

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO
NEWSLETTER

MAY 2015
VOLUME 45 NUMBER 5



BGN Calendar Details at meeting and on egroup

May 30	SCCi Annual Member’s meeting – join now so you can attend!
Jun 9	2 nd Tues Grotto Meeting 7pm, Ruffner Mtn Nature Center, 1214 81st St. S. 35206
Jun 20	(tentative) Grotto trip to Gross Skeleton. Contact Ray Merrill for details
July 13-17	2015 NSS Convention, Waynesville, MO. More info: nss2015.caves.org
July 14	2 nd Tues Grotto Meeting 7pm, Ruffner Mtn Nature Center, 1214 81st St. S. 35206
Aug 20-24	Rescue Technician Cave Rescue I/II Class, see www.hcru.org/rescueclass for information and registration.

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(Executive Committee Member)
Fennigan Spencer, NSS 61677

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.

On the cover...

April Grotto scout trip to Tumbling Rock
Trip Leader Judy Ranelli assisting a scout from below, Bruce White
assisting by holding back the water from above
Photo by Fennigan Spencer

Birmingham On-Line!
Find us on Facebook,
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The *Birmingham Grotto Newsletter* is published 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. 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. The subscription rate is \$15.00 per year. The Birmingham Grotto will exchange publications with other NSS Grottos. Exchange newsletters should be sent to:

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

Articles, Trip Reports, Graphics, Poetry, and any other speleo-related material should be sent to the Editors via the email address given. Submissions via email should be directed to: editor@bhamgrotto.org. The deadline for publication is the 27th of the month; however, the Newsletter is limited to 12 pages per month and material may be held for future issues.

More About Caves and Caving

National Speleological Society

The Birmingham Grotto recommends that all grotto members consider joining 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. Find out 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 April 14, 2015

Visitors

No visitors but the Money's were back in attendance. Welcome Back!

Minutes

March 9, 2015 Meeting Minutes were accepted.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Lindsey Bean reported the following activities on the grotto account since the last meeting

Beginning Balance: **\$4552.73**

Income:

Dues \$20.00

2015 Grotto Auction \$70.00

Total Income: +\$90.00

Expenses:

Printing \$57.86

Meal, Last Month's Speaker' \$11.85

Total Expenses: -\$69.71

Ending Balance: **\$4573.03**

Unpaid shirts; Terri \$16, Fenn \$25 (Tim/Greg)

Announcements

Chris Davis aka Howdy was in a recent accident and has a fractured skull, damaged ribs, among other things but is recovering so continue to keep him in your prayers.

We have some T-Shirts left that we need to sell. (1)Small Long Sleeve, (1)Medium Long Sleeve, and (1) Medium Short Sleeve. If interested please reach out to Lindsey Bean and or bring some \$ to the next grotto meeting.

4/18/15 – Scout trip to Tumbling Rock. Meet at Tumbling rock at 10AM. Judy Ranelli is looking for more volunteers so please let her know if you will be coming.

4/25/15 – Earth Day Cleanup of Bryant Mountain. Meet at 9am at Logan's Gas Station off 65 exit 284. Dinner and other caving opportunities after the cleanup. David Caudle has also lined up permission for a visit to Ward Cave after the cleanup. Dinner signup sheet will be started up on egroup.

5/02/15 - Dave Howell invited everyone to the annual Walls of Jericho Hike/Campout weekend of 5/2. More info about this can be found in the newsletter.

You may choose if you wish to begin receiving electronic copy of the monthly newsletter via email pdf instead of a paper copy via snail mail or at the meeting. By opting for this you should get your copy before those at the meeting and will also save the grotto some money on printing and postage. If interested please let Valerie Howell or Lindsey Bean know.

Wanting to join or renew your grotto membership? If so you can send payment to PayPal account, bhamgrotto@gmail.com. You may also still mail in check to P.O. Box 59607, Birmingham, AL 35259 or hand deliver to the treasurer, Lindsey Bean, at the next meeting. \$15 Single | \$20 Family. Add \$1 if paying by PayPal to cover convenience fees. Once paid you will receive or continue receiving the award winning newsletter and access to the Yahoo group for latest date on caving trips.

Old Business

Jaime Nobles, Conservation Land Manager at Ruffner, thanked the grotto members who came out and re-blazed the trails.

Reviving nonprofit status is getting closer and should be resolved soon.

