

The Southeastern Caver

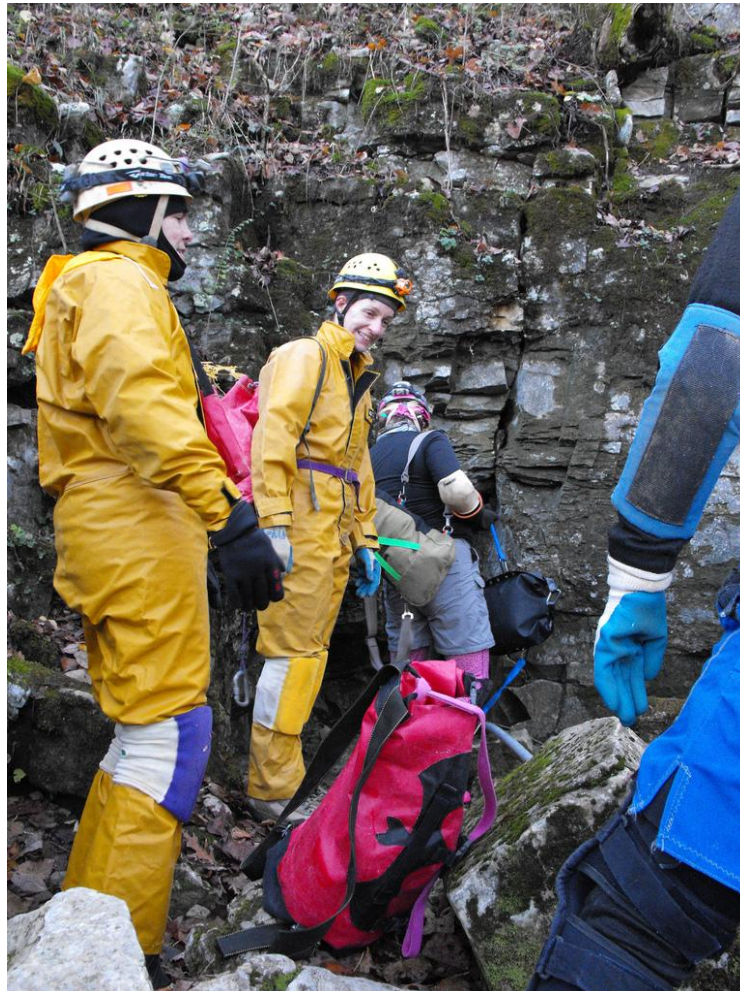
Newsletter of the Southeast Regional Association of Grottos



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Brian Roebuck - Editor



Survey Crew Enters Bible Springs Cave (photo by Kelly Smallwood)

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Julie Schenck Brown
Brian Roebuck

Sewanee Mountain Grotto: 2010 Survey Projects

By: Julie E. Schenck Brown, NSS 30493

Introduction

Sewanee Mountain Grotto's Psycho Survey Bitches and Our Entourage of Manly Men continue to be one of the most active survey groups in TAG. Anyone is welcome to join us on a survey project and no previous experience is needed. This past year, we had 30 cavers participate on our survey projects. Julie Schenck Brown (Book Bitch) produced 8 maps and Jason Hardy (Junior) produced 5 maps with the assistance of the grotto; and our ranks have been bolstered by Angela Morgan (QBU-Queen Bitch of the Universe) and Jeff Bartlett joining us as cartographers. This article provides a brief summary of a few of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto survey projects in 2010.

Hargiss Cove, Tennessee

In 2009, I met a friendly landowner from Hargiss Cove, Tennessee. As his property has a multitude of vertical caves, and he does not allow hunting, I thought this would be an excellent winter project. Our initial survey objectives were Dumbat Caverns, Devil's Fissure and Tres Well; Roots and Crawl Pit had already been surveyed by Ken Oeser and Gerald Moni. These four pits are all along the same bench and within walking distance of each other. Other than that information, the TCS Narratives were rather vague, thus our survey would provide an opportunity to update these as well.

Our initial survey began at Dumbat Caverns, presumed to be a series of blind pits, based on the original TCS narrative. Peter Michaud (Mudpuppy) rigged the entrance pit for him and Junior to begin the survey at the third pit. Kelly Smallwood (Photo Bitch) took photos and prepared to join Teresa Williams (Knot Bitch) and me on a survey team that began at the drip line.



Surveying down to the second pit, we really started to have fun as we pondered how the men had made it through this tight crack. When we finally arrived at the bottom of the second pit, Junior was on point and sketching towards pit three; Pup swore we would have to break rock to get him back out. Faithfully, Knot Bitch volunteered to join Junior for the survey of the third pit, while Photo Bitch, Mudpuppy and I finished the remainder of the survey below the second drop. My team exited and waited for Junior and Knot Bitch who eventually returned to the surface, with the errant gloves of some past explorer that Pup had claimed as booty, but managed to drop again!

Returning a few weeks later, we were able to garner additional surveyors to survey Devil's Fissure and Tres Well. Teri Stephens (Happy Bitch) and Mudpuppy, helped me survey Devil's Fissure, while Junior, Nancy Aulenbach (Famous Bitch) and Knot Bitch surveyed Tres Well. Both Nancy and Teri earned Bitch Names on this survey and were proud of their new titles. Our survey of both pits revealed new cave not previously described in the Narratives. Junior's team found a virgin pit that needed to be micro shaved, as even Famous Bitch could not fit. While we waited on Junior and Famous Bitch to return from the horrid entrance of fallen trees and unstable debris, Knot Bitch treated us to canned bread, which we dubbed the "Shape Shifter." We rocked Junior's pack with the Shape Shifter; Later that day, while walking off the hill a boulder broke lose that came careening down the hill towards

