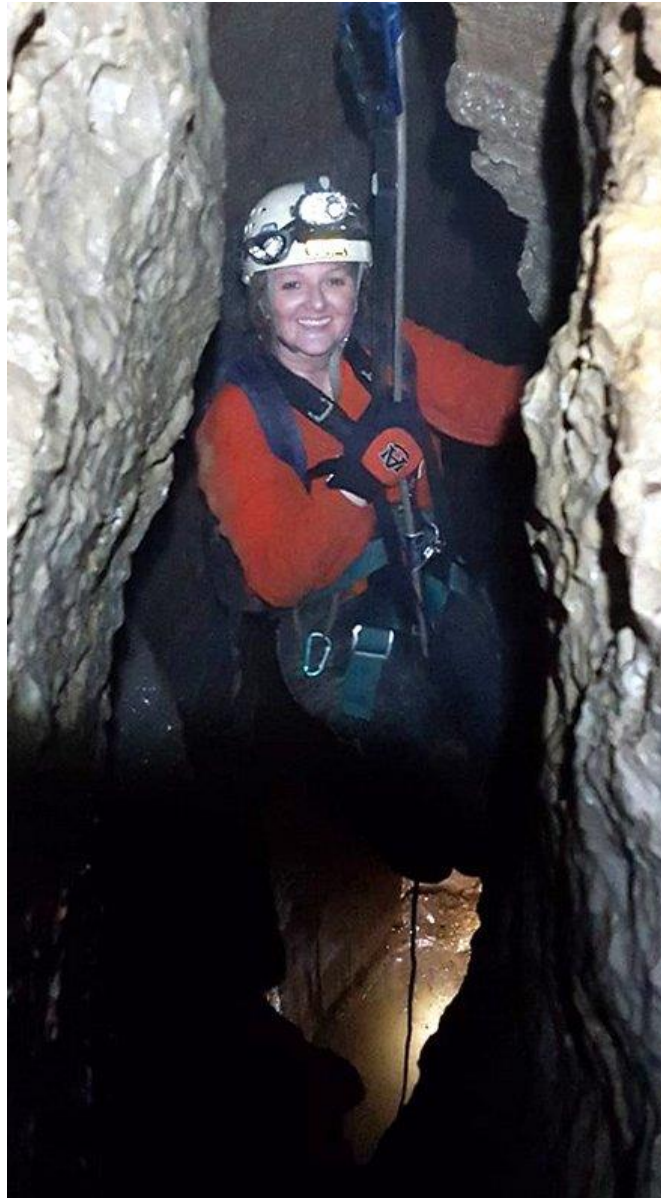


The FLOWSTONE

Vol 23 Issue 2

February 2016



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

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE



February 2016
Volume 23 Issue 2

Visit us: www.cullmangrotto.com or



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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: Evon Thompson in Rickels Cave

Photo by: The Kodachrome Kid

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ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Important NSS Updates & News!

By Wm Shrewsbury
NSS President



Happy 2016, cavers!

The NSS has several important and time-sensitive topics that require your attention. Please read below, and respond as needed.

Automatic Recurring Billings (ARBs)

The NSS changed its credit card processor to reduce our fees. However, the transition was not without glitches. ARBs for automatic membership renewals and recurring donations to the NSS were not processed in November and December, so credit cards were not charged.

As a result, amounts scheduled for November and December will be charged this month along with your January ARB.

Update Your Credit Card Info!

Has your credit card company sent you a new card, to replace the one you use for your membership auto-renewal or recurring donation (such as Team 404), perhaps due to the EMV (chip) card conversion? If so, provide us your new card info ASAP by calling the NSS Office at 256-852-1300. Your data will not be stored by the NSS, but will immediately be entered into our credit card processor's secure database.

NSS News Conservation Issue: Call for Articles

Broadcast your group's conservation accomplishments, highlight issues, or express an opinion in this annual issue. Last year the conservation issue was the most downloaded NSS News issue on our website! The deadline for submitting material is February 15th. Length limit: 2500 words or a 15,000 characters + spaces. Send images as tiff or jpeg files, and maps and illustrations as PDFs. Use the NSS News Submission and Style Guidelines. Send submissions, and your intention to do so, to werks@zianet.com and nssnews@caves.org.

