

BATS

NEWS



The "Hole" with legs in Trout Cave: Jeremy Meyers and Sarah Richards
Photo by Meredith Hall Johnson



April/May 2006

FEATURES

ANOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Thanks to Meredith and Gordon for the articles and photos. Please see our new section "From The President's Pen". Don't forget to send in articles and trip reports to keep the newsletter interesting. Also, feel free to send suggestions for the newsletter... Just let me know if there is anything you would like to see added or omitted.

Cheers!

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Photo on cover by Meredith Hall Johnson. Top and bottom photo on this page by Meredith Hall Johnson. Other two photos courtesy of Gordon Birkhimer.

THE CULPRITS ...

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CALENDAR & EVENTS

JUNE

June 10 ... Work Weekend

Bubble Cave work weekend. Contact Gordon for details.

June 13 ... BATS Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

Due to election scheduling, the meeting will be held at Carlos O'Kelly's in Fredericksburg.

JULY

July 7 ... BATS Meeting, 5:00 P.M.

This will be a POOL PARTY at Allan's house in Woodbridge. Bring something to grill, something to drink, and something to share. We will have a meeting too!

July 21 - 23 ... 3rd Annual 10th Anniversary BATS Weekend

Big Bend, WV: Float trip, the Via Ferrata, and fun! Reserve your space by e-mailing Allan.

AUGUST

August 7 - 11 ... NSS Convention 2006

For more info: <http://www.nss2006.org/index.htm>

August 15 ... BATS Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

Due to the NSS Convention this has been moved from 8/8 to 8/15... Same BAT time, same BAT place.

NOVEMBER

November 3 - 5 ... NSS BOG Meeting

Hosted by BATS. For more info: <http://cave.pure.net/~bats/pages/NovBOG.html>

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Hi BATS,

I just want to take this opportunity to thank you all for taking care of caves. BATS as a grotto promotes cave conservation through cave clean-ups and financial help for cave conservancies to individual members picking up after our not-so-concerned fellow cave users. I am proud to be a member of this grotto.

By my calculations we have 40 members, two who are Life members and one who is an Honorary member. We seem to be holding steady in the numbers. Each month we get another new member or two. However, looking at the list and thinking back over the most recent few years, I notice that there are a number of people who have not renewed their dues for 2006. That sort of makes me sad, but only because it means that other things are tugging them away from hanging out with BATS. I really like most of the cavers who have ever been members of our grotto and enjoy(ed) hanging out with them at meetings, VARs, and OTRs.

Don't forget to check the main Web page for meeting changes and updates. Allan has been doing a fine job keeping this current. And don't forget to send Allan photos for the BATS Blog page or to April Cantrell for the BATSNews. April will gladly accept trip reports too! Thanks to both of these BATS for doing our grotto a good service. (I could go on here listing all the various members who participate and help out, but really, this is supposed to be sort of short ...)

Thanks and enjoy the rest of the newsletter,
Meredith

MEETING MINUTES

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 20, 2006

ATTENDEES

Nikki Bennett, Seth Lake, Meredith Johnson, Allan Weberg, Ken Hornung

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

- Meredith gave thanks to the officers for taking their positions.
- We need to start meetings on time (at 7:00 p.m. sharp!)
- We need to look at alternative locations for meetings, possibly in the Stafford area, which would be more of a middle-of-the-road meeting place.

VOLUNTEERS

Need volunteers for the following:

- Editor for the newsletter. (April is now doing this! –NB)
- Librarian. Meredith is the current librarian, she's looking for someone else to volunteer. (Mike Hill took over at the March meeting. –MHJ)

PLANS FOR THE YEAR

- Officers are requested to lead one trip per year.
- We need to offer at least one Sunday grotto trip for those who can't make Saturdays.
- Some of the meetings will be in other places besides the Salem Church Library. The March meeting will be in Woodbridge, the July meeting will be at Allan's (pool party!), and the November meeting will be in either Woodbridge or Springfield.
- The 3rd Annual 10th Anniversary Weekend will be on July 21-23.
- We need to revamp the New Caver Orientation/What to Bring list. Maybe add in something about if people have medical issues they need to alert everyone else beforehand.

