

DEAD DOG DISPATCH

TRI-STATE CROTCH

NORMAN CAVE WATERFALL

VOL. #24

ISS. #4

APR

2009

#39



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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.

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*** The photo on the cover shows the Norman Cave waterfall. The photo 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 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!



CAVE EVENTS

2009

APR 1 ----- ALL FOOL'S DAY
APR 8 ----- Grotto Meeting 7PM
APR 10 ----- GOOD FRIDAY
APR 12 ----- EASTER
APR 15 ----- TAX DAY
APR 19 ----- Work on Karst Trail – Crystal Caverns –
10AM
APR 22 ----- EARTH DAY
APR 24 ----- ARBOR DAY
APR 24-26 --- SPRING VAR – Held at Grand Caverns
MAY 5 ----- CINCO de MAYO
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,
Mitchell, IN
SEP 3-7 ----- OTR!!!!!!!!!!!!!!
SEP 5 ----- POLYESTER POWER HOUR
SEP 5 ----- DOO DAH PARADE
SEP 7 ----- LABOR DAY
SEP 9 ----- GROTTTO MEETING – 7PM
SEP 11 ----- PATRIOT DAY
SEP 22 ----- AUTUMN EQUINOX
OCT 12 ----- COLUMBUS DAY
OCT 14 ----- GROTTTO MEETING – 7PM
OCT 17 ----- BRIDGE DAY
OCT 31 ----- ALL HALLOWS DAY

2010

JUL 12-17 ----- NSS Convention, Essex Jnctn, 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 March----- \$75.00

TOTAL TO DATE: --- \$4475.00

Keep It Coming!

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

DEAD DOG DISPATCH

V. #24

I. #4

APR

2009

41

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
WNS -- <http://www.caves.org/WNS/WNS%20Info.htm>
Containment Preceedures -----
<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html>



MONTH OF APRIL

Jeff Hajenga, Wes Reeves, Steve Rexford

HAPPY BIRTHDAY



Of course, everything is WNS related right now.
There are many links and articles on the web
right now stating facts and what to do.

Here are a few links the read up on WNS and
keep up on the developing news:

<http://caves.org/WNS/WNS%20Info.htm>

www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html#containment>

http://www.vpr.net/news_detail/84295/

<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=101547336>

www.VAR-caves.us

http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/karsthome.shtml

<http://www.earthfiles.com/news.php?ID=1529&category=Environment%3Ehttp://www.earthfiles.com/news.php?ID=1529&category=Environment>

<http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html>

http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenose/Bleher_et_al_2008_WNS_fungus_total.pdf

<http://www.wdbj7.com/global/story.asp?s=10032790>

WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME, BATS - USA

A ProMED-mail post

ProMED-mail is a program of the
International Society for Infectious Diseases

Date: Wed 18 Mar 2009

Source: The Hartford Courant [edited]

Fungus kills about 90 percent of Connecticut's
bats

White-nose syndrome, the mysterious plague
that is decimating the Northeast's bats, killed off
about 90 percent of Connecticut's bats over the
winter and is now galloping across the country
so quickly that it threatens the nation's -- and
probably the world's -- largest bat populations in
the American South.

Jenny Dickson, the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection wildlife biologist supervising the detection and control of white-nose syndrome in the state, said Tuesday [17 Mar 2009] that visits to 2 sample caves in Litchfield County in the past 2 weeks revealed veritable bat catacombs. Dickson's team of wildlife experts found thousands of dead bats floating like dead fish in standing water, or stacked on top of each other along the flat ledges of the cave walls.

"It was grim, and you don't have to be a scientist to realize the implications for the environment inside those caves," said Dickson. "This is a massive, unprecedented die-off, with significant potential impacts on nature, especially insect control."

Findings by Dickson's counterparts in nearby states paint an even more dire picture for Connecticut.

Bats are migratory, and most of Connecticut's bats fly there in the spring from hibernation caves containing hundreds of thousands of bats in the southern Adirondacks, the lower Hudson Valley, Vermont and the Berkshires of western Massachusetts. Scientists entering those caves since February [2009] have found 90 percent to 95 percent mortality rates, with some caves in New York having death rates approaching 100 percent. All told, scientists following white-nose syndrome have calculated that up to a million bats have already died in the Northeast states.

Scientists say that all bat species are vulnerable to the fungus. Dickson said Tuesday [17 Mar 2009] that the disease has hit hard among little brown bats and northern long-eared bats, which are the ones most commonly seen in Connecticut, but that it has spread to other species as well.

