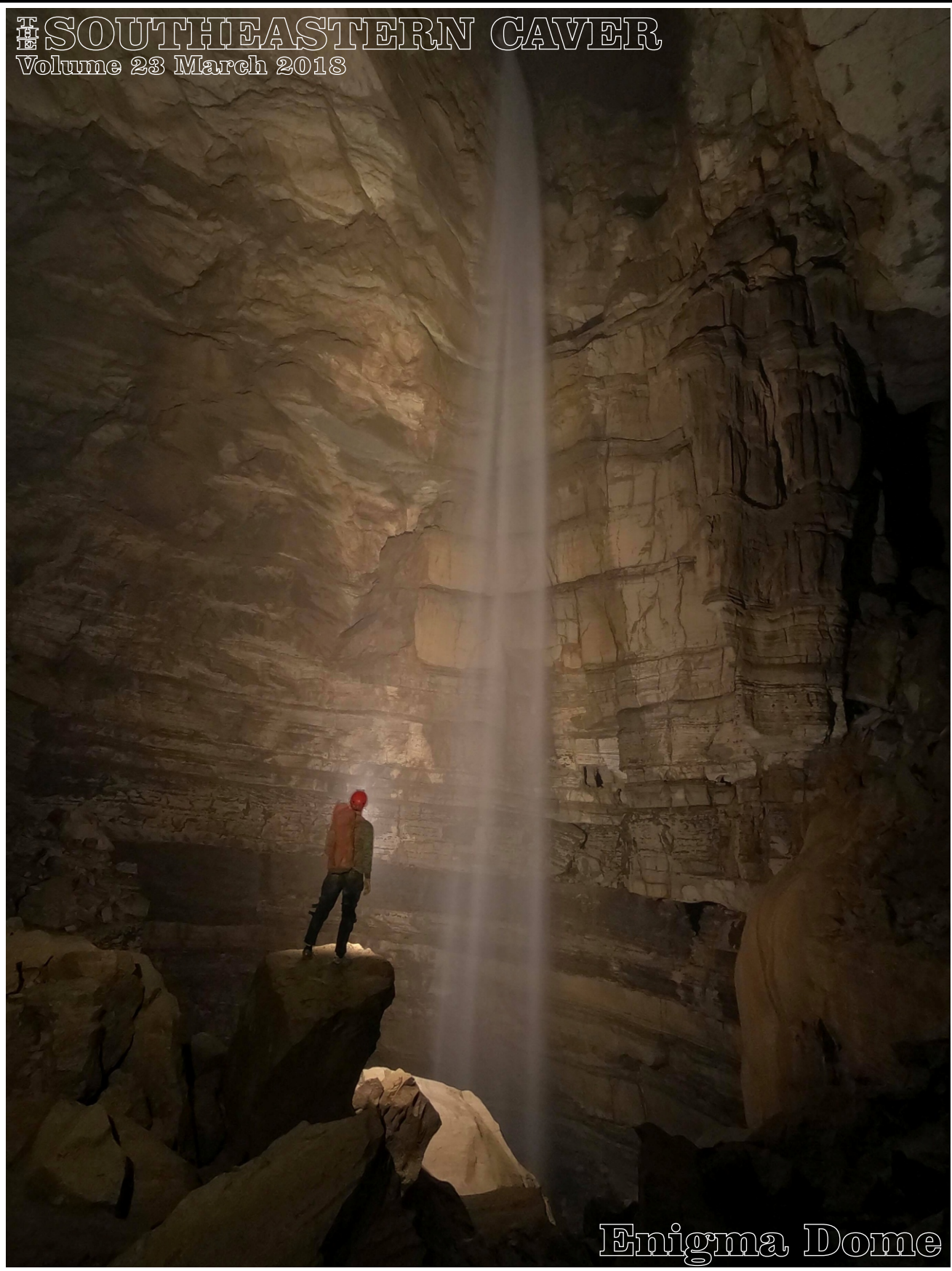


THE SOUTHEASTERN CAVER

Volume 23 March 2018



Enigma Dome

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 grottoes 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.

2017 SERA Officers:

Chair: Jeff Patton
 Vice-Chair: Jay Manneschmidt
 Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

The Southeastern Caver Editor:

Don Hunter
 157 Madison Oaks Drive
 Colbert, Georgia 30628

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Cover: Chris McMichael admiring 246 ft. Gooseberry Falls, Enigma Cave. Photographed by Jim Fox, GoPro Hero 6, with a 10 second exposure, painted with two 1000 lumen Zebra floods. Jim moves from the back cover last year to the front this year!

Back Cover: Zeke McKee at the base of Cipher Dome, Enigma Cave. Jim Fox, photographer

67th Annual SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL

The 67th annual Sera Summer Cave Carnival is proudly being hosted by the Birmingham Grotto in 2018!

It is being held at a beautiful facility located on the always stunning lake Guntersville May 3-6, 2018. Camp Maranatha, located at 1091 Jeffrey Road, Scottsboro, AL, 35769, has graciously agreed to let us use their camp and conference center for what should be a very memorable SERA. Check the following link for more details.

