

# Underwater Speleology

*Journal of the Cave Diving Section of the National Speleological Society*

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## from the Chairman

gene melton



This issue of *Underwater Speleology* is Cheryl's first. Thank you Cheryl! It is a return to limited color pages to greatly reduce printing expenses. It is also a venture into publishing UWS on the NSS-CDS website. There will be a difference between the two versions. The website version will have more color photos and longer articles. In the interest of limiting the number of printed pages, some articles were edited and thus reduced in text and photo content. As each new issue is released the website version will be replaced with the current issue. This method keeps our website storage at its current size, thus not requiring additional expenditures. Archived issues will be available for purchase on CD or DVD.

The workshop is progressing. It is anticipated that the location will be at the Community College. The t-shirt for this year's workshop will be a first. As the workshop is in part dedicated to Wes, the shirt will feature a portrait of Wes Skiles on the back. Terri Skiles has graciously volunteered to do the design. At this time the shirt will be a limited edition only available to advance workshop registrants. There may be a few extras for day of event registrants but no guarantee.

The conversion for NSS dues processing is taking longer than anticipated. As I write this the programmers are hard at work at NSS headquarters. They thought they would be ready early this month, but February is the latest projection date for the dues.

The Constitution and Bylaws committee has completed its task. The Constitution and Bylaws are posted on the website for review. See the article by Forrest Wilson in this issue.

Rumor has it that many of the springs which tend to have brown water along the Suwannee now have reasonable visibility. Grab your chance. Who knows how long the conditions will continue? On a recent dive in Cathedral we found spots where the line was buried in sand mounds. In some places the line could be pulled free and others required bridging. The unexpected should be expected when diving in places that have been brown water sumped for a long time. Sort of like diving a place that has not yet been explored. ;}

Don't forget that Cheryl needs your articles and photos:

Email: [cccheryld@aol.com](mailto:cccheryld@aol.com) Cell: 732-674-6550.

Dive safely,

Gene

***Every new beginning comes from some other beginning's end.  
~ Seneca, Roman philosopher, mid-1st century AD***

I am fairly new to cave diving as well as new to *Underwater Speleology* magazine. In that time I have truly enjoyed the efforts of Beth Murphy and the quality of magazine she was able to publish. She will be sorely missed.

While our roles are reversed and Beth sits, coffee in hand, reading UWS, I have been making a pointed effort to meet more divers, learn more about cave diving and trying to imagine how to include this in future issues. The fact that I get to read the articles and see the pictures before the rest of you is a sweet little perk!

There are some noticeable changes in this issue, with the change in editors being the least of them. The printed version is largely black and white, columns and columnists are changing, and a color online version will both complement and augment each issue.

In the future, I hope to bring back a rebreather column, the Milestones column is on a short vacation and will return, and I hope to add regular columns on sidemount diving, cave history and possibly diving medicine.

I look forward to hearing your ideas and suggestions and receiving your pictures and articles, as well as the challenge of producing this magazine and improving a little with each issue. Please be patient with me.

In the mean time please check our online version:

***<http://www.nsscds.org/test/drupal/UWS>***

Enjoy and safe diving,

Cheryl  
cccheryld@aol.com

# The Taming Continues: The Peacock to Baptizing Connection

By Agnes Milowka and James Toland

In August 2010, James Toland and Agnes Milowka made the connection between Peacock Springs and Baptizing Spring. The connection between the two springs extended the Peacock Springs Cave System by over 10,000 feet (3km), adding significantly to its already extensive 28,000 feet (8.5km) of passage.

In this interview, Agnes and James will share the thrill of adventure and exploration as they pursued their first connection.

**Many people assume that everything in Florida has been found and explored. How is it possible that you guys are finding new cave, even in popular systems such as Peacock Springs?**

James: Many divers from the Florida cave diving community are focusing on exploration around the world, but I think it's important to focus on exploration in our own back yard – a little something I like to call tailgate diving.

There is still a lot of cave here waiting to be pushed, and with the evolution of dive gear and divers alike comes the ability to do deeper and longer dives. This opens up new and exciting opportunities that were overlooked or never considered in the past.

Agnes: I think it comes down to attitude. Too many people assume everything has been lined and explored and they are only too happy to follow the lines already there. While there is a culture of exploration in Florida, popular caves like Peacock don't get a look these days. I guess it just goes to show that the possibilities are endless and the potential is still there, even in popular and often-dived caves.

**How did you find the lead that eventually led to Baptizing?**

James: Ag was off running down some leads with one of her regular dive buddies and hit the jackpot. After confirming the lead was a go it was on. She contacted me and said let's lay some line; obviously she really had to twist my

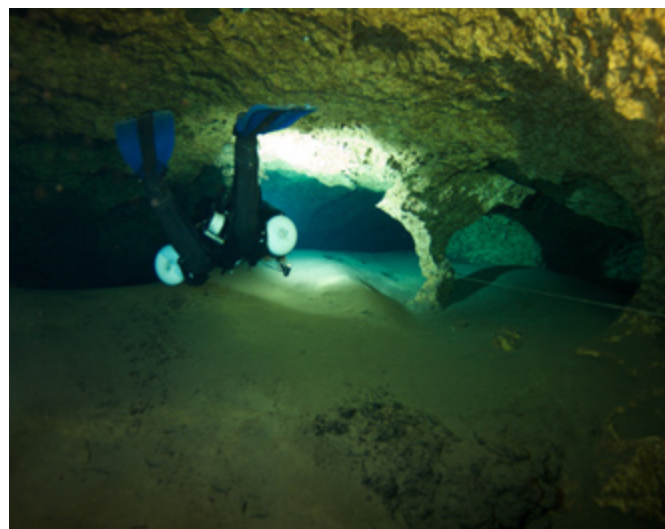
arm.

