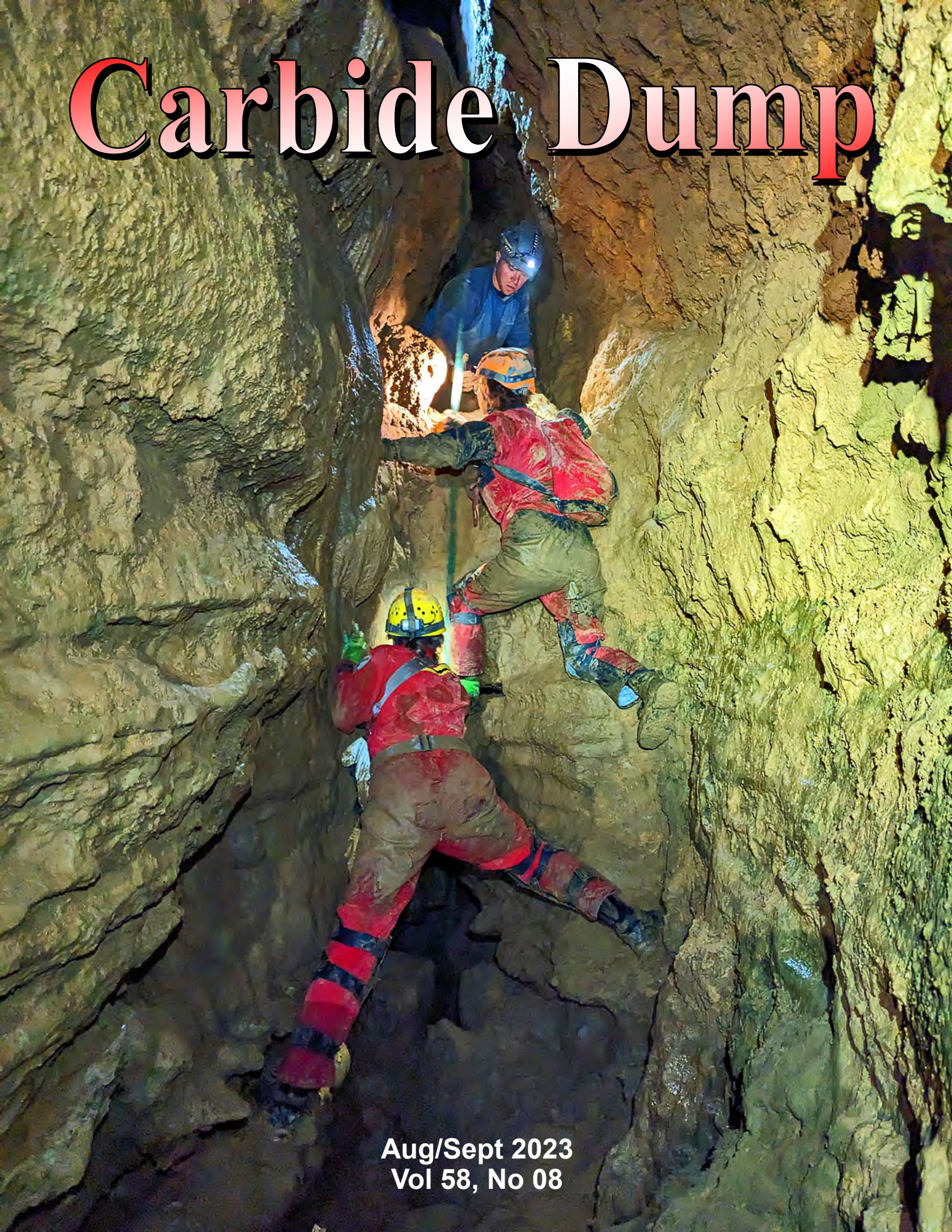


Carbide Dump



Aug/Sept 2023
Vol 58, No 08

The *Carbide Dump* is published monthly by the Blue Ridge Grotto of the National Speleological Society in Roanoke, Virginia. Distribution date is approximately the second week of each month. An issue may be skipped if insufficient material is received. Contributions of articles and artwork are invited and will be gratefully acknowledged. Art work originals will be returned. Contributions should be sent to the editor. Regular and associate grotto membership (\$10) includes a *Carbide Dump* subscription. Subscriber rate is \$10.00. Exchanges with other grotto and caving organizations are invited. Direct exchange mail to Mary Sue Socky.

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The Blue Ridge Grotto holds its monthly meetings every third Friday of the month at 6:30p at Jersey Lily's Roadhouse, 1650 Braeburn Dr. Salem, VA 24153. See the Grotto meeting announcement in this issue.

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You can access the *Carbide Dump* electronically at: <https://blueridgegrotto.org/carbidedump.htm>

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Cover: Rimstone Falls Cave, WV with Stuart Candler (top), Lauren Appel, and Susan Burr (bottom). Photo by Kelly Perkins

CAVERS CALENDAR

Sept. 15: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

Sept. 16-17: Perkins Cave Preserve Open House (Washington Co. VA). Register online Register online at this [link](#) or contact Steve Bailey at steveandjbailey@aol.com or 704-740-9290

Sept. 15- Oct. 15: NCRC Fall 2023 Level 1 & Level 2 Modular. Hosted by the Blacksburg Volunteer Rescue Squad in Blacksburg, Virginia. Classes will meet over three weekends. See <https://ncrc-er.caves.org/events>

Oct. 5-8: TAG Fall Cave-In, Menlo, GA. (last one at old site) Pre-registration ends soon! Click [here for more info](#).

Oct 20-23: Fall VAR near Sharpsburg, MD. See p. 7?

Oct. 20: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA. Nominations.

Oct. 21: Bridge Day, Fayetteville WV

Oct. 28-29: NCRC OCR beginner cave rescue weekend class, Morgantown, WV. \$60.00. See this [link](#) for info.

Nov 11: WVCC Cave Banquet in Lewisburg, WV.

Nov 17: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA. Elections.

Jan. 19, 2024: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

Summer 2024: NSS Convention, Sewanee, TN. Details at [this site](#)

Membership

BRG currently has 56 members and 5 subscribers for 2023.

Updated Membership lists will be available at the September 15 BRG meeting.

Attention former BRG members in good standing – to rejoin BRG, you only need to sign a membership agreement and pay your \$10.

Know of a potential caver? Bring them to a BRG meeting, sponsor them on a BRG activity, do lots of fun things with the best cavers around ~

Cave Softly 🦋

Long Cave Lists

A legacy of Bob Gulden, now maintained by Paul Berger

<https://cave-exploring.com/index.php/long-and-deep-caves-of-the-world/>

Treasurer's Report 9/8/2023

Cave Bucks	\$ 45.96
Conservation	\$ 2.00
Equipment	\$ 144.12
General	\$3,370.91
Total	\$3,562.99

BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

The **September 15, 2023** meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held at **Jersey Lily's Roadhouse 1650 Braeburn Dr, Salem, VA 24153**. Dinner, appetizers with socializing starts at 6:00pm with the meeting starting around 6:30p.

This month's program will be *JAPAN SPORTSCOPE-Caving* from NHK (Japanese public television). 'Harry the presenter goes into a cave in the northwest slope of Mt. Fuji with a caving adventurer.' The program is 10 minutes long.

Grotto Trip 1

Blue Ridge Tunnel, VA

Date & Time: Saturday, Sept 16, 2023. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **9:30am** or meet the group **11am** at the East Trail parking area (off I-64, X99, use map link below).

Leader: Mary Sue Socky, 540-989-7693 sockymss@cox.net. Let me know if you are interested so we can get a head count and no one will be left behind.

Requirements: light, good hiking shoes.

Limit: none.

Description

I think I have found the EASIEST trip to get folks 'under the dripline'! It is handicap accessible from the east trail, too! It is very cave-like (no lights, 55°F). Bring your helmet/light, or at least a working flashlight, good hiking shoes, and be prepared to walk for about 4 miles round trip. Rain or shine. You can bring your bike, your scooter, your family, pets, etc.

The Crozet/Blue Ridge Tunnel was hand dug in the 1850s. It was later abandoned as a railway tunnel because the modern trains were too big. The tunnel became a "rails to trails" project in the early 2000s. See this [link](#) for maps/directions.

We will visit the Blue Ridge Tunnel via the east trail parking area, off I-64, X99. The east trail is fully handicap accessible, primarily flat and offers views of the active railroad line. The 56-spot parking lot can be found at **215 Afton Depot Lane, Afton, VA 22920**.

After the trip, we can decide on where to have lunch, or head home. You can check out other caves and activities in the area, too.

Grotto Trip 2

Paxton Cave, VA

Date & Time: Saturday, Sept 16, 2023. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **8:30 am**.

Leader: Jeff Huffman

Coordination: Susan Burr 540-580-9409 pondlady97@gmail.com

Requirements: Horizontal trip. If you wish to go, let Susan Burr know.

Limit: 12

Description

Paxton's Cave is a dense joint-controlled maze cave formed in the Helderberg limestone. The cave has a little over 7 miles of "multi-level spaghetti" passage. This is **not** a cave to get lost in! Passage height is variable; be prepared for chimneys, stoop walking, squeezes, breakdown climbing, and several low crawls (i.e. bring your kneepads). Paxton's is mostly dry with many very nice formations. Paxton's is horizontal with a few areas of exposure.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BRG Meeting Minutes – can be read on the BRG webpage at: <https://blueridgegrotto.org> under the 'BRG Organization' button.

NSS Membership: Would you like to join or renew with the NSS? See this [link](#) for details.



NSS Bricks:

BUY A BRICK! For each **\$100 donation**, have your message laser engraved on a brick for all to see on a patio area, walkway, or other ornamental feature at the NSS HQ. The first 700 bricks were laid in January 2021, and 800 more are still available! See this [link to donate](#).

BRG decided to honor BRG caver Al Stewart with an NSS Brick. Al Stewart's memorial brick has been ordered.

Cave Bucks are voluntary donations from cavers who have recently been caving. Most people donate a few dol-

lars for each cave trip they have been on. Then send the money where it will do some good and buy some caves!

Upcoming: In the next two months, BRG membership needs to discuss if we will:

- Have a 2023 BRG Christmas card to send to landowners.
- BRG Holiday party? If so, when and where?
- Think about BRG Officer Nominations. Nominations will be held **October 20**; Elections will be held **November 17, 2023**. All current officers may hold office for one more year.

Bat Cave Closures -

Some WV caves have closed for the **winter** hibernating period for bats. Other caves may be open for the winter. The winter closure does not affect all caves. Check the closed list, and please go elsewhere if your intended cave is closed.

There are thousands of caves in the Virginias.

- **Virginia - Closed Apr. 15 – Oct. 15** For bat maternity colonies. **(Summer closure still in effect)**
- **West Virginia – Closed Sept. 1 - May 15** for bat hibernacula. **(Winter Closure in effect)**

See [this link](#) for more WV closed cave information.

Please respect all cave closures.

VAR CLOSED CAVE LIST: lots of information needs to be updated. Please send changes, additions to Brad Blase blase@virginiacaves.org The Closed Cave List can be viewed at [this link](#).



Acrimony in Dry Cave

By *Greg Springer* Photos by *Dave Socky*

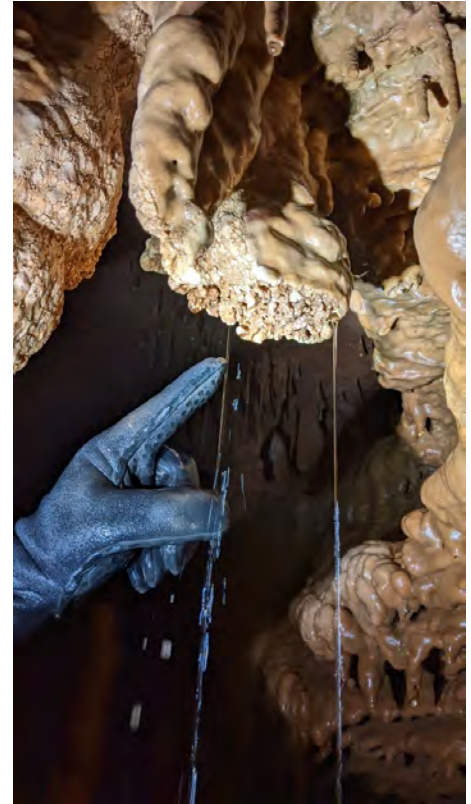
Dave Socky and I surveyed in Dry Cave, WV, on Friday, 14 July 2023. This was, without a doubt, the most argumentative experience I have ever had in a cave. Prior to this trip, my most acrimonious trip was around 2004 when I caved with a certain redheaded caver for the first time. As in Dry Cave, we were a two-person team, and the redhead proved to be so sarcastic and abrasive that I

from old surveys. We thought we were well prepared to resurvey a long portion of the 1980s-era 2000 survey and push leads shown in those notes. Oh, how wrong we were.

Dave and I needed a survey designation, which proved to be the root of our interpersonal problems. Originally, I had planned on using NIN because we hoped to put the surveyed length of the cave over 9 miles. I started the designation discussion by pointing out that a “Dave and Greg” survey already exists in the form of 2017’s two-person DAG survey by Mountain Dave Knox and I. However, Dave pointed out that “Socky and

Springer” made for the designation SAS. And so, the conflict began.

I pointed out that SAS should stand for Springer and Socky, not the reverse. This seemed obvious to me because I would be sketching, and I had organized the trip. Dave’s rejoinder pointedly noted that he is the more experienced and competent caver. Now, admittedly, Dave has been caving longer, but the most competent caver? That was just insult-



A Shower Head formation with a shower

ing, and a shouting match about relative competencies, physical fitness, and each other’s mothers resulted in a stalemate.

We agreed to use SAS, but to settle the issue of whose names comes first later. That would be as close to a truce as we got all day.

At this point, if you know Dave and I, you might be asking yourself whether we two mild mannered individuals would really have a full-fledged, anger-filled argument over priority? Well, you may know Dave as the seemingly low-key, relaxed person who eats a banana before every cave trip, but I got to see his dark inner self. And boy is it ugly.

Anyways, we began our survey at a complex, multi-level junction containing carbide station 2014 and modern station SVN8. The latter station was set by Dave, Silas Springer, and me in 2020 when we were pushing the cave over seven miles long. This part of the SVN survey killed a large lead that unfortunately ended after a few shots in mas-



Formations were all over the place!

thought, “What is wrong with this guy?” However, I later learned to appreciate his humor and personality. In fact, he is one of my favorite people to cave with. Maybe two-person teams are the problem?

The goal of the July 2023 trip was to resurvey and clean up leads in upper levels near First Bypass. To that end, I brought screenshots of a line plot with passage walls shown along with notes



Flowing Formations

(Continued on page 70)

(Continued from page 69)

sive collapse. On this later trip, Dave and I planned to resurvey from 2014 to as far as 2040.

Before we went “up” the 2000 survey, we had to survey the other passages leading out of the junction. First, we surveyed uphill to a small opening that Dave found to be a window into the 2000 survey around 2017. We set SAS3 at the window for a later tie-in and went downhill from the junction. This proved to be a messy breakdown chute that unexpectedly led to station MH35 from 2012. We closed the loop and cursed whoever was on point during the MH survey for not pushing the not-so-terminal breakdown where they stopped.

