

Butler Cave: Whee Land Bolt Climb

December, 16, 2017

Reporter: Eric Pelkey

Participants: Nick Socky, Aaron Clair, Liz Hennes, Eric Hill, Eric Pelkey

Objectives: Climb the dome at the end of the Whee Land crawl to try to find where the air goes and follow it to Barberry

Results: Dome was topped out, but no viable leads were found. The air remains a mystery and sadly, there will be no Butberry system this year.

Details:

I had visited this dome with Nathan Farrar and several others on an impromptu 3am Friday trip several years ago, and had filed it away as an exciting possibility. At the BCCS business meeting weekend this year when Maret Maxwell was showing us cave relationships on his integrated Google Earth, Aaron Clair pointed to the small gap between Butler and Barberry and said "What's here" I described the Wheeland Dome and all the air it moves to him, and he gave me the kick in the pants I needed to give it a go. The morning of the White elephant party found Aaron and myself prepared to go do the dome, but our planned third, Tony Canike was thrashed from a 14hr Candle Room trip the day before (though I still borrowed a few pieces of gear from his aid kit. Thanks Tony!) I was able to sucker an also tired Nick Socky into joining us with promises of a half hour commute, and Liz Hennes, and Eric Hill volunteered to help carry some gear. We walked to the start of the crawl, and a few minutes later I found myself saying "This is way worse than I remembered, sorry guys". It was still a pretty short trip and we were standing at the dome about an hour after entering. I underwent the tedious task of kitting up and off I went with Aaron belaying lead for the first time (He did a really great job). The climb itself was actually fairly long, but I was able to use natural holds and ledges to start high and lead out above my bolts on most placements. I took big bites of the climb, and I was at the top of the 50ft dome in just 6 bolts. Everything in the dome is completely sealed with flowstone. The air still feels fresh at the top of the dome, but I could not find a point source, and my guess is it diffuses into multiple tiny cracks in the flowstone plugs. Not seeing this as a viable lead, I down climbed my bolt ladder, and cleaned the hangers. We packed up and retreated back to the surface for a productive, but disappointing 5 hour trip

Photo 1: Eric straddling the dome preparing to set his first bolt

Photo 2: Nick, Eric, and Aaron take a selfie after the climb

Photo 3: Liz, Nick and Eric

Photo 4: Crappy memory profile Eric drew of the dome



White Land Dome: Memory Sketch by Eric Pelkey

