

Carbide Dump

September 2026
Vol 61, 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 at Famous Anthony's-Brookside, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke, VA, 24019.

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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, Susan Burr, Dave Collings, Marian McConnell, Andrew Newton, Wil Orndorff, Andrea Futrell, Yvonne Droms, Robert Balch, Dave Jackson, Mia Blyseth, Bambi Marshall, Jeff Huffman and Jerry Fuller.

Cover: *Benedict Cave, VA.* Post cave trip group shot at Benedict Cave, WV August 22, 2026, taken during BRG trip.

L-R: Jess Hester, Lauren Appel, Susan Burr, Ben Hester, Jeff Huffman, Tim Boone, and Jonathan Constantine in the front.
Photo by Ben Hester.

CAVERS CALENDAR

Sept 3-7: The 75th annual Old Timers Reunion, Daily, WV.

Sept 10 - 13: 1st International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK), an International Scientific Conference. See this [link](#) and this [form](#).

Sept 18: BRG meeting 6pm @ Famous Anthony's – Brookside. Roanoke VA

Sept 25-27: Fall VAR @ Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center, 772 E. Hungry Mother Dr., Mation, VA 24352. (near Hungry Mother State Park) Hosted by VPI Cave Club. See this [link](#).

Sept 25-27: Fall MAR @ Newville Lions Club Fairgrounds in Newville, PA. See this [link](#).

Oct 8-11: TAG Fall Cave-In @ Cloudmont Ski & Golf Resort, Mentone, AL. Hosted by Dogwood City Grotto. See this [link](#). <https://Dogwoodcitygrotto.org/TAG-Fall-Cave-In>. Must be an NSS member.

Oct 16: BRG meeting 6pm. NOMINATIONS.

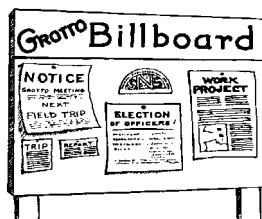
Oct. 17-18: Roanoke GO Fest. Save the date for (maybe) CaveSim!

Nov 14: WVCC Banquet. TBA.

Nov 20: BRG meeting 6pm. BRG Elections.

Dec 6: BRG Winter Party @ Dave & Mary Socky's house. Noon- 5 pm. Pot Luck, BYOB.

June 14 -18, 2027: 2027 NSS Convention. Del Rio, Texas.



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 09/04/2026

Cave Bucks	\$ 147.96
Conservation	\$ 2.00
Equipment	\$ 144.12
General	\$5,104.10
Total	\$5,418.18

BRG Meeting & Trip Notice

The **September 18, 2026** meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held in a private room 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 at the September meeting is yet to be determined.

Grotto Trip

Friars Hole-North to Snedegar

Date & Time: Saturday, September 19, 2026. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market (HROM) at **8:30 am**.

Leaders: Jeff Huffman & Susan Burr

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

Requirements: Horizontal cave, except for one 15 foot arm rappel.

Description

We will be doing a through trip, going in the stream entrance (North) & out Snedegar entrance. There will be an arm rappel, using webbing, down a 15 ft. drop shortly inside the cave. Hopefully we will be seeing some old saltpeter vats in the cave.

This trip is weather dependent. It will be cancelled if there is a lot of rain prior or chances of thunderstorms predicted the day of. Also, there will be some field / research equipment inside the cave. We will NOT be touching or messing with these at all!



It's only September – but it is not too early to think about holding BRG office, giving the current officers a break. BRG Elections are held at the November BRG meeting. Eligibility: (1) A BRG Officer must be a current BRG member AND an active (current) NSS member. (2) No member shall be eligible to an office who has not been a member of the Grotto for at least one year, unless there are no such members available. All officers shall be Regular NSS members. (3) Term of Office – One year. See all the BRG officer requirements at this [link](#) under “Constitution and Bylaws”.

In Sympathy. Former BRG Member Russ Carter (NSS# 22278, FE) recently passed away. RIP OFF ROPE

WINTER Bat Closure for some caves – closure may affect different caves (hibernacula).

WV: winter- closed Sept 1 - May 15

VA: winter - closed Oct. 15 -Apr. 15

VA is still under Summer closure. WV has a longer habitation where bats move into their hibernation caves, but still emerge to feed; this gives bats time to eat fall insects and store fat for hibernation.



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 10 remaining T-shirts! \$12.00 each. L or XL, various colors: red, gold, grey, green, light blue, etc. Contact Susan Burr pondlady97@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

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 the this link - blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com for PayPal.

