

Underwater Speleology

Journal of the Cave Diving Section of the National Speleological Society



Volume 49, No. 3
Autumn, 2022



NSSCDS™

Winter Workshop

January 14, 2023
Hart Springs

Lectures * Workshops * Prizes * Guided Dives

Agenda and speakers on pp 27-29
Guided dives for qualified divers

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Cover: Downstream Cow Springs. Diver Gene Page prepares to take on the photographer in a game of “deco chess.” © Guy Bryant.

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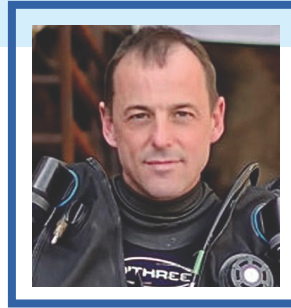
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a note from the chair

by Andrew Pitkin



The CDS had a very successful DEMA, selling out of almost all the T-shirts we had made for the event by the end of the first day. If you missed out, don't worry, because we plan to have another batch made that will be available in the online store. Thanks very much to everyone who helped with staffing the booth, especially Renée Power and Jamie Chandler, who spearheaded the effort. (See page 20 for the wrap up).

The next event for the CDS will be the Hart Springs Winter Workshop on January 14th, 2023. We have continued the successful format of previous years with presentations in the morning (this year on cave ecology, dive safety, and water quality), lunch (with a display of cave antiquities and book signings), and in the afternoon rotating hands-on sessions covering CPR, cave diving photography, and a vertical workshop to help you move around in caves that aren't completely full of water. The price is \$15 for CDS members and \$50 for non-members. Places, and T-shirts, are limited, so get your ticket before December 25. I hope to see you there.

The CDS has a long history as a successful member-run organization but if you have an opinion on how we could do better please get in touch with me or one of the other board members.

Better still – stand for election to the board of directors yourself! The only requirement is to be a member of the NSS and NSS-CDS in good standing. Three positions on the board are up for election over the next few months so now is the perfect time to think about where you want the organization to go, put it into a platform statement and get elected! More information is on page 26.

'See you at Hart Springs.

The IUCRR: Past, Present – and What is its Future?

by Ken Hill

In 2002, *Underwater Speleology* had a cover picture of Henry Nicholson* that I took in the basin of Catfish Hotel. I had just finished a dive with him and it was to be one of his last dives.

Henry was a true gentleman, and his love of cave diving was apparent to everyone he talked to. Henry died at 68. He was a U.S. Marine and a career law enforcement officer with over 35 years of service. I am a former Marine and a career law man too; we had an awful lot in common.

Protecting the caves and preventing their closure or destruction by a local authority responding to a fatality of a cave diver or someone foolish enough to dive a cave without training was the most common discussion we shared. Caves had previously been dynamited shut by eager sheriffs to solve a problem. Some of you may remember the recent Eagle's Nest fatalities and the pressure to close the site for diving. It's still open through a coordinated effort with the CDS and NACD. Our recommendations were heard, and cave diving remains.

Henry rarely spoke of the recoveries he performed; he just did his duty. One such recovery involved a lower section of a cave that has a serious restriction at about 145 FFW. Sheriffs' deputies made numerous dives in open water gear to that depth and saw the bottom of the victim's tank barely visible and stuck in the silt. Henry was a thorough man, and when he entered a cave his light scoured the passage, lighting it up 360 degrees. Slow and methodical, he swam slowly and, in this case, he saw the body. The man, who had no cave training, had ditched his gear and tried to swim out. Either that effort or the cave flow put him on the ceiling at about 45 FFW. After the harrowing tales told by his deputies and Henry's success, the sheriff became a believer that day.

Now why do I bring up this story? This cave in the 1960s was twice dynamited by this same sheriff who was the law in his county for 30 years. He dynamited it to prevent cave diving deaths.

Henry formed the IUCRR and then had to sell the idea to local sheriffs and law enforcement. These sheriffs are "elected officials" and have to run for office every four years. They face an electorate that is against "killer caves."

I guarantee that Henry used every resource he could muster. Buddy Giddens, who was a Major in Florida's Department of Environmental Protection and is now a guide and bush pilot in Alaska, pitched the IUCRR's mission to the sheriffs and park managers he knew. They offered them the IUCRR's services to perform rescues and recoveries that fell way beyond the capabilities of their dive teams. Henry and Buddy told the sheriffs that "we will do this at no risk to your deputies and at no cost to you."

I recall my early days of meetings with these sheriffs and repeating the IUCRR message that we will do this at no charge to you, and your officers will be spared from danger. We told them that any recovery would be done by civilian cave divers following the rules and regulations of their departments. We would follow the elements of a

(continued on page 14)



* Henry Nicholson founded the International Underwater Cave Rescue and Recovery, or the IUCRR, as a nonprofit, public-service organization. It was formally founded in 1999, but had its origins in the 1982 NSS-CDS cave diving workshop, held in Branford, Florida. More details are available on its [website](#).



Report from Mante

The Exploration Continues

by Luís Sánchez

For the past six years I have been exploring some of the caves in northeastern Mexico. This is a huge area full of river springs that carry a lot of water to the region, especially to Tamaulipas state.

Sheck Exley and Jim Bowden explored some of these caves in the 80s. However, there are many that have not yet been explored.

These caves are generally deep, >800 ft in some instances. The dry season—and best time to visit—is from January to April, because currents slow down and visibility improves. Access to these caves is complicated. They require climbing and rapelling. Divers must be guarded by state police because of trouble in the locality.

A famous history

Since I started cave and tech diving in 1995, I heard much about Sheck Exley's adventures. We always used his books, especially the famous *Basic Cave Diving*. I started cave diving in Quintana Roo but had always heard about his adventures in northeastern Mexico and the very deep caves in that area. Of course, I wanted to go there to learn about the area and to explore as well.