The Annual Director Election: Call for Candidates

Candidates for the NSS director election are needed! This could be you or someone you know. See the Nominating Committee pages for information. The platform deadline is March 15.

When's Your Birthday?

If you have a family membership in the NSS, we need your birth date. The Family Associate category has been discontinued; members under 18 or without a DOB listed will not receive a ballot for the director election. Use the Change of Info Form or call 256-852-1300. Please update your information ASAP.

Thank you for your prompt attention to all of the above. Cave softly.



Proposed Amendment to SERA Constitution

By: Candice Eagle (Louisville, Tennessee)

TennEagle@gmail.com



At the 2015 SERA Winter Business Meeting (WBM), we voted to develop proposed language to modify the SERA Constitution to allow the inclusion of other areas in SERA. Specifically, this was in response to attendees from an adjacent state to SERA who were interested in joining SERA.

According to the SERA Constitution, "V. This Constitution may be amended by two-thirds favorable vote at any meeting of the Governing Committee, provided that all member Internal Organizations are sent written notice of the proposed amendment no later than two months prior to the date of the meeting."

The SERA WBM is scheduled for March 12, 2016 in Knoxville, TN. In addition to written notices about this proposed amendment going to all Internal Organizations (IOs) by January 12, 2016, I am posting this notice on Tag-Net to facilitate communication.

We will be considering and voting on the following change to the SERA Constitution at the SERA WBM:

Current: "III. Membership shall be extended to all active members of the NSS residing within the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee."

Proposed Amendment: "III. Membership shall be extended to all

active members of the NSS residing within the states of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and any adjacent state wishing to participate."

The SERA Constitution may be found on the SERA website at: <http://caves.org/region/sera/ConstBy.htm>

As soon as details for the SERA WBM are available from the host grotto, Smoky Mountain Grotto, they will be posted on the SERA website. Details known, to date, are on the SERA facebook page at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/550892231734507/>

All SERA IO representatives: please discuss this with cavers in your grotto and any other cavers with relevant input and come prepared to vote on this amendment at the SERA WBM on March 12th. Thank you!



2016 SERA Fine Arts Salon

By: Don Hunter (Colbert, Georgia)



This year's salon will be held in conjunction with the SERA Winter Business Meeting, to be held on March 12 in Knoxville, TN. Details of the salon, including rules and categories, can be found on the SERA Facebook page or the SERA Winter Business Meeting Facebook page. If you have any questions, please contact me at: caverdon24@gmail.com.

Deadline for SERA Award Nominations is Approaching!

By Candice Eagle (Louisville, Tennessee)
TennEagle@gmail.com



Do you know a SERA caver with 10 or more yrs. of contributions to caving that you think should be recognized? Consider nominating him or her for the Francis McKinney Award! Details and nomination form: <http://caves.org/region/sera/mckinney.htm>

Do you know a SERA caver with less than 10 yrs. of contributions to cave projects or studies that you think should be recognized? Consider nominating him or her for the Richard Schreiber Award! Details and nomination form: <http://caves.org/region/sera/schreiber.htm>

Do you know of a caver-friendly individual or group who has been instrumental in effective cave and karst protection in the Southeast? Consider nominating them for the Alexis Harris Conservation Award! Details and nomination form: <http://caves.org/region/sera/harris.htm>

Do you know of a landowner or land manager who cares about their caves and property in the Southeast, and also about cavers? Consider nominating them for the Larry S. Adams Landowner Award! Details and nomination form: <http://caves.org/region/sera/adams.htm>

What will the winners receive? In addition to the recognition, they will receive \$50.00 cash award and a framed certificate. Plus, a plaque

bearing their name will be displayed in the NSS Office, and it will be announced in the *NSS News.*

Mail or give completed form by February 12, 2016 to: Candice Eagle, 3205 Louisville Road, Louisville, TN 37777 TennEagle@gmail.com or Peter Michaud, 1164 Old Sewanee Rd., Sewanee, TN 37375 pup@mud-puppy.com

And don't forget to register for the SERA Winter Business Meeting where all the awards will be decided! It will be held on 3/12/16 at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Knoxville, TN. The deadline to register for dinner is 3/1/16, and the registration form should be available soon from the Smoky Mountain Grotto. More info here: <https://www.facebook.com/events/550892231734507/>

Thank you, and I hope to see you at the Winter Business Meeting on March 12th in beautiful Knoxville, TN!