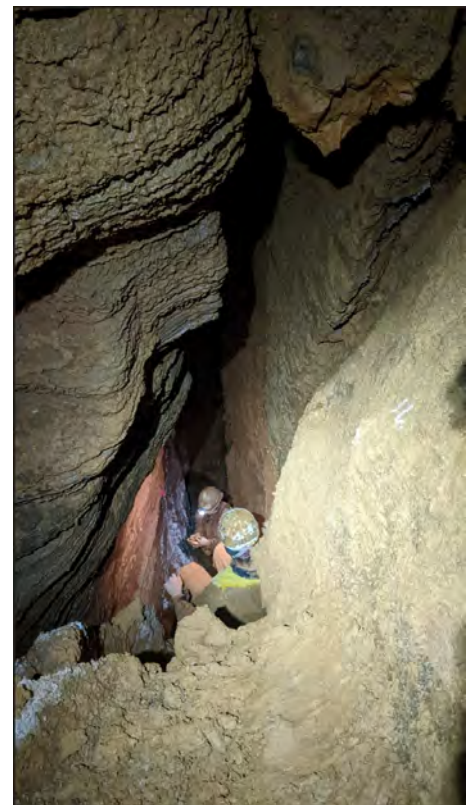
ROCKs - the Warm Springs Valley Project meets every Wednesday, and

some Saturdays. Contact Dave Socky if you would like to participate at the following email: sockydr@cox.net

BRG Xmas Cards. BRG voted to send landowner Xmas cards for 2026. Marian is working on a new card design. Group photos, pretty cave photos are also requested. Postage will be \$.87 per card. We will send 65 cards in 2026. If you have met a new landowner, get their address and BRG will send a card.

2026 Holiday BRG Party. The BRG Holiday Party will be at the **Socky house**. Save the Date! **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2026**. Noon to 6 pm. Potluck, BYOB, casual, family and friends are welcome. Contact Mary Sue Socky sockymss@cox.net or 540-529-3954 for more information.

Support Cave Conservation and Education! BRG has paid \$15.00 for annual dues to: **Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy (MAKC)**. MAKC maintains a cave library and manages several regional caves. BRG also sent \$100.00 to CaveSim to help them buy a new truck. BRG members also volunteer their time to help with CaveSim when it comes to the Roanoke GO Fest.



Looking down into the Warm River Conundrums from Howlin' Cave.
(Dave Socky)

Howlin' Cave Connects to Warm River

By *Andrew Newton*

NOTE: Warm River Cave, VA, is closed except for science and survey trips through the Warm Springs Project group with express permission from the owner.

Saturday, June 27, 2026

On Saturday, June 27, 2026, Eric Schuler, Ian Davis, Andrew Newton, Mia Blyseth, Ivan Quinn, Dave Socky, and Tim Goodloe, arrived at Keith Sweeney's house in the Warm Springs Valley at ~10:00 AM to prepare to explore and survey the breakout from last weekend's dig, which ended at the discovery of a 25' virgin pit! After gathering the necessary gear and well-wishes from Keith's cache, our crew ventured to Howlin' Cave.

The Howlin' crew shuffled around and loosely split into two teams to expedite our exploration. Eric, Andrew, Ivan, and Mia formed the rigging team, while Dave, Tim, and Ian formed the survey team. Around 11:00, we entered the cave. The rigging team was tasked with bolting the pit and dealing with whatever digging was bound to occur at the bottom... or so we thought. Eric installed two bolts on the right-hand wall of the pit while Andrew played nurse, passing him whatever he needed.

Eric was the first to descend, with Andrew shortly behind him. One single hammer swing was all Eric needed to make the passage at the bottom of the pit friendly. A short investigation yielded huge passage prompting Andrew to re-



Eric Schuler trying to smell Warm River (Dave Socky)

turn to the bottom of the pit to relay the information. Eric, while staring down the newly discovered borehole, found a survey point staring back at him, and shouted "I see a survey point!" resulting in rampant jubilation and a game of telephone all the way back to the survey team! We had broken into known Warm River Cave passage!

With Dave sketching, Tim on point, and Ian on instruments, the survey team caught up with the rigging team fairly quickly, having started from A14. Tim and Ian, both lacking vertical gear, volunteered to hike the drill and digging gear out of the cave as it was APPARENTLY not necessary anymore (thanks guys!).

C-Survey continued with Dave sketching, Eric on point, and Andrew on instruments. The passage continued past the duck under at the bottom of the pit (pictured) in the top of a tall canyon in the ceiling of the Conundrums section of Warm River Cave! The passage was largely comprised of crumbly "fake rock" and continued until station "C16" to a moderately easy downclimb into the Conundrums where a connection to sta-

(Continued on page 49)



Virgin 25' pit (Dave Socky)



Connection survey point in Warm River-station DP2 (Mia Blyseth)

(Howlin' continued from page 48)

tion "DP2" was made!

It was around this time Jason Sargent materialized, and was able to admire what became of the hole he helped discover in February 2026.

The team bumbled about in the Conundrums in awe of the large passage and aragonite crystals for a good while before making the sticky, muddy trek to the surface.

By the end of the day, C-survey totaled 170' to tie in, with Howlin' Cave adding a total of 565' of virgin passage (140' vertically) to Warm River, a new highest point, and a second entrance, turning "Warm River Cave" into the "Warm River Cave System." 🦇



The connection crew at Keith's, minus Ian and Eric who left from the cave. L—R: Jason Sargent, Ivan Quinn, Andrew Newton, Keith Sweeney, Dave Socky, Mia Blyseth, and Tim Goodloe.

Meadowbrook Wild Caving

Article by *Marian McConnell*

Thanks to Dave and Mary Sue for coming out for the event at the Meadowbrook Library on July 18.

We had one family of 4 (Dad, Mom, and two boys) come out to enjoy learning about wild caves, watching the *Murder Hole* movie documentary, crawling through the squeezebox, and trying on cave gear. None of them had been in a commercial, or wild cave before; and said they'd hoped to visit Dixie Caverns some day. Well, they won 2 adult tickets

to Dixie Caverns and it was just down the road so that worked out great for all!