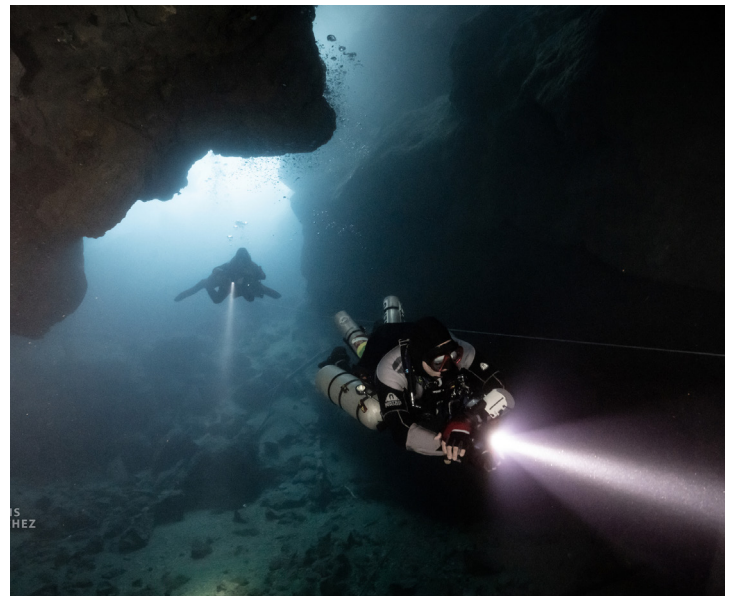
Sheck explored mainly at El Nacimiento del Río Mante. His first record was 656 ft, and his deepest dive there was 881 ft. His lines remain in the caves, some of them in bad condition. Sheck's death was a shock for everyone in the community. The accident happened on April 6, 1994, at El Zacatón, a 1,112-foot-deep sinkhole located in the town of Aldama in southern Tamaulipas. Sheck and Jim Bowden were trying to set a depth record of 1,000 ft when it

happened. Sheck remains well-known in the area; the locals still remember him.

Sheck and Jim Bowden were guided by a Mexican pioneer in cave diving, Sergio Zambrano, who knew the area. This group and others liked these caves because they were the deepest and represented the biggest challenge for them. Paul Deloach, Mary Ellen Eckhoff, Ann Kristovitch, and others explored here as well.

There are around 15 known cave systems in the area. Among the better known are:

- Nacimiento del Río Mante,
- Nacimiento del Río Santa Clara,
- Río Tantoán,
- Río Sabinas, and
- Nacimiento Ejido San Rafael de los Castro.



Opposite page: Eduardo Esquivel, Bruno Espinosa, and Antonio Ceballos enter Sistema Mante. © Luís Sánchez.

Bruno Orozco and Cynthia Delgadillo at Nacimiento del Río Mante. © Luís Sánchez.

Of these systems, Río Mante is the biggest. It throws off 19 cubic meters per second in the rainy season and 12 cubic meters per second in the dry season.

Working with Bill Stone in 2007, NASA sent an autonomous robot, “Deep Phreatic Thermal Explorer” or DEPTHX, into El Zacatón to measure its depth and to create sonar maps of unexplored areas. DEPTHX measured the bottom at 318 meters and confirmed that there were no major offshoots or tunnels. (More detail is available [here](#)).

I first went there in 2016 with a team from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM), the most prestigious university in Latin America, to gather better information from the area. Bruno Espinosa from Divers’ Community, Mexico City organized the group. Olinka Cortés, a biologist from UNAM, coordinated the cataloging of new aquatic species and sensor placement for water quality. Osama Gobara began creating three-dimensional maps of the area’s caves. Divers included Fred Devos from Zero Gravity and Anuar Patjane and me from Rango Extendido. The local government helped us with logistics and safety. We used open-circuit and rebreathers with trimix for the deep part.



New species of aquatic life. © UNAM.

We returned in May 2022 to continue our work. Bruno Espinosa organized the expedition and worked on cartography. Other cartographers/ explorers included Bruno Orozco, Antonio Gonzalez, Eduardo Esquivel, Antonio Ceballos, and Juan Pablo Gonzalez (who also was in charge of rappelling). Cynthia Delgadillo was an exploration diver. My role included photography, videography, and cartography. Melchor Banda was our deep CCR diver. Emilio Gonzalez staffed the filling station. Oliver Velazquez documented the expedition and interviews by video.

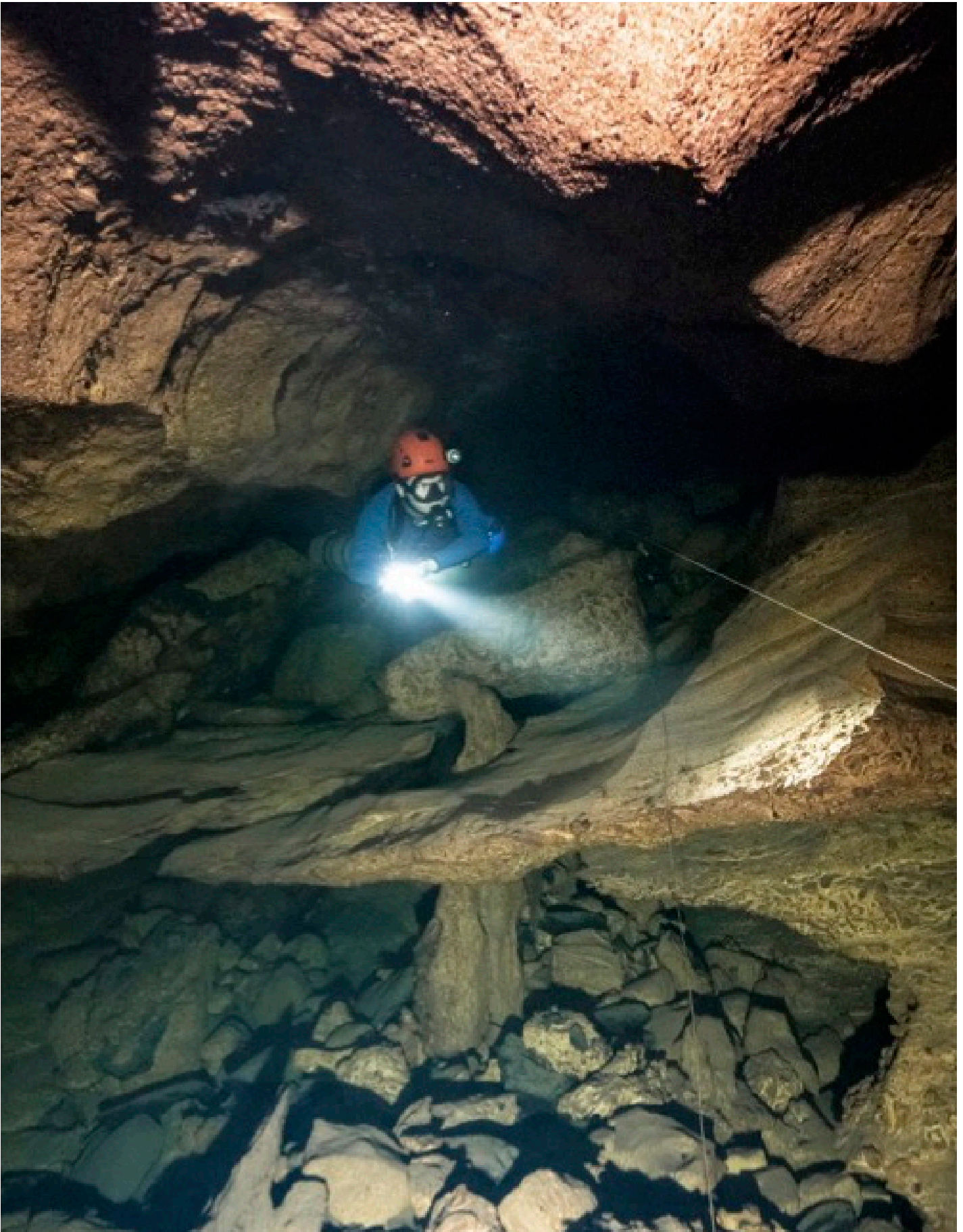
Locals Guillermo Sainz and Sheyla Palacios helped with government relations, security, and logistics. And in charge of security from the state of Nuevo Leon Firemen’s Team were José Ángel Bazaldua and Alfonso Valadez.

