

# Carbide Dump



December 2023  
Vol 58, No 11

Marian



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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.

**GROTTO OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**

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

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**Contributors:** David & Mary Sue Socky, Marian McConnell, Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Meredith Weberg, Alex Sproul and Jerry Fuller.

**Cover:** 2023 BRG Landowner Christmas Card. Artwork by Marian McConnell based on a photo from Helectite Cave, VA.

**CAVERS CALENDAR**

**Dec 9:** WVACS Christmas Party. Contact Kelly McCarthy 419-303-1694.

**Dec. 15:** NO BRG MEETING. Come to the BRG Party.

**Dec. 17:** BRG Holiday Party, Dave & Mary Socky's place. Noon-5p. Pot luck, BYOB; this is in lieu of a BRG Meeting

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

**Jan 25-28, 2024:** Carter Caves Adventure Weekend, Olive Hill, KY <https://www.winteradventureweekend.com/>

**Feb. 16, 2024:** BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

**March 15, 2024:** BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

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

**May 3-5, 2024:** Spring VAR, Hosted by DC Grotto.

**July 1-5, 2024:** NSS Convention, Sewanee, TN. Details at [this site](#)

**Fall 2024:** Fall VAR, held Oct. 11-13 or Oct. 18-20. Hosted by Eric Landgraf, John King and friends in SW VA.

**Fall 2024:** TAG will be held at the Lazy G Ranch, Union Grove, AL. Date and details TBD.

**Nov 7-10, 2024:** Karst Waters Institute 4th Appalachian Karst Symposium, Lewisburg, WV. Save the date!

**Membership**

BRG had 56 members and 5 subscribers for 2023. And now, it's time to pay your 2024 dues!

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  
12/07/2023**

Cave Bucks	\$ 110.96
Conservation	\$ 2.00
Equipment	\$ 144.12
General	\$6,572.90
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,829.98</b>

## BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

There will not be an official BRG meeting on Friday, December 15. Instead, **attend the BRG Christmas Party on Sunday, December 17**, at the Socky's place from noon to 5pm.

### Grotto Trip

#### Windy Mouth Cave, WV

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

**Leaders:** Jeff Huffman & Nick Schmalenberger.

**Coordination:** Susan Burr 540-580-9409  
[pondlady97@gmail.com](mailto:pondlady97@gmail.com)

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

**Limit:** No limit

#### Description

Windy Mouth Cave, WV is formed in the contact of the Maccrady Shale and Hillsdale Limestone, Greenbrier Series. The cave is around 20 miles long.

There is one entrance to Windy Mouth, and an initial 900 foot hands and knees crawl is required to see any area of the cave. Knee pads are highly recommended in this cave.

After the initial entrance crawl, you may encounter 3 to 15 foot high walking passage, canyon passages, streams, dome pits, waterfalls, and gypsum crystals near the back of the cave. Several large loops, with lots of crawling, parallel the series of passages from the entrance to the Waterfall Room.

This trip will turn off into the Second Canyon, where large canyon passages can be explored, plus some very nice gypsum and formations. The turn off for Second Canyon is before you get to the Waterfall Room.

Take note that the hike to the cave is along the Greenbrier River and includes possible wading through the water along rock ledges. Water levels are low, though, so it may not be too bad. There is a steep climb from river level up to the entrance, but there is a handline in place to make it easier.



Windy Mouth Cave, WV.  
Photo by Dave Socky

## 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.



**Cave Bucks** are voluntary donations from cavers who have recently been caving. Most people donate a few dollars for each cave trip they have been on. Then send the money where it will do some good and buy some caves!

Thank you, Margo Soucek, for donating \$20.00 to Cave Bucks!

**BRG Holiday Party** – yes, there will be one! **Sunday, Dec. 17, 2023. Noon-5pm** at Dave & Mary Sue Socky's place, 6572 Woodbrook Dr. Roanoke VA 24018. Potluck, BYOB, casual, friends and family welcome. Contact Mary Sue Socky 540-529-3954 [sockymss@cox.net](mailto:sockymss@cox.net) for more info. Click here for a [Google Map location](#)

**New BRG Officers:** Please welcome the new slate BRG Officers for 2024.

- Nick Schmalenberger – Chair
- David Socky – Vice Chair
- Kelly Perkins – Treasurer
- Marian McConnell - Secretary

Thank you, outgoing officers, for your time served. **The rest of you, get back to work!**

**Generic Cave Waiver:** Marian created a draft of a cave waiver that will work for any state. Note that these waivers are recommended for any non-BRG caving trips. It's up to the trip leader to determine if he/she wants to use them. The draft will be sent out by email for members to provide their feedback.

