

Luola

IV
2016

Suomen luolaseura ry | Hämäriä juttuja vuodesta 2010

Lemmenluola etsimässä

EuroSpeleo
2016

Onko luolissa huonoa ilmaa?

Luolakartoituskurssin anti

Text & photos: Duncan Simey

2016 Expedition to Picos de Europa

The Ario Caves Project is a dream to connect cave entrances high on the ridges of Picos de Europa, Spain, through the Ario plateau down to the resurgence in the Carres Gorge.

The Ario Dream is to find an underground route from the mountain ridges to the bottom of the gorge

The early days of the expedition have been documented in the iconic caving book “Beneath The Mountains” which describes how the **Xitu system** was explored resulting in a 1200 m deep through trip. The current focus is to connect Xitu to 2/7, 2/7 to C4, and C4 to one of the higher entrances (F64 is looking promising). If these connections can be made, then it will result in a through trip over 1600 m deep. Seeing 1600 m written on paper does nothing to prepare for the shock standing on a nearby mountain ridge viewing the whole panorama; it’s a crazy undertaking!

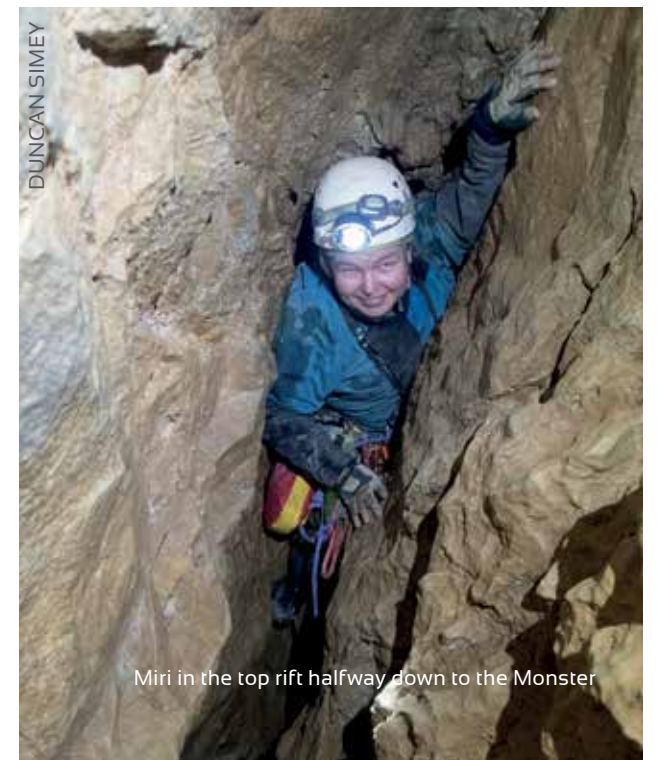
Duncan Simey and Miri Pihlaja joined the 2016 expedition to push leads in C4. Currently C4 is ‘only’ 600m deep, but for most people carrying tackle bags this still represents 24 hours underground to reach the limit of the cave and return. Getting to the cave entrance proved harder than the caving. Three carries were needed before heading underground. Two 4+ hour carries from

the car park at the Lakes to expedition base at the Ario Refugio, and a 1:30+ hour carry getting caving kit to the cave entrance. Carrying over 30 kg rucksacks in the intense heat means it is only possible to do one carry per day, and the heat was bad enough that both Duncan and Miri got heat exhaustion during the first week. Quite a few recovery days were needed.

On one occasion, Duncan and Miri were tasked with what was supposed to be a nice simple trip. They set off from the Refugio late afternoon and arrived at the underground camp in the small hours of the morning. Sleeping in camp was a surprisingly pleasant experience and they slept soundly. The arrival of a large team on their way to attempt a dive in the sump with 2/7 woke them. Duncan and Miri got the stove fired up and made them coffee and food. On the way out Duncan’s main objective was to take photos at the bottom of the Monster with Miri as caving model. The Monster is an

impressive 100m high rift and the photos looked great, they were on a high. However, heading up the Monster Miri was leading and spotted the very last rebelay at the top of the 100m pitch had been snagged around a flake and putting any weight on the rope would have quickly cut it through. The disappointment was shattering, they were only a couple of hours from getting out and they were now trapped in the cave! With all the hanging around (and much swearing) they were also uncomfortably cold, so hilariously huddled in a too-tight storm shelter on a ledge high up on the side of the Monster to warm up before returning to camp.

