 3-day holiday weekend we would be able to field mapping teams both Saturday and Sunday. Cavers arrived at the campsite throughout Friday night and bedded down during a blustery West Texas night.

On Saturday four survey teams were organized, two for the East Maze and two for the West Maze. Aimee, Geoff, and Pete continued working in the area just north of the entrance, but made a short day of it as Geoff and Aimee were heading on toward Big Bend that day (to get married it turns out!). Peter and Stephen returned to where Peter had mapped the previous month, the vicinity of Dirt Bike Junction, Hunter's Hollow, and the Party Room, which at that time represented the northwest edge of the survey. They mapped several loops off of Hunter's Hollow then followed a passage to the northwest. This lowered to a crawl and teed into a larger passage. They explored to the right eventually reached Dirt Bike Junction via a complex route. They picked one route to survey back to where they'd left off. A final lead was pursued toward the southwest which soon showed signs of being close to the surface. Roots penetrated the roof and cooler air could be felt. It lowered to a crawl that would have to be dug.



Stephen Bryant prepares for surveying in Hunter's Hollow. Peter Sprouse photo.

In the East Maze Bev and Bill Stephens continued mapping in the area beyond Assumption Junction, off of the maze where Team Beaver had been working the month before. They found one of the long gypsum mounds typical of the cave, but this one was eaten out in the middle, forming a long canoe. Meanwhile Bill Bentley, Alexander, and Geary toured the East Maze looking at the geology.

Philip and Vickie started the first survey of the cave's lower level. Climbing down at a narrow slot near the Origin Room they mapped into a narrow slot passage 6m high that led to the Genesis Room, among the largest rooms found to date in the cave. Continuing into walking passage beyond, Alexander caught up with them at Klimchouk Alley and discussed the cave's genesis, noting hypogenic features of the cave before returning to Bill and Geary. Philip and Vickie placed over 25 stations in the lower level and left many leads going before they returned to map between the Origin Room and the Broken Spoke in the cave's main level. That day they netted over 200m of surveyed passage between the two levels and returned to camp well after nightfall.

The next day, Sunday, a pared down crew entered the cave, as some people had gone home. Philip and Vickie continued to work the main level of the East Maze, winding their way back and forth, surveying passage west of the Origin Room and pushing to the end of the cave's northeast extent, mapping the Leprosy Junction, Mushroom Junction, Split Pants Junction and the Alcohol Junction along the way. They completed many loops and established a backbone survey for further surveys to connect to in the East Maze.

Bev led Alexander, Peter and Geary to her survey of the day before. Peter and Geary began mapping in a lead trending northeast, which crossed several junction rooms filled with the typical gypsum mounds. Then they climbed a chimney into an upper level, which was cooler and had

plentiful root masses hanging from the ceiling. Trucks could vaguely be heard on I-10, but no open exit could be seen. They backtracked to a canyon which dropped back down to the previous level. They were in a wide passage which contained some interesting gypsum bubbles. Working back toward where they had started the survey, they ran into Bev and Alexander, who dropped out of an upper level to join surveys.



Bev riding in The Canoe. Peter Sprouse photo.

At the weekend's close the cave's surveyed length was extended to over 1800m long and 18m deep with passages developed on three distinct levels. The resurvey of Amazing Maze will be run as a winter project with approximately two trips per year and the next survey trip will likely be in the winter of 2007/2008.



Peter and Alexander at camp. Photo by Philip Rykwald