

THE SOUTHEASTERN CAVER

Volume 21 March 2016

A photograph of a person rappelling down a large, layered rock formation in a cave. The person is wearing a red suit and is positioned in the center of the frame. The rock formation is composed of many horizontal layers and is illuminated by a bright light source from above, creating a strong contrast between the lit and shadowed areas. The person is holding a rope that extends from the top of the frame down to the bottom. The overall scene is dramatic and highlights the scale of the cave environment.

El Abismo

The Southeastern Caver is the official newsletter of the Southeastern Region Association (SERA) of the National Speleological Society and is published once a year for distribution to SERA member grottos and the NSS archives. Statements and opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the policies or beliefs of SERA or the National Speleological Society. Reprinting of articles is allowed if proper credit is given to the author and/or photographers represented in this publication. Send correspondence and exchanges to: The Southeastern Caver, c/o Don Hunter, address given below.

2016 SERA Officers:

Chair: Candice Eagle
Vice-Chair: Peter Michaud
Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

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In this issue:

2016 SERA Summer Cave Carnival, Inside Cover
2016 Winter Business Meeting Right-of-Refusal, Inside Cover
2016 Summer Cave Carnival Right-of-Refusal, p. 1
Treasurer's Report, p. 1
Minutes, 2015 Winter Business Meeting, p. 1
Spotlight on: Flittermouse Grotto, as seen through the eyes of new member, Jennifer Daigle, p. 3
SERA Karst Task Force Watershed Restoration Project, Run to the Mill Watershed, p. 5
Tennessee Sandstone Rift Caves, p. 6

Cover: Kyle Lassiter on rope in the 100 foot entrance drop in El Abismo, the first of several Tennessee sandstone rift caves found and pushed by Clinton Elmore and crew in 2015. More on these caves on page six of the newsletter.

65th ANNUAL SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL

The 65th annual SERA Summer Cave Carnival will be held at Pigeon Mountain, LaFayette, Georgia, June 2-5, 2016. It will be hosted by the Nashville Grotto. For information, contact Larry Matthews, nss6792@bellsouth.net.

2016 SERA WINTER BUSINESS MEETING RIGHT-OF-REFUSAL LIST (For the 2017 calendar year)

The SERA Winter Business Meeting is the annual business meeting of SERA. It is hosted by a grotto or cave survey on a rotating basis. SERA organizations are alphabetically organized in the order of refusal list. (There are separate order of refusal lists for the SERA Winter Business Meeting and the SERA Summer Cave Carnival.) SERA organizations are allowed to trade their position in the order of refusal with another organization. A SERA organization may also choose to co-host an event with another SERA organization.

South Carolina Interstate Grotto
Southport Chronic Cavers
Spencer Mountain Grotto
Tampa Bay Area Grotto
Tennessee Cave Survey
Triangle Troglodytes
Upper Cumberland Grotto
Alabama Cave Survey
Athens Speleological Society
Augusta Cave Masters
Birmingham Grotto
Bryson City Grotto
Central Alabama Grotto
Central Florida Grotto
Chattanooga Grotto
Clarksville Underground
Clayton County Cavers
Clock Tower Grotto
Crescent City Cavers
Cullman Grotto
Dogwood City Grotto
Druid City Cavers
East Tennessee Grotto
Flint River Grotto
Flittermouse Grotto

Florida Speleological Society
 Gadsden Grotto
 Georgia Speleological Society
 Huntsville Grotto
 Jackson County Grotto
 Middle Georgia Grotto
 Montgomery Grotto
 Mountain Empire Grotto
 Nashville Grotto
 Pigeon Mountain Grotto
 River City Grotto
 Sewanee Mountain Grotto
 Six Ridges Grotto
 Smoky Mountain Grotto

2016 SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL RIGHT-OF-REFUSAL LIST (for the 2017 calendar year)

The SERA Summer Cave Carnival is the annual caving event of SERA. It is hosted by a grotto or cave survey on a rotating basis. As with the SERA Winter Business Meeting, there is a right-of-refusal list, alphabetically organized in the order of refusal. Also, SERA organizations are allowed to trade their position on the list with another organization. A SERA organization may also choose to co-host the Cave Carnival with another organization or organizations.