Bryant Mountain Cave has not received any additional trash or

vandalism since its recent gating mostly because those wishing to visit currently do not have a way to gain access. Some additional keys will need to be made and some signs posted for whom to contact for access.

New Business

5/08/15 – SERA weekend with a possible trip to Xanadu

Dave McRae mentioned possibility of the grotto doing a paddle this year for our annual grotto splash since most members have boats now. Possibly lower Cahaba with an option to campout.

Grotto Trips

4/25/15 – Ward Cave after immediately following Bryant Mountain Cleanup

Trip Reports

Dave and Valerie Howell, Dave and Edna Caudle, Milo Washington, Andy Zerbe, Gregory Brecht, Jennifer Potts, Bradley Jones and JB Hubbell attended the annual ACS meeting. 28 new caves were reported this year and a number of those were submitted by Birmingham Grotto members so keep them coming. ACS also recommended turning in your secret caves as it's likely only a matter of time before someone else does.

Alan Cook and Cassie Perry visited Blue Springs, Florida Caverns State Park, and paddled Santa Fe River in Florida.

Ryan Carlson, Brook Boyd, and Ben Deason paddled a 10 mile section of Brushy Creek and explored the numerous tributaries and waterfalls including Coal Mine Branch Falls and Sougahoogdee Falls.

Dave McRae paddled Little Satilla River with Twee, Jeff Harrod, Frank Case, Hazard, Allan Bullen, Cassie & Luke Perry, Alan Cook, Gary Barnes, Lindsey Bean, and Chris Garrison.

Ray Merrill went back to Rickles with Jerry Saulsberry, Tim Harris, and Juan Santiago to continue pushing some additional leads that they did not have time to push on their last 10+ hour trip. Ray said there was still some additional passage left to push in this cave that has never been surveyed, hint, hint.

Ray Merrill also paddled Talladega Creek with Judy Ranelli, Dave Howell, Allan Bullen, Tim Harris, and Juan Santiago.

Fennigan Spencer paddled Big Canoe Creek with Joel McGuire, Johnathan and Sherry Gladden, April Tuck, and Randall Donaldson.

Bradley Jones did some ridgewalking with Jay Clark and Andy Zerbe, Plantation Springs Cave with Andy Zerbe, a secret cave with secret people, Florida Caverns and Hinson Conservation Area in Florida with family, and visited Cave Mountain Cave after the annual ACS meeting.

Want more detailed trip reports? I think we all do so write a trip report!

Program

David Caudle did a presentation on a 2004 trip to Romania.

Respectfully submitted,

Bradley Jones

The First Grotto Trips

David Caudle shared three 1957 trip reports from the archives, the first of which was printed here last month. Original typeface, format and sketches preserved, specific location information removed.

Guffey Cave

Date Visited: September 15, 1957; November 30, 1957; December 14-15, 1957.

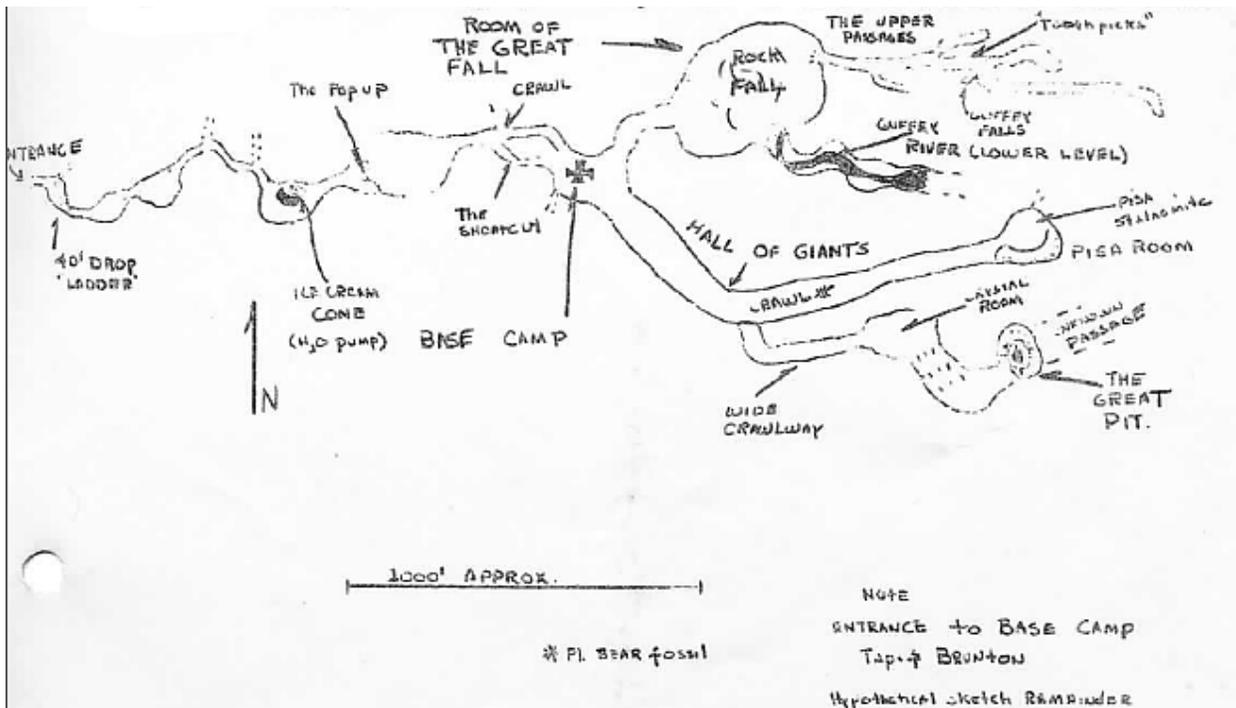
Men in party:

