

# CAVERNDISH

*NSG's NEWSLETTER*

*February 2007*

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## From the Editor:

Hello everyone,

Welcome to the First Newsletter of 2007. You will notice a change to the format, the old layout was giving my Windows 95 and me a headache (yes I know, I am old) So a simplified version is being tested this month.

Hope you all had a safe and happy holiday season. A great time for getting together with friends and family. Some of us had to work, while others got to enjoy the great outdoors with the club in places like, Villa Maria late November, prospecting and caving. Mount Owen, Bulmer over New Year.

Last months Newsletter featured a "Where Am I?" If you guessed Andrew was in Middle Earth, then you guessed right. I was there along with Claire. A great trip took us to Smorge's Hall where Andrew, Bruce and Danielle awaited their rescue in September 2005.

Looking for some more caving stories, so please send them on to me for future editions. It doesn't have to be a long tale, it's always nice to hear what our club members have been up to.

Dawn ☺

## **From the President:**

Hi Just a brief thingy on past events gone by

Bulmer as usual was a great success, a trip into camp two, several trips into the new going lead "Deep thought" numerous prospecting trips ranging as far afield as South West Owen and also Poverty Basin. At least two parties achieved Owens Summit. Great times and great people, and after all it's the people that make the trip.

Was great to see the familiar faces and good to meet new ones.

Some other activities done, have been the rediscovery of a couple of old little known caves. Yoni and family with hanger on Andrew re-found Baigents Cave and also Elliotts Caves. These caves have had large amounts of damage over the years due to there locality and ease of access but some goodies still remain and in fact a keen Cave Photographer would be advised that Elliotts caves would be worth a visit. Some old

Graffiti has become historic and dates back to the late 1800's

Paul Wopereis and myself were fortunate to secure a Helicopter flight and found us on the Garibaldi Range, a very special place with limestone grikes criss-crossing the plateau. Possible cave entrances everywhere.

Other trips that I have heard about have been "Dogleg Cave" "Nettlebed Cave" "Te-Tahi Cave" "Hawkes and Kairuru Caves" and I'm sure there were many others over the Christmas period.

Prospecting trips on Mt Arthur, Waitui and Takaka Hill West were also most enjoyable.

So keep up the good work and enjoy what is just there at your back door.

Andrew.

## **Where Am I?**

By Gary Willis

As I rounded the corner at a well known Richmond Bunker at 8am on Tuesday 2 Jan 07, I found my co conspirators to be watching the Incredibles dvd instead of getting ready to leave. As soon as I had encouraged them we got the car loaded and headed off over the hill to upper Takaka. After stopping at the farmers house to ask permission to cross his land and finding no one at home we headed off to park beside the road, changing into caving gear and sorting out ropes and rigging it was time to head off up the gully. Bush bashing our way to the entrance (take secateurs next time) we arrived covered in thorn scratches. The entrance pitch was soon rigged with two large trees being used as back up anchors and the main rope lowered over the side to hang perfectly clear. Going down first I found the rope to be caught in several places and twisted so freeing it up as I descended I was soon at the bottom, "Rope free" I yelled out to those at the top.

Soon we were all down, and trying to decide which was the right way to go. After exploring all the side passages we eventually found the right one at least twice before we thought we were in the right passage, so it was good to soon find the pretties, which confirmed that we were finally in the right passage. Following the sandy floor and big passages it was nice to see the stunning calcite formations looking like rivers and waterfalls of silver. The water level was low so we were able to go a fairly long way along the main passage before stopping for lunch. After lunch and a tune from the ever-present harmonica it was time to head out. It did not take long to reach the main pitch, going up first I was able to take my time and admire the entrance chamber. Steve, Leo's friend came next puffing like a steam train and arriving at the top exhausted and swearing. Finally after going through his whole repertoire of tunes while waiting Leo was able to Jumar to the top.

As we de rigged Steve enjoyed two cigarettes and then it was off back to the car. The weather was pleasant. It was a pity the gully was so overgrown, it took the edge off a fantastic day. We stopped on the way home for the obligatory ice cream in Motueka and then back to the bunker for a cold one. Steve murmu ring something about revenge being sweet involving a boat and a certain caver, who gets seasick.

Gary Willis, Leo Viersma and Steve (Australia)

## **Trip Stories:**

### **The Evils of Black Sabbath**

By Dawn Wood

Andrew, Seb, Jane and myself...Quite some time ago...

Situated on the karst landscape of Han's property-Takaka Hill, Canaan Road.

Han's children were the guides that lead the way to the entrance.