On all of our expeditions, we:

- study and record underwater life at different depths,
- replace guidelines that have been worn by time. Some are very old but we try to keep the originals as much as possible.
- lay line in the newly explored caves, and
- survey some caves with 3D scanners from the surface to 350 ft in depth. This allows viewers to see these magic caves in a new dimension.

We have worked in collaboration with the local authorities to study water quality and to promote the area as well. In 2015, the government proposed extracting water from El Nacimiento del Río Mante’s depths. We realized this could cause a huge collapse of the cave entrance, potentially blocking it for divers.

Eventually, we helped the government decide to cancel that approach. The beauty of the caves impressed them, so they decided to extract water less invasively. We are proud that it all worked out well for water supply and cave preservation.



Juan Pablo Gonzalez (front) and Melchor Banda (rear) at Nacimiento Ejido San Rafael de los Castro. © Luís Sánchez.

On our past expeditions, we:

- registered new species of aquatic animals, including *Mexistenasellus*, *Isopoda*, *Spelaeomysis*, and *Troglomexicanus* at depths ranging from 20 ft to 350 ft. We will be reporting on their behaviors and life cycles.
- communicated with the government and showed them footage and photos of the cave. We let them know that the potential for deep cave diving tourism in the area may represent extra income to local communities as well as to the state.
- placed around 2,000 ft of line in two cave systems but there is still a lot to lay.

- participated in water quality studies that were successful for state purposes, and
- created a 3D view of El Nacimiento del Río Mante up to 350 ft of penetration.

Our new objectives include:

- continued exploration and laying line in the caves and passages.
- creating professional photogrammetry every year of some caves. This will allow us to track deterioration and changes occurring inside the caves for conservation purposes.
- promoting cave diving in Tamaulipas state. This will help boost local tourism income and provide an opportunity to emphasize cave conservation.



CCR station. © Luís Sánchez. *Opposite page: Bruno Espinosa descends into Mante.* © Luís Sánchez.





Travel notes:

To get there, fly to Tampico, Tamaulipas, and drive about two hours to Mante City. There are some nice hotels near Mante City as well as near the caves. The drive is about hour from Mante City to the caves. Permission from the locals is required to dive the caves.

There are no local diving services or guides. All equipment and support need to be brought from Mexico City. The more shallow caves reach depths of 120 ft to 160 ft. The deeper caves require use of rebreathers and trimix. Water temperature is around 25°C/77° F.

Luís Sánchez is a cave explorer based in Mexico City. He dives and teaches near Tulum. Luis' group is filming a soon-to-be-released documentary about the northern Mexico caves and the Exley-Bowden exploration in the area.



Juan Pablo Gonzalez (front) and Melchor Banda (rear) at Nacimiento Ejido San Rafael de los Castro. © Luís Sánchez.



Juan Pablo Gonzalez,, Daniel Morales, Cynthia Delgadillo, and Bruno Orozco. © Luís Sánchez



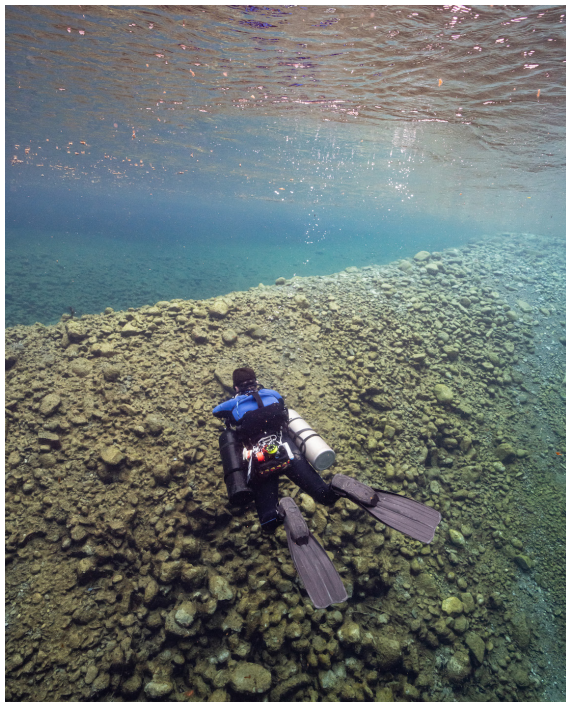
The author retrieves his CCR from the rigging. Photo by Melchor Banda.



Guillermo Sainz (rear), Juan Pablo Gonzalez, and the author (front) set the rigging. Photo by Melchor Banda.



Tanks around the cenote. © Luís Sánchez



Emilio swims in clear open water. © Luís Sánchez



El Río Mante by drone. © Bruno Espinosa.



Henry Nicholson (left) and Michael Horton (center) discuss the art of the interview during a recovery workshop. Photo courtesy of Lamar Hires.

(continued from page 5)

law enforcement investigation and be subject to the rules of their department and the sworn officer on the scene. I recall being with Lamar Hires, meeting with a sheriff for hours, before he finally agreed to our participation.

Recoveries are law enforcement operations. It's really simple: The sheriffs see the incident as a crime scene that is in their jurisdiction, and they must treat it as such until proven otherwise. That is their job. Whether underwater or on land, the scene of a death needs to be investigated and objectively examined by their officers. It's their investigators who review the facts provided by the IUCRR and determine whether the death was natural, accidental, foul play, or suicide. Those are the only four ways we'll exit this world.

Recovery divers do not speculate. The IUCRR divers are trained to report the who, what, where, when, why and how. We never speculate. This is the protocol followed by any investigator, and this results in an objective report. The IUCRR reports are for law enforcement authority to clear the case; they are produced exclusively for them.