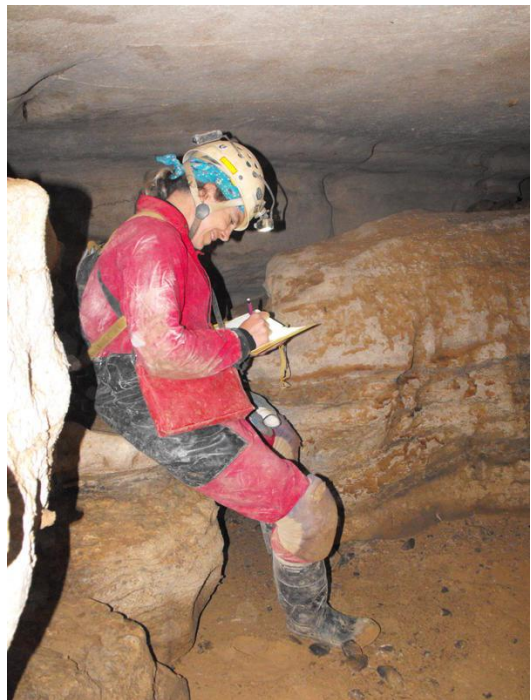
Knot Bitch and myself and we both swore Junior had found the Shape Shifter and launched it at us.

The next week, I accompanied Junior as he hauled his new Hilti Hammer drill up the mountain to micro shave the virgin pit that his crew had found. At last we were successful in bottoming the pit and calling End of Survey in Tres Well. I climbed out first and while I was off brewing a cup of coffee, I saw and heard a massive explosion of hillside debris that mobilized into the pit. I ran towards the entrance fearing it had killed Junior. Miraculously he was able to get out of the way, but was apologetic that my rope may be cut. To hell with the rope, I was just relieved he was not seriously injured or killed and we were both pleased to call EOS in an area of clear cut and briar patches, known as "This Thing." We could not imagine what this area would be like in the summer, and caution anyone visiting these caves of the hill slope erosion that has contributed to surface instability at the cave entrances.

Mark Hughes Wet Dream Cave, Alabama

This cave was located and dug open by Junior and myself during the weekend of the 2010 SERA Winter Business Meeting. After we dug open the entrance, the cave was blowing so much air that we were hopeful it would break the contact and go deeper than a nearby cave, The Penitentiary. We knew our survey crew (Mudpuppy and Photo Bitch) were "taking one for the team" sitting inside at a meeting while we ridge walked, so we decided to save the lead for them, but shot a video tape of the air movement. The following week, Jason and I were joined by Mudpuppy, Photo Bitch and Julie Usleton (Graceful Bitch) to survey the cave. The cave has a 16 foot climb-down at the entrance which requires a hand line. With Pup's encouragement, I explored the cave solo to ensure it qualified. This required me to climb an exposed 15 foot climb-up to access the rest of the cave. Later with our survey crew in the cave, we rigged the climb-up and Junior bottomed a second pit, which is 16 feet deep; beyond this area a tall canyon passage eventually became too tight, even with digging efforts by Photo Bitch. While surveying the cave, our crew experienced several breakdown collapses and we were all glad to call End of Survey in this sandstone horror hole.

The cave was named in memory of Mark Hughes, NSS 28261, who was a member of an elite group of TAG surveyors known as The Magnum Cavers. Mark was an incredible caver and surveyor who passed away a few months before the discovery of the cave. We also tied into the joke that Jon Brown made when he stated we "would have wet dreams thinking about that much air."



Martin Springs High Hole, Tennessee

With a few delays due to winter snow and the closure of deer hunting season, our grotto was able to finish the survey of Martin Springs High Hole in early March. Our first objective was to survey a lead that Andy Zellner and friends had successfully negotiated in the 1990s as Junior was convinced that a survey through this section of the cave would push it over a mile. While Junior and Mudpuppy surveyed through a myriad of breakdown, attempting to negotiate their way through to borehole, Graceful Bitch and I surveyed strolling borehole that we dubbed the "Black Pot Passage." At the end of this passage, our survey ended in the downstream sump that has been dye traced to the resurgence at Martin Spring. This area required me to tread water as I pushed the lead to the bitter end. Later that day, I could not convince Pup to do the same.

Our final survey trip focused on a side lead west of the main breakdown chamber. After negotiating "The Break Through," Junior and Mudpuppy surveyed as a team, while I led a team that included Happy Bitch and Anne Grindle (Skinny Bitch). Also present on the trip was Jon Mnich, who focused on pushing leads in an area filled with horrific breakdown. Later we learned that this area was the connection to the dig Junior had worked on so valiantly. I was pleased to present Junior's map to the daughter of the late Mrs. Martin, who subsequently requested copies for her other siblings.

Speagle Tilted Tower Cave, Tennessee

I began this survey during the weekend of Charlie Smith's memorial with Tom Coker, Anne Elmore (Crazy Bitch), Skinny Bitch and Bill Walter (The Legend). Our initial survey had finished the vertical pit entrance, main chamber and the passage leading to the formation gallery. However, we still needed to finish the passage leading to the horizontal entrance.

For the second survey, I was joined by Blaine Grindle (Brew Master), Mudpuppy and Graceful Bitch. Pup decided to enter the horizontal entrance and meet us at the recoverable survey station, while the rest of us entered the tight vertical entrance. After it took us a few minutes to locate our recoverable station, Pup joked we would finish the survey by One O'clock. Not getting in a hurry, we took our time surveying through the sinuous crawl leading to the horizontal entrance. We named this passage, Coker's Crack, in honor of Tom Coker who discovered this cave and was instrumental in our survey. Tom was excited to receive my map for a cave that was surveyed in Charlie's memory.