NCRC Training

Tim White (NCRC Southeast/TAG Regional Coordinator)



Attention TAG area cavers that are interested in cave rescue...

After the two recent cave rescues (Byer's and Tumbling Rock Caves), a number of you have asked how you can get involved, how can you get your name on a call-out list or how

can you help if you are not on an “official” cave rescue team.

Well...I can tell you. I am your NCRC Regional Coordinator for the Southeast US and TAG!

Both the Byer's Cave rescue and the Tumbling Rock rescue were conducted only using personnel from the Agency Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) and Cave Rescue Teams.

(Teaching moment here: the AHJ is often the local county fire dept. or county rescue squad. They are the official legal authority over the rescue. The AHJ has to invite or ask a Cave Rescue Team to respond. The Cave Rescue Teams cannot respond without that invitation and they then work for the AHJ.)

While the Byer's and Tumbling Rock rescues were of the nature that they could be staffed with only Cave Rescue Teams, other rescues like Ellison's and Sinking Cove required cavers to respond and help.

NCRC tracks and maintains a data base of cavers that have taken a NCRC class and/or have cave rescue training.

Having your name, information and contact on this list is the best way to get called as a rescue resource.

The 2016 National Cave Rescue Commission Cave Rescue Operations and Management Seminar is being held May 7-14 at Camp Skyline in Mentone, AL. Website at: www.ncrc.info

This is a great chance to get the training that you need to be vital part of the cave rescue community.

We can also arrange a weekend Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) class for your grotto or caving group. An OCR is a basic introduction and overview of cave rescue.

Cavers need cavers.

Behavior, Body Size Impact Bats' Fight Against White-Nose Syndrome

By Chris Samoray
Science News
January 29, 2016

Small bats, beware.

Whether or not the deadly white-nose syndrome fungal disease hits some bats harder than others could depend on behavior and size, researchers report in the Jan. 29 Science Advances. The disease depletes bats' winter fat reserves by waking them from hibernation.

David Hayman of Massey University in New Zealand and colleagues modeled how bat hibernation environment and bat energetics relate to white-nose syndrome, which has killed millions of bats in eastern North America.

The researchers found that big brown bats (*Eptesicus fuscus*) are better survivors than little brown bats (*Myotis lucifugus*)—possibly because big brown bats tend to have more fat stores, lower metabolic rates and drier hibernation sites. Lower fat reserves and humid roosting sites leave little brown bats vulnerable to the white-nose syndrome fungus (*Pseudogymnoascus destructans*), the scientists think.

Bats in Europe, where the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome likely originated, also have high survival rates. Over time, they developed behaviors and physical traits that made them less susceptible to the disease, the researchers suggest.



TAG Calendar

February 1

Grotto Meeting

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

February 20

Combined Cullman/Montgomery Grotto Trip

Rusty's Cave

Meeting Time/Place TBA

March 12

SERA Winter Business Meeting

Tennessee Valley Unitarian Universalist Church, Knoxville, TN
Hosted by Smoky Mountain Grotto
Map & Photo/Art Salons begin at 11AM

General Meeting begins at 1PM

June 2-5

SERA Cave Carnival

Hosted by the Nashville Grotto
Pigeon Mountain, GA

July 17-23

75th Annual NSS Convention

Ely, NV



New Places?

By Harold Calvert



New places?

The grotto has been asking for new places to go. With that in mind, I planned a couple of trips for January. The first was to Signal light pit/cave. The second on the list was one that only a couple of members had been to, Rickels cave in Blount County. Also we had a rope practice scheduled this month to a new spot for most of us, Moss rock preserve in Hoover AL.

We kicked off the new years caving with the trip to Signal Light cave in Tennessee. This being a new cave for us, I had no idea what to expect. Tilman McDonald volunteered to lead the trip for us. According to him, it was one of his favorite caves.



To access the cave, you park just off the interstate behind a fireworks stand. After that it's only about a hundred yards to the cave. The cave entrance is in a small sink just above the railroad track.

