

DEAD DOG DISPATCH TRI-STATE GRATTO



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The **DEAD DOG DISPATCH** is a NON-PROFIT monthly newsletter published by the **TRI-STATE GROTTTO of the NSS**. SUBSCRIPTION RATES are \$12.00 per year to SUBSCRIBING MEMBERS, and **FREE** with FULL and ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIPS to the **TRI-STATE GROTTTO**.

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All material for inclusion in the **DEAD DOG DISPATCH** must be sent to the EDITOR NO LATER THAN THE **25TH** OF EACH MONTH.

*** The photo on the cover was taken by Nikki Fox at Bowden Cave. The photo is of the Annual Polyester Power Hour at OTR.

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**** Don't forget, the **JONES QUARRY BOOKLET** is **STILL** available at a reasonable price **\$6.00**. If you don't have it in your library, then YOU MUST GET IT. It is PACKED with info about the QUARRY, the CAVE, the INDIAN BONES, and of course the **MAP!** If you are interested in purchasing the BOOKLET, contact **BOB BENNETT** [304-579-4304(H) or 304-725-3481 ext 491(W)](E-MAIL at gimpycaver@comcast.net or **JUDY FISHER** [304-258-4974(H) or 304-258-1822(W)](E-MAIL at jcf@access.mountain.net)

**WE NEED EVERYONE TO KEEP THINKING ABOUT VOLUNTEERING FOR AN OPEN POSITION. WE STILL NEED SOMEONE FOR THE FOLLOWING POSITION:
PROGRAM CHAIR
PLEASE GIVE IT SOME THOUGHT. WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!**

TRI-STATE GROTTTO MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE AS FOLLOWS:

FULL MEMBERSHIP -----\$10.00 (*Must be NSS*)
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FAMILY MEMBERSHIP -----\$2.00/FAMILY



CAVING EVENTS

2008

- OCT 8 ----- Grotto Meeting – Grotto Auction – 7PM
VAR 09 meeting at 6:00PM
- OCT 9-12 --- Fall TAG Cave-In, Lookout Mt, TN
- OCT 10-12 -- Fall MAR – Woodward, PA
- OCT 11 ----- FALL BASH AT FISHER’S LANDING
- OCT 13 ----- COLUMBUS DAY
- OCT 18 ----- Bridge Day
- OCT 25 ----- Kookan Cave – see Danny Cumbo
- OCT 31 ----- ALL HALLOWS EVE
- NOV 4 ----- ELECTION DAY
- NOV 8 ----- WVCC Banquet
- NOV 11 ----- VETERAN’S DAY
- NOV 12 ----- Grotto Meeting – 7PM – Elections
- NOV 27 ----- THANKSGIVING DAY
- NOV 28 ----- BLACK FRIDAY
- DEC 10 ----- Wrap gifts for Red Cross – 6PM at
Martinsburg Mall
- DEC 13 ----- GROTTO CHRISTMAS PARTY – 6PM
Until whenever?
- DEC 14 ----- CAVING
- DEC 21 ----- WINTER SOLSTICE
- DEC 24 ----- CHRISTMAS EVE
- DEC 25 ----- CHRISTMAS DAY
- DEC 31 ----- NEW YEAR’S EVE

2009

- JAN 1 ----- NEW YEAR’S DAY
- JAN 14 ----- Grotto Meeting 7PM
- JAN 19 ----- MARTIN LUTHER KING DAY
- JAN 23-25 --- Carter Caves Crawl-A-Thon
- FEB 2 ----- GROUND HOG DAY
- FEB 11 ----- Grotto Meeting 7PM
- FEB 14 ----- VALENTINE’S DAY
- FEB 24 ----- FAT TUESDAY
- MAR 11 ----- Grotto Meeting 7PM
- MAR 17 ----- ST PATRICK’S DAY
- MAR 20 ----- SPRING EQUINOX
- MAR 22 ----- WORLD WATER DAY
- MAR 25 ----- MD DAY
- APR 1 ----- ALL FOOL’S DAY
- APR 8 ----- Grotto Meeting 7PM
- APR 10 ----- GOOD FRIDAY
- APR 12 ----- EASTER
- APR 15 ----- TAX DAY
- APR 22 ----- EARTH DAY
- APR 24 ----- ARBOR DAY
- APR 24-26 --- SPRING VAR – Sponsored by Tri-State
Grotto
- JUL 19-26 ---- NSS Convention, Kerryville, TX

2010

JUL 12-17 ----- NSS Convention, Essex Jcnctn, VT

2011

AUG 1-5 ----- NSS Convention, Glenwood Springs, CO

***** CAVE BUCKS *****

CAVE BUCKS is a voluntary donation for cave purchases. The money is collected at each monthly meeting and sent to the organization of choice. The money SHOULD NEVER be kept past the week it is collected.

Month of September ----- \$47.00

TOTAL TO DATE: --- \$4328.00

Keep It Comin!

GROTTO LINKS

- Tri-State Grotto website ----- www.wobey.net/TSG
- VAR website ----- www.varegion.org
- NSS website ----- www.caves.org
- NSS Convention 2009 ----- <http://www.ics2009.us/>
- OTR Website ----- www.otr.org
- MAR Website ----- www.caves.org/region/mar/
- WVCC ----- www.wvcc.net
- Andy Celmer’s Web Site ---- www.wobey.net/TSG/Andy/
- Art Jr’s Web Site ----- <http://photos.arthanson.net/>
- Art Jr’s 2nd Web Site ----- <http://www.tristategrotto.org/>
- Bob’s Web Site ----- www.wobey.net/TSG/Bob/
- Earl Suitor’s Web Site -----
----- <http://mysite.verizon.net/wvcaver/>
- Ehren Gieske’s Web Site --- www.wobey.net/TSG/Ehren/
- Jerry’s Cave Web Site ----- www.wobey.net/TSG/Jerry/
- Vitas’s Web Site ----- www.wobey.net/TSG/Vitas/
- Tina Blaik’s Web Site ----- www.kayakdream.com/
- David Hackley’s Web Site -----
----- <http://s180.photobucket.com/albums/x307/clearsig/>
- Todd Robert’s Web Site -----
-- http://s63.photobucket.com/albums/h143/Todd_05/
- Bob Gulden’s Web Page - www.caverbob.com/home.htm
- Nikki Fox’s Web Site -----
----- <http://s231.photobucket.com/albums/ee8/cavefox1/>

Rock Climbing Knots Friction -----
 -- www.chockstone.org/TechTips/prusik.htm#Bachman
 Tri-State Grotto MySpace -----
 ----- www.myspace.com/tristategrotto
 Animated Knots by Grog ---- www.animatedknots.com/
 White Nose Syndrome -----
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/dcg/wns-notice-to-cavers.pdf>
 NSS Online Cavers ----- www.onlinecavers.com



GROTTO BIRTHDAYS

MONTH OF OCTOBER

Tina Blaik, Jeff Brandenburg, Ken Carter,
 Bob Denton, Debbie Floyd, Margaret
 Hanson, Jon Peterson, Skip Reeder, Susan
 Reeder, Bob Spencer, Craig Stihler

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

ANNUAL FALL BASH

The annual Fall Bash will be held again this year at Fisher's Landing near Romney, WV on Sat, Oct 11. Judy & JC Fisher have graciously invited everyone to their river lot for rappelling & climbing the wall. The climbing wall will be rigged and JC will make arrangements for those who want to rappel 'the Big One'! The smaller 70' cliff will not be rigged (unless someone wants to take the extra time to rig it) (it takes 2 hr or more to rig it)!

Judy & JC will be furnishing hot dogs, hamburgers, brisket, & soft drinks. Please bring a covered dish to share with everyone! Bring

your families and share in the camaraderie! There will be plenty of climbing equipment to try out. If you want to practice change-overs, this is a perfect opportunity. The climbing wall will be rigged with several ropes for just this purpose.

Bring your swim suits. According to Judy & JC the river is warm (of course this WILL be OCT!!!

If you are planning to attend please let us know (RSVP)! This will give Judy & JC an idea as to how much food they will need!!!!!!
 If you need directions let me know!
 We'll be seeing you there!!!!!!

Bob

IN THE MEDIA

Nature | Rockaway Township
 Watchful Eyes on New Jersey's Bats
 Nancy Wegard for The New York Times
 TINY HANDFUL Inside Hibernia Mine in
 Rockway Township, where 30,000 bats make
 their home

By DARA-LYN SHRAGER
 Published: October 3, 2008
 Rockaway Township

To the Bat Cave
 Related
 Times Topics: Bats in late September, when the air is crisp and the trees have begun to shed their leaves, Hibernia Mine, the largest known bat hibernaculum in New Jersey, is alive and teeming with the sound of wings beating in the night. This is when 30,000 bats that hibernate here each winter give their final grand performance before retreating inside the mine to rest through the long winter months.

Nine species of bats reside in New Jersey for at least part of the year, and six of them never leave the state. For those that stay year round — the little brown bat, big brown bat, northern long-eared bat, small-footed myotis, eastern pipistrel and the endangered Indiana bat — a long winter's rest is essential to their survival.

Scientists from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection come to the mine every other year to conduct what is essentially a bat census. As the threat of white-nose syndrome — a deadly disease currently afflicting bats in large numbers across the Northeast — continues to grow, scientists and researchers worry about dwindling bat populations. Bats, the only mammals that fly, play an important role in the ecosystem.

Take the little brown bat, which makes up a large part of the population at Hibernia Mine. It can consume up to 1,200 mosquitoes in an hour and up to 4,500 insects in a night. The more bats there are in a community, the fewer pesticides have to be used, scientists say.

“People need to understand the value of bats,” said Diane Nickerson, director of the Mercer County Wildlife Center in Titusville. “They’re like our miner’s canaries. When bat populations drop, it’s an indication that our ecosystem is failing in some way.”

In February, a team of researchers from the Environmental Protection Department will enter the mine to count the bats. They will be led by Mick Valent, principal zoologist with the department’s Endangered and Nongame Species Program.

Originally an iron mine dating to 1722, Hibernia Mine, in Morris County, supplied shot and pig iron to the Continental Army. After 1913, the 20-level mine, reaching 2,500 feet into solid rock, was closed. The mine is now on a list compiled by Watchable Wildlife Incorporated, a nonprofit organization that works with state and federal agencies to help protect wildlife and their habitats.

In 1994, a special bat conservation gate was installed at the entrance of the mine to protect the bats from human disturbance. Inside, there is a long, dark passageway, 5 to 8 feet high, 15 to 18 feet wide. Tracks on which carts carrying ore once moved are still visible in the dirt floor. “There are bore holes all throughout the tunnel,” Mr. Valent said. “Mine workers used to stick dynamite into the holes to blast the tunnel wider and deeper. When I go in there now, all I see is little bat noses sticking out toward the centers of the holes.”

“Bats enter a state of torpor when they hibernate,” Mr. Valent said. “We enter the hibernaculum in the winter when the bats are inactive, hanging from the walls and ceiling of the mine.” While they spend daylight hours inside dwellings, where they groom, rest and congregate, they use the evening hours to hunt flying insects.

Disease is not the only threat to bats. Humans have long been both fascinated by and fearful of bats. Vandalism to hibernacula is a common problem. Graffiti marks the walls inside Hibernia Mine. When the mine was finally gated, the endangered program needed two pickup trucks to cart away tennis rackets, hair-spray cans and beer bottles. “People use hair spray and lighters to torch the bats off walls,” Mr. Valent said.

While the life expectancy of a bat exceeds 20 years, female cave bats produce, on average, only one pup per year. Such a low reproduction potential leaves bats at a constant risk of endangerment. “Bats can’t generally survive disturbance during hibernation,” Mr. Valent said. “It just takes too many calories for them to leave the state of torpor. If they start flying around when they should be hibernating, they quickly deplete their fat reserves and die.”

Right now, the Endangered and Nongame Species Program is conducting fall sampling research using nets and harp traps. By mid-October, when cave bats have just begun to enter hibernation but have not yet entered a state of

full torpor, researchers will simply enter Hibernia Mine, pull bats off the walls and ceilings, and collect data.

Times Topics: Bats;

This baseline research is intended to help the program — an organization with a legal mandate to protect animal species that are nongame, threatened and endangered, meaning everything from butterflies to bobcats — to monitor the health of bats and protect them from potential threats or danger.

“People want to enter the mines where bats hibernate,” Mr. Valent said. “I don’t understand it, because it’s just a tunnel in the ground, but people will commit a crime to get inside. They’ll cut through steel bars on a gate just to get in.” The endangered species group runs a volunteer project every year in which it recruits people to conduct summer roost counts of bats in New Jersey. Volunteers spend quiet evenings sitting outside known bat dwellings, like churches, barns and abandoned buildings, counting bats as they exit at dusk and take to the night sky.

Over at the New Jersey Field Office of the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in Pleasantville, Annette Scherer, the senior endangered species biologist, focuses her bat conservation efforts on the federally listed endangered Indiana bat. Less than two inches long and weighing about a quarter of an ounce, this tiny insect predator closely resembles the little brown bat, with which it often shares hibernacula.

“While the Indiana bat is our only endangered bat here in New Jersey, the small-footed bat is now listed as a ‘conservation concerned’ species,” Ms. Scherer said. “This means we’re looking at the status of this bat in order to determine if its numbers are declining.” She said she believed that homeowners, developers and state land-use regulators have been fairly receptive to habitat protection efforts by her organization and others working toward bat conservation. By maintaining wooded

foraging lots in new developments and keeping older trees in which bats can roost under loose, shaggy bark, landowners and bats can share an environment suitable for both populations. “If we can protect the core areas that bats use,” Ms. Scherer said, “we can reduce our impact on these beneficial creatures.”

Scientists have found a second mine near Hibernia that serves as a winter habitat for the Indiana bat. The exact location of this vertical shaft, reaching 150 feet straight down into the ground, is a secret closely guarded by scientists working to protect the welfare of the endangered species.

“We’re constantly out searching for new mine sites, and when we find them, we protect them,” Mr. Valent said. “Hibernacula are critical to the survival of our bats.”

By the end of October, the bat show will have come to an end. The soft flutter of fragile wings will no longer be heard as darkness falls each evening. The slumbering bats will be deep in their winter nests, and the scientists will prepare to begin their count.

Submitted by Ann Muldoon

From: Janet Tinkham
Sent: Sunday, June 29, 2008 9:38 PM

Subject: FRG:Front Royal Caverns Update

Another successful project completed this weekend! Over 20 people were able to participate and get it done. Front Royal Caverns has a new entrance gate with a very natural looking railing and stone steps going in. It's very exciting that the county would like our guidance in establishing an outdoor classroom that will help to reinforce what the students will be learning through their environmental science classes. Thank you to those who endured the heat and humidity and more details will follow in a trip report for the newsletter. GREAT JOB !!

TAG 2008 Trip Report

As some of you know the ER-NCRC weeklong was canceled this year because not enough people signed up. I was looking forward to helping teach Level 1, but oh well...

I was determined to do something cave related with the vacation I had scheduled so I decided to take a trip to Huntsville Alabama to see my brother Tony (also a caver). I talked to another caver who signed up for the weeklong, Kurt Waldron to see if he was interested in going and he was. My brother could only get off on Friday and we could not stay at his place until Thursday night. So we would be on our own for Wednesday and Thursday.

We drove down on Tuesday July 22 and stayed on Scottsboro because it is near a lot of great pits. Our goal was to do two pits a day. In hindsight it was pretty ambitious, but what the hell.



Neversink

We woke up Wednesday and headed to a TAG classis Neversink, a very beautiful 162' pit. It is an SCCI cave and we found the parking area easily. The hike up was hard, but it is TAG. We each bounced the pit a couple of times and took lots of pictures.

Then we headed for Valhalla another TAG classis also owned by the SCCI and is a 228' drop. The road to Valhalla is really bad so we parked near the bottom and walked up. The walk up really sucked and we were both almost spent by the time we got to the top. We were greeted by a beautiful open air pit. WOW it looked great. We rigged the rope and bounced the pit a couple of times each. We then de-rigged and headed down the mountain. By the time we got back to the car it was dark. It was a long day, but a lot of fun.

Thursday was a bust for us... We first tried to go to Pretty Well, but no one was home at the "owner's" house. We then headed to Green Well. We had permission to access this pit, but neither of us had ever been there. We spent almost three hours walking the side of the mountain looking for it before we gave up and headed back to Pretty Well. There was someone at the "owner's" house this time, but he did not own the land. It is owned by a hunt club. He pointed us in the right direction, but we could not find Pretty Well either, DAMN... Oh well, we headed to my brother's house for a couple of beers to console ourselves.

As it turned out my brother had been to both of these pits so we decided to find them on Friday. As it turned out we got close to Green's Well. The Green's Well entrance is just a small hole in the side of the mountain but it bells out quickly to a 227' free rappel. It's not the large open air pit we have seen at other

TAG pits. We bounced Green's Well a couple of times each and headed out to find Pretty Well. My brother knew where to park and found the path to the pit.

Pretty Well was another small hole on the side of a very steep hill. It is a 208' drop that is very well decorated. Not a free drop, there are ledges and flowstone all the way down to the bottom that must be negotiated. One level up from the bottom was a large chamber that had an 81' high flowstone haystack. It was very impressive. I only bounced this one once, Kurt and my brother did it twice.

Our last day started with a pit that my brother had never been to, called Torode Pit. I had directions to the owners house and GPS coordinates to the pit. We got to the owners house with no problem. Talked to the owner, he was very nice and explained how to get to the pit. We found the pit without too much trouble, but getting there was a real bitch.



Torode Pit

Torode Pit is a classic open air Tag pit with a huge sink surrounding the entrance pit. The drop is a 190' free rappel onto a breakdown pile in a huge room. A really beautiful drop. We each bounced it twice before heading back to the car. Our last pit of the trip was another TAG classic, Stephen's Gap. It was the shortest drop of our trip at 142'. We rigged the main drop as well as the "keyhole". Dropping thru the keyhole will put you on top of the pedestal at the mid level of Stephen's Gap. We did both drops once and headed back to my brother's place. After four days of walking thru the Alabama countryside, dropping pits (and looking for pits) we were pretty exhausted. Personally I was looking forward to sitting on my butt for 10 hours on the ride back.

Keystone River Cave

by Aaron Moses & Nikki Fox

July 5, 2008

Cavers: Ricky Shortt, Dave Socky, Carl Cornett, Will Urbanski, Nikki Fox, Chris Coates, and Aaron Moses.



The Group

Aaron's desire to see Keystone River Cave began with Tim Curtis' pictures of beautiful glowing pools surrounded by black rock sculpted like a south Utah slot canyon. He was unable to find any information about the cave at the time

but wanted to see it just for the pools. Then a year later Aaron came across a trip report and Willie Hunt's pictures showing a monstrous and unique 246' pit in the cave. That solidified it: he had to go there!

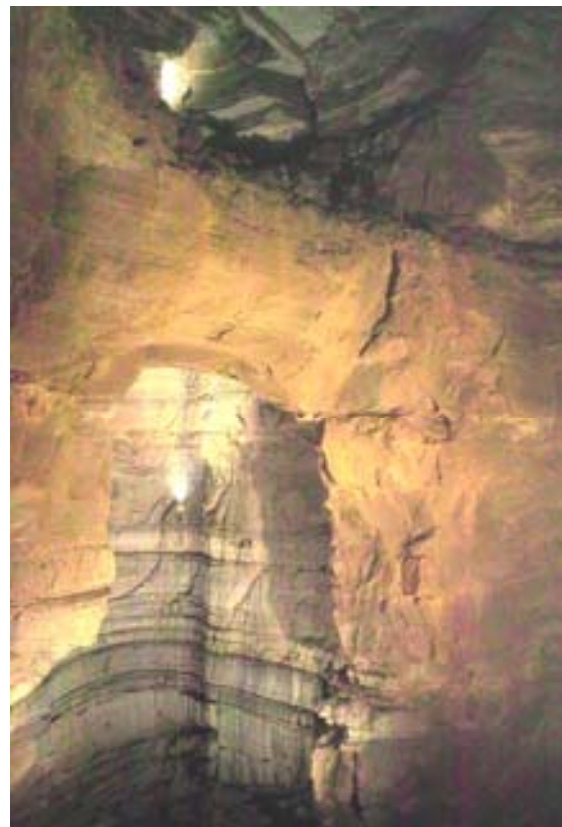
The trip began with everyone pulling out wetsuits, except for Nikki, Chris and Dave, and the muddy cave gear from the previous day at Rumbling Falls. We were fortunate that local Daniel Titus came down and offered us a crude map and some critical info to help us find our way down to the pit. We would later learn that a good map has never been drawn because the guy with the sketches went to prison.

After locating the cave only 150 feet from our cars, we climbed down the 12-foot entrance pit and then started the crawling. The cave begins with somewhat mazy hands and knees crawling over large cobbles. This leads to a climb down to a muddy dug out belly crawl. Following this belly crawl is a section of really neat canyon passage. It's in the shape of an upside down triangle with nicely scalloped gray walls and a flat ceiling. Aaron's only complaint was, well . . . it was more crawling. The floor soon dropped out a little just as the water began to pool up. This was nice for the people getting hot from their wetsuits. This passage is often described as a stoop walk was all of about 3 feet high for nearly its entire length. Maybe that's stoop-walking for some people, but not for tall people.

After one four-foot deep pool, we exited the water into a room. The passage was all easy walking with the exception of a short crawl over some large slabs. After the short crawl the passage became increasingly decorated as we approached the pit in ankle-to-waist deep water. We came upon huge pool

that filled the passage. Aaron jumped right in to cross it, as the rest of us traversed some rocks under water along the side. The layer of sculpted black rock began to expose itself from the floor and pretties pooped up here and there. Before we knew it the water was disappearing into a complexly sculpted gash in the floor.

At the top of the 246-foot pit, which was marked with a Keystone Light beer can, we began to assess the rigging situation. The only obvious anchors were boulders around 2-to-3 feet in diameter. The first one Aaron kicked moved. The second one he kicked caused a large chunk to come off. Aaron then decided it was time to quit kicking before we were out of anchors. Chris also was able to move a couple of the large boulders, noting that we should not rig to them. Finally, with a little equalization, we had an anchor that we were all comfortable with.



Composite photo of Rick on rope in the 246 foot pit in Keystone River. Note the

massive natural arch. Photo by Aaron Moses

After passing over rounded lip the drop went free and almost immediately belled to about 30 feet in diameter. A little further down and you passed by a window into the vast blackness of the huge breakdown chamber that intersects the pit. After passing by a natural bridge about 40 feet thick, the pit opens into the chamber the rest of the way down. We were surprised to see the breakdown at the bottom was all clean washed and sculpted by the waterfall. We all climbed about 100 feet up the breakdown mountain, which was mostly covered in flowstone and tiny rimstone dams, to get great views of the rest of the group rappelling the drop. We were all particularly excited to watch Chris speed rappel the drop. Nikki, Rick, and Aaron proceeded to take pictures of the nice bacon and rimstone formations we found in the room as others began their ascent out of the cave.



Dave admiring pretties

Coming out we split up into groups with Carl and Will heading out first, followed by Nikki and Chris and finally Rick, Dave and Aaron. We all took plenty of pictures along the way. Photos of nice formations, of the wet passages, and, of course, of Aaron doing stupid things like swimming across the lake again and squeezing through a wet slot in the floor

on the other side. The trip out wasn't too long but was a little bit tiring for Aaron, who was caring Chris and Nikki's 325-foot rope, with the trash bag lining the rope bag leaking and turning it into a 60-pound bag of water. After 11 hours in the cave we all made it out to look back on another TAG classic cave trip for the weekend.



Dave and Aaron in wet passage in Keystone River Cave. Photo by Rickey Shortt

Mystery Falls

by Nikki Fox

On the third day of our 3-day weekend in TAG, the eight of us split up to go out separate ways. Rickey, Aaron, Dave S., and Carl went to look at some local falls while Chris, Will, Dave W., and I drove to Chattanooga to rappel Mystery Falls.

Fortunately Brad Tipton (one of the men with a key) was available to take us into this historical cave. At 286 feet, it is the deepest pit in Tennessee. We arrived at the cave in the late morning and Brad took us about 50 feet into the cave before we hit the pit. The water flow is controlled into the pit (which was originally a dome and the path to the top was made) with a pipe in a brick wall. You can block the running water with a board in front of the pipe.

We rigged two ropes, Chris and my rope

on the high side, and Brad's on the normally-used rigging place on the low side. With this set-up, the four of us were able to rappel and climb in a fast manner.



The pit is highly decorated with beautiful flowstone and formations. We each rappelled with the waterfall "off." But when each of us climbed up the first time, Brad opened the flood gate and we were amazed by the roaring shower of water zipping past us on rope. Amazingly enough, the spray wasn't too bad when above the floor a little ways.

At the bottom of the pit, you could see where the water flowed down into a lake and kept going down. According to Brad, the city of Chattanooga used to use the cave for it's water supply. The water from Mystery Falls eventually flows into the Tennessee River. Also at the bottom you can see the old bucket-like cage that lowered people into the pit years ago. I believe that someone died when it failed.

The Fourth of July weekend marked descent of the largest drop in Tennessee and also the fourth largest (Keystone). Chris and I hope to return to TAG country for more underground

adventures!

My Latest Discovery

Corey Hackley

On Monday I biked, solo, down to jug end, where there are many caves and neat rolling marble terrains. The flank of the mountain is a bench of marble; it is riddled with sinkholes, ravines, and knolls, all of which look identical.

While searching out a cave I have heard of, but not found, I spotted a small wooden structure. That rang a bell; last year Ken had mentioned a small wooden structure with a hole in it that he did not check. Jackpot!

I approached the hole from a distance, and coming closer found it was only a couple feet deep, with a peculiar ring of stones about it. I thought, perhaps, that this ring of stones and accompanying wooden structure were to stabilize the top of the hole, allowing the bottom to collapse without being refilled. Well, if that is the case, I should push on the bottom, to make it collapse! This is customary practice for ridge walkers; you never know when you will just fall into your next cave.

The bottom did have some give, so I pushed a little harder and sank into the mud. Pounding my foot into the bottom of the hole with more and more fervor, characteristic of an excited digger, a foul smell began to issue from the hole, instead of the blast of cold air I had been hopefully anticipating. In an instant, I realized the rungs of the wooden structure were butt cheek width apart, the hole had been dug, and my foot was covered in something greenish.

As sinkholes go, this one contained an inordinate amount of fecal matter.

I had been probing a human latrine.

Not much promise there.



6/28 – Frog Hollow Cave, Greenbrier Co, WV – Jep, Bill Balfore – Surveyed 1654’ -

8/23 – Friar Hole System, Pocahontas/Greenbrier Co’s, WV – Terry McClanathan, Todd, Brian Masney, John Harmon – Crookshank entrance to Friars Hole

8/24 – Carpenter-Swago System – Terry, Todd, Brian, John – Pre-rigged the Carpenter side – We started our pull-down from the Swago side – The Dry Gallery is close to a mile in length – 7 hours.

8/28 – 9/1 – OTR – Carl & Sandy, Eric & Priscilla, Bob & Paulette, Gordon, Jerry & Mary, Ken, Chris & Nikki, Mary Lynn, Anya & Kevin, Danny C, John Da, John Di, Ben & Jo Beth, Barry, JC & Judy, Larry F, Bob Gu, Jeff H, Art Sr, Art Jr, Lucas, Kai, & Christal, Allison, Bill J, Ed, Karen, & Zoe, Pat M, Twila N, Janey & JJ, Jep, Todd, Earl & Cheryl, & Bill V

8/29 – Carpenter Pit, Pocahontas Co, WV – Jeff Hajenga, Larry Fisher, & Gordon Cole – Dropped the pit & checked out a few of the ‘not the way to Swaygo’ leads

8/29 – Carpenter-Swago System, Pocahontas Co, WV – Nikki Fox, Chris Coates, Bob Zimmerman, & 7 others from PA – Crossover trip - Four drops on the Swago side, and three climbs on the Carpenter side.

