

Carbide Dump



Marian

August 2022
Vol 57, 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 6:30p at Jersey Lily's Roadhouse, 1650 Braeburn Dr. Salem, VA 24153. See the Grotto meeting announcement in this issue.

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Contributors: David & Mary Sue Socky, Nick Socky, Marian McConnell, Meredith Weberg, Miriam Cuddington, Susan Burr, Dave Hughes, Ray Sira, and Jerry Fuller.

Cover: "Cave Breath" - Artwork by Marian McConnell based on a Missouri Bat Census photo on their Facebook page.

CAVERS CALENDAR

Aug 19: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

Aug 21: Al Stewart memorial, Catawba Murder Hole, 4-7p.

Aug 31- Sept 5: Old Timers Reunion, Dailey WV. See OTR.org for more info.

Sept. 3: West Virginia Speleological Survey meeting. OTR site, 6:30. For more info, contact George Dasher wvcaver@juno.com

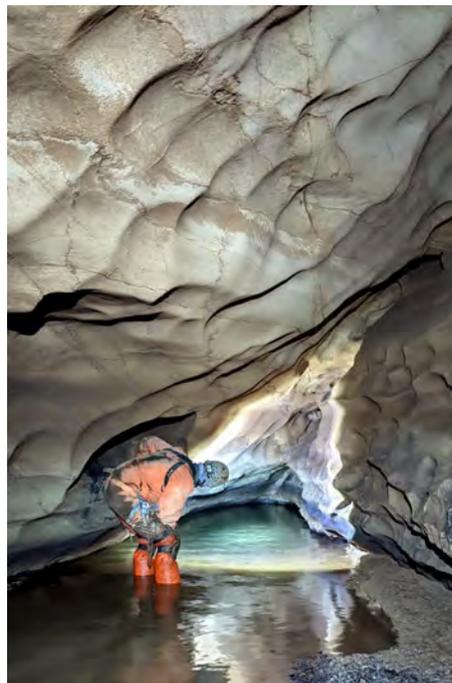
Sept 16: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

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

Oct 21 -23: Fall VAR. Location will be the RASS property in Bath County. Sponsored by VPI Cave Club. Contact Nick Socky at sockynss@vt.edu.

Nov 12: (tentative) WVCC Banquet, WV Fairgrounds, Fairlea, WV.

June 26-30, 2023: NSS Convention Elkins, WV. Sessions and vendors will be held at Davis & Elkins College; camping @ OTR site, Dailey, WV.



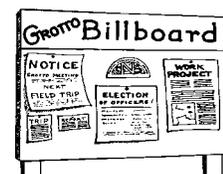
Nick Socky looks at Overt Sump, where Covert Creek begins, in the Great Savannah Cave System.
Photo by Nikki Fox

Long Cave Lists

maintained by Bob Gulden
USA Long & Deep, World Long & Deep, & World Big Rooms
www.caverbob.com/usalong.htm
www.caverbob.com/usadeep.htm
www.caverbob.com/rooms.htm
www.caverbob.com/wlong.htm
www.caverbob.com/wdeep.htm

Treasurer's Report 08/08/2022

Cave Bucks	\$ 40.96
Conservation	\$ 1.00
Equipment	\$ 104.12
<u>General</u>	<u>\$3,980.62</u>
Total	\$4,126.70



BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

The **August 19, 2022** 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 this years' **Photo Salon** program from the NSS Convention in Rapid City, SD. The program is 21 minutes long.

Grotto Trip

Rimstone Falls, WV

Date & Time: Saturday, August 20, 2022. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **8:30 am**.

Leader: Mystik Miller

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

Requirements: Horizontal, intermedi-

ate trip. If you wish to go, let Susan Burr know ASAP! Cave owner wants to know a total of who all is going. Also, let Susan know if you need helmet and/or light.

Limits: 8 cavers.

Description

note the parking lot at the HROM is now accessible through the regular route with the roundabout. This is a horizontal cave - intermediate trip. This is a water cave and staying out of the water, which is very deep in places, is the objective! It will be a moderately strenuous cave trip. It is also a very pretty cave, so bring a camera if you can.

We WILL cancel and go to another cave if the water levels are up or if heavy rains happen the night before or if they are expected on Saturday. 🐿

to properly equipped cavers for non-commercial visits. Commercial use will not be allowed.