"Down there" they indicated with delight at showing us the cave.

Memories of a bouldery climb down and some good abseils started our exploration through the very vertical cave. We reached a floor in a well like chamber dripping with water. From here a low tight passage awaited us. The passage started with a crawl over sharp rocks that cut into the unprotected knees with a trickling of water in the floor. As the walls and roof became tighter I had to turn on my side to squeeze through. Fully stretched out at this stage. A couple of curves, then came the hour glass shaped squeeze. I was advised to proceed through the larger top part of the hourglass. Following Andrew and Seb who had already passed this section. I turned on to my side with my right arm extended to the floor, supporting my weight, overalls grabbing at the claw-like sharp surfaces that surrounded me. It was slow progress and soon my arm started to tire. I could feel myself starting to slip down and get wedged in the neck of the hourglass. It became tighter and testing mentally as I fought back the demons whose claws had a hold of me. A sense of panic, the struggle began. Jane behind me, Andrew and Seb ahead, all gave lots of encouragement. I stopped and retreated, and let Jane go ahead before me. I had decided not to proceed any further. Jane went through and called back for me to go through the bottom of the hourglass. I wasn't totally happy about having another go, but didn't want the trip to end for the others. So with the team in mind I continued on for a second attempt. On my side again, this time lying in the trough of the passage, feeling the cold water seeping into my overalls and meeting my warm skin. The lower option much tighter. I had to remain calm. Slowly breathe out and shuffle, inch by inch, breathe out, move, calm... I continued like this for sometime, pushing the dark nasty thoughts to the back of my mind, finding all the will I could muster to remain calm, while my heart raced. Finally out of the demons grip with enough room to turn feet first down a tight rift. More tight closed in feelings came flooding through again. Focusing on Andrew's calm voice, encouraging me all the way. Finally standing before him, his face beaming that I had faced and conquered my demons. Overwhelmed, I burst into tears wondering how the hell I was going to get out of there. Comforting hugs greatly received.

The others went on to explore down some more rifty bits, while I felt exhausted from the mental ordeal I had just experienced. I had to keep telling myself "calm down, relax, don't panic". I took my time back through the rift and hourglass squeeze. Totally focusing on my breathing and putting great distance between myself and the confinements of this evil part of Black Sabbath. Finally relief as I found myself back in the well-like tomo, cold, wet and shivering as I waited my turn to Jumar back up.

That day Black Sabbath really challenged me. Never before or since have I felt like I felt that day. It certainly hasn't put me off caving, but that was one cave trip that will be remembered as the dark evil cave with an evil name.... Black Sabbath.

## **My Favourite Cave**

By Adi Park, age 14.

My favourite cave is in Collingwood.

I like it because it is big and doesn't seem to stop. It just keeps going down, down tight passages.

You have to put your legs on the wall and push your back into the other wall and shuffle along til you get to the end. There is a waterfall that goes down about 50ft.

The tight passage I went through was hard on the body, I thought I was going to get stuck.

The equipment you need for caving is 2 packs of batteries, food, carbide, a helmet, a pack, water, rope and a camera.

When you are caving you have to be very careful. Stay in a group and listen to your guide.

## **Past Trips in brief:**

### **Mt. Owen, New Year**

Oz, Deb and Andrew had good leads on a new find on Owen. Talks of caps and battery drill to push further.

Andrew went deeper into Bohemia, past the Black and White Minstrels, almost to the end. A good cave with only a few ladders. No SRT gear needed. Some new sandbags have recently been put in with more still needed.

Deb had a heart stopping moment in Road To Nowhere, when she lost her footing and found herself dangling from a handline. She managed a self-rescue technique, with Oz's support and was soon safe and sound. Scary stuff Deb!

### **Paturau, November**

Seb celebrated his birthday in the Paturau area. Plans to visit the Kahurangi Lighthouse were postponed due to the weather.

## **Mt. Arthur**

Dion has had some good times going down many holes in the Arthur area looking for the "Big One"

## **Nettlebed, January**

**Warning:** A recent trip to Nettlebed mid January, reported that the long rope and tape rigging just before the Honking Holes is broken, but still lying in place. Be aware it is not attached.

Mike Brien, Kip and boys went through the Honking Holes to the Up and Overs. Mike says the Honking Holes were so loud and in full force. Whilst heading for the Up and Overs he found the ducks the fullest he had ever seen them. Their trip ended there!