Again, this is just a tool and since it's available for use by trip leaders on NON-BRG trips, it's not required by BRG. It is highly recommended to "CYA" in case of an accident.

**Jeff Huffman** said it was 10 years ago that he went on a RCiPR caving trip with Carl Cornett and another lady (wasn't Marian that time) and that he has been caving ever since. Thanks Carl! Thanks, Jeff!

**Alex Sproul**, NSS # 8086 RL, OS, FE is one of the more laid back BRG members. He continues to be very active "behind the scenes" of the NSS. Alex is the person responsible for announcing the publication of the *NSS News* each month. Alex is the person who has helped maintain the NSS Legacy site for... forever. Alex has been involved in so many NSS projects over the years!

Last week, there was a posting on the NSS Community Facebook page: *Here's your chilly December NSS News! This will be my last post here, as maintenance of the Legacy site will be suspended as of the end of this year. Future posts will be by the publication editors. It has been my pleasure to serve. Alex Sproul*

VAR Chair Meredith Weberg wrote "Alex, you're an NSS hero! Thank you for ALL you've done for keeping us informed via the legacy site and all the other behind-the-scenes tasks you've taken on. It's always a pleasure to hang out with you!"

(Continued on page 95)



## BRG Cave Trip - Porters Cave, VA

By *Susan Burr*. Photos by *Jeff Huffman*

Saturday, 11/18/2023

**Participants:** Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Nick Schmalenberger, Lauren Appel, Margo Soucek, Abbey Mays, Alexander Koch.

We basically did the normal tourist route, but we did do a few alternate routes. On the way in Margo & I got to see a cave rat. Unfortunately, I could not



Climbing around in the Big Room

get any pictures, but it was cute! We also saw a few bats during our time there.

Once we got through the keyhole, we took a different route back to the Natural Bridge. It seemed much safer than climbing way up just to climb back down. Still wasn't easy or safe enough that I feel it would be the way to take my grandson in the future. You can simply go in toward the Natural Bridge from the way we normally come out. The one climb up can be avoided by simply crawling under & around. I took some

pictures of the newbies on the Natural Bridge & we explored a little around that area.

After getting back through the Keyhole, we headed over to Grand Ave. & played around there. I had everyone go through the awkward/tight passage near the back & Jeff was kind enough to take some great pictures of everyone.

Next stop on the tour was the Formation Room. We looked at all the pretty formations, fossils & cave crickets.

On the way out we took a slightly different route to the intersection where you climb up to get to what looks like a pelvis you have to climb over to slide down and continue on towards the Slit.

On the way to the Slit, I did get both Margo & Abbey to pose under the Mickey Mouse ears & take their pictures. I think it is cute. Near the Slit we admired some really nice formations. I believe some were helictites. As we were leaving, we went through what we call the Newbie Torture Route. There is a small hole you slide through to get into a short passage to an even smaller hole to get out. This is a pack off & wiggle the best you can through opening. Of course, Jeff was on the other side taking all our pictures as we struggled through! Everyone did make it through.

We headed out through the waterfall entrance to the main entrance. We were in the cave about 4 ½ hours. I believe everyone had a good time. 🐾



Classic Natural Bridge Photo



Climbing down into a hole near the entrance.

(Announcements continued from page 94)

### Bat Cave Closures -

Some WV and VA 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 Oct. 15 - Apr. 15 for bat hibernacula. (Winter Closure 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](mailto:blase@virginiacaves.org) The Closed Cave List can be viewed at [this link](#). 🐾



## 2023 CRF Mammoth Cave Thanksgiving Expedition

Article & photos by *Dave Socky*

The Cave Research Foundation (CRF) held its 2023 Mammoth Cave Thanksgiving Expedition from November 22 to November 26 at the Hamilton Valley field station. Bill Koerschner and I drove up on Wednesday in time for a nice pizza dinner that evening.

Besides dinner, the most important activity that evening was recording Dis-tox2 readings on the compass course. Then it was lots of socializing.



Mammoth Cave has LOTS of gypsum

Thursday, Thanksgiving, was reserved for shorter trips. After much shuffling of personnel, I ended up on a trip with Bill Koerschner, Bill Baus, and Ljubomir Risteski (LJ) to survey at the end of the A survey in New Discovery section in Mammoth Cave. I had been there in July 2023, so I knew what to expect. Lots of gypsum, nice walking passage, some breakdown squirming, and then tiny leads that needed to be surveyed. It was a fun day of 8 hours with 270 feet of survey. We made it out just in time for dinner at 7pm. Yum.



Hiking through borehole on Thursday

Friday was another trip to a different section of New Discovery. I went with Ljubomir Risteski (LJ), Mills Orlovsky, and Henry Grover - our trip leader. Lots more crawling to get back to the KW survey where we checked and surveyed side leads that needed to be done. Again, most were small, either ending as too tight, or looping back to the main passage. I didn't fit into some of the passage we surveyed. This was a longer 10.5 hour trip which netted a whopping 323 feet of survey.

Our final day of caving, on Saturday, was a trip into Crystal Cave with Tom Brucker as the trip leader. We had two teams for a total of 7 cavers.

I had surveyed in this same area back in July 2023. The S Bend was as easy as I remembered. I was a little concerned about the

Keyhole, but it turned out to be easier than I thought. I didn't even have to exhale to get through. Coming back was more difficult because there was nothing to push against. The Bottomless Pit crossing was easier than I remembered, too.

We split into two teams. Tom, Megan, and I surveyed tall nice canyon. Not real hard to sketch either. We soon tied into the other teams survey. We caught up with them at Floyd's Jump Off. The climb up was funky, but a rope was rigged which we used as a handline.



Checking high leads on Friday

While Jenny finished her sketching, we heard many historical stories about this section of the cave from Tom. Recommended reading - *The Caves Beyond* by Roger Brucker.

We headed out a different way and actually avoided the climb across of the Bottomless Pit. The trip out was hot and sweaty. I overheated, but managed ok. It was an 11 hour trip with 205 feet of survey in the book.



Climbing up Floyd's Jump Off.

# Grotto Trip Log

10/21 – **Lost Cave, WV** – Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Nick Schmalenberger, Lauren Appel, Trish Geiger. We had a nice trip into Lost Cave. The entrance area had a little trash that we hauled out on the way back to the car. The trail to the cave was a little overgrown & had several downed branches in the way. We wondered if we should clean up the branches or leave it to deter random visitors. We basically left the brush. There wasn't much of a waterfall flowing, but it did have some water going into the cave. We spotted a couple of salamanders as we went into the cave & Lauren found a crayfish. We discovered a lot of broken glass in the entrance area. We didn't really have anything to safely put glass into to remove it, so we tried to move the larger pieces off the main trail. There was also some other trash & fresh graffiti in there. We discussed the possibility of going back for a conservation project to clean it up sometime in the future. We basically explored everywhere we could. It doesn't have a lot of formations, but we did see a few. There were also a lot of tight and/or awkward squeezes & passages to get through. One I did with grace. NOT! Basically, I slid out doing a handstand & almost ended up on my face. LOL! I believe we were in there about 3 hours.

10/? – **Tawney's, VA** – Margo went into Tawney's with the VPI Cave Club. They asked her to lead them to the Moon Room, and then they made it back to the "stripper pole."

**10/25 Perry Campbell Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Mark Minton, Yvonne Droms, Keith Sweeney, and Rich Lambert. Mark, Vonnie, and Dave went into the high lead that Joe Zokaites and Dave had surveyed on a previous trip. Keith and Rick went toward the bottom to map geology in the cave. Mark bolted up the climb that Joe had free climbed. Mark then bolted up the rest of the way using 3 bolts. At the top, the hole to continue small. It would take some technical digging to continue. We called it a day and exited the cave at 6pm. We plan on going back.

