

The FLOWSTONE

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

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

March 2009
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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 twenty dollars (\$15) per year for individual or twenty-five 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 twenty dollars (\$15) per year.

The Cullman Grotto meets on the first Tuesday of each month unless the first Tuesday falls on a holiday or otherwise noted. In those cases the meeting will be held on the second Tuesday. 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:
Stephens Gap Cave,
Jackson County, AL
Picture courtesy of
Lynn Roebuck, NSS34627

ECHO)))) CHAMBER

Rover that rappels

Posted on Tag-Net

I never cease to be amazed at the variety and novelty of approaches to solving problems when it comes to space exploration. Check this out, especially the video link at the bottom.

NASA and Caltech Test Steep-Terrain Rover

PASADENA, Calif. -- Engineers from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and students at the California Institute of Technology have designed and tested a versatile, low-mass robot that can rappel off cliffs, travel nimbly over steep and rocky terrain, and explore deep craters.

This prototype rover, called Axel, might help future robotic spacecraft better explore and investigate foreign worlds such as Mars. On Earth, Axel might assist in search-and-rescue operations. A Web video showing an Axel test-run at the JPL Mars yard is online at:

www.jpl.nasa.gov/video/index.cfm?id?6.

Scholarships for NCRC National Seminar

Just as last year the NCRC will be offering two \$200 scholarships for the 2009 National Seminar. The seminar will be in Bedford, Indiana, June 13 - 20, 2009.

Unlike last year we will only require two letters from NSS members in support of your application. The rest of the application remains the same-- a caving resume and a cover letter describing your financial need and how your cave rescue training would benefit the caving community in your region.

Submit your information to Roger Mortimer, 1455 N. Echo Avenue,

Fresno, CA 93728. All materials may be submitted electronically to ncrc-scholarship@sbcglobal.net. All materials must arrive by March 1, 2009 to be considered. For more info go to:

<http://www.caves.org/ncrc/national/Scholarship2009.htm>

Be safe,
Tim White - Editor, Nylon Highway

ACS Meeting

Hello everyone, The 2009 Alabama Cave Survey meeting will be held on April 25th at 0900 CDT at the Scottsboro, Alabama Library.

The address is: 1002 S Broad St, Scottsboro, AL 35768 (256) 574-4335 For directions: <http://www.mapquest.com/maps?city=Scottsboro&state=AL&address=1002+S+Broad+St+&zipcode=35768#/maps/m:11:34.661167:-86.035024:0:////e>

If you have any questions, contact me:

Alan
alan.cressler@gmail.com

Stephens Gap Rescue

Ala. rescue squad lifts 18-year-old from Stephens Gap Cave after teenager suffers leg injury By Associated Press 4:16 AM CST, February 16, 2009

WOODVILLE, Ala. (AP) — Authorities have rescued an 18-year-old who had fallen while exploring Stephens Gap Cave. Officials say Jordan Garren of the nearby Limrock community was exploring the vertical cave Sunday afternoon with some friends when he fell.

Scottsboro-Jackson County Rescue Squad spokesman Eddie Teague says the squad removed Garren with a rope and basket. The man had a possible broken leg and a cut to the forehead. Teague says Garren was flown to Huntsville Hospital. Officials say his injuries were not believed to be life-threatening.

Editor's Note: The injuries were found to be much more serious than first believed as stated in this post from the Caver's Chat forum... He is 16 years old and him and a couple of his buddies thought it would be fun to go into the cave. The boy had climbed down on the pedestal and was going to "relieve" himself and lost his balance. He has much more wrong than a broken leg...at this point my current list of injuries are broke neck and back (he's wearing a halo and has had plates put in his back). He's got a broken pelvis that has been plated together. He has the broken leg and a huge open gash on the left side of his forehead. He'll be lucky to ever walk again

TAG Calendar

Mar 14
Grotto trip
War Eagle Cave. Meet at Library at 8:00a

Apr 7
Grotto rmtg
7:30p L&N Depot

Apr 11
Grotto trip
TBA

May 21-25
Kentucky Speleofest
Held at the Lone Star Preserve, hosted by the Louisville Grotto. See the [Speleofest Web site](#) for details, or contact [Shelly Wolf](#).

