

## The History of Human Exploration and Occupation of the Lava Caves of the Zuni-Bandera Volcanic Field, New Mexico, USA

By Harry Marinkis

In the high desert of New Mexico, in the Southwestern United States, is the Zuni-Bandera Volcanic Field (ZBVF) and hundreds of volcanoes, lava caves, and "ice caves." These caves have a rich history of occupation, exploitation, and exploration dating back almost 10,000 years. Native Americans have been using the caves for thousands of years. The caves attracted the attention of Europeans only about two centuries ago. Before then, the Spanish ignored the ZBVF and called the region "el malpais" - the badlands. During the past 100 years the caves narrowly avoided a nuclear blast, were bombed with high explosives, explored by rocket scientists, mined for guano and gravel, and finally protected as a National Monument. This is the history of the Zuni-Bandera lava caves.