Although the turnout was light (perhaps needed more publicity?) the family was engaged and really seemed to enjoy it, and it gave me the chance to learn how to help Dave assemble and disassemble the squeeze box.

Here are some pics from the day. 🦇



Memorial tribute to cave expert Phil Lucas

By *Wil Orndorff* and *Andrea Futrell*. Photos by *Yvonne Droms*

Philip Lucas, president of the Virginia Speleological Survey for 31 years and a former chair of the Virginia Cave Board, died on April 19, 2026. Virginia Cave Board Chair Andrea Futrell and Wil Orndorff, DCR's karst protection coordinator, wrote this tribute.

Phil Lucas (1942–2026) was a passionate advocate for conserving, exploring, documenting and teaching people about Virginia's caves and karst.

As the leader of the Virginia Speleological Survey since its inception in 1974, Lucas created a comprehensive database to manage cave and karst information that now includes 3,032 caves longer than 35 feet. In 1978, Lucas was appointed to the newly established Virgin-



ia Cave Commission, with which he helped draft and pass the Virginia Cave Protection Act of 1979, providing increased protections for Virginia's caves and establishing the Virginia Cave Board.

Lucas promoted responsible access to the organization's database for exploration, science and conservation, while at the same time maintaining the database's security. He worked with the Virginia Natural Heritage Program at DCR

to develop a data sharing agreement so the agency could access cave locations and descriptions for science and conservation purposes while keeping sensitive information such as cave entrance locations out of the public domain. This is particularly important in Virginia because the vast majority of Virginia caves are located on private property, and the broad dissemination of cave entrance locations and descriptions could result in damage to irreplaceable resources as well as criminal trespass.

Around the same time, Lucas negotiated an agreement with the Virginia Cave Board through which the VSS maintains the official state list of significant caves as mandated by the Virginia Cave Protection Act. The list assists the Virginia Cave Board and Natural Heritage in protecting Virginia's significant caves.

The Natural Heritage environmental review staff screens thousands of projects each year for proximity and potential impacts to Virginia's rare plants, animals, and natural communities, including caves. From 2002 to 2009, Lucas volunteered his time through the VSS and reviewed approximately 400 proposed development projects every year, including utility projects and road building through the Virginia Department of Transportation, and proposed subdivisions and business construction. This work supported the Virginia Cave Protection Act, helping to prevent impacts to hundreds of caves. Some reviews completed by him contributed to permanent protection for cave and karst resources.

As a contributor to community science



efforts, Lucas surveyed literally hundreds of miles of cave passages, and participated in and supported atmospheric, hydrological, paleontological and geological investigations in numerous caves in Virginia. He conducted dye traces, including work as the principal investigator in the Virginia highlands, where he documented some of the longest subterranean flow paths in the state. His willingness to work with members of the scientific communities has resulted in discoveries that have increased our understanding of cave development patterns, especially in the Burnsville Cove area of Bath and Highland counties.

Lucas' contributions to the Virginia caving community, the residents of the Commonwealth and our karst resources are foundational and leave a legacy to build upon.



Russ Carter - We'll Miss You!

By *Dave Collings*

Five...four...three...two...one.

It's better to have warm beer for the 32 ounce OTR Chugging event, at least if you don't want your stomach to revolt. The beer has to stay inside for a full 60 seconds or the attempt doesn't count. On this early 90's September afternoon, Russ "Cave Boy" Carter had been in a hurry to get to the pavilion in time and only had access to ice cold cans of beer.

When Russ attended OTR he usually won the 32 ounce contest. He'd surely win again this particular day...if he could just keep the beer down for that full minute. Stomach visibly twitching, Russ braced himself against a pavilion post as the crowd expectantly counted down. At zero, Russ erupted with the most impressive stream of liquids that anyone could ask for...to a loud and an impressed applause.

Some things just stick out in your memory no matter how many years have gone by.

Russ Carter passed away this past Wednesday evening, July 22nd. He was 70.

Russ was a big guy. Big enough at 6 foot 7 that a deployment into submarines seemed an odd assignment for him by the Navy. After he exited the service, he doubled down on that sort of size-defying activity by devoting himself to caving. Another old ex-Navy sub guy, Al Stubbe, pointed him to towards the Tidewater Grotto. There he would hook up with Tom Spina and kick off his love of surveying and project work by helping Tom with the Alleghany County survey.

I got to know Russ in the mid to late 80's while surveying Locomotive Breath. Getting along well, we ended up sharing an apartment for a year or so in Hagerstown, Md. and then later shared a house for a few more years (we toyed with the idea of starting a "Hagerstown Only Grotto" simply so we could call it "H.O.G.").

We caved most every weekend during that time, working on the Alleghany, Shenandoah and Botetourt county surveys...or headed down to southwest Virginia...or even made a few illegal forays over into WV. Dreams of finding

big caves led to a lot of small caves being mapped. And that was fine and a pleasant part of working on county surveys. Russ just wanted to be productive. Pits were a problem for us though. Like me, though maybe to a lesser extent, Russ was at heart a vertical chicken. We tried hard to avoid anything requiring more than a cable ladder. This sometimes didn't prove possible if we were going to get where we wanted to go in a cave, or if we wanted to follow other cavers, like Phil Lucas, our friend and hero, who for some reason was willing to put up with us.

