

# Carbide Dump



January 2023  
Vol 58, No 01

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 6:30p at Jersey Lily's Roadhouse, 1650 Braeburn Dr. Salem, VA 24153. See the Grotto meeting announcement in this issue.

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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, Brian Williams, Susan Burr, Nick Schmalenberger, Sydney Hansen and Jerry Fuller.

**Cover:** Nick Socky among the rimstone in upstream Covert Creek in the Sweetwater section of Maxwellton Sink Cave, WV  
Photo by Dave Socky

# CAVERS CALENDAR

**Jan 8, 2023:** BRG New Years Party.  
See announcement on Page 3.

**Jan 20, 2023:** BRG meeting, 6:30p,  
Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

**Jan 26-29: Winter Adventure Weekend,**  
Carter Caves State Park, Olive Hill, KY.  
See [www.winteradventureweekend.com](http://www.winteradventureweekend.com)  
for more info on caving, winter survival,  
rappelling, kayaking, etc. Kid friendly.

**Feb 17, 2023:** BRG meeting, 6:30p,  
Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

**Mar 17, 2023:** BRG meeting, 6:30p,  
Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

**Apr 21, 2023:** BRG meeting, 6:30p,  
Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

**April 22, 2023:** VAR Earth Day Restoration at Apple Farm. VAR sinkhole clean up near Covington, VA. More info coming soon. Save the Date!

**June 19 to 23, 2023:** WVACS Convention Pre-Camp, at the WVACS Fieldstation north of Frankford in Greenbrier County, WV. For more information, contact Jessica Reep at [j.reep@aol.com](mailto:j.reep@aol.com)

**June 26-30, 2023:** NSS Convention, Elkins, West Virginia. Registration is open! For more information, see their website at <https://nss2023.caves.org>

**Summer 2024:** NSS Convention in Sewanee, Tennessee.

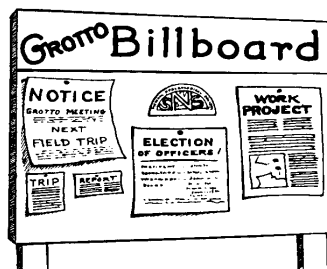
## Long Cave Lists

A legacy of Bob Gulden, but now maintained by Paul Berger

<https://cave-exploring.com/index.php/long-and-deep-caves-of-the-world/>

## Treasurer's Report 1/1/2023

Cave Bucks	\$ 40.96
Conservation	\$ 1.00
Equipment	\$ 104.12
General	\$3,882.47
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$4,028.55</b>



## BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

The **January 20, 2023** meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held at **Jersey Lily's Roadhouse 1650 Braeburn Dr, Salem, VA 24153**. Dinner or appetizers with socializing starts at 6:30pm with the meeting starting soon after.

The program this month will be a slide show on Nick Schmalenberger's caving trip to Mexico in 2019.

### Grotto Trip

#### To be determined

A trip somewhere may happen on Saturday, January 21, 2023. Where the trip will be to and what the date is will be weather dependent. If interested in a trip, please contact Susan Burr at 540-580-9409 or [pondlady97@gmail.com](mailto:pondlady97@gmail.com). Who is interested in going will help in planning on what to do.

## BRG New Years Party

The Blue Ridge Grotto Christmas Party was delayed because Dave Socky caught COVID-19. Everything is fine now, so the party will be held **Sunday, January 8, 2023**. Happy New Year!

- **Where:** Dave and Mary Sue Socky's house at 6572 Woodbrook Drive SW Roanoke, VA 24018.
- **Time:** Noon to 5 pm.
- **Details:** Pot Luck, BYOB, cavers, family, and friends welcome!

Of course, caving photos and videos will be shown!

Stay for the duration, or just for a little while; we would love for you to drop by!

Please be healthy - Thanks!

Contact Mary Sue Socky at [sockymss@cox.net](mailto:sockymss@cox.net) or call 540-529-3954 if you need directions.

Click here for a [Google Map location](#) 

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

**BRG Meeting Minutes** – can be read on the BRG webpage at: <https://blueridgegrotto.org> under the 'BRG Organization' button.

