

BATS NEWS



The rare and elusive BATS of Monongahela
Lower middle photo by Meredith Hall Johnson
Other photos by Vihn "Vickie" Kieu



Summer 2006

FEATURES

A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR:

Again, a big thanks to everyone who sent in articles and photos. And now for my standard plug: Please keep sending newsletter material. Also, please try to send things in by the deadlines given. My schedule is going to start getting especially busy in the upcoming months, so the deadlines are more important than ever. End plug. Enjoy the newsletter!

Thanks,
April

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All photos on this page are provided by Vihn "Vickie" Kieu.

THE CULPRITS ...

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CALENDAR & EVENTS

SEPTEMBER

September 12 ... BATS Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

For more info: <http://www.otr.org>

September 22 - 24 ... Fall VAR 2006

For more info: <http://www.cave.org.vt.edu/fallvar06>

OCTOBER

October 10 ... BATS Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

October 21 ... Bridge Day

For more info: <http://www.wvbridgeday.com>

NOVEMBER

November 3 - 5 ... NSS BOG Meeting

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

November 14 ... BATS Meeting, 7:00 P.M.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN

Hi BATS,

I'm as bad as the rest of you in not writing up trip reports for this newsletter. I've been a grotto editor before and it is a real pain to have to cajole folks to submit material – or worse, to have to write it yourself. PLEASE write up those trips – I know you've been caving!! – and submit them to our editor.

Some recent events our grotto has participated in are the 3rd Annual 10th Anniversary weekend, which was a raging success, and the annual NSS Convention. Several BATS members were at the July Grand Caverns survey weekend, dressed in period (circa mid-1800s) costumes and learning the Virginia Reel for a film Dave Socky is making. We had great fun and I, for one, can't wait to see the film footage – particularly the outtakes. (See Susi's article on page eight of this issue.)

Please keep in mind that the first weekend in November is the NSS Board of Governors meeting that we're hosting. We will need a lot of help. Please contact me with your generous offers to help in any way you can...

BATS is also hosting the Howdy Party at the second National Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum in Lewisburg, West Virginia, in mid-September. I have signed up to go and will report back on what it's like. Conservancies from all over the country come to these every-other-year events and share information. If you look on the West Virginia Cave Conservancy Web site (www.wvcc.net/forum), you can read about this event and see our grotto name included.

Our membership is up to 44 at the moment. We have been steadily gaining a new member or two or having old members renew at each major event. Now if only all the old members would renew AND start coming back around!!

Finally, elections are coming up soon. If you are interested in running for office, great! We need some good healthy competition. If you would rather serve your grotto by being on the nominating committee, that is good too. Let me or one of the other officers know of your desires.

Thanks,
Meredith

MEETING MINUTES

BATS AUGUST MEETING MINUTES

August 15, 2006
Salem Church Library

ATTENDEES

Nikki Bennett, Mike Hill, Meredith Johnson, TinY Manke, Winnie Miller, Allan Weberg, Erin Hart

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Meredith should have the BATS members list published hopefully by the September meeting, or even by OTR!

Rundown of events:

- OTR: we're having gate duty from 2:00 to 6:00 P.M. on Thursday and shower cleanup Saturday morning (maybe 8 or 9?)
- 2nd National Cave & Karst Conservancies Forum is in Lewisburg, WV on September 20-22, 2006. BATS has donated money to sponsor the Howdy Party.
- 2007 NSS Convention will be in Marengo, IN (July 23-27th)

SECRETARY'S REPORT

We're on Salem Church Library's 2007 calendar, so we have the room reserved for next year (2nd Tuesday of each month).

TREASURER'S REPORT

The unofficial financial report: We have approximately \$3873.18 in the bank, with about \$2900 free.

REPRESENTATIVE'S REPORT

The term "Representative" has been substituted for "member-at-large" for this position, to stay in accordance with the by-laws.