Agnes: I was actually doing a fun dive with another buddy and we decided to check out a section of Peacock I hadn't seen before – the water source tunnel for the Peanut Line.

As it got tighter and smaller I knew we were coming up to the end of the line and I was super curious to see what happened next. Finally the line ended and as I suspected the cave kept on going. It was a bit tight and quite muddy but it was definitely still going. I tied off and used what scraps of line I had left on my reel to check out what lay ahead. I laid 200 feet (60m) of line on that dive and decided it was a goer.

**So you found the lead and it looked promising. Talk us through your next dive.**

James: A week later Ag and I were at it again, and yes, we were armed with more line and more gas. The mission was simple; put all the line in.



Agnes swimming through a typical Peacock to Baptizing passage. Photo © WesSkiles.

Facing page: Agnes and James Photo by Agnes Milowka

Map : Compiled by Bob Schulte

I was graciously given lead again and we hit it. One reel, two reels, and then before we knew it the third reel was coming off. The cave decided to throw a loop into the mix and started breaking up and splitting off in several directions, so the T's started flying in. We managed to add over 1000 feet of line. In the end the dive was 280 minutes, but with an average depth of 35 feet (10m), we only incurred 10 minutes of deco.

Agnes: We did have more line this time and were armed with two reels each. Nothing was going to stop us this time! We knew the dive was going to be a long one, so despite not being a morning person, I got up early. By 8am we were there, waiting for the gates of the park to open.

It was an unbelievable dive. We just put down one reel after another and it didn't seem the cave was going to stop. Finally, the way forward became less obvious and we had to start investigating various options and leads here and there. In the end, these did not go places, but we felt we had a successful dive. You can't sneeze at dropping more than 1000 feet (300m) of line in a day.

### **When did you know you were heading for Baptizing?**

James: We started having suspicions on our second dive. After bursting through the Mud Flats, the low muddy portion of the beginning of our exploration, we started finding these green hairy mats of algae flowing through the tunnels. We noticed it the previous dive but didn't think much of it. On this dive we saw it in great abundance all over the new line that we put in. It was also all through the peanut line in very faint wisps. As we progressed in the cave it accumulated in larger masses and more frequently. I mean there were large clumps of this stuff. Then we started finding dead oak leaves in small clusters. All the telltale signs of an opening.

Agnes: We knew we had to be close to an opening because of all the green puffy algae. I remember seeing lots of it at the entrance to Baptizing when I first explored it. It started to make sense that we were heading towards Baptizing; where else would all the flow be coming from?

I still remember standing by the banks of Baptizing with James a couple of years ago and speculating and discussing where all the water was going.

Even then we figured it was heading to Peacock but we weren't sure whether a human could physically fit all the way through. Well, here was our chance to find out.

### **Tell us more about the moment you connected.**

James: Ag was in the lead and she had the grand honor of tying in the lines at both ends. At the mark we chose would be the most likely, she put the reel in and 200 feet (60m) later there was the end of the line from downstream Baptizing Springs. Ag tied that end off and we continued to push forward to make sure we had indeed done it. There was no question

in our minds as we entered the pit just downstream of the entrance to Baptizing. We were unable to exit, unfortunately, as the already super tight entrance restriction was filled in because of past floods. We did however see daylight and after a bit of digging opened it up a good deal. We returned the following day to do the traverse proper.

Agnes: It was incredible! I saw my old line and my blue 'Ag' arrow and knew we had done it! I was thrilled. I might have done a little dance right then and there, if not physically, certainly on the inside.

It was nice to go back through old and familiar territory in downstream Baptizing. I was happy to see my line was in good condition and wasn't buried, even after all the floods over the past year or so. The cave was suddenly a part of a much larger picture. By making the connection through to the entrance pool of Baptizing we had suddenly joined Peacock with the upstream section of Baptizing. This meant that the Peacock Cave System was suddenly over 10,000 feet (3km) longer!

The next dive, the swim through was a formality but it was also quite thrilling. To descend into one spring and come out another, 4600ft (1400m) farther upstream was quite remarkable. A diver physically swimming through



the passages demonstrates the hydrological link between the two springs and provides much food for thought. If a diver can swim through the water, so can pollution and contamination, and it's worth noting that the water that flows through Peacock comes a long way and everything that happens to it upstream has an effect on the quality of the water at the park.

**Bob Schulte is an important part of your team. What was his role in regards to the connection?**

James: The problem was that before the new exploration line Ag laid, there was a section of line that was not knotted, around 400 feet (120m) of it. Ag and I tried to get the data with a tape measure coming out once but couldn't because of zero viz. This prevented us from plotting all the survey data out as a map, so we never had a real perspective of where exactly we were heading. Ag went back to Australia briefly, so at this point we brought Bob in on the fun and games. He and I got the missing survey data from the old line and surveyed the rest of the cave in more detail.

Bob brings some unique skills to the table. This dude is on fire with some mad skills in surveying, mapping and putting all our mumbo jumbo together. Bob is going to be tantalizing the cave diving world with his maps in the near future and he does absolutely amazing work – he is a must have on any project.

Agnes: Before actually making the connection dive, James and I spent a whole dive blindly chasing down leads. It was so frustrating; we knew we were close but could not figure out which lead was the magic one. We found all sorts of interesting things, but really we were after the connection.

It was only once Bob compiled the survey notes and created a map that our next move was made clear. Sure enough, once it was all laid out it was simple; less than 250 feet (75m) later we hit the mark and made the connection. The map made all the difference and Bob's map is awesome. Meanwhile, just for the record, I have an axe to grind with anyone who lays line and doesn't knot it first!