Junction finished; we continued up the 2000 survey with Dave on point doing cross sections while I sketched. However, when I advanced to SAS5 I saw that Dave had used his whiteout to not only mark the station but leave a crude note to me telling me where I might insert my DistoX2. If I wasn’t mad before, I was definitely mad now!

Nonetheless, as the more mature of the two individuals, I pretended to be non-plussed while I plotted my revenge. How to make clear I was to be respected? No, not respected, that is too shallow a word. I should be *honored!*

We continued inward and shortly tied into SAS3. Eventually, we found ourselves in an odd room (2020) where we unexpectedly found the modern station CED8. This was a surprise because there was no CED survey in the SVG I brought. In fact, the SVG showed the 2000 survey continuing without a modern survey, but the CED survey contin-

ued up the 2000s from CED8. That was the passage we had expected to survey!?!

As it turned out, I used the most recent SVG in my Compass folder, but it was not up to date. We only confirmed that later and, at the time of our survey, Dave took the opportunity to heap abuse on me.

I steadfastly swore I was infallible, and the appearance of the mystery CED survey was not my fault! Nonetheless, Dave stooped to challenging my intellect and pointing out he was so sagacious that I should call him Sockyrates after the Greek philosopher. Oh, the gall of the man.

The argument over our relative wisdoms put the earlier ones to shame. Suffice to say it became a battle of who could throw the biggest piece of breakdown at the other. We hurled so many large rocks around that I had to resketch the room afterwards.

Clearly, the trip now risked devolving into chaos, so we agreed to a truce. That allowed us to return to SAS15 where we had noted a short, low crawl leading to what looked like a large passage. Perhaps finding booty would restore some semblance of peace between us?

The crawl is a little more than shoulder wide for Dave and I, but while the crawl looked passable, Dave quickly found out



Greg Springer sketching in the upper levels

that it was smaller than it looked. He wedged solid halfway through as his chest was compressed by the ceiling and floor. There was no hope of his fitting.

As the clearly superior caver, I knew I could pass the crawl by sheer willpower alone. I am a master of mind over matter! However, despite my confidence, I too wedged tight in the crawl and could only stare at the big passage beyond it. Backing out proved interesting because of the torn rotator cuff I experienced a few months before. Sweeping my left arm toward my legs resulted in a sharp burst of pain that was, fortunately, the only problem I had with the torn rotator cuff during the whole trip.

Now that our one lead had defeated us, what were we to do? I suggested we resurvey from 2014 to 2007, which would eliminate the last of the area’s bad data and significantly improve loop closures. Perhaps just to be contrary, Dave insisted we explore the CED survey and look for leads to survey. I righteously pointed out I was the sketcher and sketchers make all the important decisions. Dave did not take my sanctimonious tone or grandstanding very well.

The next thing I knew, he had plucked a large stalactite off the ceiling and was advancing with a murderous look in his eyes. Fortunately, there was tall stalagmite at my feet, so I used my martial arts skills to kick it free before countering Dave’s first slash with a blocking move. The rest of the fight was sheer pandemonium as we fenced and each attempted to get the high ground by jumping atop breakdown blocks.

The slashing, feigning, and dodging could have gone on all day, but luck was in my favor. My stalagmite was thicker than Dave’s stalactite. When I made a

(Continued on page 71)



Cool calcite poos (dried) with glove for scale

(Continued from page 70)

brutal overhead slash at him, it shattered his stalactite rapier in many calcite shards. Had I not needed Dave to continue surveying, I might have finished the job right there, but as a dedicated project caver I put surveying first and spared him.

Thus, it was decided to resurvey 2014-2007. Unfortunately, the breakdown passage proved frustratingly complex to sketch (SAS18-SAS25). The confusion culminates in a large breakdown room (SAS25) with loose slabs begging to be temporarily freed from gravity's sweet embrace. Oh, how tempting it was to set an avalanche going while Dave was in the lower part of the room!

Dave, Silas, and I had surveyed a breakdown chute descending from a scary hole in the middle of the room in 2020, so Dave and I tied into SVN15 above the



Weird Helectites

hole. The chute drops steeply to SVN17 and the complex area where we had previously eked out over 100 feet of new survey. However, on that trip, we had left a lead, so Dave and I checked it out.

Much to our delight, the lead proved to be a loop to a higher point in the breakdown chute and no more stable than Dave and I's relationship. We elected not to survey the loop and escape the shaky breakdown complex as quickly as possible.

The passage leading out of the SAS25 room was marked with CED7. Apparently, the mystery CED team had popped up into the room and decided to change directions in favor of the nice passage that starts at CED8. So, we tied in and cursed the CED surveyors profusely. Naturally, we learned later that Dave was the sketcher on the CED trip.

Once again, we were bereft of something to survey, so we decided to return to the

stream passage and survey a very wet stream crawl between DAG15 and DAG18, along with an adjacent upper level. However, as we descended a breakdown complex toward First Bypass, I observed a canyon in the ceiling that appeared to be unsurveyed.

If you weren't familiar with the data and preexisting surveys, you would probably assume the canyon was just the upper half of the passage you were descending. As the data wrangler for the project, I knew the passage was not in the database. So, Dave skirted a pit using a thin ledge and looked for stations. Not finding any, we decided to survey what looked like a nice passage.

We tied in with CED1 to SAS26 and proceeded into the 8-12 feet wide, 8-10 feet high canyon. There were many nice formations at SAS29, but most importantly, the canyon violated all the rules of Dry Cave. There were real

walls instead of ill-defined breakdown and narrow slots! Real ceilings and floors too! In fact, the stretch SAS26-SAS33 is one of the two nicest passages I have surveyed in the cave.

The canyon had to end sooner or later, which it did by intersecting a wide passage that remains largely surveyed. So, we tied into WAL8 (We Are Lost) and decided to call it a day. We had surveyed 589 feet in 39 shots in what proved to be an eleven-hour trip.

The trip out was uneventful, except for Dave and I trading insults. He insisted I had sketched poorly, and I insisted the morning bananas explain his foul



Delicate Aragonite

breath. All in all, the only thing we agreed upon on the whole trip was fore-sights and backsights. However, Dave's keying my car while I was changing was totally uncalled for. I don't regret slashing his tires in the least!

A final note... the Dry Cave survey is now 9.02 miles long, so our trip accomplished one of its goals without using the designation NIN. And the issue of whose name precedes who in the designation SAS? Dave texted me from the tire shop to point out that the issue could be solved by simply placing our names in alphabetical order. Of course, by that logic, the designation becomes Socky and Springer again. Some people just never quit!

(Note from Socky: For those who may not know Greg and I, the theme of the following article was a great subject of conversation during our survey trip into Dry Cave. We had a great time all day discussing the details and hurling insults at each other. Despite the slashed tires and keyed doors (☺), we parted ways as great friends, ready to continue surveying more in Dry Cave. And, oh, it's still plain as day that Socky comes before Springer!)



Colorful crystalline flowstone and draperies

Rimstone Falls Cave, WV, Trip Report

By *Susan Burr* Photos by *Kelly Perkins*

On August 19, 2023, the Blue Ridge Grotto cave trip was to the highly decorated Rimstone Falls Cave, WV. It is considered an intermediate and challenging cave. It is also a water cave, except for yesterday. The water levels VERY,

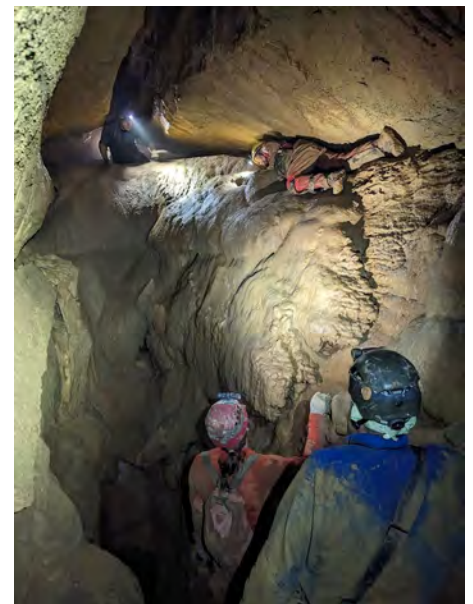


Formations were all over the place!

VERY low!!! That, of course, just made it really muddy though. Some of us did this cave back in March of 2019. Let's just say it did not get easier!!! Yes, there were many spots that scared me, including the one section I referred to the last time as slightly terrifying! A big shout out to Stuart Candler and Jeff Huffman for leading, spotting, and basically keeping us safe! We have each other's back! Safety first!!! We did have a good three-and-a-half-hour trip. I used a lot of photos by Kelly Perkins because they were way better than mine. Plus, they showed different perspectives of stuff I took pictures of. Also on the trip were Lauren Appel and Nick Schmalenberger.



Susan negotiating a well decorated climb.



Susan crossing the slightly terrifying ledge while Stuart, Nick & Jeff watch

Vertical & Caving Gear BRG Auction

The caving gear presented here is for a Blue Ridge Grotto Auction (See link below). Gear is to be sold as is. A guess at the 'new' cost for some of the gear is included along with a suggested starting bid. Any bids will be accepted, but BRG reserves the right to say a bid is not enough (\$1.00 for a \$100 piece if gear is just not enough!).

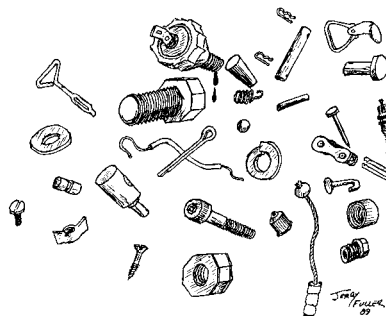
The Auction will be for BRG members only at first. The auction started as of August 15. Whatever is not sold after **September 15, 2023** will be opened up to the caving community in general. Make your bids via email to sockydr@cox.net. When bidding, please indicate the description plus the "Item Number" so there are no issues on what is being bid.

