

South African Speleological Association

Cape Peninsula Speleological Society

Po Box 4812 Cape Town



June 2012 Newsletter

A small new cave in Silvermine

Evelyne Fedele

Putting the road under our soles we walked toward and around Kleintuinkop. Turning up the side valley behind it towards the Amphitheatre we noticed some thick trees deep inside a wide depression on the left. Those were ringing bells for some exciting holes...somehow...somewhere! A quick cover in blue on our legs and arms and down we went, looking for black holes, cool breeze or hidden den among those dry thorny entangled webbed branches. "Not a chance" said Mario, already resting on a boulder. My last hope lay in curiosity and persistence for a full final investigation before the retreat.

Suddenly I could feel cool and saw a strange rock formation with a dark slot in it, just big enough to squeeze head and shoulders and finally the rest. With knocking heartbeat, mouth open, spinning eyes like a roulette marble we paused to review the rocky structures. We chose to renew our venture for a more complete prospection another day. Three days later we went with the company of Rudolf and Theo to find further a tunnel down an inclination to a tiny compressed lodge.

Since the small cave is situated near some splendid Mimetes bushes it would be appropriate to name it so. . . Most probably it is one of those sinkholes formed by running water off both sides of the mountain

The Cunonia connection

Evelyne Fedele

Anthony's vision of joining Wynberg cave to Cunonia was a dream for us as well, to try making it a reality.

Two youngsters and five others, more senior, went up on Sunday 8th January at 34° on 4X4 wheels. A team descended each opening to try and communicate by voice, noise, light, some hammer and chisel went in action too. In the meantime the not so young party investigated nearer the surface in a dark and wet kind of tunnel to see if there was any chance of an easier way through.

Indeed!!

Then like a team of rugby mates passing the oval we, (Sinead and us two), were lifting and rolling to each other the stones blocking the gallery to...a chamber. Sinead and Jeandre slid down with pain the very narrow hole and once inside the cubicle could communicate by loud voice with Rudolf in Cunonia. But it was time to pack up and drive down. The job was not complete since the voice contact is not enough.

On Sunday 29th January (Mario's birthday), three stubborn crazy people got a lift from a white bakkie up again. In the first chamber there was work to do, excavating to go through to a second cell. A vertical crack was in sight, blocked by enormous stones. Rope and Rudolf made an alliance and with plenty of

"shoutings" (the real word is censored) and titanesque power the stones rolled back.

This time with Mario's torch shining horizontally Rudolf could see it from the low entrance of Cunonia, where he excavated furiously in the direction of the voice and light. We shook hands as a first official connection but then I was prepared to prove this. Lying on my side without a helmet I squeezed through the narrow crack to the other side. At 13:00 hr the junction was made and so it will be named.

Rudolf

Mario Fedele

Here is the driving force in this period for all the new exploration and connections on Table Mountain. He has assembled a motivated team, made up of Evelyne and Mario (for the knowledge of the entrances), Frans (a slim young man who is stronger than an ox and moves around enormous rocks with astonishing ease), Jandr  and Daniela (each as slim as an envelope from the receiver of revenue) and occasionally Sinead (the modern version of Zola Budd).

Rudolf is all strength and determination. When he starts digging he goes like a Fox Terrier, very difficult to distract with a request to break for lunch. He has also designed and made a number of tools tailored to the specific needs of the moment.

After the 29th January Wynberg – Cunonia breakthrough, on 10th March, after a total of six working sessions by different groups we finally made the Pristine – Giants breakthrough as well.

Now Anthony and Sinead must do the surveys and add these breakthroughs to the overall system. We are soon going to look at the possibility of linking T-cave to The Cavern and Bats cave. Merlin also needs to be surveyed and included and we hope to reach a total of 5000m for our beloved "Mopane 5000" system Thank you Rudolf.

(Our total surveyed extension so far is 4352m, not bad for a sandstone cave, making it possibly the third longest in the world. Ed)

Vic Moll

So cavers don't only do it going down, some do it going up. With the stranding of the fishing trawler on Clifton beach equipment needed to be placed aboard. Here is Vic flying cargo out to the ship.



The Vredehoek tin mine

Lene Tempelhoff

On 27th May Rudolf gathered a party of 20 at the top of Vredehoek and led us up a nearby valley to the old workings. Rudolf organised this outing well, even providing us with copies of Professor Spargo's history of the mine.

"YOU are here for a reason" – wow, a spiritual philosopher among us.

We were about to slither into an abandoned tin mine, well tucked away on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak. The one access to the 150m long adit had collapsed and exceedingly tight. A little digging with hand trowel opened up the sliver to a reasonable-sized sinuous gap.

