

The FLOWSTONE

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

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE



April 2016

Volume 23 Issue 4

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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: *Cullman Grotto & Friends at Neversink*

Photo by: Photos by Terri Leonard

(Not shown in the picture, Kuenn. He was abandoned at Painted Bluff and left for dead...with friends like that, who needs enemies.)

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ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Auburn Student Rescued from Walker County Cave

By Emmett Gienapp (Times Free Press)

March 26th, 2016



Hypothermia and exhaustion left a 22-year-old senior at Auburn University stranded for more than six hours at the bottom of a cave pit in Walker County, Ga., that is nearly double the height of the Statue of Liberty.

Chattanooga-Hamilton County Rescue chief Bob Lewis said two men entered Ellison's Cave on Pigeon Mountain at 7 p.m. Friday, but the situation turned dire on their way back out.

The pair had some caving experience and made it down the first 125-foot pit without a problem, and snaked their way underground to a 586-foot vertical pitch known as Fantastic Pit.

They rappelled down the pit and spent several hours exploring around the bottom, but when they turned around to climb back up at approximately 1 a.m., the Auburn student found he was too exhausted to make it, Lewis said Saturday evening after the climber's successful rescue.

"He just realized there was no way he was going to get out of there on his own," Lewis said.

The climber's situation was complicated by the fact that the first several hundred feet of the ascent were spent climbing through a

waterfall and hypothermia was setting in.

His friend, a senior at Mercer University, managed to make it up to his friend and help him rappel back down to the base of the pit while he went on to get help.

Six hours later, at 7 a.m., the initial response team was entered the cave.

They found the man suffering from hypothermia and exhaustion, but after warming him up and putting him in dry clothes, they were able to begin the rescue process and haul him back up to the top of the pit.

As the group left the cave at 12:45 p.m., he was able to walk with some assistance. He was evaluated by Puckett EMS and declined to be taken to the hospital.

"It was all a little more than they could do and they were a little inexperienced," Lewis said. "They were just very lucky."

Lewis said 45 responders from the Walker County Rescue and their cave team, CHCR, and the Department of Natural Resources helped with the rescue operation.



Results of the 22nd Annual SERA Map Salon

By: Nancy Aulenbach (Lilburn, Georgia)

flittermice@bellsouth.net

The 22nd annual SERA Map Salon was held on Saturday, March 12th, 2016 at the SERA Winter Business Meeting. The meeting was hosted by the Smoky Mountain Grotto in Knoxville, Tennessee.

The goals of the map salon are to encourage and improve mapping of caves in the SERA region by (1)

providing a venue for cartographers to display their maps, (2) give an opportunity to view other cartographer's maps and techniques, (3) provide helpful critique, and (4) provide an incentive through healthy competition.

There were seven maps entered for competition this year by four different cartographers representing caves from two states. All the maps were of very high quality and the top three maps were scored very close to each other. All maps were judged in a single category. Five of the maps were given awards:

Two maps received Merit Awards for achieving a high level of proficiency: River Top Drop, Jackson Co., AL by Stephen Brewer and Only Used Once Pit, Marion Co., TN by Jason Hardy

Third Place went to Jason Hardy for Snowflake Pit, Franklin Co., TN.

Second Place went to Alan Grosse for Earth Day Cave, White Co., TN.

And Best of Show went to Ben Miller for Shiver Hole & Copena Skull Pit, Overton Co., TN.

The other fine entries included: Goodman Salpetere Cave, Grundy Co., TN by Jason Hardy Well Bat Well, Marion Co., TN, by Jason Hardy Waterworks Cave, Marion Co., TN by Alan Grosse (For show only – map previously won award at NSS Cartography Salon so could not be entered in SERA Map Salon)

Thanks to all the cartographers for their excellent maps! And thanks to the judges: Frank Bogle, Matt Thomlinson, and Brent Aulenbach.

Looking forward to lots more great maps next year! Get mapping & drafting!



2016 SERA Cave Carnival

By: Larry Matthews (Nashville, Tennessee)

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The 65th Annual SERA Cave Carnival will be held June 2 - 5 at Smokey Caldwell's Cherokee Farms near LaFayette, Georgia. Your host will be the Nashville Grotto.