**Yet:** By late January Mike Hadfield and cavers reported the same area to be the driest he had ever seen them.

**So:** Goes to show that water levels can change quite dramatically in Nettlebed.

While on the topic of Nettlebed, here is a little "**Did you know?**" By Andrew Smith

**Nettlebed Cave** underneath Mt. Arthur. Entrance is up the Pearce River, which flows into the Motueka. NZ's deepest cave @ 889 meters

NZ's 3rd longest cave @ 24.252 Km's (Bulmer is the longest @ 56Km and still going)

NZ's longest through trip, Two days from Blizzard Pot (top Entrance) to the Pearce (main Entrance).

Discovered 1986

The Abyss, or Jacobs Well is a huge waterfall chamber that is approx. 100meters high, the water falling about 60meters the abseil is 55meters.

We were hoping to achieve a circular route. The Overlander route into the campsite at Salvation Hall and then to continue on down to Jacobs Well and the Spillway and finally to meet up with the route in.

The Entrance area has a series of three squeezes known as the "Hinkle Horn Honking Holes" and soon after there is a "duck" (duck under the water)

## **Elliot and Baigent's Caves.**

Andrew, Yoni and family.

Situated in the Gorge Creek area. Elliot Cave is by the road and Baigents caves are a little further up the hill. They reported some damage with broken stals and graffiti dating back to the late 1800's. Andrew recommends Elliot Cave good for a photographic day. Permission is needed to visit these caves. Contact Yoni for land owner details, Andrew has GPS co-ordinates if needed.

## **Hut News:**

Some new reading material has been put in the hut. A Mountain Safety Guide and a Harwood Hole booklet compiled by Andrew Smith.

Dion has volunteered to do some spraying to eradicate the baby gorse seedlings that are popping up around the camping areas. Thanks Dion.

Mike Bryant and Whenua Iti have requested use of the hut for a 5 day caving course. Mike intends starting a Caving School, teaching caving techniques, through the schools Outdoor Education Program for interested 14-17 year olds. Hopefully interest from the Caving School will encourage new members to join up. Oz supported this by saying in Waitomo the Scouts Caving School has been successful in encouraging new membership.

The new rate for hut fees is as follows:

**Members \$4.00 per night**

**Non Members \$6.00 per night**

## **General:**

### **Lost Gear in Greenlink Cave.**

Kip's recent trip into Greenlink found him without his ascender when he needed it most. Kip managed to get out, but his ascender is still down there somewhere. If you're in Greenlink then please keep an eye open for it. Thanks.

## **Summit Tomo.**

A plan is to be devised on how best to prevent further soiling to the precious "Boots Off" area. Suggestions of making it a clean sock area. Also on how best to clean up the already soiled parts. Concerns that flushing with clean water may cause dirty water to runoff into the clear crystal pools. If we don't take care of this area it just may have to be taped off and viewed from a distance. Let's try and protect it by being very aware of cleanliness when entering this area.

## **Harwood Hole.**

The canvas mat that was in place at the rebelay point in Harwood Hole has been removed. Although it was still in good condition it was thought that it could easily encourage others to descend without a rebelay, when really a rebelay in place is the only way to go.

## **DVD available soon.**

Kevin Mountford will soon be releasing a DVD on SRT techniques in Caves. Made by a fellow friend and caver in the UK. Kevin has permission to distribute copies at a cost with proceeds to go to local Cave SAR Teams.

## **NZSS 2007.**

New stickers will be sent out soon.

## **Special Feature:**

I recently read an interesting article about caving in the United States that prohibits caving during the hibernation period of bats. This got me wondering about NZ bats and if anything was in place or needed to protect them. My curiosity led me to Ian Millar who very kindly gave me all the information I needed on our little creature. I also learnt that the NZ bat is the only native land mammal and that all other mammals were introduced. Let me share with you all there is to know about the bat in NZ. Thanks Ian.

## **New Zealand Bats**

By Ian Millar

We have 2 species of native bats: short-tailed bats (*Mystacina tuberculata*) and long-tailed bats (*Chalinolobus tuberculatus*). (Both having a similar species name is not helpful - creates a bit of confusion.)

The largest of the two is the short-tailed bat which belongs to its own family - *Mystacinobidae* - found only in NZ. There used to be at least two species but the larger one is thought to have become extinct on Big South Cape Island (off Stewart I) when rats invaded there in the 1960s. These bats are interesting in that although they are insectivores, they also eat a large amount of fruit in the forest and are probably the major pollinator for the parasitic 'wood rose' plant (*Dactylanthus*) - i.e. they are attracted to its flowers and spread its pollen from flower to flower. Although they can echo-locate like other bats and probably take insects on the wing, they will also land and scuttle about the forest floor to capture insects, take fruits or feed on wood rose flowers, etc, which makes them prone to predation by rats and other predators. This species is the more threatened of the two. There are only two old records in Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy (pre-1980) although of course there are many bat records for which we can't be sure of the species. Good populations of long-tailed bats are known in Northland (I think in Waipoua Kauri Forest), at Ohakune (Central North Is), in the Eglinton Valley in Fiordland and on Codfish Island (off Stewart I).

Long-tailed bats are quite a small animal (maybe the size of an average to large mouse), which seem to be totally insectivorous and capture their food on the wing. They belong to family *Vespertilionidae* (Evening bats or Vesper bats) which is the largest bat family, widespread around the world. The genus *Chalinolobus* has species in Australia, Africa, South America and elsewhere. Our long-tailed bat has a long tail with skin membranes stretching out both sides towards the hind legs and they use this to 'net' the insects they are chasing, bending down and picking them out to eat with their jaws while still in flight. This species is still more widespread than the short-tailed, although it has probably declined and become absent from many areas. However they are known from surveys to still be present in a number of places in the conservancy, including various parts of Golden Bay, Karamea Bend area, D'Urville Island, Spring Creek, St Arnaud area and around Murchison. This species has survived conversion of bush to farmland provided there were secure roost sites available. For instance, there is still a good population around Geraldine in Canterbury (where local DoC staff, Forest and Bird volunteers, etc, have set up bat roost boxes to offset cutting down or windthrow of old roost trees in the district and undertake a predator control

programme around Hanging Rock and in Kakahu Bush) which apparently seem to be centres of bat activity.

Both of our bat species appear to use mainly hollow trees as roost sites and maternity sites.

Short-tailed bats tend to be relatively faithful to individual sites although in some instances they have been found to use and re-use a series of sites in their area. They often occur in large colonies within a single site. There is a well-documented instance of a large kauri tree in Northland with a huge short-tailed bat colony falling over and the bats continued to use the fallen trunk, actually burrowing in through the rotten wood to gain access to spaces inside. This tree provided both roost and maternity sites. Although the skeletons of this species occasionally occur in caves, as far as I'm aware, they usually only occur as single specimens and have never been seen in the numbers which might suggest significant use of caves as roosts or maternity colonies, etc.

Long-tailed bats appear to be less faithful to sites, although favoured sites may be used regularly. They often occur in small numbers in tree holes or any site which can provide the necessary shelter and seclusion during the day. Apparently when Captain Cook anchored overnight in Dusky Sound during one of his voyages, when they unfurled the sails next morning two long-tailed bats were found snoozing in one of the furlled sails. This species has been encountered more regularly in caves, with a small colony found regularly using Grand Canyon Cave in the King Country. The bats here cling to the roof which is about 100m above the cave floor so disturbance isn't too much of an issue. The Cave is now part of a Nature Reserve to protect the colony and associated bushy swamplands which sustain insect populations which could provide important foraging. Long-tailed bats are also occasionally seen in the Ruakuri Natural Bridge, once again high above streamway and people. A few years back some cavers disturbed bats in the entrance shaft of Sinkpot (Pukeroa System, southern King Country) which were likely to have been long-tails. There are anecdotal stories of this species formerly being found in other caves from which they are now absent - e.g. they possibly once used the Maitai Cave behind Nelson - but given their tendency to use a number of roost sites, dislodgement from such sites by human activity is unlikely to have had a major impact. The species ranges widely to forage, with home-ranges in the order of 100km<sup>2</sup>, within which they probably use many temporary or more regular roost sites.

There is no specific record of bat maternity sites occurring in caves in NZ, although this doesn't mean it doesn't happen. However, maternity sites usually have specific climate/temperature requirements, so, for example, they are unlikely to occur in a draughty cave unless there are sizable holes and crannies which escape the wind and which retain even temperature, etc. It seems likely that our bats could more consistently find those requirements in hollow trees than in a lot of our caves. If such use was made of caves in the past you would expect to find some evidence in the form of reasonable numbers of skeletons of dead bats, just from natural attrition, but these haven't been reported to date.

I'm not sure what the latest is on bat hibernation here. My understanding is that our species may be less active in winter but don't appear to hibernate as such. I.e. they do have periods of activity during winter. In places like North America and Europe, where winter climates are more severe, hibernation would be a good survival strategy, but as far as I'm aware it's not the case here, or certainly not to the same degree.

## **Next Meeting:**

**Thursday, 15<sup>th</sup> March @ 7.30pm**  
**Kevin's place 18 Hanby Place, Nelson.**  
See you all there.



Dawn Wood  
Editor