

The Southeastern Caver

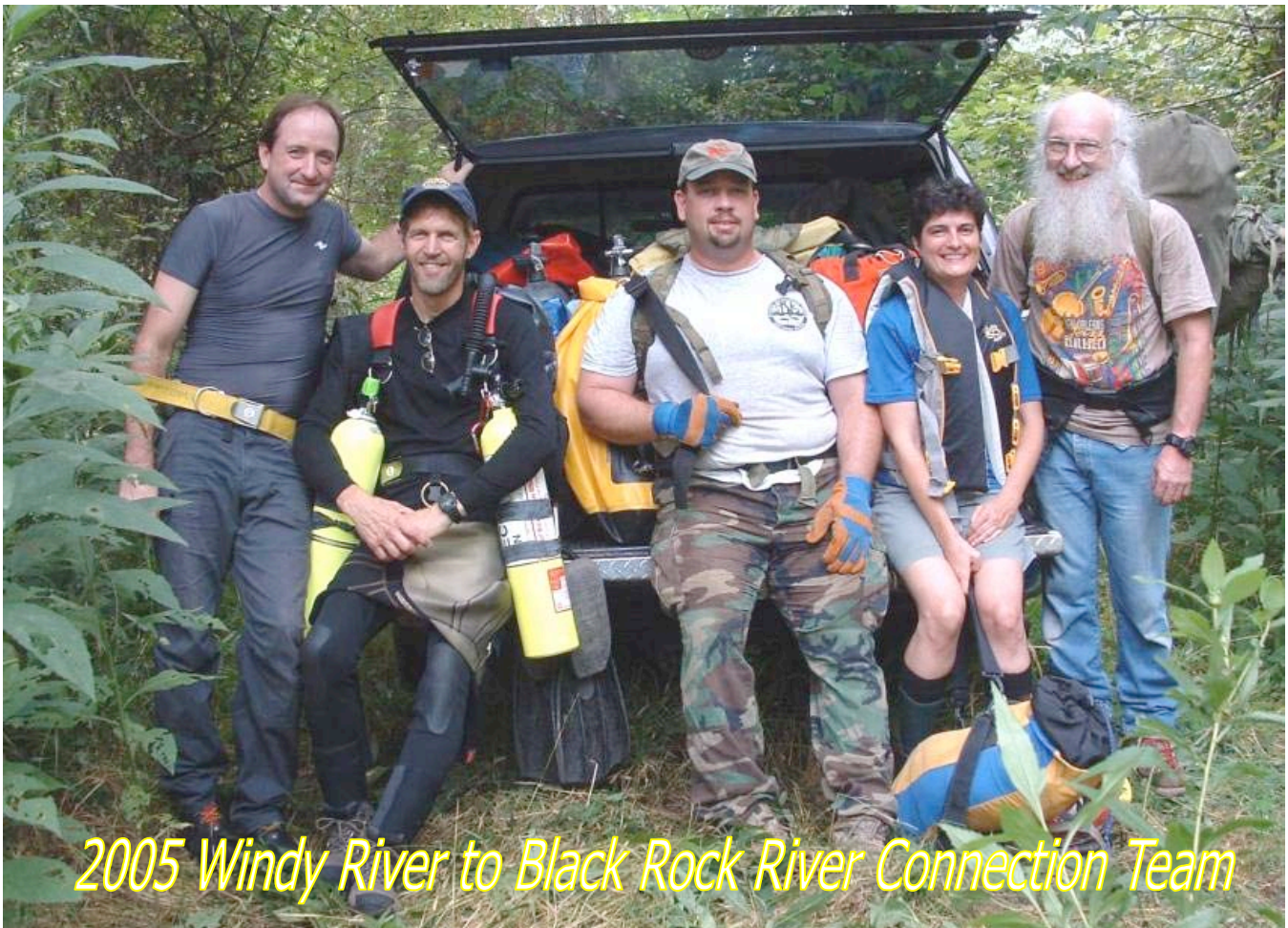
Newsletter of the Southeast Regional Association of Grottos



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Brian Roebuck - Editor



2005 Windy River to Black Rock River Connection Team

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A Note from the Chair

Welcome to the 2006 SERA Winter Business Meeting! It sure has been a fun year. I think SERA is becoming more of a region known for conservation than for just plain sport caving. We are attracting folks from all over the country to go caving and in the process are showing them how much we care about our karst areas. The SERA Karst Task Force is growing. Many dedicated cavers serve on the board and put in MANY hours of work. From setting up the corporation to doing site inspections to preparing for a cleanup, its all time spent towards one goal. And it's a goal all cavers in this region should set their sights on. Conservation is the key to our future. Another key is good landowner relations. So let's remember to leave gates as we find them and spend some time with that landowner, sit down, and have a chat. They sure do appreciate hearing from us and talking to us.

Sadly, a few caves get closed every year. But this year alone (2006) I have visited longtime closed caves with permission. Turns out things change, land changes hands and some closed caves come back to us. But what can you do to help? If you have a 'bat sticker' on your vehicle, you are an ambassador for all of caving. Your actions reflect on all of us. Please remember that while you are in 'cave country'. Try to help when you can on those cleanups! Those folks driving by own caves or know someone that does. Lets make all of SERA accessible to caving in our lifetime by our good public relations.