<http://www.bhamgrotto.org/sera2018/>

2018 SERA TREASURER'S REPORT

(Submitted by John Hoffelt for period covering 1/01/17 – 12/31/17)

Beginning balance, brought forward from 12/31/16.....\$1271.81

Income:

SERA patch sales.....\$96.00
 (SERA tax not collected in year 2017)

Subtotal.....\$1367.81

Expenses:

2017 SERA Awards (cash)\$150.00
 2017 SERA Awards (Frames/Plaques)....\$31.41
 2017 Web Space.....\$12.00
 SKTF 2016 Carnival.....\$165.50
 SERA Salons\$100.00
 PESH Expedition.....\$150.00
 SERA Patches\$357.00

Subtotal, Expenses.....\$965.91

ENDING BALANCE\$401.90

2017 SERA WINTER BUSINESS MEETING MEETING NOTES, SUMMARY, TO-DO LIST

Provided by John Hoffelt, SERA Secretary/Treasurer

The Upper Cumberland Grotto hosted the 2017 SERA Winter Business Meeting on March 11, 2017 at the Buffalo Valley Community Center, Buffalo Valley, Tennessee. Due to inclement weather, the meeting began a little late and the schedule/agenda was compressed to accommodate the shorter time available for the meeting.

1300hrs – Meeting convened. Officers present were Peter (Mudpuppy) Michaud, Chair, Jeff Patton, Vice-Chair, and John Hoffelt, Secretary/Treasurer. Natasha Moseley welcomed all on behalf of Upper Cumberland Grotto.

Early Business:

Chair Mudpuppy proposed a posthumous Meritorious Service Award for Moore J. Smith, III for services rendered as spiritual advisor to SERA for many years. The early proposal and motion, which passed, was needed in order to prepare the award certificate for presentation at Moore J's memorial service later that evening.

Announcements and Member Organization Updates:

- Jay Manneschmidt (Smoky Mountain Grotto) provided a report for the upcoming 2017 SERA Summer Cave Carnival, to be held May 19-22 at Trials Training Center on the Little Sequatchie River (Coppinger Cove).
- SKTF conducted a total of 3 cleanups at Run to the Mill Cave, removing about 175 tires, as well as a cleanup at Johnson's Crook.
- Zeke McKee reported that the survey of Enigma Cave (aka Gooseberry Grotto) now stands at 2.1 miles and the surveyed length of Blue Spring Cave now exceeds 41 miles.
- Larry Matthews and Bill Walter are updating the Blue Spring Cave book.

Old Business:

- SERA Patches: CAG (Central Alabama Grotto) moved that proceeds from the sale of patches go to SERA (Birmingham seconds) (motion carries) (later clarified that patches sell for \$5, with \$4 to SERA and \$1 to vendor).
- Cory Holiday (The Nature Conservancy) reports that the 2017 WNS surveys are complete. Northern Long-Eared bats appear gone; Little Brown, Tricolored, and Indiana bats continue to decline and Gray bats appear to be doing OK with an estimated 1.2 million in Tennessee.

New Business:

- Green River Grotto (KY) is welcomed as a SERA member (Annette Posani delegate)
- Discussion to provide SERA Summer Cave Carnival Toolbox on SERA webpage (Jay Manneschmidt, Chuck Sutherland, John Hoffelt)
- Announcement that a proposal is being put together to host the 2019 NSS Convention at Tennessee Tech (Maureen Handler).
- Bill Stringfellow requests issues for consideration by the Congress of Grottos.

I/O Roll Call:

- Fifteen IOs were present and represented at the meeting. Due to the compressed schedule, there were no grotto reports.

SERA Awards:

Francis McKinney Award – awarded to Mike Rogers (Judges: Jay Manneschmidt, Chuck Sutherland, Kyle Lassiter)

Richard Schreiber Award – awarded to Zeke McKee (Judges: Rebecca McNabb, Gerald Moni, Anne Elmore)

(Continued on next page)

2017 Secretary's Report (Cont.)

Alexis Harris Conservation Award – no nominees

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award – awarded to Mike Cardin (Judges: Cory Holiday, Jon Zetterberg, Warren Wyatt)

Meritorious Service:

Moore J. Smith III (spiritual advisor)

Cheryl Pratt for service as SKTF secretary for 10 years.

23rd Annual SERA Map Salon (results provided by Brent Aulenbach):

The goals of the map salon are to encourage and improve the mapping of caves in the SERA region by (1) providing a venue for cartographers to display their maps, (2) give cartographers an opportunity to view other cartographer's maps and techniques, (3) provide helpful critique, and (4) provide an incentive through healthy competition.

There were eight maps entered for competition this year by six different cartographers representing caves from two states. All the maps were of very high quality. Maps were judged in two categories, new cartographers (4 maps) and experienced cartographers (4 maps). Five of the maps received awards.

In the experienced cartographer category:

First Place went to Jason Hardy for Motlow Cave, Moore Co., TN.

Second Place went to Ken Oeser for Avant Cave, Dekalb Co., TN.

In the new cartographer category:

Jon Zetterberg received a Merit Award (for achieving a high level of proficiency) for Harambes Hideout Hole, Jackson Co., AL.

Second Place went to Cody Munday for Watertown Pit, Wilson Co., TN.

First Place and Best of Show went to Zeke McKee for Merrybranch Cave, TN.

The other fine entries included: Shoffner Cave, Bedford Co., TN by Brian Roebuck; Blue Spring Cave, TTB Survey, White Co., TN by Zeke McKee, and; Godwin Cave, Maury Co., TN by Ken Oeser.

Thanks to all the cartographers for their excellent maps, and thanks to the judges: Mendy Thomas Swain, Chuck Sutherland, and Brent Aulenbach.

