

# Carbide Dump

A photograph of a person and a dog standing in a cave, looking out at a stream. The person is standing in the water, and the dog is on a rock. The cave is dark, and the stream is bright with sunlight reflecting off the water. The background shows a lush green forest.

September 2025  
Vol 60, No 07



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 6:30 pm. See the Grotto meeting announcement in this issue for the current location.

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

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**Cover:** Hillary Huffman in the entrance of Piercy Cave, WV. Photo by Jeff Huffman.

# CAVERS CALENDAR

**Sept 19:** BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019

**Sep 26-28:** Fall MAR meeting, Lincoln Caverns & Whisper Rocks PA. Hosted by Nittany Grotto. URL: <https://mar.caves.org/fieldmeets.htm>

**Oct 6-10:** National Cave and Karst Management Symposium, Ely NV. Hosted by Western Cave Conservancy. See: <https://ely2025.nckms.org/>

**Oct 9-12:** TAG Fall Cave-In has been cancelled. Sorry! See you next year.

**Oct 17:** BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, on Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019. **Nominations.**

**Oct 17-19:** **GO Fest**, (Go Outside Festival) Downtown Roanoke, VA. **CaveSim** will be there. Volunteers will be needed.

**Oct 17-19:** **VAR**. At the RASS Field Station. Hosted by the VAR Officers. Registration info on pages 60 & 61.

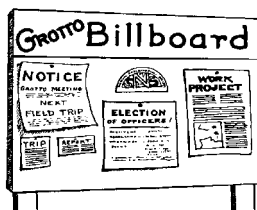
**Oct 18:** **Bridge Day**, Fayetteville WV. See <https://officialbridgeday.com/bridge-day-info> for more info.

**Nov 8:** **WVCC Banquet**, West Virginia School of Osteopathic Medicine, Lewisburg WV. See <http://wvcc.net> for more info.

**Nov 21:** BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, on Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019. **Elections.**

**Dec 13:** **Annual WVACS Christmas Party**, WVACS Fieldstation. Contact Nick Socky at 540-529-0413 or at [sockynss@vt.edu](mailto:sockynss@vt.edu) for more info.

**July 6-10, 2026:** 2026 NSS Convention, Corydon, IN (<https://caves.org/convention/2026-nss-convention/>)



## 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/>

## VAR Limited Access Cave List

<https://var.caves.org/index.php/conservation/closed-caves/closed-cave-list>

## Treasurer's Report 09/10/2025

Cave Bucks	\$ 117.96
Conservation	\$ 2.00
Equipment	\$ 144.12
General	\$5,901.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,165.08</b>

## 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.



**T-Shirts:** There are 17 remaining T-shirts! \$12.00 each. Med. to XL, various colors: red, gold, grey, green, light blue, etc. Contact Susan Burr [pondlad97@gmail.com](mailto:pondlad97@gmail.com) for more information.

**BRG Online Payments:** BRG can now accept payments through ZELLE, a 'free' cash app. Use the following email through your banks' ZELLE app: [blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com](mailto:blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com).

BRG will also continue to maintain the BRG PayPal account (which charges fees). Anyone who pays BRG through the PayPal account will be charged a \$1.00 convenience fee for the transaction. Use [blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com](mailto:blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com) for PayPal.

### BRGs Newest Home 9/2025

BRG has found a NEW meeting place, near the Brookside Golf Course in Roanoke, VA!

**Famous Anthony's - Brookside**  
6499 Williamson Rd NW  
Roanoke, VA 24019

Click [here for a Google Map location for Famous Anthony's](#).

Thanks to Trish Geiger for scouting out the newly reopened Famous Anthony's on Williamson Road! Marian McConnell stopped by in person and reserved the meeting room for our Sept 19, Oct 17, and Nov 21 meetings from 6 -9p in their meeting room for 12-20 people (est.); they have 2 meeting rooms, and both have TVs (not sure about the hookup for laptop). If all goes well with this arrangement, we can schedule for Jan-Nov 2026 in December.

Do Not Go to the Socky's House. New place is NE of the Roanoke airport. See you there in two weeks!

**Santamander** - Marian McConnell is collecting photos of cave salamanders to use to design a 2025 BRG Christmas card, "Santamander" since the Santa bats have been so popular. Please share your really good, detailed Dixie (Slimy) Salamander (black with white sparkles) photos with her between now and October.

