

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2010

Detailed Minutes - Treasurer's Report

SERA Winter Business Meeting 2010 - Hosted by the Gadsden Grotto - February 6th 2010 at The Lodge, Lake Guntersville State Park, Guntersville, AL

Meeting opened: 9:26 am CST.

SERA 2009 Officer Roll call:

Chair: Anne Elmore, present

Vice Chair: Michael Gilbert, present

Secretary/Treasurer: John Hoffelt, absent

Deirdra Hahn, Recording for John Hoffelt

Introduction:

Map and Photograph/Art Salons.

The SERA Awards will be presented after the Banquet:

The four SERA awards:

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award

Francis McKinney Award

Alexis Harris Conservation Award

Richard Schreiber Award

Executive Report: SERA Treasurer Report. SEE HANDOUT

Executive Report: SERA Chair.

SERA 2009 Winter Business Meeting Minutes:

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

Unanimously accepted into the record as written.

Map Salon:

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

Photo Salon:

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

SERA WBM host: Anthony Cline of the Gadsden Grotto:

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

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

Gadsden Grotto and SKTF SERA WBM Cave Clean-up – Lady Cave & Weaver Cave.

Will begin 10 am Central time, sign-up sheets are located at the front table.

NSS Bookstore

Kelly Davis and Stephanie Rubio:

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

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

Smallwood

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

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

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

DH

Report: 2009 SERA Summer Cave Carnival

Jody Bailey: In 2008, the Nashville Grotto learned that “necessity is the MOTHER of all invention”. Through many late nights they had the 2009 SERA about ¾ pulled off when they hit the block of location and unobtainable insurance coverage. They self-rescued by negotiating for the 2009 SERA to be held at the site of the Dogwood City Grotto’s Annual Fall Cave-In. Even though the site was not what they had in mind and feared that it would discourage attendance, 554 folks attended, less the 76 who registered as vendors.

All-in-all, the final receipts totaled \$42.50 +/- \$42.50. They encountered surprise costs that affected their budget, namely port-a-pot rental & maintenance and the final water haul. The event was marred by the unfortunate “fellow with the moonshine” incident.

The cost of security was \$1200.

Marketing could have been a factor for the low attendance number. They had Grotto plugs and their web-site had a video, but communication was the issue knowing that profit was tied to increased attendance. They believe that those in attendance had fun anyway based on the attendance of the Parade and the success of the “Your Weight in

Beer”contest. Knowing that SERA has some larger-than-life cavers, they had a fear factor of possibly not having enough beer to cover the contest. So they put together two coolers of extra beer and had that waiting in the wings - just in case.

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

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

Report: 2010 SERA Summer Cave Carnival

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

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

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

The Sewanee Mountain Grotto budgets 400 people as the break-even point.

Report: SERA Survey

Nathan Gatlin of the Central Alabama Grotto provided the results of the SERA Survey.

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

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

Introduction:

From information forthcoming since the 2008 WBM, WNS is spreading in New England, Pennsylvania and New Jersey and has been just recently confirmed in West Virginia and Virginia. Within the SERA boundary, WNS is six miles from the Tennessee border. Based on the January 28, 2010 map, it could be following the bat migration routes or Interstate 81. Summer 2009 research efforts focused on developing science and management strategies, pursuing research funding and performing summer maternity colony and acoustical monitoring surveys.

Results from the summer surveys show that maternity colonies in the NE were devastated. In New Hampshire, an entire *Myotis lucifugus* (little brown bat) sample population disappeared which ended a 16-year longitudinal study and in Vermont, the annual mist net survey netted one bat, whereas previous surveys had netted 900 bats. An acoustical monitoring project in NY located so few of the hibernating species that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is considering adding the little brown bat and others to that state's Endangered Species list.

Significant Works:

Although the WNS fungus had been reported late in 2008 as a member of the *Geomyces* group, it had not been identified down to the species level until genetic sequencing research was published on June

15, 2009 showing that the WNS fungus, now named *Geomyces destructans*, was a newly identified species.

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

F (49.C) increased spore germination and did not kill the fungus.

Funding:

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

International Collaboration:

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

Bat to Bat Vector:

Some preliminary data has come from the cave sediment sampling project (2009 Soil Sample Study). Findings showed a *Geomyces destructans* genetic signature from soils of known WNS-infested hibernacula, but that signature has not been detected outside the known WNS-infested region. These findings are synthesized to suggest that "the potential exists for fungus to be transmitted between bat hibernation caves as an unwanted hitch-hiker upon humans", however the implication is that bats are the primary vector for transmittal.

January 15, 2010 – The WNS symptom of bats flying in the daytime was reported from Hellhole cave in West Virginia. Hellhole cave is the largest hibernaculum of Virginia Big-eared bats. Nearby Cave Mountain Cave was confirmed as infested with WNS in February 2009 and previous maternity colony banding results had shown that some Cave Mountain Cave Virginia Big-eared bats hibernated in Hellhole Cave.