2017 SERA Fine Arts Salon (results provided by Don Hunter):

There were three photos, in two categories, and two works of art, in two categories. entered in the salon. All entries placed and earned ribbons.

Photo Salon Winners:

Color Print, Macro/Closeup:

First Place went to Mendy Thomas-Swain for "Isopods #1"

Second Place went to Mendy Thomas-Swain for "Isopods #3"

Color Print, Artistic:

First Place went to Wes Combs for "Beam Me Up!"

Best of Show, Photo Salon: Wes Combs for "Beam Me Up!"

Art Salon Winners:

Textiles:

First Place went to Alex Oeser for her "Cave Quilt"

Ceramics:

First Place went to Chrys Hulberet for her "Raku Jar with Oztotl and Bats" (Continued on next page)

Best of Show, Art Salon: Chrys Hulbert for her "Raku Jar with Oztotl and Bats"

(Continued on next page)

2017 Secretary's Report (Cont.)

Thanks to the judges Chuck Sutherland, Joelle Marlin and Don Hunter.

Elections for 2018 SERA Officers:

Vice Chairman: Jay Manneschmidt
Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

1645hrs Meeting closes

1700hrs Banquet

Banquet speaker: Jon Zetterberg presented on LiDAR Surveys

1800hrs Business Meeting reopened

Chair Mudpuppy reopened the meeting to distribute SERA donations for services rendered and financial support for the 2017 PESH Expedition. The following distribution of funds were moved and approved:

\$100 to Don Hunter for costs associated with Art and Photo Salons and publication of The Southeastern Caver

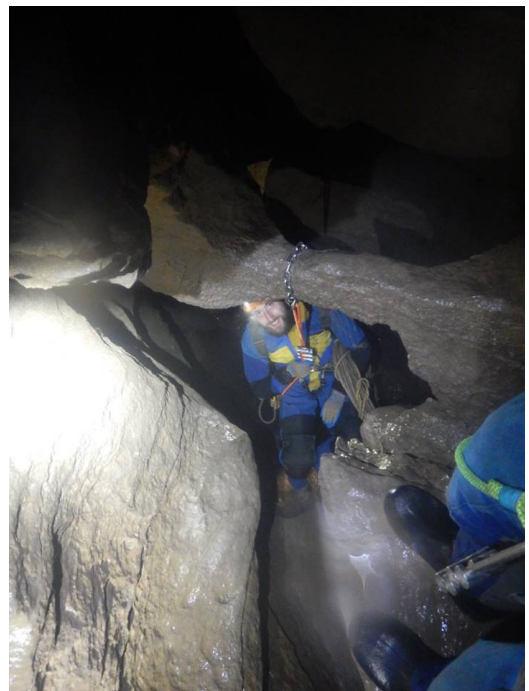
\$150 to PESH Expedition to Mexico (Bill Steele project leader)



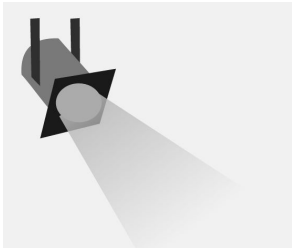
SCCI's Varnadoe Cave. Ryan Mauer, Photographer



Byer's Cave, GA, One of SCCI's finest. Ryan Mauer, Photographer



Kyle Lassiter at the 3rd drop, Solution Rift Cave, TN, during the rescue during the 2017 Fall Cave-in. William Alan Camp, Photographer



Spotlight On: The Spencer Mountain Grotto

Spencer Mountain Grotto Annual Cumberland Caverns Cave Trip and Picnic (provided by Bill Walter)

One of the favorite events held by the Spencer Mountain Grotto is the Cumberland Caverns picnic. We like to do this in September because we can usually depend on some nice weather. Since I have been exploring Cumberland caverns for around 65 years and always come out, I suspect the management trust me to lead Grotto members on a cave trip without any worries of getting lost. At 80 years old I may forget your name, but not the way to the exit.

So far we have managed 14 annual trips without any problems. In order to be at the picnic on time we are limited to 4 hours in the cave. The thought of hot dogs and delicious side dishes provided by members usually makes the decision to turn around a lot easier, even though the cave goes on.

I think the most popular area to visit is The Great Extension, an area with lots of walking passages and nice displays of gypsum. It is what I call friendly cave...dry passage, with light-reflecting walls. The only drawback is the limitation on the number of cavers allowed. This past year we had several new members, some of whom were approaching my age. Since there were too many on the list to do the Great Extension trip, we opted to go to the Monument Pillar. The trip was suited more towards both our new and senior cavers. The easy walk along the Ten Acre Room Passage was followed by the challenging climbs over large breakdown blocks in The Devils Quarry. I was impressed with the younger cavers coming to the aid of some of the senior cavers. That is the spirit of a grotto trip, along with bonding together.

We eventually reached our goal, the Monument Pillar. I have seen this formation many times in my years in this cave, and each time it takes my breath away. No one adjective can describe it although many different ones will suffice...Majestic, Gorgeous, Beautiful, Regal, Magnificent, etc. After some picture taking, a small group of us headed out to set up the picnic. I was breathless yet again...those who were in shape were displaying it!

Outside, we were greeted by my wife, Christine, who had the food and condiments ready. By the time the rest of the group emerged and all their dishes were added to the picnic, everything was ready. A balmy afternoon, good food, laughter, conversations with new and old friends - and a few stories by the Old Goat what could be better?

