

Carroll Cave Trip Report

Submitted by Bob Lerch

Photos by Dan Lamping

May 1, 2021

Participants: Josh Hafner, Derik Holtmann, Dan Lamping, Bob Lerch, Chad McCain, Tony Schmitt, Joe Sikorski

Objective: Survey side passages off the Mountain Room

Everyone was in the cave by 10am, unheard of for this group, and we slogged to the Mountain Room via the main Carroll River passage. Along the way, Josh, Bob, and Joe stopped to add a cross section that was needed for the C2 sheet. It took about 3 hrs to get to the Mountain Room. After a needed break, we began looking around to get oriented. We eventually settled on mapping leads in the OG survey, a side passage that forms a loop with the main passage and includes the Pearl Harbor cave pearl, the largest in the cave. We also saw some nice pearls in the Mountain Room.



Cave pearls in the Mountain Room.

Several leads were noted on the OG field notes from November, 2006, and two leads were quickly found near the start of the OG survey. One was a dome with water flowing off a ledge about 10 feet of the ground. Fortunately, we had a ladder from earlier trips which Chad used to access the ledge, but the passage at the top was an immediate dead-end with a small rise pool that was the source of the water. Nearby, a lead was found in the ceiling and after a short recon, it was determined to be viable. So, at this point Chad, Tony, and Joe split off to map this upper lead, using the ladder to access it. This turned out to be the longest lead of the day, with more than 400 feet of new survey added.

The remainder of the group entered a crawl that accessed two additional leads. Dan and Josh surveyed a lead off of OG-5 into some squirrely looking passage that surprisingly yielded more than 200 feet of new survey. Derik and Bob headed to a lead near OG-10 that turned out to be a 10 ft climb. The climb was a little overhung and after one attempt by Bob that ended in a foot hold breaking off, we decided to use the webbing Derik had. After several attempts, we lassoed the webbing around a medium-sized piece of breakdown at the top of the climb. Derik gave it a good tug to be sure the webbing was secure, and then he easily made the climb. Turned out, though, that the webbing was just barely around the rock, so Derik secured it for Bob to make the climb safely. Unfortunately, this lead quickly ended in a small 9' tall dome that had a tiny window (3" high) to the upper lead that Chad, Tony, and Joe were mapping. We got a whopping 29 feet of new survey. After this, Derik assisted Dan and Josh to finish their lead, and everyone eventually gathered back at the Mountain Room to have a hot meal.



Carroll River trunk passage.

The area we staged our hot meals was near where the Water Passage intersects the Mountain Room. While walking around, we noted many (>20) dead bats, all in a similar state of decomposition. We could tell from recent rains that Carroll River certainly can be high enough to sump the Water Passage and wondered if these bats had died while trapped during a previous flood.

Following our usual debate about whether or not to go back via the Turnpike or main passage, everyone went back via the Turnpike, which cut an hour off the trip. Everyone was out by 10:30pm. The total surveyed was 840.22 ft with 674.72 ft of new passage added, bringing Carroll Cave to 20.56 mi (108,532.1 ft) of surveyed passage.