BOARD OF GOVERNOR'S MEETING

- We will have the March meeting at the facilities in Woodbridge.
- Need volunteers to drive people to/from the airports, give BOG members crash space, help with parties on both nights, and supply coffee and snacks.

Submitted by Nikki Bennett, BATS Secretary.

BATS APRIL MEETING MINUTES

April 11, 2006

Salem Church Library

ATTENDEES

Nikki Bennett, Steve Bennett, Gordon Birkhimer, Averie Giles-Allnock, Mike Hill, Meredith Johnson, Chuck Lyons, Allan Weberg

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Thanks to April Cantrell for getting the new newsletter out! Check it out on the BATS Web site, and thanks to everyone for contributing! Also, thanks to Allan for keeping the BATS Web site updated. The BOG Web page is also

MEETING MINUTES

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up online.

SECRETARY'S REPORT

The secretary thinks she's found the key to the mailbox and will try it out on Thursday.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Summary 2005: We have \$3,000+ in the bank account. Last year we spent \$779, and we took in \$395 from dues and \$143 from BATS Bucks. This year, we've spent \$60 for the BATS Bucks winners of the two previous years, and we've taken in \$45 from dues and \$26 from BATS Bucks.

BATS BUCKS

We collected a total of \$11, bringing our yearly total to \$37. Some came from new members, several came for cave trips, and \$2 came in for the newsletter's revival!

TRIP REPORTS

No new trip reports.

OLD BUSINESS

- BATS Anniversary is set for July 21-23, somewhere near Franklin. The exact place hasn't been set yet, but there will be tubing at Big Bend and various led cave trips.
- Convention is August 7-11 in Washington State. There's still time to pre-register!!

BOG UPDATE

- The Web site is up.
- We met at the school last month and looked at the facilities.
- We will be going to Don Pablo's for dinner on Saturday night, after the meeting.
- Everyone needs to start collecting Virginia area cave photos to show off the region, please!!
- Jim McConkey is going to give a talk about the caves of Cave Hill (Grand Caverns Park).

CAVE CONSERVANCY FORUM

Gordon made a motion at the last meeting for the grotto to spend \$150 to sponsor the Howdy Party at CCF in Lewisburg, mid-September. The motion was voted on this month and passed.

NEW BUSINESS

- The July meeting has been moved to Friday, July 7. Pool party at Allan's house!!!
- The August meeting has been rescheduled to the third Tuesday (August 15) of the month instead of the second, since most of the executive committee (and others!) will be at Convention the normal meeting week. Same time, same place.
- The New Caver Orientation for Venture Crew will probably be on Thursday, May 4. Mike has volunteered to give the orientation. Meredith will help unless someone closer to Fredericksburg can volunteer.
- Meredith wants to get a formal member's list ready in May. Contact her if you think your membership information has changed.
- The *2006 NSS Members Manual* will be published soon. Check your information at the NSS Web site (www.caves.org) to make sure all your information is correct.
- Gordon proposed to have the BOG Meeting party at a community center near his place instead of Meredith's house. The cost would be \$75. Allan made a motion that we put a tip jar at the party, and whatever that doesn't cover, BATS will pay the difference. The motion was seconded, voted on, and passed.

MEETING MINUTES

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TRIP PLANNING

Grotto Trips

- **May 13:** Hamilton's Air Blower (led by Jeremy Meyers) and Trout with the Venture Crew. IF YOU CAN COME AND HELP WITH THE VENTURE CREW, PLEASE COME!!
- **June 10 or 17:** Bubble Cave (Most likely 6/10 when there is a "work weekend")
- **July 21-23:** BATS Anniversary Weekend
- **August 7-11:** Convention
- **September:** OTR and VAR

April 15: Grand Caverns Restoration Field Camp this weekend

April 28-30: Spring VAR

July 15: Haynes Cave Cleanup

PRESENTATION

Gordon gave a cool (and somewhat sickening) slide show on the Explorer's Club dinner in New York (that was the sickening part – goat's eyeballs anyone?), a slide show on "sewering" in Dallas, Texas (caving through the storm sewers! – no alligators though!) and one on Poor Farm Cave (very pretty!).