September 15
 Walter Anderton
 Charles Armstrong
 James Blackwell
 Wilfred Smith

December 14-15
 Walter Anderton
 Charles Armstrong
 James Blackwell
 Ben Connley
 Don Davis
 Wilfred Smith
 Harrison Steeves
 Tom Taylor

November 30
 Walter Anderton
 Charles Armstrong
 James Blackwell
 Wilfred Smith
 Harrison Steeves

Guffey Cave, probably one of the largest caverns in the southeast. "Guffey" has never been fully explored, but the Birmingham group has spent over 60 hours attempting exploration on three separate trips. The following sketch map shows graphically some of the features of this fine cavern.



with both its upper and lower (water) passageways was explored. Many speleothems, some very unique ("Toothpick" Stalagmites in the upper passageway), and an interesting cave rat (*Neotoma magister*) nicknamed "George" were noted. Due to lack of equipment the party returned to the entrance without exploring "The Hall of The Giants".

Two weeks later (Dec. 14), a larger better equipped (sic) party returned to Guffey for two days of exploration. It was on this occasion that the Birmingham group met Roger Wilson and three other Redstone cavers (the only other previous group in Guffey) and both groups explored the cavern together. Additional passageways in the upper level, "Guffey Falls", "Hall of Giants", and the "Pisa Room" were added to the exploration list. Probably the most

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important find, however, was the side passage near the bend in "Giants Hall". This crawlway leads to the very beautiful crystal room containing large gypsum and aragonite crystals and on to a very large pit. This pit over 200 feet deep and 20 feet in diameter was not crossed, but the passage continued.

Guffey cave is owned by Messers Smith, Bevel, and Burke who operate a water pump in the third room of Guffey. They have now completely sealed the entrance. However, entrance can be gained through a locked door with their permission. Mr., James C. Campbell (Park 82115 Grant), a cave enthusiast and postmaster at Grant is a good man to contact before asking the owners.

Note

In October 1957 parts of a Pleistocene bear were found fossilized in "The Giants Hall" by Roger Wilson's group.

Guffey Cave was first visited on September 15, 1957 by the Birmingham group on their first North Alabama Speleological expedition. Due to lack of available time only the first room was entered, and the true dimensions of the cave were kept secret from the group. However,

