

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 23 Issue 10

November 2016

Bridge Day 2016



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

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE



November 2016

Volume 23 Issue10

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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: Harold on the catwalk –
New River Gorge Bridge

Photo by: Chuck Tice

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ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Kenamer Cave Visitation

By: Mark Ostrander (Madison, Alabama)

mjo56300@yahoo.com

I'm the SCCI Property Manager for Kenamer Cave, near Paint Rock, AL. I occasionally still get a call or an email about "driving out to Kenamer" as if it was still wide open like it was a few years ago. Most of you know that things have changed in a couple ways out there, but I just wanted to reiterate. All the SCCI caves are going to an electronic permit system very soon, but Kenamer has been one of the pilot properties on the system this year. That means you need a permit to: go through the horizontal portion of the cave; bounce the vertical pits; camp out by the road/kiosk area; or even just walk the property. It is relatively painless, and the gateway to getting a permit is: permits.scci.org. Besides the nominal reasons of tracking visitation and obtaining a waiver from all visitors, going through the permit system at Kenamer is the means of getting the combination to the road gate. There is a large parcel that starts out at the end of the pavement and goes for a half mile that recently changed hands. The landowners back there already had a locked gate nearer the Kenamer parking area, but they persuaded the new owner to place another gate out at the end of the pavement, about a mile away from the parking area. It does not have an SCCI sticker on it yet, but we're working on that. When you go through the permit process and get the last of your releases in, the system automatically emails out the permit with the cave information, such as current gate combination.

As always, if you have any other questions, you can email at kenamer@scci.org

Fox Mountain Fire



On October 4th, a wildfire started on Fox Mountain that would eventually encompass over 1,500 acres. Firefighters from two states battled the blaze for over two weeks before it was fully contained.

The Fox Mountain Preserve is open for visitation after being closed during the TAG Fall Cave-In at the request of the Georgia Forestry Commission.

SCCI's preserve wasn't greatly affected. Some areas are covered in ash and new roads have been cut that were used in the firefighting effort.



Permitting SCCi Preserves



More permitted preserves continue to come on the Online Permitting System. To check to see if the preserve you wish to visit is on the system, please visit www.scci.org/preserves. The table there can be sorted to meet your needs.

Reminder! Beginning January 1, 2017 all SCCi preserves will require permits. Permitting helps us address many issues including liability, visitation rates and outreach to non-member visitors. It is good for SCCi! Many of you have let us know how

much you like the permitting system and how easy it is.

If you have questions or comments, you can send them to onlinepermits@scci.org



Campfire Ban



Due to ongoing severe drought conditions across the Southeast, campfires are currently banned on all SCCi preserves. Please help us protect our land and that of our neighbors. The ban will be lifted when drought conditions change.

TAG Calendar

November 7

Grotto Meeting

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

November 12

Grotto Trip

Fern Cave – Surprise Pit
Check w/ Harold Calvert re: trip space/requirements

November 25

Annual Black Friday Grotto Trip

Flowing Stone
Meeting time/place TBA

December 31-January 1

NSS New Years Eve Party

NSS Headquarters – Huntsville, AL
5pm – 1am

White-Nose Syndrome: New Policies Needed for Cave Management

By Merlin Tuttle

10/11/16



As reported in my keynote address at the 46th annual meeting of North American bat researchers last week, despite our best efforts, WNS has spread rapidly from coast to coast, and there is nothing we can do to stop, slow or find a safe, effective and practically applicable cure. It is here to stay, and eventually will reach every species and habitat that is susceptible. Bats are spreading it far more effectively than humans ever could. It is time to refocus our efforts on helping the few survivors rebuild resistant populations, as apparently has already happened in Asia and Europe.