**GEAR SALE:** When former BRG members Gary and Kim Drewry relocated to Panama, SA, Gary gifted a lot of his vertical gear to Doug Feller, who brought it to the August BRG meeting. It was decided to sell the vertical gear at the OTR Yard Sale. Dave Socky sold practically everything, and netted \$195.00 for BRG. Good deal!

**WVCC:** BRG decided to renew its West Virginia Cave Conservancy membership for 2026, at the \$50.00 level.

**Question:** What would be a good conservation group to donate to for protecting cave salamanders and their habitat?

**Dixie Caverns Conservation Project:** September 15-17, 2025 we will be draining & cleaning the Wedding Party Pool. A filter/drain bucket has been created to help the process. Dave thinks a "water-filled-hose siphon" will be sufficient to drain the pool. No one wants to suck-start the syphon.

Thank you, James Fidler, for checking the water connections and providing in-cave water for the volunteers! Want to help restore this area of the cave? contact Mary Sue Socky [sockymss@cox.net](mailto:sockymss@cox.net) or 540-529-3954.

**Rocks** - the Warm Springs Valley Project meets every Wednesday, and some Saturdays. Contact Dave Socky if you would like to participate at the following email: [sockydr@cox.net](mailto:sockydr@cox.net).

**New WVCC Preserve!** At the end of May 2025, the West Virginia Cave Conservancy announced the acquisition of Fuller's Entrance to the Culverson Creek Cave System. It was made possible by a generous donation from Cliff and Lois Lindsay. The preserve includes the Fuller's Entrance and the Karst Window. The cave will be open to all responsible experienced cavers. The gate into the field is now locked – prior contact with Bill Balfour or Lois Lindsay should be made to get the combo for access.

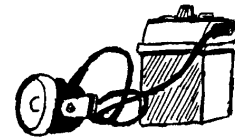
**So Long,** Ed and Marianne Saugstad! They have sold the farm and are moving to England. Enjoy your new life and home! Come back and visit us anytime! Pete and Christina Waller attended OTR. Ed and Marianne are currently living with them in Raleigh NC. House hunting in England continues. There are two good possibilities. Hopefully, everyone (4 people + cats) will be relocated Across the Pond by late 2025/early 2026.

**NSS Award Nominations:** It's time to submit nominations for NSS Awards. Nominations are due by NOVEMBER 15TH. <https://caves.org/nss-awards/>

**VAR Limited Access Cave List** can be found at this [link](#). Please send changes and updates to Brad Blase at [blase@virginiacaves.org](mailto:blase@virginiacaves.org) or Dave Socky at [sockydr@cox.net](mailto:sockydr@cox.net)

**Winter Bat Closure** for some caves. These closures are primarily for hibernacula.

- ♦ WV: closed Sept 1 - May 15
- ♦ VA: closed Oct. 15 - Apr. 15



### BRG Meeting & Trip Notice

The September 19, 2025 meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held at **Famous Anthony's - Brookside (6499 Williamson Rd)**. Come around 6 pm to order dinner with the meeting starting at 6:30pm. Click [here for the location of Famous Anthony's](#).

The program will be a 24 minute video called "*The One That Got Away*". It was the Best of Show for the 2025 NSS Video Salon. It is about looking for the lost *Airspot Cave* and features a lot of footage of *Friars Hole* plus some photos of Al Stewart!

**Grotto Trips**  
To Be Determined





## Triplet Cave Dig Breakthrough

Article by *Bill Koerschner*

Alleghany County, VA

September 3, 2025

**Participants:** Bill Koerschner, Dave Socky, Keith Sweeney, Jim Schurman, Amos Mincin, Rick Lambert, Rick Royer

**Objective:** Continue dig in Triplet Cave

**In:** 11:00 AM **Out:** 4:30 PM (5.5 hours)

**Report:** On Wednesday September 3rd we met at Keith's house at 10:00 AM and headed over to the Bowen Well parking area to suit up. Rick Lambert was first into Triplet and got right to work drilling the ceiling ledge and took the rest of it down with an 8" straw. After mucking, he returned to work on removing the pendant forming the pinch.