This is an awkward position for the IUCRR in that we are made up from volunteers in the cave diving community. Some are pro- and others not-so-pro-law enforcement. We possess the facts and usually reach an objective conclusion, which we do not have the authority to release to the cave diving community. We must wait until law enforcement closes its investigation into the case. The IUCRR does reserve the right to notify the cave diving community of any imminent danger it uncovers.

Cave divers, or anyone who is just curious, have the right, at least in Florida, to request our records supplied to the sheriff under Florida's Sunshine laws.

Nothing happens quickly, in my experience. Most times law enforcement must wait for the autopsy report, gas analysis, and gear reports, which can take many weeks if not months. These tests are performed by other entities over which the IUCRR has no control. The case remains open until the results are in.

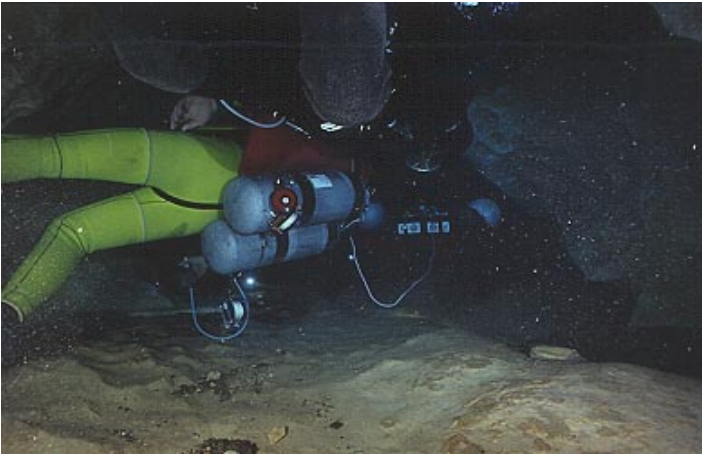
Then there is one other hurdle—If the deceased diver were found to have health problems, HIPPA comes into consideration. HIPPA is a regulatory act set into law by the 104th Congress that set limits and conditions on disclosures of protected health information. Several divers we recovered had had witnessed problems, according to their dive buddies or family members. HIPAA regulations prevented the IUCRR's disclosing this issue to the cave community.

We all remember Reggie Ross's passing at Ginnie's picnic tables after finishing a dive on Christmas Eve in 2019. Moments earlier he was in the water. Some of us knew he was sick, and others did not. Had he died in the water, his recovery would be a part of the IUCRR's recovery effort. We then would have been subject to the protocols mentioned above. You would of course know what happened, but we couldn't say what happened.

Time to retire. I took over the IUCRR in 2004 and will retire this year. I'm 76 and, as some of you know, I broke both legs eight years ago. That put an end to diving and instruction for me—no steps or descents into sink holes. I had a good ride and took pleasure in giving a lifetime of diving pleasure to my students. In my tenure as director, which had its ups and



Checking the victim's gas supply during a recovery workshop (simulation). Photo courtesy of Lamar Hires.



Positioning the body to tow (simulation). Photo courtesy of Lamar Hires.

downs, I am proud that not one dive site has been closed or diving curtailed anywhere in the United States because of a cave fatality.

I am extremely proud of our members in the successful Thai cave rescue. I and others received dozens of calls from news media asking us to speculate about the young victims and their recovery. Not one IUCRR member gave any statement to their questions. Dr. Richard Harris in Australia developed plans that were later used. I feel proud to be a part of the organization that produced a success story to the nail-biting world.

“Cover ups?” Lastly, I’ve been accused of covering up our investigations in the past. I say, “cover up what?” I feel no need to jeopardize cave diving by catering to those who live in the internet world and just love to stir things up. Recovery divers have had their share of stress, and some don’t want to do recoveries any more just because of the grief said about their efforts. I always said if you’re going to post to a forum you must use your real name so your “creds” can be checked.

The recovery divers do what they do at sometimes great risk, and they don’t need to be criticized by internet chatter. Some have a hard time explaining to their loved ones why they put themselves at risk. There is no place in the IUCRR for recovery divers or those in the know who leak and speculate. They add to our litigious society and help personal injury lawyers make money. Their personal motives don’t do anything good for the cave community.

So what’s the IUCRR’s future? The future is you, yes YOU. Henry, I know, would chuckle at the U.S. Marine recruiting poster pointing his finger at you and saying, “We Want You!”

In a perfect world there would be no recoveries. That’s not the case, and in a perfect world we would report the facts as we discovered them to the cave divers of the world. Reports would be simple if we didn’t work for law enforcement. Diver A watched Diver B “tox or have a heart attack.” Diver A, a solo diver, got stuck in a restriction, ran out of air, and died. Diver A & Diver B scootered into a highly silted area, got off the line, got lost, and died. Diver A, after a long hiatus from diving, made an aggressive dive and had his O₂ reg in his mouth 1000 ft into the cave in 100 FFW. Divers A & B, both untrained, descended to 240 FFW and died.

All of this has happened. We need you to be the next generation. You will need to want to work under a law enforcement umbrella. That’s a simple fact.

Will law enforcement be quicker to release reports? I hope so. But in my experience, once a case is solved or resolved, it gets little attention. The paperwork is *always* the last thing to get done.

So again, what’s the future of the IUCRR? Well, for one, its services are needed by lawful authority to perform recoveries. Some divers will join us, and others will say they’ll do it but they won’t be a part of the IUCRR. That is their choice. Let me know how the latter works out.

What are future recoveries going to be like? That is scary to think about. Technology has allowed divers to go further and deeper. Cave exploration is exceptionally difficult, and the recovery of an extreme explorer usually ends badly. If that diver’s dive plan was complex, the recovery has to be twice that. The training and skill needed to attempt such recoveries narrows the field to only a few—a very few!

It’s bleak, yes, but it always has been. But it has to be done, and experienced, level-headed, well-trained, and disciplined cave divers are all that is needed. All are called but only a very few are chosen.

Thanks, and dive safely!

Ken Hill started diving when he was 13. He was the YMCA’s first cavern instructor and later taught for the NSS-CDS, NACD, and IANTD. Ken is an NSS-CDS Life member and an NSS Fellow. He served in the Marine Corps and as a U.S. Marshal for 32 years.