### NSS Membership:

Would you like to join or renew with the NSS? See this [link](#) for details.



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

### Cave Conservation Events

Karen Kastning announced that NRVG has permission to clean out **3 trash-filled sinks near James Cave, VA**. TBA. This project will involve a backhoe. Karen will keep BRG updated.

Lynn Ott announced that **Cricket Maze Cave, WV**, will have an Open House in April or May 2023. TBA.

**Bat Cave Closures** - We are now in **Winter Bat Cave Closure**. Some designated caves are closed so bat species can have critical habitat to hibernate. This closure affects some, but not all caves. If the cave you want to visit is closed, go elsewhere! There are thousands of caves in the Virginias.

- Winter closure for bat caves in **West Virginia is Sept 1—May 15**.
- Winter closure for bat caves in **Virginia is Oct 15 – April 15**.

Please respect all cave closures.

**VAR CLOSED CAVE LIST UPDATES:** lots of information needs to be updated. Please send changes, additions to Brad Blase [blase@virginiacaves.org](mailto:blase@virginiacaves.org). The closed cave list can be found [here](#).

**VAR Earth Day Restoration at Apple Farm:** VAR is planning another sinkhole cleanout on **April 22, 2023** – this time on private property north of Covington, VA. More information coming soon.


### VOTE FOR YOUR FAVORITE 5!

Each year BRG holds a contest to choose the top five DUMP newsletter covers from the previous year to send to the NSS Cover Arts Salon.

**Vote For Your Favorite 5** will open at the January 20, 2023 BRG meeting.

Vote in person! Vote online!

Vote Well, and Often!

P.S. you will not see the **Favorite 5** layout in this DUMP issue, because we ran out of space for the printed newsletter. 



## Membership

At last count, BRG has 45 members and 4 subscribers for 2023. Pay Your Dues! Only a few people still need to pay their 2023 dues/subscriber fees. Save a stamp - pay your dues in person at the BRG Party, 1/8/2023!


**Old BRG Members, past BRG Members** – if you were a previous member of BRG and left in good standing, your membership can easily be activated: fill out and sign the BRG Membership Agreement & pay your \$10.00 annual dues to the Treasurer.

Know of a potential caver? Bring them to a BRG meeting, sponsor them on a BRG activity, do lots of fun things with the best cavers around ~

## Updates

Doug Feller

[dougfeller57@gmail.com](mailto:dougfeller57@gmail.com)

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# Brants Cave, WV

By *Dave Socky*

December 10, 2022

David Socky, Nikki Fox, and Sydney Hansen

This was the WVACS Christmas Party weekend, so it wasn't planned to be a long trip. The purpose of this trip was three-fold: First was to replace rigging in cave as needed. Second was to determine if there was deep water in the **Totally Unnecessary Room** and to rig a traverse line if there was. Third was to rig a line to make it easier to get up the **Rocket Formation** at the end of the survey (and scope out the continuation of the cave).

We arrived at the cave on a wet and misty morning around 10:30am in Hunters truck. Greg Springer was nice enough to drive down and show us where we needed to park as there had been quite a bit of housing development since we had been there last. There was a house now where our old parking spot was. We ended up parking along a very muddy and slippery farm road just a little before the sink that contained the entrance.



Bubble Land Pool by Dave Socky

We geared up, walked the few hundred feet to the entrance, rigged the pit, and were out of the weather within a half hour. The last time I was in Brants Cave was March 2019, so of course I missed the little turn and duck under to get to the main cave and instead ended up in the **Rubble Duck Room**. It didn't take long to figure out my mistake and we were soon back on track.

Within a couple of hundred feet was the first obstacle and the beginning of the realization that my memory for niggling details of places that are a pain is somewhat suspect. "Oh, I forgot all about this spot, but now that I'm back I remember it now" was a constant refrain throughout the trip. Anyway, the first obstacle was a fairly easy climb up onto a ledge and over some large pieces of breakdown – if you are tall and long legged. Both Nikki and Sydney are competent cavers, but they are not tall and certainly not long legged. They found a tight crawl through the breakdown which bypassed the climb, but it was a crawl I couldn't fit through.

