

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 23 Issue 8

September 2016



El Cap Memories - 2016

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

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

September 2016

Volume 23 Issue 8



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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.

Official Grotto Address

Cullman Grotto
c/o Harold Calvert
123 Co. Rd. 250
Cullman, AL 35057
webecavers@hotmail.com

Newsletter Exchange

The Flowstone
Sharon or Perry Clayton
1628 Edmondson Rd
Hanceville, AL 35077
dcpbookwyrms@hotmail.com



Front Cover: *El Capitan – Yosemite National Park*

Photo by: Gary Phelps

2016 OFFICERS

Chairman

Harold Calvert
123 Co. Rd 250
Cullman, AL 35057
(256) 287-9770
webecavers@hotmail.com

Vice Chair

Perry Clayton
1628 Edmondson Rd.
Hanceville, AL 35077
(256) 352-0235
perryclayton@charter.net

Secretary

Evon Thompson
378 County Rd. 395
Cullman, AL 35057
(256) 352-0235
binerbat@gmail.com

Treasurer

Tracy Calvert
123 Co. Rd. 250
Cullman, AL 35057
(256) 287-9770
webecavers@hotmail.com

APPOINTMENTS

Advisor

Victor Bradford
8333 US Hwy 31
Hanceville, AL 35077
by carrier pigeon only

Safety

Jeff Lynn
(256) 558-7042
bamacaveman@yahoo.com

Membership/ Library

David Drake
110 Co. Rd. 1386
Falkville, AL 35622
(205) 790-1350
dmdrake1@gmail.com

Webmaster

Kuenn Drake
100 Co. Rd. 1386
Falkville, AL 35622
(256) 739-6915
kuenn.drake@gmail.com

ECHO)))) CHAMBER

NSS seeks Secretary-Treasurer Candidates

By: Bill Jackson (Cross Junction, Virginia)

unclebill4784@gmail.com



The Executive Search Committee is looking for candidates to run for NSS Secretary-Treasurer. If you are interested in running or can suggest a good candidate, please send a note to the committee at execsearch@caves.org

The current S-T Gary Barnes had announced that he would serve for three years, which will be up this spring.

Election of S-T takes place at the Fall BOG meeting which this year will be on 29 OCT at Sewanee.

From the BOG manual:

01-618 Secretary-Treasurer Responsibilities 7-27-07:34, 8-7-98 The Secretary- Treasurer (S-T) is the Society's chief financial and record keeping officer and shall ensure the Society's finances are managed in a fiscally responsible manner. The S-T is responsible for investing NSS funds and the S-T and at least one other officer or the Office Manager shall have signature authority on all NSS accounts. The S-T is responsible for establishing the Society's accounting and financial processes and managing their implementation in accordance with policies established by the Board of Governors so as to allow for an independent audit by a certified public accountant. The S-T is responsible for managing the process

by which the entire EC assumes responsibility for both the income and expense side of the budget. The S-T is responsible for preparing estimates for dues income and other items which do not fall within a specific department. All such estimates will be provided to the entire EC for peer review with associated backup data. The S-T is responsible for presenting a budget to the Board of Governors for approval based on a consensus of the Executive Committee. The S-T shall support the other officers and the Board of Governors by providing timely reports of the Society's financial activity and status, certifying corporate documents as Secretary, filing corporate returns including annual reports and tax returns when required, and ensuring original corporate documents are stored in a safe deposit box. The S-T is also responsible for managing committees assigned to the S-T department by the Board of Governors.



Crowd-Sourced Funding for WNS Research Project Sought

By Hazel Barton

My lab is trying this crowd-sourced funding approach to getting funding for some WNS research.

Right now all Federal funding is for 'cure' only approaches, without trying to understand the underlying causes of WNS. We're trying to understand why some bats get WNS and others don't and what this means for the future of WNS in the US.

These things are funded based on the number of backers AND \$\$, so even if you can donate just a tiny little bit, it dramatically increases our chances of getting the full funding.