Much thanks to my mentor, the one and only, Jim Wilbanks! Without his guidance I surely would be lost. Much thanks also to Maureen Handler, Brian and Lynn Roebuck, Myrna Attaway, Eric Crisp, Mark Joop and of course Jim Wilbanks for all their hard work for the SKTF! Thanks also to all the volunteers that make the SERA Winter Business Meeting a great TAG happening each and every year. Don Hunter does an outstanding job with the photo salon and so does Brent Aulenbach with the map salon. Thanks to CAG and especially Michael Gilbert for hosting this SWBM. See ya'll at the cleanup tomorrow!

Peter 'Mudpuppy' Michaud
2005 Chairman SERA

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2005

Minutes for the 2005 SERA Winter Business Meeting 3/12/05

The SWBM for 2005 was convened at 09:15 Central at the Stevenson Church of Christ in Stevenson Alabama. Executive committee members Mark Joop, chair; Peter Michaud, vice chair; and Jim Wilbanks Sec/Treas were all present. Birmingham Grotto was thanked for hosting the event. Special recognition was offered for Scott Parvin, who brought AV equipment, Scott Fee, Martha Mills and Myrna Attaway.

Announcements began as Scott Fee announced the NSS office was open until lunch. Brent Aulenbach announced the map salon and asked for judges. Don Hunter announced he would be sponsoring the photo salon along with an art salon. Jim Wilbanks announced award forms were out and talked about the newly refurbished plaques, which were on display. Gerald Moni announced the spring TCS meeting for April 30. Nancy Aulenbach announced the GSS was also meeting that day. Sharon Faulkner announced the ACS would meet April 16th. Paul Aughey announced the formation of the Florida Cave Survey was the NSS' newest. Michael Gilbert announced Central Alabama Grotto would host the SWBM and SERA Cave Carnival for 2006. Scott Fee and Sharon Faulkner talked about the upcoming NSS convention in Huntsville.

Presentations were all PowerPoint. Scott Fee reported on 2005 SERA. Bill Stringfellow reported on the development of the new TAG site. Jim Wilbanks showed the Rocky River presentation he showed at the 2004 convention. Brent Aulenbach reported on the Fricks survey.

Reports from Grottos began with Sharon Faulkner for Birmingham reporting on work on SERA, SWBM, BOG meeting, and NSS convention. Smoky Mountain Grotto reported they were surveying according to Chris Kerr. Athens Speleological Society member Eric Crisp said they were working on outreach to newcomers. They have been working with the Georgia Outdoor Recreation Program teaching caving. Brent Aulenbach reported for the GSS. He said the Vulcan quarry threatening Pigeon Mountain had pulled its exploration request. Paul Aughey reported the Flint River Grotto's activities with the Glory Hole project. Glenn Mills and Maureen Handler reported on the Sewanee Mountain Grotto. They have participated in the cleanup at Neversink and are taking over the detailing of Cedar Ridge Cave. They are sponsoring recycling at TAG. Mike Hopkins reported the Pigeon Mountain Grotto had been working on a cleanup of Byers Cave and they were working with Georgia Department of Natural Resources to reopen Case Cave and the Sittons parking area. Lynn Roebuck reported the Spencer Mountain Grotto was doing a lot of eating at meetings. They were taking over Rocky River and various members tend to work on their individual mapping and exploration efforts. Brian Roebuck reported the Southport Chronic Cavers were in their tenth year and recently finished working on surveying Hubble's Post Office Cave. They have been involved in protecting Bishops cave from a road widening. Michael Gilbert reported Central Alabama Grotto was in its 13th year. He showed a short cut of a Turner South Ad they had worked on and stated they were hard at work on the 2006 SERA and SWBM. Bill Stringfellow reported on the

TAG site work, and their roadside cleanup. He reported that DCG has given \$110,000 in grants since 1986. Anne Elmore reported the Upper Cumberland Grotto had worked on a bat count at Capshaw Cave. Gerald Moni reported the Nashville Grotto was still involved in the Spencer sewage treatment plant controversy. Residents of the area where the treated sewage was to be pumped are fighting the plan. Jim Wilbanks reported the Chattanooga Grotto was going to host a Munchy Stand at TAG this year again.

Maureen Handler spoke on Graff Off. She reported on the laboratory analysis. The report showed there were no dangerous chemicals in the remover. She reported there would be a presentation at the conservation section at the NSS convention this summer.

The meeting broke for lunch at 11:30 AM

The business meeting began at 1:15 PM. Grottos present were: Alabama Cave Survey (Scott Fee), Athens Speleological Society (Eric Crisp), Birmingham Grotto (Sharon Faulkner), Central Alabama Grotto (Michael Gilbert), Chattanooga Grotto (Jim Wilbanks), Dogwood City Grotto (Bill Stringfellow), Flittermouse Grotto (Nancy Aulenbach), Georgia Speleological Society (Brent Aulenbach), Huntsville Grotto (Avis Moni), Nashville Grotto (George Plumlee), Pigeon Mountain Grotto (Mike Hopkins), Sewanee Mountain Grotto (Glenn Mills), Smoky Mountain Grotto (Chris Kerr), Southport Chronic Cavers (Brian Roebuck), Spencer Grotto (Lynn Roebuck), Tennessee Cave Survey (Gerald Moni), Upper Cumberland Grotto (Anne Elmore).

