

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 23 Issue 9

October 2016



Whiteside Mountain

A Monthly Newsletter of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

October 2016

Volume 23 Issue 9



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The Flowstone is published monthly by the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Items submitted for publication must be received by the 20th of each month for inclusion in the following month's issue.

The Cullman Grotto will exchange by request with any publishing grotto. Republication of items within *The Flowstone* is allowed provided credit is given to author and source.

Membership to the Cullman Grotto is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year for individual or twenty dollars (\$20) per year for family. Dues are payable at the first grotto meeting of each year (January) and includes subscription to *The Flowstone*. Subscription rate for non-members is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year.

The Cullman Grotto meets on the first Monday of each month unless the first Monday falls on a holiday or otherwise noted. In those cases the meeting will be held on the second Monday. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. and are held at the old L&N train depot, Arnold St., Cullman, AL. All visitors and prospective members are welcome.

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Front Cover: Whiteside Mountain practice for Bridge Day 2016

Photo by: Probably some random hiker, since everyone I know was there is in the picture! From Mandi Lynn's pics.

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ECHO)))) CHAMBER

2016 Fall NSS Board of Governors Meeting in Tennessee

By: Kelly Smallwood (Jasper, Tennessee)

rowland7840@bellsouth.net

Looking for something to do Halloween Weekend in TAG?

The Sewanee Mountain Grotto of the National Speleological Society, welcomes the directors, officers and committee members of the National Speleological Society to the Fall 2016 Board of Governors meeting in Tennessee. The event is FREE and open to the caving public.

The Fall 2016 BOG Meeting will be held near the beautiful campus of the Sewanee University. Sewanee was founded in 1857 by clergy and lay delegates from Episcopal dioceses throughout the south. The domain consists of 13,000+ acres of which 10,000 were donated by local landowners and the Sewanee Mining Company. The area is steeped in history as well as architectural character. The buildings on campus were built with sandstone from the region. One of the most notable buildings on campus is the All Saints Chapel which was built in 1905 and later finished in 1957. It is well worth a visit to take a peek inside. Weather in the Sewanee area during the last weekend of October is generally pleasant, with average high temps in the 60's and lows in the 40's. The scenery is gorgeous, the fall colors are popping and the caves are plentiful!



10/28/16 - Friday Welcome Party:

Join us in welcoming the BOG

members and their guests at the home of John Attaway from 6pm-10pm for a finger Foods dinner along with home brew from our very own TAG Brewery. Location: 1549 Old Sewanee Road, Sewanee, Tennessee

10/29/16 - Saturday Board of Governors Meeting: The Fall 2016 Board of Governors Meeting will be held in nearby Monteagle at Tom's Place. Address is 335 W. Main Street, Monteagle, Tennessee 37356.

Lunch: A special lunch menu will be available for BOG members & their guests from one of the local eateries. Cost will range from \$10-\$15 pp and a menu will be available for your selections when you check in for the meeting. There are several other dining options for cavers to choose from locally.

10/29/16 - Saturday Evening Party:

Join us at nearby Cavers Paradise for a Halloween themed caver party! Dress up or come as you are. The Sewanee Mountain Grotto will be providing the main course and asks guests (other than BOG members) to bring a side dish. Home Brew from the TAG Brewery will be provided. We will have several special guests Saturday evening. Bill Steele will be giving a talk on the recent explorations in Huautla (Proyecto Espeleologico Sistema Huautla) and Bengy von Cramen will also be showing movies including his 3D piece on Priests Grotto. Location: Caver's Paradise, 482 Wild Heart Lane, Sewanee, Tennessee 37375. Camping is available all weekend for \$5 per person/night at Caver's Paradise. Amenities include: bath house, hot tub, sauna and thousands of caves within an hour drive.

10/30/16 - Sunday Caving: The Sewanee Mountain Grotto will have several led caving trip options for BOG members, their guests and visiting cavers.

To register for the event please go to:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fall-2016-national-speleological-society-board-of-governors-meeting-hosted-by-the-sewanee-mountain-tickets-21637838357>



SCCi Fundraiser Update



The first annual Bats, Beer, & Bluegrass fundraiser was a huge success. Barefoot Nellie and Co. played to a sold out crowd at Fricks Cave Preserve. Over \$20,000 was raised for SCCi's Stewardship Endowment Fund. Thank you to all the sponsors, volunteers and donors. SCCi made a great first impression on many people in the community.

If you would like to support the Stewardship Endowment Fund, send an email to info@scci.org and we will let you know how.

Mark September 13 on your calendar for next year!