Right after the first obstacle was another long-legged climb up and then a long-legged stem and traverse across a 15-foot-deep drop. There was no bypass here. I had 150 feet of 11 mil rope which I was willing to cut, so Nikki suggested this would be a good spot to rig for safety reasons. I was able to use natural anchor points on both sides and included enough slack that you could climb up the front side, pull slack from top and use the rope as a safety to go down the back side. After everyone was up, over, and across, we continued on our way... until the next obstacle I had forgotten about. A 20 foot long, lay-on-your-side pinch. Very awkward and grabby, making it difficult to get packs and ropes through. But with a little help, everyone managed to get through. After the pinch



"High Hurdles" (rimstone dams) by Sydney Hansen

was probably the most difficult, gnarly, pain in the ass obstacle in the entire cave. First you climb up a steep flowstone slope with the aid of a knotted rope. At the top is a small hole which is two and half feet in diameter (which had been enlarged from its original small dimensions). After only 6 feet, the hole emptied out at the top of 12-foot-deep pit. The rope used as a handline climbing up the flowstone is connected to a Y hang in the ceiling above the pit. In or

*(Continued on page 5)*



Nikki Fox adding bolt by Sydney Hansen

(Continued from page 4)

der to get on rope, you need to turn around at the top of the flowstone slope and move into the hole feet first, slide down into the pit a bit and find little foot holds to keep from falling in. Luckily, you can clip your cowtails on the traverse line so you shouldn't break any bones if you slip. Then, balancing carefully, you can clip in your rack and rappel down. We determined that the rigging for this climb was ok and didn't need to be replaced. Sydney commented throughout this trip – "This is great, I'm learning a lot more vertical stuff today than I ever expected!"

At the bottom of the pit is enough space for only two people, and another 11 foot climb up flowstone. There was a webbing handline to aid in climbing up. The webbing was tied to a large column at the top. Getting up and around the column and into the continuing passage was a bit of a challenge. Again, I used a bit of my rope to turn this into a rigged climb.

After this bit of gymnastics are the **High Hurdles**, a set of five very tall and thin rimstone dams in a really cool phreatic

passage. The dams range in height from 3 to 5 feet. There was no water in them at all. After the **High Hurdles** is a sloped 10-foot downclimb into a larger phreatic passage which then leads to a room called the **Bubble Land**. The fun part of the **Bubble Land** is a lake of thigh deep water which must be crossed in order to continue. This lake can be stemmed by placing your feet on one side of the lake and your hands on the other side and scooting over while more or less hanging horizontally over the water. It takes a bit of arm strength, but I successfully managed it. Sydney did not want to get her feet wet, so she also managed the maneuver. Nikki had wellies on, so she just waded in the shallow part and managed to step over without getting water in her boots.

Now, just another 50 feet down the passage, was the crux of the trip. Was the **Totally Unnecessary Room** filled with water? Would we have to construct a traverse line to continue on? I charged ahead and found... No water! There were only two pools off to the sides at the bottom, both of which could be avoided.

After close inspection of the rope used to rig the drop, it was concluded that the rope was ok. However, the bolts were steel and very rusty. The main bolt was set too far back from the edge. So, Nikki placed a single bolt closer to the edge for the main anchor point for the drop into the **Totally Unnecessary Room** and used the existing two bolts as the approach line.

We had bolts, hangers, and quick links. But the quick links were small. They would work ok, but the opening, when unscrewed all the way, was only about 10 mm. The rope is 11 mm. Hmmm. We've run into this problem before. For the main bolt we used the one large quick link we had brought in. For the others we used the technique of flattening the rope with a hammer just enough to squeeze the rope through

the quick link. Once the rigging was completed, I rappelled in and climbed the rope up the other side while Nikki and Sydney rappelled in.

The rope for the climb back out of the **Totally Unnecessary Room** was ok, but there was only one bolt. This bolt was also rusty and had a carabiner that was corroded shut. Nikki placed a bolt near the existing one, to back up the main anchor point with a stainless bolt. And yep, a second bolt was installed to create a safety line to and from the drop. We tried flattening the rope for the small quick links, but try as I might, I couldn't get the rope through opening. I ended up using two of my spare biners.

