

The Southeastern Caver

Newsletter of the Southeast Regional Association of Grottos



Vol 18

Feb 2013

Brian Roebuck - Editor



Bluff River Cave (photo by Amy Hinkle)

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Amy Hinkle
Anonymous
Chris Higgins

A Note from the Chair

Welcome to the 2013 SERA Winter Business Meeting. Thank you to the Nashville Grotto for hosting and Cumberland Caverns for allowing us to be here. It doesn't seem that long ago we were sitting in La Fayette, Georgia when Anne Elmore nominated me to be on the SERA Board. One of the biggest challenges I had while serving on the board for SERA was soliciting nominations for the SERA Awards. I would like to encourage my fellow cavers and especially those who have previously received the awards to think about others who deserve some recognition as

The Birmingham Summer Cave Carnival Rock River Valley in was western and it there were around 400 I would also like to taken the time to SERA Karst Task Force is an amazing thing to come together to help place. And please



The past two years we learn that White Nose to move closer to our caves. Not only has it National Park property Tennessee it has also gated and closed

Wildlife updated their decon procedures to include submersion of gear in hot water, sustained at 122 degrees, for 20 minutes instead of harsh chemicals. Cavers have remained strong and have continued to follow the guidelines, all the while still being suspected for transporting the fungus. Unfortunately, the state of Tennessee continues to keep caves on public land closed and Lost Creek has recently fell victim to these closures. Thankfully Georgia and Alabama have not closed caves and one can only hope that things will eventually turn around here in Tennessee. I hope everyone enjoys the day here at Cumberland Caverns as I leave with you with one of my favorite quotes: "Unearthly Beauty Lies Underground For Those Who Venture In". Well my friend YOU have ventured in, so happy caving and remember to take lots of pictures.

Kelly Smallwood
SERA Chair 2012

well.

Grotto hosted the SERA last summer in the Paint Alabama. The theme was a blast. I believe cavers in attendance.

thank everyone who has come out and help the with a cleanup. It truly see so many cavers make the world a better remember to RECYCLE.

have been saddened to Syndrome is continuing beloved TAG area and turned up in caves on in both Kentucky and been discovered in both caves. The US Fish &

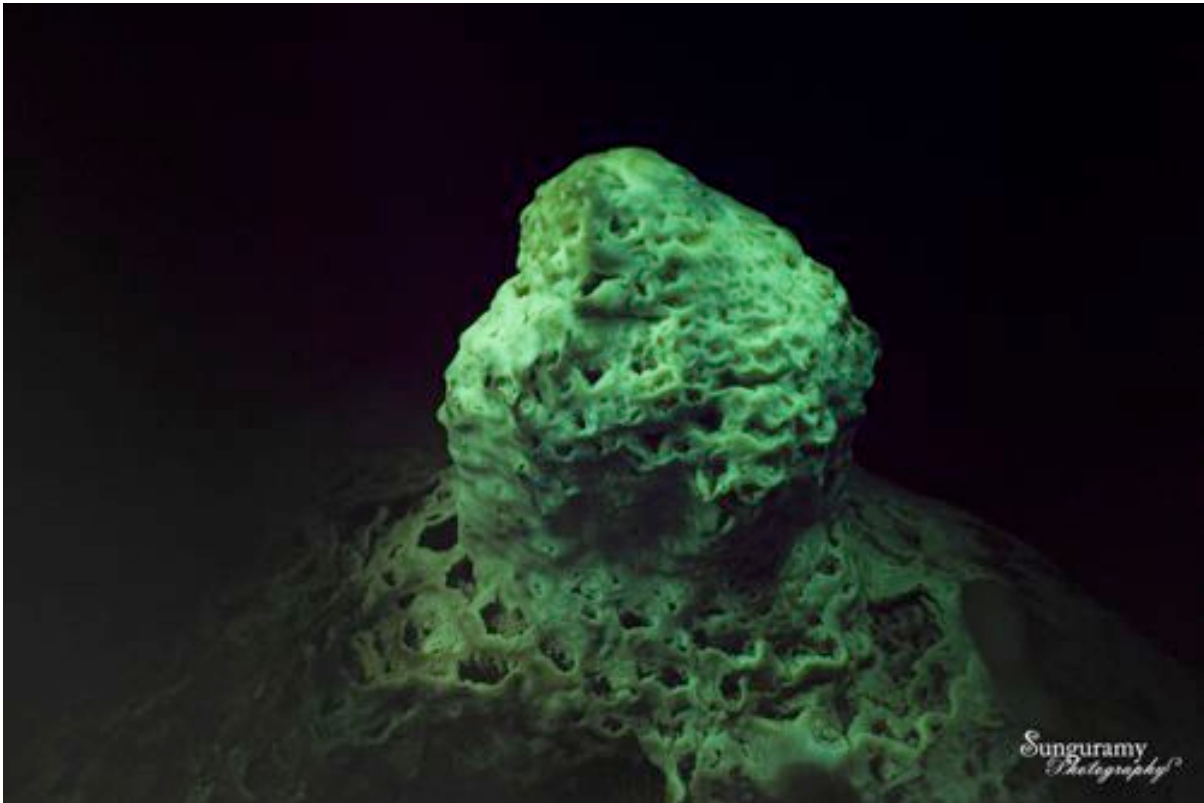
A Unique Method for Cave Photography

I didn't have any articles to share with our readers this year and had to rely on a few people to send me some caver related information for publication. Amy Hinkle (Sunguramy Photography) sent me some of her best work to share. She is a cave photographer who has developed successful cave photography methods using available light and inexpensive camera gear.



