



Cave Crawl @ Hayes Cave

Saturday, July 11 was a beautiful sunny, warm day - perfect for crawling in a chilly, pitch-black cave! Our group of 28 explorers - a record turn-out for a single Scotian Hiker event - set out that morning to visit two caves: the Woodville Ice Cave and Hayes Cave. The Ice Cave visit fell through when I couldn't find the cave, despite having been there several times! (I have since re-discovered it, see story on Page 3.) After going on a wild goose chase in Woodville, Hants Co., we set out for the main event - Hayes Cave near South Maitland. Hayes Cave is a huge gypsum cave - approximately 1000 feet long - and is the largest bat hibernaculum in NS. It turned out to be devoid of bats that day (probably a relief to some group members, and a disappointment to others) - a stark contrast to the typical scene inside the cave by Autumn, when there are literally thousands of bats clinging to the walls and ceiling.

We crossed the Five Mile River, which was running quite low, and assembled outside the cave entrance at the base of a towering gypsum cliff. Everyone readied their flashlights, headlamps and other gear, and prepared for the underground journey ahead. I went in first and did a sweep with my million-candle-power light, just to make sure there weren't any animal eyes staring back, then the group entered the cave one at a time by descending through the small opening. Once our eyes adjusted to the dark, we could see just how impressive the massive chamber at the start of the cave is; we made our way down the slope to the pond, a string of lights in the darkness.



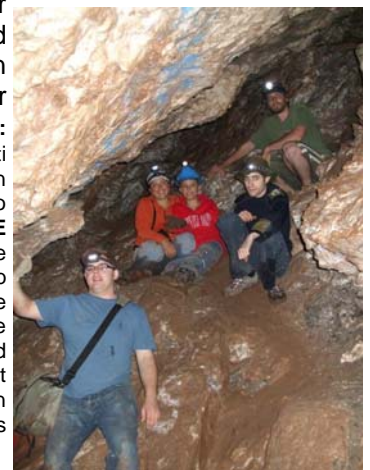
The water level inside the cave was extremely low, so low that it revealed a large sinkhole near the back that if you slid down the mud into it, you'd need rope to get back out of it. I'd never seen this before, even after several cave visits!



Our procession carefully worked its way through sticky, slippery mud and around and over boulders and slabs of gypsum until we reached the back of the cave. The temperature was measured at 58 degrees Fahrenheit (14 degrees Celsius) - a little on the chilly side for those without jackets. We put out all our light sources to experience the total pitch-blackness of the cave; you can't even see your hand in front of your face! *Never go into this cave without a good source of light AND a backup light, and don't go alone; if your lights fail, you're in trouble.* After an hour or two of exploring nooks and crannies, we all slowly made our way back to the entrance and emerged into the bright sunlight and heat of the day; our clothes were much dirtier than



when we went in but we all wore smiles on our faces from the great experience. **ONE SAD NOTE:** the cave is a natural wonder, and didn't need to have graffiti spray-painted from one end to the other. And the broken beer bottles didn't help matters. Why people would want to spoil this place is beyond me. **AN IMPORTANT NOTE ABOUT VISITING:** please do not visit this cave after the bats have gone into their winter sleep. Any visit could disturb them, and if a bat is awakened from its hibernation, it will use up precious energy that it has stored to make it through the winter. As there are no insects to feed on during the cold months, that depleted energy cannot be restored and the bat could die before Spring and a food source arrives. So, when Autumn arrives and there are no bugs flying around outdoors anymore, stay out of the cave and perhaps save some lives.





Gypsum Cliffs Hike

The weekend hiking events continued on Sunday, July 12th when a new group of 17 hikers assembled in St. Croix, Hants County; it was good to see a mix of some of the cavers from the day before and several new faces! Those who frequently travel between Windsor and Halifax have surely noticed the distinct white, tree-lined gypsum cliffs that are clearly visible from Highway 101. This was our destination; our goal was to hike the length of the cliffs from Rocks Rd in St. Croix to Route 14 in Sweets Corner. Setting out from the St. Croix side, we ascended the cliffs and made our way east through largely coniferous woods, not yet to the sinkholes and sheer drops. Barbed wire fences in places reminded us that this is private property; not knowing who to ask for permission to pass through, we were - at the very least - careful to respect the property.



