

THE SOUTHEASTERN CAVER

Volume 24 February 2019



The 246', Keystone River Cave

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: Jay Mannes Schmidt
Vice-Chair: Bill DeVan
Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt

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Cover: Jake Lieber recently captured this wonderful image of Nikki Fox on rappel at the 246-foot waterfall drop in Keystone River Cave, Van Buren County, Tennessee. The photograph was taken from a separate rope, offset by about ten feet from the main line. Nikki is providing perfect modeling and lighting with a GE No. 22 flashbulb.

Back Cover: "The Caver", by Josh Brewer

68th Annual SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL

The 68th annual SERA Summer Cave Carnival is proudly being hosted by the Huntsville Grotto in 2019!

It is being held at the Lazy G Wedding Chapel, located in Union Grove, Alabama, May 2-5, 2019. The venue is located on a large property in a private cove and has an indoor/outdoor patio and bar, as well as a hot tub. A limited number of furnished cabins are available. Two horizontal and two vertical caves are located on-site. Check the following links for more details.

<http://www.huntsvillegrotto.net/SERA2019>
Seracavecarnival2019@gmail.com

2020 SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL

The Upper Cumberland Grotto has accepted the opportunity to host the 69th Annual SERA Summer Cave Carnival. No date has been set at this time but the event will be held at Camp Tubb, in Rock Island, Tennessee. The location offers great access to many near-by caves and other outdoor attractions in the heart of the Cumberland Plateau. (Information provided by Calla Goins, UCG.)

2019 SERA TREASURER'S REPORT

(Submitted by John Hoffelt for period covering 1/01/18 – 12/31/18)

Beginning balance, brought forward from 12/31/17.....	\$401.90
Income (\$1,022.64):	
2017 SERA Cave Carnival.....	\$496.50
2018 SERA Cave Carnival.....	\$433.50
SERA patch sales.....	\$24.00
Award Frame Rebate.....	\$40.14
Income Subtotal.....	\$1424.54

Expenses (\$616.570:

SKTF 2017 Cave Carnival	\$175.00
SKTF 2018 Cave Carnival.....	\$144.50

2018 SERA Awards Cash.....\$200.00
 2018 SERA Awards, Plaques and Frames.....\$82.07
 2017 Award Plaques.....\$15.00

Subtotal, Expenses.....\$616,57

ENDING BALANCE\$807.97

**2018 SERA WINTER BUSINESS MEETING
 MEETING NOTES, SUMMARY, TO-DO LIST**

Provided by John Hoffelt, SERA Secretary/Treasurer

The Central Alabama Grotto hosted the 2018 SERA Winter Business Meeting on March 3, 2018 at Pallisades Park, Oneonta, Alabama.

1030 hrs – Meeting convened. Chair, Jeff Patton, opens meeting. Other officers present were Jay Manneschmidt, Vice-Chair, and Secretary/Treasurer, John Hoffelt. Michael Gilbert welcomes all on behalf of Central Alabama Grotto.

Early Business:

Salon Introductions:

Don Hunter recognized the submittals in both the photo and art categories and announced the availability of the new (2018) issue of The Southeastern Caver, as well as back issues of previous issues. Judges for the fine art salons were selected: Anne Elmore, Zeke McKee and Warren Wyatt. Salon results are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Brent Aulenbach announced the 24th Annual Map Salon. Judges were selected: Gerald Moni, Chuck Sutherland and Al Swain. Salon results are found elsewhere in this newsletter.

Executive Reports:

Chairman, Jeff Patton – worked on the 2017 Summer Cave Carnival and facilitated efforts by the Nashville Grotto to establish the Avis Moni Hospitality Award.

Vice Chairman, Jay Manneschmidt – worked on the 2017 Summer Cave Carnival and worked on updating the SERA website.

Secretary/Treasurer, John Hoffelt – No changes to the

SERA IOs from 2017; the NSS IO webpage is down and no updates available. Treasury for 2017 started with \$1,271.81 with \$96.00 income and \$965.91 expenses for end balance of \$401.90.

SKTF, (Maureen Handler absent) – Mark Ostrander provided report of a 2-day roadside clean-up (Marion County?) led by Jim Wilbanks. A highline was rigged to pull waste up steep slopes. The clean-up was sponsored by TennGreen (Tennessee Parks and Greenways), and SKTF provided technical assistance for the high-angle removals.

SERA Activities:

2017 Cave Carnival – Jay Manneschmidt reported attendance was 350; Kenner Food (local organic farm) an asset; good dance band and caver beer; pre-registration was 50-75% of total. Hosted by Smoky Mountain Grotto.

2018 Cave Carnival – Alan Cook reported on preparations at Camp Maranatha on Lake Guntersville, May 3-6, 2018. Hosted by Birmingham Grotto.

2019 Cave Carnival – Mark Ostrander reported that potential sites are being identified and evaluated. Hosted by Huntsville Grotto.

2019 Winter Business Meeting – Jeff Patton reported that Chattanooga Grotto would host the meeting; site to be determined.

2020 Winter Business Meeting – John Hoffelt reported that invitations had been sent, no acceptance, yet.

Old Business:

2017 WBM Notes – John Hoffelt read the minutes from the 2017 WBM; no changes were noted.

SERA Cave Carnival Toolbox Web Development – Jay Manneschmidt described the concept of the Toolbox and how it could help grottos in hosting the event.

2019 NSS Convention – John Hoffelt reported on behalf of Maureen Handler that significant progress is being made in planning the convention. Still need to

find site for Friday night banquet.

New Business Identification:

A suggestion was made to update the Summer Cave Carnival handbook that is available on the webpage (in addition to constructing the Toolbox)

Nashville Grotto (Kim Fedrick) proposed creation of the Avis Moni Hospitality Award (award description and criteria attached)

1230 hrs Break for Lunch

1400 hrs Meeting Reconvenes

Roll Call and IO Reports:

Twelve IOs present (see Sign-in sheet in archives)

New Business Resolution:

Spencer Mountain Grotto (Anne Elmore) moves and Nashville Grotto (Kim Fedrick) seconds the following SERA Act: To create and pass the Avis Moni Hospitality Award, to be awarded beginning March 3, 2018. Motion passes unanimously.

SERA Awards:

Francis McKinney Award – awarded to Chuck Sutherland; Committee: Kathie Ferrari, Mendy Swain, Warren Wyatt

Richard Schreiber Award – awarded to Natalie Pheasant; Committee: Bill DeVan, Anne Elmore, Zeke McKee

Alexis Harris Conservation Award – Annette Reynolds; Committee: Candice Eagle, Mark Ostrander, Chuck Sutherland

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award – awarded to Robert and Anita Bay; Judges: Matthew England, Michael Gilbert, Jon Zetterberg

Avis Moni Hospitality Award – awarded to Kelly Smallwood; Committee: Candice Eagle, Anne Elmore, Mendy Swain

Meritorious Service: Teri Stephens for outstanding dedication to the caving community

Elections:

Vice Chairman – Bill DeVan
Secretary/Treasurer – John Hoffelt

1500 hrs Chair Jeff Patton closes meeting and awards committees meet

1730 hrs Banquet

Salon Winners announced (list of winners found elsewhere in the newsletter)

Banquet speaker, Annette Reynolds – Manitou Cave of

24th Annual SERA Map Salon (results provided by Brent Aulenbach):

The 24th annual SERA Map Salon was held at the SERA Winter Business Meeting on Saturday, March 3rd, 2018. The meeting was hosted by the Central Alabama Grotto at the Dalton Moss Lodge Building at Palisades Park, Oneonta, Alabama.

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 four maps entered for competition this year by three cartographers along with one map entered for show only. Maps were judged in a single "Open" category. All four maps were of high quality and received awards:

Two maps received a Merit Award for achieving a high level of proficiency; Hinch Mountain Happy Hole, Cumberland Co., TN by Warren Wyatt and Calfkiller Plunge, Putnam Co., TN by Zeke McKee.

Second Place went to Zeke McKee for Briggs Cave, White Co., TN.

Best of Show went to Jon Zetterberg for TTU Cave, Putnam Co., TN.

The map "Caves of FKTAG - 2017" was entered for show by Chuck Sutherland and showed the distribution of caves throughout Florida, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama, and Georgia. Thanks to all the cartographers for their excellent maps! And thanks to the judges: Al Swain, Chuck Sutherland, and Gerald Moni.

Looking forward to lots more great maps next year! Hopefully cavers mapping caves from states other than Tennessee will step their game! Get mapping & drafting!

2018 SERA Fine Arts Salon (results provided by Don Hunter):

Judges: Warren Wyatt, Anne Elmore, Zeke McKee

Photo Salon:

Three photographers entered 18 photos in six categories.

Black and White, People:

- 1st Place, Al Swain "Passing the Torch"
- 2nd Place, Al Swain "Time to Climb"

Color, People:

- 1st Place, Chuck Sutherland "Allie, Armour's Cave"
- 2nd Place, Chuck Sutherland "Cathedral Room"
- 3rd Place, Mendy Swain "Smile"

Color, Macro/Closeup:

- 1st Place, Mendy Swain "Eyes in the Dark"
- 2nd Place, Mendy Swain "Bubbles and Bones"

Color, Artistic:

- 1st Place, Chuck Sutherland "Flowstone, Wheeler Cave"
- 2nd Place, Chuck Sutherland "Borehole, Lockwood Cave"
- 3rd Place, Al Swain, "Old School"
- HM, Al Swain, "Old and New"

Color, Entrances/Exterior Scenes:

- 1st Place, Chuck Sutherland "China Cave"
- 2nd Place, Chuck Sutherland "Short Creek Cave, KY"
- 3rd Place, Al Swain, "York"
- HM, Mendy Swain, "Does it go?"