The overwhelming response from colleagues was that it is time to refocus our efforts on providing the best possible protection at a time when populations are at critical lows. Each winter entry into a bat hibernation site forces at least partial arousals, adding a potentially insurmountable burden to already life-threatening energy losses caused by WNS. No matter how well intended, we can't afford to risk becoming the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

I was encouraged to speak with several colleagues at the conference who are already documenting apparent recovery of protected colonies of little brown myotis (*Myotis lucifugus*) in the Northeast. Though this is one of the hardest hit species, current studies are documenting apparent reproductive

success and gradual recovery. That's very encouraging!

It is time to focus all possible resources on protecting surviving remnants from unnecessary disturbance. It is also time to acknowledge that closing all caves, even those never used by bats, is counterproductive, needlessly risking partnerships with cavers that we can't afford to lose.

Members of the National Speleological Society have been extremely cooperative during this multi-year period in which access to many of their favorite caves has been denied in hope of slowing the spread of WNS. They have played key roles, contributing financially in addition to helping researchers and resource managers find and protect key sites. Nevertheless, broad cave closures clearly have failed. Though reasonable precautions to avoid disturbance in caves suitable for bat occupancy should continue, there are no further reasons to restrict cavers from using caves which are not suitable for bats.

So how does one differentiate between caves suited for bat use versus those that are not? In the coolest climates caves are seldom used except for winter hibernation, and the opposite is true in the warmest climates. Southern caves are used mostly for rearing young. In intermediate climates, a few typically multi-entrance caves may provide effective cool or warm air traps, and to the extent that their volume is sufficient to trap large quantities of cold or warm air that remains relatively stable, they may provide ideal sites for hibernation or rearing young.

Throughout mid-latitudes, where a large proportion of North America's caves are located, fewer than 10 percent are important for either hibernation or nursery purposes. However, at extreme northern or southern latitudes, large proportions of caves may be important for bats in

winter or summer only. A few also may be important as migratory stopover sites.

The largest, most complex caves, with the largest (especially multi-level) entrances have traditionally sheltered the biggest and most diverse bat populations, mostly because they provide the widest range of temperatures, especially important during times of climate change. Any mid-latitude cave that traps and holds large volumes of exceptionally cold or warm air likely has been critically important for bats in the past. Large volume also means improved survival due to less unpredictable fluctuation. When bats are no longer using such caves, it is normally due to human disturbance or changes that have altered air flow unfavorably.

So how does one determine historical bat use? In a large proportion of caves, past use can remain clearly visible for hundreds of years after bats have been extirpated. Most limestone is light in color and is typically stained a rusty reddish color by prolonged bat use. With a little experience bat roost stains are typically easy to recognize. Caves where limestone is too hard or soft for leaving long-lasting stains are rare in North America. Old guano deposits, if not completely obscured by human traffic, may prove additionally useful.

By measuring areas of bat-stained limestone it is possible to make ballpark estimates of past population sizes. Most cave-roosting bats of North America cluster at densities of roughly 200 or more bats per square foot, so by measuring the approximate area of staining, and conservatively multiplying the area times 200, one can gain rough estimates of past population sizes. Certainly, when hundreds, or thousands of square feet are stained, that would indicate a past mother-lode roost for bats.

Even when no bats remain in such a cave, large populations often can be rebuilt if protected from disturbance, and human alterations to air flow are remedied. Cavers are typically the first to discover and report such evidence and already have proven invaluable in restoring some of America's largest bat populations. This is a time when such cooperation is especially important, potentially contributing greatly to the recovery of cave-dwelling species.

It is tempting to point out that in North America's richest cave areas, most caves are unused by bats, and that those used are normally occupied only in summer or winter. Unfortunately, it is the largest, most complex caves that are often the most sought after by both bats and cavers. Nevertheless, when wise managers and cavers cooperate, they will often find that even in these complex caves, bats only need relatively small proportions in any given season, and that parts can remain open to responsible caving during specific times or even year-round.

For example, the famous Fern Cave in northern Alabama includes miles of passages critical to hibernating bats as well as miles of passages of extraordinary interest to cavers but not to bats. For more than 20 years, responsible members of the Huntsville Grotto of the National Speleological Society played a critical management role through a cooperative agreement. As site managers, they regulated access in a manner very helpful to responsible cavers, to more than a million hibernating bats and to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (the owner responsible for its protection).

The agency lacked the manpower and resources necessary to provide adequate protection for this remote property, so were happy to have onsite help from the Huntsville Grotto. Organized cavers were present year-round in the parts unused by bats, and near enough to check the entrance to hibernation

areas for possible vandals or other problems. They also were able to use the bat area during the bats' summer absence. Cavers provided the eyes and ears the Service lacked and did an exemplary job of ensuring that only authorized, supervised entry occurred.

Unfortunately, when WNS became a threat, the cooperative management agreement was canceled, and no further entry by organized cavers into any part of the cave was permitted. The subsequent lack of regular monitoring by trained grotto members resulted in extensive vandalism when the government was unable to protect it from entry by an uninformed public. Moreover, the official closure appears to have had no effect in preventing the arrival of WNS. I hope this sad lesson will serve as an example of the importance of cooperation between cave owners and managers and responsible members of organized caving groups.



Bridge Day 2016

A Pictorial Trip Report

Photos from Terri Leonard, Jessica Humphrey, Teresa Cline Lingerfelt and Chuck Tice



Can-YO-Neering 2016

By Kuenn Drake

Been two years since my last excursion to the canyon mecca these United States. Happily able to squeeze in 6 days of canyon hopping in mid-October...and WOW what a trip! Beautiful weather, less tourists, more availability for permits, what's could be better.

The first day set the bar very very high. It started out pre-dawn, a meetup with fellow TAG caver Helaman Escobar, who recently relocated his family to St. George. We had been invited to join two legendary canyoneers, Steve "Ram" Ramras and Sonny Lawrence. Ram is a "Bill Torode" of the canyoneering world and Sonny has world traveling canyon credentials – plus he's a fellow caver and cave rescuer in the San Diego area. (BTW, he and his wife are planning a trip early next year for some TAG caving...would like for us to take them to some of the classics... dates TBD).

This day's destination would eventually drop us into a secret canyon (yes, like the caving community they have theirs too) located in the Kolob Reservoir region. I have taken a blood oath not to reveal its name or location, and I'll gladly honor that request, in the hopes to be invited along again with these fine fellas.

Despite the cloak of secrecy, what a beautiful canyon she was! I lost count of the number of rappels but it would be somewhere north of 12 and south of 20. Fluted spiral sculpted walls, waterfalls, several multi-stage rappels into a kaleidoscope of sandstone and occasional water spray and moss coated slots. To coin a caver's phrase, this is where you take folks to sell them on canyoneering!!

The climactic final rap being a xxx footer dropping into a well know watercourse of the area; with more miles of wading, interspersed with a

few swims, short raps into pools and bolder hopping.

Great companions, breathtaking scenery ... and all on a 8mm rope!

We grabbed a snack just past the confluence of Oak and Kolob creeks and saw the first sustained sunlight of the day, since we watched the sunrise over Ponderosa pines hours earlier that morning.

So, the exit for this excursion is a real gem! I have read many times the disdain for the MIA exit. A challenging piece of work with the common theme of up, up, up and then up, up, up some more. (Add several more UPs in there for good measure.)

Coming from 700' elevation to 8000+' elevation in less than 24 hours, combined with a lack of proper conditioning... well it's the formula for a heart-rate raising affair. I really impressed my companions with my skills on that ascent, I'll tell you now.

The good news is my heart is in great condition. Measured rates of 180+ multiple times during the 2.5 hour ascent. And if that's not enough, to add insult to injury once you reach the top of the MIA slot proper, you still have another 3 or so miles of road with more UP to travel before reaching the parking lot.

I'll be better prepared next time...cause



I plan on packing a llama or two!!

It's nothing a good spew won't resolve, as I would experience later that evening....dude's got skills!! But, oh, what a choice memory to catalog away!!

The next day would prove to be almost as exciting as the previous one. Setup: While doing Mystery canyon with Patrick O'Diam in 2014, we took particular interest in an alternative entry rap into that canyon. This rappel would be relatively easy to approach, would skip the crappiest part of the canyon – known as the death slide down a slate scree field – and would offer a big rap opportunity. Besides, isn't that what us "stunt" rappers feed on!



The happy adventurers would include Helaman, his daughter Maja, Hank Moon and I. A good skills team for the day. Maja, recently trained for Bridge Day, would be setting a new personal rappel record.

Patrick and I had scouted out the rappel site from the top in 2014 and concluded that it was doable. Estimating the drop to be somewhere between 500 – 600 feet. Even though we couldn't quite see the bottom, our estimates are never off by much.

We headed out with a 650' rope in hand, confident we could reach the canyon floor. We would soon discover our confidence was 80' short.

After rigging the predetermined spot Helaman "volunteered" to be the first down, frog gear in hand. Being the collective astute vertical minds, we

discussed tying on a 100' footer to the end..just in case. We all thought that would be a good plan...good plans need to be executed in order to fully receive the benefits. Didn't do it, would soon wish we had.

"Bottom to Top" the radio blared, "This is Top, go ahead". "We're short rigged." "How much?" "Umm, 65, 70, maybe 80 feet or so!" (facepalm)

We would spend the next hour and 40 minutes getting a rope tied to the end of the 650' rope. A COSTLY DELAY. It would later result in us missing the very last shuttle of the day at the Temple of Sinawava by 25 minutes...on a brisk October night...but that's another tale.

Nevertheless, it still proved to be a magnificent trip. Mystery is another beautiful and highly coveted technical canyon in Zion National Park. It's more difficult to secure a permit than is The Subway, to put it into perspective.

Our final rappel sequence would land us in the Narrows under starlit skies. Superlative! Superlative! (Well it did have a little drawback. You think hiking the Narrows in the day is a slippery challenge...)

Adding a static rope entry into this canyon (cuz you sure don't want to tote a 650' 10mm rope down the canyon) adds a bit of logistical delay, but it sure is a sweet way to enter the playground.

Topped off with pizza later that evening, only after the advanced hiking party (Helaman and Maja) were able to bribe a fine fellow at the Lodge to come and save Hank and I. We had the tough job...watching the gear from ebay frenzy tourists and racoons. All's well that ends well.

I'm telling you, full disclosure here. There's something mystically addictive about pizza in Springdale. This is the third or fourth time we've dined on such and there's something

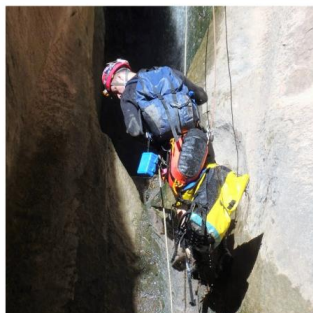
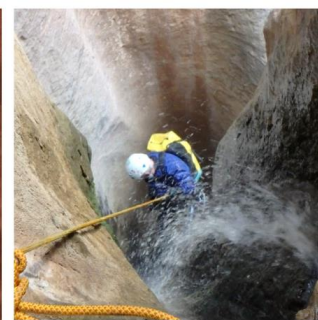
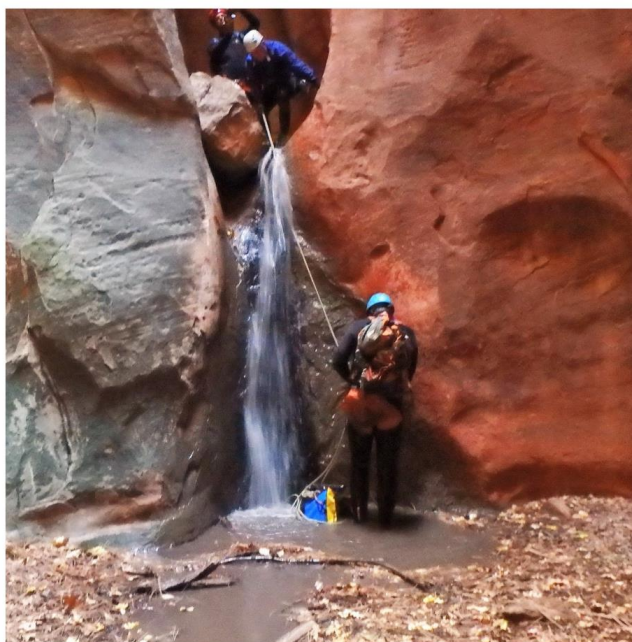