"just lie down and go through the hole feet first. I will be right behind you. You will come to a shaft where you can stand upright. Think positive thoughts. Once you are in you can come out immediately if you want to." One of the experienced cavers was encouraging a first time caver to let go of fears and to slide through the portal which had already been negotiated by 16 others, including three people using walking sticks, and two Cocker Spaniels. We were slightly concerned about the dogs as sometimes Porcupine are found inside but none were there this time.

At present the mine is a little flooded and we all merrily waded ankle and knee deep in mountain-smelling water. Anyone hoping not to get their feet wet had to think again and abandon any attempt to traverse along the dark vertical side walls.

Tin-bearing cassiterite was retrieved from a shaft over 50m deep inside the mine which today resembles an indoor pool. After exiting Rudolf took a few people to see the top of the ventilation shaft which is 23m down to the adit.

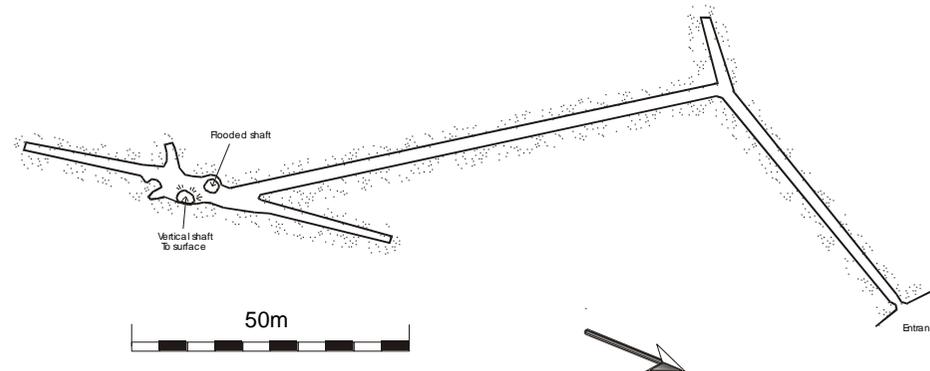
On the way back to the cars we detoured to see the nearby quarry which is a beautiful amphitheatre bowl entered via a short tunnel.

The Vredehoek tin mine operation was short-lived, from 1910 to 1912. It employed



a staff of 100 people at one stage and was listed on the Cape Town stock exchange. Sammy Marks was reputed to have been a shareholder Professor Spargo claims that much more than prospecting was going on behind the scenes.

The mine is a potential heritage site as a good example of a short-term industrial concern that operated at the turn of the last century in Cape Town.



Survey of Vredehoek tin mine done by third year UCT survey students in 1980

Orange Kloof – Hell's Gate

Lynn Ramsay

Most of the caving in Cape Town involves a lot of hiking to get to and from the cave. So on Sunday 13 May 2012, some of us decided to do a "caving meet" with a difference....NO CAVE. ☺

Ten of us went through and met with our guide, Harold Dantu, at the entrance to Orange Kloof, which is at the Constantia Nek parking area. Much to the surprise of the Pavlis brothers (Parry and Stefano), all arrived before the time and were ready, set, GO.

We walked along a gravel road for just under an hour and came across a stream which flowed across the pathway we were on. Suddenly we turned right, crossing the stream several times before it became more a river.

Rock hopping, cliff hanging and plop!

Veronique in the water! Who would be next....?

Shoes off....shoes on!

Roll up the trousers....keep them down!

Camera's abound for the next action shot! 1,2,3 click click click!

I looked for Courtney behind me, and suddenly my left leg was in the water too!

Oh, the horror! Mwah ha ha ha – nothing caught on film. ☺ ☺ ☺

Five minutes later and a turn of the corner, brought us to the most amazing, beautiful and unexpected view – not something you expect to find in the area...I cannot even describe it, I will just leave you with a few pic's and the details on how to get onto this spectacular hike (the view is worth every effort).

For those interested in this hike, you can contact:

South African National Parks – Beulah Charles on 021 689 4441

You need to book and apply for a Permit. This is a no charge guided walk, but it is customary to provide a tip at the end of the hike. A minimum of 6 people are allowed and a maximum of 12 people (excluding the guide). Please contact Beulah for more information.....the trip is well worth it!!!



Constantiaberg 4th March

Our annual outing to the Constantiaberg caves was organised with the kind assistance of Leighan Mossob from the Parks Board. Not only that but we are allowed to drive up. Using her vehicle and my bakkie we transported 17 participants up to the mast.

The weather this time was superb, not like last year. Of the 3 caves visited Adamastor is still one of my favourites. The last tight squeeze into the final chamber was dry and a number of people ventured therein. From the survey data and the GPS of the entrance I had calculated where, on the surface, the underground river disappearance should be. Searching around the fynbos at that location there was no sign of a resurgence. I guess it continues further through rock faults to some lower point. Sometime I will do the same for the long daylight crack.