AQUANAUT

by Rick Stanton

Reviewed by Jeffrey Bozanic

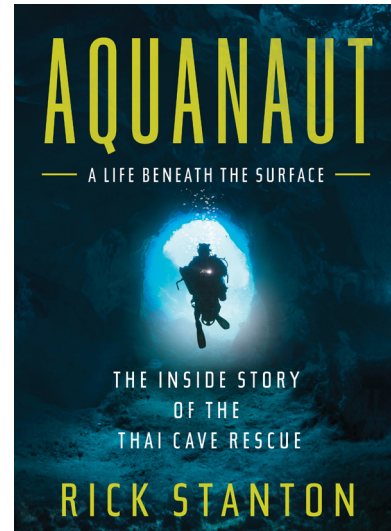
Aquanaut recounts the 2018 rescue of a youth football team (soccer, for our US readers) from a flooded cave. The story captured the world's interest as teams rushed to rescue the boys and their coach, fighting against the clock as monsoon rains flooded more and more of the cave.

Rick Stanton was one of the cavers instrumental in the rescue. I found his narrative extremely interesting, as he described the both the environmental conditions and the technical challenges and hurdles the team overcame during the extended effort. There is no doubt that the team performed what many might describe as a miracle, in successfully bringing all 12 of the boys and their coach through a mile of cave and multiple sumps to be reunited with their families. I have nothing but admiration for the technical competence and ingenuity that they displayed during the effort.

That said, Stanton's view of cave diving and caving may rankle some in our community. From his perspective, a "true" cave diver is a dry caver who has learned to dive only to pass sumps or flooded sections of dry caves. In fact, he says, the only scuba training he received was in a pool and that he is self taught, never earning a dive certification.

He implies that divers who become "cave divers" are dilettantes who are not really qualified and inherently unsafe in underwater cave environments.

In many ways his outlook reminds me of some of the British cavers I dove with in the early 1980s. I recall being told a story about a caver who had nearly died while exploring a cave when he found that he could not climb a talus mound to safety. Every time he moved upward, the rock and mud underfoot would collapse, sending him back to the bottom of the mound. I was astounded when he mentioned that he finally reached the top, just before he ran out of air in his scuba cylinder. Yes, he was underwater. The concept of using a buoyancy compensator to provide lift was completely foreign to him! Stanton mentions a similar feature in which he discusses not setting off an "avalanche," even though he is under water (p 78)



I readily accept that the type of diving done in many parts of Britain is vastly different from that which we do here in Florida and Mexico. Each has its own difficulties and hazards, and the skill sets required are equally different. The equipment and techniques needed to swim 13,000 feet in a Yucatán cave or to pass a 1,000-foot sump in a muddy, flooded near-zero vis passage are enormously different. I respect what Stanton and the team in Thailand were able to accomplish, and am not sure that I could have done as well. But I found the attitude displayed in the book to be a bit irritating.

Stanton states that in 1979, when he began caving, there were no resources to learn cave diving. However, training programs and texts existed in both the United States and Australia. I find his arguments to the contrary fatuous, offered as an excuse to justify his avocational progression. I am not arguing that he is not competent now, just that due to his background he is a bit provincial in his outlook on cave diving.

Now that I have that off my chest, allow me to progress to the book's substance.

The text contains a wealth of detail about caving and cave diving history in the 1980s and later. It is probably too much for non cavers, but I enjoyed reading the tales. It was especially fun to read about friends, acquaintances, and former students, and how they crossed paths with Stanton. Rich Pyle,

Martyn Farr, Rob Parker, Bill Stone, Barbara am Ende, Kenny Broad, Jamie Brisbin, Jill Heinerth, and others were mentioned. Unfortunately, some of these fine folks have now passed, some in cave diving fatalities of their own.

Aquanaut is really two books in one. The chapters are interwoven. A chapter on Stanton's caving development is followed by a chapter on the Thai rescue effort, followed again by more of Stanton's history. In retrospect, I am not sure but that I shouldn't have read the book in that manner, rather than reading it sequentially. It might have had better continuity that way.

Reading the chapter on San Agustín (Sistema Huautla) was particularly gripping. Bill Stone's 1993 expedition was the first major remote cave diving expedition to use rebreathers after he pioneered their use in Wakulla Springs in 1987. This was a huge project with ambitious goals. And it also carried significant risk. Stanton arrived on the eve of Ian Rolland's final fatal dive in Huautla. I remember the expedition well and the depression that descended upon the entire community as word of the accident was disseminated. Reading Stanton's perspective was illuminating, even as it opened old wounds.

The chapter describing the exploration of the Emergence du Ressel interested me greatly. When Stanton and Jason Mallinson were doing this work, I had moved from cave exploration to working in Antarctica and other locations and so was not closely following international cave diving exploration frontiers. Stanton's narrative made me realize how much cave exploration work I had not been aware of as I pursued other interests. I can easily imagine the dedication and commitment it took and could place myself in his position knowing what equipment was available at the time. A truly remarkable effort!

Overall, the book contains a lot of history and a surprising amount of detail. As the events in Thailand were unfolding, I was following with a great deal of interest, as were many in the community. As an active member of the IUCRR (International Underwater Cave Rescue and Recovery) team, originally formed by Henry Nicholson, I was wondering if I might be called upon to assist and how I would go about rescue efforts. As it turns out, I am grateful that never happened.

Exploring for a lark. After a football (soccer) practice on a Saturday morning, twelve youths and their

assistant coach went exploring in a "dry" cave in Thailand, expecting to exit in time for an afternoon birthday party. They never showed up. While they were in the cave, heavy rains caused the water levels to rise, trapping the group. Soon water was rushing from the cave entrance as rainfall dramatically swelled the river inside the system. Days later, the flow was so strong that no one could move against it.

The numbers of "rescuers" and others swelled as the days went on. Local cave divers, firefighters, a Thai SEAL team, media from all over the world, government officials and politicians, families of the missing youth, experts flown in from overseas—all were descending upon the limited area near the cave entrance, in an unmanaged and disorganized sea of humanity. This was the scene when cavers Stanton and John Volanthen arrived from Great Britain.

This trip was a lark for the Thai boys. They expected to be in and out in a couple of hours. The cave "exploration" entailed some muddy crawls, but that just added to the fun and adventure for the youth, right? Not so for the divers who had to follow once the passages flooded.

This was an ugly cave dive. The cave was muddy, with restrictions, many sumps, strong currents, zero visibility, long penetration distance, no guidelines, and hand-sketched maps. The initial responders had attempted a variety of methods to deal with the environment. They tried pumping the water out to lower the flood level. They tried stringing a line of electric lights back into the cave so they could see. They tried using divers who were not trained to cave dive, including the Thai SEAL team. Multiple dive teams were trying to find the missing group, with their actions often conflicting with each other.

Essential logistics, like an air compressor for filling cylinders, were lacking or hidden or passively guarded for exclusive use by one team. Communication between groups was terse or non-existent. Activity was so chaotic that "rescue" personnel were inadvertently left in the cave, with no one realizing they were missing. The British rescuers were so frustrated and fed up that they decided to leave. However, they were convinced to make one more try.