Minutes taken and submitted by Nikki Bennett, BATS Secretary.

BATS MAY MEETING MINUTES

May 9, 2006

Salem Church Library

ATTENDEES

Mike Hill, Ken Hornung, Meredith Hall Johnson, Mike "TinY" Manke, Allan Weberg

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Short and sweet Meredith said we got one renewal (Josh Babcock) and one new member (Randy Sherlin, the guy from North Carolina) at VAR. Also thanked Mike Hill for doing a New Caver Orientation for the Venture Crew last Thursday – nice job! Will e-mail some caver dates out (at bottom of these minutes)

SECRETARY'S REPORT

No report (Nikki out sick).

TREASURER'S REPORT

Pretty much the same, according to stand-in Allan Weberg. Nothing new to report.

BATS BUCKS

We took in \$6 total.

OLD BUSINESS

- **Convention:** We talked about airfare and logistics and who was going.
- **BOG Meeting Update:** Meredith announced that the Friday night party during the BOG weekend will now be at BOG member Gary Moss' house – thanks.
- **Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum:** Gordon Birkhimer had sent out an e-mail thanking BATS for sponsoring the Howdy Party. Also there will be an ad in the *2006 NSS Members Manual* listing sponsors, of

MEETING MINUTES

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which BATS is one!

- **Grotto Mailbox:** We decided that with our bad track record and inconvenience in trying to check the mailbox, we would not renew it. Meredith volunteered her mailing address for the grotto, since the bank already has it.

NEW BUSINESS

- **Members List:** Meredith wondered if she needed to make a motion to ask for printing and mailing money. No. Should be getting put together and distributed in the next month or so.
- **VAR Discussion:** Meredith gave a very brief synopsis of what happened during the VAR business meeting.
- **BATS Clean-up of Island Ford Cave:** Meredith volunteered the grotto to do this sometime this summer – be thinking of dates. (Gee thanks, Mer!)
- **Newsletter:** April Cantrell, the editor, wants material submitted by May 31.

TRIP PLANNING

Grotto Trips

- **May 13:** Hamilton Cave, led by Jeremy Meyers (hard trip).
- **May 13:** Trout Cave, led by Meredith and we're taking five Venture Crew guys and one adult, so she needs help please. Camping at Thorn Spring Campground, near Franklin, WV.
- **June 9-11:** Bubble Cave property – this is also a work weekend, so there will be other cavers there besides BATS. Point of contact is Gordon Birkhimer.
- **July 21-23:** BATS 3rd Annual 10th Anniversary Weekend, at Big Bend campground in WV. Point of contact is Allan Weberg. A float trip around the bend will be a big event, but there is a lot to do in that area. Contact Allan if you plan to come – he needs to know in case he has to reserve another camp site.

VBATS REPORT

TinY reported that this week's practice is at Kurt's and the alternating schedule opens up more territory for folks to come from. Seems to be working okay. Send a note to the BATSlist if you want to verify where it is that week and get directions.

TIME ENDED

About 7:55 p.m. (I think it was a record!)

Minutes taken and submitted by Meredith Hall Johnson, BATS President and sometimes Secretary.

VAR HIGHLIGHTS

From the 2006 Spring VAR Meeting

NEW BUSINESS

- **Conservation Committee:** Co-chair Andy Reeder reported that 24 (or 30) people attended the recent Easter Restoration Field Camp. Gravel was hauled, moss eradicated, some destruction and construction was done, and the swale was cleaned up. Thanks!
- BATS offered to **clean up Island Ford Cave** sometime this summer.
- **Goodwins Cave:** Mary Sue Socky reported that the cave is doing fine and is open for spring.
- **VAR Outstanding Service Award:** The deadline for submissions is July 15 to Meredith Hall Johnson.
- **Landowner Recognition Award:** Awarded to the Shiffletts, owners of Glade Cave.
- Deadline for next **Region Record** is June 15.
- Both **VSS** and **WVASS** claimed “one more cave” than the other state.
- **WVCC:** Jeff Bray reported that the Conservancy is “in talks with the owners of McClungs Cave,” and thanks

MEETING MINUTES

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especially to Blue Ridge Grotto for keeping Island Ford Cave clean and thanks for the money. [I'm not sure who that was directed to.]