From the Experiment.com funding page:

About This Project

With more than 5 million bats already dead, White-nose Syndrome (WNS) is one of the most devastating wildlife diseases in modern history. While almost all bats infected with WNS eventually die, some species are naturally resistant, including Virginia big-eared bats. Our research aims to understand why and how these bats survive, what this can tell us about how the fungus kills, and what it might mean for bat populations.

You can find more information about the project, as well as pledge your support at www.experiment.com/whitenose



TAG Calendar

September 12
Grotto Meeting
L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30pm

September 17
Grotto Trip
TBA

September 24
Bats, Beer & Bluegrass – SCCi 25th Anniversary Celebration & Fundraiser
Frick's Cave Preserve, Walker County, GA 7pm

October 1-2
HCRU SRT Class
Union Grove, AL

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

Return to El Capitan - 2016

By Gary Phelps (NSS 30170)



With the triennial V-Bats trip to Yosemite National Park rapidly approaching, I wasn't sure if I would be able to make this one or not (my fourth) but the yes/no needle finally settled down when I realized that it would be embarrassing to back out after Kellie Murphy Cooney had ordered a shirt for me! This time I flew (to San Francisco) on Saturday, July 23, and rented a small red Nissan Juke SUV, saving a week's worth of driving. The rip-off insurance they tacked on was unexpected, due to a misleading website but the vehicle itself was great (after I figured out how to start it and open the gas cap door). At Manteca I visited the local Wal-Mart for camping supplies then continued on. Almost got rear ended late at night by an inattentive driver while stopped at a red light (!) and later slept in the front seat a little past the ranger station. Sunday, at the Crane Flats gas station I watched a young man pull into a parking space and plow into someone's door in the spot next to it (many of the customers

there liked to park in front of a pump and go shopping, etc. with no regard for all those waiting in line to get gas).

Early Tuesday morning I made the same mistake once again despite my best efforts and did not start up the rope rigged to the top of El Capitan till 5:05 AM. The first half of the 2,650 foot climb went great (though I don't like the part against the wall), certainly better than in 2013. All that exercise on my Nordic Track paid off and I had no problem with a slight hernia I had worried about. A little bee like insect seemed to follow me the whole way. But when Mr. Sun came creeping around the corner of the cliff earlier than expected, I soon found myself trying to get up to the top in a brutal heat with no breeze most of the way, taking too long to rest. By then, my helmet had been replaced with a hat. The climb turned into more of a mental discipline test than anything else - I was just about at my physical limit. At least this time I had much more comfortable foot loops and shoes (the ones I always wear!) and enough Gatorade to last (three 20 ounce bottles). It was most fortunate that my sunscreen



from the day before was still working (I had some with me but had not put any on). A few hundred feet below the top I started to get cramps in my left leg but the Gatorade seemed to make them go away. It was great to finally get up on the diving board and say hi to John Deighan. I had not made it to the pigtail till 10:25 AM, easily my worst climb (but perhaps not so bad for 65 1/2 years old and two awful hours in the sun). My best climb was in 2001 when I was about 50 (2 1/2 hours). The second one (in 2010) was at least 3 hours (also made it to the top of Half Dome on that trip).

Merilyn Smith, who had called Kellie earlier, was relieved to hear from me back in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. After blowing some bubbles for Bubbles and helping John and Kellie get down the rope I sat around until the relief crew arrived from their 11 mile hike from our campsite at Yosemite





Creek. It was hot and windy and I wondered how the trees and other types of plants managed to stay alive up there.

There was no wind at all when I spent close to 25 minutes rappelling back down that early evening. On past rappels I had been blown around on the cliff face, which was kind of fun. My rack is too long which means that the bars are higher up which means that you have to reach up higher to adjust them (harder on your arms). On my way back to my vehicle I followed the cliff bottom too far and soon found myself lost on an unfamiliar path in the dark (!). A half hour later I finally saw car lights (saved!) and managed to get to the grocery store in the formerly named Curry Village before it shut (a much appreciated meal and lots of cold Coke!).