Stanton and his dive partner John Volanthen found the missing team 2,300 meters (nearly 1.5 miles) into the cave, after they had pretty much given up hope.

(continued on page 18)

(continued from page 17)

They were shocked to find all of them alive—hungry, cold, tired, and scared, but alive. They talked to them, but because they had not expected to find survivors, they had no food, no blankets, or anything to leave them except a few small lights. Rick told them they would be rescued the next day, but he really had no idea of how to accomplish that.

I cannot imagine the emotions associated with leaving the kids in the cave after finding them. “We will return!” But so many things could have interfered with that—weather and rain, cave collapse, increased flow conditions, equipment problems, illness or medical problems with the rescue divers, turf wars or other political issues. I would have known just how hollow that promise would be as I was saying farewell to the kids who had already survived 10 days in a dark cave without lights, food, or any outside communication. Stanton was leaving them hope...but would it turn out to be a false hope?

The book continued with the rescuers’ trials and tribulations bringing out the entrapped team. Without summarizing further, I will just mention a few thoughts I had while reading. The rescue team fought and overcame numerous environmental, social, logistical, and psychological difficulties. Their tenacity, dedication, and stamina were impressive. The team capability and endurance was extraordinary. And their ultimate success was nothing short of outstanding. While events in Thailand were unfolding, I gave them almost no chance of succeeding. I thought the conditions were just too extreme and the team too young and inexperienced. I was awed that Stanton and the others proved me wrong. Cave divers, who have an intrinsic understanding of the environment in which they were working, will appreciate this book.

I did not particularly like Rick Stanton from the way he presented himself in the book. The writing makes him sound arrogant and a bit full of himself. He may not be that way in real life, and perhaps someday I shall have the opportunity to find out. However, I do respect him and the things he has done. Particularly with the Thai rescue, he and the team accomplished something I believe few people could have successfully pulled off. I keep putting myself in his position and do not think I would have done as well. In the end, 13 people owe their lives to him, and countless members of their families owe him deep appreciation. And I would close with, thank you, Rick, for all you did.

Jeff Bozanic is a veteran cave explorer. He is a cave diving and rebreather instructor and a longtime member of the the IUCRR. He lives near Los Angeles, CA.



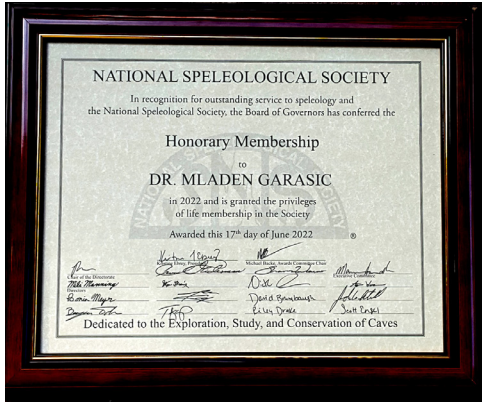
Jeff and the King Penguins on Salisbury Plain, South Georgia, Antarctica.

Underwater Speleology Wants Your Stories and Images

Are you new to cave diving or an old hand? Underwater Speleology wants to hear from you either way. Send us a story about exploring a cave, taking a class, a dive report, or surveying. Are you excited about the cave photography you’re doing? Conservation stories always are welcome. Did you have a close call? Tell us so that we all can learn. We’re interested in all things cave diving.

Send your thoughts to [Barbara](#).

MILESTONES AND AWARDS



NSS-CDS member Mladen Garašić (NSS 20649) was awarded NSS Honorary Membership and lifetime privileges at the 2022 NSS Convention. Mladen is a geologist and Adjunct Secretary and Treasurer of Union Internationale de Spéléologie (UIS), Vice President of Fédération Spéléologique Européenne FSE), and former President of the Croatia Speleological Society (HSS-CSF).

Mladen says he is especially happy because “this is the first time in 81 years that somebody from NSS-CDS got this award.”

Congratulations, Mladen!

Oscar Lambrano and Andrés Labarthe dive at Cenote Fenomeno. © Paul Heinerth



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Have you checked out GUE's [InDepth](#) magazine? It's free and in your inbox every Thursday.

— Michael Menduno, Editor

DEMA's a Wrap

by Renée Power

The [DEMA Show 2022](#) was held in the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida November 1-4. The NSS-CDS had its booth near the Technical Diving Resource Center.

Our booth was staffed by a team representing the NSS-CDS Board of Directors, the membership, and the instructors. James Chandler, Gayle Hall, Michael Poucher, Renee Power, Gwen Wyatt, and Jim Wyatt dedicated countless hours before, during, and after DEMA to ensure that the show was successful for our organization. DEMA requires often-mind-boggling planning and logistics. This team collaborated with excellence and got the job done! Although overall show attendance seemed low, the NSS-CDS as a whole surpassed benchmarks from prior years.



From left to right: Renee Power, James Chandler, Jim Wyatt, Gayle Hall, and Mike Poucher. © Renée Power.



The NSS-CDS booth and T shirt display. © Renée Power.

Our display featured:

- a stunning table cloth using our new updated logo designed in 2019.
- three beautiful vertical banners with breathtaking images donated by Pete Mesley and SJ Alice Bennett.
- attention-grabbing still images donated by Guy Bryant and James Draker.
- our DEMA T-shirt highlighting a photo donated by Fan Ping of BeWater Imaging.
- a wide selection of [NSS-CDS apparel](#), including “vintage logo” hoodies and polos along with men’s and women’s style T-shirts, and rash guards sporting either the new logo or a mermaid.
- [books](#) about cave diving and Florida’s springs and creatures, Grim Reaper signs, NSS- CDS pens, arrows, stickers, and patches.

Uniquely this year, we were honored to collaborate with the [Historical Diving Society](#) in remembering and celebrating the legendary Sheek Exley in several venues throughout the week.