May 28-31
SERA Cave Carnival
58th Annual hosted by the Nashville Grotto of the NSS, will be held in Walker County, GA. For more information visit the [SERA 2009 web site](#).

July 19 – 26
NSS Convention
Kerrville, TX , held in conjunction with the International Congress of Speleology. See the [convention website](#) for more information.

Bryant Mountain Cave Rescue?

Saturday, February 28, 2009

While travelling South on I-65 this Saturday, I looked over to Bryant cave, as I usually do when headed down the interstate. I like to see if anyone is there. There was Saturday. Fire trucks and rescue trucks with trailers and several ambulances. Knowing that there had been a rescue there only five weeks before, I was curious to find out what was happening. Maybe it was a practice. No, the real thing...another rescue

As I began to ask questions, the ones in charge wanted to know who I was. I introduced myself, and said I was with the NSS. They looked at me funny, as if to say what's that? It's the National Speleological Society, I explained. He went off on me. This is the most idiotic thing anyone can do. It's stupid to do this, it makes us have to go in after everybody, I'm sick of it! We will make sure this cave gets blasted shut!

After his rant, he stomped off.

I began to talk to the paramedics, to try and get info. All they would tell me was, 45 year old man fell into the crevice. He has open wound head injuries, he is in serious condition, we are worried that if we don't

hurry he will swell and his condition will deteriorate. He is all messed up, they said. I asked about the last rescue only a few weeks before, same situation, 44 year old fell into the crevice. He was all busted up was all I could get on him. My info was sketchy, they did not want to discuss it with me. Both rescues did end with life-flights to the hospital...must have been serious injuries for that. I asked them why they had not been using cave rescue. That comment was not received well. They immediately got defensive. "We have this trailer full of gear, and we have FOUR people qualified to

go into the cave!" I wonder what "qualified" means?

I said that people go in there not knowing what they are doing and get hurt.

They don't have proper gear or experience. They again got defensive saying "the ones we rescue know what they are doing, but they get injured anyway." Maybe I should quit talking while I was ahead before I said things I shouldn't. I left them to their rescue. It makes them feel important. I guess they are, as long as anyone is not around that knows better. Merely an opinion, or maybe an observation.

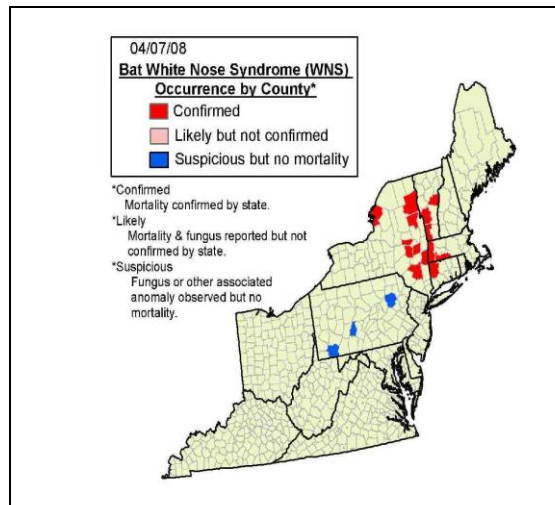
Editor's note: Neither the Cullman Grotto nor the NSS was involved in any way with the rescue or trips into Bryant for these instances.

bats. The selected caves -- Frenchman Knob Cave in Kentucky; Wolf River Cave, Holly Creek Cave and Rattling Cave in Tennessee; Fricks Cave in Georgia; and Anderson Cave in Alabama -- will remain closed until the board determines that it is appropriate to reopen them.

WNS, a lethal and poorly understood condition affecting hibernating bats, has reportedly killed over 100,000 bats since it was first detected in southeastern New York in late 2006. Where it has been identified, WNS has decimated bat populations, with reported mortality rates in the range of 80 -- 100%. After having steadily spread throughout New York and New England over the previous two winters, this winter WNS appears to have spread rapidly toward the south and west. In the past several weeks, WNS has been credibly detected for the first time in New Jersey, Pennsylvania and now West Virginia.