The 2004 minutes were amended and approved. The treasurer's report was approved (see attachment). The SERA awards committee reported no progress and chair Jim Wilbanks, recommended someone with the time take it over. Martha Mills volunteered to chair a new committee. Appointed to the committee were Brian Roebuck, Myrna Attaway and Jim Wilbanks.

The SKTF annual report was delivered by Jim Wilbanks and is attached.

Officer elections were held. Peter Michaud succeeded Mark Joop as chairman. Brian Roebuck was elected the new vice-chair. Jim Wilbanks was re-elected sec/treas. All elections were by acclamation.

A motion from the SKTF was approved unanimously. The SKTF committee moved that SERA authorize the committee the right to become incorporated as a non-profit corporation with its own treasury. The proposal is attached.

Sec/Treas Jim Wilbanks moved the SKTF be given the remainder of the NSS group conservation award in the amount of \$59.94. Alabama Cave Survey (Scott Fee) seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Wilbanks then moved the SKTF be allotted \$250 in expenses for 2005. TCS (Gerald Moni) seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Wilbanks then moved that the SERA surcharge be raised from \$1 per attendee to \$1.50 with the additional \$.50 going to the SKTF treasury. Birmingham (Sharon Faulkner) seconded. The motion passed with one no vote from Smoky Mountain Grotto. Alabama Cave Survey (Scott Fee) moved the \$100 set aside passed 02/23/02 be abolished. Birmingham (Sharon Faulkner) seconded. The motion passed unanimously. Chairman Mark Joop then opened the floor for a discussion on ways to boost attendance at the SERA Cave Carnival. There was no consensus. A committee was formed to study ideas. Mark Joop will chair and the committee will be staffed by Bill Stringfellow, Jim Wilbanks, and Eric Crisp.

Merit Awards nominations were then received. Chattanooga Grotto (Jim Wilbanks) moved and Upper Cumberland Grotto (Anne Elmore) seconded that Brent Aulenbach receive a Merit Award for the Fricks Cave resurvey. Birmingham (Sharon Faulkner) moved and Chattanooga (Jim Wilbanks) seconded that Andy Zellner receive a Merit Award for his work on the closed cave list and the cave directions booth at TAG. Dogwood City Grotto (Bill Stringfellow) moved and Chattanooga Grotto (Jim Wilbanks) seconded that Chuck Henson receive a Merit Award for providing the new site of the TAG Fall Cave In. Vice-chair Peter Michaud announced the cleanup for the following day.

Award Committees were established.

They were:

Francis McKinney: Chris Kerr, Brian Roebuck, and Glenn Mills

Richard Schreiber: JimWilbanks, Scott Fee, Eric Crisp,

Larry Adams Landowner: Avis Moni, Myrna Attaway, George Plumlee

Alexis Harris Conservation: Martha Mills, Sharon Faulkner, Paul Baggett

The Business meeting was adjourned at 3:15 PM

Awards Committees met with the following results:

Francis McKinney Award: Maureen Handler

Richard Schreiber Award: Ryan Moran

Larry Adams Landowner Award: Chuck Henson

Alexis Harris Conservation Award: John Noel

A banquet of barbeque was enjoyed in the same room. Awards were presented (salon results below) and Alan Cressler presented his pictures from a trip to Puerto Rico.

Art Salon Results:

Painting or Other Media on Board

1st Place Jerry Wallace "Formation Study No. 5"
 2nd Place Jerry Wallace "Formation Study"

Graphic Arts Salon Results:

1st Place Jerry Wallace "Voyage of the D-230, Passage to the Inner Sea"
 2nd Place Jerry Wallace "Voyage of the D-230, Descent Into the Spired Abyss"
 3rd Place Brian Houha "Psychedelic Pup"

Cartography Salon Results:

<u>Cave Name</u>	<u>Cartographer</u>	<u>Category</u>	<u>Award(s)</u>
Fox Hole, AL	Brent Aulenbach		Best of Show
Garner Pit, AL	Terry Ragon	Short Cave	Merit
Fract. Dome Passg, Pettijohn's, GA	Tom Moltz	Short Cave	Merit
Dead Dog Pit, GA	Tom Moltz	Short Cave	Merit
Sewanee Plunge, TN	Ryan Moran	Long Cave	Best Long Cave
Hubbles Post Office Cave, TN	Brian Roebuck	Long Cave	Merit
Great Expectations Cave, TN	Jack Thomison	Long Cave	Merit

Photo Salon Results:

<u>Category</u>	<u>Award</u>	<u>Photographer</u>	<u>Title</u>
Color Print - People/Animals	First Place/Best of Show	Lynn Roebuck	"Cagle Saltpeter Cave"
Color Print – Entranc./Ext. Scenes	First Place	Mudpuppy	"Rigging"
Color Print – Entranc./Ext. Scenes	Second Place	Mark Joop	"Rio Choy Reflection"
Color Print – Entranc./Ext. Scenes	Third Place	Mudpuppy	"Ain't No Caves 'Round Here"
Color Print – Entranc./Ext. Scenes	Honorable Mention	Mudpuppy	"Relaxing in TAG"
Color Print - People/Animals	First Place	Lynn Roebuck	"Cagles Saltpeter Cave"
Color Print - People/Animals	Second Place	Anne Elmore	"Sketching School Student"
Color Print - People/Animals	Third Place	Anne Elmore	"Bugs and Pearls"
Color Print - People/Animals	Honorable Mention	Mudpuppy	"Hidden Passage"
Color Print - People/Animals	Honorable Mention	Anne Grindle	"Pup"
Color Print - People/Animals	Honorable Mention	Anne Elmore	"Flowing Stone Critter"
Color Print – Artistic	First Place	Maureen Handler	"Neversink, November 1988"
Color Print – Artistic	First Place	Jerry Wallace	"The Crystal Palace"
Color Print – Artistic	Second Place	Jerry Wallace	"The Two Towers"
Color Print – Artistic	Third Place	Anne Elmore	"Dripping Drops"
Color Print – Artistic	Third Place	Maureen Handler	"North Pole by Wheat Light"
Color Print – Artistic	Honorable Mention	Anne Elmore	"Cumberland Caverns Goodies"
Digital - People/Animals	First Place	Paul Moser	"Salamander"
Digital - People/Animals	Second Place	Paul Moser	"Hanging Out"
Digital - People/Animals	Third Place	Paul Moser	"Hanging In There"
Digital – Artistic	First Place	Paul Moser	"Gypsum Flower"
Digital – Artistic	Second Place	Paul Moser	"A Pool Surrounded"
Digital – Artistic	Third Place	Paul Moser	"Almost There"
Most original use of overexposure	Honorable Mention	Martha Mills	"Puppy Butt"

The banquet concluded at 9:30 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
 Jim Wilbanks
 Secretary/Treasurer SERA 2005

Publication of The Paleontology of Kingston Saltpeter Cave

By Joel Sneed

Vertebrate paleontological discoveries in Georgia have historically been made in the coastal areas of the state, with only sporadic finds being made elsewhere. In 1950 a tooth of the American Mastodon was discovered on a farm in Bartow County, and a partial tapir mandible was found in 1955 in Anderson Spring Cave in Walker County. In 1964 a Pleistocene bear mandible was discovered in Black's Bluff Cave, Floyd County. It was also in 1964 that a discovery was first reported from Kingston Saltpeter Cave, when James Hogue, a local cave explorer, discovered a bone in the cave and took it to Dr. Phillip F.C. Greear at Shorter College for identification. Dr. Greear sent the bone to Dr. Clayton E. Ray at the U.S. National Museum, who identified the bone as being from an elk. In commenting on its importance to science, Dr. Greear remarked, "James has given us another area to explore" (The Georgia Spelunker, Vol. 9, No.1, Jan-Mar 1965). Even though this was the state's first record of elk, and was an important range extension of the animal, no follow-up work at the cave was done.



During this same period of time an excavation was underway at Ladd's Quarry, some five miles from the cave. A 1963 discovery of Pleistocene fauna at the quarry had generated quite some interest, and Dr. Lewis Lipps of Shorter College and Dr. Clayton Ray had initiated an excavation of the site (Volume 25, No.3, June, 1967, of the Bulletin of the Georgia Academy of Science, was devoted to descriptions of the finds there). Dr. Lipps, feeling that similar finds could potentially be made at Kingston Saltpeter Cave, dispatched some of her students to the site, but they returned empty-handed.

Writing about the cave in his article, "A History of Kingston Saltpeter Cave, Georgia"(Bulletin of the Georgia Speleological Survey, 1971), Marion O. Smith made the prescient statement that "there is the strong possibility of a significant find to be made during a directed and concentrated paleontological dig".

Again, however, no paleontological interest in the cave was generated.

Finally, on a recreational trip to the cave in February 1980 cavers from the Clayton County Cavers Grotto were intrigued by a bone that they found there and a paleontological study of the cave was initiated. That bone, while only a modern taxon, engendered an interest in the site by three grotto members, and in April of that year Joel M. Sneed, Larry O. Blair, and James H. Henry formed the Kingston Saltpeter Cave Study Project, an official NSS Study Project.

Excavation in the cave and removal and processing of some two tons of dirt has yielded the remains of 164 taxa, including 21 of fish; 43 of herps; 41 of mammals; 43 of birds; and at least 16 of invertebrates. Several of the taxa are now extinct, and many others are extralimital, their present-day ranges more to the south, north, or west. The fauna indicate a variety of habitats, dominated by forests of largely deciduous trees but with some conifers, and also including grasslands and wetlands. The large number of species present in the deposit may be the result of several methods of deposition, including raptor roost, predation, and washing of material down slope from the entrance.

Two specimens from the lower level of the deposit have been radiocarbon dated with accelerator mass spectrometry (AMS) by Beta Analytic, Inc. A date of 12,470 +/- 50 ybp (years before the present) was obtained on an antler from a white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus*, and a date of 12,790 +/- 50 ybp from a bone of the extinct long-nosed peccary, *Mylohyus nasutus*.

It was many years in coming but the results of the paleontological study of the deposit at Kingston Saltpeter Cave were finally published by Joel Sneed in book form this past year. Entitled *The Late Pleistocene Record of Kingston Saltpeter Cave, Bartow County, Georgia*, the book consists of chapters written by several specialists, with descriptions of the various fauna. An introductory chapter by Joel gives the background of the study, including the discovery and recovery of the specimens, as well as a description of the cave.