Combined with the losses of bats that hibernate in Connecticut, the deaths in neighboring states

mean that bats fluttering over evening barbecues or swooping down to devour insects over cornfields will be a rare sight this summer.

The syndrome, first discovered in New York state in 2006, is a condition in which a white fungus coats the heads, legs, and wings of hibernating bats. To fight the physiological effects of the fungus, bats deplete their fat reserves before the winter is over, fleeing from their caves in a desperate search for insects to eat. The ravenous, emaciated bats are then found lying in the snow or clinging to the sides of barns, and usually die before enough mosquitoes and moths hatch for them to eat.

Scientists have not been able to explain why the white fungus covering the bats, *Geomyces*, appears in the 1st place, but the impact on the balance of nature is clear. Bats eat an average of more than 3000 mosquitoes and moths apiece every night. A large die-off of the species will directly affect activities and industries that rely on natural insect control -- recreation, dairy farming, and horseback riding, among others.

Scientists working on white-nose syndrome say that they have detected no direct health threat to humans. But they do worry about indirect threats caused by insect-borne diseases, especially after an especially wet fall and winter that produces favorable conditions for mosquito breeding. The numbers of cases of such diseases as West Nile virus have been very low in Connecticut, but scientists do not know how a larger population of mosquitoes will affect human and animal health.

Dickson said that her team of scientists will be helped by public reports of bats flying in the daytime during the next 2 weeks, when there are not enough insects for bats to eat. The telltale white fungus on the bats will not be present, because it disappears when exposed to the sun and heat. Reports of daytime sightings, or other erratic behavior by bats, may be made to the DEP's number, 860-675-8130.

Since it was first detected in New York caves 3

DEAD DOG DISPATCH N. #24

I. #4 APR 2009 43

years ago [2006], white-nose syndrome has crossed state lines, probably carried by migrating bats themselves. Last year [2008], the range of the plague had been restricted to the Albany, NY, area and western New England. But this year [2009] white-nose syndrome has been confirmed from New Hampshire to southwestern Virginia. The spread of the condition to Virginia especially concerns scientists.

Crops at risk

Ecologist Merlin Tuttle of Texas is a bat expert and wildlife photographer who leads the battle to save the endangered gray bat. "The number of bats that have died so far, which is probably over a million now, will be dwarfed by what is going to happen in the next few years," Tuttle said.

"Virginia is right on the border of perhaps the biggest bat hibernation areas in the world -- Tennessee, Alabama, and Kentucky -- where there are caves with such large populations of bats we can't even measure how many millions are in there. They spread from this area across vast ranges of the agricultural South. Mortality rates like those we are seeing in the states already hit by [white-nose syndrome] would be devastating for the national bat population."

Studies conducted by Tuttle and other scientists have documented the huge value that bats deliver to farming and forestry. Every June, over the vast corn and cotton fields of Texas, for example, millions of corn earworm moths migrate north from Mexico, descending at dusk to lay their eggs on crop fields. If left unchecked, these eggs would hatch within a few weeks, and then new moths would lay additional eggs, multiplying their scourge and smothering the crops.

Using Doppler radar, radio microphones beamed into the sky and feces studies of free-tailed bats, scientists have documented that "high-altitude foraging" by the bats intercepted most of the moths before they could land on crops, saving millions of acres of cotton and corn. One study

concluded that the free-tail bats -- there are at least 100 million of them in central Texas -- consume more than 2 million pounds of insects every night.

But this balance-of-nature act is not restricted to Texas. "We have the same corn, the same earworm moths, the same night-feeding by our bats right here in Connecticut," said Dickson. "And now that we have this huge mortality of bats, [white-nose syndrome] could have a severe impact on our crops, but we just don't know yet."

More need for pesticides

One scenario that worries wildlife scientists is increased use of pesticides. If farmers see that a crop-eating insect has landed on their fields, they call in crop-dusting planes or truck-sprayers right away, which then encourages other farmers to order spraying. Without enough bats to protect crops, farmers might be tempted this year [2009] to use more pesticides, a chemical chain-reaction that can affect people, wildlife, and nearby streams, Tuttle and other experts said.

Even if the cause of white-nose syndrome is identified soon, the damage to the bat population has already been substantial. "This is a species that reproduces very slowly and that lives very long for the wildlife world -- many bats survive for 30 years," Dickson said. "Each time you lose a bat, you're losing a very precious benefit to the environment. It will take generations to replenish this bat population."

[Byline: Rinker Buck]

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Communicated by:
ProMED-mail Rapporteur Susan Baekeland

[This particular article highlights some rather far reaching consequences of the loss of bats, which in many ways mirrors the loss of the bees with colony collapse disorder. These creatures are exceptionally important. What the article does not fully address is the threat of increased

use of pesticides to domestic animals. Many farmers turn cattle and swine into corn stubble fields for grazing and eating of ears of corn that fell through the harvesting machines. With an increase in pesticides on the fields this represents another concern as these animals can be poisoned by the chemicals to eliminate the insects.

Most fungi are opportunistic by nature, and that is part of the complicating pattern with the bats. What lowered the resistance of the bats that they are unable to fend off such a fungus? We hope for answers soon. - Mod.TG

[The article above includes photographs of bats with white-nose syndrome; they can be seen at

- CopyEd.MJ]

[see also:

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (06): (PA) RFI 20090311.1011

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (05): (PA) 20090309.0975

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (04): (PA) 20090306.0931

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (03): (WV) susp 20090220.0711

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (02): (northeast) 20090208.0578

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA: (Northeast) 20090129.0401
2008

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (07): (Northeast) 20081102.3448

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (06): (Northeast) 20080331.1195

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (05): (Northeast) 20080304.0898

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (04): (Northeast) 20080304.0880

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (03): 2004 Dorset bat colony gate
20080221.0709

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA (02): (Northeast) 20080220.0687

White-nose syndrome, bats - USA: (Northeast)

DEAD DOG DISPATCH

N. #24

20080219.0675]

.....tg/mj/dk

From the VAR Listserve

News: The Scientist.com

Are cavers killing bats?

Posted by [Bob Grant](#)

[Entry posted at 23rd March 2009 04:53 PM GMT]

[Comment on this news story](#)

The continued spread of a mysterious disease that has killed thousands of bats in the Northeast United States may have a surprising human cause.

Scientists are suggesting that cavers may be inadvertently transporting fungal spores on their clothing or gear and contributing to the deadly march of White Nose Syndrome (WNS), named for the downy coat of fungus covering the muzzles of its victims.

"It appears that there's been a significant tracking via cavers,"

[DeeAnn Reeder](#),

a Bucknell

University biologist who has been tracking the spread of WNS through Pennsylvania bat populations, told *The Scientist*.



Little brown bats with WNS

She cited fresh data that shows WNS hopping from state to state, first appearing in caves popular among cavers and the general public that Reeder called "new little ground zeroes" for the spread of the disease. If the disease was spreading through migrating bats alone, she said, it would likely spread more steadily east-to-west. "There have been some bigger jumps."

Reeder noted that established caving groups such as the National Speleological Society (NSS) have been very helpful in studying WNS and have worked with scientists to adopt methods for decontaminating gear and clothing that could

I. #4

APR

2009

45

possibly spread fungal spores. The real problem, she said, is amateur cavers, especially people who purposefully enter caves that are off limits.

Peter Youngbaer, a member of the NSS, president of Vermont's caving association, and a liaison between these groups and the research and management communities, said that responsible cavers have been adhering to decontamination [guidelines](#) put forth by the US Fish and Wildlife Service for nearly a year. These include thoroughly washing and disinfecting clothing and equipment and using different sets of gear for different caves. "Those [protocols] are very very tedious and thorough and they're a complete annoyance for cavers and a complete annoyance for researchers going in," he said. "It's a drag."

Youngbaer added that the caves owned by the NSS in the Northeast have been closed to cavers while bats are present. Several states, including West Virginia, New York, Pennsylvania, and most recently Virginia, have enacted a voluntary moratorium on caving where hibernating bats are present in winter months.

Reeder, who follows the same federal guidelines on decontaminating caving gear as she conducts field studies, said that the moratorium should possibly be extended nationally until researchers have better a understanding of WNS and how the disease spreads. "We'd like to see some regulation coming from the federal level," she said. "Until we have a better handle on this, we need a moratorium on caving in bat sites."

[David Blehert](#), a microbiologist at the US Geological Survey's Wildlife Health Center, is one researcher who is close to uncovering key clues about WNS. Blehert told *The Scientist* that experiments he has underway will determine whether the characteristic fungus is the causative agent of the disease or an opportunistic infection showing up in weakened bats. The results should be in by the end of the year, he added. "Right now the fungus is the only concrete piece of evidence we have for a causative agent," he said.

