

Carbide Dump



May 2022
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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, Jeff Huffman, Bob Gulden, Susan Burr, Bill Koerschner, Meredith Weberg, Betty Jones, Karen Kastning, Rich Geisler, Tyler Huth, and Jerry Fuller.

Cover: *Dave Socky squeezing out of a tight spot in Lack's Grotto.* Photo by Jeff Huffman.

CAVERS CALENDAR

May 20: **NO BRG meeting** - go to Spring MAR/VAR instead!

May 21: BRG trip to Tawney's Cave, VA. Contact Susan Burr to sign up.

May 20-22: SPRING MAR/VAR, at Grand Caverns, Grottoes, VA. Hosts: Seven Rivers Grotto & Charlottesville Grotto. \$38 on site. See page 45 for more info.

May 22: John Fox Memorial. See announcement on page 38.

May 27-29: Salem Gem, Mineral and Jewelry Show, Salem VA Civic Center. Admission is \$7.00 adult, \$2.00 children. See this [link](#).

May 27-30: Speleofest 2022, Lone Star Cave Preserve, Bonnieville, KY. Hosted by Louisville Grotto. For more info, see <http://speleofest.com/>

May-July 2022: Karst Field Studies. Western KY University, Bowling Green, KY. Visit www.karstfieldstudies.com for more information about the program,

course descriptions and schedules, how to register, instructor bios, and more.

June 3-5: Orientation to Cave Rescue class at the Upper Tract Training Center in Upper Tract, WV (about 15 minutes north of Franklin, WV on US 220). See <https://ncrc-er.caves.org/events>

June 4: Virginia Cave Board meeting, Natural Bridge State Park, VA. All are welcome.

June 5-11: Virginia Cave Week.

June 13-17: NSS Convention, Rapid City, SD. See nss2022.caves.org

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

July 8-10: WVACS Classic, at the field station in Renick WV.

July 8-10: Karst-O-Rama, Great Salt-petre Cave Preserve, Mt. Vernon, KY <http://karstorama.com/>

July 15: BRG meeting, 6:30p, Jersey Lily's-Salem, VA.

July 16-17: 18th Lutz Field Station Jamboree, hosted by PSC. contact: Paul Gillis, pgillis@cox.net for info.

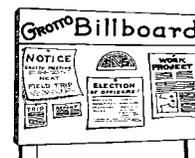
July 16-21: NCRC National Week-long, to be held in Covington, VA. See this [link](#).

July 24-31: International Congress of Speleology, Savoie, France.

Aug 5-7: Indiana Cave Capers. [Click here for more info.](#)

Sept. 3: WVASS meeting @ OTR site, 6:30p. Contact George Dasher for info.

June 26-30, 2023: NSS Convention Elkins, WV. 🐻



BRG Meeting & Trips Notice

There will be NO May Grotto meeting. Go to the VAR/MAR at Grand Caverns instead. Or go on the BRG Grotto trip.

Grotto Trip

Tawney's Cave, VA

Date & Time: Saturday, May 21, 2022. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **8:30 am**.

Leader: Susan Burr

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

Requirements: Horizontal, beginner trip. Contact Susan Burr ASAP to sign up and if you need helmet and/or light.

Limits: 12 cavers.

Description

Tawney's Cave is a perfect beginner cave. There is mud, an active stream, breakdown mountains, exposure, walking passage to belly-crawls, mud, salt-peter diggings, a maze, a pit, mud, pretty speleothems, slippery mud slopes, fossils, salamanders, and if it hasn't rained for a while, big cracks in the drying mud. There is about 3,500 feet of passage in the cave.



Doug Feller in Tawney's - By Dave Socky

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.

KWI Award: Congratulations to Bob Gulden on receiving the **Karst Water Institute Award!** The award is for Bob's work maintaining and updating the **Long and Deep Cave Lists**.



Wil Orndorff presenting the award to Bob. Photo by Dave Socky

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. If you are a current NSS member, this is a **reminder** that the **2022 NSS Directors Election** is underway. **DEADLINE** – all votes must be received by **MAY 22, 2022**. Find your email from the NSS sent 4/5/2022, (it contains your private registration code) and follow the steps. Get out and (electronically) vote!



Safety and Techniques: Dan McConnell's shoulder replacement was successful. He has a long recovery ahead.

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!

Tyler Huth, a postdoctoral researcher working with Bronwen Konecky at Washington University in St. Louis, MO, is studying geochemistry of caves and requests water samples in caves across the USA. Drips, streams, lakes are OK. He needs one to two samples

per cave; vials will be provided. This research has been approved by the NSS Research Advisory Committee. Contact Tyler if you are interested in helping hutht@wustl.edu

Beckley Coal Mine tour: Susan Burr suggested that BRG and Greenbrier Grotto combine forces, purchase "group tickets" and go on the **Beckley Coal Mine tour, in Beckley, WV**. (15+ people are required for a group discount.) *Susan motioned that BRG agree and participate in this outing, sometime in Summer/Fall 2022.* Second by Marian McConnell, Nick Schmalenberger. **VOTE PASSED.** Susan Burr and Mystik Miller will coordinate things. (This trip may be done in place of a grotto/cave weekend in July-Sept.)

American Cave Conservation Association (ACCA) is contacting all members to help a grassroots effort to stop a highway being built in Indiana. Please write to the names, addresses of IN state officials and tell them the road is not needed and to support the **NO BUILD OPTION**. More info can be found at <https://ikc.caves.org/>

BRG 'Rescue Contact' list updates. The current 2022 'Rescue Contact' list has 3 contacts. Is anyone interested? "Still open for volunteers!"