Enigma Cave Update (provided by Zeke McKee) Over the last year there has been a continuing push to climb, crawl, survey, and explore the multi-level maze cave, Enigma Cave, which lies in the Rocky River gorge of Van Buren County, TN. A large majority of the survey has been conducted by Zeke McKee and Marion O. Smith, with the regular presence of Lee White, doing dome climbs all over the cave. One such climb was the Cipher Dome, which was completed in two pitches and, though not yet taped, is approximated at 170' tall. This makes it the 2nd tallest dome/pit in the cave (the first being the Enigma dome, with a 246' drop from the waterfall lip). There are currently two other pits over 100' in the cave, with depths of 140' and a 134'. Recent pushes off of the lowest level of the cave, with bolting and exploration being headed by Jim Fox, have led to the

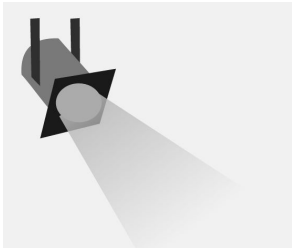
discovery of two large new rooms, one of which has several leads moving a LOT of air. As of early February 2018 there have been 31 individual survey trips totaling 18,932' (3.59 miles) of horizontal passage, with a vertical extent of 309'.



Before photo, 2017 Spencer Mtn. Grotto annual picnic and Cumberland Caverns cave trip. Photo by Russel Wickham



Lee White, dome climbing in Enigma Cave, TN. Photo by Alfred Crabtree



Spotlight On: The Green River Grotto, The Green River Grotto Flows into SERA!

By Josh Brewer, NSS 56030,
2017 GRG President

The Green River Grotto (GRG) is super excited to become the first grotto from Kentucky to join SERA! GRG is located on the campus of Western Kentucky University, in Bowling Green, however it is common for us to meet at Lost River Cave. We meet on the first Monday of each month and you can even join us online if you can't be there in person! The GRG and its members have a lot going on both inside and outside Kentucky. In 2017, GRG continued work in Dale Hollow Lake State Resort Park, which lies on the KY-TN border. Since 2008, GRG has located, surveyed and drafted maps of over 80 new caves in the park. GRG also has numerous ties to the Volunteer State. Active members, as well as GRG supporters, live, work and project cave within the state and many are members of the Tennessee Cave Survey. They include Sarah Arpin, Clint Barber, Lee Anne Bledsoe, Josh Brewer, Brian Ham, Jason Hardy, Katie Ingram, Ben Miller, Christopher Morris, Cody Munday, Annette Posani, Lilia Sewell, Kelly Smallwood, Hali Steinmann, and Teri Stephens. With all this Tennessee support it's easy to see how GRG is becoming more involved with the folks who come together to form SERA. Over the last year or so, our members participated in multiple cave survey projects in Tennessee, including: Wonder Cave, Secret Cave, Greens Well, Motlow Cave, Kings Cave, Billy Goat Hole, France Mountain Triple Pot, and more. Members also helped with dye traces in Savage Gulf State Natural Area and Big Creek, a tributary to the Collins River. GRG recreation trips included trips to White County's Blue Spring Cave and several nice Tennessee pits! Thank you for welcoming us into the SERA family, we look forward to working with everyone! Please let us know of any projects we can help with, we'd love to see everyone underground!



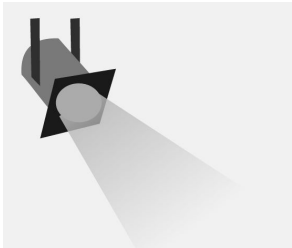
(More Green River Grotto Pics on the next page)



GRG members participated in a dye traces in the Savage Gulf State Natural Area and Big Creek. Photo by Hal Steinman



Wonderful entrance shot with Katie Ingram. Photo supplied by Katie Ingram



Spotlight On: Sewanee Mountain Grotto

Submitted by Kyle Lassiter

2017 was a positive and productive year for the Sewanee Mountain Grotto (SMG). Several survey projects are underway, membership is strong, and our annual Cavefest fundraiser went well again, raising thousands of dollars for the NSS and other caving organizations throughout the country.

An ongoing survey project carried over from 2016 is the resurvey of For a Few Miles More (FAFMM) Cave, located in Marion Co. TN, near Cavers' Paradise in Sewanee. Kyle Lassiter and Josh Schultz accidentally connected a small nearby cave called Not Worth It Pit to FAFMM in March 2015, all the while thinking they were in a different entrance to nearby Hang 'Em High Cave! Their buffoonery and poor directions has led to a resurvey of the cave to include the new entrance and associated passages, providing a much drier and more pleasant route to the bottom of the cave than that provided by the original entrance. Three survey trips were done prior to 2017, mapping much of the new part of the cave, as well as all of the passages in the bottom of the cave. Two survey trips were done in 2017 to resurvey the original entrance crawls and pit series, and one more trip will be needed in 2018 to finish this section of the cave.

Our other major survey project currently underway, that began in 2017, is the resurvey of Gourdneck Cave, an SCCi property in Marion County, TN. The Chattanooga Grotto originally surveyed the cave and published a partial map of the lower half in 1978, but the longer upper section was not mapped. So far there have been 10 survey trips and 4300ft surveyed. 2018 promises to be exciting as we resurvey the upper level passages that have not been visited in over 20 years. We wrapped up 2017 by conducting a dye trace of the Gourdneck Cave system. Results came back in January 2018, confirming that Gourdneck Cave drains to nearby Sweden Cove Mountain Cave, which then drains exclusively to the nearby scenic Gourdneck Spring. Thank you to all who have helped on this project so far; if you'd like to help with this project going forward, please contact Kyle Lassiter. We'd be glad to have you along!

Our annual Cavefest event over Labor Day weekend went off without a hitch this year, despite the best efforts of Hurricane Harvey to spoil the party at the beginning of the weekend. Several unfortunate tarps and the grotto registration tent were nearly blown off the mountain! Once Harvey moved on, we had great attendance, great cave trips, a great fundraising auction and outstanding partying all weekend long! Al Ogden rocked the house Sunday night! Our auction was full of excellent items and thus grossed over \$8700, allowing us to donate over \$7000 to the NSS, SCCi, and various other caving-related projects over the course of the coming year. We hope to see everyone up on Sewanee Mountain again this Labor Day for another great party and fundraiser for the caving community!

We have also been caving this past year! Grotto members have led trips to a variety of places, such as Jess Elliot Cave, Red Trillium Cave in Tennessee, Tumbling Rock, and Solution Rift. Unfortunately, the latter was the site of a now-infamous rescue during TAG 2017, when five cavers were trapped at the lower entrance after a pull down trip, thanks to the beavers damming up and flooding the lower entrance shut. Dam beavers! Thankfully, 20 people or more came to their aid late on a Friday night and removed the beaver dam to allow their exit. Thanks to everyone who came on the rescue (you know who you are!) Our other trips this year were much more routine and fun for everyone. Several grotto members went on caving expeditions to Mexico last year, helping to explore the massive cave systems there. SMG continues to be a proud sponsor of PESH, the expedition exploring the western hemisphere's deepest cave, Sistema Huautla.

In April, we had a weekend campout on member John Attaway's property in Payne Cove, TN, near Pelham. His property has multiple caves on them, as well as a delightful camping area and a beautiful stream sinking underground. It was a great weekend out in the woods!

Over New Year's, several grotto members pitched in on a roadside cleanup on Sequatchie Mountain Road. Quite a bit of trash was removed and the hillside looked a whole lot better! They even had a haul system set up! In April, another roadside cleanup was conducted along Stagecoach Road, near Cavers' Paradise. Thousands of pounds of trash were taken off the land and disposed of properly.

2018 is shaping up to be as good a year as 2017, maybe better! Hope to see you underground!



Crowd at the 2017 Cavefest auction, always a big fundraiser for the caving community. Photo by Cindy Ingram



Happy looking group at Pryor Springs. Sewanee Mtn. Grotto file photo.



The Southeastern Cave Conservancy: Past, Present, and Future

By Amber Lehmann, SCCi

There are over 25,000 known caves in the southeastern United States alone. Caves and karst environments are home to over 1,000 cave dwelling species and 95% of them are listed as threatened or endangered. Caves house many historic and cultural resources from Civil War signatures to Native American cave writings. These special environments must be protected and remain as accessible as possible for recreational cavers and nature lovers alike.

Protection of these environments, balanced with recreational access, is exactly why the Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi) exists. SCCi's mission of conserving caves is to preserve areas of scenic beauty, provide recreational access and opportunities, protect cultural and biological resources, and support scientific research. SCCi envisions protecting the most significant and sensitive caves across the entire southeastern US. They have been (and continue to be) successful with the support of their grassroots network, partnerships with other organizations, and individuals interested in protecting caves and cave resources.

Thanks to two decades of abiding by the conservancy's core mission, SCCi is the largest and most successful land conservancy solely devoted to acquiring and protecting caves. Although they have been operating for over 25 years, many may not be aware of the history, what the organization is currently doing, and what the plans are for the future.

Let's start with the history. In the late 1980s, large parts of beautiful southeastern landscapes were being closed to recreational access and threatened by development. A small group of cavers started talking about how to protect a beautiful and pristine part of the landscape that many people hadn't thought much about: caves.

The Southeastern Cave Conservancy was the brainchild of Jeff and Alexis Harris, two long-time cave conservation activists from Georgia. In 1991, they called together a group of about 20 cavers to discuss the idea of starting a cave conservancy. After that first meeting, everyone agreed to move forward. After more planning meetings, the newly formed Southeastern Cave Conservancy received official 501(c)3 status in November of 1991. The group believed the best way to protect caves was to purchase them. The founders of SCCi benefited from good advice and guidance from many people and organizations. SCCi's first acquisition was fortuitous when Chuck Henson donated Howards Waterfall Cave in Trenton, GA, to the young conservancy. This donation set the stage for many other good projects in the years to come.

Let's move on to the present and review what SCCi is currently doing to protect and manage caves in the Southeast. Over the past several years, SCCi has implemented several programs, initiatives, and events that have propelled the organization to the next level. Within the past year alone, SCCi preserves saw 9,715 permitted visitors. With the implementation of the Online Permit Systems (OPS) SCCi can now monitor and track preserve visitation. This is extremely important to protecting the preserves, as SCCi can make necessary

adjustments in visitation guidelines to prevent overuse of them. SCCi believes, and always has, that the way for people to appreciate the need to protect cave and karst environments is to experience them first-hand.