BATS BUCKS

Allan	BATS Weekend	\$1
	Mt. St. Helens/Mt. Ranier	\$1
	Convention	\$1
	Sengers Talus Cave, WA	\$1
Nikki	Molly Kathleen Mine, CO	\$1
TinY	Lloyd Mullins Cave	\$1
	Great Saltpetre Cave	\$1
	Cripple Creek Ice Cave	\$1
	Mt. Baker/Tabletop	
	Mt. Hike	\$1
	NSS Convention &	
	Sengers Talus Cave	\$1
	For Gordon making	
	NSS Fellow	\$1
	For Winnie Miller (CCIC,	
	Lloyd, & Saltpetre Caves)	\$1



Virginia Big-eared bat
Photo by Vihn "Vickie" Kieu

MEETING MINUTES

(continued from page 4)

Mike	Kee Cave with Kids	\$1
Meredith	NSS Members Manual Published	\$1
	NSS Convention	\$1
	Sengers Talus Cave	\$1
Winnie	Trout Cave	\$1
	Lloyd Mullins Cave	\$1

TRIP REPORTS

Nikki – Molly Kathleen Mine, Colorado

TinY – Sengers Talus Cave, WA

Allan – Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Ranier trip, WA

Mike – Kee Cave, WV

OLD BUSINESS

BOG Update: Meredith is going to send out more information on this, but basically:

- We will need volunteers to pick people up from the airports on Friday, November 3rd, and to take them back on Sunday, November 5th.
- We need volunteers to provide crash space for board members (preferably up in the Northern Virginia area).
- Need people Saturday morning early to set up the meeting room at Allan's school.
- Saturday night will be the dinner at Don Pablos. We need cave pictures to show in a loop presentation. Jim McConkey is going to give a talk after dinner – possible party at Meredith's to follow.

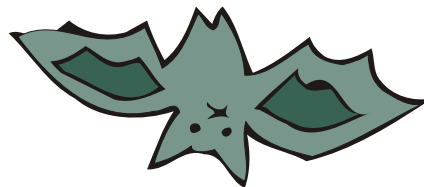
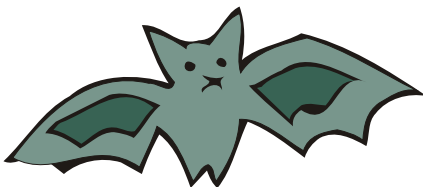
NEW BUSINESS

- **Education Efforts in Central America:** BATS voted to send \$50 to educational efforts in Costa Rica (The Bat Jungle).
- **Nominating Committee:** We need to get a nominating committee together by October. If you're willing to volunteer, please let Meredith know.

GROTTO TRIPS

- August: OTR
- September: VAR
- October: Bridge Day
- November: Possible Sinnett Trip? [Note: Allan will lead this trip on November 11, the morning shift.]

Minutes taken and submitted by Nikki Bennett, BATS Secretary.



TRIP REPORTS

BATS POOL PARTY PHOTO REPORT

Photos by Michael Young



From left to right: Steve, Kelsea, Sarah



Furr and Sarah



Meredith and Kelsea

TRIP REPORTS

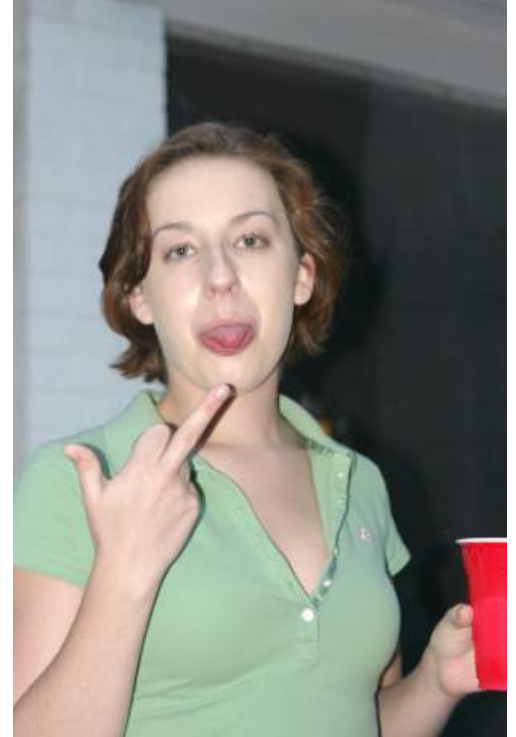
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BATS POOL PARTY PHOTO REPORT