"We don't yet know for certain that this fungus is causative, but I think all the evidence is pointing in that direction."

Blehert noted that and the fungus (*Geomyces* sp.) may remain viable for two weeks or longer outside of its host, depending on the environmental conditions. "If the spores could persist on clothing or gear for two weeks, you create a risk of vectoring it," he said. "If the pathogen does indeed turn out to be this fungus, then I think we have a greater concern with regard to human-to-environment spread than we would if it were some other pathogen with less of a tendency towards environmental persistence in the absence of a host."

But Youngbaer, who is collaborating with Blehert on a separate study to determine the prevalence of fungal spores in the soil of caves throughout the Northeast, said while he is happy to conform to existing precautions and protocols, a widespread moratorium on caving is premature, given the lack of science's understanding of WNS. "I think we should assist in these precautions, but when they go beyond that and say, 'Let's have a national moratorium and not go into caves in the summer,' there's just too many questions there," he said. "It's a fair discussion to have, but it's very premature."

With WNS spreading beyond Northeastern states and more and more bats succumbing to the mysterious disease, such a moratorium may have little effect, said Blehert. "I might argue that at least in the Northeast US, it's too late," he said. "It seems like the cat's out of the bag in the Northeast US."



Tri-State Grotto
VAR and Membership Meeting
March 11, 2009

Bernie Wootten opened the VAR part of the meeting at 6:30 pm.

JC Fisher made the following motion:

Part 1

Tri-State Grotto would encourage cavers to refrain from recreational caving in the Virginias and points north. Tri-State Grotto would encourage all cavers to decontaminate after every trip in other parts of the country.

Part 2

Tri-State Grotto will continue to host a non-caving VAR with the following provisions.

- A. Being, a letter of intent to the region Record, VAR list serve, and all other media be sent ASAP.
- B. Notify all venders of the potential smaller turnout ASAP.
- C. No food.
- D. Offer a refund to all who have preregistered
- E. Recalculate the cost basis based on estimated attendance of 100 people or less.
- F. Offer a list of non-caver events
- G. Inform all potential attendees of the revised camping areas.

Todd Roberts seconded. Passed.

We talked about moving the VAR. We could get a deal at Crystal Grottoes Caverns. They were opening up a new campground area.

Bernie called Craig, Chairman of VAR, and asked if we could move VAR. He told her yes. After a quick call to Crystal Grottoes Caverns, we received an OK from Jerry Downs to hold the VAR there.

Jeff made a motion to move VAR to Crystal Grottoes Caverns. Seconded, passed.

Todd made a motion to set the price at \$20 and \$23 at door for adults, \$17 and \$20 at door for kids. It was seconded, passed.

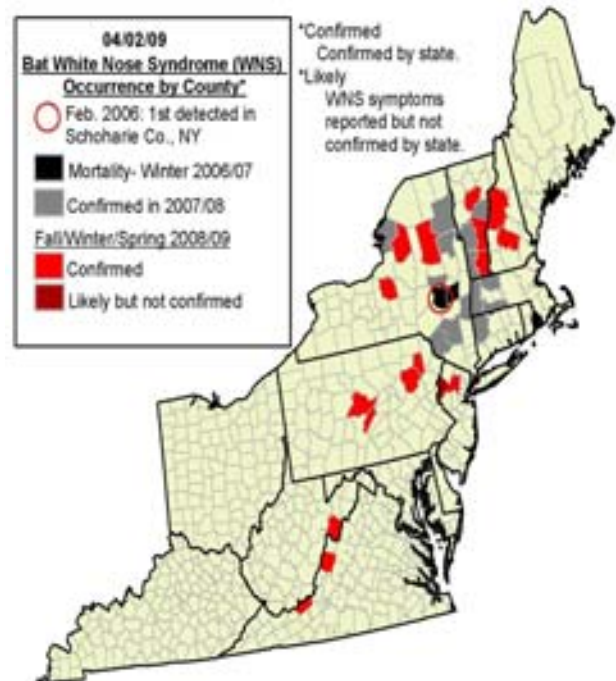
There will be a dig at the Adam Stephen House this Saturday, March 14. Arrival time will be 9 am.

Bob Bennett made a motion to buy new Grotto membership cards. We are almost out. Seconded, passed.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:15 pm.

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



TRIP REPORTS

Adam Stephen Dig

March 14, 2009

By John DiCarlo NSS # 25744

We had a large number in our group who had not seen the King Street Dig site. So, we took a trip there first and they got the two-cent tour.



