

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 26 Issue 9

October 2019



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

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

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Inside This Issue

2 Echo Chamber
TAG Calendar

4 Ocoee, Cagles,
Hytop, and
Whiteside, Oh my!

7 Minutes

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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: Cagles Chasm

Photo by: Scott Murphy

ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Creepy Crawlies & Flying Wonders: Incredible Cave Creatures

By Andrea Mustain, Planet Earth
April 21, 2011



The entrance to Saddan Cave, a temple cave in Myanmar.

The caves of Southeast Asia are among the largest and most spectacular in the world. From Laos to Myanmar to Vietnam, the caves entice explorers with their promise of adventure — and plenty of surprises in the darkness.

Liz Price, an adventurer, researcher and writer based in Southeast Asia has made caving her life's work, and has spent countless hours exploring every last corner of the region's subterranean labyrinths. See some of the incredible creatures she has encountered in her explorations, from the expected (bats) to the unsettling (amazingly large insects).

These hardy creatures pass their lives in near-darkness. Survival means finding food wherever you can, and in these wild caves, the predator can become the preyed upon in the blink of a well-adapted eye.



Living up to their reputation for surviving just about anywhere, cockroaches crowd the caves in Southeast Asia. The roaches thrive with plenty of bat guano around to feed on. In turn, the roaches are preyed upon by many of their fellow cave-dwellers.

Price says she's not bothered by the many-legged critters, even when they crawl on her. "I just brush them off and carry on," she said.



A very large centipede hangs out on a cave wall. These impressive insects can feed on the swarms of cockroaches that fill the caves. But even a creature this fierce-looking isn't safe from predators.



Dinner. A huge cave spider feasts on a centipede. It's an insect-eat-insect world in the caves, where the hunter

can become the hunted.



Sleepytime. Hundreds of bats hang from the ceiling of a cave. These furry, flying mammals are fairly high up on the food chain inside the caves.



Flying in the dark. For bats, not a problem. The tiny mammals use a kind of sonar to help them navigate, sending out high-frequency sounds that bounce off their surroundings, and help the bats avoid any impediments to their flight path.



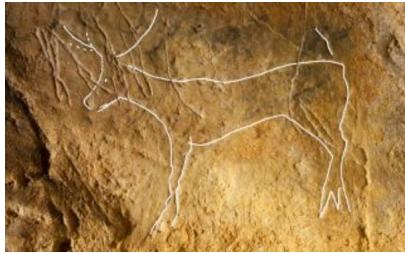
Bats, too, provide a tasty treat to hungry neighbors.

The circle of life. Cockroaches can make a meal out of almost anything, including unlucky bats that fall to the cave floor. These roaches are feeding on a dead bat in Gomantong Cave in Malaysia.

Ice Age Cave Art Found Under Layers of Centuries-Old Graffiti

<https://www.livescience.com/64099-cave-art-under-graffiti.html>

By Mindy Weisberger, November 15, 2018



Carved outline (highlighted) of a prehistoric deer or reindeer in the Agneux II cave, Rully, Saône-et-Loire, France.

For urban graffiti artists, their work is sometimes on display all too briefly before rival artists cover it up. And ice age cave art suffered a similar fate, experts have discovered.

Archaeologists suspected that two caves called Grottes d'Agneux and located in eastern France might harbor artwork produced thousands of years ago by human artists. The researchers had strong suspicions that the art was there, but the cave walls were so covered with layers of more-recent graffiti (from the 16th to 19th centuries) that the ancient art had likely been hidden for hundreds of years, representatives of the University of Tübingen in Germany reported yesterday (Nov. 14) in a statement.

Scientists with the university and researchers from Spain recently used scanning technology to peer through the graffiti layers, reconstructing carved prehistoric images of a horse and a deer buried underneath.

The graffiti covering the cave walls

was mostly inscriptions of names and dates with a few figurative pictures, research team leader Harald Floss, a Tübingen University professor of early prehistory and quaternary ecology, told Live Science in an email. Because the caves are in a picturesque part of the countryside with spectacular views, many people have visited the location over time — and plenty of them left their mark in the cave, Floss said.

For 150 years, archaeologists have explored France's southern Burgundy region and found abundant remnants of Paleolithic culture — the earliest period of human cultural development. Because there are so many Paleolithic sites in this part of France, archaeologists have long thought that there must be cave art in the Saône-et-Loire district, according to Floss.

Painted or engraved caves are found "in nearly every dense palaeolithic region of Europe," Floss said. However, the deer and horse paintings are the district's first examples of cave art created by Paleolithic humans, university representatives said in the statement.