Photos by Michael Young



From left to right: Meredith, Nikki, Meadow, April



Kelsea



Furr and Henry



From left to right: Furr, Allan, Michael

TRIP REPORTS

DANCING IN CAVES

By Susi Weston

It was pure magic. We were dressed in our finest and danced by the glow of hundreds of candles. At first, some of the women were having difficulty on the uneven floor with their long gowns. But soon we were caught up in the rhythm of the music and were dancing the Virginia Reel to the tune of 'Dixie.' It was as if we had been transported back to the 1860s, to the days of the "Grand Illuminations" at Weyer's Cave.

This was the scene in early July when several BATS members and the Grand Caverns Survey Team had the unique opportunity to attend a period ball at Grand Caverns. Dave Socky and his film crew erected lights and cameras to capture the reenacted scene. His new film features the history of the Caverns, including interviews and our dance footage.

As most of you know by now, I am a member of the 35th Battalion Virginia Cavalry, a Civil War Reenacting Unit.

Photo by Jim McConkey



Cavers reenacting a ballroom dance at Grand Gaverns

Together with my dear friends, Margaret and Harold (also reenactors), we were able to dress about 25 cavers in period attire. Although most of these volunteers were reluctant to slip into corsets and ball gowns or wool pants and shell jackets, I think they would all agree that dressing the part is half of the battle [Editor's note: the uphill half].

Once dressed, we made our way to the Grand Ballroom, where nearly everyone turned instantly into wallflowers.

With some amount of struggle, Margaret and I paired up our dancers and went about the challenge of teaching everyone the Virginia Reel. Within just a few minutes, this motley bunch of cavers turned into dancing fools! We all enjoyed the dancing so much that when Dave called 'cut' and the bright lights were doused, we all kept right on dancing. And dancing. And dancing our way into the night.

It was a special treat for me to combine my two favorite hobbies into one fun evening. I hope everyone who participated in the ball had as much fun as I did. See you all in the movies! ♦

THE VIA FERRATA

By Luke Cantrell

Mmmm, peaches..." I thought as I guiltily rearranged the slightly maimed bag of peaches I had been using as a soft, fuzzy rest for my head. I had taken to napping during the three-hour trip from the small town of Warrenton, Virginia to the even smaller town of Franklin, West Virginia. It was a pleasant journey there,

Photo by Vihn "Vickie" Kieu



Luke on the Via Ferrata

TRIP REPORTS

(continued from page 8)

with my sister, April, her friend, Vicki, and the peaches for company. Once in Franklin, we stopped at a short, squat little restaurant called Thompson's, since it was either that or a place called 'Mean Gene Burgers.' Once inside I was treated to two very excellent BLT's and some fries, which I had difficulty concentrating on due to the absolutely gorgeous waitress at the counter who was talking to a friend of similar attractiveness. It became very hard indeed to keep myself from staring when I realized that all of my food was gone whilst my sister's and Vicki's plates were still threatening to spill out onto the table. In a final, last-ditch effort to keep myself from openly ogling at the women, I began madly crunching on all of the plentiful ice in my glass of water, which by the way, was the best ice I had ever had the pleasure of munching on. It wasn't the kind of ice you get at your house, which is too big and too difficult to get out of the glass, nor was it the 'gas station' ice with the annoying holes in them that makes them hard to chew without freezing your brain. No, this ice was the perfect size, roundness, and texture for crunching on in times of stress and need. We finally left the restaurant just in time to keep me from resorting to drastic measures, like stabbing my leg with a fork or beating my head on the table, and we started out again on our journey to the Via Ferrata.