Webinar: Underground Cave Cities of Central Turkey

By: Carol Tiderman (Fulton, Maryland)

ctider@ymail.com

Join us for a webinar on Oct 06, 2016 at 8:00 PM CDT (9PM EDT / 7PM MDT / 6PM PDT). Please check your time zone for the correct starting time

Turkey, the area bridging Asia and Europe, has a long and amazing history. It has seen wars, peace, swelling empires, and crumbling governments.

One chapter from its long history was the creation of "cave cities". For many years, people actually dug their homes underground. Entire cities were formed that branched off to create a sprawling underground civilization. This wasn't just one city, or even just a few in an area, this is hundreds if not thousands of cities that thrived underground. The numbers of these ancient cities were so numerous that more cities are still being discovered to this day.

In this webinar Trevor Parker will take you to Turkey on a trip through the country experiencing culture, history, geology, and exploring several of these cities.

Register now:
<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/5587082951673256196>

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the webinar.

View System Requirements:
<http://support.citrixonline.com/s/G2W/Help/SystemRequirements>



Welcome to the 39th Annual TAG Fall Cave-In

Plans are in the works and all of the volunteers are preparing to bring you one of the best caving events of the year. We're working hard to ensure this year's Cave-In is the best one yet!

This year's event is scheduled for October 6-9, 2016 atop Lookout Mountain (Georgia), above Rising Fawn on the Little River Preserve -- the same location we've used for the past 13 years!

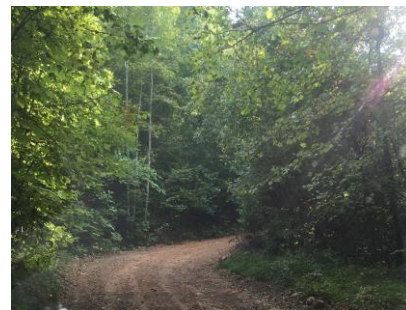
[Registration](#) is open now. Register early - before September 1 - for a discount. Remember, this is a private event and you must be an NSS Member to attend.

Head over to our [Facebook](#) page and join the conversation if you haven't already.

A few of you may be asking "What is the TAG Fall Cave-in?" Well, it's our very own event and fun fundraiser to support our Atlanta-area caving club, the [Dogwood City Grotto](#) -- one of the largest and most active grottoes in the National Speleological Society. All of the proceeds raised through this event go back to the caving community in the form of grants. The Dogwood City Grotto has supported many local and global research, exploration, and conservation efforts over the last 39 years. We look forward to the next 39 years!



Road to Valhalla



With many thanks to Buddy Lane, Treasurer and Valhalla Preserve Manager; Birmingham Grotto; and other volunteers, the improvements to the road to Valhalla have begun. The work should be completed this fall and will once again provide for vehicular access.



TAG Calendar

October 3
Grotto Meeting
L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30pm

October 8
Grotto Trip
TBA

October 6-9
TAG Fall Cave-In
Lookout Mountain, GA

October 28-30
2016 Fall NSS Board of Governors Meeting
Sewanee University
Sewanee, TN

Only a Handful of People Can Enter the Chauvet Cave Each Year. Our Reporter Was One of Them

A rare trip inside the home of the world's most breathtaking cave painting leaves lasting memories