Back at camp Duncan and Miri got the stove on and were wondering what to do. There were 9 people trapped in the cave and the camp could only sleep 5, it was going to be very cold and uncomfortable waiting for help from the surface to come and free the rope. At this point Tom Chapman and Matt Selkirk arrived at



Miri in the top rift halfway down to the Monster

camp. They had bounced from the sump without waiting for the dive to take place. Tom decided he wanted out of the cave and opted to have a go at climbing the Monster belayed by Matt using dynamic rope found at camp. They suggested Duncan and Miri get some sleep awaiting either their return or the arrival of the dive team on their way out.

Duncan and Miri slept surprisingly well and were woken by the the dive team who were astonished to see them still in camp. 4 hours had passed, so presumably Tom had made it up the climb. The dive team were knackered, and once again Duncan and Miri got the stove on to do as much as possible for them. Most of the dive team elected to carry on out the cave with three of them needing to stop and sleep in camp. The trip out was mercifully uneventful and the offending pitch on the Monster had been double rigged with the dynamic rope alongside the original static line. The top of the Monster is vertical to mildly overhung and it was a super-human effort by Tom to climb it after 20 hours continuous caving, we are eternally grateful to him. Duncan and Miri emerged 40 hours after the start of their unexpected adventure.

The Ario Caves project has fielded expeditions every year for over 40 years. Although the 2016 expedition only explored 300m of new passage, they found 5 compelling leads upstream towards both F64 and a blank space on the survey, and there is unfinished business downstream connecting with 2/7. The foundations have been firmly laid for the 2017 expedition.



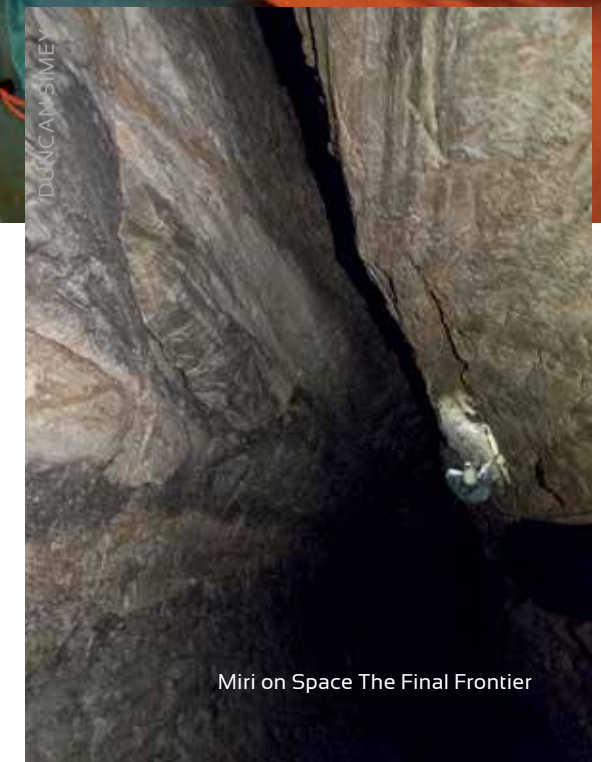
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Tiivistelmä suomeksi (päätoimittajan): Duncan & Miri, kaksi Suomen luolaseuran jäsentä, osallistuivat kesällä 2016 Espanjan Picos de Europa -vuoriston luolia kartoittavaan tutkimusretkeen. Retkellä riitti vastoinkäymisiä: raskaiden varusteiden kantaminen helteellä aiheutti lämpöuupumusta, ja yksi vierailu retken pääasialliseen kohteeseen, luolaan nimeltä 2/7, venyi 40-tuntiseksi terävän kiven taakse juuttuneen köyden vuoksi. Yhteensä osallistujat kartoittivat noin 300 metriä uutta käytävää, ja löysivät useita kiinnostavia jatkosuuntia tulevia vuosia ajatellen.



Paul Diffley, Richard Cole and Miri in underground camp



Phil Baker descending into C4



Miri on Space The Final Frontier