SCCi also started an annual bluegrass concert fundraiser titled Bats, Beer, and Bluegrass, held at Frick's Cave Preserve. Starting in 2016, the event has been a huge success and has exposed SCCi to a brand new audience. Many attendees at the past two events had never heard of SCCi or even understood the importance of protecting caves. The events raised over \$25K for SCCi's Stewardship Endowment Fund, which will ensure that SCCi's caves are protected and managed forever.

In addition, SCCi started hosting a Preserve Managers Meeting. This event is designed specifically for property managers to discuss their challenges and needs, and for SCCi to talk about upcoming projects, communicating with visitors, and how to otherwise manage the preserves. This event helps SCCi connect with its greatest resource, the preserve management team.

Moving toward the future, SCCi has started to break new ground in how it operates, raises funds and engages members. It will be very challenging to maintain and protect caves forever without doing so. They have implemented several strategies over the past few years that will continue in years to come.

For more than 25 years, SCCi has provided opportunities for not just cave exploration, but for hiking, photography, camping, and scientific study. SCCi owns some of the most beloved caves in the southeast to make sure that future generations will be able to enjoy visiting some of the most beautiful places on and below the surface of the earth. They also protect some of the most important bat habitats, caves with spectacular biodiversity, and important watersheds. To support SCCi, you can:

1. Join SCCi as a regular member for as little as \$25 a year! (Membership dues have allowed the SCCi to purchase or lease 31 preserves, over 140 caves, 1,465 acres, in six southeastern states, and acquire over \$2 million in land asset) scci.org/join/
2. Join the group of over 500 SCCi members with a sustaining membership. (SCCi Sustaining Members have helped meet the challenge of paying for acquisition, stewardship, preserve improvements and administrative costs for over 2 decades.) scci.org/sustaining/
3. Donate to SCCi with a gift suited to your budget. scci.org/donate



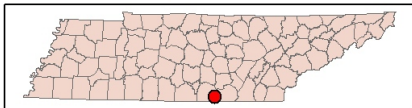
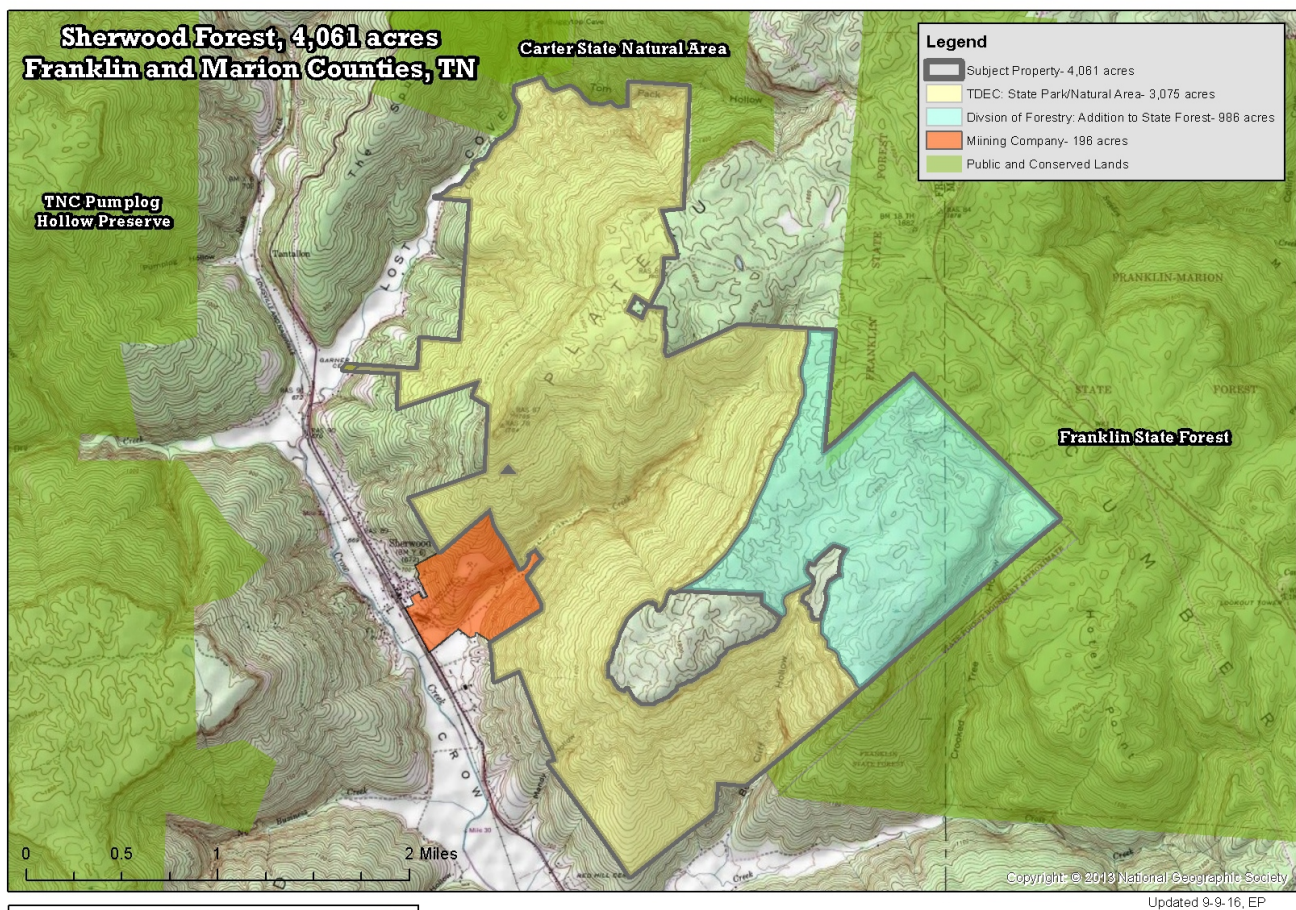
SCCi's Kenamer Cave, photo by Nathan Williams

Limestone, T-shirts & Snails: The Snail Wins.