By Joshua Hammer

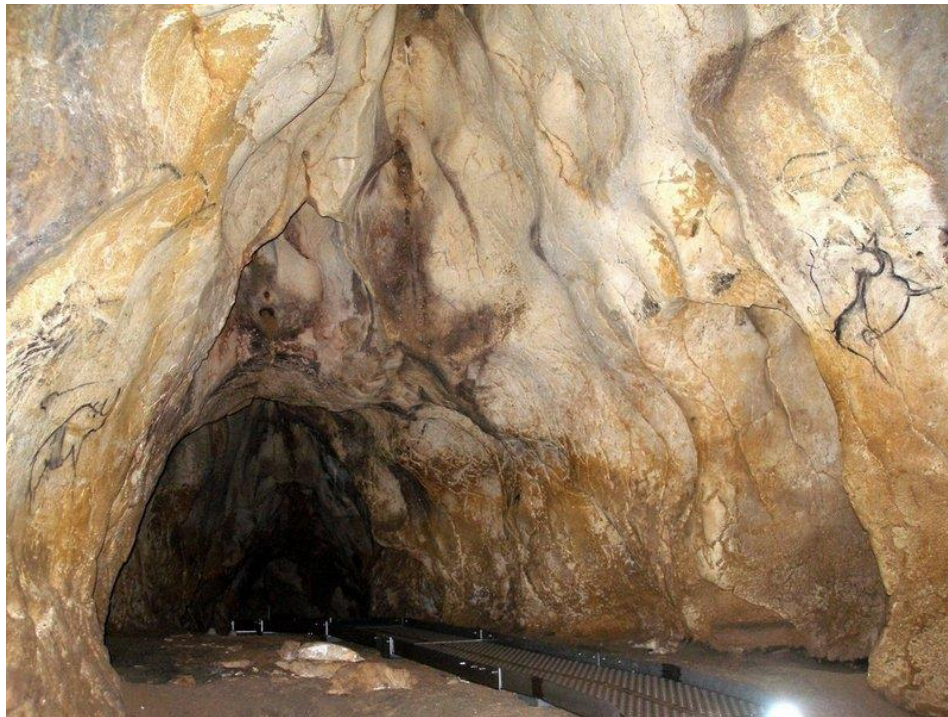
Reprinted from

www.smithsonian.com

April 14, 2015

The entry into the depths of the Chauvet Cave, the world's greatest repository of Palaeolithic art, begins with a dramatic ascent. A steep switchback trail through a forest brings one to the foot of a limestone cliff. From here a wood-plank walkway leads to a steel door. Behind it, sealed from outsiders by four secure locks- including a biometric lock accessible by only four conservators - lies a time capsule that remained hidden from the world for 35,000 years.

Ever since three amateur spelunkers, led by Jean-Marie Chauvet, crawled into the cave on December 18, 1994, and stumbled upon its remarkable trove of drawings and engravings, the government has sharply restricted access in order to preserve its fragile ecosystem. I had been as far as this



entrance four months earlier, while researching a cover story about Chauvet for Smithsonian. Back then, I had to settle for entering the Caverne Pont D'Arc, a \$60 million facsimile then under construction in a nearby concrete shed. But in April, in advance of the facsimile's opening to the public, France's Ministry of Culture invited me and three other journalists on a rare guided tour of the real Chauvet.

Marie Bardisa, Chauvet's chief custodian, opened the steel door and we entered a cramped antechamber. Each of us slipped into the obligatory protective gear, including rubber shoes, a blue jumpsuit, a helmet mounted with a miner's lamp, and rope harness fitted with two carabiners. Feelings of claustrophobia began to take hold of me as I crawled through a narrow rock passageway that ascended, curved, then descended, and finally stopped just before an abyss: a 50-foot drop to the grotto floor. A permanent ladder is now in place here. Bardisa's assistant clipped our carabiners to a fixed line and we descended, one by one, into the darkness.

All these precautions are in place to protect the cave itself and avoid repeating what happened to the famous Lescaux caves, where bacteria and decay have ruined the cave art. As I wrote in my Smithsonian feature:

The cave's undoing came after the French Ministry of Culture opened it to the public in 1948: Visitors by the thousands rushed in, destroying the fragile atmospheric equilibrium. A



green slime of bacteria, fungi and algae formed on the walls; white-crystal deposits coated the frescoes. In 1963 alarmed officials sealed the cave and limited entry to scientists and other experts. But an irreversible cycle of decay had begun. Spreading fungus lesions—which cannot be removed without causing further damage—now cover many of the paintings. Moisture has washed away pigments and turned the white calcite walls a dull gray. In 2010, when then French President Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife, Carla Bruni-Sarkozy, toured the site on the 70th anniversary of its discovery, Laurence Léauté-Beasley, president of a committee that campaigns for the cave's preservation, called the visit a “funeral service for Lascaux.”

At Chauvet, however, Just 200 scientific researchers and conservators are permitted inside each year. Bardisa says that as long as they stringently restrict access and closely monitor the cave, it can continue in its present state for the foreseeable future.

Because I had already toured the facsimile in December, I thought I would have some idea of what to

