

The FLOWSTONE

23 Issue 7

July/August 2016

Summer Caving



Monthly Newsletter of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE



July/August 2016

Volume 23 Issue 7

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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: Collage of pictures from the Gross-Skeleton trip

Photos by: Mark Ostrander and Dustin Humphrey

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ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Wilderness Medicine Class

By: Lee Burnett (Birmingham, Alabama)

burnett.lee@gmail.com

The Alabama Wilderness Medical Association is offering a three-day course in Advanced Wilderness Life Support (AWLS) on September 8-10 at Ruffner Mountain in Birmingham. Developed at the University of Utah School of Medicine, the course provides substantial and practical coverage of all major subjects in wilderness/austere/expedition/environmental/field medicine. Beginning with the initial assessment of the patient, we move onto field management of trauma, drowning, lightning strikes, hypothermia, envenomation, and more. Extensive hands-on and simulation components occur each day in order to apply the skills and knowledge discussed in classroom sessions. A full course description, schedule, and registration information is available at AlabamaWMA.org

Only a limited number of spaces remain available, and it's first-come, first-served until the course is full. All course materials, supper on Thursday, lunches on Friday and Saturday, breakfasts, and coffee are included. The course will go forward, rain or shine.

In order to cover all of this material in three days, participation is limited to those with medical training (EMT, paramedic, RN, PA, MD, med students, etc.). Participants who successfully complete the class (including a written exam and demonstration of hands-on competency) will receive AWLS certification lasting four years. The following professional organizations grant 20.5 hours of continuing education credit (AMA, PRA-approved category 1) for this class: Wilderness Medical Society, Physicians, American Academy of

Family Physicians, and the American Association of Physician Assistants. The Alabama Department of Public Health has approved this class for all state EMS license holders. Other license holders should contact their governing entities regarding credit. Questions should be addressed to AlabamaWildernessMedicine@gmail.com



SCCi Online Permit System Goes Live



SCCi is rolling out an online permit system. The system has been designed to make the permitting process as convenient and transparent as possible while helping SCCi responsibly manage preserve access. Online permits are available for caving, hiking a preserve and camping (where allowed). Stephens Gap has been successfully implementing online permits with very few user problems.

Preserves that currently require permits will continue to roll out this summer. All preserves will require permits beginning January 1, 2017. Preserves that do not currently require a permit will be placed on 'automatic' which means as soon as you electronically sign the release, the system will issue a permit. It is possible to do this from any internet connected computer, tablet or smart phone.

Visit permits.scci.org and give the system a try. If you have any suggestions or problems send an email to onlinepermits@scci.org.



New NSS History Book Available

By Tony Canike



A new NSS history – “The Diamond Jubilee of the NSS” is now available at the NSS Bookstore!

Published in celebration of the NSS' 75th Anniversary, "Diamond Jubilee of the National Speleological Society" is a hardbound, 291 page historical book covering highlights from our past 75 years. The publication includes sections on national, regional, and grotto events, in addition to extensive chapters on science and technology.

Member discount applied at checkout.

<http://caves.org/bookstore.shtml>

TAG Calendar

August 1

Grotto Meeting

L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30pm

August 6

Annual Grotto Picnic

Palisades Park Oneonta, AL

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

How To: Pallet Bat House

By Scott Murphy

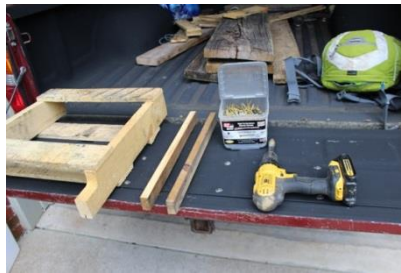
After our trip to Florida Caverns State Park, Legina Thought we could get a bat house for a souvenir to take home with us. I told her that I would build us one. So at work the other day I decided I would build one from a pallet. So this is how I did it.



I first cut down the side of the middle 2 by 4



Then I cut that section in about half to get this piece. I saved all my scrap to fill in the middle section to make it a 2 chamber bat house.



I cut 2 strips 1 inch wide to use as a spacer. I screwed them to the inside and to the backside of the house.