There are three vertical rigs which are presented as a set. But if someone wishes to bid on separate pieces, that is

ok. However, those who bid on the set will override bids for individual parts. Most gear is lightly used, but the condition will be noted below with the photos.

Contact Dave Socky for any questions sockydr@cox.net

Link to BRG Gear Auction 2023
https://blueridgegrotto.org/documents/brg_gear_auction_2023/BRG_Gear_Auction_2023.htm



Norman Cave, WV, Trip Report

By *Susan Burr* Photos by *Kelly Perkins*

7/22/2023

Jeff & Hillary Huffman, Nick Schmalenberger, and Susan Burr

We basically went downstream past the waterfall for about 1 1/2 hours or so & then turned around to come out. The waterfall was flowing nicely. The water levels in the stream were not bad at all. Our goal was to only be in the cave for about 3 hours. When we got back near the entrance breakdown hill, we looked for the route to the "WV Room." We did not find it right away & by the time we thought we had found it, we were tired & ready to get out.

After changing, we headed further down the road to the blueberry farm. They have goats you can pet & feed & you can pick your own blueberries. They also let you eat as many as you wish! Unfortunately for us the owner said by the time we got there he had already sold over 300 lbs. of blueberries & we would have to work at finding some. 🐐



Hillary and Susan next to the long flowstone wall with rim pools on top in Norman Cave, WV. Photo by Jeff Huffman

NSS Perkins Cave Preserve Open House September 16 to 17, 2023 - by Ellen Hofler

We would like to invite you to join us at the **NSS Perkins Cave Preserve Open House on September 16-17, 2023.**

There will be a cookout Saturday evening (BYOB). Guided cave trips into Perkins Cave will take place Saturday morning/afternoon, according to demand and available trip leaders. There are also other caves in the area which are open to visitation, and the Channels Natural area is just up the road. The ACC Annual members meeting will be held Sunday morning.

Primitive camping is available onsite Friday and Saturday evening. There is no running water, and bathroom facilities consist of a simple outhouse, so plan accordingly. A small, finished field-house space has electricity available. Note that the farm lane down to the site may not be suitable for low-clearance vehicles. There is limited parking near the highway for vehicles that can't make the drive down to the cave and field-house area (about a 15-minute walk from the upper parking area).

More information and a registration link will be sent as we get closer to the date. Contact Steve Bailey at steveandjbai-ley@aol.com or 704-740-9290 or Jason Lachniet at jason.lachniet@gmail.com or 276-492-4376 (after July 15).

For more information on the Perkins Cave Preserve, see the September 2021 NSS News [at this link \(PDF\)](#)

Follow us online on Facebook and Instagram at www.facebook.com/groups/acave and at <http://www.acave.us>

Note that you can now renew or join online at: <http://www.acave.us/accmembership.htm>

Appalachian Cave Conservancy (ACC) is a 501 C 3 Tax exempt Organization. Your contribution is tax deductible. 🐐



Cave Rescue in Turkey

Matt Link of Baltimore Grotto asked this be more widely distributed:

For all who haven't heard yet, Mark Dickey a NSS member, NCRC Instructor, and Caving Academy founder who does a lot of cave exploration around the world fell ill 1,000 meters down in the Morca Cave System in Turkey. There is currently an international rescue being mounted to get him out safely and numerous cavers from multiple countries are responding. A GoFundMe was started to help cover some of the costs of the travel and logistics for the rescuers. If you can contribute it would be greatly appreciated. The campaign can be found at the below link:

<https://gofund.me/25da58b4>

For more details on this rescue click on this [link](#).

Earl Sutor
Eastern Region - National Cave Rescue Commission. Deputy Resource Coordination Section Chief.

Call or text 24/7/365 : 703-431-2661

9/6/2023 Update: Reports indicate Mark's condition has improved, and the team is preparing to move him. (from Facebook)

SINKHOLE Challenge!

SCCi needs to raise \$165,000.00 by September 15, 2023, to purchase the 155' deep Sinkhole and additional land to create the **Kelly Cove/Sinkhole Cave Preserve.**

Pud Zwolinski (John Pearson) announced that he and wife Liz are donating \$100.00 for the Kelly Cove/Sinkhole Cave Preserve (KCSCP), and he **challenges other cavers to donate at \$50.00 per person before the deadline.** So far, Lynn Ott, Gene Ferguson, Dan & Marian McConnell have met Pud's challenge. You have until September 15 to donate to SCCi and meet Pud's challenge!

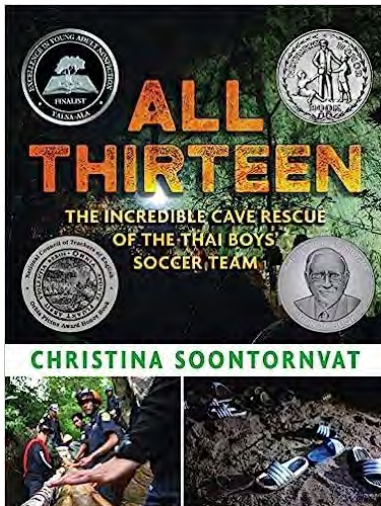
(Update: 9/5/2023: \$145,012.00 has been raised.)