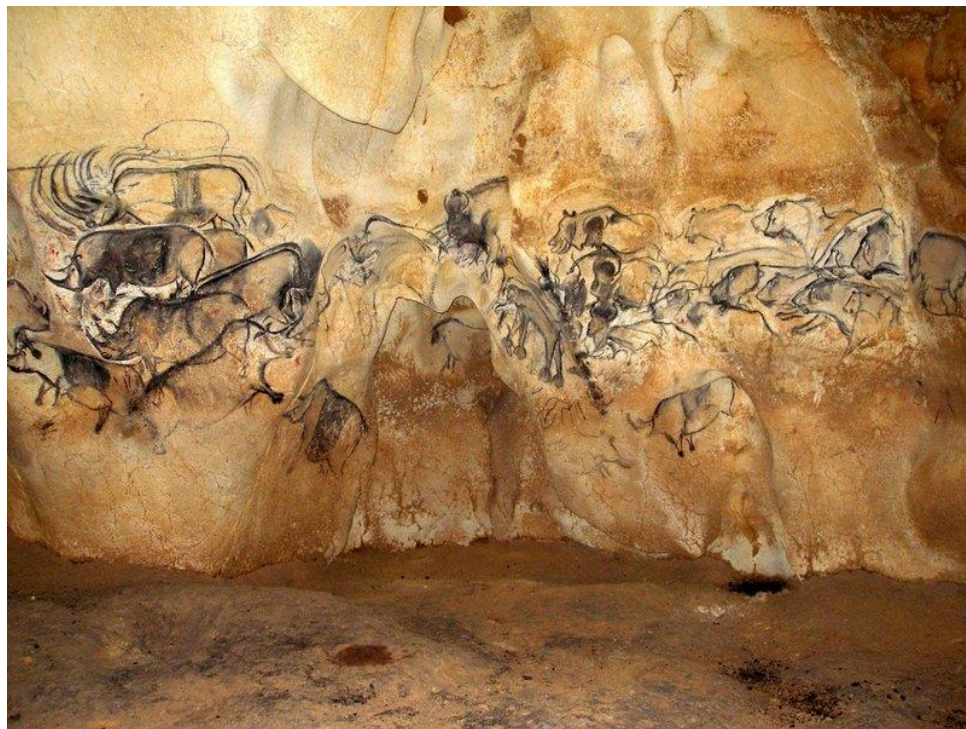


expect. But nothing could have prepared me for Chauvet's vastness and variety. (The Caverne Pont d'Arc has been shrunk to one third of the real cave's 8,500 square meters.) The lamp on my miner's helmet, along with a seepage of natural light, illuminated a cathedral-like gallery that soared at least six stories high. As we trod along a stainless-steel

walkway that retraced the original explorers' path – warned by Bardisa not to touch anything and remain on the walkway at all times - I stared at an extraordinary panoply of colors, shapes and textures.

White, purple, blue, and pink calcite deposits –formed over eons by water seeping through the limestone - suspended from the sloping ceiling like dripping candle wax. Multi-armed stalagmites rose from the floor like saguaro cacti. Others poked up like sprouting phalluses. There were bulbous formations as elaborate as frosted, multi-tiered wedding cakes, clusters of dagger-like stalactites that seemed ready to drop off and impale at us any moment.

Some limestone walls were dull and matted, while others shone and glinted with what seemed like mica. The floors alternated between calcified stone and soft sand, embedded with the paw prints of prehistoric bears, ibexes and other animals. The prints in the soft ground, frozen in place for 35,000 years, could be

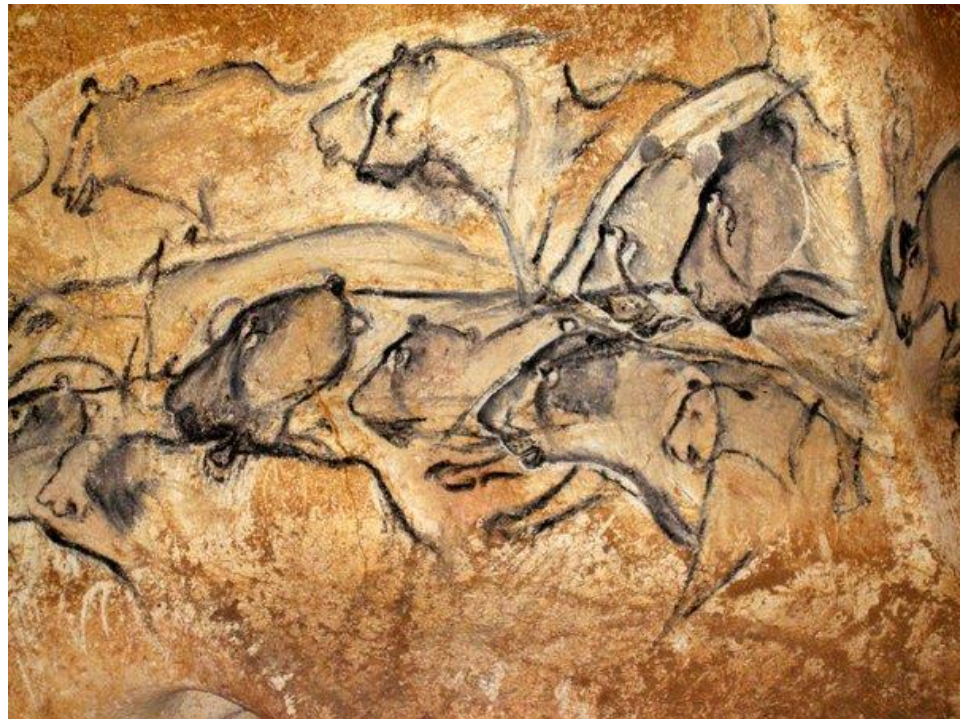


destroyed by a simple touch, Bardisa warned. And everywhere lay remnants of the beasts that had shared this cave with human beings: bear and ibex skulls, little white islands of bear bones, the droppings of a wolf.