- **New Dixie Cave:** Survey is finished!
- **Virginia Karst Program:** Joey Fagan reminded us that the Commonwealth has funds for sinkhole clean-ups and material and expertise for dye tracing projects.
- **Virginia Cave Board:** Joey Fagan said that the minutes are online.
- **Wilderness Proposal:** Bob Handley reported that thousands of comments were received but still Greenbrier Valley gets zilch.
- **Virginia Karst Trail:** Andy Reeder reported that this project is still alive. Will try to hold a 1-day meeting with caverns owners on the trail concept.
- **Cave Conservancy of the Virginias:** Janet Tinkham reported that the *Living on Karst* booklet will be reprinted, thanks to CCV. CCV supplied the grant for a groundwater education (?) program/kit that was donated to Grand Caverns Park during VAR.
- **Host Grotto Report:** 353 registered (147 pre-registered), with three kids under 4, 24 kids aged 4-14, 11 day passes, a few guests, and lots of trips went out.

UPCOMING VARS AND HOSTS

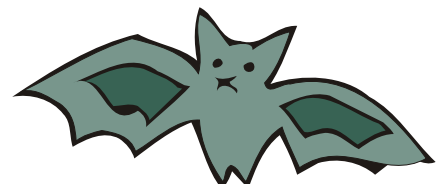
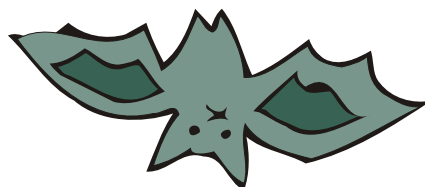
- **Fall VAR 2006:** Hosted by VPI Cave Club, **September 22-24, 2006**, being worked in conjunction with the Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum, which will be in Lewisburg, WV, on September 20-22.
- **Spring VAR 2007:** Hosted by Front Royal Grotto, most likely the last weekend in April 2007.
- **Fall VAR/MAR 2007:** Hosted by Philly Grotto (doing most of the work) and Triangle Troglodyte Grotto (setting up cave trips mostly), at the OTR/TRA site in Dailey, WV, *possibly* Columbus Day weekend in October, but the hosts will check since that is also the TAG Fall Cave-In. Philly is celebrating 60 years as a grotto.
- **Proposed Changes to VAR Quorum Rules:** John E. Pearson suggested a change, the wording of which has to be worked out, to the quorum requirements of VAR and will make the motion at the fall meeting.
- **Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum:** The Web site will be up soon – please visit.
- **Grant Request:** Andy Reeder, VAR Conservation Co-chairman, requested up to \$500.00 to do a **survey on gated caves** in Virginia (and maybe West Virginia). PASSED.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Cheryl Jones:** NSS can grant up to \$1,000.00 per project (up to \$5,000.00 per year) for conservation projects. The money often goes unused so please ask for it. The requirements are less restrictive than in the past.
- **John E. Pearson:** Thanks to the host “grotto” for hosting VAR.
- **Jim McConkey:** The gate on Silers Cave needs some welding; help will be needed on May 20, 2006, to haul up the welder and gear.

A record-setting meeting ended in just over an hour!