Dixie Drop, Alabama

Early in 2010, Jon Brown conducted a series of ridge walks on Keel Mountain, Alabama. Jon found an opening that was the size of a baseball and proceeded to dig it open, but was almost swallowed as the entrance collapsed. Jon then called me from the ridge to verify the coordinates as not existing on the Alabama Cave Survey, and to tell me there was a new pit on Keel Mountain that I needed to qualify. A few months later, after Jon had dug open the pit, Junior decided to return to a known cave on Keel Mountain to enlarge an opening marked as "?" on Bill Torode's map. He then proceeded to ridge walk and re-discovered the pit that Jon had dug open. Returning to my house, where Photo Bitch and I were working on *the 2010 SERA Guidebook*, Junior convinced us to return to the ridge and visit this new discovery. While we normally survey as you go, Junior, Photo Bitch and I decided to bounce the entrance pit and make sure it qualified. We then discovered a second pit, and

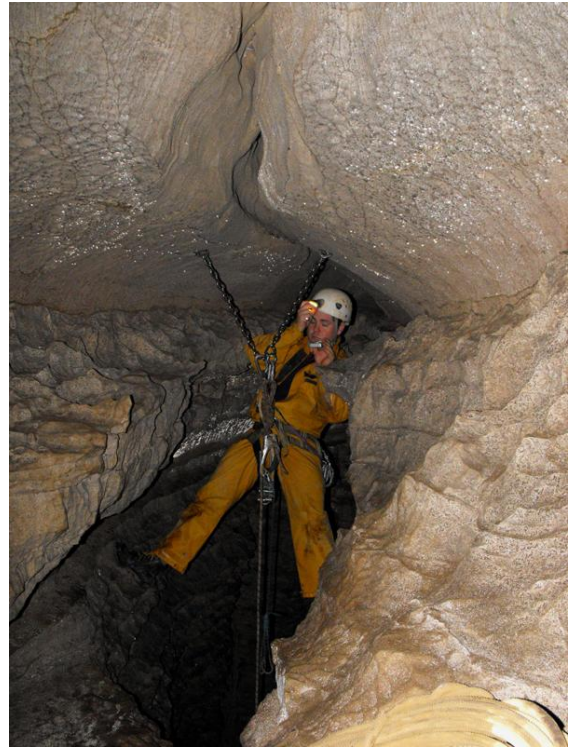
knew we had a grotto survey project. I recognized this unknown pit as the dig that almost swallowed Jon Brown and suggested the name Dixie Drop.

Our first survey was on April 10, 2010 and included Junior, Photo Bitch, Graceful Bitch and myself. Junior worked on setting bolts at the second pit, while the Bitches surveyed towards him. The entrance pit was taped at 74 feet, while the second pit was taped at 67 feet. At the bottom of the second pit, we observed small helictite bushes and going passage. Our survey was shortened by the grotto meeting, but we knew this the beginning of a great project.

The next day, Junior and Mudpuppy continued to survey into a myriad of horror, while Photo Bitch, Graceful Bitch and I surveyed strolling virgin borehole, making such comments that, "surveying virgin cave is so difficult" and "I hope the Men don't join us too soon." At the end of the day, my team discovered another pit and set a cairn with flagging tape for The Entourage to locate us. We had fun hiding from the Men and scaring them both into near cardiac arrest. We pondered what waited below the pit and heard their tales of Horror as we gleefully explained our day of strolling borehole.

The next weekend, on April 17th, Andy Zellner, Marion O. Smith (The Old Goat), Junior and I continued the survey below the unexplored pit. We had a remarkable day of survey and knew we needed to break the contact layer for the cave to go deep. Unfortunately, our survey led us to a low air space below a flowstone area that appeared impenetrable. Our survey eventually connected back into the flagged cairn that the Bitches had set the week before for Our Entourage of Manly Men. Slowly the survey was coming to an end. Based on Jon Brown's calamity at the entrance while digging open the cave, the Old Goat suggested the entrance pit be called "Jon Brown Did Well" and expressed delight at being included on the survey of virgin cave.

The next day, Junior and I returned to mop up a few side leads, including an in-feeder near the entrance pit and a low stream crawl past a pit that he and Pup had surveyed. The low level lead alternated from a belly crawl in water to hands and knees crawling in water to where it became too tight. As I was on point, I kept telling Junior, "it gets better..." even when it returned to horror, hence the name of the passage. The cave was surveyed to a total length of 2,776 feet and a vertical extent of 189 feet. Regardless of who discovered the cave, the important fact rests with the recognition of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto for surveying another virgin cave and Junior producing a nice map.



Solution Rift, Tennessee

Sewanee Mountain Grotto members worked diligently to finish the survey of Solution Rift in 2010. Our final survey trip occurred on September 11th and was dubbed "The Legends Trip" as we celebrated the completion of the survey with three of the original Solution Rift surveyors, including Dan Twilley, Gerald Moni, and Marion O. Smith; also invited on this trip was Avis Moni as all are TAG legends. Our objective was to tie-in from our recoverable station set at the concrete dam and survey to the drip line of the lower entrance. Dan Twilley triumphantly called End of Survey for our grotto, which is 30+ years after the trips where Dan, Marion Smith, Gerald Moni, Jim Smith, Jill Dorman, Stella Twilley, Brad Neff, Susan Neff, Will Chamberlain, ET Davis, Buddy Lane and Sandy Montgomery connected the upper and lower entrances of TAG's most challenging pull down trip and began their survey. At the conclusion of our survey, we made a champagne toast to the efforts of everyone who has explored and surveyed this cave. Marion suggested the name "Champagne Conclusion" for this section of the survey, which aptly described our celebration. TAG now has another mile long cave (Length: 5,350 feet; Vertical Extent: 429 feet) thanks to the efforts of Sewanee Mountain Grotto.