After scans revealed the figures, the scientists reconstructed the artwork with image-processing software. Then, the researchers used carbon-14 dating of charcoal in the cave and in the art to reveal the age of the paintings. Carbon-14, a carbon isotope, breaks down over time. By examining how much of the isotope in an object has decayed, scientists can calculate how old the object is; in this case, the art was found to be 12,000 years old.

The region in France where archaeologists discovered the cave art is significant, because it represents a zone where modern humans may have encountered Neanderthals. Evidence uncovered there could offer intriguing clues

about human-Neanderthal interactions, Floss said.

Following the scientists' analysis of the carvings, French authorities inspected the caves and confirmed their archaeological significance for signs of early humans, according to the statement. The researchers said they're planning further investigations of the site.

The findings were published in August in the book "Palaeolithic Rock and Cave Art in Central Europe?" (Verlag Marie Leidorf, 2018).

TAG Calendar

October 7

Grotto Meeting - This month's cave trip will be discussed at the meeting.

August 17

Grotto Trip to Cagles

October 10-13, 2019

TAG Fall Cave-in, Lookout Mountain, GA 30750.

Pre-registration is open. Details at the website:

<https://dogwoodcitygrotto.org/TAG-Fall-Cave-In>



When Rappellers Go Rafting...

August 24, 2019

By Lisa Huff

Photos by Scott Murphy



A small contingent of the Montgomery and Cullman Grottos beat the heat this August rafting down the Ocoee River. It was a really fun trip for all, and especially meaningful to Mike Huff, who rafted the Ocoee River forty years ago, with his Dad, to raft the river again, on his 50th birthday, with his son.



Mike as a wee tyke, rafting through the Double Trouble with his Dad, circa 1980.



Fast forward to Double Trouble Rapid in August 2019: Mike, Jake, Lisa, and Terri run Double Trouble. I'm not sure whose eyes are bigger: Jake's or Terri's!



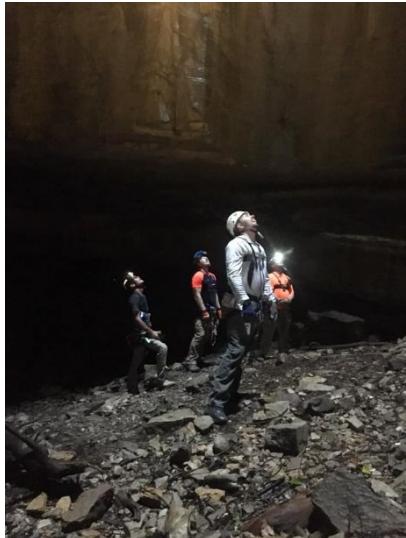
The next day, a few of us ran the Hiawassee in sit-on-tops, duckies, and kayaks. Jake ran the river like a pro in his new sit on top.

Cagle Chasm Collage

Photos By Scott Murphy, Theresa Lingerfelt, and Terri Leonard

Need date





Summer Caving Smorgasborg

By Harold Calvert

With this summer being so hot, and people being so busy, not much caving has taken place recently. We have managed to get a couple of trips in though. The grotto did a trip to Cagles and another to Hytop cave.

Cagles is a 180+ pit near South Pittsburg and is an open air free drop from the lip. Several ropes can be hung here, and this day we had three ropes down. This was an exciting day for Zach Brooks and Bob Negro, it would be a new depth record for both of them. They are progressing nicely on ropework.

It was a nice day for pit bouncing, but hot. The cool cave air felt good, the temps up top were in the upper 90's. We all made our way down, the new guys had someone go down other ropes to accompany and instruct as needed. They both did good, but needed to drop a bar to move without feeding. Both had a belayer for safety. Each person made at least two rappels. I climbed

adjacent to one of the new guys to instruct how to cross the lip safely and easier. Going over the lip, whether down or up, is one of the harder areas for new vertical people. With a little instructions, everybody did well.

Our next cave was Hytop. Chuck had been itching to go there, since that is the trip he got injured on while hiking to the cave and did not get to see it. The weather was better this trip, sunny instead of a thunderstorm. We did not have a hard time finding the cave, in spite of not having an established trail there. The cave is in a sink, in a creek bed. It must catch a lot of water in rainy times. There was only one decent rigspot for this drop, so it would take a while to get everyone down and out. It's about a 130 foot drop. We had a couple of new vertical people this trip also, Allie, Micah's daughter, and Gavin, Teresa's son. This would also be a vertical depth record for both of them. The rig was a little awkward, but was made better by coming off a tree right on the lip. This made a free drop from there to a ledge about thirty feet down. Backing off this ledge was another free drop down to maybe thirty feet from the bottom where another ledge is reached. It is an easy rappel, but you have to pay close attention to the ledges.