*Pseudo-minutes taken and submitted by Meredith Hall Johnson,
BATS President and sometimes Secretary.*



TRIP REPORTS

SPRING VIRGINIA AREA REGION

By Gordon Birkhimer

Saturday, April 29, 2006, was a wonderful day to be in the Shenandoah Valley as part of the Spring Virginia Area Region (VAR) led cave trip, sponsored by the Front Royal Grotto. The VAR was celebrating Grand Caverns' 200th Anniversary of continuous operation as a commercial cave – from the years 1806 through 2006. On this fine, sunny, clear day, we were heading north from the VAR campsite at Grand Caverns, Virginia, about 40 minutes drive past Edom, in Rockingham County, Virginia, where Kurt and Gordon were to lead one of the VAR vertical caving



Turkey Capital, Rockingham County

trips. The turkey monument is on Route 11, and is proudly visible as soon as you enter Rockingham County, the Turkey Capital of Virginia.

The long caravan arrived at the parking area around 10:30 A.M. After gearing up and following the pink flagging tape to 3-D Maze Cave, Kurt and I continued up the hill toward the tree line. We entered the woods and Lyle's Pit after a few minutes of looking around. The pit was rigged quickly, and the long list of visitors began descending the 30-foot rappel into the large entrance room.

After about a half dozen cavers were in the pit, Kurt ascended the rope and tackled the difficult undercut ledge. After evaluating the rope position for the level of skill needed to climb out, it was determined to be excessively challenging for the varied skill level of our group. It was decided to change the position of the rope to make the climb out less challenging, and to get more rope available to be put into the pit to do the second drop.

The rope was then taken back into a narrow passageway and the second drop was rigged. This is not a free rappel, but a series of 15-20 foot drops that equal about 80 feet once you've reached the muddy bottom. The top of this second



Photo by Gordon Birkhimer

Bob Thrun descends into Lyle's Pit

drop was quite tight and challenging to pass through, so only some of the cavers decided to do the rappel. Unfortunately, there was only enough rope to get to a ledge that was within 10 feet of the bottom and the cavers were only able to come down and climb out one at a time. Josh Babcock, Earl Suitor, Dave Mahony, and Kurt Waldron were able to do the second drop.

The 20 cavers who entered the pit are listed in order of entry:

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| • Kurt Waldron, MD | • Ellen Hofler, NC |
| • Earl Suitor, VA | • Shane Ashby, VA |
| • Dave Mahony, NY | • Ricky Shortt, VA |
| • Cheryl Suitor, VA | • Leanne Barley, VA |
| • Darrel Worsham, VA | • Lisa Grant, UK |
| • Bob Thrun, MD | • Eddy Hill, UK |
| • Dom DiGloria, NJ | • Peter Hertl, NC |
| • Scott McCrea, NC | • Terry Zornes, NC |
| • Josh Babcock, MD | • Preston Geiger, VA |
| • Randy Sherlin, NC | • Gordon Birkhimer, VA |

The main focus of our trip was safety. Each caver was provided a safety check prior to beginning the rappel, and a bottom belay was always available. Ricky Shortt, Kurt Waldron, and Lisa Grant each showed the initiative to bounce the pit twice. Lisa was particularly exuberant and her shouts of glee were clearly audible as she traveled down the rope.

On the drive back to camp, Bob Thrun told us to use Route 11 so we could see the Turkey Capital Memorial.

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Photo by Gordon Birkhimer

Dom DiGloria ascending Lyle's Pit

Rockingham County has a long history of being among the top turkey producers in the country. In 2002, the year of the latest agriculture census, Rockingham County was the nation's second-largest poultry county, generating \$326 million. Sure enough, there was a grand metal statue of the great bird on a stone pedestal about 100 yards going north as soon as you cross into Rockingham County on Route 11. (See photo.)