Pre-Registration is now open. Go to www.nashvillegrotto.org/sera2016 to register online, or if you prefer you may download the Registration Form and register by mail.

You may also access information on Facebook at [facebook.com/groups/sera2016](https://www.facebook.com/groups/sera2016).

Registration includes camping and a Guidebook. T-Shirts are extra, of course, and a bottomless Beer Mug is just \$10. If you register by May 1, pre-registration is \$25. After that, registration will be \$30. Of course, you may register on site when you arrive. A band is scheduled for Saturday night and there will be door prizes provided by the vendors.

We look forward to seeing you at the 2016 SERA Cave Carnival!!! Pre-Register now, and save money.



Tennessee Cave Survey - Spring Meeting

By: Chuck Sutherland (Rickman, Tennessee)

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You are cordially invited to the Spring Tennessee Cave Survey meeting. The meeting will be held at the University of Tennessee, in the Earth and Planetary Science building, in Room 302, at 9am EST, on 4/30/2016. Information on parking to follow.

If you are interested in doing a presentation, please send me a private message at this email address.

Facebook event page:
<https://www.facebook.com/events/1541831722778031/>



Success in Saving Bats from White-Nose Syndrome



This little guy was released after being successfully treated for White-Nose Syndrome. It's a great day for conservation!

10 years ago, a fungus was introduced in the United States that quickly decimated populations of bats in American and Canada. The culprit? *Pseudogymnoascus destructans* (Pd), which causes White-Nose Syndrome in bats. But now, for the first time, scientists have successfully treated bats infected with White-Nose Syndrome.

On May 19, 2015, scientists and conservationists gathered outside the historic Mark Twain Cave Complex in Hannibal, Missouri, to release back into the wild some of the first bats successfully treated for deadly White-Nose Syndrome. The 75 bats released in May were part of the first field trials of a novel way to protect bats from this syndrome.

What White-Nose Syndrome Does to Bats

Pd invades the nose, mouth and wings of bats during hibernation, when bats' immune systems are largely shut down. Research indicates that the fungus may lead to dehydration, causing them to wake

more frequently and burn precious fat reserves. This leads to starvation. Science has yet to develop an effective, ecologically appropriate means of combatting the fungus, which may kill up to 100 percent of bats in an infected cave.

Science Brings Hope

In 2012, Dr. Chris Cornelison and several colleagues at Georgia State University found that a common North America bacterium had the ability to inhibit the growth of some fungi. This innovative treatment's development began not with bats, but with bananas. That's right: the bananas on your supermarket shelf play a surprising supporting role in bat conservation.

Dr. Cornelison, U.S. Forest Service wildlife bat specialist Dr. Sybill Amelon and research plant pathologist Dr. Daniel Lindner have been conducting laboratory research on the application of this bacterium since 2012, and in 2014-2015 conducted field trials in Missouri and Kentucky caves. Funding for this research was provided in part by Bat Conservation International, the U.S. Forest Service and the Tennessee Chapter of The Nature Conservancy.

Update

In the winter of 2015-2016 Cornelison and Amelon had hoped to conduct field trials with the bacteria treatment using the Conservancy's artificial cave near Clarksville, Tennessee. However, they were not able to collect enough bats to do the experimental treatments. So far the results from the 2014-2015 field trials are the most promising sign yet that White-Nose Syndrome can be fought and that America's bats can be saved. Cornelison and Amelon are looking for other ways to test their experimental bacterial treatment and eventually move toward cost-effective, large-scale treatments.



TAG Calendar

April 4

Grotto Meeting

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

April 9

Grotto Trip

Valhalla – (after the ACS Meeting)
Meet at the Scottsboro McDonald's
11 am

April 9

Alabama Cave Survey – Spring Meeting

Scottsboro Public Library 9 am
Scottsboro, AL

April 30

Tennessee Cave Survey – Spring Meeting

University of Tennessee – Earth &
Planetary Science Building – Room
302 9 am EST

May 7-14

NCRC Cave Rescue Operations & Management Seminar

Mentone, AL

June 2-5

SERA Cave Carnival

Hosted by the Nashville Grotto
Pigeon Mountain, GA



Tennessee River just below the Guntersville dam. It is a very scenic location; the bluff overlooks the river and lots of flat land, giving a panoramic effect. It can be intimidating, despite only having a 135 foot drop.