Pigeon Mountain Grotto
 River City Grotto
 Sewanee Mountain Grotto
 Six Ridges Grotto
 Smoky Mountain Grotto
 South Carolina Interstate Grotto
 Southport Chronic Cavers
 Spencer Mountain Grotto
 Tampa Bay Area Grotto
 Tennessee Cave Survey
 Triangle Troglodytes
 Upper Cumberland Grotto
 Alabama Cave Survey
 Athens Speleological Society
 Augusta Cave Masters
 Birmingham Grotto
 Bryson City Grotto
 Central Alabama Grotto
 Central Florida Grotto
 Chattanooga Grotto
 Clarksville Underground
 Clayton County Cavers

Clock Tower Grotto
 Crescent City Cavers
 Cullman Grotto
 Dogwood City Grotto
 Druid City Cavers
 East Tennessee Grotto
 Flint River Grotto
 Flittermouse Grotto
 Florida Speleological Society
 Gadsden Grotto
 Georgia Speleological Society
 Huntsville Grotto
 Jackson County Grotto
 Middle Georgia Grotto
 Montgomery Grotto
 Mountain Empire Grotto
 Nashville Grotto

TREASURER'S REPORT

(Submitted by John Hoffelt for period covering 1/01/15 – 12/31/2015)

Beginning balance, brought forward from 12/31/15.....\$938.56
 Income, from SERA Cave Carnival.....\$548.00

Subtotal.....\$1,486.56

Expenses:
 SKTF SERA Cave Carnival('14 & '15).....\$297.50
 2015 SERA Awards:
 Cash Awards.....\$150.00
 Plaques, Frames,
 Mailing.....\$97.66
 2015 Web
 Space.....\$12.00

Subtotal Expenses.....\$557.16

Ending Balance.....\$929.40

2015 SERA WINTER BUSINESS MEETING

The 2015 Winter Business Meeting was hosted by the

Sewanee Mountain Grotto on February 21, 2015 and was held at the Sewanee Community Center in Sewanee, Tennessee. The following meeting notes are subject to discussion and approval at the 2016 meeting.

Meeting Notes, Summary and To-Do List

(A full digital recording of the meeting, including grotto reports, is available in the archive files.

Chair: Ohad Newton, absent

Vice-Chair: Candice Eagle (conducting meeting)

Salons:

Fine Arts Salon

Judges: Sally Edwards, Tricia Spiliotis and Mendy Thomas

Best of Show, Photo: Candice Eagle "Fifty Shades of Gray"

Best of Show, Art: Chrys Hulbert "Crayfish in a Pool"

Map Salon

Report not provided

Old Business

1. Scan guidebooks 2006 to present, for website – completed.
2. Supply guidebooks (and t-shirts) to NSS archives – on hold until new headquarters is ready for them
3. Get Jim Wilbanks' archive files – Maureen contact him ?
4. Provide meeting notes and reports to website – completed
5. Contact Jennifer Foote regarding WNS decon insert for "Responsible Caving" - unresolved

Chattanooga Grotto reports 2014 Summer Caver Carnival had 211 attendees, bringing in \$6,000.

Huntsville reported on Volunteer Survey Questionnaire

New Business

Green River Grotto requests membership in SERA

1. Motion to amend SERA Constitution, Section III, to allow membership in SERA for Kentucky

internal organizations – original motion by Georgia Speleological Survey (Nancy Aulenbach) on behalf of and specific to Green River Grotto – seconded by East Tennessee Grotto (Frank Bogle); amended to extend to any Kentucky Grotto (IO) by Sewanee Mountain Grotto (Peter Michaud) – seconded by Tennessee Cave Survey (Gerald Moni). Carries unanimously.

Moved: "SERA Executive Committee to pursue writing an amendment to the Constitution to extend membership to Kentucky Internal Organizations."

SERA Awards

Francis McKinney Award – Not awarded
Committee: John Attaway, Cindy Geick, Shari Lydy

Richard Schreiber Award – Given to Mark Ostrander
Committee: Jason Hardy, Kyle Lassiter, Jeff Patton

Alexis Harris Conservation Award – Given to Bill Putnam
Committee: Maureen Handler, Erin Ling, Cheryl Pratt

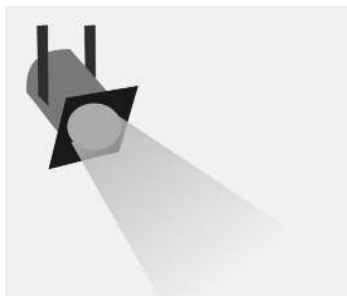
Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award – Given to The Estate of Bruno Grunt and the Allardt Land Company
Committee: Frank Bogle, Peter Michaud, Gerald Moni

Meritorius Service Award:
Don Hunter for coordinating the Fine Arts Salon and editing the Southeastern Caver

Bambi Dunlap and Kelly Smallwood for logistical support (and a home-cooked meal for the business meeting).

Elections

Vice-Chair: Peter (Mudpuppy) Michaud
Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt



SPOTLIGHT ON: FLITTERMOUSE GROTTO, ASHEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Cave Baby, My First Year as a Flittermouse

By Jennifer E. Daigle

My first official year as a caver has involved the love-hate kinship of loops to knots in a vertical harness, a territorial gang dispute between cave crickets and spiders an inch away from my face, and bat guano in places that I'm not going to admit. How weird is it that I like this stuff? Well, maybe not the spiders...