Trinity Cave

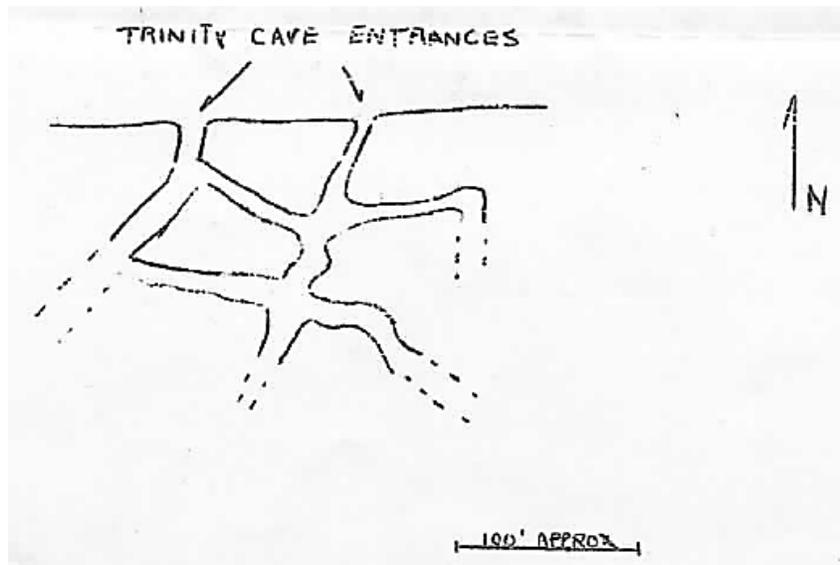
Date Visited: September 14, 1957

Men in party:

- Walter Anderton
- Charles Armstrong
- James Blackwell
- Wilfred Smith

Trinity Cave is located in a hillside west of Trinity, Alabama. The cave is confined to a stratum of course (sic) bedded limestone about 20 feet thick. The passages form a labyrinth of narrow solution enlarged joints which converge at acute angles.

This cave which was the first visited on the North Alabama Speleological Expedition was unimpressive and contained no depositional features.



CH Armstrong Jr.
Recorder.

CH Armstrong Jr.
Recorder.

Another Lost and Found Known as Pilot Knob

Bradley Jones NSS 63915, SCCi 2946 Sustaining

I discovered there was a cave not far from my home known as Pilot Knob. I headed to the general location and explored both sides of the road on 2 separate trips. I did not find any potential karst on either of those trips. I spoke with a nearby landowner before returning home on my second trip. He informed me that he had lived there 10 years and grew up in the area. He knew nothing of a cave at this specific location but tipped me off on another that was at the bottom of a cliff he used to rappel.

Having exhausted my efforts on initial attempts I decided to reach out to ACS. I was then informed that there was a significant error and that the cave was actually expected to be located 8 miles away. There was however little or no info of anyone ever visiting the cave. This was more than enough to motivate me to make yet one more attempt. After all the idea of going somewhere so few have ever been is what attracted me to caving in the first place. So one morning on my way to work I decided to make a quick peak. This area indeed looked more promising however it was extremely overgrown and I could tell would take more time to explore than I had that morning so I would plan to return once more.

Not long afterwards I spoke with an old friend, Mike, who had previously tipped me off on relocating long lost Malone. He informed me of a cave he visited many, many years ago in the exact area where I was looking to locate Pilot Knob. I was pretty confident after hearing this that I would locate the cave on my next attempt. I had recruited a few to meet me morning of 03/09/14 between 6:30-7AM with plans to bottom Malone that Mike and I had just

relocated. I like to get an early start to maximize hours but unfortunately the time changed due to daylight savings and everyone slept in. Malone's was now out so I decided I would instead head out on my own and attempt to relocate Pilot Knob.

I parked in roughly the same spot as the previous trip but decided on a different approach as the fewer thorns and whatnot to rip me apart the better. Mike had told me there was a trail that would lead you to the cave when he visited but I saw no signs of a trail anywhere. I attempted to explore northwest to north until I came across some potential karst. Once upon the promising area I started checking everything that looked like a possibility. Unfortunately nothing was so I started making my way back thinking I wouldn't be so lucky today. I was ok with this since just yesterday we had relocated Malone along with the new find known as Tucker's Squeeze.

So thinking I was done I just happened to stumble upon the entrance. Funny how that happens. It was a crawl so I put on my helmet and peaked in and it immediately looked better than anything else I had investigated today so I headed in. I was in walking passage once I was through the crawl. I did not observe any formations. Instead most of what I saw was crickets, spiders, and lots of signatures carved in the passage walls. Also noticed outside the exit a name painted in red above the entrance but it was faded and hard to make anything of it. I had intended on following this same elevation back to the jeep to see if I might find anything else but was quite pleased and decided to call it a day.