Joel enlisted the assistance of a caving friend of his from Chattooga County, Faye Henry, for layout of the book, and together they got the manuscript to the publisher even as Joel was undergoing chemotherapy and a bone marrow transplant. Below is a photo of Joel and Faye, taken at the Weinman Museum's "Rock Fest" in Cartersville, Georgia shortly after Joel was discharged from the hospital.

Chattanooga Grotto - Glory Hole Trip Report

By Tom Moltz

On January 21, 2006 I took some Chattanooga Grotto members on a trip to south Georgia's Glory Hole. It was a combination work / tourist trip.

Marty Abercrombie, Ben Castleberry, John Corley, Laura Durkin, Jonny Prouty, Glenn Segrest, Alexander Stinson, and John Weitzel made up the group from Chattanooga Grotto. They camped at my house and we got down to Glory Hole by 10am.



We had stopped by Grandma Gainous' house and had a good visit with Linda (Arista Gainous daughter). Grandma is out of the nursing home and living back with Linda. Grandma's condition has not improved but her situation is such that she can live back at home. Linda was also quite pleased to show



off her new grandbaby that she was keeping for the day.

Matt Kalch, Guy Yates, and Thom Kennedy were already at the cave when we arrived. Matt was working on making a new heavier duty gate out of a thick steel plate.

Unfortunately we discovered a new problem at the entrance. Vandals had apparently attempted to dig in under the new gate by removing a lot of rock and the imbedded silt screen.

A few people helped Matt with replacing the silt screen and rock. A couple others started removing some of the old OSB and 2x4's inside the gate housing that was still there from the concrete forms. The rest of us headed over to last years burn pile out in the field. We pulled out all the unburned logs from the dirt and restacked the pile to burn at a later date.

Matt and Guy continued to work on the hole and the gate while the rest of us toured the cave. I heard that one person took over 400 pictures during the cave trip. Four brave cavers made it down through the Mind Bender to the Granny Star. On our way out we carried out some old worn out sprayers and brushes.



After enjoying some Mexican food in Cairo we camped at Tim Lewis's in Havana Fl.

Thank you Chattanooga Grotto for helping out once more at Glory Hole. It's always a pleasure to have you.

Frustrating Success By Brian Williams

August 6, 2005: Windy River Cave, Van Buren County, Tennessee.



Planning is done before the connection trip

Attempting to make a cave connection through a sump is difficult at best, but it's even more difficult to find (coerce) the right cavers (anyone breathing) to drag gear over a mile through cave passage alternating between long swims and breakdown climbs, only to reach the destination where they sit and freeze while waiting for the diver to come back. The first few times you ask for help you generally get a few enthusiastic folks, and most cavers are always good for a trip they haven't been on. But try talking them into coming back, same cave, same tanks, same long cold swim.... different day and well, let's just say you have to wait a long time for the sherpas to forget about the last trip before they are willing to do it all again.

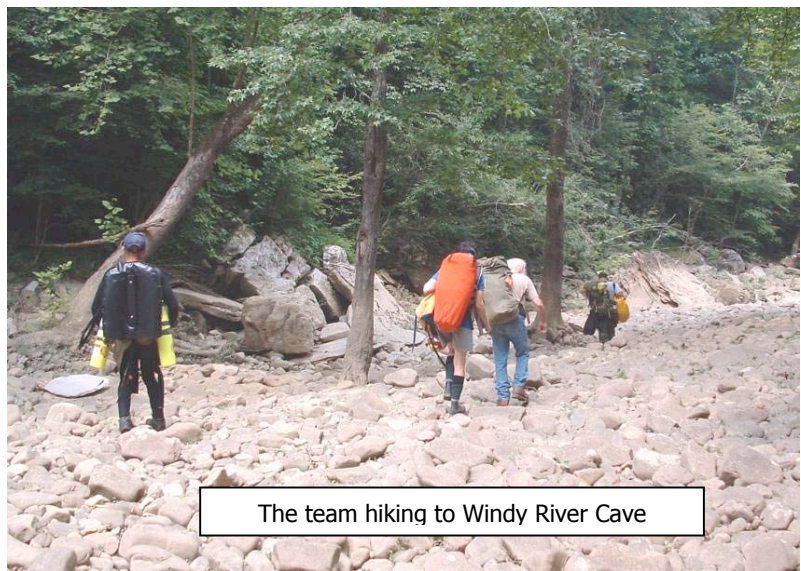
This was not the first Windy River sump trip. Previously we had multiple teams consisting of at least 15 cavers to carry gear for a simultaneous upstream and downstream push. Trip report at:

<http://www.caves.com/fss/pages/trips/SumpDiving8-16-03.htm> . The subsequent trips were progressively more difficult to muster volunteers willing to make the push downstream through the 55 degree water hauling tanks and gear. So we really thought we had waited long enough for the horrors to subside and we would be able to "wrangle" enough sherpas for another assault on the upstream sump. I guess two years isn't long enough !

August 6, 2005, found a grand total of 5 cavers willing to make the one mile trek to the upstream sump in WR and attempt to make the connection to Black Rock River Cave. Marbry Hardin from Murfreesboro, TN was once again trip leader and he has dedicated much time and energy to the survey of this system. We also had the "infamous" Forrest Wilson; Georgia, Brian Williams; Florida, and Becky Dettorre, and Mark Wenner: both from Nashville, TN. On a previous trip, Tom Johnson was able to lay 225 ft of line in the upstream direction. He explored another section that turned out to be a loop around a large breakdown room. Maximum depth of 25 ft. Having used quite a bit of line in this loop, he had the unfortunate experience of running out of line before he ran out of passage. Tough break but it happens, that's part of exploration. (I think TJ may have even taken off his shoe laces to get some more line to lay.)