Visit <https://saveyourcaves.org/sinkhole> to donate. 🐐

ALL THIRTEEN: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team

Book Review by *Marian McConnell*

- by Christina Soontornvat
- Copyright 2020 - ISBN 978-1-5362-0945-7 - Candlewick Press
- Hardback, 280 pages with many color photos, illustrations, maps
- Currently available at Amazon (\$16.99 sale price)



The story of this miraculous cave rescue has been the subject of quite a few movies and books. One of the best movies I've seen is "Thirteen Lives" directed by Ron Howard. The book, "Aquanaut: The Inside Story of the Thai Cave Rescue" by Rick Stanton is very well done; he did a presentation at the NSS Convention and his books sold like hotcakes.

"All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team" by Christina Soontornvat is exceptional. Winner of many prestigious awards, it is full of photographs, illustrations, maps, and stories about the boys and their coach, the Thai culture, and the rescuers. The author does an excellent job of explaining the cave environment, the challenges of this life or death extrication, and the significance of teamwork and a positive attitude. Each of the 31 Chapters is brilliantly written and illustrated; and explains the challenges, strengths, and perspectives of those involved. Cavers and non-cavers will understand what a miracle the rescue of all 13 actually was. While written for young adults, I believe it will appeal to anyone of any age; and is educational as well as inspiring.

As Soontornvat says, "The lesson I wanted to share the most comes from Coach Eck and the boys, who -- like their rescuers -- defied impossible odds. They taught me that 'impossible' exists only in your mind. You are capable of so much more than you can even imagine."

Be forewarned - the book is impossible to put down until you have read it all! I give it 5 STARS! 🌟🌟🌟🌟🌟



WVASS Bulletin #28:

The Caves and Karst of North-Central Greenbrier County is now available from the West Virginia Speleological Survey. This 198-page publication describes the caves southwest from Spring Creek to the Richlands area and includes The Hole and the Higginbotham caves. It covers the area between Ludington and Lost Cave, and south to Ronceverte, WV. In other words, the Davis Spring Basin, and some other nearby areas.

The cost is \$30, and it can be ordered from Andrew "Nick" Schaer, WVASS Bulletin Sales and Treasurer, 304-621-5144 or andrew.schaer@frontier.com.

George Dasher

Bob Alderson Cave Rescue Update

Here is an update on Bob Alderson, who fell in a cave in Mexico on August 13, and ended up with a broken back and a cracked pelvis among other things. He was operated on in San Luis Potosí and that went well, but his pelvic issue forces him to remain pretty much immobile until it has resolved, which means staying in Mexico for a few more weeks after being released from the hospital. His sister Mary Lee flew to take care of him after he left the hospital. They are in a Airbnb for another two weeks at least before being able to return to the US. Bob's girlfriend Elida has also been instrumental in helping with his care and at the hospital.

TexCom Cave Rescue Call Out Texts 2023

The days of one or two cavers calling EVERYONE for a cave rescue are dwindling – Yay! Cave rescue alert messages are much faster than manual phone calls. If you CAN help with a cave rescue, then REPLY to the message. If you cannot help, then Do Not Reply. Do nothing. It is that simple!

A TexCom alert message reads:

"Injury in ZZZ Cave. Call Coordinator if available. 999-999-9999."

or

"Stand-Down All Clear for ZZZ Cave Rescue."

The email address to join the public Google Group to get info on training and other events related to cave rescue is at this [link](#). In order to be added to the TexCom list, update your info, or check to see if you are on the list, is to contact Earl Sutor wvcaver216@gmail.com or Cell: 703-431-2661 [text or call any time].

Earl Sutor NSS 50640 RL/CM

Eastern Region - National Cave Rescue Commission. Deputy Resource Coordination Section Chief.

And, remember to fill out your Caver Alert Info Sheet and give it to your Call-Back person.

[this is a link to the Caver Alert Information Sheet](#)



Bob is still confined to a bed or wheelchair because he can't put weight on his left leg. The good news is that he's doing better, albeit still in pain, but the bad news is that it's going to be many months before he is able to cave again. :(

P.S. In order to defray the costs of hospitalization and recovery, a GoFundMe account has been set up in his name. There is more information on there. Here is the link for those who are interested in helping.

<https://www.gofundme.com/f/injured-caver-carried-out-of-a-cave-in-mexico>

Thanks!
Yvonne and Mark



Grotto Trip Log

6/25: Nick Schmalenberger reported that the *NSS Geology Fieldtrip* during NSS Convention visited **Seneca Caverns, WV** and one other cave near Nelson Rocks.

7/4-8: Mammoth Cave, KY. Participants included Bob Alderson, Dave Socky, and Bill Koerschner, plus numerous other CRF cavers. This was a CRF expedition. Surveyed in the following areas/entrances of Mammoth Cave. El Ghore passage, New Discovery, Austin Entrance, Great Onyx Cave, Stans Well section through the Feil Entrance, and Colossal Cave section. Over the six trips we spent about 50 hours caving and surveying and surveyed a total of 2500 feet. It was a good and productive week.

