

## Summary of the „China 2013” caving expedition, Polish Mountaineering Association

Tomasz Pawlowski - Polish Mountaineering Association

Dates: 11.10.2012-10.11.2013

### Participants:

- Ciszewski Michał
- Ciszewski Andrzej – expedition leader
- Golicz Mateusz
- Berdel Bartosz
- Ramatowski Paweł
- Olczak Tomasz
- Wójcik Ewa
- Pawłowski Tomasz
- Zygmunt Jerzy



Expedition participants – *Photo by T. Pawlowski*

The aim of our expedition was exploration of caves in the vicinity of Shizilu, a village located in Dalou Shanmai mountains, near Lichuan city in Hubei province, southwestern China. We have already visited the area twice – during a recon trip in spring 2012 and a larger expedition in autumn 2012. In addition to participants from the Polish Mountaineering Association mentioned above, the team included He Duanyong, who is a Chinese caver, two Chinese drivers that sometimes also visited caves, as well as Natalia Brede and Kaja Kałużyńska - interpreters who joined us in Chongqing.



Surveying in *Feng Dong* – *Photo by M. Ciszewski*

Field trips started with identifying a few entrances pointed by He Duanyong and the local people. Then, the actual caving began with caves that we failed to check in the previous year because of limited time. The biggest of them was Feng Dong, a fossiled resurgence in the southwest quarter of our area ending with squeezes. Overall, 1509 m of passages were surveyed in that cave.

Our next goal was Luò Xī Tiān Kēng (Falling River Tiangkeng), the most interesting leftover from 2012 expedition.

Previously, during our stay inside the massive entrance pit, a couple of large rocks had separated from its ceiling, endangering our team. This is why this year we spent a considerable amount of time removing loose rocks and rigging a system of traverses 80 m above the pit bottom. After we finally reached flat ground, we went through spacious, horizontal passages to a sump at -433m.



Descending the P320 in Luo Xi Tiankeng – Photo by M. Ciszewski (1), T.Pawłowski (2-3)

Near that sump we have explored a side passage, arriving at foot of a high and spacious chimney. Also, at the end of expedition we managed to connect another (third) entrance, which made the whole system 3463m long. We measured the entrance pit depth again and confirmed it to be 320m counting from the upper edge. The estimated volume is on the order of 2,8 millions of cubic meters.

Dà Dòng is a complex system inside which a few watercourses meet. We have been exploring it throughout the whole expedition, however a few leads remained unchecked simply because of lack of time. Currently the cave is 4573 m long and 186 m deep.

Huang Jia Wo Dang, another cave near Shizilu worth mentioning, ended with a squeeze at -129 m. Laizi Dong, a spatially developed, 540 m long cave also ended with squeezes.

The second group of caves we explored was located around Zhà Kǒu Dòng entrance. Itself, it is an old, multilevel system draining a plateau at 1600 m a.s.l. We climbed a high lead that was left in 2012 and reached a spacious passage. Unfortunately it lead to a squeeze very soon. Anyway, the cave reached 1773 m of length.

Near Zhà Kǒu Dòng we visited two caves drained into the Ji Jiang valley, 700 m below. Both had a cascading nature and active watercourses.



Weng Jia Dong – Photo by T.Pawłowski

Luo Shui Kong is a intermittent sink that swallows a stream from an upper section of the massif. At the bottom of the entrance shaft, the cave splits into two directions. The more spacious part leads quickly to a sump, above which a small window still gives some hope for a bypass. The other part is a series of steps leading to another sump at -112 m. In total, 937 m of passages were surveyed in this cave.

Ma Bao Dong, located nearby, also has a cascading nature and leads into a resurgence in the Ji Jiang river. It ends with a

sump at -156 m.

In most of the explored caves there are still leads to check, that we failed to follow because of lack of time. In total, during the expedition 7517 m of passages were surveyed. Approximately 1200 m of caves was explored but not surveyed.



*P40 in Laizi Dong – Photo by M. Ciszewski*

In the last days of our stay we found out that a new road was build west of Shizilu, letting us make two recon trips that helped to understand geological conditions. On cliffs above the Ji Jiang river we clearly identified layers of impermeable beds, corresponding to sump zones. Thus, despite lots of entrances still awaiting to be verified, one must take into account overcoming numerous sumps.

Just like in the previous years, our primary concern was a very limited access to maps, as well as restrictions concerning creating our own cartographic material. Moreover, the expedition would not have taken place at all without the interpreters. Local people speak solely Chinese, which means a good translation service is absolutely necessary to conduct any further exploration in the area.

**Andrzej Ciszewski**

**Expedition leader**