**Is this section of the cave unique? Is there anything really cool in there or is it all low and muddy?**

James: The cave is by far some of north Florida's best diving. Fossils litter the passages throughout the new

exploration. After jumping off the main line the cave takes on a whole new look. The walls are without scars. The floors are littered with all types of bones, from vertebrae, jaws, teeth and regular long bones, to areas that look like a seafood buffet as crab claws and extremities stick out of the walls. It looks the way a cave should look before the raping of all her treasures and diver traffic.

Passages range from a sizable borehole cave with sandy bottoms through to low restrictive muddy clay bottoms. Some passages are almost complete rock top to bottom. The flow dynamics are interesting and some areas have an exceptional amount of flow in comparison to the rest of Peacock. Then other areas have little to no flow, especially where the cave starts to spider web out. These areas are typically low and silty and have zero visibility on exit.

Agnes: I am a huge fan of Peacock in general. I think it is one of the most extraordinary and incredible caves in Florida. In my mind Baptizing will always be special, as it was my first venture into real and extensive exploration and I found so much virgin cave there. To join these two caves together and to expand the Peacock System was an extraordinary experience.

Like James said, the amount of fossil remains in the cave is impressive and there is much archaeological material around Baptizing Spring itself. It is a fascinating system on so many levels. Baptizing Spring has this rich history dating all the way back to the Timucuan Indians and the Spanish invasion in the 17th century. Then there is the hydrology; there are still many mysteries surrounding the water flow around Peacock. To find this huge amount of new cave and reveal one more little piece of the puzzle is really great.

But some bits of the cave are indeed low and muddy. The whole Peacock to Baptizing run is an advanced sidemount cave dive and while not off limits, certainly requires good gas management and a love of tight places, thick silt and zero vis.

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# WES SKILES PEACOCK SPRINGS STATE PARK

## ASSOCIATED CAVE SYSTEMS

### Peacock Springs Surveyors

#### 1996 Project Principal Survey Team:

Tony Pate, Michael Poucher, Ted Cole,  
Bill Rennaker, Dennis Holden, Scott Worrel

#### 1996 Project Survey Members:

Dennis Holden, Bruce Campbell, Steve Gerrard,  
Bruce Poucher, John Orłowski, John Dunk,  
Tom McDonald, Bruce Ducksworth,  
Annette Gebuis, Julius Tomsits, Kerry Duffy,  
Quentin Jones, Wayne Head, Steve Keene,  
Elena Casson, Sue Sharples, Paul Logan

#### 2005 Survey Update:

Michael Poucher, Sandra Poucher

#### 2010 Survey Update:

Agnes Milowka, Bob Schulte, James Toland

### Peacock III Spring/Siphon Surveyors

Bill Rennaker, Terry Pate, John Rankin,  
Don Black, Mike O'Leary, Tom Turner  
Ted Cole, Elena Casson, Michael Poucher  
Mark Long, Ed Grossenbacher, Pierce Hoover

### Baptizing Springs Surveyors

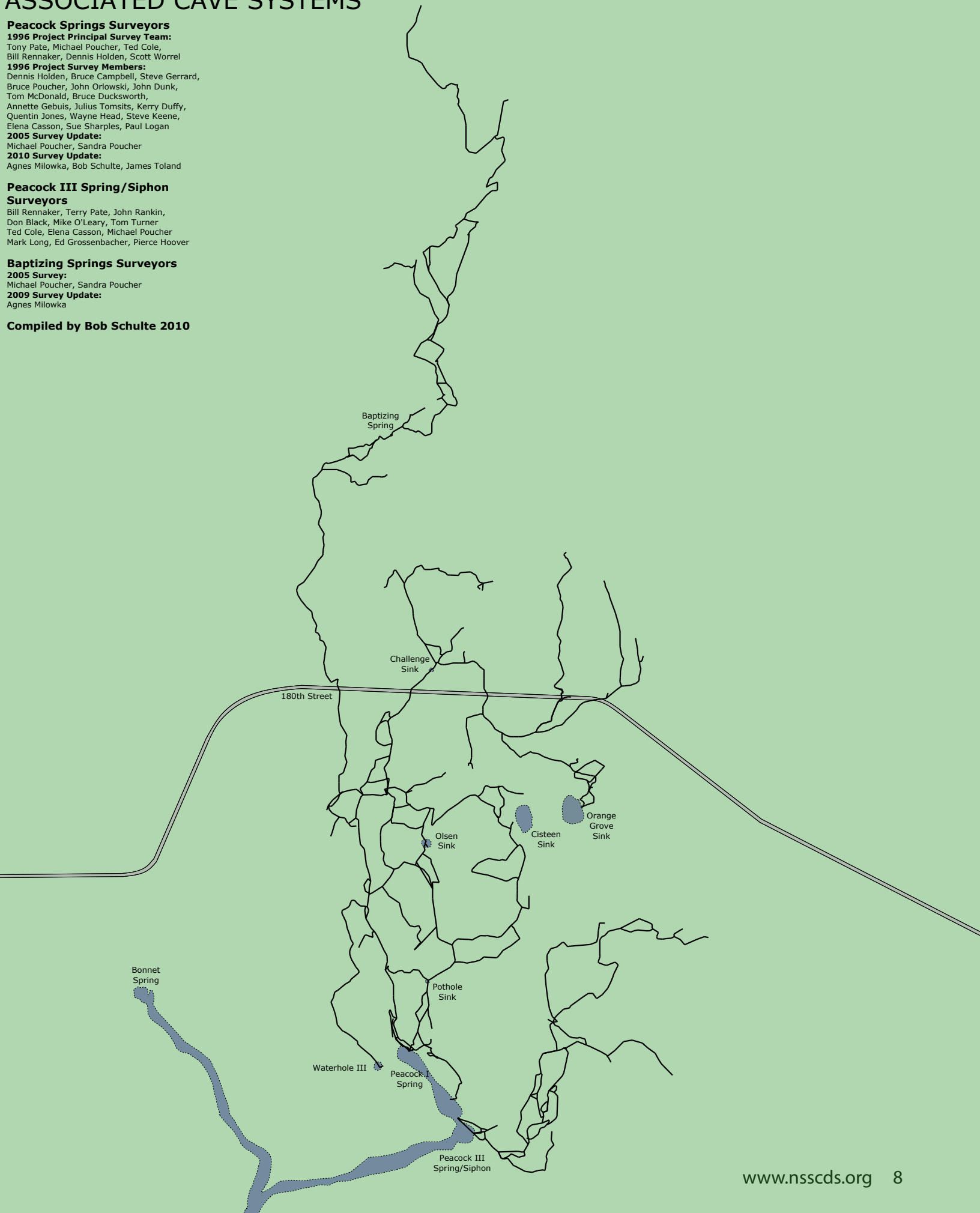
#### 2005 Survey:

Michael Poucher, Sandra Poucher

#### 2009 Survey Update:

Agnes Milowka

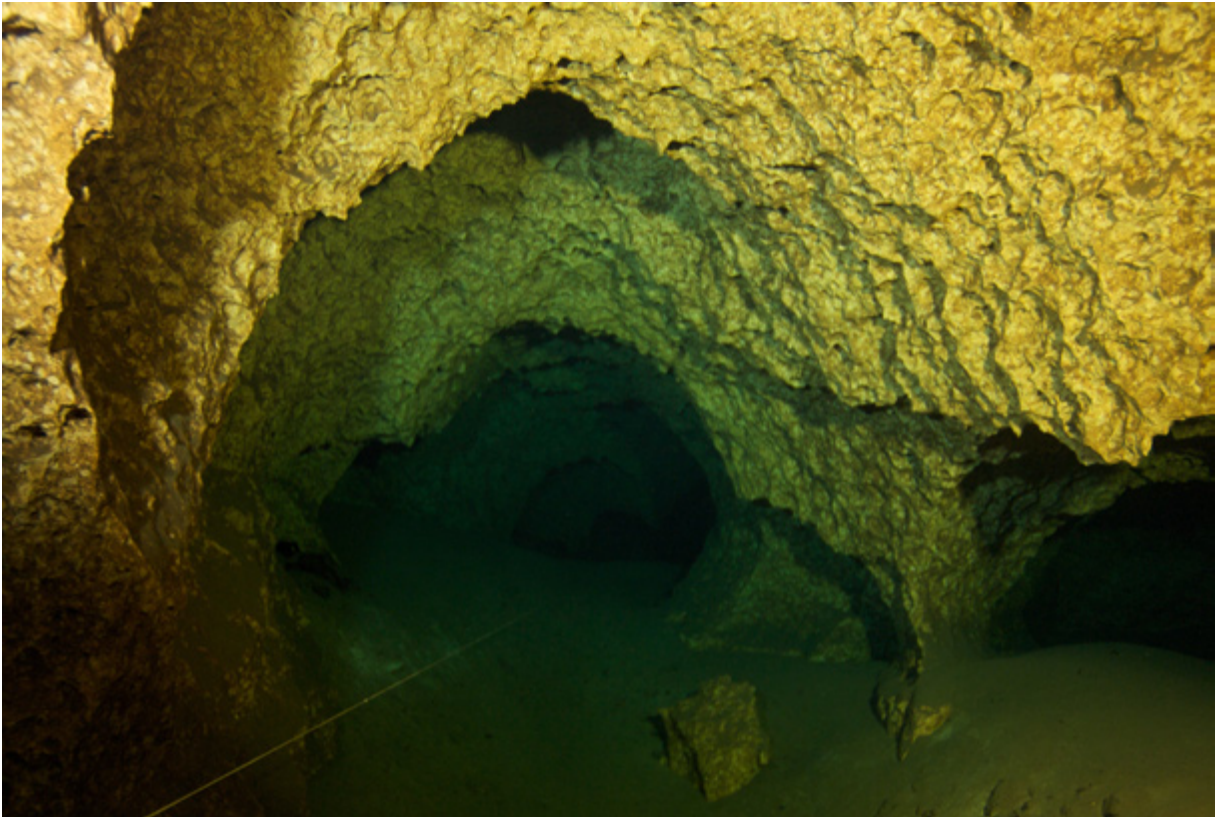
Compiled by Bob Schulte 2010







*Agnes inside a tight section of Baptizing Springs Photo © WesSkiles.  
Inside the Tunnels of Baptizing Springs Photo © WesSkiles.*



# Conservation Corner

By Kelly Jessop

## Slopes

Quite commonly we are swimming along, and suddenly the cave passage drops rapidly with a silty slope. At the top of the slope I look at the rocky ceiling and notice some signs of limestone crumbling, which could be a sign that somebody ascending the slope and losing track of gas expansion in their wing or drysuit, made contact with the ceiling while floating upward. While looking down the slope I notice hand contact at the bottom of the slope. Somebody descending the slope may have lost buoyancy control with gas compression during depth change, and made contact with the floor before recovering their buoyancy. As I head down the slope I notice that there are signs of fin marks along the side of the slope, which is evidence of loss of trim or body awareness related the descent.

Descending and ascending a slope can present challenges to all caver divers. Not only do we have to watch the changes in buoyancy that occur with compression or expansion of gas in our wing and/or drysuit, but we want to prevent contact with any part of the cave. For new to veteran cave divers this can be like threading a needle to balance all the things that are occurring, but for the ones who master it, there is no evidence of traversing this passage.