My sincere appreciation to the following surveyors whose dedication assured the completion of the survey: Nancy Aulenbach (Famous Bitch), Adam Byrd (Rico Suave), Chad Dubuisson, Mike Doughty, Kris Fausnight, Mike Green, Anne Grindle (Skinny Bitch), Blaine Grindle (Brew Master), Jason Hardy (Junior), Angela Morgan (QBU), Peter Michaud (Mudpuppy), Avis Moni (Testosterone Bitch), Gerald Moni, Mark Ostrander (Warthog), Kelly Smallwood (Photo Bitch), Amy Smith, Teri Stephens (Happy Bitch), Jack Thomison, Dan Twilley, Julie Uselton (Graceful Bitch), Teresa Williams (Knot Bitch) and Andy Zellner. Additional recognition goes to the Dogwood City Grotto who graciously funded a grant to purchase two survey instruments and Keson survey tapes for our survey. Thanks also to the Sewanee Mountain Grotto for providing a grant to Chad Dubuisson to re-bolt the cave; and to Inner Mountain Outfitters for their continued support. I am very proud of our grotto and what we have accomplished! I have enjoyed drafting the map, which is being dedicated to the late Charlie Smith, who graciously allowed us to visit his caves for so many years; a tradition that continues with his adult children, Leanne and LeRoy.

Louis & Mark Cave, Tennessee

We began the survey in April 2009 and found a second drop at the end of the day, deciding to return in the dry season. Our return was delayed as the survey of Solution Rift dominated most of our time in 2010. In September, Junior, Photo Bitch and I finally returned to finish the survey. We had to dig out the second pit and I had to wear an emergency poncho thinking the drop would be dry, as we were back in drought conditions. The dripping of the water on my cheap poncho as we dug open this 26-foot pit inspired the name "Chinese Water Torture." Junior micro-shaved another area, which I was able to penetrate, but it was just a lower level of the main room obscured by breakdown. Thus, after exhausting all leads we called End of Survey. I was pleased to present my cave map to Louis Ross and Mark Butler, who were co-discoverers of this cave and also assisted with the grotto survey.

Swell Well, Tennessee

Although Swell Well is a closed cave, Junior and Photo Bitch met the landowner and were able to gain access for a survey project. Until the survey, the cave had been on the TAG 100+ foot pit list. However, as chronicled in the article by Kelly Smallwood, "One Less 100 footer in Tennessee," published in the *TAG Caver*, Volume 1, Number 2, the entrance pit was taped at 96 feet. Despite the reclassification of this pit, it was great to have the opportunity to survey it and meet the kind acquaintance of the landowner, Mr. Chuck Young who still considers his caves closed, but appreciated Junior's map and photos from our very own Photo Bitch.

Bible Springs Cave, Tennessee



After the grotto finished the survey of Solution Rift, I was thinking of well known TAG caves that still need a map. My attention was drawn to Bible Springs Cave as it is near Charlie Smith's farm, does not have a bad walk and is a horizontal cave that may allow more members to be involved in a grotto survey. Similar to other caves in the area, a survey was begun back in the 1980s, but no map was ever produced. Wm Shrewsbury even led Jon Brown on a re-con survey project back in the 1990s, but the survey was never resurrected.

Our grotto began the survey of Bible Springs cave from zero datum. We even had a new surveyor join us, Ginger Bankston (Spice Bitch), who is very familiar with the cave. My team, which included Photo Bitch and Graceful Bitch, began the survey at the drip line. Junior's team, which included QBU and Spice Bitch, headed into the cave to set a recoverable station. As we tied into his survey, we learned that QBU pushed a small side lead that appeared to be going cave. She was kind to give my team that lead as she joined Junior and Spice Bitch through a very muddy loop area. It was a remarkable day of survey and we were all frozen upon our return to the vehicles. I'll never forget Graceful Bitch standing there in her frozen clothes, taking time to clean the grotto's new survey instruments before changing into warm, dry clothes; she was focused on keeping the grotto's gear in top shape.

During our second survey trip, the teams included: Book Bitch, Happy Bitch, Graceful Bitch on a team; Jeff Bartlett and Famous Bitch on a team; and Junior, Photo Bitch and Skinny Bitch on a team. Both Jeff and Junior's team turned around in going passage and we have surveyed the cave to a total length of 3055 feet and a vertical extent of 56 feet. There are no hanging surveys at this time, thanks to everyone's hard work. We still have cave to survey in the spring/ summer when the conditions will be more suitable for pushing leads and Pup can join us!

Doodlebug-Blowing Cave System, Alabama

This survey project, which is being led by Junior, began on a cold December day high above the valley floor at the entrance to Doodlebug Hole. Junior led a team on Saturday that included Famous Bitch and Photo Bitch; their focus was to begin the survey at the drip line and survey the massive entrance shaft, which actually consists of a series of vertical pits. Andy Zellner entered the cave first to begin rigging the re-belays, while John Stemble (Rocco) and I followed with plans to set a recoverable station below the entrance shaft and begin to survey downstream towards the Blowing Cave entrance. Later in the day after my team set a recoverable station near a climb-down area, we were surprised that Junior's team had not leap-frogged our survey. Retreating back towards the entrance shaft, we encountered Junior's team and learned of their survey into virgin passage, which was still going. Deciding to route, Andy Zellner and I had left gear at the entrance of Doodlebug Hole and climbed back out the pit series, while Rocco agreed to lead the others out through the Blowing Cave entrance.

The next day, Junior and I returned to continue the survey of the entrance pit series with Jim Nichols who was visiting from Alaska, as well as Mark Dickinson a Georgia caver I had recruited to the ranks of the Manly Men. Our objective to survey the virgin leads off the entrance shaft was completed and we were successful in tying in the survey to the recoverable station my team had set the day before. Thus, we would no longer have to hike the ~500 foot elevation gain to Doodlebug Hole. Mark enjoyed his first survey trip and his Entourage name was granted by Graceful Bitch and me during a later trip.

Conclusion

Many of the maps produced from the caves that were surveyed in 2010 by Sewanee Mountain Grotto will be entered into competition by the cartographers. In addition to the SERA Regional Map Salon, which is traditionally held at the SERA Winter Business Meeting, our maps will also be entered into competition at the 2011 NSS Convention in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. As cartographers, we want to show other cavers what our grotto is capable of producing as a team.