Photo by Vihu "Vickie" Kieu



Allan on the bridge at the Via Ferrata

After about a half an hour and Vicki and me asking if we were lost 20 or so times, April, who had earned a few gray hairs before her time, spotted Mike Hill's Jeep cruising



Photo by Meredith Hall Johnson

From left to right: Vickie, April, Luke, Ellie, Kevin, Allan, Mike, Chris, Marisa, Mike

down the road. We decided correctly that he probably knew where he was going and quickly took up chase. Soon we were pulling onto a wide gravel road that led to a small parking area and out-building. We parked as Mike, Mike, Chris, and Marisa filed out of the stuffed red Jeep and became acquainted with the site's cuddly terrier, Villain. We spent about 30 minutes milling about and waiting for all of the new arrivals, before milling about some more and earning several group pictures from Meredith's and Vicki's cameras. After all of the important items were taken care of, we began up the mountain, taking care not to slip on loose rocks and a certain fuzzy pooch.

After hiking about a quarter mile up a loose rock path, we found ourselves staring at a 100-foot vertical rock wall with pole steps, ropes, and cable ladders traversing it. We began up it one at a time, single file, as Villain did somersaults in a vain attempt to follow us up the sheer rock face. After about 15 minutes of climbing, scrambling, scraping knuckles, and generally just having a good time, we passed through the rock spine we had just been

TRIP REPORTS

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climbing on and found ourselves on the other side of it, hanging over 250 feet of empty space. Another 15 minutes brought us to a serenely waving cable bridge with a carefully moving Mike on it, trying to hop-skip across the thin wooden sticks that some comedian thought would be funny to use for steps. When my turn rolled around, I shakily started across, trying not to imagine myself missing one of the steps and crushing something very important to me. About half-way across the 150 foot bridge, I noticed some smart-ass bird mocking me as it flew in lazy circles under the bridge. (Keep laughing, ya stupid bird. Someday you'll end up in a pot of soup.)

After finally reaching the other side of the bridge we continued on to the headwall, which was an optional climb that allowed us stand at the very top edge of the second spine and enjoy the spectacular view. We could see the first spine in contrast to the rolling green hills of the valley behind it. Looking down hundreds of feet, we see the rope bridge spanning the two ridges with little orange heads bobbing across it. After that it was back down the headwall and across the back of the spine a short ways, until we came to a cut-through and the end of the climbing section. We came off the cable with heavy hearts when we saw the way back down, as it cut right through the center of all the progress we had made. We zigzagged our way down the middle of the two ridges passing under the entire climb until we came to the fire road that led back to the vehicles. After that, it was fun, games, Deuce Bigalow, and a couple of drunk people for the rest of the weekend. ♦

Photo by April Cantrell



Vickie and Kevin in front of the two fins of Nelson Rocks

THE BUBBLE CAVE SYSTEM

By Gordon Birkhimer

A recent exciting development has occurred at the Bubble Cave, Limited Liability Company (LLC) Property near Renick, in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. I would like to formally announce the existence of the – BUBBLE CAVE SYSTEM. All right, I understand the



Photo by Gordon Birkhimer

Before digging in Bubble Cave

whole thing is not even 300 feet, but we will soon connect the two largest known caves on the Bubble Cave, LLC property!

Bubble Cave, LLC was formed by a group of individuals, mainly friends and local grotto members, and organized to invest in the purchase of the property to save the caves. The cave property was officially purchased through the sales of shares on October 13, 1999. The Company is in accordance with the provisions of the West Virginia Limited Liability Company Act. Bubble Cave LLC was formed “to hold and protect the Bubble Cave and surrounding real property for the study and use of its members.” The property consists of six acres of rolling meadow farmland with some trees. There are three small caves and three large sinks located within the boundaries. The Company's intention is to preserve this property in a natural state, to provide education, and to discourage development harmful to caves.

Saturday June 12, 2006, was the annual Bubble Cave, LLC Weekend, where members of the group work to

TRIP REPORTS

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Photo by Gordon Birkhimer

Kurt digging the possible Bubble /Lunchbox Cave connection

improve the property and conduct a required annual business meeting. Shortly after Kurt Waldron and I returned from mission over at Buckeye Creek, gathering rock for our pavilion, Bill Balfour came by the property. John Pearson had coaxed Bill to come by for the purpose of surveying the two major caves located on the property, Lunchbox and Bubble. We have one map originally created by Doug Medville, Dick Graham, and Ron Simmons from January 14, 1995 of Bubble Cave, which is the largest known cave on the property. At that time, Bubble Cave was better known as Burr Cave #2, but I think Bubble Cave is a better name because of the unique limestone bubble shape over the entrance. Lunchbox had never been mapped or tied into Bubble with a surface survey, so we had no perception of their proximity or their relationship to each other. John was thinking when he asked for Bill's help.

After gearing up and walking to the entrance, we established the datum outside Lunchbox and began to survey into the cave. I had lead tape and read instruments, Kurt read tape and checked side leads, and Bill sketched. After recording seven shots, we completed the survey with a total distance of 84.5 feet. Exiting the cave we took three shots from the Lunchbox entrance to Bubble Cave entrance to complete the surface survey. The distance from entrance to entrance was 106 feet.

I climbed down the steep entrance to Bubble Cave and selected the first survey station inside the cave. We chose to survey the short leg of the cave under the entrance. Once

that segment was completed, we back-tracked past the entrance and then surveyed down the drain and up the other side. Next we surveyed down the flowstone and made the climb up to the rimstone dam area and the terminal pit. That section being finished, we made it back to the lead on the right wall, just before the drain when coming from the entrance.

Kurt entered the remaining lead, which began as upright walking, but rapidly deteriorated into a crawl. At the end of the crawl was a pit that Kurt assessed and decided he would attempt a free-climb down. That required Kurt to come out and get turned around so he could descend the pit blindly by going feet first. He made it safely to the bottom, and the drop measured 28 feet! The passage terminated in all directions, but one notable lead terminated into a pyramid-shaped room. Kurt described the various features and Bill sketched from his descriptions. When the reconnaissance was completed, Kurt began the rather difficult belled-out pit free-climb. A little grunting and what sounded like a lot

of agony later, first the light, and then Kurt, appeared over the lip. This is a difficult part of the cave most people will never see.

Once Bill tallied up the 15 shots we took in Bubble Cave, the survey totaled 202 feet. Later we looked at the Medville map and determined we didn't survey the lower level stuff; altogether it would probably add up to another 50-60 feet which would equal what Medville's group had originally surveyed. As it turned out, that wasn't the important part of the survey anyway. We went back to the pavilion and prepared for the night's festivities by changing into our evening dining garb.

Since the stone patio was now complete, we chose to have dinner in our pavilion, and it was wonderful. I made several batches of fresh cut french fries. There was plenty of good food, complete with a water cooler of margaritas courtesy of Mark Manor. The Company meeting following dinner was conducted smoothly, and all of the necessary business discussions, motions, and voting were completed successfully. When the meeting was concluded, the party moved up the hill to the campfire and an evening of music, conversation, and adult beverages.

Around 11:00 P.M., Bill Balfour came driving up the hill, parked, and walked up to John, handing him the survey data and a map he had already compiled that evening. Once handing over the paper, he proclaimed, tongue-in-cheek, "I would like to announce the existence of the new Bubble Cave System," to the surprised campfire crowd. Sure

TRIP REPORTS

(continued from page 11)

enough, the survey doesn't lie. There on the paper, the caves line up perfectly nut to butts with only a slight 1.6 foot elevation deviation between them. Wow! It was hard to believe, but there it was.

It didn't take long to become bored with the campfire. The thought of digging and connection fever started to set in. I ran through our options. We could either go to sleep now (not likely) and get up early and begin digging (less likely) or we could suit up and get to the task now. It was midnight and I presented the case to the remaining campfire crowd, from which I found five willing participants. Once geared up, and with the small military shovel from my truck, Ben Doan, Mark Manor, Kurt Waldron, and I climbed down the Bubble entrance and made our way to the dig site. A little later, Vik Garg would enter Lunchbox Cave alone to that dig zone in order to have people on each side.

I always had a strong feeling that this was a good dig location and I had told others about my hunch. In my opinion, the dirt in front of us was a plug that had filled in the going passage. The rock ceiling provides a sense of security from collapse, the couple-inch airspace between the rock ceiling and the dirt shows the way to dig, and the soft dirt fill is relatively easy to move. The manpower was here, and we began taking shifts of 10-15 minutes, loosening and removing the dirt from the plugged passage. We created about a body length of spacious passage, which made it easy to work. Directly in front of us was a rock formation, and Kurt was taking his turn trying to go left, right, or down to circumvent the obstacle when we all heard an unmistakable, "Hey." It was Vik's voice. He had made it to the dig location in Lunchbox and was yelling. We had a voice connection!

It was decided that Ben should go over to help Vik, partly to equalize the teams, but also because Ben had the knowledge of what was happening in the Bubble dig. Kurt continued digging to the terminus, which was a rock or formation directly ahead and he enlarged the tunnel by removing the spoils and leaving a rather spacious area. A lot of voice contact with Ben, and tapping and banging revealed that Ben, and Lunchbox Cave was definitely above Bubble. Based on that knowledge, we felt it would be easier to dig down rather than up. We wanted a hammer to break the rock, and Mark offered to go find his. When Mark returned with the hammer, he yelled down the entrance to us. Kurt and I grabbed our packs and the shovel, and we climbed out Bubble's entrance.

Mark brought us a hammer, one of the four-foot pieces of reinforcement rod (rebar), and a small mattock. Kurt and

I entered Lunchbox and made our way to the far end of the passage to find Ben digging and Vik moving the spoils. Ben was digging straight down to where he last heard our voice. He had a nice body-sized pothole dug out at the end of the



Photo by Gordon Birkhimer

After digging in Bubble Cave

passage. Kurt was ahead of me – pushed a lot of the loose dirt down the slope, and I pushed it to the side and behind me. Vik and Ben decided to switch places with us and they departed the cave. Ben went back over to Bubble so we could do some more voice tests designed to narrow the distance between us.

Kurt took a couple rounds of digging up loose dirt and pulling it out of the hole. It was slow going because there wasn't much room to work and the dirt had to be removed one handful at a time. A few more voice checks with Ben revealed we were going in the right direction. Then Kurt decided to do some probing with the rebar with pretty good results. He would tap the rebar with the hammer, driving it into the dirt, and Ben would report where he heard the sound. Generally, Ben described the sound as being to the left, to the right, and always just in front of him. He thought it sounded as if the rebar was riding down along the other side of a rock. That intelligence led us to believe that the remaining obstacle that separates us is a rock or a formation. And it's not much.

It was now 3:30 A.M., and I told Kurt I was running out of steam. We gathered the tools, exited the cave, and met everyone at the campfire. Everyone was tired but satisfied with our effort. A reasonable expenditure of energy had revealed the secret of the Bubble Cave System. And I believe the connection will be made on the next try... ♦

TRIP REPORTS

ALLAN'S SIDE TRIPS

Photos and text by Allan Weberg

On my way to the NSS Convention in Bellingham, Washington, I took a detour south to do some hiking in Mt. Ranier National Park. I stopped and parked at the Paradise Valley Visitors Center and hiked in the meadows below the mountain. All the wildflowers were in bloom and it was—sorry to use the trite phrase—a riot of color. I hiked further up and closer to the Nisqually Glacier. You could really see how the glacier had carved out the valley. There was a surprising amount of water gushing from the terminus of the glacier. I did manage to spot a Hoary marmot – sort of a rabbit, woodchuck kind of thing. He wasn't at all afraid of me, and he let me get pretty close. Below is a picture of his snout and tail sticking out as he is trying to hide in a hole. ♦

**Top left:
Terminus of
the Nisqually
Glacier**



**Top right:
Hoary
marmot in
hiding**



**Bottom
left: Trees
in the mist**



**Bottom
right:
Wildflower
meadow
below Mt.
Ranier**