After several shots the pinch was history and we were looking up through the waist of a keyhole into walking passage. Amos was able to squeeze through and found that the walking passage only went 15ft before splitting into a lower, rubble-plugged component and an upper fissure canyon with a body-sized keyhole crawl 5 ft off the floor.

Amos went to work de-popcorning the keyhole while Bill began to drill the far side of the pinch for an additional shot. Bill and Amos swapped tasks after Bill was having trouble controlling the drill. Another 30 minutes of hammering and the keyhole was large enough for an attempt. Bill inched through the cheese grater crawl for about 8 ft before the floor of chocked cobbles dropped away

into an 8 inch slot canyon that belled out below. He bridged along the top until the slot widened enough to allow a down climb to the bottom.

The lower component had returned on the far side of the rubble plug. It should be possible to remove all the rubble down to the same calcite floor that was present before the pinch. This will allow both people and water to flow freely to the far side of the keyhole crawl.

Beyond this point we had walking passage again that went to the top of a 3ft



Bill Koerschner in the narrow, grabby canyon.  
Photo by Amos Mincin

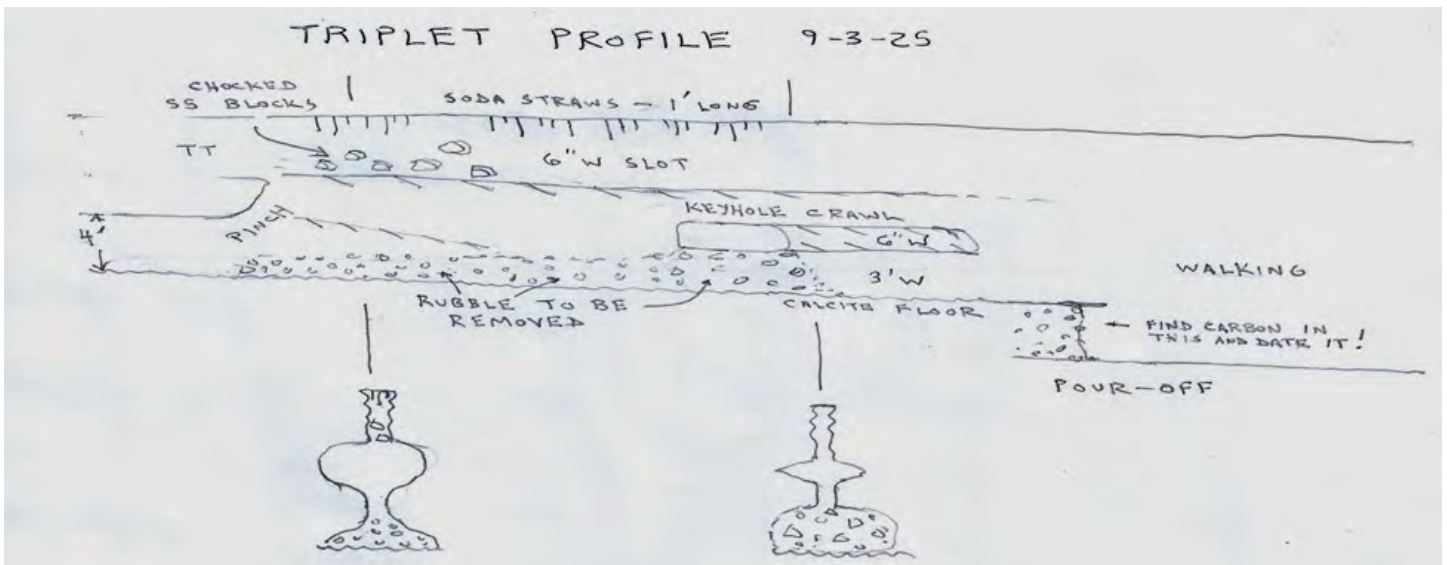


Rick Royer at one of the dig points. Photo by Amos Mincin

high pour-off. This feature is caused by the calcite floor becoming too thin to protect the underlying gravel fill from erosion. After this down climb there is about 20 ft of walking canyon until you hit a clay plug and the water flow exits hard right into a 6Hx1W descending fissure passage.

