



Birmingham Grotto
Newsletter

November 2024
Volume 54 Number 11

BGN Calendar

Details at Grotto meetings, on Grotto egroup, & on Facebook

Dec 3

**** Grotto meeting **** 7pm CT (First Tues.) Hybrid
at **Derby Bar & Grill** - 3630 6th Ave S,
Birmingham, AL 35222

- 6:00pm Grotto Christmas Party
- 7:00pm Grotto elections & meeting

Nov 15

Annual Moses Tomb Campout

**May 2-4,
2025**

SERA Cave Carnival, East Fork
Stables Campground, Mena, AR,
Hosted by East TN Grotto

Birmingham Grotto Online! Find us on:

Members eGroup {https://groups.google.com/#!forum/bham_grotto}
Facebook {<https://www.facebook.com/groups/150556684966936/>}
CaveChat {<http://www.forums.caves.org/viewforum.php?f=47>}
or
www.bhamgrotto.org

Disclaimer

Caving trips are led by volunteers. No Grotto committee reviews any trip leader's qualifications. New cavers should inquire about the nature of the trip and the experience of the leader in advance. Those participating in the trips should be aware of their limits. On vertical trips all participants are expected to supply their own gear and be knowledgeable about rigging and safe practices.

The Birmingham Grotto Newsletter is published approximately twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto, Inc., of the National Speleological Society, Inc. Other NSS Internal Organizations may reprint material provided credit is given to this publication and the author. The Birmingham Grotto will exchange publications with other NSS Grottos. Exchange newsletters should be emailed to editor@bhamgrotto.org or mailed to:

Birmingham Grotto
P.O. Box 59607
Birmingham, AL 35259

Articles, trip reports, graphics, poetry, and any other speleo-related materials are welcome. **Email submissions to: editor@bhamgrotto.org** or contact us for other options. **The deadline for publication is 2 weeks before the next Grotto meeting;** however, the Newsletter is limited to 8 pages per month and submitted material may be held for future issues. Annual dues are \$15.00 per individual and \$20.00 per family, which is payable on October 1st. Dues are prorated for anyone joining during the year. A Lifetime membership is currently available for \$250. Newsletter subscription rate is \$15.00 per year. See PayPal link on the Grotto website (bhamgrotto.org).

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Secretary

José Pilco NSS 71404
secretary@bhamgrotto.org

Treasurer & Member List

Lee Abts, NSS 70690
treasurer@bhamgrotto.org

Immediate Past President

(Executive Committee Member)
Tawnya Abts NSS 70101

On the cover...

**Shane Stacy Suspended at
Oct '24 TAG Fall Cave-In**
(Photo by Van Coffey)

Other Supporters

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Corrections to the posted version accepted thru the end of this month-Eds.

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Grotto Equipment Wranglers
David McRae and Jeff Harrod

More about Caves and Caving National Speleological Society

The Birmingham Grotto recommends that all Grotto members join our parent organization. More info can be found at <http://www.caves.org/>

Southeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.

The SCCi is a wonderful organization led by cavers for cavers, which purchases and protects caves with reasonable management. Learn more at <http://www.scci.org/>

Prefer Paperless?

Grotto Newsletter e-subscriptions are now available on request. Just let the Treasurer and Editors know, confirm your email, and you can get the next issue, in color, before the meeting.

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes

The October 2024 live meeting of the Birmingham Grotto was called to order by President Dave Mcrae at 7:13PM.

New Members

N/A

Announcements

1. Dues are due in October (PayPal). Reminder post will be posted via Lee Abts. Dues are 15 single 20 family.
2. TAG is October 3rd-5th.
3. Christmas party will be December 3rd, the first Tuesday night of December. It will be at Brown Derby at 6 PM. More details are found on the Facebook event post.
4. The Sloans Valley trip will be the weekend of October 19th with Dr. Barnes.
5. October 19th Tennessee Cave Survey is hosting a meeting at Sewanee – The University of the South.