Afterwards, we walked back to the Adam Stephen House and prepared for our dig. Jeff climbed down into the hole and we measured 27 feet. Jeff started sending buckets of dirt up. Our crew worked hard. The guy at the bottom was replaced often to keep him fresh. By lunchtime 91 buckets were brought out!



Keith supplied an outstanding lunch for us. The guys earned it. Looking down the counter I saw rolls, a meat platter, toppings, long sliced pickles, carrots, celery, two kinds of potato chips, pretzels, grapes, fruit salad, chocolate chip cookies, two pies and drinks.

After lunch people headed back to the dig. A few who had arrived later took the trip to the King Street Dig.



As fate would have it, Andrew Stevens, at the Adam Stephen House, found a bone as he dug in the bottom of the tunnel. We will try to find out what it is. This was the find of the day.



Our workers, not in any order, were: Andrew Stevens, Todd Roberts, Ted Kaiser, James Durst, Jimmy Kackley, Douglas Kretzer, Richard Divver, Jeffrey Marcum, Dave Cunningham, Keith Hammersla, Carrie Marcum, Scott Wean, Danny Frost, Bob Bennett and John DiCarlo.

We ended the day with 163 buckets of dirt removed. After running the tape, we found out that we now measured 26 feet to the bottom of the tunnel. Yes, we lost a foot. We took out the edge of a drop-off near the bottom. Now it is more of a straight shot down.

Bone-Norman Thru Trip, March 7, 2009

On an early Saturday morning, Chris Coates and I drove from Harrisonburg, Va., to Lewisburg, W.Va., to meet people going to our organized Bone-Norman trip. The days preceding our trip, which was planned for a couple of weeks, there was a lot of chatter in the caving community about white nosed-syndrome and the possibility of Virginia closing its caves since it was reported to be seen in Breathing and Clover Hollow Caves. The Friday before we set out for our trip, the voluntary moratorium, which is supported by the Virginia Cave Board, the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS), the Cave Conservancy of the Virginias (CCV), the Board of the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society (VAR) and the Butler Cave Conservation Society (BCCS), was announced.

We still decided to go caving.

We met friends Aaron Moses and Kurt Waldron at Shoneys for breakfast and then drove out to the WVASS fieldhouse to pick up the rest of our group for the trip: Robin and Lance Mitchell. We then drove to the Norman side, suited up, piled in the Mitchell's truck and drove to the Bone side.



Nikki Fox points to way to the Devil's Pinch, a 7.5 inch constriction in a crawl way, in Bone Cave. To make the through trip from Bone to Norman Cave, you must go through the pinch. Photo by Aaron Moses

When we walked up the Bone Cave entrance, there were ice formations still

in the cave. It was going to be a beautiful, warm day outside and we were all getting underground. Only one of our group had actually made the through trip before, and that was five years ago. Good thing we had a map and some experience between the six of us. It was easy finding the route to the Devil's Pinch, a 7.5 inch pinch in a tight crawl.

Chris went first through the pinch. He grunted and groaned the whole way. If he was having such a problem, I knew it would be pretty challenging for myself. I was next. I shoved his pack, my pack and photography equipment thru the pinch to Chris. Then I went in. My upper body slid right though, however my pelvis was another story. I got stuck. I had to back out, and try again. The second time I really did get stuck and could not back out. So I rested. I rested some and then wiggled my pelvis to one side. Got stuck even more. So then I relaxed and went the other direction. This did the trick and I was able to go right thru the pinch.

Aaron was next and had no problem. The fourth through the Devil's Pinch was Kurt. He's a big guy and most of us doubted he would be able to maneuver thru the passage. But anyone who knows this man, knows that when he sets his mind to do something, he will. And he did. With a lot of coaching from Robin, he made it through. The next person was Robin, who had a hard time with it as well. Lance was the last and seemed to do fine.

After the pinch was our crawling time. Our noses were in the fine, almost talcum-powered like cave dust for at least an hour. And of course, it felt like an eternity. Once we were able to stand up, we were near the skeleton head. It is three holes in the wall that looks like a skull when others are on the other side lighting up the small room.

We then had to route find. None of knew where we were going and we kept breaking out the map. We only took one wrong turn and followed it for a good ways before heading back. Usually, I do not like to follow or trust arrows or written markers on the walls, but in this cave, it's advisable.