The end of the 90's found Russ moving back to Washington state where his parents lived. There he helped his dad run, and later took over, the family garage door business. But he would make trips back east to see his daughters Amanda and April and his grandkids. He also came back, just about every year, for DOM or the occasional odd trip just to do some Virginia caving. Out on the west coast he became adept at searching online for old historical references, stories and legends about Virginia caves. Hopefully more of those historical tidbits will find their way into future Cellars.

Russ came close to dying in 2015, battling and surviving cancer, though losing his leg in the process. He never lost his sense of humor though. Russ would joke about Floyd Collins' missing leg, the new challenges of butt kicking contests, and pressure me to find him some "Big Hopping Passage." Less than a month after he was discharged from the hospital, Russ sent me an email saying only "When I sit outside just after sunset to let the cool western breeze refresh me, a three legged stray cat that lives in the neighborhood

comes near and mocks me." Russ's caving days were over (except for navigating Phil's Water Sinks tourist trail), but he continued to head back east on trips to see his kids and grandkids and would organize his caving buddies on trips to take his family underground.

Russ served several years as Vice Chair and then Chair of the VAR. Before he headed out west he spent a few years as the acerbic editor of the Region Record. And of course he was a VSS director for many years. But I'll remember more all the times he forced himself through spots that his size shouldn't have allowed so that we could finish a survey. Usually that meant he ended up dragging my suuntos along through the mud too. And I'll remember Russ with his guitar around the campfire, giant cup of swill by his chair, singing his caving songs...then shaking the guitar to try and get his pick back out of the sound hole.

It's been a bit more than 3 months and now both Russ and Phil are gone.

The universe is starting to make some pretty big mistakes.

I'm going to miss my friends. 🐾



**Russ Carter at Water Sinks July 22, 2017
(Dave Socky)**

Patton Cave, WV Trip Report

Article by *Susan Burr*

6/20/2026

Participants: Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Jonathan Constantine, Elena K. (friend of cave owner), C J Miranda, Paul Westbury.

After arriving at the parking area, Jeff & I went to the house to say hi to Valerie, the cave owner, and her friend Elie, who was going to go caving with us. Once we were all geared up we headed through the cow field to the cave entrance. Along the way we got to see some cute calves.

Everyone was impressed with the entrance. This was C J & Elie's first wild cave trip. Paul has only been in Breathing Cave once.

Our goal was to make it to the Football Room. Once we got into the stream passage, we noticed it was dry. There was little to no water in the cave this time due to the drought. In some of the small pools of water left we saw lots of baby salamanders & 3 or 4 tiny crayfish. We did not see any bats or adult salamanders.

Did we get lost any? Well of course we did. We first realized we were lost when we arrived at the same place we had been before. We actually did that a couple of times this day. We did manage to find the Football Room. We did end up going out another way, through the tight belly crawl.

As we headed out, we did get lost again, but we got back on track. Also we checked out a couple of other passages on the way out. The last area we went to

(Continued on page 53)

Windy Mouth, WV Trip Report

Article by *Susan Burr*

7/18/2026

Participants: Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Jess Hester, Ben Hester, Jonathan Constantine, Bambi Marshall, Katie Collins, Conner Aiken.

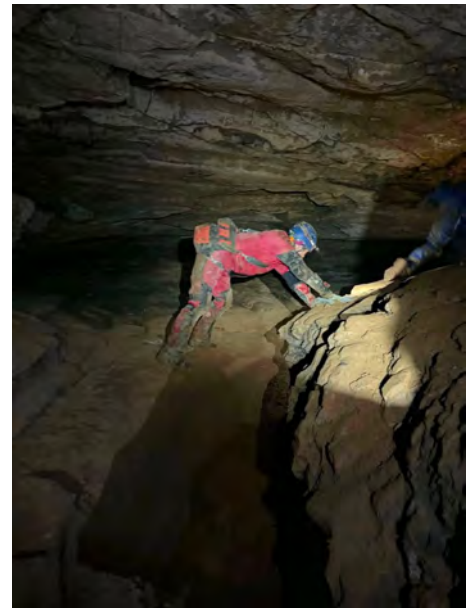
This was the most difficult cave entrance to reach that I have ever done in all my years caving! The entrance is a fair distance from the parking area by the river. The route there is not simple with water, rocks, and lots of overgrowth along the way. Then you have to go straight up a steep & very slippery hill before arriving

at the entrance. We found out doing this in the summer is NOT the ideal time. It took us 1 hour to reach the entrance. We were all hot, thirsty & tired by the time we reached the entrance. We chilled out for about 10 – 15 minutes. Luckily there was a very cold breeze coming from the entrance which helped us cool down as we hydrated & rested.

Not too far in we saw our first & only bat. Then the never ending crawling or stoop walking began! This cave has lots & lots of crawling & stoop walking. Every now & then we did have walking passages. Some of the passages were walking over breakdown. We did have a canyon to get across & one we had to climb down. Neither one were that difficult.