Treasurer's Report

(Waiting for treasurers report)

Treasurer, Lee Abts, reported on Grotto account activities since the last meeting:

Beginning Balance: \$10,155.91

Income: \$0.00

Dues: \$0.00

Total Income: \$20.00

Expenses:

Dave Mcrae auction and sinking cove food: \$370.76

Total Expenses: \$370.76

Ending Balance: \$9,785.15

Outstanding Debts:

Outstanding checks and commitments*

Total of outstanding items: \$0.00

Total balance taking into account above: \$9,785.15

New Business

1. TAG party is this weekend. We will make a post when we know where we were located in TAG
2. Snailshell got postponed due to rain. We're rescheduling the trip for the month of October potentially.
3. We are looking to have a Moses' Tomb Trip/ Campout at the end of November.

- The Ugly sweater trip to Anderson is in December. Wil Lim is leading the trip.

Old Business

- Graves Cave gate is coming. The steel has been donated. We're planning a workday once all the materials have been delivered.
- T-shirts. Tawnya will post the prices again. Pay lee for t-shirts.

Trip Reports

1. Tawnya – (following up)
2. Van Coffey, Ray Merrill, Amber Lee, Brent Koch, James Goggins – Jess Elliot
3. Jose: My trip was to Limrock with Lee Abts, Wil Lim, Devin Machowicz, and the Hopper boys (Lawson and his sons Finn, Judah, and Lawson).

Next Grotto Trip

TAG

Program

N/A

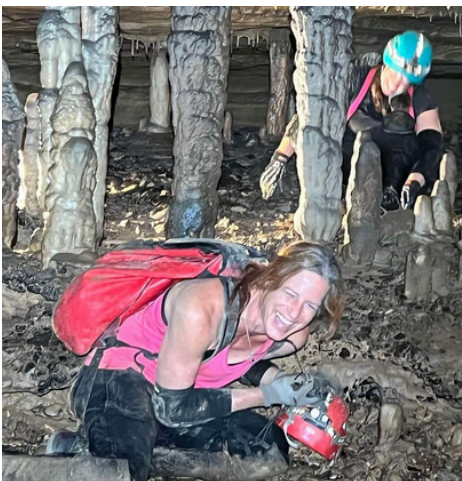




Above: Lee Abts photographed mid-crawl by Amber Yeakle at the 2024 TAG Fall Cave-In

Amber reports: "This was exactly what I needed yesterday - an incredible cave adventure with an incredible group of people. It made my heart and soul happy while simultaneously making my muscles sore. Decent trade off. So many amazing pics and videos from yesterday that it was hard to narrow it down. **Thanks to Lee, Kelley and Van for some of the pics!**" Van reports: "Yesterday's trip will probably go down as one of my favorite ever. I love to pieces every single person on that trip. Still grinning and there's still so much to see."

Below: Van Coffey, Lee Abts, Shiny Partsup (Kevin Giles), Kris Baldwin, Tony Tomasello, Katie Mueller



Top left: Van & Amber

Lower left: Van, "After I fell on my butt to avoid grabbing the formations for balance. Nature over bruises!"