Skirting sinkholes and following the cliff edge began in earnest after descending into and climbing out of a ravine that marked the end of the first stage of the hike. The Karst topography was clearly evident here; the landscape was almost nothing but sinkholes of varying diameters and depths - all caused by water erosion and drainage over millions of years ago when the Windsor Sea that covered the entire area began to recede. Trees grew in them and on the hills between them, and the walking was constantly uphill and downhill for a while. The best views overlooking the St. Croix river were found along here. As we moved



along, we arrived at a large sinkhole, at the bottom of which was a small gypsum cave. Hike participants, only two at a time for safety's sake, descended the guide rope into the cave; for some, this was their first time ever in a cave! We moved along and emerged from the woods onto a flat grassy plain through which ran a stream; a conveniently-located fallen



tree that stretched from bank to bank made a great bridge; nobody fell in, fortunately. With our vehicles in sight in Sweets Corner, we climbed the next gypsum bank, and entered the third and most difficult leg of the journey. The trees were more dense and the sinkholes smaller and more numerous, creating a pockmarked, hilly landscape. It was a good test of leg muscles and balance. Finally, we emerged from the woods at the end of the route after 3 hours of trailblazing, drove back to the start point in St. Croix, and made a side trip to Frenchman's Cave on the opposite set of cliffs and over the same type of terrain which we had hiked for the past 3 hours. This 100-ft-long cave is a special place; it's found in a giant sinkhole with its own unique eco-system, reflected in the lush flora. Standing at the top



of the path leading down into the sinkhole, you can feel the cool air hit you. After this final cave exploration, some group members opted for a visit to Dawson Falls for a cold-water swim to bring a fun, interesting weekend full of adventure, exercise, caves, camaraderie and scenery to a suitable, refreshing close.





Homegrown Trivia

1. What was the name of Barrett's vessel in the song "Barrett's Privateers"?
2. What unofficial Nova Scotia anthem laments over saying goodbye to both "mountains, dark and dreary" and a "bonnie, bonnie lass"?
3. What was the name of the mine near New Glasgow that exploded in 1992, killing 26 miners?
4. In what year did the first person drive the Cabot Trail?

(Answers at bottom of page)

Things To Do

- Don't forget about the Tall Ships visiting NS from July 16 to Aug 1. For schedule, see <http://www.tallshipsnovascotia.com>
- Interested in learning how to climb with ropes? Join the **Annapolis Valley Climbing Enthusiasts** group on Facebook!
- Explore historic and ghostly Wolfville NS with tours on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays <http://www.wolfvillewalkingtours.com>
- Valley Trekkers Volkssport Club <http://www.valleytrekkers.com>
- The Town of Middleton is having its centennial Birthday Bash on July 17 & 18. Visit <http://www.discovermiddleton.ca> and get the events brochure!
- It's Mud Creek Days in Wolfville from July 19 - 26! For more information, see <http://www.downtownwolfville.com> or call 1-877-999-7117

Outdoorosophy

"The sun, with all those plants revolving around it and dependent upon it, can still ripen a bunch of grapes as if it had nothing else in the universe to do." - Galileo

"The happiest man is he who learns from nature the lesson of worship." - Ralph Waldo Emerson



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Woodville Ice Cave

Well, the fact that I couldn't find this cave on the Cave Crawl really got to me, especially since I'd been there on several occasions. So, I got together with two friends and we made a hastily-scheduled trip down there Tuesday evening on a fast-moving mission to locate it. Enduring the thick mosquitoes, we found the right path not long after getting there and soon reached the cave, a big gypsum chamber. It's cool like the other caves - no ice observed, but lots of loose gypsum rubble on the floor - but it smells funky like animal, unlike the other caves we visited. Nobody was home at the time, but I don't think I'll lead a group hike here after all. For those who would like to visit: take Wentworth Road from Windsor to Sweets Corner, then turn left at the stop sign on to Route 14; follow the 14 to Brooklyn and turn left at the monument. Go uphill to the Petro-Can station and turn right; from here, go 5kms and turn left on Station Road. Proceed 1km and park just before the bridge. There is a field on the right, the entrance is blocked by two logs and there are No Hunting signs on each side of the entrance. Enter the field and go right through tall grass until you find the woods road that leads uphill to the left. Watch for blue trail tape to mark the way from here on (the tape may be removed by the time you get there; it IS private property, after all, but I don't know who the landowner is; it's always ideal to get their permission first when possible). Follow the woods road uphill until you see a right-hand turn; turn here, and almost immediately turn right again onto a different path (this is where I went wrong on the Cave Crawl; didn't make the second right-turn). Follow this for no more than five minutes; pass through some small evergreens, then veer left and descend a slope into a sinkhole to the cave entrance. Exercise caution, and go entirely at your own risk.



Upcoming Hikes: Saturday, July 18th Cape Split, led by Deana Sharpe. Contact her to register before Friday evening; hike could be cancelled if nobody signs up in advance! Saturday, July 25th Moses Mountain, led by Don Crowell. For complete details on both hikes, please see www.scotianhiker.com/events.htm - Happy Trails! :)