

Eagle's Nest (aka Lost Sink)



Location:

Eagle's Nest is a large cave system on SWFWMD property (bought in 9/99) about 4 miles into the woods near Weeki Wachee. The access road to the area was blocked last year by Florida Game and Fresh Water Fish Commission, which manages the property just to the east of the Nest. [Larry Green](#) is attempting to get divers allowed on the site on a guided basis. Please let this go through the proper channels so everyone can get a chance to dive here.

Description:

Getting to the nest was often as hard as the dive. It was best to go with someone who had been there several times before since the hunting roads can become an incredible maze. Now, the access is completely blocked by a locked gate that cannot be passed. Even if past the gate, one must negotiate through miles of the backwoods hunting grounds. This is supposed to be one of the most awesome dives around, but access keeps getting more limited. This is an extremely advanced dive due to the distance from help and the depths found here. There is no open water, cavern, intro, nor apprentice to cave level of diving conducted here unless under the control of an instructor. With a team of 3-4 divers using HIDs and scooters, one can really just start to get an idea of the size of this place. Access is gained through the Chassahowitzka Wildlife Management Area. The access is a few miles north of the Hwy 50/Hwy 19 intersection. There are some good directions with pictures at this site: [REMOVED FOR THE TIME BEING] I'll update the page next time I get out there. When you dive there, please make sure to leave a copy of either your annual pass or the stub you got after paying at the ranger on the vehicle dashboard so that law enforcement may check it while in the water. Please also leave a copy of our cave certification card as well as you would at Peacock.

The St. Petersburg Times published an article on the closing of Eagle's Nest in their 8/22/99 edition. The online text can be found [here](#), or [here](#) if the link is dead.

On July 19, 2003, the St. Petersburg Times published an article concerning the reopening of the site. The online text can be found [here](#) or [here](#) if the link is dead.

Update (4/03) Copy of post made by Larry Green: "I was down Eagle's Nest last week working with Fish and Wildlife. We are planning on putting in a boardwalk to get into the water and to help stop the erosion around the sink. We are also planning on fixing the roads back to the sinkhole. The first 4 miles is good road, the last mile needs a lot of work, about \$25,000 worth of work. I will be down there in the next week or two with contract bidders to get the boardwalk started, then back again to examine the lines in the cave for safety. It will be \$3 daily admission, or \$27 annual pass. I encourage everyone to support the F & W and buy the annual pass. We are discussing how the state (or if they are allowed) to take donations from us (cave divers) to help repair the roads because their budget money is limited. This is in the works, will keep everyone updated. Opening looks positive for mid-summer. Larry Green, TDI HQ, NACD Training Director" and a post by Mike Poucher "On Wednesday of last week, Larry Green - NACD, John Jones - NSS-CDS, and Mike Poucher - NSS-CDS met with three representatives from Florida Fish and Wildlife Commission (FFWC) to give input on improvements to Eagle's Nest. FFWC has received a grant from the Florida Springs Initiative to build a boardwalk and improve the parking lot to control erosion at the site. We discussed opening of the site and possible dates, but no firm commitments yet. The site will be opened but the condition of the road is the major obstacle at this point. It needs about \$25,000 in improvements, which is not a problem in their overall budget, but will take some time. Their concern with opening the road before improvements is further damage that will increase cost. As far as recommendations for

qualifications, they are the same as with any deep, advanced site: trimix training, proper experience, be introduced to the site by someone that has been before, DAN insurance."

Update (7/03): The Nest has been reopened for divers. Major props go out to some of the players that worked for a LONG time to see this done. The state will be doing work on the access roads for the last couple of weeks of July and likely installing a boardwalk and steps to help prevent erosion and damage to the area. Please do not visit the site during this time period. We've waited this long, so a bit longer as the site is made better will be nothing. This is a good site, but a very advanced cave dive. the visibility and size can make this seem deceptively easy. If the only dives you have ever do are Ginnie, Little River, and Peacock, then you should not dive here. Minimal requirements include diving with experienced divers that have been to the site several times prior, full cave training with advanced experience (e.g. GUE Cave 2 level), and use of trimix. If you are willing to drive over 11 miles of winding back roads into mosquito and tick invested swamp for this dive, then don't be a tightwad and just spring for the right mix. Even if you just plan on playing in the 'cavern' a MOD 190 mix would be a good place to start. Once the road is completed and I have a chance to revisit the site, I'll ad info concerning places to get the passes, pictures, and hopefully something close to a road map.