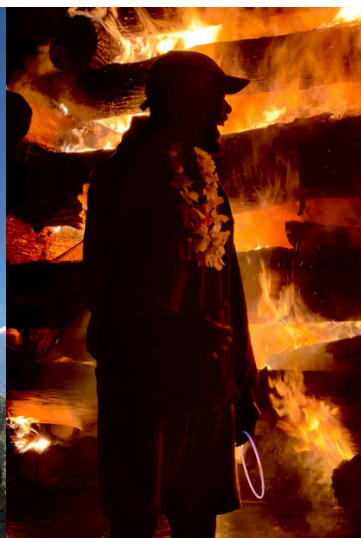
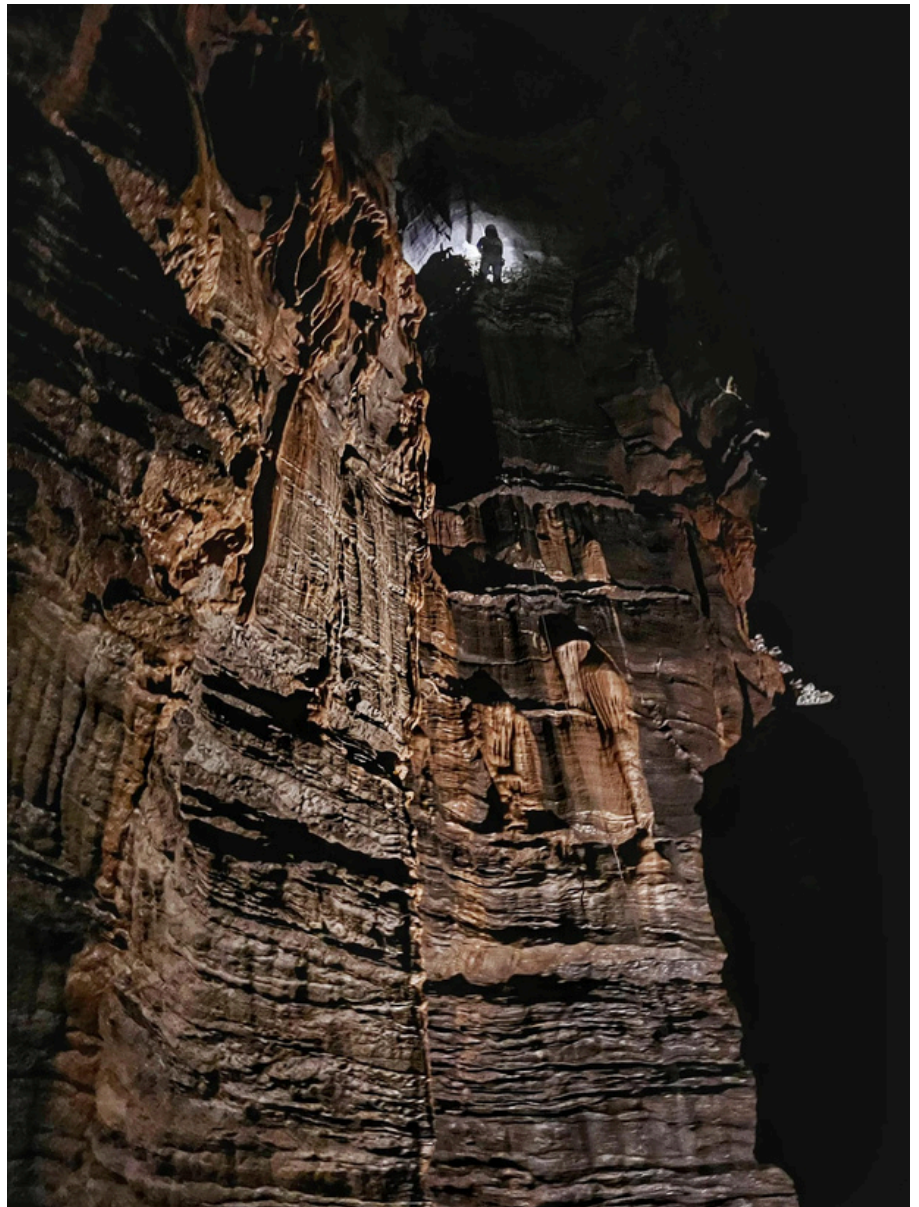
TAG

By Amanda Bridges Dunn

Thank you so much to everyone who helped with the TAG fall cave-in this year! Each year Andy Zellner works hard to find people who are willing to lead trips and 5 of us lead official trips this year! Thank you for your help! Shiny Partsup Lee Abts Bradley Jones James Lavigne

Thank you to David McRae and all of those who helped him throw the best party at TAG! So many people did an excellent job of setting up and breaking down and your help is appreciated!