This can just barely be traversed along the bottom, but it looks gnarly with many grabby spikes that will need rounding. Rick Royer later backed down

(Continued on page 55)





(Triplet Dig from page 54)

this a few body lengths and reported that the floor drops away into a fissure that is too tight for his feet with boots on. It looks like the passage is dropping through one of the chert beds that are common in the upper Beekmantown Formation. It should enlarge again below the chert, but it is going to be a challenge to work. The good news is that we still have the air and the water travelling the same route to places unknown.

After exploration was completed, we set off a final 4" straw in the pinch to make it passable for the rest of the team. We removed 61 buckets of rock and gravel fill in 5 hours and passed two pinch points! Good Work!



Virgin walking passage.  
Photo by Amos Mincin



Dave Socky the bucket counter.  
Photo by Dave Socky

## Patton Cave, WV

Article by *Susan Burr*

7/19/25

**Participants:** Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Lauren Appel, Brian Williams, Bambi Marshall, Jessica Hester, Ben Hester, Andrew Minarik

Luckily the weather held out for us. No changing in the rain before or after the cave trip. Apparently it did rain some while we were in the cave though. That made getting up the steep hillside a bit more challenging. Not to mention the inground bee's nest we saw right at the

top of the path. Fortunately for us, they were NOT yellowjackets!

Our goal was to get to the Football Room. As we got to the stream in the cave, we noticed it was basically dry. I'm not sure I ever saw it this dry before. We took lots of pictures along the way of formations, rimpools, etc. We did manage to get to the Football Room, but I think we did it in a slightly different way at the last minute. We did leave out the belly crawl route.

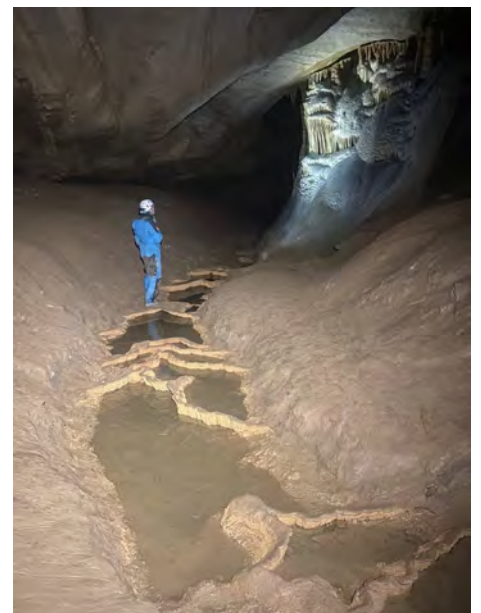
On the way out, we checked out the side stream passage. I think it is the one that is supposed to lead to another entrance??? We did have to walk in ankle deep water to cross the stream & then stayed dry until the pool. The Pool was fairly deep & no one really wanted to go in. Bambi loves water caves, so I asked her to lead & see if the water was deep. She stuck to the left

edge & the water was only about knee deep. We all followed & continued until we could go no further without laying in the water, then we turned around & went out.

I think we were in the cave for about 4 ½ hours.



Formations in Patton's Cave. Photo by Lauren Appel



Passage in Patton Cave.  
Photo by Lauren Appel

## Piercy Mill & Piercy Cave, WV

Article by *Susan Burr*

8/23/25

Participants: Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Hillary Huffman, Bambi Marshall, Jessica Hester, Ben Hester.

When we arrived at the cave parking area, we were greeted by 2 dogs, a beagle named Beau and mixed breed dog named Gabby. A few minutes later, Steve, the caretaker, showed up to meet us. What we didn't know at the time was that Beau was going to escort us into each cave and I mean stay with us the whole time! In Piercy Mill, there was on area he could not go with us and apparently he stuck around waiting for us to come back.

The trail to Piercy Mill closest to the cave entrance is a bit washed out. Much harder to keep from falling. Thank goodness for the few reachable trees you could use to hang onto. The trail could definitely use some maintenance. The water level was low so we never really got super wet. We discovered the water in Piercy Mill is MUCH warmer than the water in Piercy Cave.

Our first cave was Piercy Mill, with the objective of going to the rimstone pool room. We first went as far as we could into the cave & then back tracked to the side passage that would eventually lead us to the pretty formation room and then the rimpool room. This side passage is where Beau had to wait for us to come back.