Today it was very slick around the pit; it had been heavily raining for days.

The entrance pit is an easy rap in, only about 50 feet. Once on the bottom, there are a couple of ways to head out. One leads to a signature room where there are several civil



war signatures, and some good flowstone formations. The opposite direction leads into the main part of the cave, the muddy and sometimes crawly part. There seemed to be lots of that. Although there were a few sights to be seen in the cave, I think the main goal to visit there would be to do the pit and see the signature room.



After crawling around and getting completely soaked with mud and water, we exited the cave with a light rain falling. Glad we were close to the cars.

The second cave for the month was Rickels cave. The best part about Rickels is.....well.....uh.....it's close to home? We met up with the Montgomery grotto; it was to be a combo trip with our grotto.

The cave is only a short drive from the interstate; we were there quick,

fast, and in a hurry. (Yay) To do this cave, you have to be a dedicated caver; it's a caver's cave for sure. I guess all that means is, it's ugly. From the word go. Maybe we do it for the challenge? Or we forget after awhile and want to go back? There might be a legitimate reason why most of the grotto does not go there?

Arriving at the cave, we soon find



out the cave entrance has washed almost completely shut. This is a recurring problem here, it was soon enlarged enough to let all the group through. It is a tight wriggle down entrance through breakdown, leading to more wriggle, then crawl, then wriggle. Seems to be an ongoing theme this month. After getting into passage large enough to walk, you encounter the pit. The pit is 50 feet, with a low rig point and sharp break over in a crack/canyon off to one side. Awkward from start to finish. Once on rope, the actual pit is nice. Close to the wall, just close enough to touch it with your toes while climbing. Maybe we should stop there and just bounce the pit a few times. Nope. I was afraid they would say that.

At the bottom of the pit, the passages quickly turn to belly crawls in mud and water. COLD WATER! We poked around in the lower cave awhile until everyone was ready to leave. The only thing to see down these passages is the end. On the way out, everyone seemed to notice how unstable the cave had become with all the heavy rain of recent months. Many rocks were loose, and a couple moved as we made our way through.

Everyone climbed the pit without problem, there were only a few grumbles going over the awkward lip up top. With heavy muddy packs, the

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trip out was less than fun. But we exited to a warm, sunny day, and all was good.

There may be a new cave forming about 100 yards from the entrance. We heard water running and went over to find a new sink with a now exposed underground stream running into a hole that disappeared into blackness. A good lead for another day. Its time for food and dry clothes.

Our third excursion of the month was also with Montgomery grotto. Cullman had been invited to attend a rope training day at Moss Rock Preserve in Hoover.



Mandi had wanted to get Isaac on rope and it was a perfect opportunity to do so. Chuck also had a couple of new members asking to learn rope work. We rigged three ropes on a 40 foot wall and two on a twenty foot to get everyone familiar with all the gear. Isaac did good with his first experience, he will get better with time. The new ones from Montgomery also did well for their first time on rope. With more practice they all should not have a problem doing pits with us.

It has been a busy month, lots of caving and climbing, a good start to the year. Come join us!



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

January 4, 2016

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, January 4, 2016 by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 7 people were present.

The minutes from November's meeting were read. A motion was made by Tracy Calvert to accept the minutes as read. The motion was seconded by Evon Thompson. The motion was approved.

A Treasurer's report was given.

Announcements:

SERA Winter Business Meeting –
March 12, 2016 Knoxville, TN
NSS Convention – July 17- 23, 2016
Ely, NV

Old Business:

Dues are now due and payable.

New Business:

Elections were held. Harold is still Chairman, Perry is still Vice-Chairman, Tracy is still Treasurer

Cullman Grotto Flowstone

and we have a new Secretary! Evon Thompson was voted in!

Future cave trips were discussed. A list was made of caves and/or pits everyone was interested in visiting.

SCCi is asking for donations. Harold motioned that the Grotto donate \$100. Tracy seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

The Byers Cave rescue was discussed.

January Grotto Trip

Signal Light Pit/Cave – January 9
Meet at Library at 7AM

Trip Reports

Kuenn gave a report of his trip to the Big Tree during Christmas break.

The meeting was adjourned at 9pm.