Roppel Cave - Yahoo Cave Pearls

Her photography kit fits into the palms of her hands, weighs less than three pounds, and cost under \$200.



Phosphorescent Formations - Rimstone covered Stalagmite

Amy relies on technique rather than equipment to capture her cave photos with available light sources.



Mystery Falls Waterfall

Amy's images have appeared on covers of multiple scientific journals, has been featured in National Geographic's Daily Dozen, and multiple Photos of the Day. Maybe the rest of us don't need 50 lbs of cave photo gear after all?



Surprise Pit

Great photos Amy! Thanks for sharing. For more information you can reach Amy at: amyhinkle@gmail.com

WNS SERA Cavers Poll

By: Anonymous SERA Cavers

I posted on the SERA Facebook page a poll for SERA Cavers asking the following question: "**How has WNS affected caving for me?**" The following anonymous responses make for some interesting reading.

Caver 1: I am still somewhat new to caving but WNS has prevented me from seeing some caves that I would very much like to & I fear I may never "legally" be able to do so. I have been hiking & or backpacking Sipsey Wilderness off & on for the past 20 years. I have hiked all the official trails & have since been checking out all the points of interest off trails such as arborglyphs, petroglyphs, fossils & or anything of interest. A couple of years ago a friend & I stumbled upon a cave off of one of the trails. We spent a couple of hours exploring it & really awakened both of us to caving. I had heard rumors of more caves in Sipsey and happened to contact someone at Wildsouth to ask if they knew anything about any of the caves. They did but informed me that I was not allowed in any of the caves due to WNS & that if I was caught there was a \$5000 fine. I informed them that I didn't see any signs anywhere stating such and I wasn't turned in to any authorities. They were more or less informing me so that I knew about the laws. Anyways I was a bit disappointed as Sipsey is by far my favorite place to explore in the state of Alabama & now if I go I have to turn away from any cave I might stumble upon. Its too much so I hardly visit anymore. Also over the past couple of years I pursued a graduate degree in Environmental Management from Samford University. I took classes such as endangered species & I understand that we should do what we can to protect the bats. What is sad about all this is those that abide by rules are punished yet you can see videos on youtube by non-cavers harassing & or killing bats. These people will just plead ignorance & get away with doing whatever they wish. Wasn't a Cave Act established in 1988 to protect caves and their inhabitants? If so why can't this be better enforced for those in violation which would include breaking formations, dumping trash into pits, graffiti, harassing bats, stealing endangered species, etc. Perhaps these are 2 separate issues but I think the bats could possibly be better protected under the Cave Act then simply banning everyone from caves for rest of their lives. Hoping this changes soon as I really want to get back out & explore Sipsey and the treasures that I have still yet to see.

Caver 2: WNS keeps me from caving here in Indiana. All government owned caves in Indiana and many surrounding states are closed. Between that and fuel prices I used to cave three times a month- now maybe 5 times a year. I will not go back to the same cave over and over again with 4 dollar gas. Closing government caves lowers my list of available caves quite a bit.

Caver 3: I, as all cavers, have been greatly affected by WNS. That being said: I love bats. I have bats stay at my house every year. My heart breaks from the devastation effected on the bats from WNS. I do not see how the knee jerk reaction of closing all caves on state land is helping the bats. A case in point: I know the area forester for a state forest that I live near. He contacted me last summer to give me the name and phone number of a caver that was interested in the caves in said state forest. I took that opportunity to question the status of cave closure in the forest. His reply and I am not joking here was: Oh yeah what did we do about that, we put up a sign or something about that. We do continue to cave. We decon using the latest protocol. It helps that I recently purchased a pressure washer to help in this process. Ps: Our bat colony last year was a maternity colony and went from approx 40 bats to approx 70 - 80 bats!

Caver 4: WNS has caused me to avoid all caves with a significant bat population and to encourage all cavers to discontinue all caving during months that bats are hibernating.....

Cave Photography Of Chris Higgins

It's always interesting to see the work of cave photographers in the SERA region. Chris Higgins has been caving for about 10 years since the age of 16 when he bought a copy of Tom Barr's *Caves of Tennessee*. He began to blend his interest in photography with his caving interests by using disposable cameras on cave trips.



That early experience has led him to attempt to photograph the most remote cave areas he can carry his 50 lbs of photo gear into.







Chris reflects: "One of the most exciting shots for me was photographing Clinton Elmore passing a knot 300 feet off the floor while climbing Fantastic from the Attic rig. I think what makes photographing caves so fun is that you have to solve a puzzle for each picture." Nice work Chris.

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 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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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:

<https://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=333106360986>
<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/gss/>

SERA Facebook page
TAG – Net
Tennessee Cave Survey
Florida Cave Survey
Alabama Cave Survey
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!

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A publication of the South East Region Association of the National Speleological Society

Kelly Smallwood – Chairman Bambi Dunlap -- Vice Chairman John Hoffelt – Secretary/Treasurer