

Guads Trip: October 2004

Gypsum Caves / White City: *by ET*

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As the other cavers and we headed home, I realized that I had been feeling really very good these last two days. Next morning we were supposed to go to Hell Below Cave, it is a leader and permit cave. Randy and Kristen had been to it once before but Hank and I had not. The morning found me with a full blown head cold again and hardly able to breath and with a slight sore throat, so I had to cancel out. R and K called our leader Mike Huber and he did not mind cancellation at all since he had other stuff to do that was necessary. Next day we moved to south of Carlsbad and south of White City to go look at the gypsum caves Hank and I had found and explored and surveyed the last couple of years. We were curious what the large amount of rain had done to the gypsum caves. The roads were in terrible shape and the caves not much better.

GYPSY 13CAVE

We had hoped to survey this year and dig the lead at the bottom, had a very large collapse right about where the main drain and dig would have been. We found that the Big Room cave had taken a lot of water also and the hole was about 4-5 times bigger than last year but still not safe to go into.

HOOPS CAVE

Hoops Cave, which we surveyed last year, had a small log in the upper portion, which we removed and then went down to look at the drain and potential dig site. The 6-inch air space was now body sized but neither Hank nor I felt like exploring it in the rich organic mud, but it sure does not need digging now. That area revealed that it must be one huge hole down below to take so much water. We could see the water levels on the banks of the gullies supplying the sinkholes/caves. Actually, the week before we got to this area they had about 30 inches of rain and normally they get maybe 15 inches a year total, so this area was drenched.

GYPSUM CAVES

Next day we went back to Brantley Lake to camp. Then Friday, Oct 29 we went out to see some Gypsum caves that other people had located a while back. These were not much better than the ones Hank and I had found. Some had collapsed in and the rock/dirt is crumbly and does not make one feel safe entering them. Chalk cave required a rope, which we did not have. Skylight Cave has a guess what? A huge skylight, Hank got a picture of the impressive collapse. We scared up about 5-6 owls that live or perch in these caves. We looked at about 6-7 large sinkholes/caves and then went on home.