The stream deep in Adamastor cave

Northlink College outing

Once again Northlink asked me to take a group of their students caving. Unfortunately they can only leave the college at 11:00 AM so we only get going at 12:00. Next the bus arrives at 4:00 to collect them. Fortunately they are sports science students and quite fit so we managed to do 5 of the 6 caves, leaving out Oread Halls. We arrived back as the bus arrived. Again it was fun seeing how they reacted to bats in Boomslang. As usual they needed to borrow quite a few lights.

Hey Folks, how about sending me short items for this newsletter. I struggle to fill it each time. I can't keep putting in oversize photos.

NO, NOT AS BLIND AS A BAT

Lene Tempelhoff

Prof Robert Barclay from the University of Calgary, Canada gave a riveting and highly colourful talk on bats at CPSS's social this month. Bats or chiroptera meaning hand-wing, are the second largest grouping of mammals after rodents. There are over 1300 species world wide. About 70% are insectivores and 30% frugivores. There are only 3 species of Vampires, the Common, the Hairy-legged and the White-winged bat.

The vamp bat pierces its victims skin with razor sharp teeth (campers best keep your shoes on as they enjoy toes). An anticoagulant in the vampires saliva causes the victims blood to flow profusely which the bat licks up. The saliva also contains a pain killing substance! Research is currently on the way as regards the possibility of using the anticoagulant to dissolve blood clots. There are no vamp bats in Africa at present - they are native to South America.

The worlds smallest bat is the Bumblebee, it is 30mm long, weighs 2 grams and is native to Thailand and Burma. The largest is the Flying Fox which is native to Indonesia and Thailand and has a wingspan of nearly 2 metres. The bats body is 25 cm long and the "underdeveloped" body weighs less than 1 kg. Bats live between 20 and 30 years, are able to fly up to speeds of 30 km and travel up to 300 km's in order to secure food.

The worlds ugliest bat knows it. The face characteristics look a bit like a very contorted brain cross open intestine – a challenge to any gargoyle or scarecrow- no wonder its called the Wrinkle-faced bat. To cope the bat has a partially see-through visor/membrane which it is able to pull up to hide its face!

The worlds most suave looking bat is male, sporting an incredible Mohekan hairdo, the Crested free tailed bat, clearly an inspiration for the Sex Pistols, and lives up the road in Zimbabwe.

The fruit bats living in Bat cave on Table Mountain do most of their foraging in Rondebosch and Newlands, surviving off figs from the (Ficus Capensis) Wild/Cape/Broomcluster Fig trees and pseudo fruit from Yellowwoods. Spot them in the Wild Fig tree outside the Baxter next time you are at the theatre. Figs are the only fruit that is high in calcium and is crucial to the female bats diet. Her pups (usually they only have one offspring per season) will rely on her calcium enriched milk until they grow into adults!

To activate their echolocation system bats emit sounds through their mouths or noses which generally are not audible to the human ear. World wide and including the 4 wind energy generating turbines near Darling have in instances not been successfully negotiated by the bats cone shaped sonar systems. Fatalities result as some of the bats do not detect the blade tips which rotate up to 200kph.

The fruit eating bats have a rudimentary echolocation anatomy and rely on their eye vision to distinguish the fruits they forage on. When next in Bats cave listen to the click clicking social communication sounds that they emit. Their sounds are quite pleasant in relation to some of the high end sounds emitted from other bats that our ears only marginally pick up.

For those of us heading off to De Hoop Guano cave brace yourself for a treat, 3 types of bats live here under one roof, the Tri-coloured bat, the Bent-winged bat and the Slit faced bat. Over 300 000 live here. In the past guano, being rich in nitrogen was dug out of the cave and used as fertilizer. To stay up and flying this tri-species colony consumes over a 100 tons of insects per annum, to the delight of the farmers no doubt.

Did you know that its the Year of the Bat (2011-2012) as decreed by Bat Conservation.

Inflation

On a recent trip to Zimbabwe I photographed this display. If Zimbabwe had not changed to the American dollar this would have been the next banknote to be issued.



Space filler

Monitoring our electricity consumption I found we use on average 8.5 units per day in winter and 9.3 units per day in summer. This is counter-intuitive as we don't use a heater or air conditioner and the lights are used less in summer. The refrigerator is the second most power hungry device after the hot water cylinder. The manufacturers unfortunately make the wall insulation quite thin to give maximum internal volume. Thus most of the refrigerator's work is to make up for the heat loss or should I say heat gain through the walls. Now the air temperature in the kitchen could differ by as much as 10° between summer and winter. If the average is say 16° in winter and 26° in summer and the fridge is 8° then the temperature differential is 8° in winter but 18° in summer. This is going to make the difference.

Maybe the hot water cylinder isn't the only device needing a thermal blanket.



Editor: Ron Zeeman 021 7855818