Although not technically a cave survey, I have to mention how well our grotto teams did during the survey course that was designed by Photo Bitch, Graceful Bitch, Happy Bitch and I for the 2010 SERA Cave Carnival. It was not an easy course, but The Psycho Survey Bitches had a team that included QBU and Knot Bitch, while the Entourage of Manly Men had a team that included Junior and Mudpuppy. I am proud to report that despite the many obstacles, such as magnetic zones, stations set 15+ feet in the air and obstructed by tree limbs, both teams had exactly the same closure error of .31%, which is absolutely amazing if you knew how difficult the course was we had established. Their scores are truly a reflection of their accurate survey skills.

The purchase of new grotto survey instruments in 2010, will also ensure the accuracy of all grotto surveys, as well as improve the quality. In the past, we were limited by ~100 foot survey shots, but actually had 120 foot and 148 foot survey shots, after the purchase of the new Leica Distos. As QBU joked, we will have to draw straws to see who gets to run the new instruments. I know I sure have enjoyed the improved accuracy, especially on LRUDs and splay shots of large rooms.

My sincere appreciation for everyone's assistance with the grotto survey projects; we have a fun time and the grotto should be proud of what we accomplish during our survey projects. I hope more grotto members will join us on grotto survey projects in the New Year. Remember no survey experience is needed, as we are always happy to teach new surveyors; who knows you may even get a coveted "Bitch Name" or "Entourage Nick Name."

NSS Office Move – Tell it to the BOG!

Fellow SERA members. As most of you already know the NSS is studying the possibilities of moving the office to other locations. The BOG created a special "NSS headquarters committee" last fall to investigate this effort and their recommendation may result in the BOG voting to move the office / library to one of several new locations. This of course will require a large sum of NSS funds to support the construction of new buildings, move of resources, etc depending on what the committee recommends and the BOG decides to do. It is also possible that the BOG will decide that the NSS office and library will stay in Huntsville.

Now is the time to write letters to the BOG (BOG@caves.org) stating how you feel about this important issue. If we tell them how we feel about this issue in writing we will have done what we can to influence them to represent us. Your elected BOG members will no doubt come to realize that many of us may not support the idea of moving the office if we all take five minutes to send them a message. Please take the time to send them an email. To be taken seriously keep things civil and state your thoughts and opinions politely.

Brian Roebuck
34626

2010 SERA Winter Business Meeting Notes

Recorded by Deidra Hahn

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2010

SERA Winter Business Meeting (WBM) 2010 – Hosted by the Gadsden Grotto – February 6th 2010. The Lodge, Lake Guntersville State Park, Guntersville, AL

Meeting opened: 9:26 am CST.

SERA 2009 Officer Roll call:

Chair: Anne Elmore, present

Vice Chair: Michael Gilbert, present

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt, absent

Deidra Hahn, Recording for John Hoffelt

Introduction:

Map and Photograph/Art Salons.

The SERA Awards will be presented after the Banquet:

The four SERA awards:

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award

Francis McKinney Award

Alexis Harris Conservation Award

Richard Schreiber Award

Executive Report: SERA Treasurer Report. SEE HANDOUT

Executive Report: SERA Chair.

SERA 2009 Winter Business Meeting Minutes:

Located in "The Southeastern Caver"; read over and vote.

Unanimously accepted into the record as written.

Map Salon:

Brent Aulenbach hosted and placed a call for judges and instructed the membership to come up and look at the maps.

Photo Salon:

Brian and Lynn Roebuck hosted and placed a call for three judges.

SERA WBM host: Anthony Cline of the Gadsden Grotto:

Welcomed the membership to Guntersville State Park. Special thank you to Grotto members Becky Wooten and Selena Morten for their help. Hike the great trails and eagle watching is still a highlight of the Park this time of year. For the lunch break, we were on our own but were reminded that the Lodge restaurant was open and that there were plenty of other options available in the city of Guntersville.

The SERA Banquet theme is Southern Feast and consisted of Chicken Fingers, Pulled Pork, various side dishes and for dessert, Pecan Pie.

Gadsden Grotto and SKTF SERA WBM Cave Clean-up – Lady Cave & Weaver Cave. Will begin 10 am Central time, sign-up sheets are located at the front table.

NSS Bookstore

Kelly Davis and Stephanie Rubio:

Kelly told us about a little game she had set up. Hidden about the tables are cards and finding a yellow bat card gets you a discount of 10-25% off bookstore items. Kelly also had a purchasing incentive. A SERA 2010 WBM - NSS Bookstore purchase granted us the opportunity enter a drawing for a chance to win one of the new Bookstore items; a hooded sweatshirt with the "bat sticker" logo. Kelly also had 2009 SERA t-shirts for \$10 and 2009 SERA Guidebooks for \$15.

SERA 2010 pre-registration forms and SERA 2010 t-shirts for \$15 – see Kelly Smallwood

Executive Report: SERA Karst Task Force, Inc. – Jim Wilbanks, Chair SEE HANDOUT

We interrupt the regularly scheduled programming for this public service announcement:

"Jay Clark has left the building!" but Bill Overton says, "Vote Jay Clark for the NSS." -DH

Report: 2009 SERA Summer Cave Carnival

Jody Bailey: In 2008, the Nashville Grotto learned that "necessity is the MOTHER of all invention". Through many late nights they had the 2009 SERA about ¾ pulled off when they hit the block of location and unobtainable insurance coverage. They self-rescued by negotiating for the 2009 SERA to be held at the site of the Dogwood City Grotto's Annual Fall Cave-In. Even though the site was not what they had in mind and feared that it would discourage attendance, 554 folks attended, less the 76 who registered as vendors. All-in-all, the final receipts totaled \$42.50 +/- \$42.50. They encountered surprise costs that affected their budget, namely port-a-pot rental & maintenance and the final water haul. The event was marred by the unfortunate "fellow with the moonshine" incident. The cost of security was \$1200.