The Conservancy's Cave Acquisition Fund was used to partially fund the purchase with the balance being borrowed from the Conservancy's Endowment Fund. Donations to repay both funds are welcomed and encouraged. The Conservancy can only work for you if you can help us out. We want to be able to act fast when a possible acquisition is identified. Please mail contributions to:

**WVCC, Robert Hoke, Treasurer,
6304 Kaybro St., Laurel, MD 20707**

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!

VAR Closed Cave List: lots of information needs to be updated. Please send changes, additions to Brad Blase blase@virginiacaves.org

Bat Cave Closures - We are now in **Summer Bat Cave Closure**. Some winter hibernacula caves may be open for the summer months. Other caves will be closed for the summer because some species of bats use specific caves as maternity roosts, and it is critical that the moms and pups not be disturbed.

- Summer closure for bat caves in **West Virginia is May 15 – Sept 1**
- Summer closure for bat caves in **Virginia is Apr 15 – Oct 15**

Please respect all cave closures. 🐿

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.



Bill Cuddington - Sad news. Vertical Bill Cuddington (age 88) passed away at his home at approximately 7:30 PM Central Daylight Time on Friday evening, August 5, 2022 after a long illness. Bill Cuddington started caving Virginia and is considered the Father of vertical caving. Bills Rappel in Newberry Banes is named after him. Visitation will begin at 1:00 PM on Thursday, August 11 at the Moulton First United Methodist Church (14595 Market Street, Moulton, Alabama; 256-974-1185). Services will begin at 2:00 PM at the same location. (From Dave Hughes, Miriam Cuddington, and Ray Sira.)

Friars Hole Cave: We are pleased to announce that the West Virginia Cave Conservancy has acquired 3.4 acres of land encompassing the main entrance of Friars Hole Cave, in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. This is the original en-

trance to the system and is separate from the Friars Hole Cave Preserve that the Mothes family owns. It does NOT include Canadian Hole entrance. With this acquisition the southern section of the 50+ mile system along with the northern section belongs to cavers. The WVCC now owns or manages 165 miles of cave in the two Virginias.

A formal management plan for the Friars Hole entrance has not been developed but the intent is allow unrestricted access

Membership

There were eight members and 3 guests at the July 15 BRG Grotto meeting.

Kelly Perkins is new to caving and loves the underground experiences! Susan Burr is Kelly's sponsor. Kelly was unanimously voted in as a BRG associate member. Welcome Kelly!

The program was a 'guess the entrance' slide program by Susan Burr. The group did amazingly well at guessing the entrance from Susan's slides. Lots of fun!

Blue Ridge Grotto currently has 57 members and 5 subscribers.

Membership Updates

Kelly Perkins

3117 Corbeshaw Road SW
Roanoke, VA 24015
919-710-0396
perkinskm13@gmail.com

Doug Feller

540-618-1295 (cell) 🐿



Al Stewart Obituary

1930 - 2022

Albert William Stewart, “Al,” NSS 8695 RL,FE, passed away on June 8, 2022.

Al was 92 years old, and he lived an amazing life.

Born in Saginaw MI on 1/8/1930, Al Stewart was the oldest of four boys. John A. and Mary Martin Stewart had their hands full raising Al, Jock, Bob, and Denny.

They lived an All-American lifestyle and spent summers at the family cabin on Drummond Island, MI.

After graduating HS, Al enlisted in the US Navy and became a C-2 Electronics Technician and Radio Telephone Operator – First Class. He graduated top in his class (18-51), and he served on a mine sweeper (# 33).

When his tour of duty was up, Al took advantage of the G.I. Bill at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg VA and graduated with a BS in Engineering and later a Master’s degree.

In the late 1960’s, Al moved to Roanoke, VA. He began his career as an instructor in the Electrical Engineering department at Roanoke Technical School, which later became Virginia Western Community College. He retired with 35 years’ service in 1992.

OK, now for the fun stuff. Al loved the outdoors! He was an avid hiker and was a member of the Roanoke Appalachian Trail Club. When it would snow, Al would take his authentic snowshoes down to a nearby park and have fun slogging in the snow. He was also a member of the Roanoke Camera Club, where his nature photos of waterfalls won several awards.