Then I flipped it over and used some of the boards to fill in the back first.



Then I shortened some of the pieces and filled in the middle section. When that was finished I covered the front.



I ran out of the pallet wood and had to use a couple of decking boards to fill in some of the space they fit perfect.

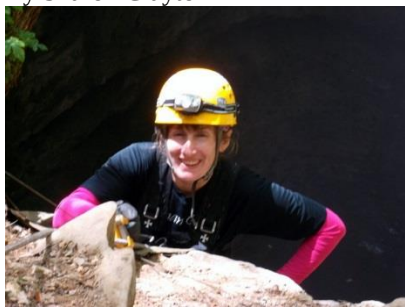


I added a board to the top and a 2 by 6 on the back to attach to a pole. Just needs a coat of paint and then its ready to put up.

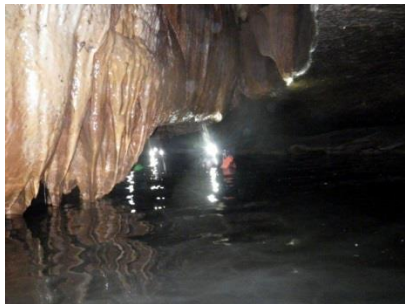


Summer Caving

By Sharon Clayton



When the daytime temperatures are hitting the high 90s and the humidity is enough to drown in, what's an Alabama caver to do? Well, head underground, of course! And what's better on a hot humid day than a wet cave??? Especially a wet cave that was also a new cave (to me, at least!) My two most recent cave trips hit all of these criteria.



First off, Harold arranged a trip for us in June to Gourneck Cave. Several Grotto members had been here in the past (including Harold), but I had not been able to make those trips. I was excited to go, since those who had been before had really talked the cave up. We had a fairly small group for that day...me, Harold, Kuenn, Chuck and Terri. We were glad the "hike" from the parking area was short, since we were all in our wetsuits & about to die in the heat & humidity. There is a short entrance rappel and we found it already rigged, telling us we were not the only folks visiting the cave that day. We rigged our own rope carefully so as not to cause a problem when the other group de-rigged theirs. Once inside, it was not long at all before we met that group on their

way out. We were surprised to hear that there was another group in the cave as well, not connected to the other group. We wondered how they had gotten in & how they planned to get out as well. We met up with that group soon after. They said they just free climbed the drop & planned to free climb it out. They had done so many times before & were experienced climbers. Well, I'm glad they were confident...I'm not sure I would want to free climb it myself!

Once inside the cave, there really isn't a lot of room to get lost. If you just follow the water pipe, you're sure to find your way in and out. The cave lived up to the hype the other Grotto members had given it. I had a blast! The water was lower than the last time Harold had been (only about knee deep in most areas), but there was still enough to make me glad of the wet suit & also to play in. I got to practice/learn a few canyoneering techniques while hanging out with Kuenn. I really thought the cave was like an underground canyon (much like the ones in Zion!) At the very back of the cave there is a large round pool...at least 8 to 10 feet deep...with a waterfall going into it. Kuenn did a cannonball into it...he always does like to make a splash! The rest of us did slide in & take a swim. And I managed to fall into a mudhole on the way out and wallow around like a pig. I was wishing for that pool after that incident...I haven't had that much mud on me since Tallucah!

In July we had our second wet cave trip of the summer...and another new cave for me. I had heard a lot about Gross-Skeleton Cave from Amel over the years, but somehow we had just never had the chance to go. I was thrilled when Harold said we could go! Perry had missed the Gourneck trip due to an injury, but he was able to join us this time. Harold decided we would make a through trip of it, going in the upper entrance and out the lower one. Apparently no one had done the upper entrance in a while, because Perry and Mark had to do

some digging to get in. That almost ended in disaster when a large log shifted & threatened to squish Mark. Perry had his shoulder up under it, ready to try to keep it from crashing down, but it stopped shifting just in time. By the time they got the entrance open, the log was stable & we were able to get in without danger. Well, there was the danger of shrieking & terror caused by a large rat that was disturbed by the digging (no, it wasn't Jelene & I who were terrified...no names, but I think his initials are Bo!)