The last 340 feet of cave before reaching the **Rocket Formation** is some of the nicest walking canyon that one can ask for. Most of the way is clean sandy floor with no breakdown, about 4 feet wide and 20 feet high. But soon enough, we reached the **Rocket Formation** – a big flowstone blockage across the whole passage. A length of webbing tied off with long etrier loops dangled from the top about 15 feet up. The passage continued from the top.

Nikki used her cowtails to clip into the loops as a safety and climbed to the top along with her drill. At the top, of course, was another drop down the other side. Nikki put two bolts in the wall and rigged the front and back with another length of my now diminished rope. Once rigged, Nikki rappelled down the 12-foot drop and found the dig that Kyle and company had opened up. However, it was a belly crawl in water and Nikki stated she really didn't want to get soaked at this point. It was also getting late in the day and time to head on out.

According to Kyle, the crawl opens up and leads to another 500 or so feet of cave before ending in another dig. Surveying this passage and checking out the dig will be the objective of the next trip into Brants Cave.

It didn't take as long going out as it did going in, but the obstacles still slowed us down. We exited to a cold evening at 6:45pm. We got back to the field station in time to get a full dinner, even though most everyone else eaten already. We didn't get any survey done, but the cave is fully rigged now, and I won't forget about the details again – I'll just need to remember to read this trip report!



Nikki Fox bolting above Rocket Formation  
by Sydney Hansen



# The Catfish Caves, VA

By *Dave Socky*

## Catfishes Pot (Gory Hole) and Catfish Caverns (Catamount Cave)

Russell County

April 13, 2022

*(Editor's note: This trip took place in April of last year, but the maps were just recently completed. Thus this article)*

In late 2021 Jaydon Minnick of Russell County, VA reached out to the caving community through Facebook, asking for help in checking out a deep pit on his property. It didn't take long for Steph Petri, who is the VSS director of Russell County, to contact him. A date was set-up for January of 2022, but as the date approached, Steph reached out to Brian Williams and myself because she wouldn't be able to make the date due to work.

Fast forward to the week of our planned trip – it rained all week. The weather did not look good and there was flooding all around. Jaydon let us know that the creek was up and that it would be un-

likely we would be able to get to the cave. The night before or planned departure, the trip was cancelled.

After more emails and discussions, the trip was re-scheduled for April 13 and Joe Zokaites was added to the group. This time, there was no rain – we had a beautiful warm and sunny day for checking out caves. With directions from Steph and Jaydon, we found the small farm track off an isolated road in Russell County and made our way up a valley to find Jaydon and Steven Johnson working on a farm.

Jaydon pointed the way and explained where the cave was, saying that we shouldn't have any problems finding it. Through the field and straight up the side of the mountain we went. After a little stumbling around on mountain

side, we nearly fell into a large pit! It wasn't a six second drop as sometimes described, but it was likely to be over 100 feet. This turned out to be a known cave – Gory Hole. But Jaydon and family wanted to name it Catfishes Pot.

We rigged a rope around a tree and Brian was selected with the honor of first one down. A steep leaf covered slope led to a 20-foot diameter shaft against the back cliff. After a couple of minutes, Brian yelled that he was down and off rope. Joe and I soon joined him at the bottom. The shaft turned out to be 135 feet from breakover to bottom. It was a dead bottom pit with a lot of leaves, sticks, and bones covering the floor. The western wall of the shaft was almost totally covered in flowstone. Very pretty. The shaft itself



**Catfish Caverns by Brian Williams**

was very reminiscent of TAG, straight and nicely fluted.

There was a way too tight drain in one corner with a couple of little leads up in the flowstone, but they were all too tight. About 35 feet up was a tall fissure in the flowstone which maybe could do something but was likely sealed shut. It was on the opposite side from the rope, so it was inaccessible. At the top of the pit were two high leads, one which was measured to 50 feet, which could do something, but would take extra bolting work to get to. The fifty-foot lead looked to be the best one. But it is mostly likely a long crack that eventually gets too tight.