The natural concretions were splendid, but it was, of course, the drawings that we had come to see. The presence of Palaeolithic man revealed itself slowly, as if these ancient cave artists had an intuitive sense of drama and pacing. In a corner of the first gallery, Bardisa pointed out the tableau that had mesmerized the French cave-art expert Jean Clottes when he entered here in late December 1994 to authenticate the discovery: a grid of red dots covering a wall, created, as Clottes would determine, by an artist dabbing his palms in ocher then pressing them against the limestone. Clottes developed a theory that these early cave artists were prehistoric shamans, who attempted to communicate with the animal spirits by drawing them out of the rock with their touch.

We continued along the metal walkway, slightly elevated off the soft ground, following a sloping course through the second room, containing another large panel covered with palm prints and, here and there, small, crude drawings of woolly mammoths, easily missed. Indeed, Eliette Brunel, the first to enter the cave, had noticed none of these paintings on her first walk through. It was in a passageway between the second and third galleries that Brunel had caught sight of a small, smudged pair of ocher lines drawn on the wall to her right at eye level.

"They have been here," she cried out to her companions. Over the next few hours, she, Chauvet and Hillaire moved from gallery to gallery, as we were doing now, staring in amazement as the representations of



ice age beasts became more numerous and more sophisticated.

Kneeling down in the third chamber, I set eyes on a long panel of rhinoceroses at waist level. Then came a panel of white engravings – the first artwork we had seen that was not created using ocher paint. Made by tracing the fingers over the soft limestone, or by using crude tools, the etchings included a profile of a horse that seemed almost Picasso-esque in its swirling abstraction. "You can see it springing. It's magnificent," Bardisa told us. I had to agree.

A final passageway, hemmed in by sloping walls, brought us to the End Chamber.

The prehistoric artists, creeping into the cave's hidden recesses with their torches, had obviously deemed this gallery the heart of the spirit world. Many visitors, including the filmmaker Werner Herzog, the director of the Chauvet documentary *Cave of Forgotten Dreams*, had marveled at the paintings contained in this last gallery – perhaps the fullest realization of Paleolithic man's imagination. Here, the artists

had changed their palette from ocher to charcoal, and the simply outlined drawings had evolved into richly shaded, torqued, three-dimensional creatures, marvels of action and perspective. Across one 12-foot slab of limestone, lions captured in individualized profile stalked their prey – a menagerie of bison, rhinos, antelopes, mammoths, all drawn with immeasurable skill and confidence.

After admiring this crowded canvas, we retraced our steps through the cave. I hadn't been able to take photographs and had found it too awkward to scribble my thoughts in a notebook, but I retained a vivid memory of every moment of the two hours that I had been permitted to explore Chauvet. I climbed back up the ladder and removed my protective gear, punched the exit button and stepped into the bright sunlight.

As I made my way down the pathway to a parking lot far below, my mind still reeled with the images that had sprung dreamlike out of the darkness- as vibrant and beautiful as they had been when our distant ancestors first painted them on Chauvet's limestone walls.

October at Whiteside: a Pictorial Trip Report

Pictures by Mandi Lynn (et al)





Minutes of the Meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

September 12, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, September 12, 2016, at 7:35 p.m. by Perry Clayton, Vice-Chairman. The meeting was held at the Festhalle Marketplatz, due to the Depot being booked by another group. 6 members were present.

The minutes from the August meeting were read. A motion was made by David Drake to accept the minutes as read and was seconded by

Arlon Baker. The motion was approved.

A Treasurer's report was sent in & given by the Vice-Chairman.

The Webmaster said that the website is up to date and our pictures are accessible again. There is also a link to our Facebook page.

The Librarian came straight from a golf tournament so he didn't have anything for the group.

The Flowstone editor reminded everyone to do stuff & write about it. Proper grammar and spelling are NOT required!

Announcements:

HCRU SRT Course – October 1, 2016

Surprise Pit Trip – November 12, 2016

Annual Grotto Black Friday Trip (Flowing Stone) – November 25

Old Business or New Business:

None worth reporting

Trip Reports

Arlon gave a report of his epic U.S. road trip with Carol this summer. He also shared pictures.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45 pm.