Federal Management Strategies:

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

Private Foundation Management Strategies:

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

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

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

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

Grotto Reports:

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

Sewanee Mountain Grotto: Peter Michaud / Julie Schenck-Brown

Hosting the 2010 SERA. Another Russell Cave Watershed cleanup scheduled for

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

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

Conservation projects include the recycling of aluminum from the SERA and TAG Fall Cave-In events that netted 970 pounds of aluminum. Additionally, the Grotto also separates the plastic recyclables at these events and disposes of these properly. The

Grotto has completed two clean-ups within the Russell Cave Watershed, one at Blue Springs Cave and one at Tumbling Rock Cave.

At the 2009 NSS Convention, the cable ladder climbing contest (female) was won by

Maureen Handler and the "Psycho Survey Bitches and their Entourage of Manly Men" took second place at the ICS.

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

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

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

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

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

Nashville Grotto: Jody Bailey. SERA 2009!

Gadsden Grotto: Anthony Cline. Hosted the SERA Winter Business Meeting. Grotto

Secretary, Samantha Johnson, 18 years old, with less than one year in the Grotto found a 92.8 foot pit in Etowah County. Weaver Cave clean-ups have removed 2.25 tons, so far.

Huntsville Grotto: James DeForest. Prepared and presented the Huntsville, AL site proposal for the NSS office complex. Grotto has 85 members. Grotto helps out at the NSS Office. They cleared the tree that fell from the storm and helped with the Smith House clean-up.

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

Chattanooga Grotto: Jim Wilbanks. Meets at the Chattanooga Nature Center, Brian

Killingbeck is chair. Grotto meets Monday nights.

Roll Call – Jim Wilbanks recorded.

New Business

Motion.

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

Chattanooga Grotto seconds.

Talking Points:

WNS approximately 6 miles from TN border.

Increase of NE USA occurrence.

Summer – produced science and management strategies; funding.

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

Birkhimer writing letter without Youngbaer.

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

Paper published about transportation of bats from overseas.

Official USFWS vs. Draft 2009 Management Plan

Meeting Break.

Significant bat populations

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

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

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

Call for vote:

Unanimous – motion passed.

Kelli Davis.

Status of NSS Office move.

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

Jim Wilbanks.

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

Kelli Davis.

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

Jim Wilbanks.

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

Merit Service Award Nomination

Jim Wilbanks.

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

Member of a Grotto that worked with cavers.

Call for Nomination.

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

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

Elections

Secretary/Treasurer

John Hoffelt – Nominated inabsentia

Seconded.

Vote - Unanimous

Vice Chair

Nomination – Crissy Richards

Seconded.

Vote – Unanimous

Chair – Michael Gilbert – Bylaw default.

Award Committees

Larry S. Adams Landowner Appreciation Award:

Kelly Smallwood-Roland

Gerald Moni

Hazard Bryant

Alexis Harris Conservation Award:

Nancy Aulenbach

Christina Richards

Nathan Gatlin

Francis McKinney Award:

Jim Wilbanks

Brad Barker

Michael Dougherty

Richard Schreiber Award:

No committee.

Break till Banquet

Award Presentation

SERA Meritorious Service Award – Jody Bailey

Larry S. Adams Landowner Award

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

Francis McKinney Award

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

Alexis Harris Conservation Award

No nominations received

Map

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

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

Best New Cartographer – Jason Hardy: Can Do Cave

Best of Show – Julie Schenck-Brown: Hytop Drop

NSS Sweatshirt Raffle

Joe Douglas drew Joe Stewart

Salons

Brian Roebuck.

Art:

Best of Show – Myrna Attaway: Cave Cup

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

Photo:

Best of Show – Kelly Rowland: Rebel Light

First Place – Jim Loftin: 170'

Second Place – Clinton Elmore: Secret Reflection

Jr. Art:

Award of Excellence – Scout Aulenbach and Dakota Roland

Speaker

Marion O. Smith – Quips, Quotes & Factoids

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

MOS diaries begin 1958.

Inspected the contents of 1966 – 2009 for this meeting.

Esoteric baloney:

Fairburn, GA - born

6685 holes; logged 13,334 hours; most caves per day – 18; 811,000 feet rope

climbed; caved in 35 states; 40-45 trips to Mexico; 3rd Golondrinas Trip =

Buffoon.

TN Hartselle Formation is the geologic contact for caves.

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

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

Cartersville, GA.

Rusty Mills put the Goat on a Rope; First pit - Cemetery – on knots; Second pit – 199' –

Pearsons Pit, GA.

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

GA Speleological Survey: 1969 – 1971

1974 – wetsuit caving; 1976 – 8+ drops cave

Highlights:

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

“Cavers build on each other's explorations.”

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

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

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

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

Meeting adjourned: 7:45pm.

SOUTHEASTERN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE NSS

JANUARY 1, 2010

BEGINNING BALANCE	\$ 465.66
(Balance Forward from March 7, 2009)	
INCOME (\$1,113.00)	
2009 SERA Award Rebate	\$ 150.00
2009 SERA Cave Carnival	\$ 675.00
2008 SERA Cave Carnival	<u>\$ 288.00</u>
	Subtotal
	\$1,578.66
EXPENSES (\$359.39)	
2009 Southeastern Caver	\$ 32.93
2009 Alexis Harris Conservation Award Plaque	\$ 5.46
2009 SERA Karst Task Force	\$ 225.00
2008 SERA Karst Task Force	<u>\$ 96.00</u>
ENDING BALANCE	\$1,207.27