

New to Us Passage in Scout Cave

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Ray Keeler NSS 23245

Participants: Raul Puente (CAG), Dario Puente-Reinhardt (CAG), Jared Deane (CAG), Stephanie Peterson (CAG), Will Golz (CAG), Nishant Singh (AOC), Wesley Hoyland (AOC), Will Golz (CAG), Aaron Roth (AOC), Max Becker (AOC), Bryant Chu (AOC), Willie Zin (AOC), Kelsey Banister (Flagstaff), and Ray Keeler (CAG)

We had nice mix of 14 on the trip including some new CAG members, ASU students and varying experience levels. Since Scout Cave northeast of Payson is probably the most visited cave on Tonto National Forest it seemed like a good cave for the “first time experience”. CAG (drafted by Jerry Hassemer) finished mapping the cave in 1972. We spent some time in the Entrance Room and walking canyons on the left getting people used to three points of contact. Then it was through the tighter crawl needed to see the back of the cave. We spent some time at the Pool Room and then the flowstone passage. We found another route into the flowstone passage from the 14’ pit room which turned out to be very useful later. We then went off to the “dry stream channel”.

Our Scout Cave trip had an interesting and unusual event. I had mentioned to a couple of the newer cavers that some well known caves had been pushed by newer cavers and had discovered new passages that had been missed. We were in the “dry stream channel” and since leads in the ceiling are the most commonly missed, we were looking around. Beyond a ceiling ledge is a nice 12 foot climb through a hole and into the bottom of a room. Will Golz scampered up followed by Wesley and Kelsey. James and I found another way up into the passage while the rest headed for the entrance. There are some nice, unbroken soda straws, flowstone, and a short column. This area is dotted on the Hassemer map. Will then wormed through some breakdown in the west end of the upper level passage, found a hole going down and dropped into new-to-us passage. Wes, Kelsey and James followed.

They found some walking passage, a loop, and a couple of dead ends ... and after a tight, awkward turn, Wes recognized the passage he had crawled in earlier on the trip. ... Pretty exciting for them and an hour of me wondering where they were. Attached is James’ sketch map of where they went from above the Dry River Passage over to near the 14 foot pit. They had left their packs in the dry stream channel (it was going to be a short “look and see” side trip) so they took the lower route to retrieve their packs. All in all it was a nice twist. After the 5.5 hour trip Raul and Dario went camping, others went to the Mexican restaurant in Payson and others returned to Tempe.