We had a great time in the cave. It is really nicely decorated and has a lot of fun water passages...everything from knee-deep splashing to full on swimming through tunnel passages. And, once again, I somehow found myself in the mud again. Mark led us on purpose through some really deep peanut-butter style mud on the way to some formations. Perry & I only belatedly found out that the mud wasn't as bad if you stuck (no pun intended) to the edges. We also almost got into a mud wrestling match on the way out. Again, I was nearly as muddy as Talucah by the end of that!



So that was my June & July underground waterpark experience. I really enjoyed both caves and hope that we get to go back to them soon. Now...on to more adventures!



Gross-Skeleton Cave Trip

By: Mark Ostrander (Madison, Alabama)

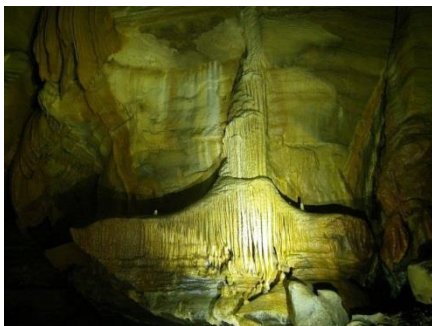
mjo56300@yahoo.com

On the 2nd, I was able to go with friends from the Cullman and Montgomery grottoes on a trip through Gross-Skeleton Cave. We did the typical through trip, going in the upper and out the lower. We all had wetsuits. My thick farmer john one was just perfect.

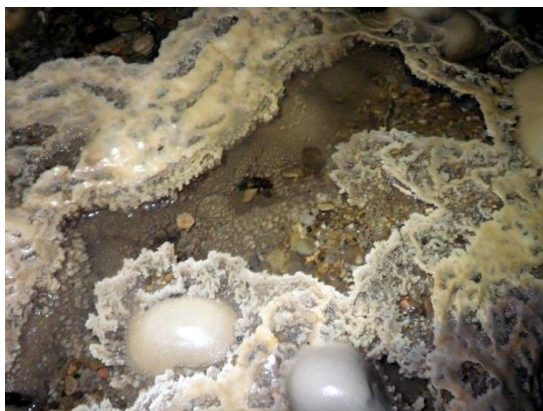


Mr. Albrechet was his typical friendly self about parking in the big lot outside his gate at the upper end, and we walked down from there. The cave must not be getting much traffic, as we had to dig our way in to it - through a log jam a ways inside the cave. My day was almost ruined when a tree trunk shifted and almost settled on top of me.

I enjoy every part of that cave, from the outrageous 360 degree water



scallops in the upper entrance, to all the wading, the beautiful formations and rimstone, the swimming through the formations, and exploring the big room with all the soda straws at the end. It always seemed misty to me, I guess since the wind was blowing the steam off our bodies along with us. We saw a fair bit of wildlife above and below ground. Everyone had a great time.



The situation at the lower end is still fluid. Mr. Week's old house has been torn down, the lot cleared, and a new brick house has been built in its place. It was still empty, but won't be for long. We stashed my car at the beginning of the former Weeks driveway with a note on it, and then hiked to it past the empty house on the usual route when we came out. When the house is occupied, we'll have to see how that goes.



Gross Skelton/ Mrs. Millers

By Harold Calvert

Due to the holiday schedules and people being on vacations, the July grotto trip was taken before the July meeting. And with the grotto picnic being this next Saturday, the August trip was taken at the end of July! What a mess! Maybe now we can get back into the regular grotto schedule, meeting on the first Monday and trip the next weekend.

The first trip we had in July was to Gross Skelton cave. This is a wetsuit trip; there is deep water in spots requiring swimming in cold water. The grotto, with the exception of Mark, had been to the lower part of the cave but had never done the through trip. I knew the upper parking spot, contacted the landowner and had prearranged the trip. The hike to the upper entrance has been made easy; the landowner had cut a road all the way to the sink.

After donning suits we entered only to find that the earlier floods had plugged the small passages required to enter the cave. With a little digging we were in. The cave is pretty much a straight shot through, mostly walking, and a few hands and knees sections. Most of the deep water comes into play around the middle of the cave.