The exposure there is spectacular, giving chills to even the most experienced rappellers. Notice, I did say the trip WAS to be to Painted Bluff. True, we did go there. But a local guy with a shotgun and pack of big dogs convinced us that was not the place to be that day. He told us the area had been closed for years, but we had obtained permission so many times that the landowner told us we did not have to ask anymore, just go. Not the case anymore. Plan B.



There were many places discussed, the one that kept surfacing was Neversink. Neversink it is.

Arriving in the parking area, we were surprised that nobody else was there. It was such a nice day to do an open air pit that we thought there would be standing room only. Apparently they must have all been at Stevens's Gap, or so we heard. Since the permit system had been started there, it seems there are always way too many people there. On the hike up the mountain we noticed everything is turning green, especially the poison ivy. There will be a bumper crop this year.

The water was flowing nicely that day, more than usual. The bottom of the pit was misty and windy. Seems you can always find wildlife at the bottom as well. There is always at least one snake found, along with salamanders, frogs and various other critters. The last time we were there, there was a possum hiding under a log occasionally peeping out at us. Today, no possum, but there was a large gerbil looking animal very curious about our rope. It kept crawling around, over and under our rope on the bottom.

One by one we all had our turn going down, and usually tandem climbing out to save time. There were photos and videos taken as we all enjoyed the day.

Even though it was a plan B, it is always a joy for me to do Neversink. It was my first pit, way back when. And may still be my favorite. At least while I am there!



Painted Bluff?

By Harold Calvert



This last month's vertical trip was to be Painted Bluff, on the edge of the



Of Shotguns and Hound Packs or, a Sudden Change of Plans

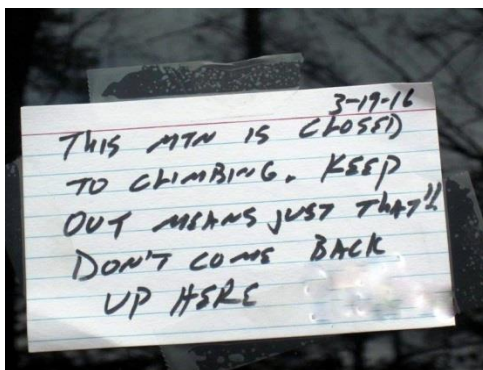
By Sharon Clayton



Sometimes, no matter how hard you try, things just don't go according to plan. The plan in question this lovely Saturday in March was a trip to Painted Bluff. This scenic bluff overlooking the Tennessee River is a favorite spot for our grotto. It features incredible views, easy on and off rope, a satisfying 130ish rappel and a nice chance to get used to exposure for those looking to do some of the higher outdoor rappels. We had a good relationship with one of the local landowners who allowed us access to the parking area via his drive way (so good, in fact, that he had told us we no longer needed to check in with him every time we planned to go) So, the plan was made for a March Grotto trip. Along with the Cullman Grotto, several friends from Tennessee were joining us as well.

Harold & I met up with Chuck & Terri at the Guntersville McDonald's right on time. However, Tilman & Co. from Tennessee were a little lost & running late. Kuenn was already en route to the bluff & let us know he would have the rigging done when we arrived. Sure enough, his truck was in the parking area when we pulled in. And here's where things went awry. As we were getting our gear out & ready to join Kuenn, we heard the sound of an ATV headed our way. On said ATV was one VERY grumpy looking guy (NOT our local contact, for the record) with a shotgun across his lap and a large pack of hounds surrounding him. He

let us know in no uncertain terms that we were not welcome in the area. He indicated that the bluff had been closed to "climbing" for many years and we were trespassing. Not wanting to cause a scene (and seeing that discretion is indeed the better part of valor when dealing w/shotguns & hound dogs), we apologized & said we would leave immediately, which we did as soon as we let Kuenn know what was happening. (As we were packing up, we found the following note attached to the window of Kuenn's truck...author's name removed):



Well, now what? It was too lovely a day to just call it quits, not to mention that Chuck, Terri & Tilman's group had all come great distances to do some rappelling. We regrouped at the highway & talked it over. Due to time constraints, Kuenn had to leave us, which was disappointing. We eventually settled on a back-up plan of Neversink. No advance permit was necessary, all of us were fans of the pit, and we had enough rope & gear for that depth. We did think it likely that we would find the pit occupied, due to the beautiful weather, but that didn't deter us. We cavers are nothing if not a social bunch!