Marketing could have been a factor for the low attendance number. They had Grotto plugs and their web-site had a video, but communication was the issue knowing that profit was tied to increased attendance. They believe that those in attendance had fun anyway based on the attendance of the Parade and the success of the "Your Weight in Beer" contest. Knowing that SERA has some larger-than-life cavers, they had a fear factor of possibly not having enough beer to cover the contest. So they put together two coolers of extra beer and had that waiting in the wings - just in case.

Jody said that the Nashville Grotto would definitely host again as it was actually fun for the Grotto folks who truly fellowshiped throughout the work. The Grotto celebrated by having a Nashville Grotto Party for SERA.

Jody entertained us with a 9 minute presentation of all the pictures taken throughout their Grotto venture.

Report: 2010 SERA Summer Cave Carnival

Peter Michaud of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto informed us that SERA would be held June 17-20 at a site in Monteagle, TN with plenty of shaded camping and field camping with two ponds; just 10 to 15 minutes from Interstate 24, this area sports hundreds of caves.

The city of Monteagle and surrounding area offers liquor stores, a bakery, pizza, grocery stores, internet access at a local library, bed & breakfasts and state parks. We can hike from the campsite to go caving.

Private caves within Payne Cove will be accessible for SERA offering something for everyone from horizontal to vertical and wet. Access to these will be a short drive around the cove. One Payne Cove cave will have a guided trip where a wet suit may be required for the mile long cave that will present great photo opportunities. Respect for private property would be enforced. The Sewanee Mountain Grotto budgets 400 people as the break-even point.

Report: SERA Survey

Nathan Gatlin of the Central Alabama Grotto provided the results of the SERA Survey. Nathan validated the survey by stating that greater than 10% of the SERA population had responded (the SERA seven-state NSS membership population is about 500 and there were 86 survey respondents). SEE HANDOUT.

Report: White Nose Syndrome (WNS) – Update by Chrys Hulbert

Introduction:

From information forthcoming since the 2008 WBM, WNS is spreading in New England, Pennsylvania and New Jersey and has been just recently confirmed in West Virginia and Virginia. Within the SERA boundary, WNS is six miles from the Tennessee border. Based on the January 28, 2010 map, it could be following the bat migration routes or Interstate 81. Summer 2009 research efforts focused on developing science and management strategies, pursuing research funding and performing summer maternity colony and acoustical monitoring surveys. Results from the summer surveys show that maternity colonies in the NE were devastated. In New Hampshire, an entire *Myotis lucifugus* (little brown bat) sample population disappeared which ended a 16-year longitudinal study and in Vermont, the annual mist net survey netted one bat, whereas previous surveys had netted 900 bats. An acoustical monitoring project in NY located so few of the hibernating species that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is considering adding the little brown bat and others to that state's Endangered Species list.

Significant Works:

Although the WNS fungus had been reported late in 2008 as a member of the *Geomyces* group, it had not been identified down to the species level until genetic sequencing research was published on June 15, 2009 showing that the WNS fungus, now named *Geomyces destructans*, was a newly identified species.

A special session on WNS was held at the 2009 combined conventions of the International Cave Science and NSS in Kerrville, TX. Updates from the convention included knowledge of a white fungus reported on European hibernating bats since the mid-1800's but with no associated body-mass wasting or die-offs en-masse and laboratory research results on fungus viability showing survival to mammalian body temperature of 100F (38C) for at least 3 days, but unviable after 8 days; survival to exposure temperatures of 86F (30C) for at least 15 days; that short-term incubation of the fungus at higher temperatures reduced the number of conidia present and altered the morphology of the conidia, but that, in itself, may not inhibit fungal growth once optimal temperatures are reestablished; and that heating clothing (without disinfection) at clothes dryer temperatures of 120F (49C) increased spore germination and did not kill the fungus.

Funding:

Late summer, Bat Conservation International and several researchers met with members of congress and monies were appropriated for cause/control measures (\$800K) and research and monitoring (\$1.9M).

International Collaboration:

December 30, 2009 - Published research from France documented the presence of *Geomyces destructans* on a bat; however the bat appeared otherwise healthy with no other WNS symptoms.

Bat to Bat Vector:

Some preliminary data has come from the cave sediment sampling project (2009 Soil Sample Study). Findings showed a *Geomyces destructans* genetic signature from soils of known WNS-infested hibernacula, but that signature has not been detected outside the known WNS-infested region. These findings are synthesized to suggest that "the potential exists for fungus to be transmitted between bat hibernation caves as an unwanted hitch-hiker upon humans", however the implication is that bats are the primary vector for transmittal. January 15, 2010 – The WNS symptom of bats flying in the daytime was reported from Hellhole cave in West Virginia. Hellhole cave is the largest hibernaculum of Virginia Big-eared bats. Nearby Cave Mountain Cave was confirmed as infested with WNS in February 2009 and previous maternity colony banding results had shown that some Cave Mountain Cave Virginia Big-eared bats hibernated in Hellhole Cave.

Federal Management Strategies:

US Fish and Wildlife Services call for closing to human access caves and mines with bats newly infected with WNS and limiting human access to unaffected caves and mines located 250 miles beyond known infected caves and mines. These recommendations are intended to help slow the spread of WNS during the 2009/2010 hibernation season.

Private Foundation Management Strategies:

The Center for Biological Diversity (CBD) petitioned the Department of the Interior (USFWS) to extend Endangered Species Act (ESA) protection to two bat species (eastern small-footed and northern long-eared bats) and also close all federal bat-inhabited caves and mines nationwide to slow the transmission of WNS. The CBD also petitioned the Departments of Agriculture and Defense to close caves and mines nationwide under their jurisdictions. The petition also states that the USFWS needs to expand its closure advisory to address private cave owners in all states. The most direct way for state and private landowners to avoid harm to listed bats would be to immediately close all caves and mines harboring bat species listed under the ESA and caves and mines with non-listed bats in regions where listed bats occur and are thus susceptible to bat to bat transfer of WNS. They, therefore strongly recommend that this rule specify that entering or allowing entry to caves with bats, or at a minimum entering or allowing entry to caves with endangered bats constitute a violation of the ESA. Furthermore, short of a closure of all caves with bats, this rule should specify that travel between caves, particularly with the same gear or clothing and between a cave from a region with WNS to another region, is a violation of section 9 of the ESA.

The CBD petition also addressed cave organizations by stating that since cave groups own a significant number of caves throughout the country, particularly in the eastern and southern U.S. and some of these groups have already enacted cave closures, although some closures are only partial or temporary. A revised USFWS advisory needs to recommend the year-round closure of all bat-inhabited caves and mines on private lands throughout the United States. The advisory should stress that closure of caves both within and outside the current WNS affected zone is vital for the conservation of bats and cave

ecosystems around the country. Therefore, the USFWS should make sure that these recommendations are communicated to all caving and speleological organizations.

The CBD petition also addressed commercial caves by stating that the USFWS needs to address the use of commercial caves and that the USFWS should either issue a revised closure advisory that includes commercial caves, or a separate advisory directed only at commercial cave owners and national commercial (or "show") cave organizations. The advisory should include a recommendation that any commercial cave harboring hibernating bats be closed to public access; establish protocol for visitor decontamination for those commercial cave owners who chose not to heed the closure recommendation; the advisory should be national in scope, in order to protect bats from potential leapfrogging of WNS into currently unaffected regions of the country.

Chrys closed the WNS update by reminding the members present to protect our rights and suggested we write a polite informative letter to Secretary Salazar, Secretary of the Interior.

Grotto Reports:

Birmingham Grotto: Deirdra Hahn – An issue over the past year has been the break-ins at Graves Cave. The Grotto is fabricating a new locking mechanism that should prove tamper resistant.

Sewanee Mountain Grotto: Peter Michaud / Julie Schenck-Brown

Hosting the 2010 SERA. Another Russell Cave Watershed cleanup scheduled for February 13, 2010. Membership stands at 64 (75% female). PupFest 7 was an admission-free fundraising event, attended by 100 folks. One event is the annual float trip to Nickajack cave to observe the bat flight.

Surveying efforts have encompassed 18 caves and generated 14 maps using 49 cavers. Total maps to date is 30. All cavers are welcome to help survey.

Conservation projects include the recycling of aluminum from the SERA and TAG Fall Cave-In events that netted 970 pounds of aluminum. Additionally, the Grotto also separates the plastic recyclables at these events and disposes of these properly. The Grotto has completed two clean-ups within the Russell Cave Watershed, one at Blue Springs Cave and one at Tumbling Rock Cave.

At the 2009 NSS Convention, the cable ladder climbing contest (female) was won by Maureen Handler and the "Psycho Survey Bitches and their Entourage of Manly Men" took second place at the ICS.

Received the 2009 NSS Grotto Conservation Award from the Conservation and Management Section of the NSS.

The Grotto received a grant from the Dogwood City Grotto used for the resurvey of Solution Rift Cave.

Dogwood City Grotto: Bill Stringfellow. DCG hosted over 1100 people for TAG Fall Cave In and awarded over \$10,000 in grants.

SCCi: Bill Stringfellow. Kennamer purchased. Income \$300,000. SCCi concerned with cave closures affecting finances. SCCi closures are for cave protection, therefore OK.

Central Alabama Grotto: Nathan Gatlin. Fundraising from manning gate at the Talladega Speedway. The Fall 2009 NSS BOG meeting was hosted by CAG and the Birmingham Grotto at the Birmingham Zoo. Planning a trip to El Capitan. Raised \$1500.00 for WNS by raffling off a weekend in Gulf Shores, Alabama. Grotto earned \$300.00 in 45 minutes from gate sales at Talladega Speedway.

Nashville Grotto: Jody Bailey. SERA 2009!

Gadsden Grotto: Anthony Cline. Hosted the SERA Winter Business Meeting. Grotto Secretary, Samantha Johnson, 18 years old, with less than one year in the Grotto found a 92.8 foot pit in Etowah County. Weaver Cave clean-ups have removed 2.25 tons, so far.

Huntsville Grotto: James DeForest. Prepared and presented the Huntsville, AL site proposal for the NSS office complex.

Grotto has 85 members. Grotto helps out at the NSS Office. They cleared the tree that fell from the storm and helped with the Smith House clean-up.

Spencer Mountain Grotto: Anne Elmore. Blue Spring Cave is over 35 miles. Bill Walter published Exploration of Blue Spring book.

Chattanooga Grotto: Jim Wilbanks. Meets at the Chattanooga Nature Center, Brian Killingbeck is chair. Grotto meets Monday nights.

Roll Call – Jim Wilbanks recorded.

New Business

Motion.

Nashville Grotto moves that SERA as a group sends a letter to the Secretary of the Interior stating our position against the Center for Biological Diversity petition. The motion is open to talking points of what should be in the letter.

Chattanooga Grotto seconds.

Talking Points:

WNS approximately 6 miles from TN border.

Increase of NE USA occurrence.

Summer – produced science and management strategies; funding.

Blehart's soil study – Slide presented at Convention, data are OK, but interpretation is NOT.

Birkhimer writing letter without Youngbaer.

CBD – 2 people wrote petition, CBD as group not on board with petition; petition diverts federal money from research to enforcement.

Paper published about transportation of bats from overseas.
Official USFWS vs. Draft 2009 Management Plan

Meeting Break.

Significant bat populations

All agreed on one point: Bat to bat transmission is primary vector.

Should this letter be drafted by SERA member or by SERA Executive Board?

Written by folks Board Empowered: Covers at forefront of research, not pressure private landowners, caver's contributions with cave access, cave clean-ups, and petition diverts money and manpower away from research.

Call for vote:

Unanimous – motion passed.

Kelli Davis.

Status of NSS Office move.

Committee established. November 2009 BOG meeting approved the KY corridor with a 2015 time frame. General membership is discombobulated.

Jim Wilbanks.