Color, Humor:

- 1st Place, Al Swain "Follow your leader"
- 2nd Place, Mendy Swain "Got mud?"

Best of Show: Chuck Sutherland for "China Cave", with an average score from the judges of 44 out of 45 total points.

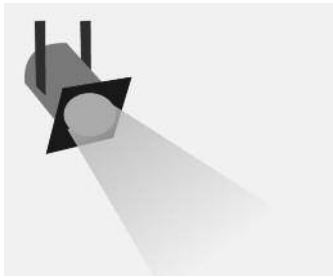
Art Salon:

One artist in the graphic design category.

- 1st Place Ribbon and Best of Show to Joelle Marlin for her graphic design piece "Blue Spring Cat"



Warren Wyatt and Jason Lavender, Young's Pit, TN,
Photograph by Jim Fox



Spotlight On: Nashville Grotto

(From the December 2018 Speleonews)

It was back in 1953 that the Nashville Grotto was first organized. To celebrate this achievement, the Grotto organized a birthday party that took place on Saturday, October 20, 2018, at the SCCi Snail Shell Cave Preserve. Thanks to the fantastic organization effort led by the amazing Kim Fedrick, along with the Executive Committee, a great time was had by all.

Jody Bailey set up his tents and had a multi-media presentation going, including old pictures and video birthday greetings from grotto members that were unable to attend the festivities. Port-a-potties were rented, a generator was going and many folks braved the cold weather to do some camping.

Plenty of grotto members that we don't see too often showed up, including George Plumlee and his wife, Donna, Morris Sullivan and his brother made an appearance, as well. Ken Oeser was spotted with his son, Braxton, who is almost grown now.

There were two campfires, lots of food for the potluck and plenty of libations, as well. The cave was explored, stories were told and everyone had a great time.

Honorary Lifetime Membership awards were given to Ed Yarbrough, Gerald Moni and Larry Matthews. Gerald received his award during the December Grotto meeting.



Festivities at the Nashville Grotto Birthday Party (Photo by Candace Eagle)

(Spotlight on: Nashville Grotto continued on next page)

Spotlight on: Nashville Grotto (continued)

After receiving his Lifetime Membership, Ed Yarbrough offered these thoughts, reprinted here, from the Speleonews:

At the 65th Anniversary Celebration of the Nashville Grotto, I received the Honorary Lifetime Membership Award, along with Gerald Moni and Larry Matthews. Prior to that night, only Tank Gorin, Roy Davis, Tom Barr and Bill Halliday had been given that award so, in my mind, it was a big deal. It was also significant because I have already been a member of the Grotto for almost 58 years, having helped to reorganize it in 1961.

When the Grotto was founded in 1953 it was one of only a handful of active grottoes in the NSS and one of the first in the South. The intense activity of Nashville cavers was made evident by the articles and photographs provided to the NSS News by Barr, Davis and others who were writing about the legendary finds being made in Tennessee. Higgenbotham Cave, Indian Grave Point, The Gouffre, Mystery Hole and many other significant explorations were revealed to the world by Nashville cavers. And although the club languished for a few years in the late 50's, it came roaring back in the 60's and 70's when Tennessee and TAG were at the epicenter of vertical caving in America.

Current members of the Grotto should be proud of this legacy and strive to continue it by finding and exploring more caves and helping to tell the NSS about them. The Grotto also plays an important role in training the explorers, divers and mappers of tomorrow as the decrepit cavers (I will be 75 this month) take their rightful place in the armchairs of their living rooms. But, of course, the old-timers can still contribute time and energy to the organization by coming to meetings, writing about our history and pitching in on the many tasks that are key to maintaining a successful grotto.

So please accept my thanks for the award and join the old and new Nashville Grotto members in making the next 65 years as exciting as the last.



Ed Yarbrough receiving his Honorary Lifetime Membership at the 65th Anniversary Celebration of the Nashville Grotto (Photo by Candace Eagle)

Kim Fedrick presenting Larry Matthews his Honorary Lifetime Membership at the 65th Anniversary Celebration of the Nashville Grotto (Photo by Candace Eagle)





As we head into the new year, changes are happening at the grotto's core. We are no longer considered a Western Kentucky University Student Organization. We plan to keep our close ties with the Geography & Geology Department and the Crawford Hydrology Lab, but we have found a new home at Lost River Cave, in Bowling Green, where we will meet on the first Thursday of each month at 7pm. Please "Like" us on Facebook for the most up to date information about meetings, events & trips.



Rumbling Falls Through Trip, July 7, 2018

By Warren Wyatt

Editors Note: This is not the first through-trip conducted in Rumbling Falls Cave, TN, but it is one of the first and, in this trip report, from the December 2018 issue of the Upper Cumberland Grotto's monthly newsletter, "The Winged Messenger", Warren gives a good blow-by-blow description of the passages and conditions encountered along the grueling route. He also makes it clear that this trip is not one to be taken lightly or attempted by anyone not familiar with the route.

Rumbling Falls. Everyone knows it, everyone's seen the classic photo of the Rumble Room, heard the story of its secret survey, the drama... it's a famous cave. I had only been to the cave once before this particular trip. Zeke took me, Kathie, Brady, and Austin in to bounce the Rumble Room, which we did. That was an epic experience by itself, but honestly, I hadn't expected to be back.

Earlier this year Troy Fuqua revealed that he had opened a second entrance several miles from E1, and by that time the first (and other) through trips had already been done. Kyle Lassiter was taking a group through on July 7 and I got invited by my good friend, Jeff Patton, and it was ON again. When the date drew nearer, it seemed there was a vacancy and I suggested Zeke McKee to fill it, and we had our group. The group consisted of myself, Kyle Lassiter, Jim Smith, Jay Mannes Schmidt, Jeff Patton, Matt Tomlinson, Rebecca McNabb and Zeke McKee, a very solid group of competent cavers.

On the day of the trip we met at the E2 parking location, leaving our vehicles and carpooling to the main (E1) entrance, miles away. I wore my vertical gear from the outset, and managed to dirty up Jeff's truck, a faux pas on my part. When we arrived at the entrance parking, we were met by none other than Marion O Smith, who as everyone knows discovered the main part of the cave, the Rumble Room, and surveyed the entire cave, secretly. Having visited over 8000 unique caves, he is a living legend in the caving world. Today he was going into the cave to push something awful near the entrance, and was going to use our rope. He offered to remove the rope at the entrance drop when he left but we decided if something went wrong and we had to return out the original entrance, we'd need the rope. So off to the cave we went.

We ducked inside the entrance and watched Kyle rig the first drop, immediately inside the entrance. I think something like 70 feet? I was second down this drop, and we started off into the passage ahead to keep the line moving as the others rappelled in. It was like I remembered at this point. Tight, sharp, wet, uninteresting. We came quickly to the first of two waterfalls that we had to climb. My first trip here, both Kathie Ferrari and myself free climbed both of the falls. Today though it was a bit more water so I used the ropes that stay rigged there. (I will use this opportunity to say that maybe UCG should replace those two ropes)

After reaching the top of the second waterfall climb we waited a bit to regroup and then headed on. At this point somehow I was in front, with Zeke and Matt following. It gets down to a wet cobble crawl pretty quickly after the climbs. I will mention here also that I was chugging on Theraflu and coughing, and being generally unfit for being in ANY cave. After a bit of belly crawling in the stream, we came to the "break room" and regrouped. This is the last "nice" part of the original cave find.

Kyle led on from here. At this point the cave goes to gnarly, tight, sharp canyoning. The best bet is to stay as high in the canyon as you can, and chimney forward into the cave. I've gone both high and low in this area and the high route is MUCH preferred. If you drop gear into the low part, God help you. Pick that up some other day. So we made our way on, me trying to keep my grumbling to a minimum, but I was taking a beating in the canyon. On my previous trip here, I saw Zeke do this passage while pushing a 300ft Highline rope. I have zero idea how he accomplished this.

I was directly following Zeke at this point. I would shout back to those following about which turns we were taking, just to be sure we were all on the same page. After pushing and pulling yourself through that tight mess, the air starts to pick up, getting somewhat breezy, and you know you are approaching big cave. BIG cave. As soon as one is able to stand freely, you are on the entrance drop balcony above the Rumble Room. You know it's about to get real. I should add that the big drop was left rigged by the previous through-trippers, so we had a much easier time through the upper cave. As we gathered at the drop, we soon started down.

Matt took up a leisurely spot near the lip to sit and make whooping sounds into the darkness. I don't think I would have sat there! The Rumble Room is indeed immense. The drop is intimidating. A small safety traverse to a single huge bolt and nothing anywhere else but blackness. Zeke went first, clipped onto the traverse line and stood exactly on the edge of the 200ft drop to put his safety onto the main line and rack in. Two points of safety, always two. He tested his rack and when he sat on it to weight it, he was immediately over the pit. As I said, it is a little intimidating. He removed his safety and he was gone. When he yelled "Off rope!" I was next to go, repeating the same process. I'm telling you now, weighting your rack over the Rumble Room is a pucker moment. As I dropped down the rope I could see Zeke's light far below. The feelin of "empty" here is crazy. Huge room. Everything echoes. As I got off rope, I scrambled to my seat to await the others and put on another upper layer of clothing. We were about to GET WET.

One by one we dropped in. I will say here there was indeed inappropriate humor and jokes at each other's expense. Good times, good times. After everyone was down, we set off to the river, and parts of the cave I had never seen. What can I say about the river portion of Rumbling Falls? Well it was tolerable, the water never reached my chest, and was usually around my knees. Zeke and I would scramble like cats to avoid actually dunking ourselves in the deep spots. The amount of crayfish was really astounding. Zeke and I were in front, soon we were WAY out in front, and then WAY WAY out in front. I didn't know if we were excited or everyone else didn't like us. But as it turned out, one of our group had a little difficulty that later turned into cramping. I know what that is like, and I totally understand.

We ran through seemingly endless giant borehole for miles, and exited the river at a place where the ceiling disappeared out of sight, and the first of the breakdown climbs began. Gary's Chamber. Another immense room. We regrouped here and I filtered water through my Sawyer filter and filled my bottle. I climbed up and sat with Zeke and Matt as the others arrived. Here Jay also filtered water. A lot of it. A LOT. He intended to make tea later. We began climbing shortly thereafter, and let me describe this. Not a lot of people have been this deep into this cave. So everywhere you stepped was likely never stepped on before. And slick. Very, very, very slick. If anyone gets hurt in here, it will happen on these breakdown mountains.

Kyle was near the front and gave us rough directions onward. Zeke, Matt and I went on and soon found the route up, and onward. Here you climb into old, dry, sandy, pleasant borehole, very much like the trunks in Blue Spring Cave. I lay down here to drink Theraflu, cough, and wait on the others to get up the mountain. I may or may not have fallen asleep here. It was getting a little fuzzy for me. Again, I was sick, and probably shouldn't have been along on this trip. As the group arrived, we were off again. At this point probably 2/3 of the way to E2.

The nice passage ended with another breakdown mountain climb. This is where the sketchy gets even sketchier. The river below rejoins this passage again here and as you climb upward it is tons of exposure, with water below. We stayed spread out until we reached the farthest wall where we regrouped. We did this for safety. A rock dislodged here falls well over a hundred feet into the water below, so we didn't want anyone in a fall zone. As we approached the top, Kyle was in front to locate the very small exit(s) from the breakdown. Again, this part is rarely traveled...everything loose...everything slick and gnarly, gnarly. They were ahead of me and throwing loose stuff into the void, a lot of it crashing into the river below, cleaning the route. This was a very sketchy spot.

As we finally (and thankfully) exited the bypass mountain, we climbed to the top and into... sandstone?!? It was beautiful. The ceiling looked like rippled, shimmering water, perfectly flat and stretched the whole length of this giant room. My favorite part of Rumbling Falls is this room. Fossils everywhere, and a shark tooth! It was here that we rested while Jay made tea and I finished off my Theraflu. I'll be honest by this time I was a little out of it. I was fascinated by the moisture in the air. I'll leave it at that.

After resting we finally moved on to the final section of our trip. Again following Kyle, we found the exit to this giant room, and soon afterward found ourselves in Monster Blocks. It is exactly what it is named. Large passage filled with gigantic single pieces of breakdown. Very difficult going. We got pretty spread out again here, and the exit from this area is tiny, so Kyle had to get Matt, Zeke and I to that tiny crawl and then go back for the rest. We three waited here in very pleasant passage. The C Forever starts here. C survey passage from this point on is very pleasant, very dry, and again it is very much like M trunk passage in Blue Spring Cave. Everyone at this point was in high spirits, we were approaching the E2, very shortly.

I want to add that without a guide, having never done it before, there is zero chance that anyone could complete this trip. There are several critical turns/holes/climbs that are impossible to find in the vastness of this cave. So don't try it without someone who's been. We carried on until it started getting mazey, passages flying off everywhere, and river cobble started to show up, and the ceiling started to lower. It was almost over. Zeke was leading here. We came to a dead end, and Zeke announced we had arrived. The crack that dropped into the dead-end room didn't look promising, and this was after it had been chemically enlarged. We clambered up into the crack, and it was belly crawl again, until we came to the rebar rungs that Clinton Elmore installed. The wind was blowing now, the exit just ahead.

Climbing the rungs and crawling forward out of the "mine shaft", we all soon emerged into daylight... possibly the most picturesque stream bed I've seen...where I collapsed, and waited for the others. TAG's longest through trip. Epic cave. Good people. And Mexican food in Sparta. And that's it!!



Zeke McKee and Warren Wyatt during Rumbling Falls Cave through-trip. Photo by James Smith

Charles B. Henson Preserve at Johnson's Crook, a 15-Year Dream Becomes Reality

by Amber Lehmann

The Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi) now owns one of the most geologically unique and environmentally sensitive landforms in the southeastern U.S., containing one of the highest concentrations of caves in the Southeast, permanently protecting it from potential development and destruction. What was a long-time dream of preserving the geographical area known as Johnson's Crook, in Dade County, Georgia, has finally become a reality. Conservation efforts started over 15 years ago with SCCi benefactor, Chuck Henson. Chuck recognized the risks of development to the fragile ecosystems of Johnson's Crook, and began the efforts for conservation to protect the land and make the preserve a reality. He worked tirelessly in the last years of his life to save the exceptional landscape.

The vision of saving this land finally became a reality when the SCCi recently received a donation of more than 2,300 acres of land, from an anonymous donor, increasing the size of the Charles B. Henson Preserve at Johnson's Crook to approximately 2,500 acres. The donated property, which includes most of the "failed development" called the Preserve at Rising Fawn, includes over 30 known caves, stands of hardwood trees and stunning landscapes, and a diverse ecological environment supporting wildlife of all kinds. The preserve, named the Charles B. Henson Preserve at Johnson's Crook, honors the memory of Chuck Henson.

Over the last six years, the Georgia-Alabama Land Trust, Inc. (GALT) has worked to acquire many parcels in the failed development as they became available. Land acquisitions for GALT's Johnson's Crook Project were accomplished through private and corporate donations, and support from the Open Space Institute's Northwest Georgia Land Protection Fund. Open Space Institute's Northwest Georgia Land Protection Fund is made possible with funding from the Lyndhurst Foundation and the Benwood Foundation. The Northwest Georgia Land Protection Fund seeks to build capacity of land trusts working to protect ecologically significant landscapes in northwest Georgia.

"The partnership with the Georgia-Alabama Land Trust has made it possible for this natural resource to be protected and enjoyed forever by recreational cavers, hikers and outdoor enthusiasts," said Ray Knott, Executive Director of SCCi. "SCCi wants the preserve to be an asset to Dade County and the North Georgia community."

The SCCi will be working with community partners to develop a master plan for the preserve. "Conserving this amount of land comes with a lot of responsibility and cost. Stewardship, trails, and basic recreation structures can be costly. We will need the input and support of many partners to make this preserve a North Georgia destination," stated Knott. With this donation, land owned and protected by the SCCi increased to more than 4,475 acres.

With the board's decision to increase capacity, hire staff, and create better support systems, the SCCi is positioned to accept and manage a donation of land of this size and value. It is a testament to how much the SCCi has progressed in the past few years.



Henson Preserve (Photo by the Georgia-Alabama Land Trust)



Little Nickajack Cave, Henson Preserve (Photo by Alan Cressler)

2019 NSS Convention Comes to SERA/TAG

by Amber Lehmann

Hosted by Tennessee cavers, including the Upper Cumberland Grotto, this year's NSS Convention is being held on June 17-21, 2019 in Cookeville, TN. Located on the Highland Rim, between the Nashville Basin and the Tennessee Valley, Cookeville is located 79 miles east of Nashville and 101 miles west of Knoxville in the Upper Cumberland Region of Middle Tennessee. This year's theme, *Land of 10,000 Caves*, represents the fact that Cookeville is the near centroid of Tennessee's 10,000+ cave locations, with over 6,000 located within a 50-mile radius. Many of the caves are amazing showcase caves including Blue Spring Cave, Xanadu, Run to The Mill, Wolf River, Cumberland Caverns and Camps Gulf.

The convention sessions will be held on the Cookeville High School Campus. Social events including the Howdy and Campground Parties, and Banquet will be at the Putnam County Fair Grounds, which offers level camping and maximum convenience. Other camping facilities with more traditional RV campsites or a more wilderness atmosphere are available within a 30-minute drive. The area is ideal for world-class caving, paddling, hiking, shopping, and touring your favorite winery, distillery or brewery. It has been 21 years since Convention has been in Tennessee and the first time that Cookeville has hosted us.

Cookeville, TN

Cookeville is the county seat of Putnam County and is one of four cities located within the county. The other municipalities are Algood, Baxter and Monterey. There is a wide variety of recreational and cultural opportunities provided by local governments, the state park system, civic clubs and community organizations. Cane Creek Park, a 260-acre park with a 56-acre lake, is owned and operated by the City of Cookeville's Department of Leisure Services. Three state parks offer many camping, picnicking, hiking and other recreational opportunities. This area of Tennessee is known for its scenic waterfall hikes. There are three Corps of Engineer lakes, with over 1,200 miles of shorelines and are within a 30-minute drive. There will be something for everyone within a short driving distance of the Convention.

<https://www.tnvacation.com/middle-tennessee/cookeville#>

Caves/Caving

Within just the Cumberland Plateau region, there are close to 5,543 surveyed caves. In Tennessee alone, there are over 10,000 caves! There will be no shortage of caves to explore for convention attendees. The Cumberland Plateau also hosts the highest diversity of cave-dwelling species in the United States. Although located in what is known as TAG (Tennessee, Alabama, Georgia), the area in and around Cookeville is slightly different in landscape than further south. Most of the time, instead of hiking up to get to a cave entrance, visitors will actually hike DOWN to a sink. In some cases, the hike can be both up and down.

Historically many caves in the Cumberland Plateau functioned as dwellings for Native Americans and frontier settlers, as well as livestock holding pens and hideaways for distilling whiskey. Once settlers discovered calcium nitrate in bat droppings they refined it into saltpeter, which was used to make gunpowder. One cave in the plateau region, Big Bone Cave, is said to have produced 25% of the Confederacy's gunpowder. (Source: The Cumberland Plateau National Heritage Corridor Feasibility Study, 2006)

In Conclusion

The 2019 Convention staff is very excited to host this year's event in Tennessee once again. Convention will include sessions and presentations on domestic and international cave exploration, geology, hydrogeology, biology, cartography, and archeology. On Monday, June 17, 2019, a special all-day session called "The Land of 10,000 Caves" will be presented highlighting the caves and karst of Tennessee. Locations and dates of specific sessions and presentations will be published in the program guide and on the website here: <http://nss2019.subworks.com/sessions.html>, as plans are finalized.

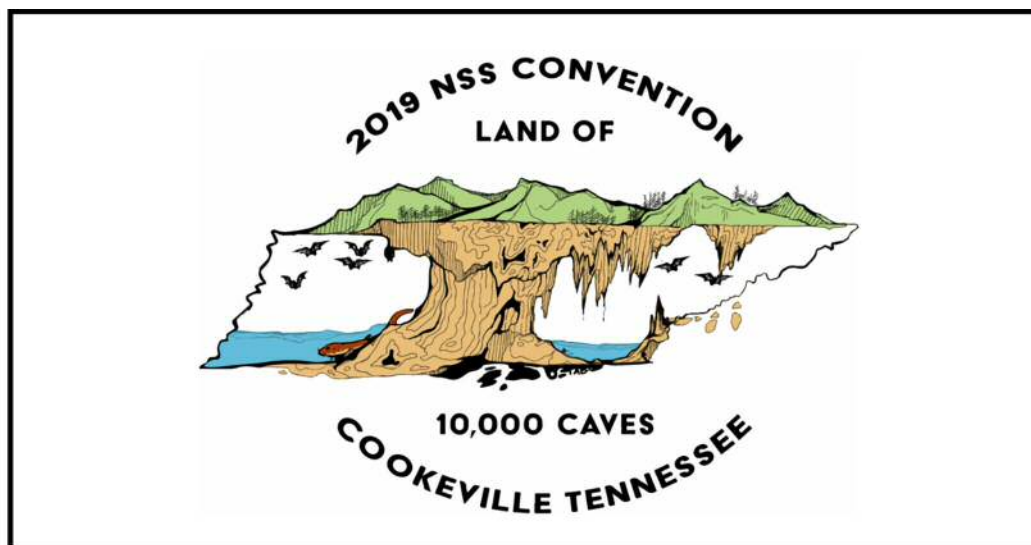
Special Convention Offerings:

- 2019 Convention Guidebook \$23 ea. Information on over 50 caves with many maps will be included. It will serve as an authoritative regional guidebook on our caves and the science of caves. In it you'll find geography, geology, hydrology, biology, archaeology, and history of our caves and cave resources. It will also contain information on our many noteworthy surface features like waterfalls, trails, natural arches, as well as other natural resources.
- 2019 Convention Patch \$8 ea.
- 2019 Convention Pin \$8 ea.
- 2019 Convention T-Shirt (S, M, L, XL): \$25 ea.
- 2019 Convention T-Shirt (XXL, XXXL): \$30 ea.

A mail in registration form can be downloaded at:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1YRMJrxVA5yJ0ee6k9L2dmQvOmJz6fMsc/view>

Early registration is happening now through April 20th! Check out our website: nss2019.subworks.com/ to register. Get updates on our FaceBook page: www.facebook.com/2019NSSConvention/?modal=admin_todo_tour



CaveSim, More Than Just Sixty Feet of Cave on a Trailer

Dave Jackson, NSS 60740 RL FE

How did you get your start in caving? Most of us remember where, when, and with whom we started caving, and many of us have passed the torch by introducing others to caving. The good folks who organized the 40th TAG Fall Cave-In did this by inadvertently introducing caving to about 600 people around Georgia. “Inadvertently?!?”, you ask. “How did they do that?” They did it by raising the funds to bring CaveSim to Georgia from its home-base in Colorado for the 2017 CaveIn. You see, CaveSim is much more than 60 feet of highly decorated, multi-level passage in a trailer. It’s much more than computer scoring to show you how careful you are at avoiding the delicate formations. What started out as a cave rescue training device over a dozen years ago has grown into an entire ecosystem of conservation education programs.

When we learned that Nina Martin, Glenn Fell, and others involved with the Cave-In were going to have us bring CaveSim to Georgia, we arranged two days of school programs and a day at the Fernbank Science Center in Decatur, Georgia (with none other than Forrest Wilson!). With the help of TAG caver Rachel McArthur, we added a third day of school programs, which allowed us to do a total of four days of programs for about 600 non-cavers around the state. Of course, we also made CaveSim available for free to everyone who attended the Cave-In over a two-and-a-half day period.

So what did we teach all of these kids and adults who were new to caving? Cave conservation, of course. But you can’t expect a lesson to stick unless the learner wants to learn. Our approach with CaveSim is to get participants so excited about caves that learning about cave conservation becomes effortless and fun, and the lessons stick for good. If you look at the pictures in this article, you’ll see kids (and adults) thrilled to be exploring CaveSim. You’ll see kids really excited (and maybe a little bit scared) to be riding in a Skedco cave rescue stretcher, having fun learning about bats, and happily sliding through a squeezebox. And you’ll see kids gathered tightly around the author to learn about cave conservation like it was the coolest thing they’d ever heard about.

If you had attended these programs, you would also have seen carbide lamp demos and heard our associated chemistry lessons. You would have seen kids playing with working cave rescue phones (field phones) and learning basic electronics. You would have seen hands-on geology lessons, bat biology demos, and safe caving lessons. But more than anything else, you would have seen, heard, and felt the excitement about learning. Learning about conservation of caves, bats, and groundwater. And this excitement is coming back to the Southeast this summer when we bring CaveSim to Cookeville, both for the NSS Convention and for public programs pre- and post-Convention.

Whether you know it or not, you may have had a hand in bringing CaveSim programs to school children and the general public. Numerous businesses, grottos, and individuals helped to fund CaveSim’s trip to the 40th TAG Fall Cave-In, and many more have helped us get to Convention every

year since 2011. If you want, you can have a hand in bringing more public programs to the Southeast this fall.

At the 2018 Convention, we received sponsorship from 20 Grottos around the US, including the Sewanee Mountain Grotto and Blue Ridge Grotto. We're very pleased that we were able to do more public outreach during the 2018 Convention than we have done at any previous Convention. Instead of just one or two programs for non-cavers, we did five days of organized free programs for kids and adults in Helena and Hamilton Montana. We were only able to do so many programs because of other organizations and individuals who collaborated with us, including grotto members, school administrators, museum directors, and the US Forest Service.

So how will you pass the torch of cave conservation and exploration? Maybe you'll take the new guy or gal at work on a beginner caving trip. And maybe you'll also help us to do even more outreach and education programs when we travel south and east for the 2019 Convention (and maybe even the 2019 Cave-In). There are lots of ways that you can help, from encouraging your grotto to be a sponsor of CaveSim to putting us in touch with local museums and school (or summer school) programs. You can also be an individual sponsor, or sign up to help facilitate CaveSim programs during Convention. If you're interested in helping in any way, just reach out to the author at dave@cavesim.com. By working together, we can bring more cave conservation education to non-cavers in the Southeast, and we can do our part to develop the next generation of cave conservation advocates.



Sked Ride at Young's Grove Elementary School (Photo by Lisa Saroka)

More CaveSim photos on the following page



(Left) Finishing a trip through CaveSim, Young's Grove Elementary
(Photo by Lisa Saroka)



(Right) Dave Jackson, Instructor, introducing students to cave conservation at Young's Grove Elementary (Photo by Lisa Saroka)



(Left) Squeezebox fun at Hillside Montessori, LaGrange, Georgia (Photo by Rachel McArthur)



(Right) Learning echo-location at Young's Grove Elementary (Photo by Lisa Saroka)



T THROWN FROM SOCIETY
H HAUNTED BY LIGHT
E EMPOWERED IN DARKNESS

C CELEBRATES LIFE
A ASTONISHED BY WONDER
V VIBRANT
E ENLIGHTENED
R REJUVENATED