We were excited to have seen 2 of the pretty orange cave salamanders & Katie found about 4 or 5 of another type salamander. We also saw several baby salamanders. There were some cave crickets, centipedes & Katie found a springtail. Jeff found a crayfish.

Because of the late time heading into the cave, we had to turnaround before we had originally planned. Fortunately the room we stopped at was filled with lots of pretties!!! Everyone explored this area & took lots of pictures. We also decided to take a small break & have a snack before heading out. Our in the cave time was 5 hours 15 minutes.



Bambi crossing the void in Windy Mouth, WV. (Jeff Huffman)

Jonathan was the first one to go down the steep hillside. He was on the lowest rope & it broke. Fortunately he was near the bottom. He did fall, but wasn't hurt bad. On the way back to the car several cavers walked in the river or got in the river at the parking area to cool down & clean off some. It still took us 50 minutes to all get back to the car.

On the way to dinner we stopped off at Hokes Mill Covered Bridge. It was right next to the road we were on. We took some pictures & then headed off to Pick-away Pickins for a great meal.



Formations in Windy Mouth, WV. (Bambi Marshal)



(Patton Cave continued from page 52)

is often filled with water and more difficult to get into. Since the stream was dry, we had no problem going through & got to see lots of neat formations.

We had a really nice 4.25 hour cave trip. I asked the newbies if we had lost their confidence in our leading abilities or scared them from wanting to cave again. The consensus was everyone loved it & would like to go caving again!

Afterwards we were going to eat at the Swinging Bridge Restaurant. As we were changing, Jonathan, who I call the problem child, comes up to me in his underwear & tells me he forgot to pack a pair of pants to change into. Of course I got mad because I really wanted to eat my favorite chicken salad sandwich there. I fussed at him since he was at the parking lot when I was asking the newbies if they had a complete change of clothes, including shoes. Jonathan did offer to just sit & wait in the car while we went to eat. I didn't want him to have to do that since it was hot & they do not have the fastest service. I did tell him he

would have to ride in the back in his underwear & I was not going to let him forget about this for a while! Jonathan should have known!!! I had told him the story, while in the car a previous time, of how 2 newbies went with us to a water

cave & forgot to bring a complete change of clothes. I made them sit on plastic bags, in the back of the van, in their underwear since everything they had was wet. Again no dinner afterwards.



Paul Westbury in Patton Cave (Susan Burr)

MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Membership Updates August 2026
BRG has 53 members & 4 subscribers.

Welcome! BRG's newest member!

Jonathan Constantine NSS # 76250

1726 Victoria St
Salem, VA 24153
540-597-2752

Jonathan.L.Constantine@gmail.com

Welcome back!

Duane Owen NSS # 16634

2272 Beverly Heights Rd
Chatham, VA 24531
804-432-0517

Pyrocaver1@aol.com

New address: **Carrie Doupnik**

PO Box 21275
Roanoke, VA 24018

New Email:

Nick Socky sockyns@gmail.com

Help CaveSim

BRG voted to donate \$100 towards CaveSim's cause, but they have quite a ways to go. Dano and I have donated, as have others. Please spread the word to help Dave Jackson and his team replace their truck!

Marian McConnell



CaveSim needs your help

What we do: We teach over 20,000 people each year about cave conservation, exploration, and science. Kids and adults love exploring. They learn to love caves. Most participants will never enter a wild cave, but we're building generations of cave conservation advocates.



Students at a CaveSim SRT demo in Oklahoma



Left: a veteran from the Afghan War says exploring CaveSim helped him overcome PTSD.
3 generations explore in TX

The problem: Our truck has 320,000 miles and just had major engine failure. We're using a rental truck. The new trailer is bigger. A heavier-duty truck is needed. CaveSim does ~100 days of events per year in 8-12 states!

The solution: A new truck to continue our educational work effectively and safely. A ¾ or 1-ton diesel w/ <20k miles. Such a truck is \$60,000-\$85,000.

Why we need your help: CaveSim relies on cavers. Generous cavers helped buy trailers for the mobile caves. Cavers fund education each year at schools, museums, libraries, and Convention. We need your help because doing the education is costly, and we can do far more if you help CaveSim get a new truck.

How to help: Mail a check to CaveSim at: 13 Kreg Ln., Manitou Springs, CO, 80829 (not tax deductible). Or mail a check to the Cave Research Foundation (memo: "for CaveSim") at: CRF Treasurer, Box 600367, Dallas, TX 75360 (tax deductible). Or donate via credit or debit card at www.cavesim.com/support. Let us know if you want to be recognized or anonymous. If you have RMDs (Required Minimum Distributions), QCDs (Qualified Charitable Distributions), or a DAF (Donor Advised Fund), please donate through CRF ("for CaveSim").

Questions? Contact Dave: 914-330-7824;

jacksondmit@cavesim.com



cavesim.com/support

Grotto Trip Log

6/10: Dunn's Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, Bob Alderson, Jonathan Constantine, and Amos Mincin. We went back to work on the dig and try to survey the upstream stream passage. Well, we didn't get to the stream passage because the dig broke out into LOTS of virgin passage! Bill and I surveyed 345 feet and there is more to do yet. There is one side passage (which ends) that is at least 70 feet and there is a side lead that goes down into a passage (or maybe just a room), plus there is a 20-foot pit that will require rigging and a rope. But the way on where the air is coming from is a mining operation. A 5-inch slot that is about 3 feet high goes back at least 12 feet before it "may" open up. It has lots of air. It was a fun 8 hour trip.

