

ASSOCIATION FOR  
MEXICAN CAVE STUDIES

*NEWSLETTER*

NEWS AND NOTES

CONSERVATION

TRIP REPORTS

Ahuacatlán, Qro.

Ocampo, Tamps.

Sótano del Anticlino, N.L.

Sierra de Guatemala, Tamps.

El Barretal, Tamps.

Lote La Gruta, N.L.

Ayutla, Qro.

ARTICLES

Exploration of El Sótano

Letter From Rick Rigg

Cave Rescue Procedure

vehicular use. It has not been used recently though and was in a moderately bad state of repair. It would be very interesting to find out more information on this canyon and its associated activities, maybe from the rancher, if he would talk. There's bound to be a good story about it if it could just be found.

**Date:** 17-26 April 1972

**Destination:** Ayutla, Qto.

**Location:** SMO; Jalpan

**Persons:** Craig Bittinger, John Greer, Clark Lillie

**Reported by:** John Greer                 Austin, Texas  
                           Craig Bittinger             Kingsville and Austin

17-19 April. Left Kingsville Monday night, crossed at Reynosa, rode buses to Ayutla. Walked part way up canyon south toward Rancho El Barro from Ayutla and spent Tuesday night in a haunted rockshelter next to river (nacimiento). Wednesday we continued on up to El Barro and found Ramón -- Craig's previous guide and good friend (Ramón Gonzales, Santa Maria de los Cocos, Ayutla, Querétaro, México). That afternoon we hiked on up to El Sótano (entrance drop 1345 ft) just to look at the huge pit. Leaves covered the trail and we ended up jungle crashing through thorns about half the way. Spent the night in El Barro.

20 April. Thursday morning we left at 8:00 for La Florida, "3 hours walk" west of El Barro (faster to come straight in off the highway from west of Ayutla). Checked several 25-35 foot pits in a large sink area on the way (between La Huasteca west of El Barro and the Puerto Cudisia east of La Florida). In the pass before dropping down to La Florida we checked the Sótano del Puerto Cudisia -- 4.9 sec. initial freefall, bounces to 11 sec., then we just couldn't hear the rocks anymore (estimated over 600 ft deep). We got into La Florida at 3:00 p.m. exhausted. Heard of many more pits. Checked one pit (ca. 120 ft) about half-way up the hill south of town (15 minute run from the church). About 70 yards NE of the church are two pits: ca. 150 ft, ca. 120 ft, both apparently drop to a dirt floor. Reported is a huge cavern north down the valley toward the highway, contains a stream or lake; should be checked for sure. Also reported was a deep pit north of Lagunillas toward Rancho Carrizal, possibly at Rancho Carrizal (our informant had seen the pit -- said it was huge, over 500 m deep, and well known). Another very deep pit reported on Cerro del Pajaro south of town. We were the first norteamericanos in La Florida and were well accepted. We fixed the electrical generator for the church (except for the tornillos to connect the motor with the generator in place of a clutch). Spent the night at the church after an exceptionally fine meal with the padre (Javier Ferros Moya, La Florida, Municipio de Arroyo, Seco, Querétaro, México).

21 April. We left Friday morning with two guides and checked out two pits on top of the hill NE of La Florida. Sótano de la Mora, 3.6 sec. entrance drop to dirt floor. Sótano Conrado, 6.5 sec. drop to dirt floor. Area is apparently all internal drainage with some really large sink areas. Headed back toward El Barro again, stopping by Sótano del Puerto Cudisia. Clark fixed another radio. Stopped by another pit (ca. 110 ft) in the sink area on the way back down the hill between Puerto Cudisia and La Huasteca. Back at El Barro we were temporarily harassed by drunks, who then began fighting among themselves with

knives. Ramón went over and broke it up. Then the army happened by and hassled, interrogated, and arrested us and put us under strict armed guard with machine guns for the night. Trying to urinate with armed escorts turned out to be quite a new experience.