If you ever visited Al, you were in awe of his extensive Vinyl LP collection of classical music, only rivaled by his CD, DVD and VHS collections. He loved music, from Classical and Opera to Punk Rock! His house was a time capsule from the 1970’s and was rumored to be the basis for “Doc’s house” in the movie ***Back to the Future***.

Al loved the water. In his younger days, he was on the Virginia Tech Swimming Team, and was awarded an Outstanding Service Plaque in 1963-64. Later in life, Al was a member of the Roanoke Gator

Pool, where he swam every day and helped maintain the pool and building.

A quiet philanthropist, Al donated to the University of the Appalachians KY, Alice Lloyd College KY, Hillsdale College MI, the Joy Ranch in Hillsville, VA, Patrick Henry Family Services of Brookneal, VA, and cave conservation organizations such as the National Speleological Society, the West Virginia Cave Conservancy, the Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy, American Cave Conservation Association, and others.

Al was a staunch Right-Wing Republican and a member of the John Birch Society.

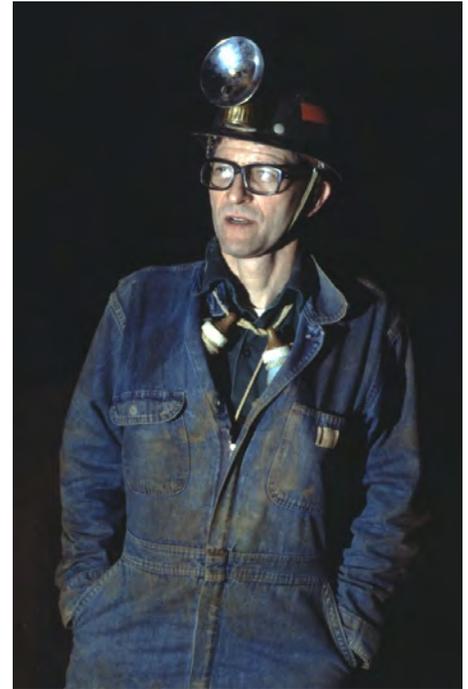
Al Stewart donated a boatload of blood over the decades – The Red Cross calculated that as of May 1987, he had donated fifteen gallons!

But most of all Al Stewart was a Caver! He began exploring caves in 1967 and was the college sponsor of the Virginia Western Community College Caving Club (VWCCCC), which later became the Blue Ridge Grotto. Al took many of his students caving, camping, and rappelling. Al was a founding member of the Blue Ridge Grotto chapter of the National Speleological Society (NSS), calling the first BRG meeting to order on December 12, 1969, in his classroom in Webber Hall, WVCC. Al Stewart was a Life Member of the NSS, 8695 RL, FE. Al became a Fellow of the NSS in 1994. He won national awards for his cartoon sketches. He surveyed many caves in Virginia and West Virginia – look for his name on reports and old cave maps! Al also assisted at several cave rescues, and often drove other cavers to the caves in his old gray Checker station wagon.

Al Stewart was a Life Member of the Robertson Association, and he attended every Old Timer’s Reunion until he could no longer go camping or make the drive to Dailey, WV.

Al Stewart mentored generations of cavers, students, scouts, and various ne’er do wells who called him names, such as “Mister Stewart”, “Professor Fubar”, and “Fossil # 1”.

Al moved to Assisted living in 2019, and he had been in declining health since October 2021.



Al was my neighbor for many years.

Al was my caving buddy.

Al was my friend.

See you on the Other Side, Al!

June 26, 2022

Mary Sue Socky

End? No, the journey doesn't end here. Death is just another path, one that we all must take. The grey rain-curtain of this world rolls back, and all turns to silver glass, and then you see it: white shores, and beyond, a far green country under a swift sunrise...

Gandalf — J.R.R. Tolkien,
[The Lord of the Rings](#)

CELEBRATION OF LIFE Sunday, August 21, 2022 from 4-7p at Dano & Marian McConnell's home in Catawba. Share memories at the edge of the Murder Hole cave, then spread his ashes into the Daylight Cave. Al was a founding member of the Blue Ridge Grotto. Pot-Luck supper afterwards. Please RSVP to marian.mcconnell@gmail.com or (540) 309-4707. Feel free to contact her if you need directions.



Blue Ridge Grotto takes honors at the 2022 NSS Convention

The **Blue Ridge Grotto** took honors at the 2022 NSS Convention in Rapid City, SD.

- ◆ On Friday night, David Socky received the **NSS Outstanding Service Award!**

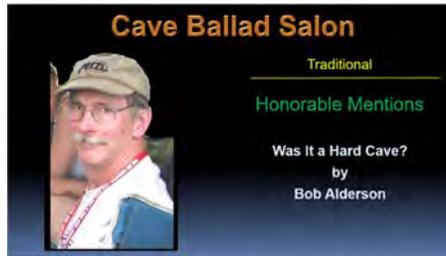


President's Certificate of Appreciation

- ◆ **Alex Sproul** - for all of the time and effort spent as NSS Webmaster.
- ◆ Pat Kambesis and **Dave Socky** - for the 2021 Virtual Convention.
- ◆ **Meredith Hall Weberg** - for Service as Director and 2021 Virtual Convention.

Congratulations to BRG members who received awards in the 2022 Cave Ballad Salon:

- ◆ **TRADITIONAL Honorable Mention** - "Was It a Hard Cave" by Bob Alderson

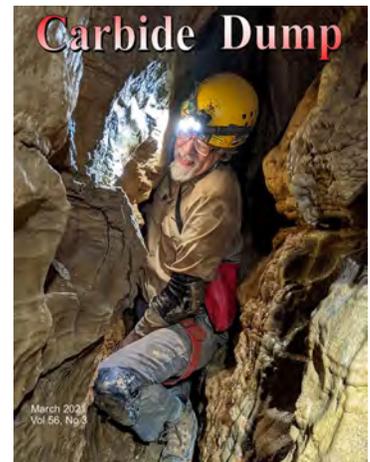


- ◆ **ORIGINAL Honorable Mention** - "Caver's Heaven" by Marian McConnell



Salon Chair Roland Vineyard said "There were many compliments about the quality of what we had this year. Congratulations!" Songs and results will also be posted on the NSS website

- ◆ The **CARBIDE DUMP** received an Honorable Mention in the NSS **Cover Arts Salon!** (This cover was chosen in the "Vote For Your Favorite Five" contest – BRG knows how to pick them!)



Fall VAR 2022

Hello cavers!

I am pleased to announce the VPI Student Grotto will be hosting the 2022 Fall VAR this year!

Date: October 21 - 23, 2022

Location: RASS Property in Bath County -
<https://goo.gl/maps/YRxZwxZnvdLy1d1B8>

We will be looking for volunteers to help so if you can, please reach out to sockynss@vt.edu. Otherwise, please mark your calendars,

forward this announcement and stay tuned for more details in the coming month!

Cheers,
 Nick Socky



Sweetwater Camp Trip - Upstream Covert Creek Maxwelton Sink Cave, WV

By *Nick Socky*

July 22-24, 2022

DSC Survey

Participants: Nikki Fox, Nick Socky,
Dave Socky

Friday, July 22

Dave Socky, Nikki Fox, and Nick Socky entered the cave at approximately 7 pm on Friday July 22nd 2022. It had been several months since anyone had been to Sweetwater and nearly a year for Nikki so everyone was quite excited about returning. Entry was uneventful and we took our time making our way through historic Maxwelton. We did stop and begin rigging the sloping traverse below the 15 ft drop out of the overflow maze – the last drop of Historic Max. We didn't have enough rope to fully rig the drop yet, but we set bolts and had it ready for another 15 ft section. Meowing our way through the CAT crawls and eventually feeling enlightened in the GOD passage,



Nikki climbing one of the many nuisance drops. Photo by Dave Socky

we got to the Fox Hole – and it was dry! In fact the entire Pie Passage was very dry – Nick was even able to keep his feet dry going through the connection crawl into Sweetwater. We all arrived at camp around 11 PM for a 4 hour entry. Got water, set up camp and then relaxed before heading to bed for the BIG DAY tomorrow.

Saturday, July 23

We all woke up at about 9:00 AM and started breakfast. After breakfast, everyone started organizing gear for the day. The plan was to make an assault on the Great Divide area in upstream Covert Creek. We had an aid climb to do, several digs to check and assess, and any mop-up that was easily available. We also wanted to take a few pictures to make it a photo trip as well. Hauling heavy packs, we left camp around 11:45 AM and made our way upstream. As Nick always does, he checked Overt Sump – the upstream sump of Covert Creek. It was still impassible. He was sad.

We went up the rope to get to the Rim Stones of the Great Divide and then Nikki and Nick set up to climb. Before climbing though, we cut a traverse in a mud bank up high in the breakdown room and checked a canyon dig that Corey and Keely had recommended to us. It will require a bit of technical digging but we can hear the sound of water through a small softball size mud filled hole that we can't get to yet. Air was not very exciting though. Nikki and Nick headed back to the climb while Dave solo surveyed to the start of this future dig.

It only took Nick three bolts to get up into the high lead that we were interested in, and OF COURSE, it went nowhere – just another blind air-bell. But



Nikki getting at the lip. Photo by Dave Socky

now we know! We cleaned up the climb and ran across the room and set an assisted 10 ft from to get into another going passage that had 3 dig leads in it. The first one, up high and to the right, actually looks really good and just needs to have some mud moved. It had air and was just a little sloppy. The 2nd which was up high and to the left didn't have a lot of air, but was trending down and had less air than the first. It is very low and wide (4 inch tall and 10 ft wide) and will require a lot of work. The final dig, which was straight ahead, Corey had pushed before and gotten through a low point. Nikki was the only person to get through this low point and then found another pinch point that she could not get through. Having a sledge with a digging bar to pull up the floor (flow stone crust) would make this passage go, and she could see it open up and turn toward the right. Also, there was a lot of air going into this crawlway. It's a good lead.

At this point, Nikki wanted to go to the Dragons Keep and work on the technical dig at the far end of the Dragons Breath – a passage that she and Casey had discovered last year. But first we had to do some re-rigging! The rigging of the Three Fingers was sub-optimal so we decided this should be done first. Nikki rappelled down the old rigging and made her way to the Dragons Keep to find a new rig point to avoid the tight crawl Dave and I most likely would not fit through. Dave pulled the Three Fingers

(Continued on page 55)

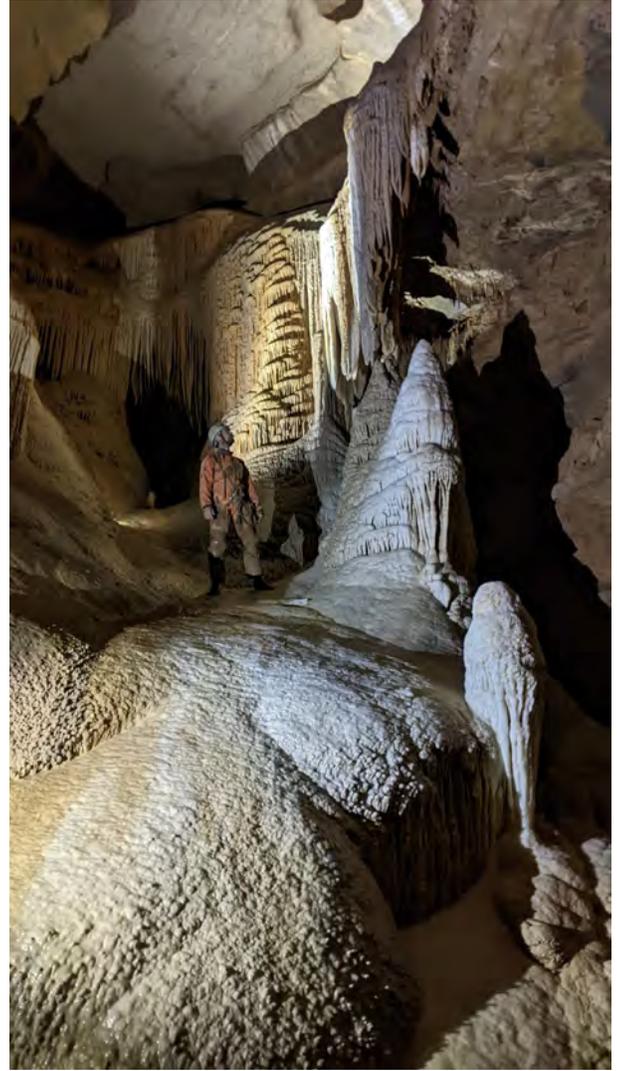
(Continued from page 54)

Rope and brought it over to where I then rigged a free hanging Y-Hang into the lower passage. We rappelled down, took some shots of the Pleistocene horse tooth that we had found here nearly 2 years ago, and ran into Nikki (up high) who had found a good spot to put the new Rigging for the climb up into the Dragons Keep. She lowered the rope and we sent up the drill and hardware. While she started rigging a series of re-belays, Dave and I went to a kitty litter sand dig that Nikki and I started 2 years ago. We started surveying into the low passage and eventually I got to a spot that was too tight. BUT to my surprise I soon heard Nikki above me! Turns out this was a weird Swiss cheese type passage that went into the Dragons Keep complex and we had found another too tight route in. We connected through cleverly and then went back to see Nikki's creative rigging.

Once up in the Dragons Keep complex, Nikki showed Dave and I where we had made the voice connection and then some additional promising sediment filled leads. To me, this is a very promising area. After some tight belly crawls we entered the heart of the Dragons Keep. Nikki climbed up the rope that Casey had rigged a year ago, and set a known and needed second bolt. Dave and I then climbed up and we were in the Dragons Breath! And boy-howdy, it sure was rippin' air! We took off our vertical gear and started crawling out to the dig face. We also cleaned up some breakdown on the way to this section, making the passage more pleasant. At the dig face its about 3 ft wide flowstone

floor with formations and popcorn ceiling. The flowstone floor comes up to about 3 inches of the ceiling and it moving A LOT of air. After attempting to technical dig in the floor and being unsuccessful, we decided to turn and head back to camp. It was nearly 10 pm. I think the best way forward is to drill into the ceiling through the popcorn and drop it onto the floor to pull out. You will need to do this for about 15 feet.

The crawl back was uneventful other than hauling heavy packs. If we were to cave straight from the dig face to camp it would actually take about 1.5 hours and you have to go up and down four ropes! If this becomes a trade route into the cave (once we find a new entrance) it certainly will be quite an adventure for sport cavers. We stopped at the Great Divide rim stones to get a few pictures and then stopped at the flow stone gallery to do the same. Back at camp we cleaned all gear, took inventory, and then had a delicious dinner. Not a lot of survey, but it was a very busy day!



Nick in stocking feet. Photo by Dave Socky

Sunday, July 24

We awoke, packed up, and left camp around 11 AM! Bit of a slow trip out but

none of us where in a big rush. Nikki and I did some re-rigging in Covert Creek and grabbed a rope that we planned on using for the traverse in Historic Max that we didn't finish rigging. I finished rigging that and we all continued to cave along to the entrance. Dave's croll was slipping a bit on the ropes so he said he was going to out the historic way instead of up the ropes in R canyon. Nikki and I decided to follow because we had not done this in a while, it only took an extra 30-45 min at the speed we were going but we all exited at 4:30 pm for a very leisurely but enjoyably 5.5 hour exit. We had surveyed roughly 150 ft of cave, killed 3 leads, and re-evaluated 4 digs. It was a good 46 hour trip.



Pleistocene horse tooth. Photo by Dave Socky



Breathing Cave Trip Report

By *Susan Burr*

6/25/22

Doug Feller, Susan Burr, Nick Schmalenberger, Jeff Huffman, Kelly Perkins, and Brandon Phibbs

Our trip did not start off too well. First there is the construction at the intersection of Rt. 419 & Rt. 311, which caused us to go alternate routes into HROM. Since gas prices are insane, we ALL piled into my van except Brandon who drove himself. Then we got on the other side of Fincastle & Nick informs us he has forgotten his cave boots! He was only wearing flip flops, so that meant we had to turn around & drive all the way back to HROM. We sent Brandon on ahead & met him at the BP station just before you get onto I-64. We did finally make it there.

Since we got lost on the way back from the cave last time, I tied some flagging tape at the turn we missed. Our hike to the cave was good, but a little hot since we got a later start. We met another

group coming out as we arrived. We basically did the normal cave route we use inside. The objective is to always make it through Serpentine Way to the waterfall since that is my favorite passage in there. The waterfall was flowing, but not a lot. We explored a few passages on the way out. Kelly & Doug came with me. It was a big smooth mud slope that was slightly challenging to get up. Then it headed down to an awkward & very tight hole. Doug tried but couldn't make it through this hole. Next, Kelly & I went down another mud slope & through another hole that wasn't as tight as the first. We ended up in walking passage. Since no one really knew where we were & we certainly didn't know, we had to come back out. That was negative fun! Ended up that section sucked the life out of me! We were all dragging a little on the way out, but I was whipped!

Still overall we had a really good trip & found our way back to the cars with no problems. 🐾



Nick Climbing down.
Photo by Susan Burr

Lost World Caverns Trip Report

By *Susan Burr*

7/9/22

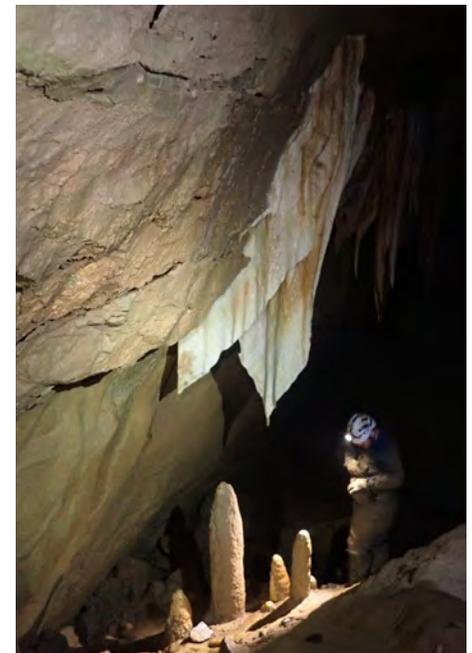
Lost World Caverns, WV

Doug Feller, Susan Burr, Nick Schmalenberger, Jeff Huffman, Kelly Perkins, Kat Watson (Kelly's friend/newbie), Jacob Whitlock, Lauren Appel

Due to several regular cavers not being able to cave on grotto weekend, we moved our grotto cave trip to 7/9/22. Originally a through trip was planned into the Wildcat entrance of Culverson Creek, go to the log jam & then out the Culverson Creek entrance. However due to all the previous rain & rain in the forecast we decided to abort mission! I had 2 back up plans & opted for the Lost Caverns off trial cave trip. Steve, the owner, has a nice room to change in so we would stay dry if it was raining, which it was when we got out of the cave. Steve was VERY accommodating. He literally fit us in at the last minute.

We basically did the same trip as the last time, but we explored a little more in the lower part of the cave. Some of the extra stuff we did was on the negative fun side, but we all survived. Some of the extra passage we did was awkward/tight & one section a little scary. Luckily for us we did not scare off or kill our newbie Kat. She was a trooper. The formations back in the wild section are beautiful! Many of us went down the Toilet Bowl, just for fun. This is a very small hole in the floor which you do not have to come back up, you can simply walk around. Later, all but Jacob went through the Birth Canal. We met back up with Jacob in the first main formation room & then continued on.

On a side note, Steve is an awesome steward of his cave. His show cave formations are beautiful & clean (not green) & he has done a lot to keep them that way. He is very caver friendly. 🐾



Jacob below the nice draperies.
Photo by Susan Burr

Grotto Trip Log

4/20: Mary Sue Socky and Mathieu Sales visited **Dixie Caverns, VA** & other Roanoke Valley landmarks.

6/13: Rushmore Cave, SD. Participants included David Socky, Meredith Weberg & NSS Convention. Visit to Rushmore Cave - a commercial cave, was part of the NSS Convention Howdy Party. It was a pretty cool cave, very crowded with NSS Cavers. Didn't get to do the roller coaster because a thunder and lightning storm closed the rides in the park. Oh well.

6/25: BRG trip to Breathing Cave, VA. Susan Burr, Doug Feller, Nick Schmalenberger, Jeff Huffman, Kelly Perkins & Brandon Phibbs. We got a late start. We flagged our route to the cave and did not get lost this time. We visited the Serpentine Way, the waterfall, and other holes and mud slopes, where we eventually had to retrace our steps to get out. The last section was difficult. We were all dragging a little on the way out. It was a hot hike to and from the cave.