Lo and behold, when we arrived at the Neversink parking lot, we found it deserted! So we wound up having this spectacular bit of nature all to ourselves for the day. And what a day it was. It was warm enough that we all worked up a light sweat on the hike up, but not so warm that we stayed uncomfortable for long. There

was a LOT of water falling into the pit, which lead to some great waterfall pictures from Terri. Harold even climbed up on the shelf behind the waterfall & shot some GoPro video thru it, but I haven't seen any of the footage. We all had the chance to enjoy at least a couple of bounces. Terri and I did a tandem climb (after I performed a bit of an impromptu change-over practice to adjust some gear) and I had one of the easiest times going over a lip with weight below me that I have ever done!

We ended the day with fellowship and pizza in Scottsboro before going our separate ways. For a day that didn't quite go as planned, it sure was a good one!



KEEP OUT!

By Kuenn Drake



The concept of "private property" is deeply ingrained in our culture; no society has ever existed for very long that did not draft rights and enforce control for ownership. So...I get it.

I'm quite confident that the phrase "that's mine" has an equivalent in every spoken language... heh, even the animal kingdom upholds it!

And it is a part of human nature; even the very young quickly adopt it. I was reminded of this recently when my 2 year old grand-daughter succinctly stated to my 3 year old grand-daughter, "MY Papaw!"

Again, I get it.

Coming face-to-face and standing between those that have and those that have not, can sometimes prove to be an objectionable encounter. I will not rehearse the recent episode at Painted Bluff in its entirety; suffice it to say, Mr. Have was not a protagonist of *'The needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few. Or the one'*.

His Facebook page proudly asserts that he is "God fearing and Gun toting". He certainly had the armament advantage at that given moment (considering he was confronting a gaggle of adventurers armed with rappelling gear and granola bars). Although, I do wonder, had I pulled my HK45 out of the truck, would the intimidation and fear of God factors been a bit more equalized.

Alas, this is not the intent of my article (although it did feel good to rant just a tad).

My intent is to set the record straight. We may indeed have crossed private land that day in order to gain access to the Painted Bluff parking area. (I might add land we have been given permission to cross on numerous previous occasions.) However, the bluff is clearly not private land. It is part of the 293,000 acres of reservoir and surrounding public land that TVA manages.

From the TVA website under the [Rules for Use of TVA Public Lands](#) page, you will read:

Much of this land is undeveloped, meaning just that—wild land available for informal recreation, untouched by civilization and free from modern facilities. Popular activities on these lands include hunting, hiking, birdwatching and camping.

We invite you to use and enjoy these beautiful public lands and to help us preserve them for future generations.

I am currently in discussion with the public land department at TVA, to determine the proper status and access privileges for Painted Bluff. I will keep you posted.

Back to the narrative. Prior to pulling the rope, I rappelled down to the ledge and enjoyed the landscape and solitude wondering if it possibly might be the last time.

It is a beautiful place! It speaks to the loftier, less possessive, side of human nature.

I will be back!

Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in, where nature may heal and give strength to body and soul.

John Muir

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

March 7, 2016

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

The minutes from February's meeting was read. A motion was made by Arlon Baker to accept the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Sharon Clayton. The motion was approved.

The treasurer's report was given.

Announcements:

SERA Winter Business Meeting – March 12, 2016, in Knoxville, Tennessee.

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

SERA – June 2-5, 2016, at Pigeon Mountain, Georgia.

Old Business:

Tracy talked to United Way about the Grotto helping them with fundraising but nothing definitive was discussed.

New Business:

Discussion was held regarding a Grotto award/quest patch for a specified vertical distance, such as a vertical mile, within a set time frame.

March Grotto Trip

Painted Bluff – March 19

Trip reports were given.
The meeting was adjourned.