Again, for those that may have missed subtle points. **This is an advanced dive. Do not take this lightly. Do not screw it up for the rest of us.**

Update (5/04): The state has put in a lot of time and effort to improve the road and build a dock and ramp system to enable divers to have easy access. This is a great deal. The price to dive here is \$3 a day or you may purchase an annual Wildlife Management Area pass for \$26.50 at local hunting supply stores or even Wal-Mart.

Update (6/12/04): There was a dual fatality at this site today. Little information is being released other than they were diving on SS scooters and failed to surface. The divers have been identified in an article posted [here](#) or [here](#) if the link is expired. Another, more detailed, article has been published [here](#) or [here](#) if the link is dead.

Update (6/15/04): John Robinson's body was recovered on Sunday and Simon's body was located Monday night. His body and hopefully the equipment will be recovered today. An incredible amount of effort has been made by the local community and they should be offered our gratitude and respect. Every one of the recovery and support divers out there are volunteers and are spending 4-5 days of their lives and hundreds dollars of their own money in order to see that closure is provided to the families as soon as possible. They are refusing to quit until the job is done and even had to deal with torrential rain that turned the access roads into mud to the point where the last person leaving at 2:30 in the morning needed to get towed out by a bulldozer. This is the epitome of the community and camaraderie that is shared. This is not only a sad task, it is also a difficult one as one has to man-handle the bodies in full gear at a depth of over 290 feet while still attempting to determine what happened and what can be learned through accident analysis. Since this web site was mentioned in a news story [here](#). I will add what information I can for outside observers. Eagle's Nest is not a complex system in terms of a maze, though it still cannot be approached lightly because of the simple fact of the extreme depth. Just getting to the site requires a 9-11 mile drive from the nearest paved road. It is a beautiful system that can be like floating down a 8' diameter chimney into a room that could practically swallow half an arena (like the Tampa Ice Palace). Going through the system would be similar to walking through the darkened sports arena with little but a handheld flashlight, but also likened to flying in a glider or ultra light through the Grand Canyon. As is in every explored cave,

there is a permanent guideline that the divers may use. Whatever had happened, all speculation at this point so I will not comment here at this time, it is a sad event. If the diver had left the scooter and his buddy behind, it would be nearly impossible to successfully exit at that depth since gas is used so quickly, especially if enough was not left in reserve. The divers were, however, *fully* aware of the risks involved. They had the training, the equipment, and even previous experience at this particular site. Of course once the story has settled, the issue of continued open access will remain. This is not a case of inept children or untrained individuals doing something of which they were seemingly unaware of the risks (as had been a major issue when training was not prevalent in the sport several decades ago). Events like this often see the sites closed, barred, or even dynamited (such as the case of Morrison Springs) as a knee jerk reaction to seemingly prevent further incidents. Outstanding members of the community have collectively put thousands of hours into seeing access established and maintained. This isn't just a cave diver's effort as so many park administrators (especially managers at some of our state parks like Peacock Springs, Manatee Springs, and recently Madison Springs), state agencies (such as the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission and Southwest Water Management District), and landowners have made substantial efforts to see that the resources on our public lands are able to be enjoyed by all. Each of them could just as easily bar access and be done with it, however I believe that they too see something worth making an effort to protect and enjoy as does the cave diving community. Let us hope for the safety of the recovery team and a peaceful resolution for the families.

Update (6/16/04): Both bodies have been recovered. An incredible amount of appreciation and respect is deserved for the volunteer recovery divers. These guys spent 4-5 days of their lives in order see the job done right and as safely as possible. Unfortunately one of the recovery had some minor symptoms of DCS develop. This isn't something that would be totally unexpected when considering the back-to-back deep dives and physical exertion involved. The diver was treated in a recompression chamber and is now back home resting and reportedly doing well. Lets give these guys a while to recover themselves. There is consideration among the community of setting up a fund in order to help the volunteer divers defray some of their costs since every dive they did would cost them at least \$80-150 in terms of just the breathable gas that they used; not even including time off work, food, lodging, etc. I'll update the site if it gets set up. A fairly detailed article was printed today and you can read it online [here](#). *Though it should be corrected that cavers doing this kind of dive would not generally be using air, as almost always reported in the media [one preliminary article, [here](#), even made the grossly erroneous statement that the diver was found with 'an empty oxygen tank']. Divers will use a custom blend of helium (in order to reduce the narcotic effects of nitrogen when under pressure [likened to the effects of nitrous oxide in a dentist's office]), oxygen, and nitrogen.