Kurt and Gordon finished the day with a tandem rappel, and we returned to Grand Caverns at 6:30 P.M. just in the nick of time for dinner. Susi Weston created a beautifully decorated cave cake celebrating the 200th Anniversary of Grand Caverns that we rapidly consumed after the fine dinner. It was without doubt a great day to be on rope and a wonderful VAR to attend. ♦

Photo by Meredith Hall Johnson



Happy 200th Anniversary, Grand Caverns! This cake was made by Susi Weston.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM SPRING VAR 2006

By Meredith Hall Johnson

Spring VAR was fairly well attended by members, former members, and friends of BATS: me, Josh Babcock, Gordon Birkhimer, Logan Birkhimer, Morgana Birkhimer, Shirley Birkhimer, Mike Conner, Ellie Florance, Kelsea Johnson, Chris Graham, Mike Hill, Ken Hornung, Bobby Kinson, TinY Manke, Twila Neeld, Sarah Pearce, Sarah Richards, Randy Sherlin (newest member!),

Janet Tinkham, Kurt Waldron, Allan Weberg, Susi Weston, and many others. (Sorry if I missed anyone, but I'm writing this a whole month later!)

This year, Grand Caverns is celebrating its 200th year as a continually operating commercial cave – the longest-running commercial cave in the country! To help celebrate, Susi Weston made a beautiful sheet cake complete with cave formations and



Photo by Meredith Hall Johnson

Jim McConkey presents the new map of Grand Caverns to Andy Wells, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority

19th century cave tourists. Even the sides of the cake had candy speleothems! It was so cool, and it tasted good too!

The Virginia Area Region presented the finished map of Grand Caverns to Andy Wells, Executive Director of the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority. The map presented is huge, nearly as tall as Jim McConkey, who presented it. Paul Gaskins did the cartography and did an amazing job fitting the new couple of miles (!) of passage onto a piece of paper. Andy was overwhelmed. The remapping of Grand Caverns has been a VAR-sponsored project attended by many BATS members.

Many BATS went on cave trips, even if it was just a jaunt

TRIP REPORTS

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through Fountain Cave. Kelsea led a trip to Glade Cave. On Friday night, many of us were treated to a "Civil War Tour" of Grand Caverns by Craig Hindman. He had promised Susi a few weeks before that he would show her the many Civil War-era signatures in the cave. He totally amazed me with his in-depth research and the stories he told.

Despite the unexpected very cold temperatures at night, I think most everyone enjoyed VAR. The food was good and plentiful, as was the drink, the company was good, and the vendors stayed open late. ♦

BATS AND CREW VENTURE UNDERGROUND

By Meredith Hall Johnson

The grotto was first contacted back in the winter by a local Fredericksburg-area Venture Crew. After making arrangements to do a New Caver Orientation (NCO) and setting a cave date, things fell through. We ended up doing both in May 2006.



Pictured left to right: Jeremy Meyers, Allan Weberg, Bruce White, Ian White, Matt Lansden, Kevin Martin, Cory White, Sarah Richards, and Matt Mittura

Ian White is the point of contact from the Venture Crew. He persisted in getting a firm date for the NCO. Mike Hill met me to co-teach the NCO. He did a wonderful job! Thanks, Mike, for helping out. One Venture Crew leader and five young men (ages 15-19) planned to come on our grotto trip on May 13.

Allan Weberg and I drove up to Thorn Springs Campground the night of his birthday and met Kevin Martin, who was already there. Sarah Richards and Jeremy Meyers planned to drive up the next morning and meet us at the cave.



Mike Hill prepares to teach the New Caver Orientation

While we were hanging around camp, up walked Jim McCloud and his friend, Butch. Both are science teachers at the year-round Governor's School. They were in the area to lead a Girl Scout cave trip the next day. Jim promptly renewed his BATS membership and talked us into going over to Grant and Edna's, the local dive across the road. We did our best to keep up with Jim and Butch's interesting way of keeping track of how much you drink... Ian and Matt Mittura, hereafter known as Egg Matt, stopped by and tried some of the pickled eggs and sausages that Jim had gotten from the bar. Meanwhile, I was looking at some of the more recent Cave Books that this bar is famous for. (These were from the late 1990s up to 2003. I really wanted to see the ones from the early 1980s, when I might have been in there. The Cave Books are notebooks that cavers use to write, to draw, and to generally be extremely creative in.)

The next morning, we gathered the entire group of 10 at the parking spot below the Trout Rocks caves. We were actually pretty

TRIP REPORTS

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much on schedule. We followed the trail up to the cave and assembled in the entrance room for a group photo. The Venture Crew comprised Bruce White (adult leader), Ian and Cory White (brothers, Bruce's sons), Matt Lansden, and Egg Matt.