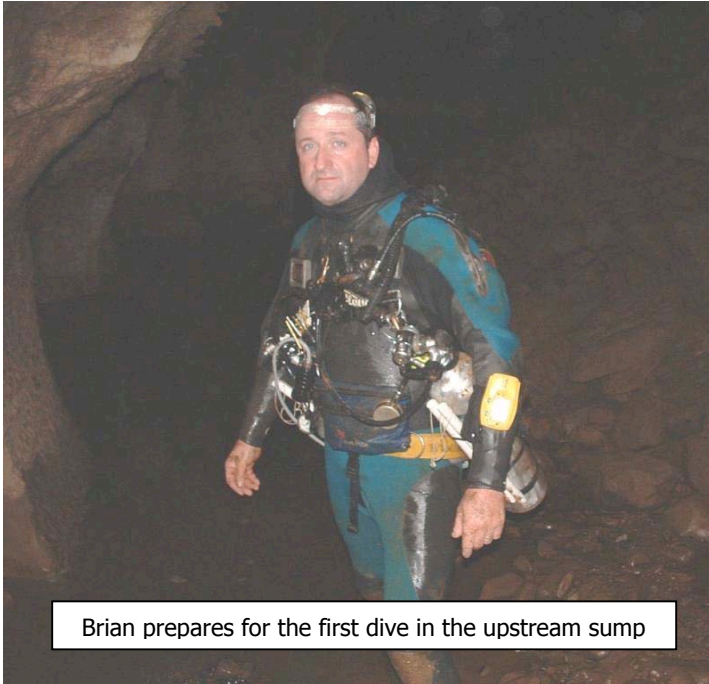
The plan for this trip was to head upstream and try to make the connection and get the survey data through the sump. Additionally, a new, knotted line would need to be run through the passage to facilitate the survey. We needed two divers. One to go re-lay line and the next to make the final push and try to get as much survey as possible, then next to make the connection to BRRC. That was the successful part. We had 5 cavers to get all this gear upstream to the sump.....that was the frustrating part.

Gear for the trip consisted of: 4 AL 30's rigged sidemount, two harness systems, 8 lights, 2 exploration reels, 2 safety reels, 4 sets of regs, assorted back-ups, tools, silt screws, fins, 20 lbs of weight, and all the usual personal gear including food, water and extra polypro. This is a lot of gear for 5 cavers to move through a mile worth of difficult passage.



The team hiking to Windy River Cave

Fortunately we were able to drive the bottom of the valley which shortened the hike but we still had a long way to the cave entrance. The plan was for Marbry to make the first dive and try to crack the sump. I would make the next dive and try to get some survey. Things don't always work out the way you have it planned, but this is where the biggest asset of a caver comes in to play....flexibility. Making last minute changes and still getting the job done. Upon unloading the gear Marbry discovered that he had forgotten his harness. The plans quickly changed and now it was down to Forrest and me for the dives. No problem, we'll make it work.



Brian prepares for the first dive in the upstream sump

After a couple hours of swimming and scrambling over breakdown, we arrived at the staging area some 800 ft before the sump. This is the last dry ground to gear up on and it's all swimming after this point. I drew the lucky straw and got to dive first. To me, every dive is a survey dive, so I decided to lay new line and get as much survey as I could, then Forrest could come in and continue the exploration. Marbry and Mark swam up to the terminal point with me then headed back to the staging area as I tied off and proceeded into the sump, running new knotted line in as I went to facilitate the survey. The passage ceiling fell away in several places and I surfaced 3 different times in fissures approximately 40 to 50 ft long and between 10 and 20 feet high. After 225 ft, I left a loop on the end, turned the dive and surveyed out. Total dive time was 45

minutes, max depth = 19 ft. Arriving back at the staging area I gave a quick report about the going passage and it was time for the next diver. Tired muscles stiffen up nicely while waiting for the returning diver and Forrest had decided not to dive. I was still "motivated", so we switched my rig over to the remaining 2 tanks and back I went.

This time I wanted to make the connection if possible, so I ran straight to the end of the line, tied off and started exploring on. TJ had described a gradual slope where he had run out of line and after I tied in, the passage did begin to trend upward.