I spent much of the rest of the week there recovering from the climb (stiff and sore) and putting up with the 100 degree heat in the valley. Yosemite Falls looked like it was about to dry up. Had a lot of interesting conversations and experiences with V-Bat members (close to 20 on this trip) and other people I met, including our last get together around the fire. The pizza at Yosemite is not too bad. I wish I had been able to

hike to the camp on El Cap, help out and do another rappel but it was getting too late (going by how long it took Nicole and me to get there in 2013) and I did not think it was a good idea to do it alone. I wish I had also gotten to see the Chinese rocket booster that put on a spectacular show as it burned up in the atmosphere on Wednesday night.

Saturday, Kellie and I took off for San Francisco about 3:30 PM, with Tiny Manke, Tony Pugh and Tyler French following us. We had dinner at a Mexican restaurant in Groveland then continued on. The traffic was slow much of the way - Kellie's audio GPS was very handy, especially at night (too many lefts and rights and signs to follow). All I could think about was getting there on time and finding a bathroom! Everything took too long and I ended up getting there a bit too late to check my luggage (!). Some of the customers waiting in line must have been the same ones I saw at the Crane Flats gas station! Absolutely no regard for those in line behind them. One couple argued for over 20 minutes about having their luggage delivered in a manner not allowed. Another lady gabbed on her phone at least that long in front of the desk while everyone else waited for her to shut up and conclude her business.

At any rate, I slept in an airport chair all night and took off the next day around noon. The others had some difficulties getting home too.

Hope to see everyone again in 2019 (when I will make SURE not to get a late start up the rope!!!).

Thanks to all for a great time!



What Is It?

By Sharon (and Perry) Clayton

At last month's Grotto Picnic, held at Palisades Park, Perry Clayton made note of an anomaly in the rock around a popular rappelling site. He had seen this anomaly a number of times and tried to find out if anyone at the park knew what the pattern was, with no success. He decided to take some pictures and see if he could get an answer from the internet. He submitted the photos to several "What is it?" forums on the popular Reddit website, including forums dedicated to both geology and fossil identification. He received quite a lot of responses to his posts, most of which agreed that the pattern was not man-made at all. It was, in fact, a fine example of a fairly common fossil in our area: the fossilized imprint of the bark of a *Lepidodendron*!

Okay, so what on earth is a *Lepidodendron*, you might ask? According to wikipedia.org, as well as Britannica.com, *Lepidodendron* was a common "proto-tree" found in this area during the Carboniferous Period, roughly 359 to 299 million years ago. During this time, the entire Southeastern region of the North American continent was a large swampy delta for a number of rivers coming out of the Appalachians. These *Lepidodendrons* formed dense

groves throughout the area, with each plant reaching up to 130 feet in height and up to 7 feet in diameter. The plants tended to grow straight up, with no branches, until reaching maturity when they put out branches at the top and long narrow grass-like leaves. The lack of branches allowed them to grow in extremely dense patches...up to a thousand per acre in some areas!



An artist's rendition of what Lepidodendron might have looked like – by Tim Bertelink

Today, Lepidodendron fossils, as well as the distinctive patterns formed by their bark pressing into dense swamp mud, are common in the southeastern US. They are most often found in sandstone or shale deposits.



*The pattern found in the rock face at Palisades Park – Oneonta, AL
Photo by Perry Clayton*



An example of fossilized Lepidodendron bark pattern.

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

August 1, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, August 1, 2016, at 7:35 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 8 members were present.

The minutes from the July meeting was read. A motion was made by Perry Clayton to accept the minutes as read and was seconded by Sharon Clayton. The motion was approved.

There was no treasurer's report.

Announcements:

Grotto picnic – August 6, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. at Palisades Park.

HCRU – August 25-29, 2016.

SRT – October 1, 2016

Old Business:

Harold will try to get to Palisades Park early to get a pavilion. BBQ will be from Johnny's BBQ.

New Business:

Discussion was held as to whether the grotto should purchase a set of bolting equipment and it was agreed that the grotto would not purchase one.

Trip Reports

Trip report was given on Mrs. Millers.

The meeting was adjourned.