6/13: Benedict Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Daniel Martin, Izzy Trenkova, and James Benoit. Team 2: Bill Koerschner, Tristyn Stemple, Gage Keener, and Malie Curry. We split up in the room where the upper level is accessed. My team went up, while Bill's team went straight ahead to continue in the northeast passage. We surveyed upstream until we got to the flowstone choke (it didn't go). Then we climbed up and headed back over the top of the passage we came in on. Within 2 stations we were at the top of the lower room with a narrow slippery ledge around the left side. It was a 15-foot drop to the right and no good handholds. I could do it, but I didn't want to risk our beginner surveyors, so I decided not to continue across the ledge. We headed back down and caught up with Bill. We leap frogged and continued the survey in nice walking passage, going upstream. It was a good 7.5 hour trip with 324 feet surveyed.

6/17: Dunn's Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Bob Alderson, Joe Zokaite, Jonathan Constantine, and Mark Minton. Back to Dunn's to work on the dig and survey the leads that were left. Bob rigged and went down the pit, which turned out to be around 60 feet deep! The rope did not reach the bottom. We will need to

return to the pit. Joe and I surveyed the lead taking off from the top of the pit that Bob worked on. It went for 80 feet where it ended in mud fill. We then went to BO17 where we surveyed "Bill's Balk" passage, which turned out to be not that hard. It was just a small room. While Mark worked on the main dig where all the air is, Jonathan dug open a lead right at BO18 and discovered a small room, but it was mud filled, too. On the main dig, it was opened enough that Bob was able to crawl back about 20 feet to find that more 'mining' would be required at a slight turn to the right. But there was LOTS of air all day. We surveyed around 200 feet, killed several leads, and pushed the dig another 20 feet. It was a good 6 hour day.

6/20: Howlin' Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Andrew Newton, Mia Blyseth, Jacob Whitlock, and Joshua Cosby. (Marissa Loftus and Jason Sargent - surface only). At the main dig, we were able to stabilize a lot of the loose rocks and get them stashed up higher. We finally got the base of the room clear of large rocks and debris which allowed us to dig into the crawl to the left under the headwall. After a couple of hours, the crawlway was looking better and better. Jacob took over and moved a lot of dirt and mud. Finally, we insisted Mia take her turn. She went down to take a look and just disappeared! She had gotten through! The crawl was about 15 feet long with the floor dropping out and then it was walking. Almost immediately there was a 15 to 20 pit! Having no rope or vertical gear, we took some photos and headed out. It was a good 7.5-hour trip with more cave found!

6/24: Triplet Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Bob Alderson, Bill Koerschner, and Jonathan Constantine. Birthday caving! Went to Keith's to pick up rope and quick links. We got in the cave around 11am. Bill did geology. Bob cleaned up the route with a rock hammer. Jonathan and I dug. We brought a sled, a short handled shovel, and a hoe. We built up the wall a bit but pulled spoils through the last crawl. Bob took a turn digging and pulled out a huge rock. I

dug for a while. Bill dug for a bit. We made some progress, but still 10 to 15 feet to go before it looks like it might get bigger. The sled works! Dug until about 5:00 pm. Got out around 6:15pm.

6/27: Howlin' Cave – Warm River Cave, VA. Participants included Dave Socky, Ian Davis, Tom Goodloe, Andrew Newton, Mia Blyseth, Jason Sargent, Eric Shuler, and Ivan Quinn. See article on page 48.

7/4: Squire Boones Caverns, IN. David and Mary Sue Socky visited this commercial cave during the 2026 NSS Convention. Very pretty cave with lots of nice formations.

7/5: Marengo Cave, IN. David and Mary Sue Socky visited this commercial cave during the 2026 NSS Convention. Cool cave with parts that looked like Mammoth Cave. Went on the Dripline tour.

7/6: Indiana Caverns (Binkley Cave), IN. David and Mary Sue Socky and 100 other cavers went here during the NSS Convention Monday night Howdy Party. This commercial Cave is part of the Binkley Cave System which I surveyed in around the mid '70s. This part of the cave was commercialized in 2013.

7/16: Howlin' Cave – Warm River, VA. Participants included Dave Socky, Joe Zokaite, Jonathan Constantine, and Mia Blyseth. We spent time doing route improvements to make travel through Howlin' easier. Once in the Warm River Conundrums, we went left and did the floorless nail traverse (with a safety line), then the Slime Slot (not as slimy as I remembered), then the 25-foot rope rappel and finally the Worm Hole, which popped us out into Warm River proper. We headed downstream, taking a look at the Hot Tubs and then got to the water and found the Ear Dip. One of the primary goals for this trip was to see if the Ear Dip was open considering the planned trip into Warm River for Saturday. Well, it was open! As a matter of fact, the water was low. So, the Saturday trip

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(Quick Trips continued from page 54)

is a go. We headed out at the Worm Hole at 4pm. It took us two hours to get us and all our gear out to the entrance of Howlin' Cave. Not the best way to get out of Warm River Cave. We were out at 7:30 pm, after a challenging 8.5-hour trip!

7/18: Warm River VA Expedition. 3 teams. Bob Alderson. Keeley Owens, Corey Hackley, Mark Minton, Bill Koerschner. Two teams surveyed a bunch of virgin cave in Mouse Heaven. It still goes! One team went in the Howlin' entrance and exited via the historic Warm River entrance, making for the first through trip!

7/18: Windy Mouth Cave, WV. BRG trip. Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Jonathan Constantine, Susan Burr, Jess Hester, Ben Hester, Bambi Marshall, Katie Collins, Conner Aiken. Long trip with lots of crawling. We all had a good time and saw lots of salamanders and pretty formations. Leaving the cave, the handline down to the river broke on Jonathan. Luckily there were no injuries.

7/18: Meadowbrook Library (Shawsville, VA). Cave Day Event was lightly attended. Door Prize: Dixie Caverns had a drawing for 2 free adult tickets to Dixie Caverns – tickets were won by a very deserving family.

7/21: Maxwelton Cave, WV. David Socky, Greg Springer, Maggie, and an assistant. Collected mud and water samples in entrance passage, Cove Creek, &

three locations in Classic Canyon. an interesting 9-hour trip.

7/22: Dunn's Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaite, and Jonathan Constantine. We surveyed the upstream stream passage through the duck under. There were mud banks and high leads on the other side. 132 feet surveyed in a short 2-hour trip.

7/22: Howlin' Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaite, and Jonathan Constantine. We took a blue farm barrel for entrance testing - to see if it would work as a gate on Howlin' Cave. It will. Plans were made to make the gate the next Wednesday.

7/29: Helms Deep, TN. Bob Alderson joined the survey. Helms Deep is 80 miles of passage in a huge maze cave.

7/29: Howlin' Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Rick Royer, Matt Vest, Joe Zokaite, Rick Lambert, Keith Sweeney, and Jim Schurman. Ten bags of concrete, rebar, and a blue barrel along with a wooded lid were the materials used to construct a gate for Howlin' Cave entrance to Warm River. The purpose of the gate was to make the entrance more like it was first found and to protect cattle. Rick Lambert and Keith later fixed up the wooden lid which restricts the airflow back to pre-dig days. There is no lock.

7/29: Triplet Cave, VA. On Saturday (7/25) Andrew Newton and crew dug out the crawl in Triplet and found going cave. Four days later, David Socky, Rick

Royer, Matt Vest, and Joe Zokaite went to start the survey of the new stuff. The mud puddle had dried out. Beyond was a tall narrow canyon, a dome room, and more up climbs. Matt left webbing for a future survey. Vertical gear is recommended. We surveyed 288 feet for a fun 5-hour trip.

8/1: Smokehole, VA. Pickup trip with Jeff Huffman, Susan Burr, Ben and Jess Hester, Lauren Appel, Jonathan Constantine, Bambi Marshall. Explored a lot of the cave and saw several salamanders and a frog. We all exited the water entrance in the very cold water. The passage out was a lot longer than Jeff or Susan had remembered.

8/8: Bob Alderson visited Shoveleater Cave, WV to de-rig some of the vertical areas in the cave.

8/19: Triplet Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, and Jonathan Constantine. We were going to survey the downstream passage. However, we found that the supposed mud puddle had turned into a lake! One to 2 feet of water, and only 2 to 4 inches of airspace. We declined to go through and aborted the trip. The low spot had likely accumulated water from drips and ground water from recent heavy rains.

August: Whippistle Cave, KY. Roland Moore joined Joel Despain, Monica Galvez, etc. Cavers have dug open a new entrance, and the teams set 27 stations in the new entrance areas. Whippistle Cave is 47 miles of long, hard passage.



Scandinavian Caves

By *Robert Balch*

Robert Balch (NSS 41389) recently visited three Scandinavian countries and toured various caves, mines, and bunkers.

7/10/26 – (Sweden) hiked for miles, using trails, ropes and ladders, finally found **Skomakarens Kammare**. There was a metal ladder that descended into the first room. It was a tight squeeze into the second room, and I spied a third room leading to a back entrance.

7/13/26 – (Sweden), Near Gotenburg, Sweden, I found **Kalkgrottorna** or **Hunneberg Grotto**. This was a series of single level limestone mines, partially flooded. There were supposed to be limestone caves and mines in the foot-

hills nearby and above the Västra Tunhems Church. Around the corner, I found some small boulder caves. At Nygårdspark – Naturreservat, more limestone caves were promised on the hillside. There was parking and a trail leading in the right direction. While checking out a possible lead, the bog found me and I almost lost a boot. Even when I spied something up the slope, many large, felled trees prevented access.

7/16 - (Vikersund, Norway) to the **Cobalt Mines**. I joined an informative underground tour.

7/18 - Drove 6 hours East to Bergen (Norway), passing through 31 tunnels

varying in length from 350 m to 20 km.

7/19 - At the **Vedahaugane** (Norway) rest area; found the *manmade cave* with artwork of a sleeping bear & junk.