22 April. Saturday morning, following orders from Querétaro headquarters, the commander released us (after 18 exciting hours); we took pictures of everyone, had a few laughs, etc., before leaving. Since the day was shot, we just lay around, except for a short walk to the river (3 miles) to take a bath.

23 April. We left at 5:30 a.m. with Ramón for La Cienega, across the river up past Naranjo SE from El Barro. We were also the first norteamericanos in Naranjo and La Ciénega. While we were waiting for some beans and tortillas to be heated for us, we visited two pits: ca. 90 ft and ca. 250 ft. Informants said the whole hill is covered with pits. We ate and left with our guide Luis Arriega of La Ciénega. Later Elias Sanchez (who lives up on the hill west of La Ciénega) joined us. We climbed the hill west of La Ciénega and checked several excellent pits in the upper regions of the hill. Of particular interest was a drainage terminal which we called Cueva del Perro Muerto for obvious reasons – probably an extensive system begins here; there is a large drainage pattern and no resurgence activity on the hill at all. This is not far above the store and below the house of Elias Sanchez. Hoya de Callejón is quite a way above Sanchez's house and at the edge of an upper field. Entrance drop probably well in excess of 600 ft. Huge rocks drop for 14 seconds before they just go out of hearing range. This and most other pit entrances on the hill around generally about 3 x 4 m, mas o menos. Near the top of the hill is Sótano del Bernal (at this point we were above and just west or WNW of the rock finger which is easily visible, but small, from La Ciénega), which is said to be the deepest in the area, apparently because a man went down 60 m without reaching the bottom. The pit opened up 30 years ago when a man was walking home from his corn field – the ground opened and swallowed him up. The whole hill is hollow and walking across some fields, one can actually hear echoes down probably 200 ft. Apparently the hill has a hollow mantle and may contain an extensive system. These pit entrances are probably easily 3000 ft above the entrance to Sótano de la Paila (to be mentioned later), which leads to some interesting possibilities. Our guide also mentioned that other pits were present on the hill higher than Bernal; certainly the karst continues higher (there is also a house about 300 yards or so up to the NNE where presumably one could acquire another guide). The possibilities here are staggering. From Sótano de Bernal we continued on around the hill and started down, always checking insignificant pits of about 25 to 150 ft deep. We stopped by a cavern entrance where people today get water. Old flowstone covered footholds indicate that the cave has been used for a considerable period. The bottom of a 100-foot pit in the entrance room should be checked for artifacts which might indicate how long the cave has been used. We continued down to the bottom of the hill and visited Las Tranto, a cave into which a whole valley runs. It should be checked for sure, and might easily be found to connect with the huge Sótano de la Paila which lies about one-half mile to the northeast. Sótano de la Paila is an extremely large pit with a mouth about 300 x 200 ft; the shaft narrows about 200-250 ft deep to about 65 x 20 ft. We dropped rocks from about 100-150 ft below the rim (one can climb down somewhat on the north side). The following times were recorded (running times are for individual bounces with elapsed times in freefall): (a) 3.4 sec. initial, bounce to 5.0, 5.0-9.0 freefall,

11.0 total; (b) 3.4, 6.8, 9.0, 11.5, 20.0; (c) 3.6, 5.5, 7.0, 8.5, 12.0 (thought we heard a later one but not certain); (d) untimed rock with a distinct, very faint bounce very deep after about 10 sec. freefall following the usual several seconds of entrance bounces; (e) 3.4 initial, bounce to 12.0, 12.0-16.0 sec. freefall, no more sound. We hopefully estimate the pit at around 1500 ft. After this excitement, we returned to La Ciénega and back to El Barro (arrived 9:30 p.m.) -- a 16 hour trip.

24 April. Left El Barro and went back to Ayutla, then to Valles, and out to Los Sabinos for the night. A welcome sight.

25-26 April. Came back into Valles. Messed around, rented a house for summer headquarters, and headed back for Kingsville.

#### TRIP SUMMARY

Craig Bittinger, John Greer, Clark Lillie

17-26 April 1972

Notes: No pits were entered. Times are from stop watch for falling fist-size limestone rocks.