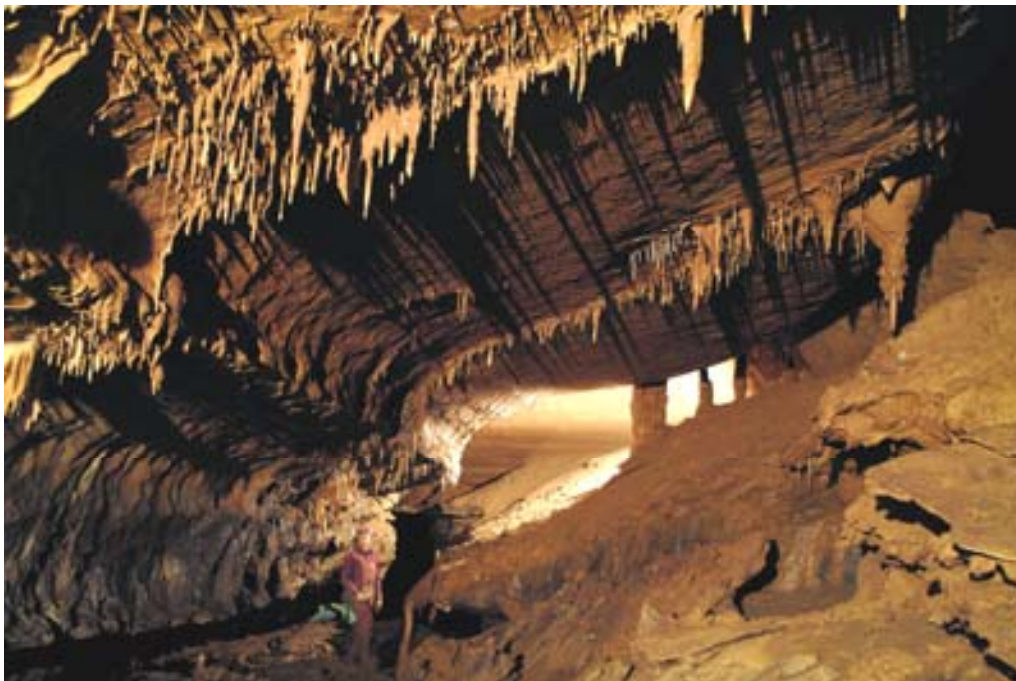
Once I recognized the turn to take to the West Virginia passage, I knew we were near the Norman side. There was much rejoicing when I told the others of my discovery since none of us used masks in the dust of Bone. A little more caving and we could hear the roar of water. HORRAY!

We decided to take a break and eat lunch. The plan was to leisurely make our way out of the cave and take photos along the way. I had just bought two flash bulb guns and wanted to test them out in their second cave. Norman has some really big rooms that are perfect to see just how powerful some of the bulbs I had were.



Nikki Fox stands in the first big room in Norman when coming from Bone Cave. Photo by Aaron Moses

We made several stops along the way, since two of us were photographers, for photo making. It was all in good fun. In one instance, it took five of us to make a photo, with a model, three flashes and me choreographing the whole thing behind the shutter of the camera.



Robin Mitchell stands in a decorated passage in Norman Cave.

Photo by Nikki Fox

Everyone seemed to enjoy the decorated rooms and the scenery along this beautiful cave system. At the end of the stream passage, where the water carved out layers in the chert, Aaron dove into the water. He wanted photos of himself, completely submerged, wiggling through a hole of the chert as water rushed over him.



Aaron Moses crawls under a layer of rock in the stream passage of Norman Cave.

Photo by Nikki Fox

We were all entertained by the famous waterfall on the way out. Everyone rushed out of the cave, excited to still see daylight at the top of the breakdown pile. Aaron, Chris and myself stayed to take a few more photos of the huge entrance room into Norman. When we got to the top of the breakdown, it was nightfall. I was glad, it just doesn't seem right to be exiting a cave when it's still daylight outside.



Chris Coates (left) and Nikki Fox use flash bulbs to light the breakdown-filled entrance room of Norman Cave.

Photo by Aaron Moses

Chris, Kurt, Robin and Lance returned to the fieldhouse to spend the night. We were going to have a vertical practice in with our ExTreme Rappels friends and fellow team members the next day.

We all had a wonderful time at Bone-Norman!

Grapevine at Lost World Caverns, March 8, 2009

The morning was met with a late start, as it seemed many beers were drunk the night before. Chris and I arrived at Lost World right when they were starting to rig the 120-foot drop. Two ropes were rigged through the tiny cement square that was the original entrance to the cave.