Despite intensive research efforts, scientists have not yet determined whether WNS is being spread by bats, humans, both, or by other transmission methods. However, faced with sobering WNS mortality statistics and the fact that the potential for human transmission has not been ruled out, the SCCi Board determined that closure of the listed caves containing endangered bat populations was the most prudent course.

The SCCi board believes that our highest responsibility is to exercise sound stewardship of our caves and the ecosystems they support. Our stewardship responsibility is heightened by the fact that many of our caves provide critical habitat to significant populations of federally-listed endangered bat species. While we recognize and sincerely regret that these closures may inconvenience those who would like visit these caves, we are far more concerned by the potential that human visitors to the caves could



SCCi Acts to Protect Endangered Bat Populations

By: Ron Miller

On February 7, 2009, the Board of the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi) took precautionary action to protect tens of thousands of endangered bats from deadly White Nose Syndrome (WNS) by closing several SCCi-owned or managed caves in the southeastern U.S. All of the caves being closed are home to significant populations of endangered

unwittingly introduce WNS to SCCi caves.

The SCCi takes the WNS threat seriously and continues to closely monitor the situation and take steps that are consistent with our goals of cave conservation and protection. To stay updated on developments, please visit the SCCi web site at www.scci.org

Brian S. Krebs, Chair, CEO, Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.

(posted on behalf of the Chair by Ron Miller, SCCi Secretary)



White Nose Syndrome

As posted by: Joel Sneed on Tag-Net

***Lab Results Confirm White-nose Syndrome in West Virginia Bats ***

The U.S. Geological Survey National Wildlife Health Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, has confirmed that bats from two Pendleton County caves submitted for testing by Division of Natural Resources wildlife biologists have the condition known as White-nose Syndrome (WNS). This condition has killed thousands of cave bats in the Northeast, and the affected sites in West Virginia are currently the southernmost sites where WNS has been observed.

White-nose Syndrome is named for the white fungus which is often observed on the muzzles, wings and ears of affected bats. Although there may be several factors contributing to the condition known as White-nose Syndrome, the invasion of skin cells by a specific fungus is a

consistent observation in all cases. The fungus, a member of the genus /Geomyces/, was cultured from the West Virginia bats. Genetic data indicate the fungus is identical to that cultured for other WNS-positive bats. Microscopic examination of the bats' skin provided evidence that the fungi had invaded the cells of the skin in all three species submitted: little brown bats, eastern pipistrelles, and northern long-eared bats.

This winter, DNR biologists have conducted bat surveys in Grant, Hardy, Randolph and Tucker counties as well as Pendleton County, said DNR biologist Craig Stihler. To date, WNS has only been observed in Pendleton County. However, only a small number of caves have been visited in each county.

It seems likely that the most common way this condition is spread is from bat to bat. However, because the fungus associated with WNS can live in cave soils, it may be possible for cavers to spread WNS in cave dirt on their clothing and gear. DNR Wildlife Resources biologists ask cavers to clean and disinfect all gear between caving trips both within the state and between states. Guidelines for disinfecting gear and additional information on white-nose syndrome can be found on the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Web site www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html. Cavers are also asked to avoid entering some of the most important bat caves in the state to minimize the introduction to these sites. A list of closed caves is available at www.VAR-caves.us

Scientists at several laboratories across the country are looking for ways to fight WNS. This research will take time, Stihler said. Our best conservation strategy is to do whatever we can to slow the spread of WNS until a better solution is found.

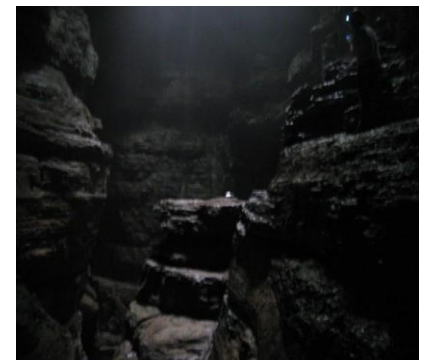
18-Year-old Rescued from Cave



Scottsboro-Jackson County Rescue Squad Several members of the Scottsboro-Jackson County Rescue Squad and other rescue personnel rescued an 18-year-old man from Stephens Gap Cave after he fell into the vertical cave while exploring it with a group of friends.