Once everybody was down, we explored the cave a bit. There were a couple of nice formation areas, some small helictites, and various other formations that were given colorful descriptions. I will leave it at that. There were a few bats in the cave, they appeared to be healthy. One by one we made it up the pit, with no difficulties had.



We noticed on the hike back to the car that we crossed between the Alabama and Tennessee state line several times. The trails there cross into management areas.



Chuck was glad to finally see the cave, and the new vertical people had fun bouncing the pit. It was a very good day to be on rope.

Next up for me is Bridge Day. See you on a long rope soon!



Whiteside is a granite mountain in North Carolina that has a 660 foot rappel, and is a good practice for the bridge. It not only has the length needed to simulate the rappel, but also the exposure factor that we will encounter once on the bridge.

All new event participants are required to do several drops in preparation for the big day. The first step is to be proficient in rappelling and climbing rope, with knowledge of changeovers. Next, for those down south, we do weavers point, a 180 foot drop, to practice on a weighted rope to simulate conditions at the bridge. The third and final step for qualifying is to do Whiteside. This is as close as we can come to conditions at the bridge. All VBATS members have completed this training before being allowed to do the bridge day event. Most have also belayed there, giving them a first spot on the two VBATS teams.

Whiteside training for bridge day

By Harold Calvert

Need the date

Once again it is time for on rope training for bridge day. Bridge day is an 876 foot rappel from the New River Gorge bridge in West Virginia. This one day festival in October closes the bridge for a day so that people can watch base jumping and rappelling/climbing off the bridge. There is usually around 100,000 or more there to witness 300 rappellers and 300 base jumpers doing what they love to do.



This years Whiteside trip went about as smooth as possible. We went a week early this year, dodged the hurricane, and also had the mountain to our self.



Curt was kind enough to get there a day early and hike up the ropes and all the rigging. He also works at PMI, he had a new rope there for us to use. Very nice, a red ,white, and blue stripe rope.



The rest of our group arrived Friday afternoon and set up camp in Blue Valley, south of town. It was a nice weekend to camp, not hot or rainy, just right.

Saturday morning the group made their way to the trail parking and suited up for the hike. There is about a mile hike to our rigspot.

With the ropes rigged, I moved to my normal hangout, on the ledge, to check people out and assist where necessary.

It was a nice day, not much wind, full sun but not hot. While people were rappelling I watched two Falcons teaching little ones how to hunt and maneuver.

They would call to them, then do some acrobatics, and the little ones would try and copy that. They still have some work to do on it.



With only a few having to qualify this year, this left time for some to climb, a luxury not afforded on some trips.

Everyone did real good, there were no problems anywhere. Once derigged we were off for pizza. All were ready to do the bridge.

With camp broke the next morning we all made our way home, ready for the big one , BRIDGE DAY!



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

August 5, 2019

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, August 5, 2019, at 7:42 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 8 were present.

The minutes from the July meeting were read. A motion was made by Harold Calvert to accept the minutes as read and was seconded by Arlon Baker. The motion was approved.

The treasurer's report was given.

The editor needs submissions for the Flowstone please!

Announcements:

TAG is October 10-13.

Bridge Day is October 19th.

Trips: Cagle's on August 17
Whiteside on August 31
High Top Drop possibly in September

Old Business:

Still need submissions for a 25th Anniversary T-shirt design.

New Business:

No new business.

A discussion was held regarding the recent fatality at Stephen's Gap.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:15 p.m.



Minutes - September 9, 2019

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological society was called to order on Monday, September 9th, at 7:35 p.m. By Harold Calvert, chairman, 7 were present.

The minutes from the previous meeting were read. A motion was made to accept the minutes as read and was approved and seconded.

The treasurers report was given .

The editor need submissions for the Flowstone, please send anything that can be used. If there are no submissions there wont be a Flowstone.

The webmaster said he was keeping a watch on our old .com site to see when we can get it back.

The librarian brought a book on caving, it was passed around and comments made.

The vice chair had nothing to bring up.

Announcements-TAG is on October 4 to 6th. Bridge day is October 19th.

Old business-We need a shirt design for the anniversary edition,

New business- Anyone interested in volunteering for Over the Edge event in Huntsville on September 20-21 contact Tim White. It is a charity event. Get to rappel off the Regions bank building, get a free t shirt and lunch.

Trip this month is to Hytop cave.

Trip reports were given.

There was no program this month.

The meeting adjourned at 8:40

From The Archives