7/20 - Dumdalen Grotter in Breheimen Nasjonalpark (Norway). Long hikes to ten caves designated **G1 to G10**. Visited **G1**, a 25 m long river cave with two entrances. It actually passes under an old road... And **G3**. **G3**: The climb down entrance is in the middle. I crawled, switching passages about 400 feet up stream. When it appeared to end, I crossed back into another passage and

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(Scandinavia Caves continued from page 55)

up over a lip for another fifty feet to a small back entrance. There was some colorful bacon like rock near the top of the other passage. Returning downstream, the cave went a couple hundred feet past the mid entrance before sump-ing.

7/21- (Svenstavik, Sweden). I was looking for **Hoverbergsgrottan**, a commercial cave. After an arduous drive including a dirt road, I followed signs to a farm. The old man sold me my tickets and said the cave was up the hill about 300 meters. I returned to the car for boots and helmet before heading up. The low entrance led to a metal stairway down about fifty feet. Another stair dropped another fifty feet. I was to experience cave graffiti on steroids, fiberglass artwork, trolls, flags and colored lights. The lower passage continues a few hundred feet up a breakdown slope. The upper passage went about sixty feet in the other direction, dipped and stopped.

7/25 - Went looking for caves and bunkers. Visited **Kasaberget Cave** near Kirkkonummi (Finland). I spent hours looking for old Russian warehouses nearby, but no luck. I sought a bunker in Siuntio. It was easy to find. The bunker turned out to be of the small, most common format used by the Russians during the occupation. Like many others, the bunker was destroyed, perhaps partially blown up. But unlike most other bunkers, it was filled almost to the brim with rocks; one had to crawl to move inside. There was an entrance tunnel 30 feet long, a bulwark, a short jog to the right and a small room behind the bulwark.

7/25 - (Lohja, Finland): Visited **Torhola Cave**, purported to be the largest limestone cave in Finland, with 107m of passage. A good trail to the cave led to a cliff with several openings. At the main entrance was a wooden step ladder. There were several low leads that did

not go. Someone skinnier might have been able to get through. Moving the step ladder enabled reaching a high lead. This dropped quickly and led to a tight twisty feet first crawl, slowly descending for about 150 feet, before it pinched off with breakdown.

7/29 - (Turku, Finland) Visited a cozy little boulder cave, **Luolavuoren luola**. The cave used to extend into the Turku castle, until a water tower was built in Luolavuori and part of the cave, previously 50-60 meters long, collapsed. Currently, the cave is wet, with a few small rooms and fairly short.

7/30 - **Harmala Gorge**, Masko, (Finland). There was a small shelter cave at the far end of the gorge. The view from the top revealed some of the Turku Archipelago (islands).

8/1 - (Sweden) Tried to visit the abandoned **Rallingsberg Mine**. Found the site has been fenced off, replaced by the modern Grind 22 mine.



Bacon in Pritt Cave (Singularity), VA, with Jacob Whitlock.
Photo taken by Dave Socky on September 2, 2026

Fall VAR 2026

September 26-28
Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat
Center, Marion, VA

"Native Critter Cavort,"
 a chance to celebrate all our native VA critters

Download all this general info as [one file](#).

Plants or seeds for the Sunday morning plant swap!

Registration

Pre-registration opens August 1st and will close September 11. Mailed registrations must be received by August 30. Please register online at: <https://tickets.caves.org/w4lvs/2026-fall-var/> or use the QR code here:

Dinner is only guaranteed to those who pre-register, and T-shirts are only available to those who pre-register.

Adults price is \$55, children under 18 are \$25.

Camping

Plenty of room for camping. A bunkhouse will be available first come, first serve, at no additional cost. RVs are allowed, but there are no hookups available. Bathrooms and showers available onsite.

Cell Service

Cell service is non-existent at the campground. Wi-fi is only available to staff.

Dogs

Yes, well behaved pets and well behaved owners, please. Pets must be under constant control of their owners and you must clean up after them. No pets allowed in the buildings.

Fires

Allowed ONLY in designated fire rings, subject to any applicable burn bans.

Hotels

[General Francis Marion Hotel](#) "Southern hospitality at its finest!"
[Lodging in and around Marion](#)

Alcohol

Alcohol is technically not allowed on side. Make wise choices!

Other Rules

- No cutting of trees or vegetation
- No illegal substances, explosives, firearms, or weapons
- No trail bikes or ATVs

Quiet times are from 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. in tent areas and bunkhouses



Caving

Cave trips are a **work in progress**. Both horizontal and vertical trips will be available.

Possible trips include:

- Perkins Cave - Washington County, very limited.
- Newberry-Banes (vertical) - Bland County
- Cyclops Cave (vertical) - Russell County, permits required **
- Salamander Cave (vertical) - Giles County, permits required **
- Buchanan Saltpeter - Smyth County
- Hancock - Smyth County
- Brass Kettle Hole (vertical-ish) - Washington County
- Roberts - Smyth County
- Worley's
- Hairy Hole
- Pound Pup
- Catfish Pit (vertical)
- Molly Hole Survey Trip (vertical)

PLEASE NOTE: All caves on Cave Ridge in Smyth County are absolutely off limits until further notice due to cavers accessing the property without permission. This includes Dead Air Cave, Boxwork Crystal, Radon, Horseshoe Pit, and Snocone.

** These caves are owned by SCCi. You must request a permit prior to coming to the VAR!

For more information, see this [link](#)