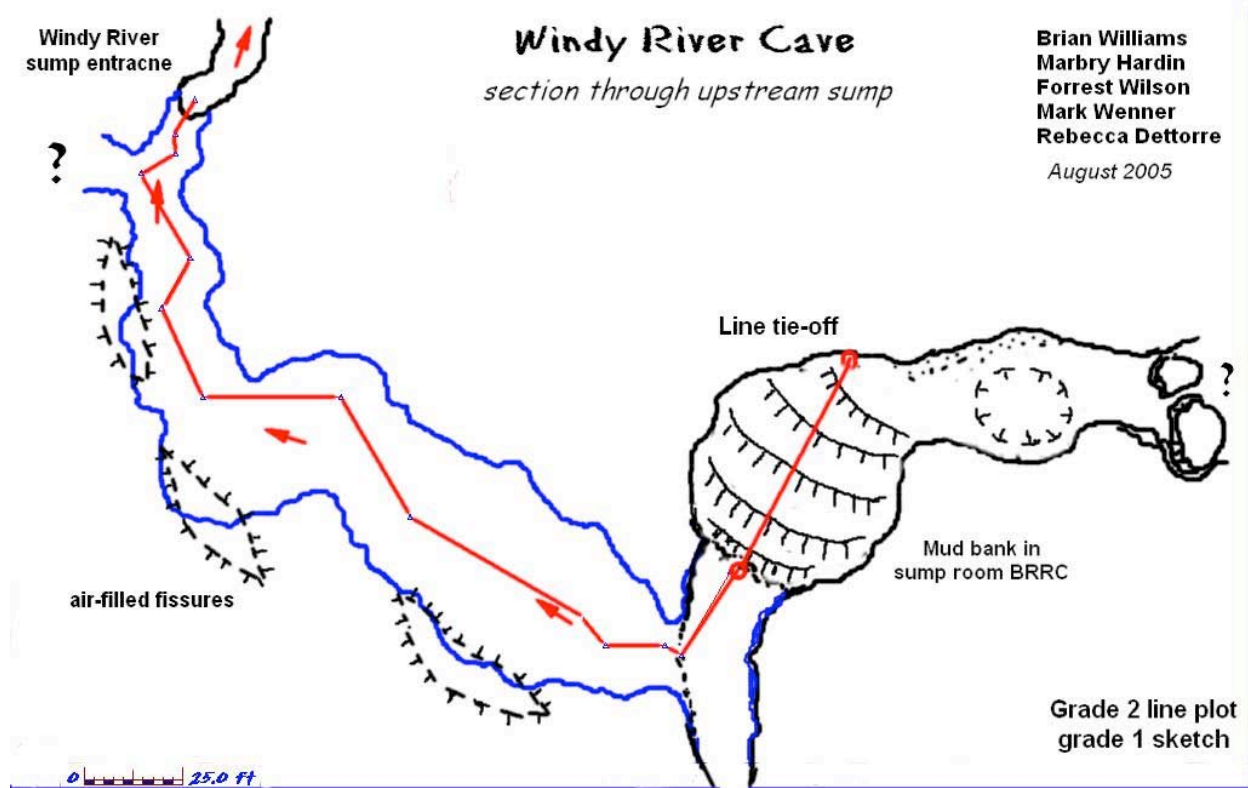
Continuing on for another 55 ft., I found my way up through the breakdown and into a large air-filled room with a huge mud bank tumbling down to the sumps edge. I had never been in the pit room in BRRC, but this seemed to be similar to what Marbry had described. Caution is required in all forms of caving but even more so when you are the only one on the other side of a sump in unknown passage. I slowly made my way up this muddy slope, crawling and digging steps as I went. Upon reaching the top I could see that the room was approximately 50 to 60 ft to the ceiling, and 30 to 40 ft wide with a bend around to large breakdown. I chose not to go further as the mud made the conditions slightly "technical" and any misstep would mean a long fall with a questionable outcome. After finding a protrusion to tie-off on, I left a line arrow for a survey marker and proceeded to slip and slide my way back down to the sump. Everything



Connection team in entrance lake room

was covered in mud and I even had to scrap my boots off before getting my fins back on. This was going to reduce visibility back through the sump to 0 so after I eased into the water I set a silt screw on the bank at waters edge and made one final tie-off. Still needing to get the last of the survey, I made my way to the first station and took a quick backsight before being engulfed in silt. The trip back out was uneventful and the silt cleared near the end.

Arriving back at the staging area one hour later, we were all ready to head out by this time. We quickly repacked and began the long trip out....dreaming of Mexican food and Dos Equis awaiting us in McMinnville.



The Windy River Cave system is rich in aquatic cave life including schools of Blind Cave fish and a myriad of cave adapted crayfish. The Cumberland Plateau has some of the most diverse and rich ecosystems of any caves I have ever seen and it's fortunate that there are cavers willing to chart these passages and turn over this data to the State which allows informative decisions to be made regarding the protection of watersheds and natural recharge areas associated with these cave systems.

These are not your average caving trips and could not be possible without a dedicated group of cavers willing to make the hard trips in the name of exploration. Special thanks to The Tennessee Central Basin Grotto and all the cavers that have been involved with the mapping projects in this area over the years.

NSS Director Elections: Your Vote is Important **By Sharon Faulkner**

It is almost that time of year again. Within the next month or so, you will receive your ballot for the 2006 NSS Directors election. When you receive your ballot, please take a few moments and cast your vote for the director candidate(s) of your choice. Your vote is important for many reasons, the most obvious being that you are electing the person(s) who will be representing you, and your interest in the Society, for the next three years. Four director positions are filled by membership vote each year. The prime responsibility of the directors is the election of the officers of the Society. The directors, along with the officers as a Board of Governors, set policies for conducting the official business of the Society. They also serve on committees and review the activities of all the committees.

For a number of reasons, the majority of the NSS membership does not participate in the annual election process. In 2004, only 16% of all election ballots (*Fig. 1*) were returned to Montana Spencer, chair of the Nominating Committee, for counting. Out of the 11,294 ballots mailed in 2005, only 1,975 ballots were returned, for a 17% return rate, up 1% from 2004. This means that less than 2000 NSS members are choosing the NSS leadership, which will represent you, the interest of your region, and the future direction of the Society.