Halfway through there is an upper level that is very nicely decorated. At this point is also where the deep water is encountered in the lower section. There is one area that has low air space and deep water. This day the water is a little lower, there is

over a foot of air, but it is still a swim with around ten feet deep water. After this section there are alternating deep pools and stoop walk for the remainder of the cave. It was a good trip, and was enjoyed by all.

Next trip was to Mrs. Millers cave. This is one that I have been to several times. The entrance is not very noticeable; if you are ten feet from it you will miss it. Chuck walked straight to it; I was ten feet over and walked past it. It is a very small hole without much around it to mark it. The entrance is a vertical, climbable wormhole down with cow bones littering the entrance. A long time ago a cow fell and wedged in the hole and died there, the bones are still there. This entrance leads down to a small room with a small triangular passage leading off one end. Through the triangle there is a larger room with the pit and some cave passage. The triangle is snug, which allows for quite a few "special" words to be spoken!

After entering this area, Chuck began the task of rigging. One spot was tried, he did not like the spot and climbed back up to try another. Finding this spot satisfactory, Chuck, Sharon, and Bob went down to explore the lower cave. I rigged in and went over the lip, had light problems and decided not to continue. After a changeover and climb back up, we heard a thunderstorm outside. Bo, Jelene, and I decided to make our way back out of the cave. Bo had an interesting conversation with the triangle on the way out also. On the second try and some encouraging words he made it through.

The entrance climb was slick due to the rain that was now falling, this made the climb interesting. We three made it out just in time for the thunderstorm, seems I get caught like that a lot! The hike to the cars was pretty soggy but uneventful. Bo and Jelene had clothes to change into but Chuck had them locked in the car and had the key. So we waited in the rain.

Just as it quit, the others arrived from the cave. Everybody got cleaned up and dried out, except for Bob, who had left his clothes at home. It's going to be a long drive back to Montgomery in wet muddy clothes! Despite the little problems, it was a good trip. It was good to be back underground.



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

June 6, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, June 6, 2016, at 7:30 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 10 members were present.

The minutes from the May meeting was read. A motion was made by Tracy Calvert to accept the minutes as read and was seconded by Micah Sims. The motion was approved.

The treasurer's report was given.

Announcements:

NSS Convention – July 17-23, 2016, in Ely, Nevada.

HCUR – August 25-29, 2016.

Old Business:

Grotto picnic will be held on August 6th at Palisades Park. The grotto will furnish the meat. Everyone bring a side dish.

New Business:

There was no new business.

June Grotto Trip:

Gourdneck Cave. Meet at the library at 8:00 a.m.

There was a group discussion of the SCCI permit system.

Trip Reports

Mark Ostrander discussed a trip to Ulla Cave. Sharon Clayton discussed the training at the bridge. Kuenn Drake gave a trip report on Tumbling Rock.

The meeting was adjourned.



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

July 11, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, July 11, 2016, at 8:00 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 5 members were present.

After standing at the door to The Depot without a key and watching a multitude of people looking for Pokemon, the 5 who showed up for the meet meeting moved next door in the Festhall Market.

The minutes from the June meeting was read. A motion was made by David Drake to accept the minutes as read and was seconded by Vic Bradford. The motion was approved.

There was no treasurer's report.

The Flowstone editor was out of town and there was no Flowstone.

However, there will be a double-issue next month.

Announcements:

NSS Convention – July 17-23, 2016, in Ely, Nevada.

Grotto picnic – August 6, 2016 at Palisades Park at 10 a.m. The grotto will furnish BBQ. Everyone bring a side dish.

HCRU – August 25-29, 2016.

Old Business:

The time for the Grotto picnic was scheduled for 10:00 a.m.

New Business:

There was no new business.

July Grotto Trip:

Joint trip with the Montgomery Grotto to Mrs. Miller's.

Trip Reports

Trip reports were given on the trips to Gourneck and to Gross Skeleton.

The meeting was adjourned.



In her haste for consumption, Sharon cringes at the realization... She failed to conceal her heist of Gourneck's most valued treasure - *troglodyte brains*.