The history of Sherwood, Tennessee and the new Sherwood Forest

by Kelly Smallwood NSS 58745 RL FE

Sherwood, Tennessee is located near the northern end of the Crow Creek Valley, which is a relatively narrow valley surrounded on three sides (north, east & west) by the Cumberland Plateau, with the southern end of the valley opening toward Alabama. Crow Creek, which flows from Lost Cove Cave/Buggy Top Cave, drains the valley and flows through the western part of Sherwood, emptying into the Tennessee River at Gunter'sville Lake, near Stevenson, Alabama. Sherwood lies at an elevation of 669 feet and State Route 56 is the only major highway that passes through it. To the north, the road ascends more than 1,000 feet to Sewanee, atop the Cumberland Plateau and to the south, the road continues into Alabama as State Route 117. Railroad tracks run alongside the highway for much of its stretch in the valley.



THE CONSERVATION FUND



Sherwood Forest Property Map

Evidence from nearby Sinking Cove and Russell Cave indicate that Native Americans inhabited this region around ten thousand years ago. Charcoal from ancient campfires in these areas has been carbon dated to around 6,500 B.C. The Tennessee State Legislature created Franklin County in 1807 and there are reports that George Gray settled on Crow Creek in 1809.

The history of Sherwood, like that of many cities and towns, has been shaped by its geography. The railroad from Nashville to Chattanooga might have taken a different route had it not been for a low place in the Cumberland Plateau, a place perfect for the historic Cumberland Mountain Tunnel which is about seven miles north of Sherwood. The tunnel was completed in 1852 and was strategically important to both sides during the Civil War. The Confederates eventually abandoned the tunnel as they retreated from Tullahoma toward Chattanooga in July 1863.

At first, the small community of Sherwood was called Kitchen's Station or Catchings Station. It was named for station master Meridith Catchings and it began appearing on railroad maps just after the Civil War. It was later changed to Sherwood in 1878, when it was named for Charles D. Sherwood, who was a lieutenant governor of Minnesota during the Civil War. The Tennessee State Legislature approved Charles's charter for the Tennessee Immigration and Land Company on April 15, 1878. That same day, he purchased the 1,410 acres of land for his northern colony from John F. Anderson and, on June 19, 1878, a local paper announced that the name of Kitchen's Station would be changed to Sherwood. Charles was more interested in the local spring and natural beauty of the area and paid little attention to the mineral that formed the valley walls. Unfortunately, Charles Sherwood was not able to realize his dream of building a resort community featuring mineral springs and in 1892 he sold most of his real estate in Sherwood to Byron Gager, who was an industrialist from Ohio.

Gager established his lime manufacturing company in the town because he was looking for the type of high quality limestone that he found in the area. The Gager Lime and Manufacturing Company was chartered in 1892 and operated until 1949. During its heyday, Sherwood had 1,700 residents, as of the 1930 census, but the population declined to around 900 in the 1950's after the mine closed. The castle like ruins of the lime production facilities and silos still remain in the area.

In the mid 50's families were working grimly to try and save their town. There had been no payroll since the limestone plant had shut down and economic paralysis set in. Men drifted away, seeking work elsewhere, and the population was dwindling. Led by a young Episcopal minister named Father Joseph S. Huske, the women of Sherwood began looking for a way to breathe new life into the town that their Scotch & Irish ancestors settled just over 100 years earlier. They had planned to start a shirt factory and to symbolize the town's determination to survive, a candle was lit in the Church of Epiphany Mission with the promise that it would burn brightly until Sherwood's future was assured. They created the Epiphany Corporation, an organization to assist in securing the factory and to finance the venture, the corporation offered for sale \$50,000 in bonds bearing 3.5% interest. 95 local women began training as seamstresses to staff the plant and Father Huske contributed the cloth and his mission acquired the machinery. The shirts they made sold readily and the income was used to continue their training program. Initially the women were making \$40 a week and they had hoped to grow to employ 180 women which would mean an annual payroll of \$374,000. Unfortunately, the factory did not succeed and once again Sherwood would face economic hardships.