WOODVILLE - An 18-year-old man was rescued from Stephens Gap Cave near here Sunday afternoon by members of the Scottsboro-Jackson County Rescue Squad.

Jordan Garren of the Limrock community near here was exploring the vertical cave with some friends when he fell, said squad spokesman Eddie Tigue. He said squad members removed Garren by means of a rope and a basket.



The Pedestal at Stephens Gap

Tigue said Garren received a possible broken leg and a cut to the forehead. Squad members transported the victim about a mile over extremely rugged terrain to an ambulance,

which then carried him a short distance to an awaiting Air Evac helicopter.

Garren was flown to Huntsville Hospital where his condition was not immediately known. But his injuries were not believed to be life-threatening, Tigue said.

The squad was assisted by the Jackson County Sheriff's Department, the Limrock-Aspel Volunteer Fire Department and paramedics from Highlands Medical Center ambulance service

Editor's note: The injuries were found out to be much more serious than first believed as is stated in this post from the NSS CaversChat forum: *I'm from the Woodville area and know the boy. He is 16 years old and him and a couple of his buddies thought it would be fun to go into the cave. The boy had climbed down on the pedestal and was going to "relieve" himself and lost his balance. He has much more wrong than a broken leg...at this point my current list of injuries are broke neck and back (he's wearing a halo and has had plates put in his back). He's got a broken pelvis that has been plated together. He has the broken leg and a huge open gash on the left side of his forehead. He'll be lucky to ever walk again.*



Deep Well? Maybe not.

By Harold Calvert

This month's grotto trip was scheduled to be Deep Well, near Stevenson, AL. There was good participation for this trip, most of our group had not been there. The ones who had been, were ready for a return visit. The group from Cullman were Scott Murphy, TinY and Nikky Manke, Richard and

Becky Wooten, and myself. We also had two from Gadsden grotto, Mark Medlin and Jim Loftin.

Our original plan was to ask permission to go in from the bottom of the mountain. Then if that was not possible, try to come in from the top. That is what most groups have been doing. When we arrived at what we thought was the land owners home, we were disappointed at what we were to hear. I am not the landowner, I only rent the place, he said. You will need to speak with the new land owner. He gave us the number to call. The new owner was polite, but stern. He said the land is posted, and I do have people arrested. I own the cave, as well as the route in from the top and the bottom. So don't even think about it. But I am interested in some cave group managing the cave access, for liability and insurance purposes. If you can work that out, I will reopen the cave

With that trip a washout, we regrouped to figure out what to do next. Mark suggested Nag Well. He said it's just right here off the road. When we got there, it was posted as well. We just go around the fenced in part to get to the cave, he said. But I was in no mood for being arrested there either, so off we went to our third choice, South Pittsburg pit. Mark and Jim decided to go ridgewalking instead. We had to search a little for the park that is designated for parking for the pit. I remembered taking an access road by 4x4 to get there. Finding it, we were on our way.

The pit was a little wet, due to weather we had been having. This made the route to the lip a little slippery and the bottom muddy. All rappelled and had good climbs. On the way back down the 4x4 road, we found the trail that leads to the park. That would cut down on hiking times in the future.

After the trip, Tiny took us to a Chinese buffet that he highly recommended in Kimball Tennessee.

Excellent food, we will return there. All in all it turned out to be a good trip in spite of all the disappointments of not doing what we set out to do. Sometimes that's the way it goes.

MINUTES OF MEETING OF CULLMAN GROTTA OF NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

February 3, 2009

The regular monthly meeting of Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Tuesday, February 3, 2009, at 7:30 p.m. at the Depot by Harold Calvert, chairman. 14 members were present.

The minutes of the meeting were read and a motion was made by David Drake to accept the minutes as read, seconded by Tracy Calvert.

The trasury report was given by Tracy Calvert, treasurer.

Grotto dues were accepted and will be posted in the paid column.

Discussion was held regarding Cavation for 2009.

T-shirt designs are needed. The picnic was discussed in old business. No new business was brought forth.

Trip reports were given.

The program was Glory Hole cave slide show.

There being no further business to discuss, the chairman declared it adjourned.

BAT FAX

Vampire bats adopt orphans, and are one of the few mammals known to risk their own lives to share food with less fortunate roost-mates.