7/14: Dry Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky and Greg Springer. We surveyed in the SAS survey (Springer And Socky) in the upper levels above the First Bypass before the Blowhole. We followed the old 2000 survey and kept on running into the CED survey (Chris, Errol, and Dave). Greg sketched and did front sights, and I did cross sections, point, and backsights. I didn't get too cold, although I did use a couple of 'body warmers'. It was a good 11 hour trip with 586 feet in the book.

7/22: Grotto trip to **Norman Cave, WV.** Susan Burr, Jeff and Hillary Huffman, Nick Schmalenberger visited the waterfall, explored around for 3

hours. They never found the West Virginia Room. Then they exited the cave and headed for the nearby blueberry farm.

7/31: Lauren Appel, Mystik Miller, Reilly Stalnaker and Emily Cabral from Greenbrier Grotto visited the **Higginbotham Caves 1-4, WV.** It was a good trip! They bellycrawled through water and saw a bazillion raccoon tracks in one area.

8/12: McClungs Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, Jason Williams, Scott Zagrodny. Kelly McCarthy, Aaron Clair, Matyas Ginishl, and Danial Wilson were on the other team. We split up into two teams of four. Kelly's team did little leads around the end of Megalithia. We went to Bill's Crystal Pool lead. But to get there you had to go through this narrow slot in the floor. I didn't fit. We hammered at it for close to an hour, but I still couldn't fit. Even took my coveralls off. So we did a couple of come-arounds and then went to the west end of Wafflefoot. We didn't pick up from where Kelly had left off because there was a tight spot I wouldn't fit through at the start of the east end. We surveyed until 8pm getting 43 stations. We got out at 11:00pm, making for a 12.5-hour trip with 542 feet of survey. We did break 25 miles for McClung Cave on this trip!!

8/14/2023: Mexico – Bob Alderson – “Caving in a small cave in Mexico, did

a sketchy 15 climb down a canyon. A slot in the floor went down another 10. I fell climbing down this. With a belay I was able to climb up and rest on a ledge while waiting for a small group of Mexican cave rescuers. They set a few bolts and pulled me up with a direct haul from outside the entrance. I had to climb out the narrow entrance. When I got out, I could barely stand, and walking was out of the question. The Mexican crew put a survival [cervical] collar on me and a short back board. They packed me in an abs skegh [SKED] and carried me off. I have many thanks for the Mexican cavers. At the hospital they diagnosed a couple of broken ribs.”

(NOTE: Bob's injuries to his back and lungs were a bit more serious than first thought. Bob had a successful operation on 8/18/2023 to repair a fractured vertebra. He IS doing better. Get well and fly home soon, Bob! See page 74 for an update Bob.)

9/1: Simmons Mingo Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Kelly McCarthy, Daniel Wilson, and Phaedra. We went into the upper big entrance and did LOTS of down climbing. We went in for about 4.5 hours and then headed out the same way we came in. But we missed a turn and took a lower smaller route back. We did bypass some of the funky climbs we had done on the way in. It was a fun OTR cave trip.



Kelly McCarthy looks at a cool striated wall in Simmons Mingo Cave, WV. Photo by Dave Socky

Last Chance Fall VAR 2023

Antietam Creek Campground
 October 20 - 22, 2023

Last Chance Fall VAR 2023

The Last Chance Fall VAR is two things. One, there wasn't going to be a Fall VAR this year. With literally days left Tri-State Grotto stepped up as the last chance to have The Fall VAR. Second, this will likely be your last chance to camp out this year.

The dates of the VAR are **October 20-22, 2023**.

We will be staying at the **Antietam Creek Campground**, near Antietam, MD. This is part of the **Chesapeake & Ohio Canal National Historical Park**.

The campground is located near the mouth of the Antietam creek. Nearby towns are Sharpsburg, MD, and Shepherdstown, WV.

The campground is located between the C&O Canal and the Potomac River. It is a walk-in campground. Canal Road parallels the campground. Parking is on the shoulder of one side of the road. This is the normal campground parking. Some of it is paved and some places it is level dirt. We cannot handle large self-contained units. Pop-ups are sketchy; you only have the shoulder for parking, then it drops off into the canal.

No alcohol is allowed in National Parks.

There will be led cave trips to Molars Cave, Cricket Maze Cave, Jones Quarry Cave, and Donaldson Cave.

You can also hike and bike the canal or kayak the nearby Potomac River.

Dinner Saturday night will be pulled pork, green beans, potato salad, and drinks. There will be a vegetarian option. You must request it on the pre-registration form.

Pre-registration: \$35.00 (ends 10/5/23)
 On Site/At the Door registration: \$40.00

At the Door Registration does NOT include Saturday dinner.

For more info, see <https://var.caves.org/index.php/events/fall-var>



Kelly McCarthy lights up a ceiling channel in Simmons Mingo Cave, WV.
 Photo by Dave Socky

NSS New Membership Designation

The NSS has a new membership designation of "LAND OWNER" which they tell me is the "top of the food chain" for membership status. If you are a landowner, when you go to renew your NSS membership it won't say REGULAR as before. And if you get the NSS News in hard copy you will be given a discount.

Marian McConnell





Large room near upper entrance in Simmons Mingo Cave, WV.
 Photo by Dave Socky