It wasn't until 50 years later that a new opportunity for jobs in Sherwood would arise again. In 2005, Ted Thieman purchased the old mining property for \$3.75 million, which included approximately 3,200 acres at the abandoned Gager Mine. However, it was soon to face a battle, the Painted Snake Coiled Forest Snail, which is a threatened species first discovered in 1906 and found only in the town of Sherwood. It was first discovered in Buck Creek Cove, just south of Sherwood and it was listed as threatened by the US Fish & Wildlife Service in 1978, rather than endangered, because of logging threats that had not been demonstrated to be imminent. The mollusk looks like a coiled snake and lives in crevices and under ledges of limestone. It is estimated there are thousands of these snails but this is the only place in the world where they exist. While locals were eager to see the mining operation open up again because of potential jobs, the first of its kind in over 50 years, others were fighting to stop them because of the snail. Locals who needed the economic boost were frustrated to say the least. Some long time locals stated, "The Snails do not provide food for us but the mine will". Franklin County Mayor Monte Adams said, "Emotions of Sherwood residents on both sides made the environment vs. jobs

zoning decision heart wrenching”. Franklin County commissioners did initially approve a zoning change to accommodate Mr. Thieman’s plans for a mining operation up the mountainside from the vine covered ruins of the Gager Company, however, it was still necessary for him to obtain federal permits and provide a protection plan for the snail with the US Fish & Wildlife Service. His new mining operation had been slowed to a snails pace (pun intended)! Eventually, the Sherwood Mine obtained their necessary permits and mining operations once resumed in the town of Sherwood. The limestone that was being removed from Sherwood was now being sold to coal fired power plants for use in desulfurization of flue gas.

Ten years after opening, Ted Thieman worked out a deal with the Conservation Fund and the Land Trust for Tennessee, in partnership with the State of Tennessee to protect 4,061 acres in Sherwood, Tennessee. Funding was made available from the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) through both the US Forest Service’s Forest Legacy Program and the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s Cooperative Endangered Species Conservation Fund. More than eight miles of streams in the Crow Creek Valley and vital habitat for more than one-third of all the federally threatened Painted Snake Coiled Forest Snails known to exist have been conserved. The surface of the property will be managed by the State for public access and recreation, drinking water quality for Sherwood, wildlife habitat protection and sustainable forest management. The Tennessee Department of Agriculture’s Division of Forestry will manage a portion of the land as part of the Franklin State Forest, expanding future hunting access and the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) will manage the rest as part of the Carter State Natural Area and South Cumberland State Park. The Sherwood Mining Company will retain the rights to mine the limestone underneath the property for the next 50 years. This will allow the company to continue operations and maintain the local jobs. In all, the purchase was for 3,893 acres and the Sherwood Mining Company donated 168 acres to mitigate for impacts to the Painted Snake Coiled Forest Snail habitat. This innovative conservation effort was made possible with funding from the LWCF, a bipartisan federal program that uses percentages of proceeds from offshore oil and gas royalties, not taxpayer dollars.

Tennessee’s US Senator Lamar Alexander stated, “Preservation of Sherwood Forest in Franklin County will help provide future generations with opportunities for hunting, hiking and recreation in a beautiful area of our state”.

In addition to the snail, the property will also protect the federally endangered Morefield’s Leather Flower, as well as seven additional rare species of plants and animals. This area has been identified as a “hot spot” for ecological resiliency and the land is also likely to support wildlife far into the future. This project also connects over 25,000 acres of forest and wildlife; 13,000 acres at the University of the South, 7,700 acres in the Franklin State Forest, 375 acres at the Mr. and Mrs. Harry Lee Carter Class II Natural Scientific State Natural Area (Buggy Top) and now the 4,061 acres in the Sherwood Forest.

There are over a dozen known caves on this parcel of land that are also now protected. Some of the more significant ones are Young’s Creek Blowhole, which is a multi-drop at 568 feet deep and 8,502 feet long, and Rusty’s Resounding Rock Rock Drop at 452 feet deep and 2,164 feet long,

On October 20, 2017 an official dedication ceremony was held in Sewanee, Tennessee celebrating the 4,061 acre addition, which is now open for public use. With this new addition to the South Cumberland State Park, it has officially become Tennessee’s largest state park at 30,837 acres.

There is a three mile loop trail in progress, with only the first half mile currently completed. The half mile trail takes you to a gorgeous overlook that has views of Lost Cove and the Crow Creek Watershed and just past the overlook is a natural bridge. In addition to the planned three miles, there are also several miles of jeep roads available for hiking. The property will also be open to hunters during deer gun season and spring Turkey hunters

so if you visit the area during this time you will want to take precaution. The area is a day use only so the gates close at dark.

Access to the Sherwood Forest is on top of the mountain, off of Highway 156. To get there you take Highway 156 from either South Pittsburg or Sewanee to Old CCC Road. Follow Old CCC road all the way to the end and you will come to the gate, just past the gate is a large gravel parking area and kiosk. The park is still in need of volunteers to help complete the three mile trail. For more information on future work days contact Ranger Jason Reynolds at Jason.Reynolds@tn.gov.

About the author: Kelly Smallwood is an active caver who lives in the HEART of TAG, in South Pittsburg, Tennessee, along with her husband, Jason Hardy. Both Jason and Kelly are active cave surveyors and have produced dozens of maps for local landowners and helped on countless other survey and cave science projects. They are both National Speleological Society LIFE Members and Kelly is also recognized as a Fellow of the Society. They have surveyed caves for the Appalachian Power Company in Virginia, the famous Jack Daniels Distillery in Lynchburg, TN and locally have surveyed mile plus long caves such as Doodlebug Hole, Wonder Cave, Solution Rift, and The Hell Sucker. They have a love for caving and the outdoors and giving back to their community. Jason and Kelly have both been recognized on a regional and national level for their cave maps and photography. Jason and Kelly are current members of the Nashville Grotto and the Green River Grotto. Kelly also maintains a blog on all things TAG at www.tagcaver.com.



Jason Hardy at Natural Bridge, Sherwood Forest. Photo by Kelly Smallwood



Lost Cover Overlook, Sherwood Forest. Photo by Kelly Smallwood