In the formation room everyone but me, since I forgot my camera, took lots of

pictures. I crawled in one of the higher small rimpool sections and saw that it continued on, so the others followed.

Jeff and I discovered it lead to our primary objective, the large rimpool room. I had talked about how we had to go through this tight & awkward section to get to this room to everyone. Jeff wanted to see if everyone could make it that way.

We ended up going back to the formation room and heading through the tight hole in the floor to continue to the rimpool room. Everyone did great and we made it back to the large rimpool room. Unfortunately most of the rimpools were dry. Some still had the pretty colored deep water, but not many. We played around back there for a while and then I got Jeff to take a cute pic of the rest of us inside different dry rimpools.

Afterwards we headed out the easier route to the formation room through the passage we had found earlier. As we got closer to the main passage we heard Beau whining. He was super glad to see us again.

In Piercy Mill Cave we saw 4 salamanders, one was a different kind from the typical orange one. We saw at least one baby salamander, several fish & several crayfish.

As we headed to Piercy Cave, we passed by the old mill, crossed the stream, and then headed down the overgrown trail filled with briers. We cut over to the adjacent field for the last part since it was not as overgrown. There I saw a cute little toad.

Upon approaching the cave entrance we heard the mooing of cows in the cave and noticed two or three cows leaving the entrance area. Next thing you saw were lots of cows in the entrance.

We desperately tried to get the cows to come out



**Piercy Mill Cave.**  
Photo by Jeff Huffman.

of the cave, but could not. They ended up running back into the cave. It sounded like they were stressed out because of our presence so we decided to leave.

We barely got out of sight of the entrance and next thing you know an entire herd of about 30 cows came out of the cave. We patiently waited and then headed back into the cave. That was probably our favorite part of the cave trips!

Since the water levels were so low most of us went to the very back of the cave. We were able to avoid all the deep water. At one point we came upon a stand-on rope swing, so of course we played on it!

On the way back out there was one section we could not get Beau to come down from so he could follow us out. Finally Bambi, Ben and I had to help him down and across the stream.

In this cave we saw 3 bats, lots of crayfish, one frog, one fish and a LOT of sculpins!

The day's caving adventure lasted about 4+ hours. Both dogs made it back home. Once we had cell service I called Steve to let him know we had left & thanked him for allowing us to visit the caves.



**Piercy Mill Cave. L-R: Jeff Hester, Bambi Marshall, Ben Hester, Hilliary Huffman, and Susan Burr.**  
Photo by Jeff Huffman.





## BRG Donations to Cave Conservation 2025

It is time for BRG to inspect our coffers and make donations to our favorite cave conservation organizations? Here is how we donated last time around:

### Final 2023 Donations List

ACCA <sup>1</sup>	American Cave Conservation Association (KY)	\$25/yr.
CaveSim	Cave Sim	\$50
MAKC <sup>1</sup>	Mid Atlantic Karst Conservancy	\$15/yr.
NCRC	National Cave Rescue Commission (Eastern Region)	\$50.00
NSS	National Speleological Society (for Al Stewart Memorial Brick)	\$100.00
VCB	Virginia Cave Board	\$50.00
WVCC <sup>1</sup>	West Virginia Cave Conservancy	<u>\$50/yr.</u>
		<b>\$375.00 Total</b>

Others considered: AKC, BCCS, BCI, VAR, VSS, WVACS <sup>1</sup> Paid for 2025

### This is what we've paid for this year

WVCC	\$50.00	Dues	8/19/2025
MAKC	\$15.00	Dues	5/31/2025
ACCA	\$25.00	Dues	5/12/2025

So, in addition to the dues we've already paid, what should the Blue Ridge Grotto donate this year? We have money in the bank, so we can certainly afford to contribute to some worthy causes. Let us know your thoughts or come to the upcoming grotto meeting to express your ideas.

## SubTerranean SubTitles

By *Marian McConnell*

I have an idea for a short (15 minutes or less) cave video called **SubTerranean SubTitles** if Dave Socky is willing to film. And if we can get a few volunteers (actors/actresses).

The plot will be simple, with a few BRG members leading some newbies on their "first" wild caving trip to learn basics about cave safety and conservation. We can easily do it in Island Ford in one filming.

The video will have SUBTITLES that go with the plot. BUT, you can choose ALTERNATE SUBTITLES which will be funny, silly, jesting, etc. - kind of like comments that get made when we are watching a program at a BRG meeting. To get input from everyone, we could have the video and regular subtitles to show first, then have a "caption this" party to come up with the funniest alternate subtitles and add those last. What do y'all think? Thoughts and additional ideas are more than welcome.

## CaveSim and GoFest 2025

CaveSim and Dave Jackson will return to Roanoke, VA in October for the GO Fest event!

CaveSim will be open Saturday, October 18, and Sunday, October 19, 2025, in downtown Roanoke. Rain or Shine.

If you helped with CaveSim last year, then you know how much fun it is. It is estimated that **2000+ people** will visit during GO Fest. CaveSim needs your help!

Saturday will be the 'long day': 9 am to 8 pm. Sign up times are from 9 am to noon, noon to 4 pm, and 4pm to 8 pm.

Sunday will be 10am -5 pm. Sign up times are from 10 am to 1 pm and 1 pm to 5 pm

GoFest is rain or shine! Please bring water, chair, and a light. keep track of

personal items - you are dealing with the public. Be in good health.

We need cavers willing to interact with the public to help explorers 'helmet up' and experience CaveSim! We also need folks to help with the Squeeze Box, Pulley Systems, and answer questions about caves, bats and how to 'Cave Softly and Safely.'

Yes, this is a busy October weekend. Fall VAR is 'close by' – you can enjoy VAR, *and* help with CaveSim, too. It's an activity-filled weekend, either way.

Folks, we need volunteers Both Days for the various shifts. Let me know what day and time. Please sign up. Contact Mary Sue Socky at [sockymss@cox.net](mailto:sockymss@cox.net) or 540-529-3954.



# Grotto Trip Log

**5/19:** Trish Geiger visited **Ryugado Cave, Japan** during her recent vacation. One of Japan's three largest limestone show caves, *Ryugado* (means "dragon river cave"). The entirety of the cave is approximately 4 km long, with about 1 km that is open to the general public. Parts of the passages were rather narrow and some had low ceilings; making it almost felt like real caving. LOL. It had pretty decorated sections, but unfortunately about ½ had tacky colored lights. There was also a museum there with a cool bat skeleton. Definitely worth a visit.

**7/19:** BRG trip to **Patton Cave, WV**. Susan Burr, Brian Williams, 5 others. Rigorous trip, across the scary deep place on the way to the Football Room. They found the Football Room, forgot to look for the bear claw marks, & headed out via the 14" belly-crawl passage. 4 ½ hour trip. No rain.

**7/23: Various Caves Warm Springs Project (WSP), VA.** Participants included David Socky, Rick Lambert, Chas Lambert (Rick's grandson?), Joe Zokaite, Keith Sweeney, and Amos Mincin. We went to change data loggers at these caves: **Wave Function, Pasco Pit, Robinson Cave, Glass Menagerie, Hoover Cave, and Wares Cave**. Joe, Amos, and I did not go to Hoover or Wares because Joe and Amos bounced the entrance drop for Glass Menagerie. We were done by 1 pm and then went to the Country Cafe in Healing Springs for lunch. Catfish - yum.

**7/26: Triplet Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Rick Lambert, Keith Sweeney, Amos Mincin, Jim Schurman, Marissa Loftus, and Jason Sargent. We had just enough people to dig at Triplet, although we could have used a few more for rotation. Of course, I was outside doing bucket counting and Keith's back is so bad we didn't let him do anything. But we provided morale support. Cleaned a lot of the rocks, dirt, and gravel out, set up ramps, filled in holes, and confirmed that the dig as we had left it from way before is still there and wait-

ing. Not much air blowing out even though it was pretty warm, so there could be a blockage further in. We got 76 buckets hauled out and worked until about 3:30pm when the rain clouds started to roll in. We packed it up before it rained and made it to Keith's house for wonderful dinner cooked by Kathy.

**7/30: Triplet Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaite, Bill Koerschner, Amos Mincin, Keith Sweeney, and Jim Schurman. Another dig on Triplet Cave. 60 buckets. Put in sled slides to make it easier to get spoils out of the cave. Dave was rope tender and fuckit counter again.