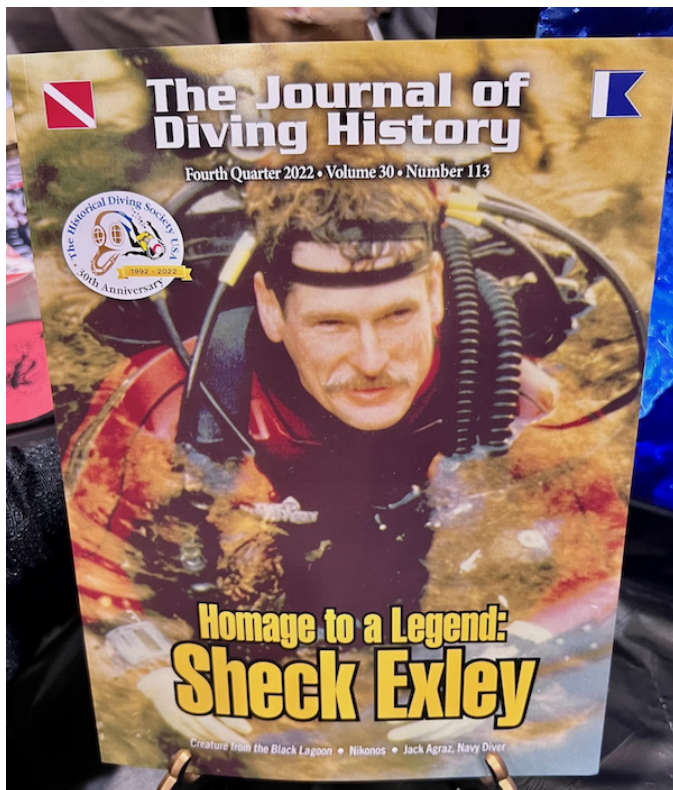
Special Tributes to Sheck

A DEMA-sponsored display of “Celebrating The History of Diving” showcased Sheck and other pioneers. We were able to display a lot of Sheck’s dive gear, thanks to Mary Ellen Eckhoff, Guy Bryant, Tom Johnson, Ed Uditis, Wayne Kinard, Chris Werner and Tec Clark contributed personal historical diving items. Sheck’s red Parkway drysuit, a Goodman Belly Bag, hand-drawn cave maps crafted using old-school cartography methods, veteran reels, manuscripts, an early homemade wing and motorcycle battery light, a Tekna DV-3X scooter, aka “Cherry Bomb”, and a Halcyon PVR-BASC rebreather, aka “The Fridge” all graced the display cases. Each piece held countless stories, giving the observer a deep sense of wonderment about the past. Our diving technology excels today, and we certainly appreciate our cave diving forefathers and foremothers for paving the way.

Michael Menduno, invited by the NSS-CDS, honored Sheck with a presentation in the Technical Resource Center. The discussion included personal anecdotes from Rob Aiello, Paul Heinerth, Lamar Hires, Donn Kearns, Clark Pitcairn, Terrence Tysall, Hal Watts, and others in the standing-room only audience.



Clark Pitcairn accepted the Historical Diving Society's Diving Pioneer Award on Sheck's behalf. © Ed Uditas.



Enlarged cover of The Journal of Diving History, featuring the cover story by Underwater Speleology editor Barbara Dwyer. © Renée Power.

The Historical Diving Society further honored Sheck with its prestigious Pioneer Award at the AAUS NOGI Awards. Clark Pitcairn, Sheck’s longtime friend and dive buddy, graciously accepted the award on his behalf. Documentary filmmaker Brian Udoff had prepared a touching video that stilled the audience as Sheck’s friends and colleagues remembered him personally and the diving legacy he has left behind.

[Have a look at the video.!](#)

More Thank Yous...

- A HUGE thank you to Gayle, Jamie, Jim, Gwen, Michael, and Renée for serving with your time and hard work at our booth or assisting at the show in some way.
- Adam Hughes, you were instrumental through the entire process of the show and quickly made yourself available when we had administrative, membership or store questions. Lifesaver!
- Sam LeFlore, we greatly appreciated your IT support when we had random needs.

- The NSS-CDS Board of Directors was supportive giving us reasonable freedom as we strived for excellence.
- Guy Bryant, James Draker, Pete Mesley, and SJ Alice Bennett — thank you for donating your imaging. It made all of the visual difference!
- Michael Menduno, Christine Tamburri, and Kendra Warlow —you all were on point with the collaboration between the NSS-CDS and the Historical Diving Society’s display and with various celebrations of Sheck Exley to include in Michael’s presentation in the Technical Resource Center.
- CDS Board of Directors members Terry DeRouin and Sam LeFlore, and NSS Museum coordinator Scott Shaw, you worked well together to bring several of Sheck’s hand-drawn maps to be displayed at the History of Diving exhibit.
- The “blue man” was a big hit! Thank you Jon and Kristi at Cave Country Dive Shop for loaning us your guy for shirt display.
- Fan Ping - your T shirt photograph really shined! Thank you!
- The Historical Diving Society - we were honored to be included in the celebration of our own, Sheck Exley. The displays, your cover story in the Journal of Diving History, the gigantic Sheck posters, and a touching award ceremony at the NOGI Awards, all honored Sheck with both style and expected humor by those who knew him.
- Barbara Dwyer, our *Underwater Speleology* Editor, thank you for your continuing work, including the [cover story](#) that you wrote for *The Journal of Diving History*: “Homage to a Legend: Sheck Exley”.



Gayle Hall and Jamie Chandler take a brief break. © Renée Power.



The Historical Diving Society's booth. © Renée Power.



Gwen Wyatt takes a break outside. © Renée Power.



The tee shirts sold out rapidly. © Renée Power.

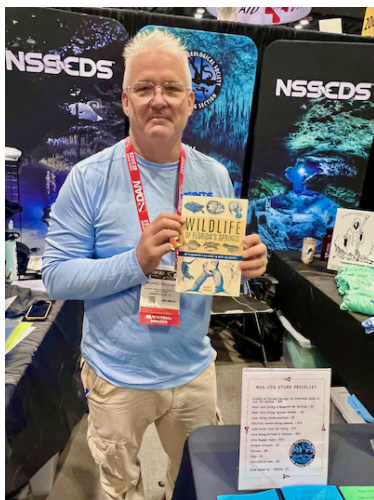
Thank you to all you familiar faces who stopped by the booth for conversation, hugs, and photos.

Several donations were made to the NSS-CDS at the show and before. Thank you Max Kuznetsov at Cavemax for your generosity.

The greatest thank you of all goes to YOU, our membership. Without all of you, none of this would be possible. We are grateful.



And the Cave Country Dive Shop "blue man" kept an eye on everyone. © Renée Power.



Mike Poucher holds up a book about the wildlife that makes the Florida springs their home. © Renée Power.