Once back up, we found Jaydon had hiked up to see what we had found. We chatted for a bit, and then Jaydon told us about another cave which was close by. Back down the mountain we went, around the corner, up valley, and back up the mountain. With appropriate instructions, we hiked right up to the large entrance. Again, this turned out to be a known cave – Catamount Cave. And

*(Continued on page 7)*



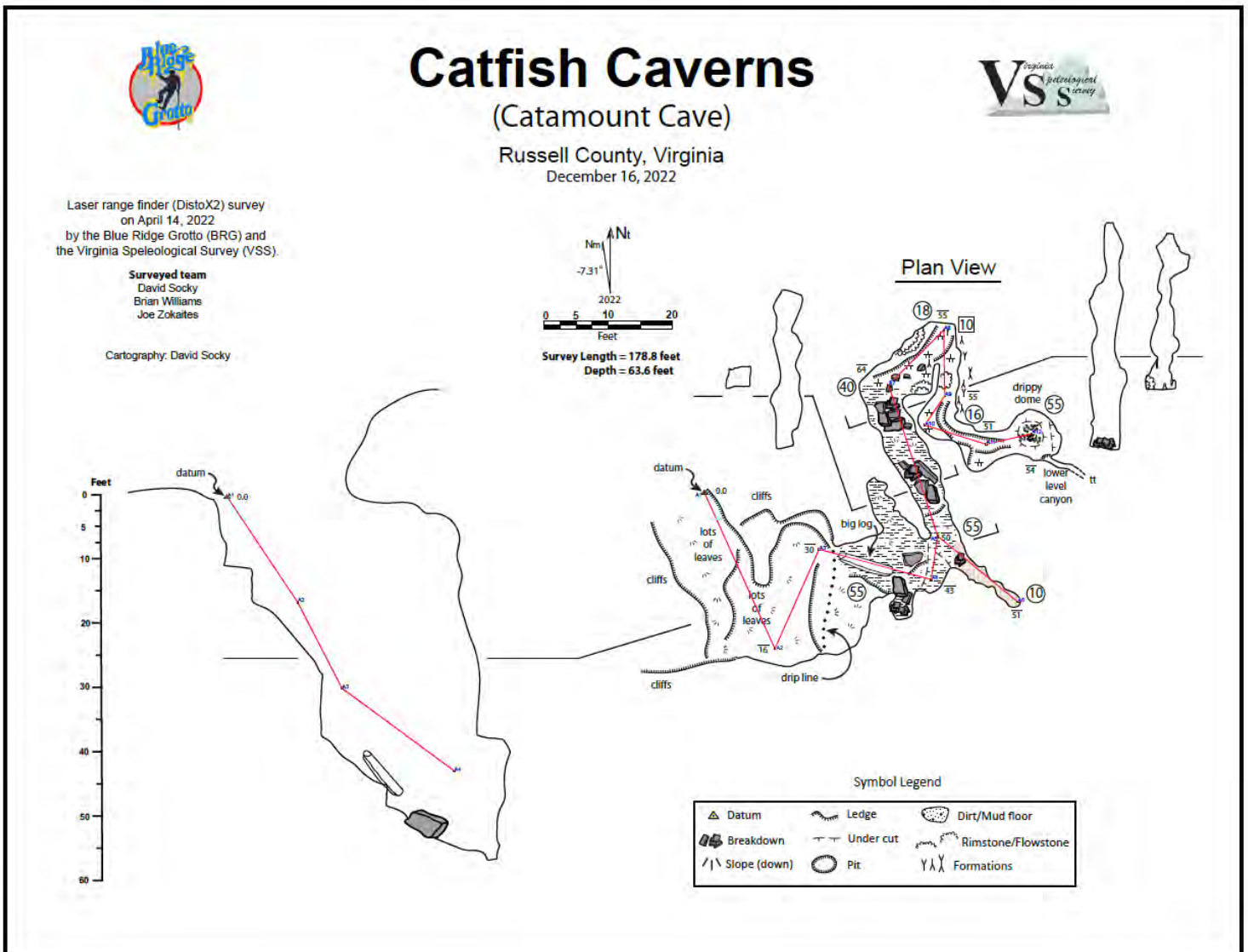
**Catfishes Pot-Brian Williams**

(Continued from page 6)  
again, we named it Catfish Caverns per the owner's request.