**8/4:** Dave and Mary Sue Socky visited **Dixie Caverns, VA.** They took disto readings of the Wedding Party Pool and area to know how much garden hose (100') would be needed for the pool cleaning and draining. Cleanup will be in September 2025.

**8/8:** Dave & Mary Sue Socky met Brian and Patti Williams at the **Natural History Museum, Martinsville, VA** for the display of **Petra** – an ice age big cat skeleton found in Burga Cave, VA. Dave Socky was one of the cavers who collected and brought the skeleton to the museum. Conservators at the museum have spent the past 3 years removing mud and calcite from the articulated skeleton. Petra was likely a puma, but the skeleton is too old and mineralized (not enough DNA) to get a radiocarbon date.

**8/13: Triplet Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaite, Bill Koerschner, Andrew Allard, Keith Sweeney, Amos Mincin, Rick Lambert, and Jim Schurman. Yet another dig. We improved the sled slides and put a large fence up to keep debris out of the cave during storms. We actually moved the dig face further in and have gotten to the point that technical digging will be required. But you can see black beyond a narrow slot. Still looks good!

**8/20: Rushing Waters Cave, VA.** Participants included David Socky (surface support), Brian Williams, and Rick Lambert. This was Brian William's dive check trip - to see what the cave was like

and check out the sump to see if it was reasonable to do. Brian and Rick went in while I did surface watch because of my healing ribs. Brian took in a telescoping pole with a GoPro and light in order to get as much info as he could. From the video, it looks like the underwater passage is about 6 feet wide and 3 feet high and sloping downwards at about a 15-to-20-degree angle. The floor is thick mud. The water is flowing out, so visibility is good as you go in against the current. Brian was very encouraged and plans on doing the dive with Jon Lillestolen this fall - sometime in October or November. We then went over to Triplet where everyone else was digging.

**8/20, 8/23, and 9/3: Triplet Cave, VA.** Participants included the usual bunch of nefarious Wednesday cavers. Progress was made each trip and finally the dig crew broke through the constriction and found some walking passage, but also tight gnarly canyon. It did end in another dig, a narrow canyon that needs to be enlarged. It may go down. Cave is close to 200 feet now. See trip report by Bill Koerschner. Dave Socky was good, and did nothing but bucket counting and rope tending on all these trips.



Bill in Triplet Cave by Amos Mincin



# Dixie Caverns Salamander

## Center for Biological Diversity

Contact: Trisha Sharma,  
(971) 717-6419 x 429,  
tsharma@biologicaldiversity.org

Endangered Species Protection Sought for Rare Virginia Salamander.

ROANOKE, Va.— The Center for Biological Diversity today petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to protect the imperiled Dixie Caverns salamander under the Endangered Species Act. These salamanders are found in just three locations in Roanoke County, Virginia, and are threatened by deforestation, development, disease and climate change.

“Dixie Caverns salamanders are some of the most imperiled animals in the world and they desperately need Endangered Species Act protections to keep them from going extinct,” said Trisha Sharma, a legal fellow at the Center. “These sparkly little salamanders are an irreplaceable part of what makes caves and forests in the Southeast so special. It’s up to the Fish and Wildlife Service to act urgently to protect them and the places they live before it’s too late.”

Dixie Caverns salamanders are generally small and slender, with white and brassy flecks along their dark bodies. The salamanders were discovered in the Dixie Caverns cave system in Roanoke, where their populations have declined in the

last several decades. An interstate highway was built over the cave system, which causes stormwater runoff and pollution from road construction projects to enter the caves and disrupt the sensitive ecosystem.

Climate change also threatens Dixie Caverns salamanders. They breathe through their skin and require a cool, stable climate to keep their skin moist.

Dixie Caverns salamanders have been found in two other locations where they rely on forested canopy cover, fallen leaves and logs to create the cool, moist microclimates they require. At least one of these populations has likely been destroyed by clear-cutting of forest habitat for pipeline construction.

Virginia is a global hotspot of salamander diversity, in part because of the many microhabitats associated with the unique geology of the Appalachian Mountains. The state is home to nearly 60 different salamander species, including the endangered Shenandoah salamander.



Dixie Caverns salamander  
photo by Matt Neff.