When you receive your ballot this year, please consider taking the time to read the platform statements of the candidates, casting your vote, and returning your ballot. In addition, go one step further and encourage your grotto members to cast their vote, have a grotto ballot party at your grotto meeting if you have to. Have everyone bring his or her marked ballots and drop into a large envelope with plenty of postage. Seal the envelope at the meeting and have a responsible person place it in the mail. Some folks will lay their ballots aside and forget about them, give these folks a friendly reminder. Others may toss the ballot in the trash because they want to avoid speleo-politics, tell them it will only take a few moments to vote and they may then shove politics into the dark recesses of their mind for another year. If your grotto has newer NSS members, they may not know that the directors or the Board of Governors exist, much less which candidate may support his or her best interest, offer to answer any questions they may have. Alternatively, there could be new faces and names on the election ballots. If you do not know the candidates running, ask them questions. If they will not respond to questions as a candidate, it is

unlikely they will respond to questions as a director either. Is this an important attribute to you? If a person is running for re-election, look back at the BOG meeting minutes and see how they voted on issues that matter to you or that impact your region. Read their responses to membership concerns on regional or national caving forums. Did this candidate make an effort to discuss Society issues with you?

(Figure 1) 2004 Ballot Returns by State Postmark

Postmark	2004 Members/State	2004 Rtrnd Ballots	2004 Rtn %/State
AL	489	90	18.40%
AK	50	8	16.00%
AZ	236	52	22.03%
AR	154	30	19.48%
CA	735	136	18.50%
CO	374	56	14.97%
CT	112	12	10.71%
DE	23	1	4.35%
FL	605	65	10.74%
GA	750	69	9.20%
HI	26	1	3.85%
ID	79	7	8.86%
IL	258	48	18.60%
IN	482	59	12.24%
IA	38	3	7.89%
KS	63	6	9.52%
KY	313	36	11.50%
LA	49	3	6.12%
ME	21	1	4.76%
MD	435	57	13.10%
MA	96	10	10.42%
MI	217	28	12.90%
MN	53	4	7.55%
MS	58	9	15.52%
MO	362	52	14.36%
MT	50	6	12.00%
NE	9	2	22.22%
NV	85	17	20.00%
NH	44	4	9.09%
NJ	188	36	19.15%
NM	214	35	16.36%
NY	340	61	17.94%
NC	235	13	5.53%
ND	3	2	66.67%
OH	598	89	14.88%
OK	101	12	11.88%
OR	106	24	22.64%
PA	678	90	13.27%
RI	10	2	20.00%
SC	67	4	5.97%
SD	26	2	7.69%
TN	652	86	13.19%
TX	498	70	14.06%
UT	100	11	11.00%
VT	38	7	18.42%
VA	847	121	14.29%
WA	154	29	18.83%
WV	288	73	25.35%
WI	122	17	13.93%
WY	45	12	26.67%
INT'L	384	32	8.33%
No Postmark		175	
KaCity (MO/KS)		9	

Campaign for the candidate of your choice. If you feel someone has skills or talents that will benefit the Society, or they have contributed time and effort in your caving area, do not be afraid to let others know. Since I cannot say it better, I will quote Tom Lera in his July 2004 Officers report: *To the membership at large, I urge more active participation, such as running for important, influential offices and voting on Board members based on qualifications rather than merely on name recognition. There is an enormous wellspring of people available, and we need to be encouraging, not discouraging, these members to get involved.*

References:

Board of Governors Manual Prime Responsibility of Directors - <http://www.caves.org/nss-business/bog/section4.html>

Spencer, Montana Autumn, Chair, NSS Nominating Committee – (figure 1) email communication, January 2005

Lera, Thomas, July 2004 AVP Report - <http://www.caves.org/nss-business/reports/jul04/avp.html>

Editors Corner

All submissions to "The Southeastern Caver" are gladly accepted in the following forms, written text, MS Word, plain text files, jpeg, tiff, scanner size prints (8.5" x 11" max), photo slides (I have a slide scanner), pdf, Adobe Photoshop and Illustrator native, and many others (please contact me if you have any doubt). Please send all submissions, photos, etc to the editor by the last day of January for possible inclusion into the next "The Southeastern Caver" electronically to: solow@charter.net (broadband) or via snail mail to the following address:

Brian Roebuck
Editor: "The Southeastern Caver"
94 Magnolia Lane
Normandy, TN 37360

Please visit our website at <http://www.caves.org/region/sera/> for the latest information and to view older newsletters etc.

Coming soon! A new SERA Karst Task Force (SKTF) website is being created for your enjoyment and to provide information on cave conservation and education in the SERA area. Look for an announcement online soon through the links below!

Caving related discussion forums and websites of interest to SERA members can be found here:

<http://www.caves.org/phpBB2/>

<http://nssmembersforum.proboards28.com/index.cgi#Other>

<http://www.hiddenworld.net/tag-net/>

<http://www.webwhisper.com/tcs/default.html>

<http://www.caves.org/survey/fcs/>

<http://ourworld.cs.com/alabamacaves/>

<http://www.caves.org/survey/qss/>

NSS Cavers Forum

US Cavers Forum

TAG – Net

Tennessee Cave Survey

Florida Cave Survey

Alabama Cave Survey

Georgia Speleological Survey

"Every Caver is some other Caver's weirdo"
Dr Beaner

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