

## Use Good Judgment !

- You have a choice in what you do.
- Be honest with yourself about your skill level.
- Practice and master new skills/equipment in open water before trying them in a cave.
- If you can't make a certain dive without causing damage to the cave, then don't make that dive until you can do it without causing damage.

## Learn to recognize fragile cave formations

**(Look, but don't touch)**



Phreatite (also known as Goethite)



Stalagmites, Stalactites( and other flowstone formations)



Sedimentary formations ( such as this clay bank exhibiting severe damage from an unthinking diver)

## NSS Policy for Cave Conservation

The National Speleological Society and the Cave Diving Section believes; that caves have unique scientific, recreational, and scenic values; that these values are endangered by both carelessness and intentional vandalism; that these values, once gone, cannot be recovered; and that the responsibility for protecting caves must be assumed by those who study and enjoy them.

Accordingly, the intention of the Society is to work for the preservation of caves with a realistic policy supported by effective programs for: the encouragement of self-discipline among cavers; education and research concerning the causes and prevention of cave damage; and special projects, including cooperation with other groups similarly dedicated to the conservation of natural areas.

Specifically: All contents of a cave - formations, life and loose deposits - are significant for it's enjoyment and interpretation.

Therefore, caving parties should leave a cave as they find it. They should find means for the removal of waste; Limit marking to a few, small and removable signs as are needed for surveys; and, especially, exercise extreme care not to accidentally break or soil formations, disturb life forms or unnecessarily increase the number of disfiguring paths through an area. Scientific collection is professional, selective and minimal. The collecting of mineral or biological material for display purposes, including previously broken or dead specimens, is never justified, as it encourages others to collect and destroy the interests of the cave.

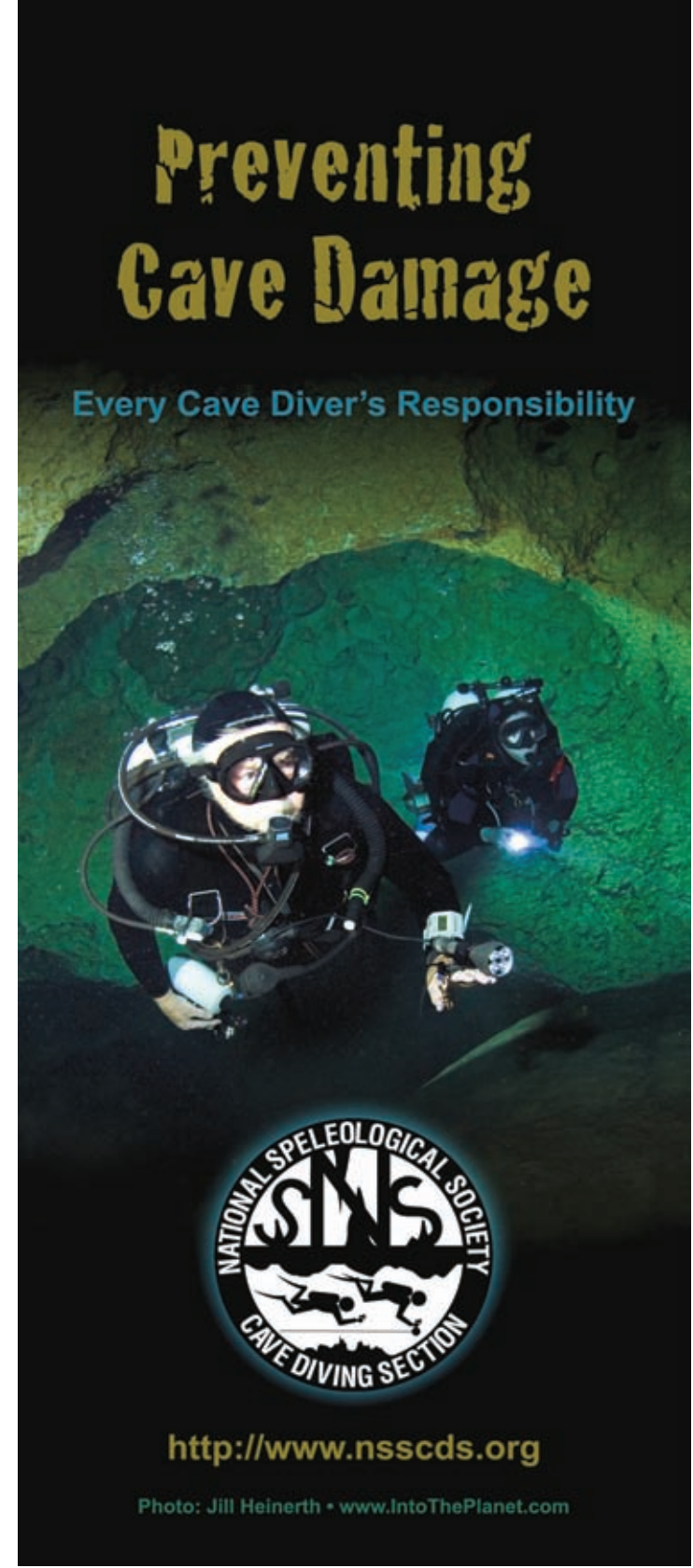
The Society encourages projects such as: establishing cave preserves; placing entrance gates where appropriate; opposing the sale of speleothems; supporting effective protective measures; cleaning and restoring over-used caves; cooperating with private cave owners by providing knowledge about their cave and assisting them in protecting their cave and property from damage during cave visits; and encourage commercial cave owners to make use of their opportunity to aid the public in understanding caves and the importance of their conservation.