extraordinarily special about it. Must be the oregano!

The rest of the week would be most excellent as well. To include a midnight ascent of the Great Arch with new found friend and Zion Adventure Company staff, Cassy Brown. And a short, but sweet slot canyon right on the outskirts of St.

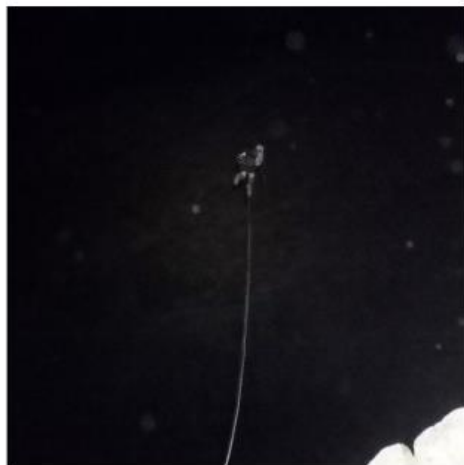
George in Snow Canyon State Park, Johnson Arch. Accompanied by Hank and another new found friend in Andy Archibald.

Twas a fabulous week of adventure! Can't wait to go back and do it all again!! Here are a few pics for you enjoyment.





Mystery Canyon - ZNP



Great Arch – ZNP

Under the Stars

Harold gave a report on the VBATS
Whiteside Bridge Day practice trip.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10
pm.



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

October 3, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, October 3, 2016, at 8 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. The meeting was held at the Festhalle Marketplatz again, due to missing Depot key. 8 members were present.

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

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

A safety discussion was held on pick offs and other advanced rescue techniques.

Announcements:

TAG – October 6-9

Surprise Pit Trip – November 12, 2016

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

Old Business:

None

New Business:

None

Trip Reports



New Year's Eve Party

At the NSS Headquarters
Registration: \$50.00 per person
\$25.00 12 and under
Please register by 1 December
Open to all NSS members and guests
Dress is caver casual



Featuring

New Year's Eve dinner

Catered by Creative Catering of Huntsville
Carved pork loin and chicken tenders with honey mustard
Cocktail rolls, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables w/dip, cheese and cracker assortment
Potato bar w/condiments, spinach dip w/chips, cake
Sweet & unsweet tea, coffee, and cavers' favorite adult beverages!

Commemorative Cup and T-shirt

DJ music and dancing, 8pm - 1am

Champagne at Midnight

Camping included

Grounds open noon Friday to noon Monday. Toilet facilities available.

Doors open 5pm Saturday for social gathering.

To register online, go here: <http://bit.ly/2e4cX8B>

This link will take you to the event registration page in the **Neon Customer Relations** software, soon to be the new NSS membership system, *if you already have a Neon account*. If you don't, you'll be taken to the login page, where you should click "Continue event registration as a new account." Your registration will create a Neon account for you, so remember your unique login!

Please register by 1 December; there will be no registration at the event.

Point of contact for event information: Fennigan Spencer, Event Chair, fennigan@gmail.com

For registration or other fundraising questions contact:

Bill Jackson, Fundraising Chair, bjackson.director@caves.org, 706-840-2619.

Supporting the NSS Headquarters and Conference Center
Burn the mortgage in 2017!



Johnson Arch – Snow Canyon State Park