Most of us got one rappel in before many more people showed up: there was a family of West Virginians who had just started to rappel. They also brought a group of teens with them who had never been on rope before. It turned out that our vertical practice was more for others than ourselves. Each of us took a partner, went over the basics of vertical and got on rope. We had each of the teenagers attached to ourselves in case there was an out-of-

control rappel and a bottom belay on each rope.

The day went by with no accidents or injuries. Chris and I had to leave a bit early since we had a 3-hour drive back home and he had to work that night. So our weekend of caving and rope had to end at some time!

Nikki Fox

Checking for WNS in Crystal Grottoes Caverns John DiCarlo NSS # 25744

Saturday afternoon, April 4, 2009, Sonny Floyd, Jim Grolton and I, John DiCarlo, did a bat count and health check of all the commercial caves in Maryland.

We drove to Crystal Grottoes Caverns near Boonsboro, Maryland. Being a commercial cave (the only one in Maryland), it was not affected by the moratorium on caving. We did not wear or use anything that has ever been in another cave.

There was one bat found. An Eastern Pipistrelle Bat (*Pipistrellus subflavus*). I was told that there was a second one in the cave but that it had left a few weeks ago. We did not see it today.

We were looking for WNS. Looking at the bat we could see white in the hair all over the body but nothing on the face and arms. It looked like water vapor on the body hair. We took several photos and left it alone. We also looked at a future dig in Crystal Grottoes Caverns. We talked with Jerry Downs about some of the logistics.



California (Dreamin) Caving

Ironically when you guys started slowing down, I finally got underground again. On the weekend of March 21st, I drove out to the Mojave, met up with James and we did a couple of caves (sorta). The first was Mitchell Caverns, a commercial cave. It's really two smaller caves combined by a man made tunnel. The guy who got it during the depression era did it by making several mining claims... something like 50 I think, to get all the property. There are a couple of pathetic attempts at mining there as well, and James and I wandered into two of those.

The commercial portion is very well decorated for something so small. It even had a couple shields, though not one as impressive as those at Grand Caverns, of course. Afterwards we found the spot where more of the cave once was located, across a wash. Unfortunately since it's on National Preserve land, they're not allowed to dig it open!

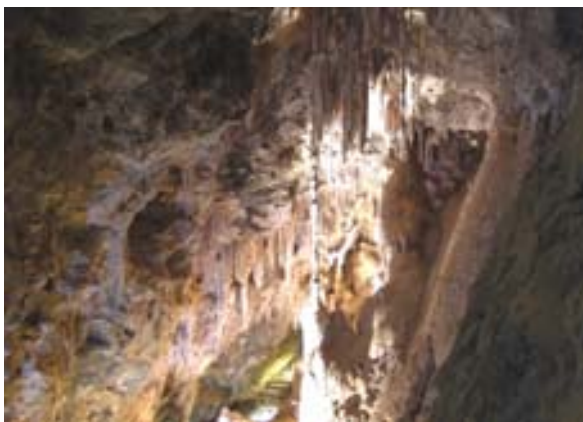
We spent the night in the campground by the caverns and barely got any sleep, thanks to a windstorm. When we got up in the morning, the inside of the tent was full of dirt. We packed up and drove off, planning to stay elsewhere that night and after setting up a new camp on the other side of the mountains, we jumped in James's car and went for a drive. A very wet drive... it started pouring on us after awhile.

Luckily after a couple of hours the rain stopped, just in time for us to go searching for a lava tube that was labeled on the map. Its official map name was... Lava Tube. It was very small, lots of collapses, but we got there with perfect timing. We climbed down a set of metal steps into a collapse, walked inside, duck-walked a short way and walked into a room with 4 skylights well overhead. Between the sun rays coming in and the dust in the air, I got some great photos. After that we just wandered into some little ash shelters and that was it for our 'caving' trip.