**11/3 Perry Campbell Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaites, Mark Minton, and Yvonne Droms. We returned to the bolt climb we had done a week ago. Joe went up first and enlarged the first constriction enough to get close to the second. After some beating with the sledge, he hauled up the drill and straw supplies and put in one short straw. He then rappelled down. The dig got us through. Mark was able to squeeze past the constriction. He found a small room with a ceiling full of breakdown where you could see space above, but it would be a death dig. We decided it was not worth it. We surveyed the find and then exited the cave right around 4:30pm.

**11/8 NCKMS** (National Cave and Karst Management Symposium) in Chattanooga, TN. Field trip stops: **Cumberland Caverns, Grundy Spring, Big Mouth Cave, Big Room Cave, Jasper Blue Spring, and Ruby Falls** (where the NCKMS banquet was held).

**11/11 Island Ford Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Mary Sue Socky, Meredith Weberg, and Janet Tinkham. Stopped at the entrance on the way to the WVCC banquet. I went in as far as the entrance room. Talked to a caver couple who were taking their two kids on a cave trip.

**11/11 - WVCC Banquet, WV** – John Pearson and others attended the banquet, and praised Mike Ficco's presentation on *Caving in Montenegro*.

**11/12 Culverson Creek-Hinkle Unus entrance, WV.** Participants included David Socky, Mary Sue Socky, Meredith Weberg, and Janet Tinkham. The day after the WVCC banquet we visited the entrance to Hinkle Unus because Meredith and Janet had never been there. Dave Socky went back into the narrow canyon until it started to get annoyingly narrow. Didn't go back as far as the crawl.

**11/13 Shenandoah Wild Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Casey Tucker, and Carl Amundson. The entrance is a narrow slit going down at a steep angle into a small room. It's easy to get it, but getting out was a real chal-

lenge. Having a rope helps. At the end of the small room is a small hole going down. It is tight, probably about 12 inches max. I had to take my vertical stuff off to fit. Soon after this was the two drops to get to the lower part of the cave. One drop was over flowstone and then through a narrow window into a large room. The second drop was about 25 feet. After this drop, we took our vertical gear off and caved several hundred feet (or so) until we got to our lead. It was an up climb that we used an etrier to get up. It was all virgin. But it didn't last long although we left two leads - one a dig lead with a little air and the other a yucky dig lead which is probably not worth the effort. We surveyed a total of 169 feet for a 5 hour trip.

**11/15 Warm Spring Project, VA.** Participants included Dave Socky, Rick Lambert, and Keith Sweeney

- **Black Widow Pit.** Dave Socky reports rappelling part way down this dead bottom pit. There was a tight spot about 15 feet off the floor I didn't feel comfortable going through, so I did a DistoX shot to the floor and then set a station halfway up. Climbed back up and finished the survey. There is a C class dig at the bottom.

- **Mitchell #2 Pit.** This pit was larger, so Dave Socky was able to drop all the way to the bottom. Did one PUD shot and then surveyed out. There was a side pit halfway down but couldn't get to it because of breakdown blocking the way. There was nothing at the bottom but a 3-inch drain crack. Surveyed 60 feet or so.

- **Perry Campbell #2 dig, plus 3 other potential digs.**

**11/23-25 Mammoth Cave, KY.** CRF Thanksgiving Expedition

- **New Discovery (A Survey).** 8 hours with 270 feet of survey

- **New Discovery (KW Survey).** 10.5 hours with 323 feet of survey.

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- **Crystal Cave KY** (YM Survey). 11 hours with 205 feet of survey.

**11/29 Warm Spring Project, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaites, Rick Lambert, Bill Pickett, Keith Sweeney, and Josh Webner

- **Massie #1 Cave.** We were going to survey this cave, but there was a bear snoozing inside! We had talked about the possibility of a bear - there was one last year, but we figured it had been too warm and they would not be bedding down yet. Keith offered to go in first. The entrance is a 10-foot climb. At the bottom is a tight crawl-way which then opens up into a room. Keith squirmed into the crawl, looked up and saw the bear just a body length away from his face. Needless to say, Keith backpedaled

(crawled) back out quickly and climbed out the drop. The bear did not come out. After some discussion, we pulled the rope up and went over to the *Singularity Caves*.