ETA: thank you @shiny for saving a life! We had no idea we had a newbie on my trip. Thankfully, Shiny was at the bottom of the pit giving a stranger his gear, I was at the top getting the haul system ready. Thankfully, it all worked out.

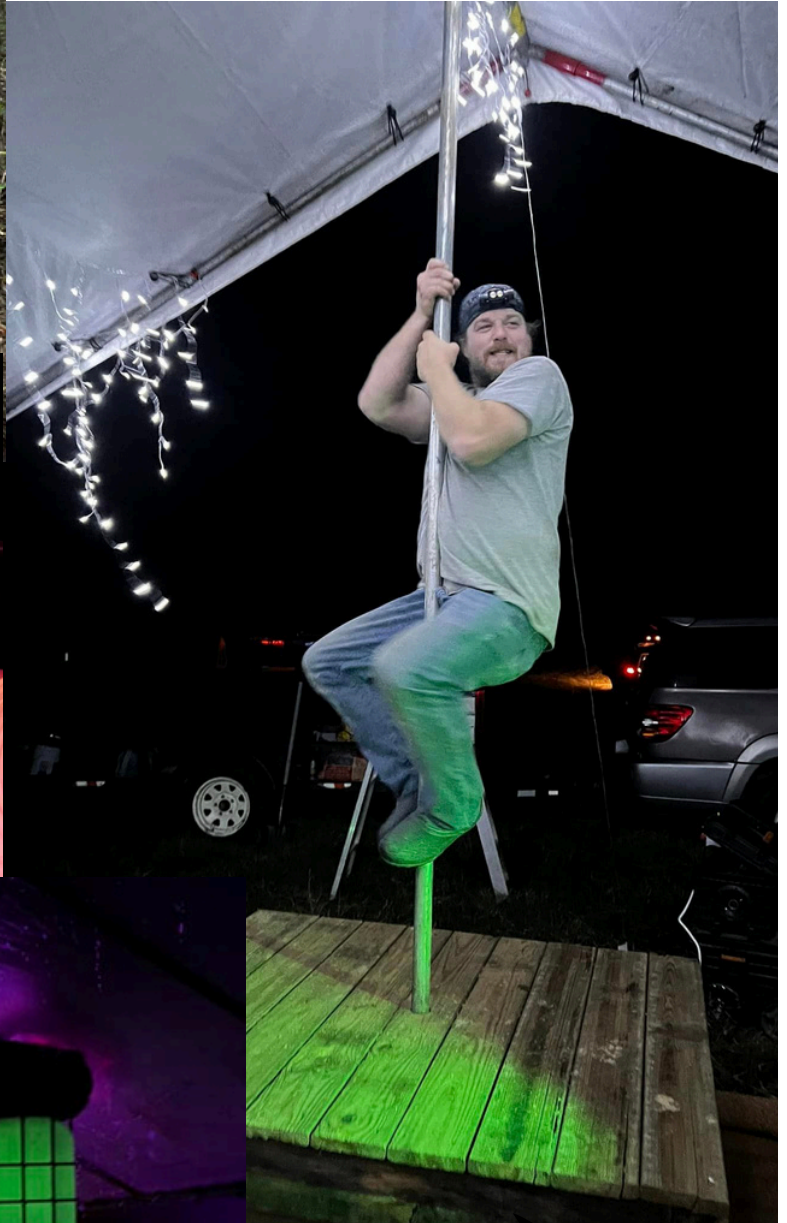


TAG Fire Stack Before (left), During (right) + fire sprite (center)



Buncha Birmingham Grotto caver cuties playing and partying at at TAG 2024

Counterclockwise from Left- Van Coffey and friend, Jose Pilco, friend and Van, it was a dark and stormy rave, & below, Lee Abts doing the dance of seven veils



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS-- Lifetime Caver Stories

(From National Speleological Society Community Page)

Howdy all, I am Ken Moore co-chair for the NSS 2025 Cobleskill, NY convention and this is an invitation for your lifetime cavers to have a part in it.