Here are some considerations:

- When descending or ascending a slope, watch for buoyancy changes that occur, and be prepared to react by adding or expelling gas as needed. In some senses, being able to make these buoyancy changes with your wing versus drysuit may have advantages. Sometimes it is difficult to get the drysuit valve oriented upward depending on passage configuration, but the wing has a rear dump valve, and a hose that can be extended upward.
- When ascending or descending a slope, having your body parallel to the angle of the slope while swimming reduces contact. This will also reduce fin contact when descending since our fin thrust won't be perpendicular to the passage.
- When we are ascending or descending and nearly at the top or bottom of the slope, our first instinct is to get parallel with the forthcoming passage. Keen body awareness is needed at this point, because our lower body is still traversing a change of elevation, and our fins can be precariously close to the floor or ceiling.
- When using DPVs everything occurs at a much faster rate, and getting off the trigger and swimming can save larger scale evidence.

We all appreciate pristine passages, and extra consideration will allow a future visitor to enjoy the same.



*Editor's Note: The following discussion is for review purposes only and not a substitute for training with a qualified cave diving instructor.*

# Skills, Tips & Techniques

## By Jim Wyatt

### DPV Cave Diving

We are seeing more and more cave divers riding DPVs lately. One day over this past Christmas season I counted 10 DPVs at a dive site all at one time.

When we are at the dive sites riding our DPVs I hope there are several things that we always keep in mind. What I am discussing below is also included in the NSS-CDS DPV Pilot training course. Of course, the DPV class covers a whole lot more than is being discussed here.

Cave conservation is enhanced when divers ride pilot their scooters properly. A properly piloted DPV never causes cave damage. The pilot does not have to pull on the cave walls to propel himself against the flow. The pilot does not make contact with the cave floor or the overhead. The properly trained and correctly thinking pilot does not drive his or her scooter in passageways that are too small. This pilot also is aware of what his thruster wash is doing and where it is going!

It is for the reasons set out above that I think DPVs can be a good thing and highly compatible with cave conservation when piloted properly.

One issue that DPV pilots may have is allowing the DPV to control their buoyancy. Proper buoyancy control and trim are among the first things I teach new DPV students, starting in open water. Pilots should come off the trigger frequently and make sure that their buoyancy is under control. DPV pilots should not be in the cave without full buoyancy control and instructors must be sure that their students have their buoyancy under control prior to entering the caves.

**Proper buoyancy control or lack thereof is a common problem with both swim and DPV cave divers.**

Proper trim while riding the scooter is important. Riding above the scooter, with proper buoyancy control prevents thruster wash from hitting the diver's body and then being directed down to the cave floor, causing silt to be stirred up and reducing visibility. DPV pilots should not ride their scooters at full speed for several reasons. Cave conservation and diver safety come to mind. **Keeping the scooter under complete control at all times is a big plus for cave conservation and diver safety.**

DPV pilots, just like divers who swim in the caves should take pride in their dive techniques and skills. DPV pilots should be able to work neutrally buoyant when dropping and retrieving stage bottles, or deco bottles. DPV pilots should be able to just as easily deploy and retrieve a reel as they are able to do without a scooter.

**Just like swimming divers, DPV divers should NEVER work while on their knees.**

If everything else is equal, swimming divers should be given the right of way. In practice I try to give DPV pilots room to get around me when I am swimming and do not simply take my right of way for granted. DPV pilots should also strive to grant swim divers the respect to stay out of their way. A little common sense goes a long way, or at least it should.

A while back while on a swim dive two DPV pilots zoomed by me and my partner and blasted the silt and clay off the bottom and left us in zero vis. Of course we are all trained to deal with zero vis, but we should not have to endure it due to the lack of skill or caring on the part of an errant DPV pilot. I hear stories about this type situation frequently. Several years ago I was even bumped into with a DPV by a DPV pilot while swim diving in the cave!!

**Let's be careful, mindful of the resource, try to be polite and let's have fun in there!!**

# Wes Skiles Peacock Springs State Park

By Kelly Jessop



On a rainy, windy morning on the 16th of November, 2010, Peacock Springs State Park was renamed in honor of Wes Skiles after his recent passing.

This ceremony featured the Skiles family, as well as DEP Secretary Mimi A. Drew, the former coordinator of the Florida Springs Task Force, Jim Stevenson and Wes Skiles' brother, Jim Skiles.



Wes left a lasting impression by being an advocate of Florida's springs and water resources. It was a fitting tribute that it rained during the ceremony, a replenishment to the springs that Wes truly appreciated.

*Photos by  
Gene Page*



*Photos by  
Gene Page*

# Exploring the Philippines

By Bruce Konefe

Samar Philippines is becoming one of the most well known cave locations around the world. Five years ago it would have been hard to find a cave diver on the island. That has changed quite a bit over the past years with many cave divers heading to Samar Island.

For the past five years we have been able to dive at least 15-16 virgin caves each year always exploring new locations. This year Thomas Bodis, William Hudson and I (Bruce Konefe,) met up in Manila airport, flew to Tacloban where we picked up tanks, caught a mini van to Catbalogan and met up with our guide, Joni Boniface, of Trexplore to plan for the next two weeks.

The first couple of days we sorted out the tanks and compressor issues, plus had the opportunity to check out a few nearby caves we already knew about. Finding nothing worth more of our time, we looked for a change of luck.... for that awesome cave with miles of penetration.

We hired a mini van to take us up to Las Navas Samar, a 4 hour ride. When we arrived we found out there weren't any hotels in the area so we ended up sleeping in one of the local's guest house.

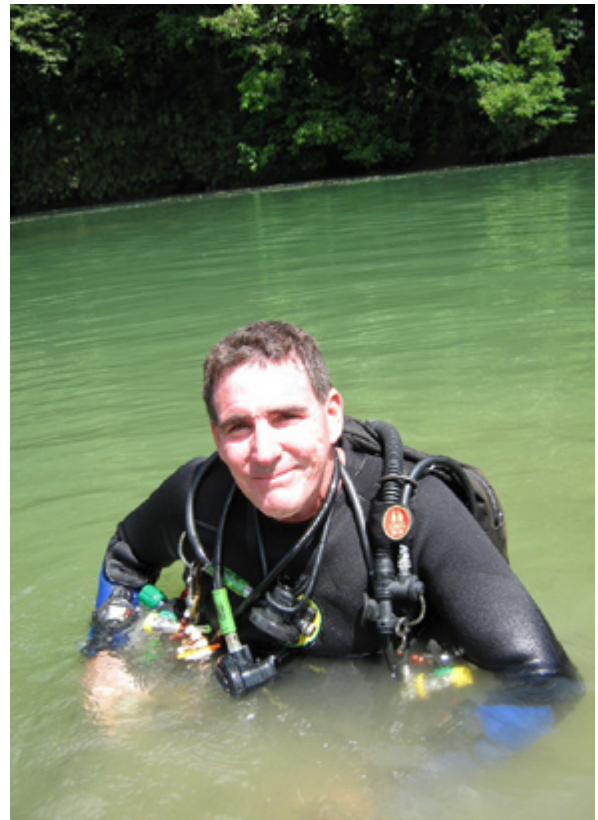
We got up the next morning and started pumping tanks before catching an early banca boat to our destination 1½ hours upstream.

At the village we rounded up a group of 9 porters to help carry the equipment and tanks another one-hour hike through the jungle. After all of this work and very little sleep the night before, the caves turned out to be a big disappointment. We hiked back to the village and loaded the boat to take us back downstream and another four-hour ride back to Catbalogan.

With the way things were going we all seemed a bit depressed but the thing is, if every cave we explored was that monster cave, it would take all the fun out of it. We just wanted some time in the water so we headed to a cave that had already

been dived by another group, something we never wanted to end up doing. Virgin caves were our main priority.

When we arrived at the cave it was a small pond with a fast flow of water coming out. We kitted up and managed to squeeze and pull our way through the small entrance, and once through, the flow was considerably less and it opened right up with a line already there. We followed the line all the way to the end and decided to add more line to see where it would take us. This cave would snake itself around with a maximum depth of 21 m., but the passageway was getting smaller, with tree roots growing through. The area got silted up when I was trying to swim through the tree roots, so I decided to turn the dive there. This turned out to be not so bad of a day, considering.



*Team Leader Bruce Konefe ANDI I.T.D. #15 - Yulot River*

*Facing page: Philippine porters Calidungan Lake*

*All Photos by: Joni Boniface*

Trying to come up with new locations is starting to get a bit harder after five years. The next morning we woke up at 3 a.m. (Thomas loved that) and took a 1 ½ hour bus ride to the river. When we arrived at the village it was still dark and the tanks, compressors and other diving gear were loaded into boats that turned out to be cut out trees with a 10 hp Honda motor. After figuring out that you could not breathe too hard or move too quickly without flipping the boat over, we were under way.

The boat ride took 2 ½ hours and at one point we had to bail out and pull the boat through when it could not make it up the rapids.

After arriving at the village we noticed all of these guys walking around with M16 machine guns with grenade launchers, etc. This really started to look bad. We came to find out they were on our side; it was the Philippine military on a training mission.

The village had had a large party the night before and we were unable to get any porters to help us carry the equipment, so we decided to head back upstream about ten minutes more and check out some other possibilities at the Ulot River Magbukl Springs. We took a look at the entrances and almost decided to call it quits for the day but decided to have one person kit up and do a quick reconnaissance.

William had kitted up and dropped down the wall while Thomas and I stood across on the river bank waiting for him.

Time was going by and we started to worry and started to kit up when all of the sudden William popped his head to the surface with a big smile. We knew exactly what that smile meant and we hurried to get our kit together.

Descending down, the cave was quite narrow and you would only fit with sidemount equipment. At about 24 meters deep it opened up and we could start to do some penetration.

We had gone in about 50 meters and came to a fork. I was leading and Thomas was right behind me but we could not see William and we were coming to the end of our turn pressure so I decided we had better turn the dive. We would have liked to have done more penetration but with only air and no nitrox or O2 available we kept our dive times short.

On the second dive we followed the fork to the right and the cave got as deep as 31 meters and extended a good 100 meters or so with holes we would have to take tanks off to get through.

That night we slept on the river bank in a small hut made out of bamboo poles and large leaves to keep us dry. The following morning we had a 2 ½ hour hike through the jungle to reach Kagma-an ghit cave.

We hiked into the cave for about 100 meters with thousands of bats swarming around and flying right into us, to reach the crystal clear water we knew was going to be the best dive of the trip.

On this dive Thomas would lead the way through what turned out to be the largest passageways and most excellent viz that we had seen in the Philippines so far. Thomas got to the end of his reel and gave the thumbs up signal, I knew we had plenty of gas and more reels so we all agreed to continue on. William had taken the lead and run out another full reel of line so I handed him the third reel. Just as we ran out the third reel of line we all reached our rule or thirds at the same time. It was a good thing William had purchased some extra line to re-spool our reels.

We turned around and started to head back to the entrance, taking our time looking for new passage- ways that we may have missed. We all had the biggest smiles ever. We all had dreamed of finding some large caves with long penetration and the last dive of the trip, we found that cave.

With all of the headaches and disappoints we had, this last extra effort was definitely worth it. As my cave instructor taught me, "You won't know unless you go."

Exploring new caves takes a lot of effort and a lot of support. Special thanks to Ocean Management Systems (John Griffith) and ANDI (American Nitrox Divers International) who made this trip possible. Normally we never plan to go back and re-explore a cave we have been to before, but this is one of the very few that we thought was worth the trip back. Next trip we will dive with four tanks each and the help of some scooters to see where this passageway will lead us



On an expedition like this you can expect some minor glitches.....