Jeremy had originally planned to lead a harder trip into Hamilton Cave, but there were not enough cavers, so his trip merged with my planned beginner trip, which merged with the Venture Crew into Trout. (He didn't seem to mind too much – at least he was getting underground.) It ended up, though, that he and Allan became the trip leaders. Allan led us back to the Sculpture Room and then to the Square Room, and Jeremy later took the Venture Crew on past that to look at yet another sculpture area. While he tuckered the younger folks out, the rest of us BATS went as far as we felt like and then studied some sculptures along the trail. Bruce also went with Jeremy. He was a trooper!

Earlier, we were down-climbing a very exposed climb that had me totally freaked out. I had just declared that I was not going to even try it. Bruce was there, acting as my “mental belay,” but I didn't want to trust him since I barely knew him and he wasn't a caver. I really wanted Allan or Jeremy there, but they were out of reach. Allan and Bruce talked me out of my fear and down the scary place. I was quite impressed with Bruce after that.

Later, I was behind him in a very low crawlway. He is a big man. He was just scooting on through like there was no other choice. I told him, “I like caving behind you... if you can make it through, I can make it through!” He got a kick out of that. So did the boys when he repeated it.

In the Square Room, you'd have thought we were at the zoo or in the jungle. The boys started making animal sounds, or was that Jeremy and Kevin? Anyhow, I think

everyone joined in for a cacophony of cave chaos. Sarah marveled at the strata on each wall. We all tried out our different headlamps and compared their brightness on the far wall. I really like my new 3-watt light!

By the time Jeremy and the Venture Crew got back to us, we were getting cold. They were pretty much wiped out. Me too, being the older weenie that I am. We tried our best to be careful on our way to the entrance; being tired in a cave is often when accidents happen. We passed a group of “about 19” amassed not far from the entrance. We also ran into Dave West, who was in cave with Karen Willmes working on a dig. (Dave is the manager of the John Guilday

[Trout Rocks] Caves Nature Preserve, owned by the NSS.)

I think we were all pretty glad to see the sky. We had only been in the cave for five hours, but we worked hard and moved fast. Ian was wearing insulated coveralls and at one point, he squeezed his helmet headband and sweat poured onto the floor – gross! Trying to keep up with a bunch of male teenagers is hot and tiring, let me tell you! And I only took six pictures, so I wasn't even slowing

us down that much. We counted about a zillion bats, mostly Little Browns, Pipistrelles, and a few Big Browns.

We all made our way down the hillside at our own pace, but the BATS were quite surprised when the Venture Crew bus drove off down the road below us. They had not even said good-bye. I did get a “thank you” e-mail from Ian a few days later, but we never did find out what their hurry was.

I think everyone enjoyed the combined grotto and Venture Crew trip. I appreciate all the BATS who showed up to help out. Oh, almost forgot... the entire BATS grotto that camped out fit into one car to go to breakfast that morning! ♦



The “Hole” in Trout Cave: Matt Mittura, Matt Lansden, and Ian White

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LOOKING FOR VOLUNTEERS! SPELEO DIGEST COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

The Speleo Digest Committee is vested with ensuring the annual publication of each year's Speleo Digest. Originally published by the Pittsburgh Grotto from 1956 through 1966, the NSS has published all subsequent editions. Each Speleo Digest, often times a 600 page book, contains selected material from grotto newsletters of a given year. Therefore, this committee collects all the newsletters produced by NSS Internal Organizations for consideration by a volunteer editor or editorial team which is appointed by the Speleo Digest Committee Chairman. The volunteer editor, in turn, selects material based on entertainment and permanent reference value. Each Speleo Digest volume becomes a valuable potpourri of information on American caves and caving.

The ideal Speleo Digest Committee Chairman candidate is an individual who has managed volunteers to accomplish long-term projects, and who can stay within prescribed book publishing guidelines and budgetary constraints, while providing assistance to the editors and managing each book's publication.