Photos by Bradley Jones



Earth Day 2015 Grotto

Thanks to the Caudles for hosting, to Bradley Jones for the photo, and to them plus the following for making it a success: Alan Cook, Cassie Perry, Frank and Donna Ray, Tylon Gibbs, Ben Wanagat, Andy Zerbe, Lindsey Bean, David McRae and Chris Garrison (plus at least two unidentified younger folk).



Walls of Jericho Hike 2015

Photo and thanks sent in by Martha Mills who, along with Reed Hilton, Forrest Hilton, Patty Bank, Bryan---, Ariel ---, Bryan’s dog and day hiker David Caudle, enjoyed the beautiful scenery.



Mark Your Calendars!

Upcoming National Speleological Society Headquarters Volunteer Weekends

All skill levels are welcome!

Free indoor and outdoor camping.

Full kitchen available.

Encourage your grotto to claim a weekend and a project!

For more information and to RSVP, please email hqvolunteer@caves.org or hqcomm@caves.org.

March 14 - 15, 2015
 March 28 - 29, 2015
 April 11 - 12, 2015
 April 25 - 26, 2015
 May 2 - 3, 2015
 May 30 - 31, 2015
 June 13 - 14, 2015

News & Notes

Dave Howell

*** Welcome to May, which brought us the SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL this past weekend, the 8th-10th, in Jamestown, Tennessee (trip reports?); and which will of course bring us Memorial Day weekend, the gateway to summer, traditionally vacation time for a lot of folks. Have you planned your vacation yet? If not, give it some thought, the possibilities are endless! How about an expedition to the deep pits of Mexico? Or to the world class caves of Romania? A trip to observe and photograph the cavedwelling crocodiles of Madagascar? Ridgewalking the northern Rockies in search of the troglodytic lair of the sasquatch? Exploration of the mammoth dry-cenotelike pits of Mars? (Okay, that last one might be prohibitively expensive, I must admit.) In any case, happy travels, and let us know what interesting things you do this summer. We can't wait to hear.

*** Due to a prior family commitment Valerie and I had to miss EARTH DAY at DAVID and EDNA CAUDLE's this year, but I hear it went well. The annual cleanup of BRYANT MOUNTAIN CAVE, recently gated by our Grotto at the behest of oldtime Grotto member LAURENCE BREELAND, evacuated a truck bed full of trash from the cave and removed or mudded graffiti. Refer to the

photo of the event elsewhere in this issue. How about more photos or a trip report or two from those who did make it? We'd be glad to publish those next month. Or the month after that. Or in the gelid darkness of winter it might be refreshing to read about a trip in the warmth of spring.

*** I hear next month's Grotto trip will be GROSS-SKELETON CAVE on Saturday, June 20, presumably the customary through trip. Don't forget your wetsuit and personal flotation, this trip is a damp one with much wading in knee-to chest-deep water, and at least 2 swims. (Neither is longer than perhaps 10-15 yards.) The payoff for this travail is the dry upper walking passage with its impressive rimstone and fine formations, including the bicolored Integration Formation. Y'all come!

*** I hear that JUDY RANELLI has been teaching a class in Basic Rivercraft, techniques of river reading and running applicable to canoeing and kayaking. I hear that a number of Birmingham Grotto personnel participated therein. I expect the next Grotto river trip will be well attended. (Cahaba lily trip later this summer, anyone?)

*** Congratulations to RYAN MORGAN on his recent graduation from the honors program at

Flathead Valley Community College in Kalispell, Montana. Good job, Ryan, especially considering the killer commute from Birmingham.

*** My annual WALLS of JERICHO hike and campout took place the weekend of May 2-3, and went well. Total in attendance this year were 7, including REED and FORREST HILTON, MARTHA MILLS, and several noncaver friends. With 2 different Boy Scout troops filling the campground with an estimated 40 campers, the place was crowded; we set up in a little-used campsite across the creek from the cemetery, well away from the noise and brouhaha of the Scouts and close to an abundance of firewood. The cave at the Walls was pumping water more strongly than usual, the creek and the big waterfall were flowing, the first time in several years that I've seen that. (See the photo elsewhere in this issue.) The Walls and surrounding woods were gorgeous in their spring finery, and the skies were cloudless. With the moon moving toward full that Monday, the night was almost bright enough to render our headlamps and flashlights unnecessary. Funny thing: by the time we crawled from the sack Sunday morning, there was no trace of all those Scouts! Perhaps they didn't sleep well in the bright moonlight.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED