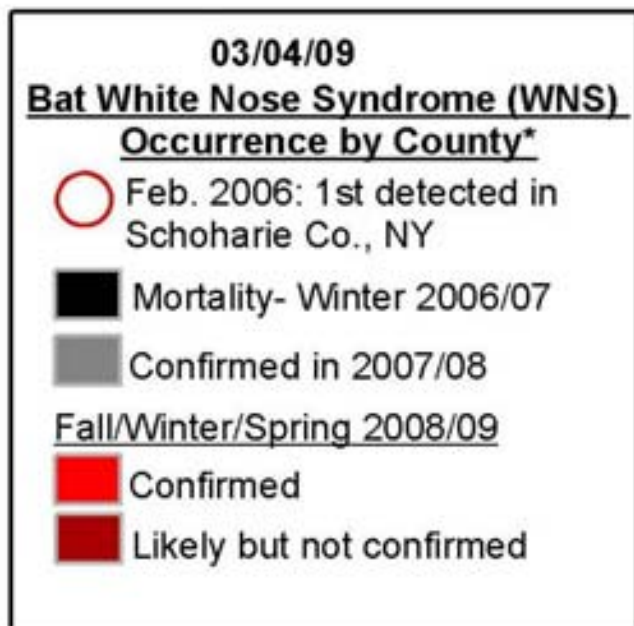


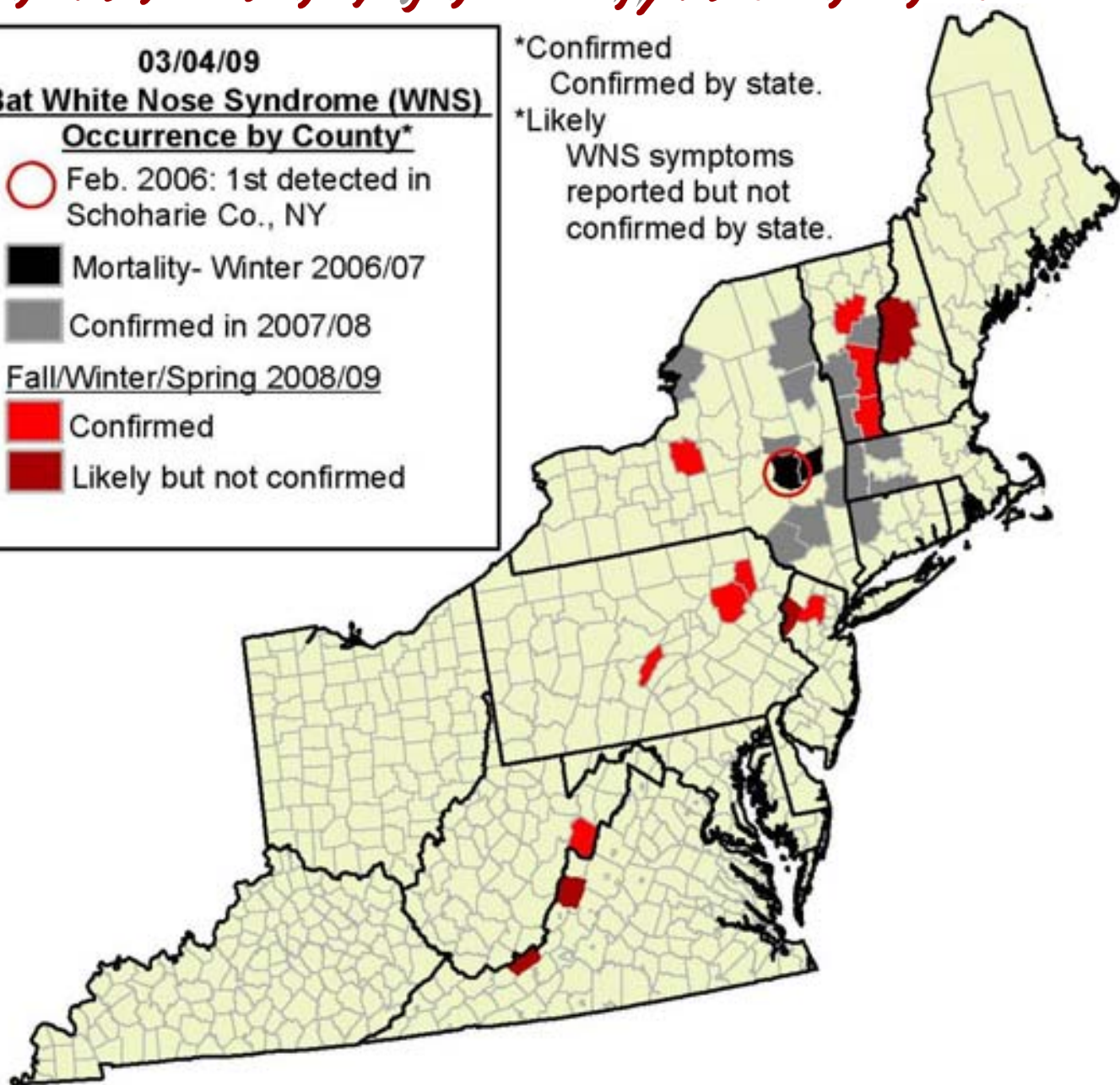
# DEAD DOG DISPATCH

## TRI-STATE GROTTO



\*Confirmed  
 Confirmed by state.

\*Likely  
 WNS symptoms reported but not confirmed by state.



# MAP OF COUNTIES & STATES WITH WNS

**VOL. #24**

**ISS. #3**

**MAR**

**2009**

**#25**



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

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\*\*\* The photo on the cover shows Chris Coates in  
McMahons Mill Cave. It was taken by Nikki Fox.

\*\*\*\* 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](mailto:gimpycaver@comcast.net) or **JUDY  
FISHER** [304-258-4974(H) or 304-258-1822(W)](E-MAIL  
at [jcf@access.mountain.net](mailto: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!**



# CAVE EVENTS

## 2009

MAR 6 ----- GEPKS – Bob – GPS caves in Jefferson Co  
MAR 7 ----- Norman – see Nikki – Thru trip  
MAR 11 ----- Grotto Meeting 7PM  
MAR 14 ----- Scout trip – need leader  
MAR 14 ----- Adam Stephen Dig – 9am – see John DiCarlo  
MAR 17 ----- ST PATRICK'S DAY  
MAR 20 ----- VERNAL (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 – Held at Grand Caverns  
MAY 7 ----- Day of Prayer  
MAY 9 ----- Martinsburg Heritage Day – Adam Stephen Day – 10 AM  
MAY 10 ----- MOTHER'S DAY  
MAY 13 ----- Grotto meeting 7pm  
MAY 16 ----- ARMED FORCES DAY  
MAY 21-25 -- KY Speleofest – Lone Star Preserve  
MAY 25 ----- MEMORIAL DAY  
MAY 28-31 -- SERA Cave Carnival, Walker Co, GA  
JUN 5-7 ----- Bubble Weekend  
JUN 10 ----- Grotto Meeting – 7pm  
JUN 14 ----- FLAG DAY  
JUN 20 ----- WV Day  
JUN 21 ----- FATHER'S DAY  
JUN 21 ----- SUMMER SOLSTICE  
JUN 25-28 -- Karst-O-Rama – Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve - KY  
JUL 4 ----- INDEPENDENCE DAY  
JUL 8 ----- Grotto Meeting – 7pm  
JUL 11 ----- Grotto Picnic – Crystal Grottoes – 12pm  
JUL 19-26 --- NSS Convention, Kerryville, TX  
AUG 12 ----- Grotto Meeting – 7 PM  
AUG 14-16-- Indiana Cave Capers – Camp Riverdale, Mitchel, IN

## 2010

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

## 2011

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

## 2012

JUN 25-30 -----NSS Convention, Lewisburg, WV

### \*\*\*\*\* 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 February----- **\$15.00**

TOTAL TO DATE: --- **\$4400.00**

### Keep It Coming!

## GROTTO LINKS

Tri-State Grotto website ----- [www.wobey.net/TSG](http://www.wobey.net/TSG)  
VAR website ----- [www.varegion.org](http://www.varegion.org)  
NSS website ----- [www.caves.org](http://www.caves.org)  
NSS Convention 2009 ----- <http://www.ics2009.us/>  
OTR Website ----- [www.otr.org](http://www.otr.org)  
MAR Website ----- [www.caves.org/region/mar/](http://www.caves.org/region/mar/)  
WVCC ----- [www.wvcc.net](http://www.wvcc.net)  
Andy Celmer's Web Site --- [www.wobey.net/TSG/Andy/](http://www.wobey.net/TSG/Andy/)  
Art Jr's Web Site ----- <http://photos.arthanson.net/>  
Art Jr's 2<sup>nd</sup> Web Site ----- <http://www.tristategrotto.org/>  
Bob's Web Site ----- [www.wobey.net/TSG/Bob/](http://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](http://www.wobey.net/TSG/Ehren)  
Jerry's Cave Web Site ----- [www.wobey.net/TSG/Jerry/](http://www.wobey.net/TSG/Jerry/)  
Vitas's Web Site ----- [www.wobey.net/TSG/Vitas/](http://www.wobey.net/TSG/Vitas/)  
Tina Blaik's Web Site ----- [www.kayakdream.com/](http://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/](http://s63.photobucket.com/albums/h143/Todd_05/)  
Bob Gulden's Web Page - [www.caverbob.com/home.htm](http://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](http://www.chockstone.org/TechTips/prusik.htm#Bachman)  
Tri-State Grotto MySpace -----  
----- [www.myspace.com/tristategrotto](http://www.myspace.com/tristategrotto)  
Animated Knots by Grog ----- [www.animatedknots.com/](http://www.animatedknots.com/)  
White Nose Syndrome -----  
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/dcg/wns-notice-to-cavers.pdf>

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NSS Online Cavers ----- [www.onlinecavers.com](http://www.onlinecavers.com)  
WNS -- <http://www.caves.org/WNS/WNS%20Info.htm>  
Containment Precedures -----  
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html>



MONTH OF March

Peter Cooper, Pearce Cooper, Bob  
Gulden, Ken Tayman

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

CAVING NEWS

WNS!!!

FYI

The press release about WNS in VA:  
<http://www.dgif.virginia.gov/wildlife/b...-syndrome/>

For Immediate Release  
3/9/2009

Virginia Investigating Possible Cases of White-  
Nose Syndrome in Bats

Asking Cavers, Owners of Caves to Help by  
Reducing Cave Traffic

Richmond, VA — The Virginia Department of  
Game and Inland Fisheries (VDGIF) is  
investigating two recent potential occurrences of  
white-nose syndrome (WNS) in bats in Virginia.  
While conducting winter surveys of caves where  
bats hibernate, known as hibernacula, biologists  
and volunteers from VDGIF, the Virginia

Department of Conservation and Recreation, the  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Virginia  
Speleological Survey discovered bats that  
showed signs of WNS in Breathing Cave in Bath  
County. Soon after, similar symptoms were found  
in bats in Clover Hollow Cave in Giles County.  
Specimens were collected and sent to the U.S.  
Geological Survey (USGS) National Wildlife  
Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin, for  
analysis. It will take from two to three weeks for  
results to be available.

White-nose syndrome was first found in the  
winter of 2006-2007, when bats in several caves  
around Albany, New York, displayed a white  
fungus growing around their muzzles, ears, and  
wings. By spring 2008, thousands of bats had  
died, and conditions had spread to other sites in  
New York and adjacent states. By the winter of  
2008-2009, WNS had spread to bats in Vermont,  
Massachusetts, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, New  
Jersey, and West Virginia, and is suspected in  
New Hampshire. Scientists have been alarmed  
by the rapid and far-reaching spread of the  
syndrome. Little is known about WNS, but one  
common symptom in these cases is the presence  
of this newly-identified fungus. How the fungus  
affects bats remains unclear. No known human  
health issues have been identified.

During the summer and early fall in Virginia,  
bats feed on insects and build body fat reserves  
critical for successful hibernation and survival  
through the winter months. Bat colonies  
consume thousands of insects in a single night,  
including mosquitoes and beetles. During  
hibernation, the metabolism of bats slows  
dramatically, virtually shutting down, to  
conserve fat reserves. Bats emerge in the spring  
ready to consume insects, give birth, raise their  
young pups, and continue their life cycle.

Bats collected from known WNS caves have  
depleted fat reserves; some even have appeared  
to starve to death. Bats suspected of having WNS  
appear to arouse more often and are more active  
during the hibernation period. Reports of bats  
found flying outside of mines or caves,  
apparently trying to find food, at a time when

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*they should be hibernating, are symptomatic of the syndrome. WNS is almost always fatal to affected bats.*

*The impact of white-nose syndrome on bat populations could be highly significant if the condition cannot be controlled and continues to spread. Some WNS caves in New York have experienced declines of more than 90% of the bat populations. Losses in bat populations of this magnitude will cause a substantial ripple effect due to the important role that bats play as insect feeders, as a food source for other animals (hawks, owls, raccoons, skunks, and other animals that prey on bats), and with their contributions to cave ecosystems.*

*How WNS is spread is under investigation, but it is suspected that transmission of the syndrome can occur by both bat and human traffic in caves. Many of the caves where WNS has been confirmed have been popular sites for recreational caving. Huge geographical leaps in WNS occurrences beyond the migration distances of bats, and in popular recreational caves, indicate that people who visit caves may inadvertently play a role.*

*Due to concerns about spread of WNS, the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries has closed the caves on its wildlife management areas until more is known about the transport of the syndrome. The Department will be asking private landowners with caves on their properties to consider closing their caves temporarily. Caving groups and individuals who enjoy caving are being asked to respect this temporary closure of Virginia caves and to suspend recreational and research caving activities until more information about the cause and spread of WNS can be determined.*

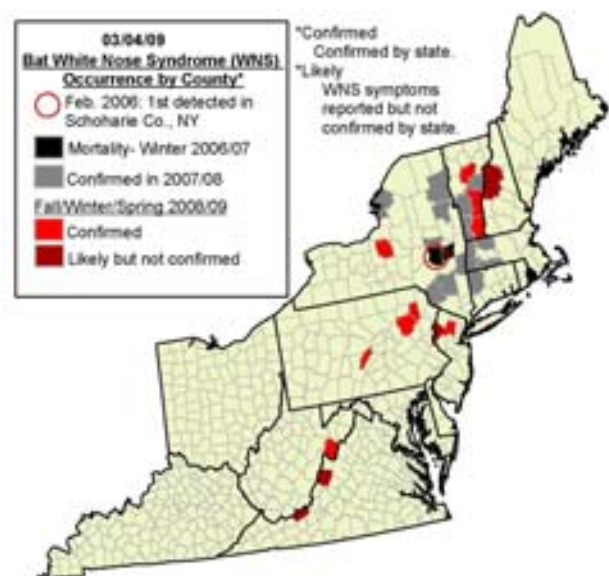
*The USGS National Wildlife Health Center is currently conducting experiments to determine how white-nose syndrome is spread between affected bat colonies and healthy bat colonies. Research is being conducted on soil samples to learn more about the fungus. The scientific community is well aware that, with the rapid*

*spread of WNS and the high mortality, answers to the mystery of WNS and solutions to address it are of the utmost importance. Because of the potential impact of WNS, the VDGIF urges cavers and cave owners to help Virginia's bat populations by reducing cave traffic until more is learned about this syndrome.*

*For more information about white-nose syndrome and about the bats of Virginia, visit <http://www.dgif.virginia.gov>.*

*It is the mission of the VDGIF to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation and to work diligently to safeguard the rights of the people to hunt, fish and harvest game as provided for in the Constitution of Virginia; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing; to provide educational outreach programs and materials that foster an awareness of and appreciation for Virginia's fish and wildlife resources, their habitats, and hunting, fishing, and boating opportunities.*

*\* © 2009 Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries*



# **Tri-State Grotto**

## **Meeting**

**Feb 11, 2009**

Bernie Wootten started the meeting at 7 pm. 19 members were present.

Chuck Stanley gave the treasurer's report. It was moved, seconded and passed.

### *Mail and announcements*

The 2009 SCCI Open House is Saturday, February 28, 2009.

We received a "Thank You" letter from WVCC for the CaveBucks we have sent them.

### *Old Business*

VAR. We discussed WNS and if it would be a factor at the VAR. We also talked about the contract with Grand Caverns. Jerry Bowen showed us a mock-up of the guidebook.

TSG will be nominating Joe Harper for the VAR Landowner Award.

WNS has turned up in Hamilton Cave.

### *New Business*

We received an invite to show the caves at The Adam Stephen House during Heritage Days.

### *Trip reports*

Bernie told us that she had pictures of cool stuff from Ohio that she will show at the next meeting.

Bob Bennett, Danny Cumbo and John DiCarlo are searching for Duffys Caverns.

Bob talked about an opening next to Ted Wachter's driveway. Ted climbed down and it

had some passages and a lot of loose rock. Unfortunately the owner has put fill in it and it collapsed as a larger sinkhole.

Bob is leading a trip to Breathing Cave in Bath Co, VA, Feb 14. Meet at the Inwood Food Lion at 7 am.

**CaveBucks.** \$15 was collected and will be sent to WVCC

Bernie dismissed the meeting at 7:45

Terry McClanathan gave a slide show called "Name That Cave" after the meeting.

Submitted by  
**John P. Di Carlo, Jr.**  
**Secretary**  
Tri-State Grotto



Chris Coates in small C&O Canal Cave



# TRIP REPORTS

## Pendleton County and Hamilton cave: Beyond the Airblower Corey Hackley



Formations in Quarry Cave

On Sunday January 11, 2008, Joe Clemens and I entered Hamilton cave on the Trout Rock Cave Preserve. Jon had to go back home for work early on Monday, leaving Joe and I to grab dinner at Fox's Pizza Den (try something called "the wedgie") and play around in a giant maze cave for the better part of the night. Stopping by the car, we grabbed the map, some lights, water, some snickers, and a pad of paper with which to mark our way. It was a little before 8 o'clock when we began the climb up to the cave. On the way up, we stopped briefly to marvel at the newly installed gate on the Trout Cave entrance. It will be awhile before anyone breaks through that one.

It was starry, and about 30 degrees when we reached the entrance. The warm air was spilling from the cave and keeping everything near the entrance nice and damp. Right away I pulled out the map and started choosing passages to follow. I had a vague goal of reaching the larger areas in

the back of the cave, and chose passages accordingly. Well, we were confused as to our location by the time we reached the register room (one of three we passed in the cave) and I started choosing passages based on direction, trying to follow the fractures straight back to the deeper portions of the cave. The passages became progressively smaller until we were mostly crawling through identical, narrow, triangular passages with chert protrusions on the walls. Joe, a little more frank about his nervousness than I was attempting to be, diligently left a paper arrow at each junction. We would be grateful for this later.

Finally a passage emptied into a small room with some breakdown. The map only marks breakdown in this portion of the cave near the center of the maze. This was a vital clue to recognizing where we were. Pushing farther into the mountain, straight as we could along the axis of the anticline, we were soon, unmistakably, in the slab room. This room can be recognized by four large, flat, breakdown slabs at each of its corners. From here we went straight out of the room into a passage that was marked on the map as leading to the next chamber, though the connection must have been much tighter than the map suggested. We could not find a comfortable way into the next room from this passage.

Returning to the slab room, we decided to try another route. We turned left out of the room, and carefully using the map, shimmied down through a hole that looked sort of like a toilet bowl. From here, room by room, we found our way to the Roslyn Escalator. If you can find your way this far, you can make it to the Airblower. We slid down the escalator, the first significant drop in elevation we encountered, and in no time stood face to face with the blower.

Its entrance is a few feet up the wall from the floor of a small room, and it would be unthinkable that it leads to the largest part of the cave, were it not for the rushing air at its entrance and the heavy wear on the rock. The tube does not look humanly passable, at a glance. It is solid rock, slightly sinuous, irregular. We dove in.

Being inside the Airblower is an existential experience. The two loudest sounds, as you pass through the tube, are the air rushing past your ears and the rhythm of your own heart racing in your chest. The rock is snug on all sides; your shoulders remain contorted, with one arm ahead of you and one arm behind.

Having been spat out of the blower, we collapsed on the floor ten feet below its outlet to rest and be thankful. After a few minutes of laughing, I suggested we die. Joe pointed to a knob on the wall behind me, inscribed with an arrow to the floor and the words "die here." We decided it was best to move on.

Contrary to what one might hope, there are still a good deal of obstacles between the airblower and the impressive parts of the cave. Several other constrictions, junctions, and a long, grueling fissure passage, constricted several times more, must be encountered between the near death experience and the Bowl Room. We pushed through these.

Disconcerting was the number of bats still awake in this portion of the cave. They fluttered around us, bonking into us in inconvenient places and screeching. An Ad Hoc version of the popular hip-hop song "Been Through Too Much Bull\*\*\*\* to Put up With These Drunken Hot Girls" was composed: "Been Through Too Much Bull\*\*\*\* to Put Up With These Drunken Hot Bats" remained our theme song for the rest of the trip.

Only a couple weeks later, WNS was identified in the deep portions of Hamilton. Consequently, the cave has been closed, and should be avoided until the end of the hibernation season, or possibly entirely.

We continued down the gently sloping canyon through numerous tight spots, dragging more and more. Finally, I shouted down the passage and heard a distant booming echo. Joe and I picked up our pace, and in seconds were sitting at the ceiling of the immense, funnel shaped bowl room. Until now, the entire cave had been on pretty much the same plane. At the bowl room, everything dropped steeply to the gaping lead at the bottom of the room. Joe sat back on the floor

of the passage to rest; I scrambled down the steep rocky slope to see the lower level. This is the deepest point of the cave. There must be more in this region; the air must come from somewhere.

After a little more pushing and exploring, we decided we had to leave before we got too tired to make the return trip. Joe and I switched roles on the way out; I had rushed in the cave, motivated by the large rooms deep inside. Joe, motivated by the prospect of leaving the cave, was now the more energetic one, diligently removing his paper arrows and guiding us safely and quickly to the entrance. There was a little hangup on the return trip through the blower. Joe's headlamp had been scraped off the first time, and sat in the tube. I had to do a lot of maneuvering, and took a lot of false starts trying to pick up the light and put it in the bowl of my helmet.

The trip up the escalator was fun, and we were rejuvenated trying to find all our turns and twists necessary to exit. Hamilton is really a puzzle, and can be a very fun cave as long as you keep your wits about you and your sense of direction strong. Three Hours after entering, we burst out the entrance into the open West Virginia Night, cold, starry, and relieving. Pleased with ourselves, we went back to the little hotel room in Franklin, took hot showers, and watched animal planet until we fell asleep, images of chert nodules and identical 4-way intersections floating through our heads.

### **A New Zealand Wedding!!**

#### **Lord of the Rings**

By Lauren McCoy

Bob, we brought you along with us in spirit to New Zealand; thank you again for your list of must-see places. We did get to Waitomo cave - the same day we were married, Friday 2/13 - to see the glowworms by boat through the cave. There are thousands of them and they illuminate huge high-ceiling rooms! No pictures, no talking, no touching was allowed.



Outside it's a tropical, humid forest with enormous ferns. That was on the north island. On the south island, caver Kevin Mountford took us to his Nelson Speleo Group meeting on Thursday, 2/19 and on Saturday, February 21 we visited Harwoods Hole with Kevin, Mary from Oklahoma and Jessie from Canada. More on that awesome trip, and photos, later.



Mt Doom



Lord of the Rings!

### **Microwave Cave: Anatomy of a TAG Multidrop** by Terry McClanathan

It is no secret that I like deep pits, and while I have sort of a reputation as a pit bopper, what I really enjoy most are caves with deep pits in them. Unfortunately, these are not to be found in great abundance in our primary caving state of West Virginia. A few do exist, and are in fact quite nice. Sinks of the Run in Greenbrier,

Caldwell in Mercer, Windy Run in Randolph, and the Swago pit series of Carpenter Swago in Pocahontas have been known for a good many years. More recently, Germany Valley discoveries in Pendleton have even given the state some degree of notoriety in vertical status.

By 1972 I was hooked on vertical caving to the extent that it was rare that any caving trip did not revolve around at least one pit cave. This would explain my early infatuation with TAG. There are thousands of pits in this area, and the number exceeding 100 feet in depth is currently around 450. Over half of these are open air surface pits, but many are also found inside caves which are known simply as TAG multi-drops. There are around a hundred caves in TAG which fit the criteria for a multi-drop. The typical multi-drop would be between 400-600 feet deep, contain about half a dozen pits, and be somewhere between half a mile and a mile in length. There are a few considerably deeper than 600', and some sub-400 footers would also qualify.

The explanation for the proliferation of so many medium depth caves in such a small geographic area can be found in the geology of the region. Most of TAG is part of the Cumberland Plateau. The plateau is structurally made up of several distinct limestone units overlain by a thick sandstone cap rock. The limestones are perched between 300-600 feet above the valley floors which serve as the local water tables. The permeability of the overlying sandstones acts as the perfect sieve to channel acid-laden groundwater down into the soluble limestones. Where erosion has exposed the limestone along the flanks of the many incised coves radiating from the main river valleys dome pits are often intersected to form pit entrances to the caves.

The top two limestone units are the Pennington, a poor, thin cave former, and the Bangor. The Bangor and a lower unit called the Monteagle are each about 200 feet thick and account for most of the TAG multi-drops. There also exists an interrupt unit called the Hartselle formation. The Hartselle is a largely impermeable shale layer of minimal thickness, usually ranging from just a few feet to seldom more than ten. It is

responsible for preventing more than half of TAG's Bangor pits from reaching the Monteagle. This is the reason why a lot of the pits in TAG are dead bottom after just one or two drops, and do not have depths of much over 200'. If a cave has enough corrosive power it is able to breach the Hartselle and can continue down through the Monteagle. When this happens there is nothing to stop the movement of groundwater from making it all the way to the valley floor, hence dozens of caves end up between 400-600 feet deep.

Sometimes the water emerges as a passable spring making for a sporting through trip, usually referred to as a pull-down, where, as long as the trip leader is familiar with the route, it is possible to traverse the entire cave carrying just one or two ropes, pulling the rope down each drop as you go. The route finding is often not difficult because a common mode of exploration for a true TAG multi-drop is simply follow the water. At other times the caves may end in deep sumps, too tight branching crawls, breakdown chokes, or pinches too small for passing or too long for practical modification. Regardless, most TAG multi-drops offer exciting traverses down drop after drop of clean washed scalloped and potholed passages with the song of running water a constant companion. Some caves can be a bit more demanding, as the Hartselle contact is sometimes marked by long, mucky crawls typical of passages formed in shales. TAG multi-drops offer varying degrees of challenge, ranging from the truly difficult whip you're a\*# variety to those that are just plain fun caving.

To date I've been to just over half of the multi-drops in TAG. Predictably my efforts have been focused on the ones containing hundred foot pits. The following is an account of one of the latest trips in Alabama's Microwave Cave. Microwave is not a new cave. In fact it was first pushed in the '80's to a depth of about 500', including a 135-footer. You'd think I would have put it on my list a long time ago, but until just recently it was on restricted land. A couple of years back this land became part of the Skyline Recreation and Wildlife Preserve, which is accessible for caving, but I didn't learn this until just this past

summer. I made plans to visit the cave during the 08 TAG Cave-in.

I could find no one willing to serve as guide for the trip, but a few of my TAG caving friends did provide me with helpful information. Alan Cressler and Doug Strait gave me a good description of the cave, and Andy Zellner verified its location on a topo map for me. I got together a competent crew of younger generation TAG cavers and we were good to go. Anxious to experience his first ever TAG trip, Todd Roberts joined me for the long ride down. The rest of the crew consisted of Brian Killinbeck and Mae Kile from Chattanooga, Manuel Beers and Jeff Moore from the Atlanta area, and Dan Nolfi and Tabatha Cavendish from Knoxville.

Our approach was from the top of the plateau. The walk down was only about half a mile with a 400 foot elevation loss, which is pretty tame by TAG standards. Doug had warned me to take one extra rope besides the six drops listed in the ACS, so we had seven ropes in all. The deep pit was the first one encountered so the only long rope would have to be carried just a short ways in. A small streamlet was flowing into the entrance. Alan told me the cave could be very wet at times.

A cobble floored stream passage extended from the entrance as a hands and knees crawl for about 800' to the deep drop. Looking over, I could see water splashing from a ledge about 40' down. It looked like a good rig point could be reached by traversing around on a flowstone ledge about eight feet from where the water entered the pit. I thought this might make the drop free and bypass the water splashing from the ledges. My rig point required a short exposed traverse out around the edge of the pit (while clipped in of course). Some in the group had a little difficulty with the traverse at the top, but most managed it smoothly. The pit was surprisingly nice. The rig point did allow for a basically free drop and we missed the water. It was easy to imagine that the pit would be a raging thrasher in high water, but on this day it was just a little drippy. The shaft belled nicely to a diameter of about thirty feet. I waited at the bottom until everyone was safely

down. Manuel and Todd took a couple of the ropes and headed on to the next drop.

I knew the 135 foot pit was followed by five short pits spread out over about 1000 feet of passage to the bottom. The ACS printout said none of the drops was deeper than 26'. The second drop was a short distance from the bottom of the 135 and only 12 feet deep. Manuel had already rigged it and was enroute to the third pit when I arrived. There seemed to be some confusion after this. Perhaps I hadn't described the cave to Manuel, who I think was in the lead, very well. Shortly Dan and Tabatha were making their way back to the 135, apparently not liking the look of the third drop. This was approached by a low crawl in water with an awkward move to the lip of the pit. It was only an eight-footer, but offered no footholds. Manuel must have thought it did not count as one of the six drops because he had rigged it with webbing, even though he had a rope. If you've ever tried climbing soaking wet one inch webbing with no footholds, you can appreciate why Dan and Tabatha weren't too thrilled. Brian and Mae were still behind me and had our shortest rope which I used to replace the webbing. This nuisance drop landed in a pool of wall to wall water. A down-cutting stream channel of moderate dimensions carried water from the pool over several down-climbs.

Within a few hundred feet we came to a fourth drop of 25 feet. More down-climbs over a clean washed, potholed and scalloped stream passage lead to the final drop series. The initial part of this may have been the seventh extra drop Doug had mentioned. We climbed it easily, but I could imagine that even in moderate water flow the obvious holds would be hidden by the cascading water. The last two drops of 15 and 26 feet followed in short order. We were standing on the bottom of a spacious flat gravel floor. The stream disappeared beneath a low ledge.

We had traversed only about 2000 feet of cave and were at a depth of about 450', but Microwave contains about three miles of passages. The rest of the cave is beyond a 2000' stream crawl which Alan had told me about.

Many years earlier he had also discovered a second entrance which lead down a series of short drops interspersed with tight nasty canyons and crawls, also intersecting the main cave on the other side of the 2000' crawl. I thought I might at least have a quick look at the crawl just to see if I liked it. From the base of the last pit I followed a fissure passage through some interconnected domes for a few hundred feet to where everything just pinched down to a low crawl. I peeked into it enough to see that it was flat out belly about 10" high in a shallow stream. There was no way I wanted anything to do with 2000' of that. I got the feeling Manuel and Todd may have been interested in seeing some more of the cave, but no one objected too strenuously when I suggested this might be a good time to rout.

I was still carrying the seventh rope, which we never used, so I took that and started up the drops. Todd, Manuel, Brian, and Mae were not far behind me as they derigged the other drops and removed the ropes. I think Todd was the hero and carried the long rope used in the 135 foot pit out through the 800' entrance crawl for the final leg.

As multidrops go, the part of Microwave that we saw was actually pretty nice. Even the long crawl from the entrance was only hands and knees, not belly. There were just a few short crawly sections between the drops. There was really nothing that would truly qualify as genuinely gnarly. The 135' pit far exceeded my expectations. In high water the entire cave would have been quite sporting in my younger days; now at 60 such a trip would probably be more than I could handle. If one desired a truly kick-butt trip, there's always the 2000' stream crawl at the bottom, or you could try Alan's second entrance. For me, I'd prefer good memories, so I don't think I'll ever try either of those options.



**SPRING VAR 2009 REGISTRATIOM FORM**  
**APRIL 24-26, 2009**  
**GRAND CAVERNS REGIONAL PARK**  
**5 GRAND CAVERNS ROAD**  
**GROTTOES, VA 24441**  
**HOSTED BY TRI STATE GROTTTO**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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State \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Grotto/Organization \_\_\_\_\_

Adult (16 + years) \$33.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Children (5-15 years) \$29.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Children (0-4 years) Free x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ 0.00

Extra Guide Book \$ 5.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# of Vegetarian Meals requested (Available on pre-registration only) \_\_\_\_\_

Sunday Morning Breakfast \$ 4.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

T-Shirt Small \$12.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Medium \$12.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Large \$12.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

X-Large \$12.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

XX-Large \$15.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Due = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Alcohol must be consumed with great discretion as it is not allowed in the park. No bottles or cans can be seen by park manager. Pets must be on a leash and well behaved at all times.

**Please remember the continued concern for the spread of WNS, clean all gear before arrival (See Decontamination protocols) and if planning to attend more than one cave bring two sets of clothes**

*March 24, 2009 is Pre-Registration Deadline*

Cost if postmarked after March 24: Add \$3.00 per person

Make checks payable to the Tri State Grotto & Mail with Registration form to:

Bernie Wootten 431 Liberty St., Hagerstown MD, 21740





# SAVIN CALENDAR

## MARCH 8TH - APRIL 18TH



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>Mar 8</b> DAYLIGHT SAVING TIME STARTS	<b>Mar 9</b>	<b>Mar 10</b>	<b>Mar 11</b>  Grotto Meeting 7PM	<b>Mar 12</b>	<b>Mar 13</b>	<b>Mar 14</b> Adam Stephen Dig 9AM
<b>Mar 15</b>	<b>Mar 16</b>	<b>Mar 17</b>  ST PATRICK'S DAY	<b>Mar 18</b>	<b>Mar 19</b>	<b>Mar 20</b>  VERNAL EQUINOX	<b>Mar 21</b>
<b>Mar 22</b> World Water Day	<b>Mar 23</b>	<b>Mar 24</b>	<b>Mar 25</b> MD Day	<b>Mar 26</b>	<b>Mar 27</b>	<b>Mar 28</b>
<b>Mar 29</b>	<b>Mar 30</b>	<b>Mar 31</b>	<b>Apr 1</b> ALL FOOL'S DAY	<b>Apr 2</b>	<b>Apr 3</b>	<b>Apr 4</b>
<b>Apr 5</b>	<b>Apr 6</b>	<b>Apr 7</b>	<b>Apr 8</b>  Grotto Meeting 7pm	<b>Apr 9</b>	<b>Apr 10</b> GOOD FRIDAY	<b>Apr 11</b>
<b>Apr 12</b>  EASTER	<b>Apr 13</b>	<b>Apr 14</b>	<b>Apr 15</b> TAX DAY	<b>Apr 16</b>	<b>Apr 17</b>	<b>Apr 18</b>

# DEAD DOG DISPATCH



Nikki in very low passage

- 1- WNS FOUND IN BREATHING CAVE!!!!!!!!!!!!**
- 2- MICROWAVE CAVE**
- 3- LORD OF THE RINGS**



## DEAD DOG DISPATCH

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