*On this trip we ended up covering just about all 4 corners of Samar Island. Since the logistics on trips to this area are so difficult Thomas had decided to purchase a small compressor and some diving cylinders. The diving cylinders showed up a couple days after we had arrived in Samar but the compressor was lost somewhere enroute. We did manage to find a small compressor on one of the nearby island to fill the tanks. The additional tanks we needed for the expedition we rented from a fishery in G1 and we had them sent up on a bus.*

Long days.....

*On 7 August we hired a mini van to take us up to Las Navas Samar which was a 4 hour ride. When we arrived we found out that weren't any hotels in the area so we ended up sleeping in one of the locals guest house. After a good nights sleep we got up and started pumping tanks right away since we had to catch a early bonca boat to our destination. After the tanks were filled we took a bonca boat ride up stream for 1½ hours. After arriving to the village we rounded up a group of 9 porters to help carry the equipment and tanks to the caves which was another 1 hour hike in the jungle. After all of this work and very little sleep the night before the caves turned out to be a big disappointment. We hike d back to the village and loaded the boat to take us back down stream. After all of this work we still had another 4 hour ride back to Catbalogan.*

And a few moments that make you go HmMMM.....

*We arrived back at one village and the guide we had used was punched in the face. When you xcheck int this village you are supposed to see the head village guy and he did not, and they didn't like that.*

*We sat in the village , surrounded by all of our expensive dive gear, trying to get a Jeepney to take us back. In the middle of the night a Jeepney pulls up, with four large Philipinos, claiming to be our ride back. William and I locked eyes and started kicking Thomas in the leg to wake up. I was sure we were about to be beaten and robbed.*



Above photos: Philippine porters at Calidungan Lake All Photo by Joni Boniface





*Luxury transportation abounded....  
Photos by Joni Boniface*

*Cave entrance on Yulot Rivver  
Philippine porters, Thomas Bodis,  
Bruce Konefe, William Hudson*



*Thomas Bodis crawling through hole  
and William Hudson Waiting his turn  
at Duloy Springs*



*William Hudson on left, Thoma  
Bodice just going undser and Bruce  
Konefe already under water at Yulot  
River*



*Bruce Konefe and Thomas Bodis at  
Duloy Springs*

*Bat at entrance to cave on Yulot River*



*“Protective detail” at Pinipisakan Falls.  
William Hudson on the left,  
Bruce Konefe on right*

*Camping on the Ulot River*



# "20'12" Cave Conservation Documentary Wins Awards

By Luis Sanchez

Translated by Celia Evesque

Mexico's Yucatán peninsula (Quintana Roo) is home to the most decorated and beautiful caves on the planet. While the shallow sections are commonly dived, the spectacular deep passages remain off limits to all but the most experienced cave divers. The "Pit" section of Dos Ojos, first explored in 1997 by Dan Lins and friends, is a deep and complex dive with a deep major restriction. Beyond this restriction lies the enormous Wakulla Room, the largest underwater chamber in this part of Mexico. The wonderful underground rivers in our country are among the most beautiful of the entire planet. It is our hope that people's awareness will promote appreciation and a halt to destroying our waters and these wonders of the planet earth.

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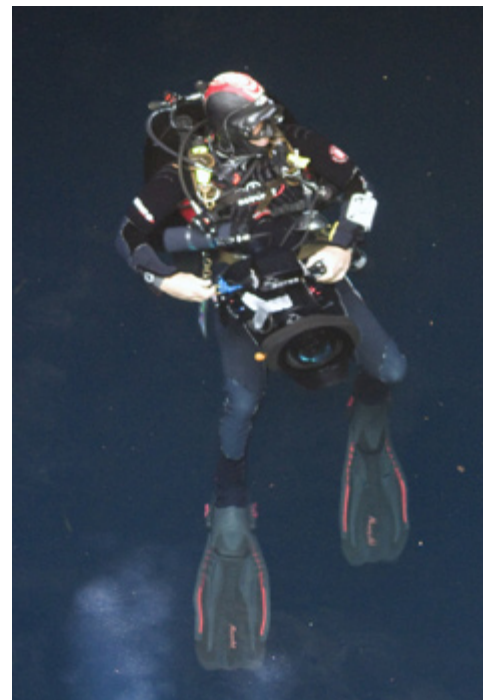
***Diving the Pit and the Wakulla Room.*** These are the deep sections of the Dos Ojos ("two eyes") cenote system that we planned to explore. After two days of travel, Day 3 was our first diving day, and we were very excited. The temperature was 38 degrees (100 F) and the plan was to put in the lines and familiarize ourselves with the cave by penetrating to approximately 900' at a depth of 280 feet (just before the major restriction).

The next day required absolute concentration. Every step and every move in this dive was very important. Our team of four support divers set up tanks with mixes of 32%, 50%, and 100% oxygen at the appropriate depths and prepared to meet us on ascent. Penetration divers Ricardo Castillo and Luis Sánchez each carried three tanks of trimix (two of 14/50 and one of 18/32). After a final review, we descended using 50-watt HIDs, double-checked that the line and tanks were in place and accelerated the swim to arrive at the restriction by 7 minutes' run time, where we

changed to our "deep" mix. The cave looked endless, the formations spectacular, and space seemed to stretch out everywhere. We were at 287 feet deep.

***The needle's eye and beyond.*** At first it was wide enough, and then narrowed down to where we could get through one at a time. We had about 40 cm (16.5 in) of height, and the ceiling began to percolate. We knew that our return would be complicated by poor visibility. At the end of this restriction --- the Wakulla Room, a huge chamber with an indescribable beauty, the biggest I've ever seen in a cave. We were at 340'.

After admiring the cave and taking some shots, we needed to return. Our bottom time was limited to five minutes. Passing through the restriction, we found very little visibility but we kept on the line and swam fast to reach our decompression stations in the planned time. Decompression lasted more than two hours.