7/2: Dig time! Jeff Huffman joined Nick Schmalenberger, Martin DiLeggi, Rolland Moore and one other person to the *streambed dig* in the *Karnes Spring area* of Botetourt Co. VA. This dig has been "filled in" several times by rains and floods, so they built a creek diversion and uncovered the entrance and passage once again. They have surveyed 150', and it is 50' deep.

7/9: McClungs Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, James Dunn, Nathan Otto, and Payal Razdan. WVACS Classic survey trip into McClungs. Went to the side passage past Second Breakdown that ends at the overlook to Freeman Ave across from the entry to Tufa Trail. Payal felt really uncomfortable about going through the tight crawl at the lead for our survey, so while she waited in the main passage, James and Nathan and I surveyed for two hours. As it turned out, Payal tried the tight spot and got through ok, but she returned to her pack and took a nap.

7/9: Lost World Caverns, WV. (BRG trip one week early) - Participants were Doug Feller, Susan

Burr, Nick Schmalenberger, Jeff Huffman, Kelly Perkins, Kat Watson (Kelly's friend/newbie), Jacob Whitlock, and Lauren Appel. Steve, the owner, was very accommodating. We had an enjoyable time! We did the same trip as last time but explored the lower areas a bit more. The formations back in the wild section are beautiful! Many of us went down the Toilet Bowl, just for fun.

7/14: A family came by the McConnell's to look at the **Catawba Murder Hole** sinkhole. They donated \$20 to the cave conservation fund.

7/20: Lowmoor Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Stephanie Petri, Scott McCrea, and 5 others. Helped NCRC instructors find a good place in Lowmoor to have their weeklong NCRC finale in-cave rescue class which takes place on Friday. Choose the mazy area with pits up just past the Capital Room. They said it was perfect. They were planning on having 4 people needing rescue of one kind or another. I'm going to miss it because of a planned trip starting on Friday of Sweetwater.

7/23: Maxwellton Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Nick Socky, Nikki Fox. This was a camp trip to the Retreat. We went to upstream Cove Creek, where we climb up right from camp. Our goal was past the turn off for Twisted Sisters and up the rope where Chris, Dave Smallwood, and I had free climbed. Then there are a lot of other nuisance climbs, mostly up. We got to a place where Nick wanted to do a bolt climb. While he and Nikki worked on that, I solo surveyed to a side lead that got too tight. Nick's bolt climb didn't go. We then went further in, re-rigging some climbs and drops and putting in an alternate in another place. We eventually got back to the Dragon Breath passage. There were two tight crawls which I barely fit through. Then there was one 100-foot-long belly crawl with a sticky floor, which was not tight, but was probably around 15 inches. It was a pain. Then there was some nice rectangular stoop way and crawlway with cobble floor. The dig at the end of the Dragon Breath passage was about 5 to 6 inches with a flowstone floor. Nick beat at it for a while, then one technical dig, which failed. The dig is exciting

because it has air in the right direction. Plus, it is really dry, there are nuts on the floor, and there were a bunch of flies - indicative of an entrance. Plotting things out, there is only 20 to 40 feet of overburden. We got 8 hours of sleep (2 am to bed) and headed out at 11:40am. It was slow paced trip out, taking 5 hours. It was a good but exhausting 3-day trip!

8/6: McClungs Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, and Bob Alderson. Went to Lt Dan's Dome in the Junction Complex in order to lasso the natural bridge and climb up into the upper-level stream passage. We brought in 100 feet of 11 mm rope. I had forgotten how tight the 'Squeeze Way' is. The last 10 to 12 feet is really tight, probably 10 or 11 inches. Almost had to exhale to get through. Once through we got to the dome without delay, and I found the way to get to the bottom without having to do the tricky climbdown. While Bob got ready to climb, I successfully threw the cord over the natural bridge on the 2nd try. Bob climbed up and rigged a Y hang for a nice free drop. Bob also rigged a traverse line for the wide stem across the drop to get to the stream passage. We surveyed until about 9:30pm. We finished everything except for one lead. Other leads were for really tiny cavers or just too tight. We got out at 10pm for a good 11.5-hour trip. 930 feet of survey completed.



Bill Koerschner in McClung.
Photo by Dave Socky