Where there is reason to believe that publications of cave locations will lead to vandalism before adequate protection can be established, the Society will oppose such publication.

It is the duty of every society member to take personal responsibility for spreading a consciousness of the cave conservation problem to each potential user of caves. Without this, the beauty and value of our caves will not long remain with us.

**If you would like to know more about the NSS-CDS  
contact us at :**

**[www.nsscds.org](http://www.nsscds.org)**



## A Cave Diver's Responsibility



For many years when the subject of cave conservation has come up most cave divers have thought of land-use related issues such as overdevelopment, the dumping of waste or garbage into sinks, and chemicals or sewage infiltrating the groundwater that flows through the cave passages in which we dive. While these problems are clearly still with us, another type of issue has moved onto the list of challenges we face in preserving our cave diving sites.

As the numbers of cave and cavern divers have dramatically increased in recent years, the issue of diver impact on the cave has become a much more important issue. For some cave owners, particularly the local, state and federal governments, diver impact has become one of the biggest conservation concerns at some dive sites they manage.

However, diver impact is one problem that we, as cave divers, have a lot of control over. As cave and cavern divers, each of us has the responsibility to minimize or eliminate our own impact on the caves in which we dive. If each of us learned to recognize and not touch the fragile formations and features in our underwater caves and we consistently used the low impact diving techniques and good judgment that we are taught in our training; most, if not all, visible diver impact on the caves could be eliminated. We can do it! It's our responsibility!

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Photographs by Jill Heinerth, Bill Dunn and Kelly Jessop

## Low Impact Diving Techniques

### I. Use/Maintain good buoyancy and trim

We typically think of buoyancy and trim as being cave diving skills needed to preserve visibility by not disturbing silt and other unconsolidated sediment. However, in order to preserve the cave, good buoyancy and trim are required to avoid contact with the floor and ceiling. It is wise to stop with depth changes to do a buoyancy check to prevent touching the floor or bumping the ceiling.



### II. Proper kick techniques

The main kick techniques used by cave divers are the frog kick, the modified flutter kick, and the shuffle kick. The main purpose is for locomotion in the cave system without disturbing silt. We also want to choose the proper propulsion technique in certain areas of the cave to prevent contact with the cave. If the cave passage is low and wide, then a frog kick is ideal since spreading legs outward won't contact the ceiling. When the cave passage is narrow, but tall, then a modified flutter/shuffle kick will keep the legs away from the walls. A cave diver should adjust kick styles to accommodate the changing dynamics of the cave.

### III. When and where to use Pull and Glide

Pull and glide is a propulsion technique where the cave diver grasps a rock and pulls themselves forward to advance movement.

Any contact in this manner will cause wear and tear on the cave and should be avoided at all costs, especially in low flow caves. In high flow caves where kicking to advance movement is impossible, then the pull and glide technique may be used carefully, only touching areas that have been previously touched. Ceiling push offs should be avoided due to damage to the cave ceiling by the diver's feet and back mounted tanks.

### IV. Use and placement of stage and decompression cylinders

Stage/deco bottles should be rigged so they stay tight against the body, and the valve doesn't drop down. When carrying the stage through tight or low areas, it should be lifted or cradled to avoid contacting the floor, or making you swim higher and contact the ceiling. When dropping a stage/deco tank it is wise to avoid silty areas in favor of rock, and preferably a place that has already been worn. Secure the tank to the line to keep it from moving around in high flow areas. Once the gas limit has been reached with a stage tank, keep it with you until an appropriate drop point can be found and if none can be found, then just keep it with you.

Once the stage is nearing empty it may float above your horizontal plane and the tank neck will drop down. Continue to manipulate the tank by cradling it to avoid contact with the cave. NEVER place a stage/deco on a tank D-ring or crotch strap where it can't be controlled.