Catfish Caverns was not a pit, but it was a very steep sink dropping down a good fifty feet until it got into actual cave. We were able to get down by sliding down steep leaf covered slopes, and down a ledge with the help of a handline. At the bottom of the slope, under the dripline, the cave leveled out for 15 feet and then turned north into a tall narrow canyon. After 40 feet, old formations appeared along both walls. At a 10-foot-high climb-up, the passage turned 180 degrees and headed south for another 30 feet where it turned to the east and ended in a small dome room. A lower-level narrow canyon took off to the southeast (the obvious water drain), but it was way too narrow to enter. Not a long cave, but more passage than Catfishes Pot – 180 feet surveyed.



Catfish Caverns by Brian Williams





# Catfishes Pot (Gory Hole)

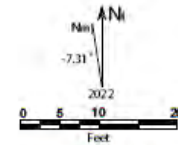


Russell County, Virginia  
December 16, 2022

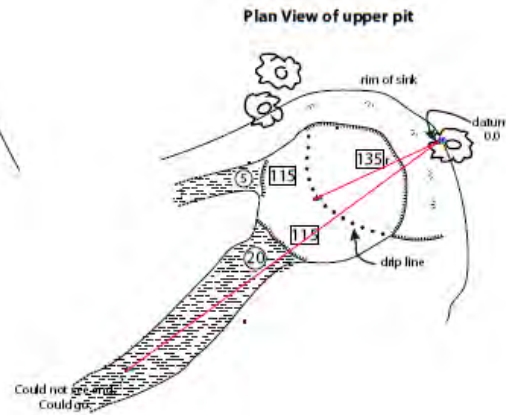
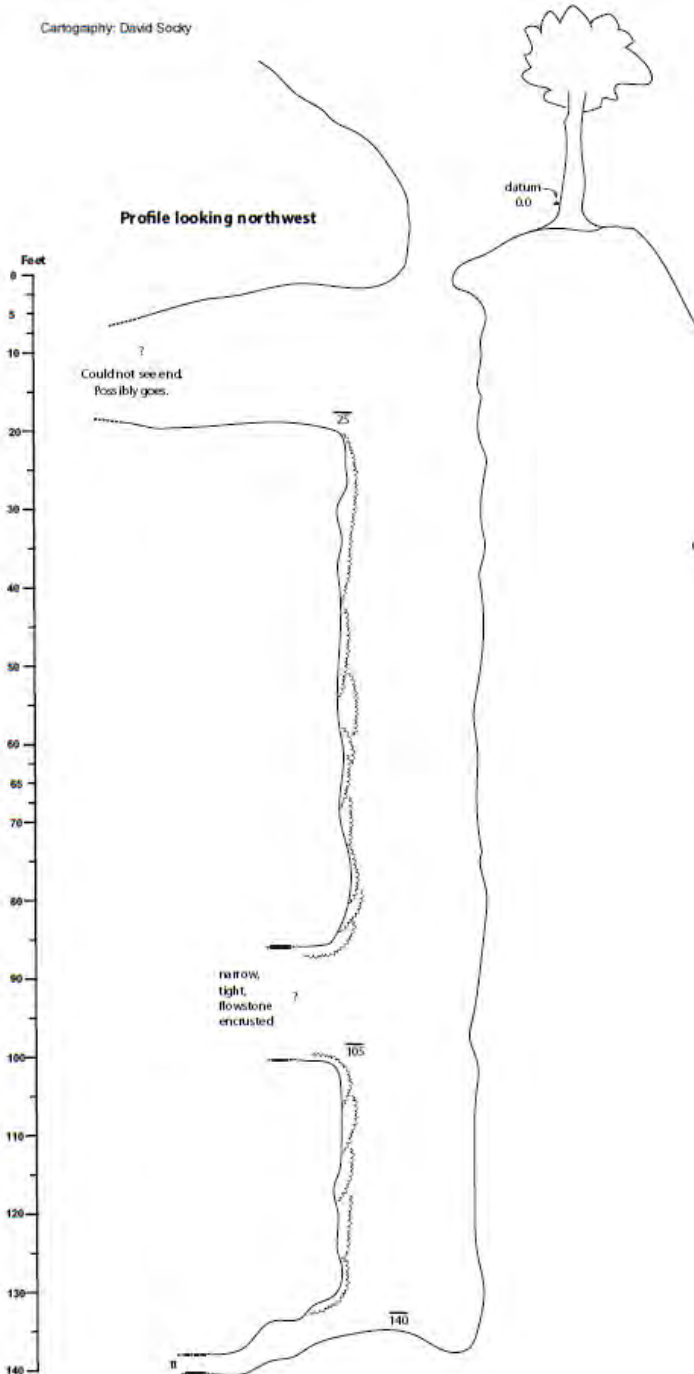
Laser range finder (DistoX2) survey  
on April 14, 2022  
by the Blue Ridge Grotto (BRG) and  
the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS)