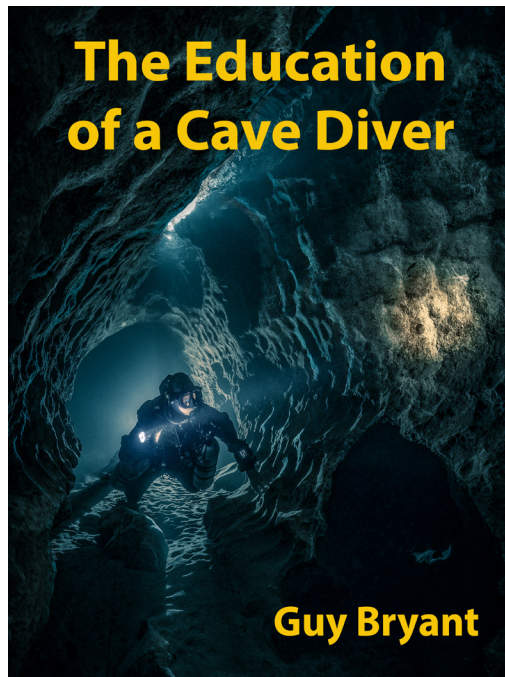


It was a very good DEMA 2022. Thanks, everyone.

—Renée Power

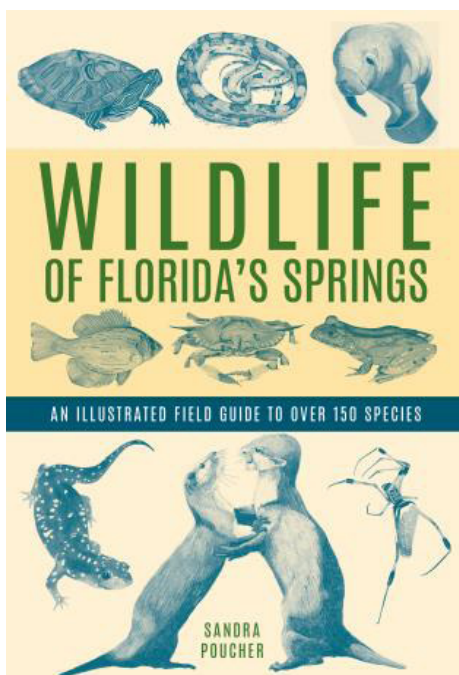
The Education of a Cave Diver

a book by Guy Bryant



In his upcoming book, longtime NSS-CDS member Guy Bryant takes you through his early ventures into caves, scuba and, eventually, cave diving. There were no formal cave diving courses in the 1970s. One learned from others, figured things out, or survived mistakes. Guy recounts his adventures—good, bad, and dangerous—and about the mentorship of friends and more experienced cave divers he met along his journey.

The Education of a Cave Diver was published in October, 2022, and is [available on Amazon](#).



WILDLIFE OF FLORIDA'S SPRINGS An Illustrated Field Guide to Over 150 Species

by SANDRA POUCHER

New for 2022, this book describes the life found in Florida's springs, spring runs, rivers, and even underwater cave systems. It features over 150 species and more than 130 original illustrations.

Available in the [NSS-CDS bookstore](#)

A note from the training director



by Max Kuznetsov

Fellow instructors,

We're slowly recovering from the last two pandemic years. I see more and more divers at our sites here in Florida, not just from all over the US, but from Canada, South America, Australia, and Europe as well. CDS instructors are getting busy again. This year (which is not over yet) we certified almost 150 students. 'Not a bad number at all, considering that COVID-19 caused us to have a dramatic drop.

All instructors, especially those from overseas, please check out the [list of caves and passages](#) recommended for conducting lights-out drills. Please limit drills to these passages. Unfortunately, every day we see more damage to our caves, and we are getting very concerned about it.

The CDS board members are working hard to bring our organization up to modern standards. Our new platform is operating well despite a few glitches and technical problems. A few items:

- The renewal process for 2023 has changed, hopefully becoming easier and more straightforward.
- We're working on fixing the problems with uploading student photographs. Hopefully this will be resolved soon.
- We'll be giving instructors who are out of the region (in Mexico, for example) permission to print c-cards so that students outside US can get their certifications faster.

It can be frustrating, but please remember that most of people working on the platform are volunteering their time.

Other good changes are on the way as well, and we will keep you up to date with them.

We also welcome any ideas, recommendations, and advice from you instructors. Let's keep CDS the leading agency in cave diving education and cave conservation.

Safe diving,

Max Kuznetsov
Training Director

*It's time to start
thinking about
the NSS-
CDS Board
of Directors'
Elections...*



January 2023 starts the CDS election cycle, and we want to alert the membership.

The nomination committee is forming to solicit people who are interested in running for the board. The only requirement is having been a member in good standing for 1 year.

If you have any questions or wish to make a nomination, please contact [me](#).

To vote in the 2023 election, you will need to have up-to-date membership information, especially an email address.

If you have changed any part of your membership in 2022, please reach out to [Sam Leflore](#).

**Kelly Jessop
Administrator of
Elections
cavedvr@yahoo.com**



***The 2023 International Cave Diving Conference is on!
May 26th - May 28th, 2023 Lake City, FL
Save the dates!***



Hart Spring. © Mark Long. Used with permission.

Hart Springs is open to diving with a few requirements:

- Divers must show proof of full cave certification and Abe Davis award (or proof of 100 post-certification cave dives).
- DAN insurance or equivalent is required.
- Guide is required for the Black Lagoon system (not for Little Hart).

Registration forms, waivers, guide information, and more are available at [Hart Springs State Park website](https://www.hart-springs.com/).

[Get your tickets here:](https://nsscds.org/event/hart-springs-winter-workshop/) <https://nsscds.org/event/hart-springs-winter-workshop/>

REMINDER: On-line tickets are available until 12/25/2022. After that, Santa will be busy preparing our unique conference t-shirts by Fan Ping of [Be Water Imaging!](https://www.be-water-imaging.com/)

On-site ticket sale t shirts will be subject to availability. Make sure you get your ticket so your t-shirt will be waiting for you.

Members \$15.00, nonmembers \$50.00

Preliminary Agenda

Registration

Welcome and remarks

Paul Heinerth, Master of Ceremonies

Heroes of the Caves- Forrest Wilson Tribute

Terry DeRouin

Mysteries of the Floridan Aquifer

Thomas Sawicki, PhD

Break

Dive Safety; Just Culture

Panel: Christine Tamburri, moderator
Charlie Roberson, Jared Hires

Recognition and awards

Water Quality in the Floridan Aquifer

Pati Spellman, PhD

Recognition and awards

Lunch

Cave diving antiquities display

Education of a Cave Diver -book signing by Guy Bryant

Wildlife of the Florida Springs - book signing by Sandra Poucher

Concurrent workshops

Vertical workshop

Cave diving photography

CPR-AED Rescue

Andy Pitkin, Matt Vinzant, and more

Fan Ping

James Chandler, Emergency First
Response Instructor Trainer, and
Lee Ann Waggener, RN

Wrap up and 2023

International Conference Preview

Adam Hughes

Thanks to Our Hart Winter Workshop Sponsors

January 14, 2023



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