8/30 – Bowden Cave, Randolph Co, WV – Bob Bennett, Jerry & Mary Bowen, Ken Carter, Chris Coates & Nikki Fox, John DiCarlo, Jeff Hajenga, Art Jr, Lucas, & Malakai Hanson, & Christal Henson – 5th Annual Polyester Power Hour

8/30 – One Scary Day(Cave), Fentress Co, TN – Terry, Marion O. Smith, Sharon Jones – Dug open by John Swartz just this past winter – The cave is aptly named – You have to rappel down through a jumble of very threatening death boulders for almost ninety vertical feet to the lip of a 126’ pit. – 2 hr

8/31 – Windy Run Cave, Randolph Co, WV – Bob, Jeff, Chris, Nikki, Jerry, Mary – Long scenic hike – 106’ & 18’ drops

8/31 – Ostara Cave, Jackson Co., AL – Terry, Marion, Sharon, Andy Zellner
The cave has been known for several years, but has only ever seen one sport trip – 66’, 131’, & 85’ pits – The depth of the cave was about 350’ – 6 hr

9/11 – Crystal Grottoes, Washington Co, MD – Sean, Bernie, Abigail, Chris, Jonathan, & Tyler Wootten, John DiCarlo - Work Day

9/17 – Donaldson Cave, Berkeley Co, WV – Bernie Wootten, Tiffany Arnold, & Jerry Bowen - Tiffany Arnold of the Herald-Mail Newspaper in Hagerstown, MD and two of her photographers, on location deep into the cave. Tiffany went with me and saw 95% of the cave - The photographers got hung up in different areas taking pictures. The article should appear in this Sundays, October 12, Lifestyle section.

9/17 – Carnegie Cave, ___ Co, PA – Joe Reeves, Skip & Sue Reeder & 7 kids, Sean & Bernie & 4 kids - Waded through knee deep mud in Carnegie Cave

9/18-19 – Trout Cave, Pendleton Co, WV – Jeff Hajenga, Craig Stihler, & others – Cave gating

9/19-21 – Fall VAR – Bob & Paulette Bennett, John Dale, Alan Knowlton, Bernie, Sean, Abigail, Chris, Jonathan, & Tyler Wootten, JC Fisher, Chris Coates, Nikki Fox, Lauren Rexford, Greg McCoy, Jep, Ellie Florance, Jerry Bowen, Eric Berge, Gordon Birkhimer, Anya Crane, Kevin Mulligan, Danny Cumbo, Lee Durst, Sonny Floyd, Bob Gulden, Pat Minnick, Ann Muldoon, Twila Neeld, Todd Roberts, Ken Tayman, & Jon Peterson

9/19 – Hide-A-Bed, Greenbrier Co, WV – Bob Bennett, Ellie Florance, Jerry Bowen, & Jep – 1st official trip into cave in many years

9/19 – Rehobeth Church Cave, Monroe Co, WV – Eric Berge & others

9/20 – Catawba Murder Hole, ___ Co, VA – Eric Berge & others

9/20 – Paxtons Cave, Allegheny Co, VA – Bob, Jerry, Ann – Played in maze

9/21 – Catawba Murder Hole, ___ Co, VA – Bob B, Paulette, Jerry, Nikki, Chris – All but Paulette bounced entrance pit

9/24 – GEPKS – Chuck & Bob B – Checked Sinkhole in Jefferson Co

9/24 – Caldwell Cave, Mercer Co, WV – Jeff Hajenga - Trash pickup in area and checked on cave salamanders and cave protection sign at entrance.

10/4 – Pinesburg Cave, Washington Co, MD – Joe & Wes Reeves – Locate & briefly explored the cave

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