**Surveyed team**  
David Socky  
Brian Williams  
Joe Zokaites

Cartography: David Socky

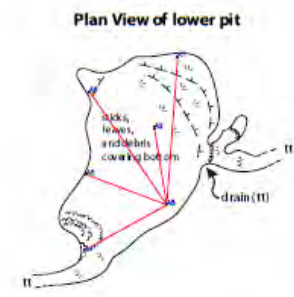


Survey Length = 214 feet  
Depth = 140 feet



Symbol Legend

Datum	Ledge	Dirt/Mud floor
Breakdown	Under cut	Rimstone/Flowstone
Slope (down)	Pit	Formations





# Warm Springs Baths to (Finally) Reopen

From the BCCS Burnsville Brief from an article in The Recorder – December 8, 2022



After a long awaited reconstruction, the famed Warm Springs Pools will reopen to the public next weekend. Note that the "official" public opening day is Saturday, the 17th of December, although Bath County residents are invited to enjoy the warm healing springs at the historic bathhouses one day earlier at a reduced rate with proceeds benefiting the Christmas Mother program in the county. (Photo courtesy Sky Pics/Tony Hensley)

Reservations required and are available on the hour priced at \$25 per person, per 50-minute soak. Guests are encouraged to arrive 15 minutes prior to their reservation and hear a brief overview of the history of the bathhouses and details on the various minerals found in the waters.

**SCHEDULE & HOURS** going forward:

- The gentlemen’s and ladies’ bathhouses will be open Wednesday-Sunday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

- Family soaking time will be from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Swimsuits are required and children under the age of 18 may come with a parent.
- Adult co-ed soaking time, for ages 16 and up, with swimsuits required, will be from 1-3 p.m.
- Adult soaking by gender, ages 18 and up, swimsuits optional, will be between 3-6 p.m.

For reservations, call **540-839-3860** (through the Omni Homestead) or email [warm Springs Pools@omnihotels.com](mailto:warm Springs Pools@omnihotels.com).

The full article can be read at <https://www.therecorderonline.com/articles/warm-springs-pools-re-open-next-week/>

Following a day of caving, there's nothing more relaxing than a warm soothing soak with friends!

## BRG Donations 2023

Here is a listing of cave and conservation organizations BRG has donated to in the past – circa 2020.

Virginia Speleological Survey	\$75
Virginia Cave Board	\$75
BCI	\$100
VAR (send to Treasurer)	\$100
WV Cave Conservancy	\$200
SCCi	\$200

NSS	
Save the Caves	\$75
Cave Vandalism Deterrence	\$50
WNS Fund	\$100
MAKC	\$100
WVACS	\$75
NCRC (Eastern Region)	\$50
BCCS	\$25
ACCA	\$50

What do we want to do for this year? We can change amounts or choose different organizations.



Eli Meyer next to a formation near Thunder Road in Maxwellton Sink Cave, WV. Photo by Nick Socky