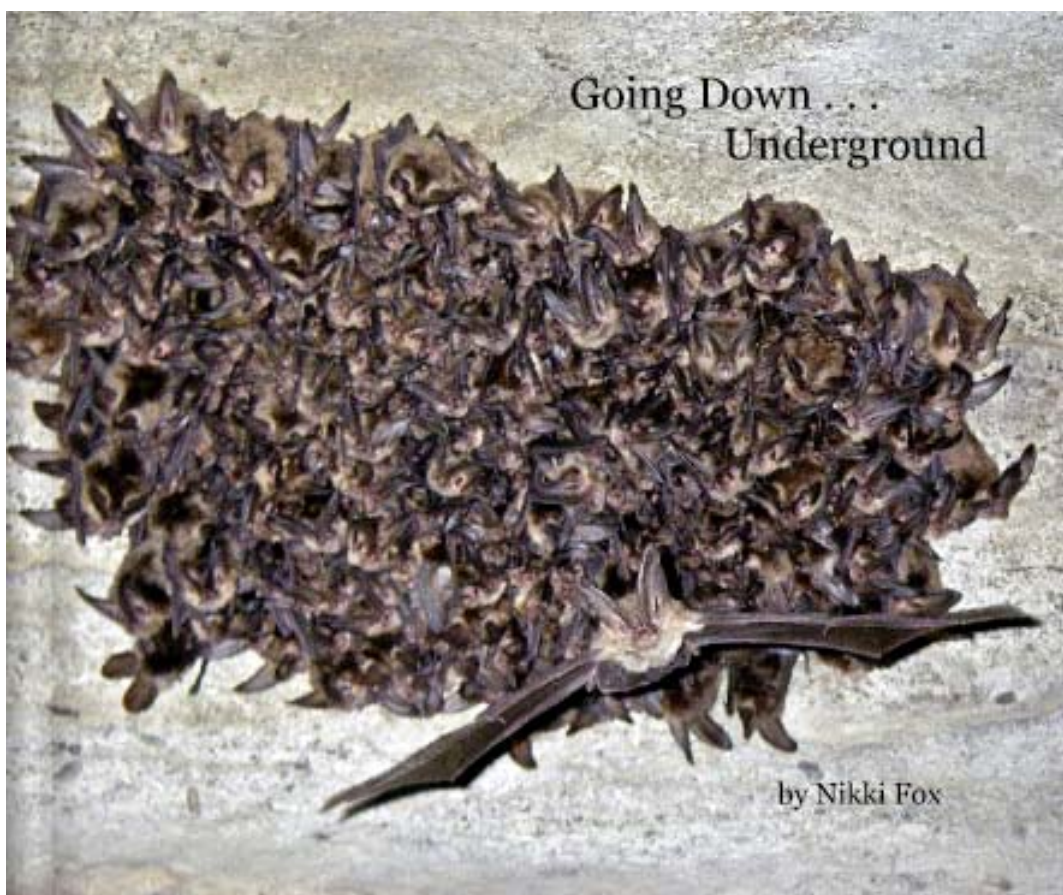
Photos, of course, are online

Adios!

Ehren Gieske







Heya there,
 This is a shameless plugging of my new cave photography
 book... take a look and order one if you have the clams...
 Thanks, Nikki Fox

<http://www.blurb.com/bookstore/detail/627756>

Softcover	\$50.00	<input type="text" value="0"/>
Hardcover, Dust Jacket	\$60.00	<input type="text" value="0"/>
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This is a book of cave photography. Most of the caves photographed are in West Virginia and Virginia. Some are in South Dakota, Mexico, Tennessee, Alabama and Georgia. Learn about vertical caving with ropes, long rappels, Mexico, cave animals, bats and much more!

Feast your eyes on the great unknown of the underground world!



SAVIN CALENDAR

APRIL 5TH - MAY 16TH



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Apr 5	Apr 6	Apr 7	Apr 8 Grotto Meeting 7pm	Apr 9	Apr 10 GOOD FRIDAY	Apr 11
Apr 12 EASTER	Apr 13	Apr 14	Apr 15 TAX DAY	Apr 16	Apr 17	Apr 18
Apr 19 Karst Trail Crystal Caverns 10am	Apr 20	Apr 21	Apr 22 EARTH DAY	Apr 23	Apr 24 ARBOR DAY Spring VAR Grand Caverns	Apr 25 Spring VAR Grand Caverns
Apr 26 Spring VAR Grand Caverns	Apr 27	Apr 28	Apr 29	Apr 30	May 1	May 2
May 3	May 4	May 5 CINCO de MAYO	May 6	May 7	May 8	May 9 (Martinsburg Heritage Day) Adam Stephen Day 10am
May 10 Mother's Day	May 11	May 12	May 13 Grotto Meeting 7pm	May 14	May 15	May 16 ARMED FORCES DAY

DEAD DOG DISPATCH



Jones Quarry & Troop 956

1- WNS WNS WNS!!!!!!!!!!!!

2- NORMAN THRU TRIP

3- CALIFORNIA (DREAMIN) GAVING

DEAD DOG DISPATCH

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