



Cave Survey Synopsis

February 23, 2013

Team members:

Kelly Mathis (trip leader)	Jessica Reese
Chris Pelczarski	Rene Ohms

On this trip, the team explored leads beneath Hell Canyon, in the western section of Jewel Cave. The passages in this area are wetter and muddier than the rest of the cave, due to the input of surface water from the canyon above. The floors are often composed of “mud cracks,” where thick mud dried, then cracked into intricate patterns. Drip-stone formations such as stalactites, stalagmites, and flowstone are also found beneath the canyon.

The team’s objective was to survey leads in and near the Big Block Room. These passages are on the edge of the known cave, and have potential to lead to larger discoveries, but are near a tributary of Hell Canyon that could keep them from continuing. Although the cave does cross Hell and Lithograph Canyons in a few places, the canyons appear to have limited cave development beneath them, and it is not usually easy to find a way across.



Jessica and a large sediment cone. NPS Photo



Chris looks into a high passage and wonders where it might go. NPS Photo

The team checked several leads, and none of them went far. Two of them connect back to other known passages, and the others are dead ends.

Near survey station dg38G is a large “sediment cone,” where sediment once poured out of the ceiling and piled up on the floor below. Above the sediment cone is a high dome, which may have more passages leading from it, but the the climb cannot be negotiated without technical gear.

The team added 355.15 feet to the Jewel Cave map, and were underground for 11.5 hours.

The current length of Jewel Cave is 164.95 miles.

New Jewel Cave Survey

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Historic Cave Entrance

Hell Canyon

Elevator Entrance

— New Survey