Depths are estimated. Most entrances are in general about 3 x 4 m.

#### EL BARRO

Visited -- El Sótano (previously explored and mapped by AMCS, January 1972)

#### Trail, LA HUASTECA to LA FLORIDA

Visited --

1. Pit, 25 ft (est.)
2. Pit, 30 ft (est.)
3. Pit, 35 ft (est.)
4. Pit, 110 ft (est.)

#### LA FLORIDA

Visited --

1. Sótano del Puerto Cudisia, over 600 ft (est.) -- 4.9 sec. to first bounce, 11 sec. total drop before going out of hearing range. In main saddle east of town.
2. Pit, 120 ft (est.) to dirt floor. Hill SE of town.
3. Pit, 120 ft (est.) to dirt floor. NW of church.
4. Pit, 150 ft (est.) to dirt floor. NW of church.
5. Sótano de la Mora, 3.6 sec. to dirt floor. Top of hill NE of town.
6. Sótano Conrado, 6.5 sec. to dirt floor. Top of hill NE of town.

Reported --

- Many pits (some deep) all around La Florida and in the surrounding hills; good leads for the area around Cerro del Pajaro SE of town.
- Very deep pit reported on top of Cerro del Pajaro.
- Cave with good yellow calcite crystals just WNW of town; also nearby elephant bones (portion of exceptionally well preserved mastodon molar was examined).
- Very large, long cavern containing a river or lake, north up the canyon toward the highway from town.
- Deep pit (over 500 m) between Lagunilla (on the highway NW of Ayutla) and Rancho Carrizal. Very large and well known.

## LA CIENEGA

## Visited --

1. Pit, 90 ft (est.). South side of town.
2. Pit, 200-250 ft (est.). South side of town.
3. Cueva del Perro Muerto (our name). Cavern on opposite hillside just west of town. 20 ft climbable drop to horizontal passage. Drains a very large area. Should be a very deep system.
4. Pit, 100 ft (est.) to breakdown slope. Just above house of Elias Sanchez on opposite hill west of town.
5. Hoya de Callejón, over 600 ft (est.) – 3 sec. freefall, 2 sec. bounce, 2 sec. freefall, fast bounces at least 6 more seconds (out of hearing range).
6. Pit, 40 ft (est.)
7. Pit, 120 ft (est.) – 3.0 sec.
8. Pit, 30 ft (est.) to breakdown room.
9. Pit, over 200 ft (est.) – (a) 2.8 sec. freefall, fast double bounce, 5.0 sec. total; (b) 2.8 sec. freefall, several bounces, 7.5 sec. total.
10. Pit, 50 ft (est.)
11. Sótano del Bernal, over 500 ft (est.) probably into an extensive system in the hollow mountain – 11 sec. bouncing before rock goes out of hearing range. Near top of the hill.
12. Pit, 80 ft (est.) – 2 sec. to dirt floor.
13. Pit, 30-35 ft (est.).
14. Pit, 30 ft (est.).
15. Cavern entrance with some formations into a small room; on right side of room a pit drops about 100 ft (est.). Ancient footholds to allow water collection are partially covered with flowstone.
16. Las Tranto. Long horizontal passage draining an extensive area. In bottom of valley about 2 miles south of town. Very likely connects with Sótano de Paila in an extensive system.
17. Sótano de la Paila, probably over 1500 ft (est.), bounce times up to 20 sec. before rock goes out of hearing range. Example of running times for bounces with intervening freefalls: 3.4, 6.8, 9.0, 11.5, 20.0 sec. (rocks dropped from 100-150 ft below the entrance lip). Very large entrance; drains an extensive area.

## Reported --

- Numerous pits all around and practically in La Ciénega. Apparently hill is covered with pits.
- Upper portions of hill opposite La Ciénega to west, where we checked our pits, is covered with sinks and pits. Only a few were checked.
- Large pit less than an hour walk up the valley (south) from the cave Las Tranto.