To apply, please contact NSS EVP Gordon Birkhimer at (home) 703-573-4653 or by (e-mail) evp@caves.org

Background information is available: <http://www.caves.org/pub/speleodigest/>

2006 NSS MEMBERS MANUAL WILL BE DISTRIBUTED SOON

The 2006 NSS Members Manual was sent to the printer. We anticipate it arriving in your mailboxes by mid to late June. Thanks to the members of the Members Manual Committee: Gordon Birkhimer (ads), Bob Hoke (cool facts and databases and preparing for printer), and Scott Parvin (design and layout). We all did a wonderful job, but can't do it without YOUR help in keeping your information current at the NSS Office!

3RD ANNUAL BATS 10TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION Friday - Sunday, July 21 - 23

You're invited to the 3rd Annual BATS 10th Anniversary Celebration to be held at Big Bend Campground at the Big Bend Park located in the Monongahela National Forest in scenic West Virginia.

For more information, please visit the campground website at
http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/mnf/rec/rog_campgrounds/bigbend_campground.htm

We're gonna have a blast – check out the park site for amenities/activities offered. We've got a group camping site reserved for 13 people and 4 cars (there is overflow parking available.) Possible activities are numerous...

To begin with, the park is located in a loop of the Potomac River, enabling a circular tubing trip around the campground back to the starting point with a short walk across the road to start all over again. The water is cool, the scenery is gorgeous, there are little rapids and long slow stretches of still water. Wow!

The Via Ferrata is relatively nearby.

There is fishing allowed in the river.

Of course, there will be caving, and visiting with BATS friends, and good food & beverages.

Would it be too much to ask for a general kind of commitment from folks so's to figure if we need to reserve another group spot? In other words, let Allan know if you're thinking seriously of going!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

KARST-O-RAMA JULY 14-16, 2006

Join the Greater Cincinnati Grotto at one of the largest caving events held this year in the eastern half of the United States

Held at the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve in Mount Vernon, Kentucky, just off Interstate 75 at Exit 59. Additional information along with registration forms, on-line registration, maps, and much more can be found at www.karstorama.com

The Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve is 300 acres of mostly wooded area with several acres of camping divided into a "Party Camp" and a "Family Camp". The creation of two "Camps" allows guests to enjoy the peace and quiet of the outdoors or stay up late and check out the night owl activities.

Great Saltpetre Cave was used for saltpetre mining in the early 1800's, and since then for weddings, Masonic meetings, country music radio shows, family outings, and even the production of a movie. In 2001, the preserve was the site of the NSS National Convention with 1,100 campers in attendance.

Karst-O-Rama weekend actually starts off with Registration opening on Thursday at 6:00 P.M. About one-third of KOR participants arrive by Thursday night, so come early and join the fun. Sign-up sheets for cave trips will be available at the shelter house with trips running all weekend.

The kitchen will be open for dinner Friday evening and for breakfast Saturday and Sunday mornings. Friday night will include a Howdy Party for checking out the crowd and signing up for cave trips on Saturday and Sunday, as well as the highly popular noodle-wrestling event.

Saturday morning, cave trips will begin, both guided and self-led. Other activities for the day include a photo contest, hayrides, hiking, and a climbing contest. If the July temperature becomes unbearable while shopping at the vendor section, the Crooked Creek swimming hole awaits – complete with rope swing and zip line. The preserve includes several miles of hiking trails both on and off the property. For those who are shopping addicted, the preserve is only a few miles from the city of Berea with its many gift shops and antique malls.

As the evening approaches, there will be a banquet from 5:00 to 7:00 under the shelter followed by a caving program at 8:00. Door prizes will be awarded prior to the program. If you want to stay up 'til all hours, there will be lots of activity in party camp, with the official KOR party starting at 9:30, featuring a live band.

For those with leftover energy, there will be cave trips Sunday morning.

If you have any questions about this yearly caving event, please contact Rick Peters at chairman@karstorama.com