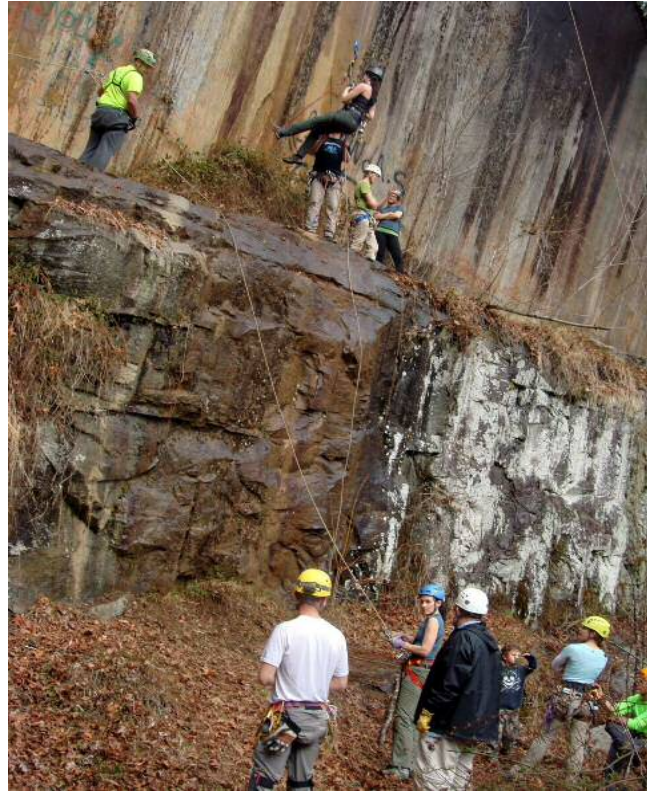
Asheville's Flittermouse Grotto (that's German for "bat," you know) doesn't seem to think it's weird at all. Without judgment, I've been ushered through four underground worlds that most surface dwellers have no idea exist with such scale beneath their feet. Worley's Cave outside of Johnson City, Tennessee introduced me to the Star Chamber and the fact that I'm never again allowed to cave in jeans. Newport, Tennessee's Rattling Cave introduced me to the Mars Room and my love affair with hanging from supposedly-secure ropes. Perkins Cave in Washington County, Virginia was a 12-hour survey expedition through a coral reef-like crawl and a miniature Grand Canyon with what my primal brain now recognizes as EXPOSURE. Want to know about Michael Rhinehart's azimuth, Noah Landreth's clinometer, and Dan Henry's line plot? I basically held the gofer role in our 4-person team and placed the little red light on top of rocks. They would have been lost without me. In Pennington Gap, Virginia, Buford Pruitt used breakdown in Gilley Cave to read it's earthquake history, I got lost for a brief period of time in a river, and I frolicked a little in at least two waterfalls. Yes, frolicked. Mars Room, coral reefs...who knew I'd find the sky and the ocean in these rock worlds?

In addition to caves with names, Sue and Mike Kettles and Janet Manning were patient enough to sponsor the newbie through some shallow underground playgrounds around Cashiers, North Carolina. Thus, the crickets vs. the spiders...with a little lone bat who somehow got caught in the middle at one point. On my first vertical slant that required a pressure hold in order to avoid sliding into the dark abyss (it was only 15 yards down, but still), I was coached by Sue and Janet that, "Yes, your body can actually do that!" Then there have been numerous vertical practices to literally learn the ropes...at an abandoned quarry before the Banff Film Festival in Brevard, in Scott McCrea's toyland basement, in Dan Henry's rigged-up backyard, and in trees at the summer and Christmas parties. These people really like their parties with trees. And beer.

My year-in-the-grotto doesn't come close to most of the other members. Apparently, there are major festivals with tents, competitions, and nakedness. I should probably consider buying a tent. There are bigger, badder caves that make the grown men curse in the telling. Cyclops gets them especially riled up. And, in every monthly meeting, the seasoned Flittermice toss the still completely foreign names of people, places, and speleo-things over my head as fast as Harry Potter's winged Quidditch ball. I'll catch one, one of these days. For now, my first official year as a caver, you'll be happy to know that my cave legs are better than they used to be, and there's nothing I've done that I don't want to do again, and again, and again.

In short, cotton kills, the Simple is not as simple as it thinks it is, and a diet of jerky and granola bars is *not* sufficient for 12-hours in a cave. But excellent company is. I still weirdly like it all. But so do they...so it's okay. Happy caving, speleo-freaks!

SPOTLIGHT ON FLITTERMOUSE GROTTO PHOTO GALLERY



Clockwise, from upper left: Spotlight contributor, Jennifer Daigle, Gilley Cave; Vertical practice in Pisgah Forest Quarry; Formations, Perkin's Cave; Janet Manning, Cashiers Crawl; Survey team in Perkins Cave.