## Cave Updates

- **Catawba Murder Hole Cave, VA** is CLOSED
- **Norman Cave, WV** - Parking problems are ongoing. Vehicles will be towed. Go caving elsewhere.
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- **Giant Caverns, VA** – now owned by WVCC. Must be vertically competent. More info coming...
- **Friar’s Hole, WV** – All entrances on the Mothes’ property are now open. Permission must be arranged with landowner in advance for all trips to any entrance. Group size limited to 20 people, no beginners. Please walk, Don’t drive to these cave entrances. Closed Jan – May be due to poor access & road conditions.



Lowmoor by  
Dave Socky

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# Fall VAR 2025

## october 17–19, RASS Field Station

Since no Grotto has volunteered, the VAR Officers have stepped up to host this one at the RASS Field Station, 6076 Deerfield Road, Millboro, VA 24460.

### Registration

Fill out and email the form AND register at the following website: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/fall-var>

You can also use our [Fillable PDF Registration](#) - edit and save it, then email it and send a check as directed.

If not filling out the PDF using a phone or computer, please print so that anyone can read it; in other words, no scribbling. Instructions on where to email or snail mail the form are on the form.

### Camping

The RASS Field Station has 26 acres of open grass for camping, and a bath house building with a few showers and flush toilets. Portajohns will be available around the property. Please bring a chair, and everything you will need for the weekend because the site is remote with only a few convenience shops nearby. There will be no onsite trash collection or recycling. Please plan to carry all your trash and recycling home with you.

### Cell Service

Cell service at the site is nonexistent to low depending on your carrier. Don't count on it. You may have some limited reception at night, though voice and plain text may work during the day.

**Dogs** - Yes, well-behaved pets and well-behaved owners, please.

**Fires** - Allowed ONLY in designated fire rings.

**Hotels** - Out here? Are you kidding? Maybe in Staunton VA.

**Alcohol** - BYOB

**Caving** - Yes! There are lots of caves in the area.

### Other Activities

Of course! The Vertical Tower will be open periodically throughout the weekend; you must sign a waiver. There are trails and footpaths around the RASS Field Station and hikes nearby!

### Vendors

Cheryl Suitor, cave artist, will be selling her amazing and affordable art, mostly paintings.

Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (SCCi) will be onsite too. Stop by and learn about this fabulous group, make a donation, get some swag (perhaps).

### Dinner

"Fall off the bone" BBQ-sauced chicken

Vegetable lasagna

Garden salad with assorted dressings

Green beans

Assorted salads (such as coleslaw, macaroni salad, or potato salad)

Blueberry pies & apple pies

Unsweet tea & sugar-free lemonade

### Schedule

#### Friday, October 17, 2025

Registration opens at noon

Self-guided cave trips

Trip sign-ups provided we've gotten any trip leaders (Time to be announced)

#### Saturday, October 18, 2025

Self-guided cave trips

Maybe a few led cave trips if we can find any volunteers to lead cave trips

Dinner at 6 p.m. Don't be late!

Speaker: Dave Hubbard, "The surprising and significant story of three, not so little, peccaries"

#### Sunday, October 19, 2025

VAR Business Meeting @ 9:00 a.m. in the pavilion

VAR officially ends at noon, so be sure to get packed up before then

Self-guided cave trips on your way home.





## Fall VAR

October 17-19, 2025

RASS Field Station

Hosted by the Virginia Region Officers

Print clearly and **include ALL**  
people in your group.

Name(s):


Address:


Cell #:

Grotto:

Email Address:

# Vegetarians:

Category	Price Through October 8	Price Starting October 17	How Many	Total \$ Due
Adults (17+)	\$40	\$50	<input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
Kids (6-16)	\$30	\$40	<input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
Little Kids (<6)	Free	Free	<input type="text"/>	FREE
Total Due	Please double check your math!			\$ <input type="text"/>

### How to Pay

Email this form to [ctider@gmail.com](mailto:ctider@gmail.com)

**Zeffy:** Use QR code to right. If you went to Spring VAR, your info is likely already there.

**Check:** Pay to "VAR" with "Fall VAR 2025" memo.

Mail with completed form to:

Carol Tiderman, 2901 Moreland Gap Rd, New Market, VA 22844.



**NOTE:** Saturday dinner guaranteed ONLY to those who pre-register by October 8!

You can also find the registration form online here: [Fillable PDF Registration](#)