Antipathy toward BOG. Scott Parvin works with TAG cavers. The expense of attending BOG meetings has increased, being on the BOG is a huge time-sink. We need to support these folks as is not evident by the backfighting on TAGNet and CaveChat.

Kelli Davis.

NSS has stipends available to BOG members to attend meetings – BOG members normally do not take these stipends.

Jim Wilbanks.

Bill Putnam and Jay Clark on the 2010 NSS BOG ballot.

Merit Service Award Nomination

Jim Wilbanks.

Award for folks who deserve recognition but don't fit criteria of other four awards.

Member of a Grotto that worked with cavers.

Call for Nomination.

Jody Bailey – Always in the background working, pivotal for the 2009 SERA, has everything in his mini-van, Nashville Grotto's 50th anniversary, thief who stole the clothes/camera from the skinny dippers, and he owns a portable steam room.

Seconded and voted –Unanimous. Jody received Mardi Gras beads for his nomination.

Elections

Secretary/Treasurer

John Hoffelt – Nominated inabsentia

Seconded.

Vote - Unanimous

Vice Chair

Nomination – Crissy Richards

Seconded.

Vote – Unanimous

Chair – Michael Gilbert – Bylaw default.

Award Committees

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award:

Kelly Smallwood-Roland

Gerald Moni

Hazard Bryant

Alexis Harris Conservation Award:

Nancy Aulenbach

Christina Richards

Nathan Gatlin

Francis McKinney Award:

Jim Wilbanks

Brad Barker

Michael Dougherty

Richard Schreiber Award:

No committee.

Break till Banquet

Award Presentation

SERA Meritorious Service Award – Jody Bailey

Larry S. Adams Landowner Award

Jack Lynch of Kimball, TN; nominated by Anne Grindle (Sewanee Mountain Grotto) for welcoming cavers and generous access to Lynch Pit.

Francis McKinney Award

Julie Schenck-Brown; nominated by Peter Michaud (Sewanee Mountain Grotto).

Alexis Harris Conservation Award

No nominations received

Map

Brent Aulenbach - 16th Annual SERA Salon, encourages mapping, a venue to display and critique. 9 maps were entered this year. Judges: Brent Aulenbach, Peter Michaud, Brian Roebuck

Technical Merit – Julie Schenck-Brown: Paul's Cave

Best New Cartographer – Jason Hardy: Can Do Cave

Best of Show – Julie Schenck-Brown: Hytop Drop

NSS Sweatshirt Raffle

Joe Douglas drew Joe Stewart

Salons

Brian Roebuck.

Art:

Best of Show – Myrna Attaway: Cave Cup

First Place – tie: Chrys Hulbert: Raku Pottery and Myrna Attaway: Bat Magnet #1

Photo:

Best of Show – Kelly Rowland: Rebel Light

First Place – Jim Loftin: 170'

Second Place – Clinton Elmore: Secret Reflection

Jr. Art:

Award of Excellence – Scout Aulenbach and Dakota Roland

Speaker

Marion O. Smith – Quips, Quotes & Factoids

"History is the collective memories of what was done and done to us."

MOS diaries begin 1958.

Inspected the contents of 1966 – 2009 for this meeting.

Esoteric baloney:

Fairburn, GA - born

6685 holes; logged 13,334 hours; most caves per day – 18; 811,000 feet rope climbed; caved in 35 states; 40-45 trips to Mexico; 3rd Golondrinas Trip = Buffoon.

TN Hartselle Formation is the geologic contact for caves.

"Virgin doesn't mean that you have to be in front."

1st cave – Cave Spring Cave, GA – Nov. 1958 – rock-hounding in Ladds Quarry, Cartersville, GA.

Rusty Mills put the Goat on a Rope; First pit - Cemetery – on knots; Second pit – 199' – Pearsons Pit, GA.

Significant Trip – Engle Double; Wore a cotton t-shirt and it was a bad hair day - 1st seventeen-hour trip.

GA Speleological Survey: 1969 – 1971

1974 – wetsuit caving; 1976 – 8+ drops cave

Highlights:

June 24, 1967 found TAG Shower; July 3, 1967 Godfry, Cave City, TN, Myotis Room; April 19, 1969 Stairstep Cave, 2nd step is 82'; 3rd to drop Incredible Pit; connection to Ellison's; Pettijohn's – 1st wormtube – Echo Room.

"Cavers build on each other's explorations."

May 10, 1969 – Point man on survey team, first to see North Pole formations.

People figure over and over in his memories, take Gerald Moni (Gerald was present), "It takes talent to be that untalented."

The stories MOS told about Gerald were a listener's revelry; my pen, retired. -DH

Lastly, Anne Elmore had interviewed MOS about his cave food preferences: MOS, "Poptarts? They taste OK, even though they'll kill me. POP-POP-POP-POP-POP-POP-POP."

Meeting adjourned: 7:45pm.

Editors Blurb

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:

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Normandy, TN 37360

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

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

http://uscaversforum.org	US Cavers Forum
http://www.caves.org/phpBB2/	NSS Cavers Forum
http://www.hiddenworld.net/tag-net/	TAG – Net
http://www.webwhisper.com/tcs/default.html	Tennessee Cave Survey
http://www.caves.org/survey/fcs/	Florida Cave Survey
http://ourworld.cs.com/alabamacaves/	Alabama Cave Survey
http://www.caves.org/survey/gss/	Georgia Speleological Survey

For all of you cave photographers out there please head on over to Flickr to see some amazing cave photography in various groups such as Cavers, Caves, and Caving Photos (CCCP) located here: <http://www.flickr.com/groups/cavers/> as well as many individual accounts and cave related groups. Search to find more!

Still looking for things to do with your spare time and a fast internet connection? Well then don't forget to check out your caving buddies on Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn and all the other time wasting internet social sites out there!

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

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Michael Gilbert – Chairman Chrissy Richards -- Vice Chairman John Hoffelt – Secretary/Treasurer