SERA Karst Task Force Watershed Restoration Project, Run to the Mill Cave Cumberland County Tennessee

Submitted by Maureen Handler, SKTF Director

The Southeastern Cave Conservancy purchased Run to the Mill Cave in 2014. Cavers that visited the cave noticed that a significant amount of trash had been dumped in a gulley that ran down to the east from the entrance to the property. This was brought to the attention of the SKTF Committee. John Hoffelt and Maureen Handler met Jeff Patton at the property in October 2015. Two dumps sites were readily apparent. One was on the RTTM property and one was on the adjacent property to the south. Both dumps were located at sharp curves in the road where it was easy for people to dump trash down the steep slopes.

On Saturday, November 14, 2015, a beautiful autumn day, the SKTF and its volunteers mobilized to the site. It was the inaugural trip of the SKTF trailer. What an ease! Getting ready to head to the clean-up happened in record time! 23 cavers from TN, AL & GA met at 9 am to rig the high line and prepare loads for hauling. By 10 am, the first of the trash was flying out of the gulley. Tires, tires and more tires came up. A total of 84 tires! In addition, the big 40 yard dumpster brought by the Cumberland County Waste Management Department had about 3 tons of trash in it. What a great job.

On Saturday, February 20 we were at it again. This time 33 cavers from across TAG showed up to tackle the second dump. Easy high line rig this time. We were able to tension it with a truck! Again the tires started coming out! This time it was 70 tires! We also filled up the dumpster with about 5 tons of trash! What a haul. The before and after photos are truly amazing! I'm so proud of what our volunteers can accomplish in a day! The SKTF thanks you! The SCCi thanks you! And Mother Earth thanks you!



Before: Years of wanton dumping of household trash and tires created an ugly mess



After: 70 tires and 5 tons of trash removed by 33 volunteers from all over TAG, in a single day!

TENNESSEE SANDSTONE RIFT CAVES

Compiled by the Editor from Clinton Elmore's Facebook updates on these discoveries.

In 2015, Clinton Elmore and crew discovered and pushed several caves along the top of the Cumberland Plateau that garnered much interest among TAG cavers. All but one, Hydroclastic Conduit Cave, were developed solely within the Warren Point Sandstone, most of them nearly totally developed within the entire 200 feet thickness of mainly level-bedded terrestrial sandstone and quartz conglomerate. Some minor shale is present near the base of the formation. The exception, Hydroclastic Conduit Cave, is different in that it's development actually worked it's way through the basal shale and into the carbonates in the uppermost portion of the Pennington Formation.



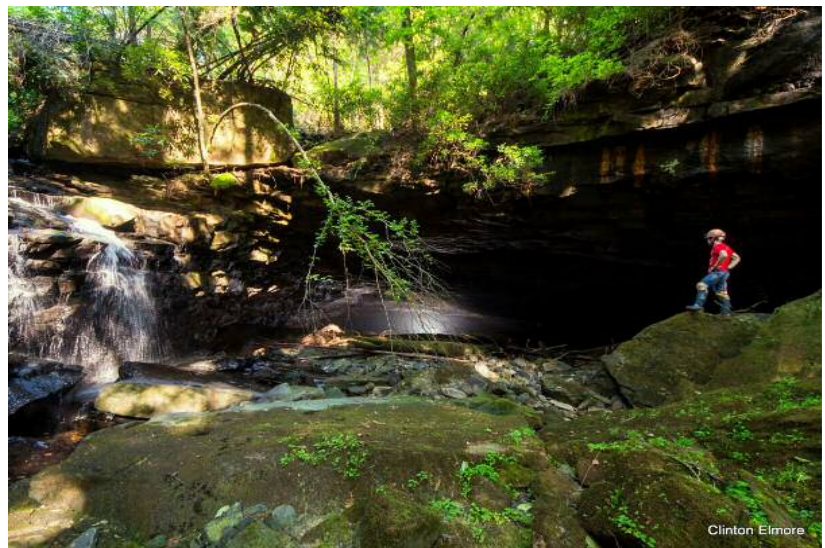
James Smith and Frank Bogle below the second 20-foot pit in El Abismo. This passage is developed in shale, suggesting that the carbonates of the Pennington Formation lie not far below.



Clinton Elmore in main rift passage, Demon's Dinette Cave.



Clinton Elmore, entrance to Dragon's Dive Cave



Clinton Elmore at the impressive 100-foot-wide and 30-foot-tall entrance to "Hells Kitchen" Cave.



Jason Alexander nearing the entrance of Hydroclastic Conduit Cave after a long push trip that added another 3000 feet of passage to the cave.



James Smith and Frank Bogle caving through the top of the Pennington Formation in El Abismo Cave.

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