The theme of 2025 is "A Lifetime of Caving". We all know that once you go caving it changes you on some level, so what I am looking for is how has caving affected, changed or inspired your life. These stories can be funny, sad, inspirational, or insightful or just plain silly.

What is going to happen with these stories? Well, they are going to be compiled into a little book that will be part of our convention so all your cave family can appreciate what you have to say.

Now I am not looking for perfect writing skills but instead I encourage you to write like you are talking to a caving buddy, keep it real. There will be very little to no editing.

So here are the rules:

- It must be a page and a half at most single spaced.
- A minimum of 25 years of caving. I figure if you have been caving for 25 years, you are in it for life.
- If it is a story that you cannot put your name to, do not send it.
- **Stories are due by December 1st 2024.**
- Please include your Name and NSS number.
- Send you stories to caverken@gmail.com.

I am excited to read everybody stories and to see how this experiment goes!



Calvin and Hobbes



News & Notes

by

Dave Howell

*** November is upon us, and with it national ELECTION DAY on the 5th. Which is also Grotto meeting day this month. This is/was a monumentally important election, can't wait to get up tomorrow and see whether we're going to be living in a representative democracy or a fascist dictatorship, also whether Florida votes to legalize recreational marijuana. (We may need it if the government goes fascist!) Beyond that, of course November also brings us THANKSGIVING, America's traditional feast day, as well as the beginning of RIDGEWALKING SEASON, this year, at least - because of the wonderful but dry Indian summer Alabama enjoyed through most of October, the leaves have stayed on the trees longer than usual, and the fall colors are muted. As November gets under way this will change, increasing visibility in the woods, a boon for cavers, ridgewalkers, and hunters alike. The hunting schedule for Skyline WMA was published last month, so I will not revisit it now, will simply repeat my encouragement to be safe out there and report all finds to the

Alabama Cave Survey, even non-qualifying karst features. And be sure to write trip reports for the BGN!

*** Unless the temperatures in north Alabama take a really sharp downturn, we will have to watch out for SNAKES in the woods in this unseasonably warm fall weather. Although a snakebite is no joke, I guess we have it better than the folks in south Florida, who are battling an invasive infestation of Burmese pythons. Originally sold in pet stores, but released in the wild by buyers when the snakes got too large for their liking, these snakes have been multiplying, decimating native wildlife in south Florida. They have been known to swallow full-grown whitetail deer, which typically weigh around 175 pounds, whole, which gives you an idea of the threat level. Recently a 17 foot 2 inch, 195-pound example was caught, although the current record is 18 feet, 205 pounds. Sure am glad I don't have to look out for those on my ridgewalks!

*** Some interesting news reaches us from southern China: investigations in a stream cave in the province of Guanxi, which shares a border with Vietnam, found a previously unknown

species of cave fish, designated *Paranemachilus liui*, or Liu's cave loach. This fish is about 2.5 inches long, is yellowish-brown with smooth scales, bright yellow fins, catfishlike whiskers, and neon-yellow eyes. Particularly interesting is that the cave waters that are its habitat are described as "highly polluted." The pollutant was not stated, but obviously Liu's cave loach is a tough and adaptive little creature. In these days of threatened and vanishing species, it's refreshing to be reminded that there are still some out there we haven't seen before.

*** As a followup to Halloween, OLAN SUDDETH reports that Samhain, the Celtic feast of the dead corresponding to the Christian All Hallow's Eve, is correctly pronounced SOW-wen, the first syllable the same as the word for a female pig. Thanks, Olan, for setting us straight on that. Wouldn't want to mispronounce "Samhain" in conversation.

*** Public service announcement: Overindulgence at the Thanksgiving table may result in increased difficulty in those tight crawls.

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P.O. Box 59607

Birmingham, AL 35259

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