Update (6/17/04): There will probably be a dive this weekend to recover any remaining equipment. Please avoid diving Eagle's Nest until the recovery efforts have been completed, which should not be later than Saturday if the weather remains good and doesn't wash out the roads again. As mentioned yesterday, a recovery fund has been set up for the volunteer divers. The sole intention of this fund is to help compensate the volunteer divers on this particular recovery at Eagle's Nest with the expenses they incurred. There is a fund (<http://cavediver.net/chrishensonfund/chrisfund.htm>) already in place to help support families during times like this. Should you want to make such a noble donation, I suggest you contact that fund administrator (their email is listed on that site) to obtain further information.

Update (6/18/04): There is an article in today's 'Hernando Today' newspaper. You can view that article [here](#) or [here](#) if the link is dead. Apparently a fund has been established to help the Simon family with the information being posted in the article mentioned above.

Update (6/19/04): An article today has reported that the dive site will remain open. You can view that article [here](#) or [here](#) if the link is dead. There has been a request from the Simon family for any pictures of video of Craig Simon. Please send anything you might have and I will forward everything. All gear has been recovered from the recovery operation this afternoon. Access to Eagle's Nest is closed until July 4 so that the roads can be repaired from all the traffic over the past several days. Please accept the wishes of the commission and let them do the clean up.

Update: (6/28/04): There was a fairly decent article in the Orlando Sentinel with a follow-up [here](#) or [here](#) if the link is dead.

Eagle's Nest Recovery Fund

As most of you know, many of these guys did 3-4 deep dives back to back. None of them have asked for any level of compensation, so this is just a gesture that several members of the community thought would be nice to make to the guys that dedicated their time in this. Each dive easily costs \$80-150 in breathing gas, vehicle fuel, lodging, food, etc. Curt Bowen (editor of Advanced Diver Magazine) has been asked if he would be willing to administer it since he would know the principle divers involved and made one of the earlier recommendations of setting up the fund in the first place. He will be out of the country for the next 10 days starting tomorrow, but has agreed to help. He suggests that we can speak to the CDS about holding a fund for future recovery projects. Since they are a non-profit group and have an established name it would be better to have them organize the monies for future efforts, but for now this should be able to do something

In order to reduce any confusion and handle this as simply and efficiently as possible, the distribution will be handled as follows:

After two weeks, the funds will be tallied. The funds will be distributed evenly among the deep recovery divers to help defray personal expenses for this particular recovery effort.

Should any of the funds be refused by the divers, then the remainder will be evenly distributed between the NSS-CDS and NACD to be donated to a safety and education program already in place.

If you wish, you may contribute either through Paypal or by sending a check or money order. 100% of all money received will go directly to the volunteer divers or cave organization fund as outlined above. I will maintain a list of all the contributions and names of the contributors. Should you not want to be identified, simply add a note specifying such and your donation will simply be listed as being 'anonymous' with the amount contributed. If you don't use Paypal for convenience and want to reduce the fees involved, then you can send a check or money order to the person currently handling the fund. To make sure that all donated money goes to the recovery volunteers, Floridacaves.com will donate the equivalent of all Paypal fees to the fund.

Mailed contributions go to the person currently administrating the fund.

Michael Blich
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Again, 100% of all monies received will be distributed to the volunteer divers. This is just an effort that several in the community thought would be a nice gesture and is not officially endorsed or supported by any cave diving organization or agency.

Any Paypal donations should be sent to ENrecoveryfund@floridacaves.com Please use that address only to send any contributions. Any other inquiries should be sent to the website administrator at [floridacaveswebmaster \(at\) floridacaves.com](mailto:floridacaveswebmaster@floridacaves.com)

[List of Contributors to the Eagle's Nest Recovery Fund](#)

[Click here for a general view of the cave \(PDF\)](#)

[Click here for Eagle's Nest map \(PDF\)](#)

[Click here for another good map of Eagle's Nest cave \(PDF\)](#)

[Click here for Eagle's Nest extended profile map](#)

[Click here for aerial view of Eagle's Nest and surrounding area](#)

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