*Above: Luis Sánchez  
Photo by Gabriela Woodworth*

*Next Page: Cranium found in cave  
Photo by Luis Sánchez*

**Pre-Ice Age fossils.** On our fifth day we were back to The Pit. Our first dive was to 130 feet, filming the layer of hydrogen sulfide that makes the place appear outside this planet. Our second dive was a shallow 60' where we came across a whole skeleton, apparently a giant sloth bear that had been there for thousands of years (this animal last lived in this part of the world before the last glaciation when the caves were dry).

After spending Day 6 in the shallow (but spectacularly decorated) Cenote Dream Gate, we returned to the Wakulla Room to explore from the other end. To our surprise, we found other restrictions, but this is for the future most likely using rebreathers.

By August 12, 2010, we had made two penetrations to the Wakulla Room and had all the images and enough footage for our documentary. The second part of the adventure began. We had two weeks in which to write, record, edit, translate, and add music to our 20-minute documentary so it would be ready for the Underwater Image Film Festival in Marseille at the end of October 2010.

In the end we made it. Now we only needed to find out if they liked it. We would be in company with some of the largest documentary producers on the planet (BBC, Label Blue, NHU, and others).

**The film festival and award.** The experience was grandiose. Jean-Michel Cousteau, Albert Falco, Jacques Cluzaud, and others were in attendance. When the announcement came for the Dimitri Rebikoff Award, all I remember hearing (with my limited French) was "this is the first time this country is represented in this festival with an extraordinary work... MEXIQUE" and the announcement of our documentary "20'12." We were on the big screen; we had won from over 270 other entries!

I cannot describe very well what I still feel when I recall that moment. It still seems incredible. Our documentary is about

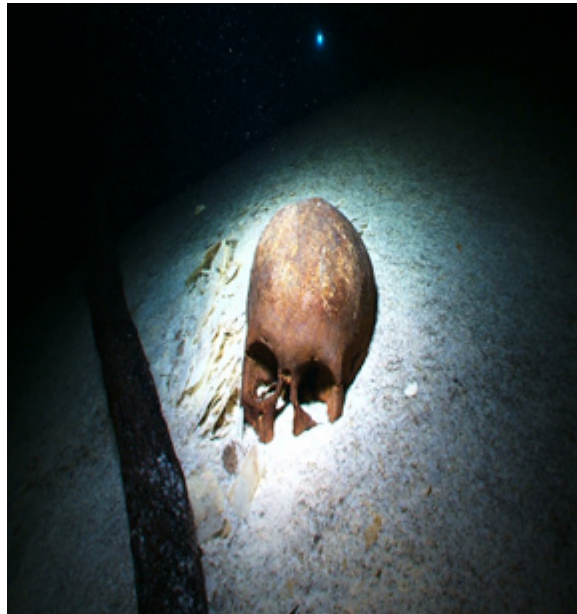
conservation. We titled it "20'12" with 20' being the bottom time at the deepest part of the dives and 12 representing the end of the Maya calendar. In the documentary, we mention that the Maya are not foretelling the end of the world, but most likely the end of what they gave us...their culture, pyramids, and caves. We see this as a warning that we need to take more care and do much more for conservation.

This is why we do what we do at Rango Extendido: "We will have to choose between disappearing as a sentient species that threatens to destroy the planet or evolving toward the harmonious integration with the universe, understanding and realizing that everything is alive and we are part of it and we can exist in a new enlightened age."

**The Rango Extendido Team:**

Lourdes Del Olmo, Marcela Soláres, Bernardo González, Ricardo Castillo, Gabriela Woodworth, Ángel Diez, and Luis Sánchez. Maricarmen Garcia collaborated in this work.

20'12 has gone on to win additional awards, most recently in Hungary. It will be released in Mexico in March 2011, followed by Europe and the US.



See the trailer for "20'12" at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ\\_tZcxRaek](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ_tZcxRaek). More information on Fundación Rango Extendido's conservation efforts is available at our website: [www.rangoextendido.org](http://www.rangoextendido.org).



*Bear bones*

*Restriction at 300 feet*



*On a Deco stop*

*Servia prize for documentary*



*Photos by Luis Sanchez*

# NSS-CDS Bylaws Update

By Forrest Wilson

In January of 2010, a committee was appointed to review the NSS-CDS Constitution and Bylaws. The committee was composed of current and past NSS-CDS officers, and after nearly a year of review and discussion, they proposed changes to both the Constitution and Bylaws.

These new documents are posted on the web site for review, and will go out for voting with the upcoming election of new directors.

There are no major changes to either the Constitution or Bylaws; however, some wording was changed for clarity and some examples and excerpts follow.

The Constitution hasn't been updated in many years, and was full of minor errors from previous cut/paste type of corrections.

One example is that at the time the requirement for members requesting a special meeting was last changed, it was supposed to change from one fourth (1/4) to one eighth (1/8), What ended up in the Constitution was one eighty-fourth (1/84). The new version will read "one eighth (1/8)".

Other changes in the Constitution include removing articles that are covered in the Bylaws. The Bylaws are meant to cover things that might change, and the Constitution shouldn't ever have to be changed.

We also removed language that required printed notification and ballots for elections. This will make it possible in the future to have electronic voting.

In the bylaws, we added a statement requiring directors to read Florida law governing not-for-profit agencies so directors cannot claim they did not know the Florida laws that apply to the NSS-CDS.

The timeline for director elections was changed from calendar dates to dates relative to the annual workshop since that date moves a little from one year to the next.

Some wording was changed in the requirements for check signing to allow for electronic signatures. We will not switch to electronic signatures until an inexpensive secure method becomes available.

The requirements for Life Membership were changed to require Life Membership in the NSS as well as the CDS.

We also copied the NSS requirement for expulsion of members for not paying dues or other things such as failing to follow the NSS-CDS Conservation Policy.