- **Singularity Sister Cave.** This was a known cave with no air and was a dead bottom drop but needed to be surveyed. Joe, Josh, and I surveyed it with five stations. The entrance was almost straight down, tight, and awkward. Easy enough to get into, but a pain to get out. There were old dried formations. It was 27 feet long.
- **Spinning Singularity Cave.** Joe pulled some rocks from this dig, after which we could see it was possible to enter after a straw or two. Unfortunately, it ended after dropping down into a small room. The survey length was 67 feet.

- **Singularity Cave.** We did a surface survey from Spinning Singularity Cave to Singularity Cave. Singularity Cave has been surveyed, but the map still needs to be drawn. There is the need to find out where the air comes from too. Like Spinning Singularity, the air comes out of the entrance quite strongly.

**12/2 McClung Cave, WV.** Participants included David Socky, Nikki Fox, and Anthony Fagan. We met at 10am on a cloudy drizzly day. Went back to the far end of Wafflefoot to clean up side leads. The leads back there turned out to be small and gnarly. They either ended or tied back into the main Wafflefoot passage. For a fourteen-hour trip, we only got 259 feet of survey. Our average shot was around 7 feet with 34 stations. But, it was a fun trip!

## PAY YER 2024 DUES!!

It's that time. Dues are due! Current BRG members and BRG Subscribers:

- 2024 BRG dues are \$10.00 for regular or associate members, \$5.00 for additional family members. Discount for members under 18. Subscriber fee is \$10.00 per person.
- Make checks to *Blue Ridge Grotto*.
- Families, additional dues payers – there will be printed info on your family rate at the Nov 17 BRG meeting.
- If you mail in your dues, please include a piece of paper with your current address, phones, email, NSS number (and NSS expiration month), and primary grotto affiliation.
- You can pay for multiple years.

Pay your dues at the December 17 BRG Christmas Party, or mail them to:

**Kelly Perkins**  
BRG Treasurer  
3117 Corbieshaw Road SW  
Roanoke, VA 24015

Can't remember if you've already paid? We do! Check the **Pre-Paid List**:

Lauren Appel - 2025  
Joe Banks - 2025  
Tom Beaman - 2024  
Sharon Bruce - 2024  
Susan Burr - 2024  
Joseph Caldwell - 2026  
Carl Cornett - 2024  
Miriam Cuddington - 2032  
Martin DiLeggi - 2026  
Carrie Douplik - 2029  
Joey Fagan - Life  
Cheryl Feller - 2025  
Doug Feller - 2025  
Barry Ferguson - 2024S  
Helene Ferguson - 2024  
Cole Frantz - 2028  
Trish Geiger - 2024  
Keith Goggin - 2024  
Lisa Goggin - 2024  
Gene Harrison - 2032S  
Jeff Huffman - 2030  
Cyndi Hutchison - 2024

Ben Johnson - 2024  
Kevin Johnson - 2029  
Dan McConnell—2024  
Marian McConnell - 2024  
Randy Michael— 2024  
Sharon Mohney— 2026  
Lynn Ott - 2032S  
John Pearson - 2025  
Jen Perdue— 2024  
Kelly Perkins - 2024  
David Rose - 2024  
Suzanne Rose - 2024  
Ed Saugstad - 2024  
Marianne Saugstad - 2024  
Nick Schmalenberger - 2024  
Gordon Smith - 2028S  
David Socky - 2024  
Mary Sue Socky - 2024  
Nick Socky - 2024  
Alex Sproul - 2024  
Jennifer Suggs - 2028S  
John Taylor - 2026  
Brian Williams - 2025

*Not a BRG member? Ask any officer how to begin the membership process.*

## Obituary - Andy Reeder

Andy Reeder, NSS 27559 RL, FE passed away on October 13, 2023.

Andy was best known as a mover and shaker for New River Valley Grotto. He was VAR Conservation Co-Chair for years.

Andy was one of the people responsible for the original Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave, VA!

Andy and New River Valley Grotto helped Blue Ridge Grotto maintain and repair the gate to Goodwin Cave, VA.

[Link to Facebook post](#)

We will miss you, Andy; your love of caves and nature, and your awesome gourmet cooking – RIP.