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 05/11/2022

Cave Bucks	\$ 15.96
Conservation	\$ 1.00
Equipment	\$ 104.12
<u>General</u>	<u>\$4,126.34</u>
Total	\$4,247.42

John Fox Memorial Service and Celebration of Life

Betty Jones and Karen Kastning

A Celebration of the Life of John W. Fox, caver, father, husband, brother, friend, "dancing bear", lover of bats, music and people will be held on Sunday, **May 22, 2022 at 2pm** at Unity Christian Church, 400 Tyler Avenue, Radford, Virginia. Anyone wishing to visit with the family is welcome to the family home after the 2pm service. Address 204 Fifth Street, Radford, Virginia.

On Monday, May 23, 2022 John will be interred at the Southwest Virginia Veterans Cemetery at **11am**. There will be a short service with military honors. The address is 5550 Bagging Plant Road, Dublin, Virginia. All are welcome to attend.



Cave water samples for isotope research Tyler Huth

My name is Tyler Huth – I'm a postdoctoral researcher working with Bronwen Konecky at Washington University in St. Louis, MO.

I work on the geochemistry of caves and am looking to acquire a set of cave water samples (drips, rivers, lakes) from across North America as part of a scientific study on caves and climate (project details below). Would members of your group be willing to collect cave water samples in caves they are already plan-

2023 NSS Convention in Elkins, WV

Hallelujah! After much delay, we are happy to announce the **2023 NSS Convention** will be **June 26–30, 2023** in Elkins, West Virginia!

The sessions and vendors will be located at Davis and Elkins College. Yes, *that* Davis and Elkins! We were there in 1983 and they are delighted to have us back.

Camping will be at The Robertson Association (TRA) site nearby. Yes, the Old Timers Reunion (OTR) campground!

Meanwhile, mark your calendars, put in for leave from work, and start looking forward to a fun convention in wild, wonderful West Virginia!

Many thanks,
Rich Geisler
Meredith Hall Weberg
2023 NSS Convention
Co-chairs



Membership

Thirteen BRG members and guests attended the April 15, 2022 BRG meeting. We had another great guest speaker - **Larry Manning**, who enlightened us with his program, "Reviewing Your Caving First Aid Gear." Great talk, Larry! Thanks!!

Blue Ridge Grotto currently has 56 members and 5 subscribers.

Membership Proposals:

Pat Banks, one of Al Stewart's students and member of VWCCC (1960's). Pat has shared many of his photos of past caving adventures with Al Stewart, Tom Beaman, and Barry Ferguson. Pat's sponsor is Mary Sue Socky. Although Pat was unable to attend the April meeting, **Pat was voted in as BRG's newest member!**

Kelly Perkins is new to caving and loves the underground experiences! Susan Burr is Kelly's sponsor, seconded by Lauren Appel. Kelly's application is tabled until the **June 15, 2022**, BRG meeting.

Membership Updates

Carl Cornett - NSS #56641 FE
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Roanoke, VA 24015
carlcornett2015@gmail.com
c/ 540-759-0745

Nick Socky - NSS #34313 FE
711 Montgomery Street
Blacksburg, VA 24060
sockynss@vt.edu
c/ 540-529-0413



ning to visit this year? Anywhere in North America is fair game – samples from close to home or across the country will work for this study.

What am I asking for?

Based on what caves/sites you would be willing to sample, I will send you a corresponding number of vials (I only need 1-2 samples per cave). In the cave, you'll fill the vial (s) and record basic site information. Then, you'll mail the samples and notes back to me in a provided envelope. The time commitment should be ~15 minutes total.

If you'd like more information or have questions, I am available by email or would be happy to set up a phone call or video chat.

Cave conservation considerations

Water sampling should not present any conservation concerns and this research has been approved by the NSS Research Advisory Committee.

Sincerely,
Tyler
hutht@wustl.edu



Lack's Grotto

Botetourt County, VA

By *Dave Socky*

The entrance to Lack's Grotto is located at the western end of a steep 30 foot long by 20-foot-wide sink. The entrance is 12 feet wide and 4 feet high and leads directly into a passage heading west. The floor of the passage is dirt with leaf debris and many old dried-up bones. Just a few feet from the entrance is a narrow slit on the right. Just below and to the left of the slit is a belly crawl. Both the slit and belly crawl lead to the same place within 30 feet – a T intersection to a passage which is parallel to the entrance passage.

At the intersection the passage is about five feet high. To the right (east) the passage turns into a crawlway with an old drain on the right. It was at this point that an old 50mm ammo box was found buried in the dirt. The ammo box was dug out at the owners' request, and it was found to be empty.

Past the buried ammo box, the crawl turned into a narrow belly crawl (2 feet wide by 1 foot high) which then opened up into a small 4-foot-high room after about 6 feet. There were tree roots coming out of the ceiling and walls. At the northern end of the room was a small six-inch hole where another very small room could be seen after only 4 or 5 feet.

Back at the intersection before the ammo box, the passage continued to the left



Owner at the top of the mud plug.
Photo by Susan Burr

(west) as a walking passage. There was a pile of small rodent bones on the dirt floor. Just 15 feet to the west of the intersection was a low crawl at floor level heading to the southwest. After only a few feet, this passage turned into a crawl which was too tight for anyone to fit into. Later, a light connection was made to a crawl from the main entrance passage. Plus, laser range finder survey shots from both ends pretty much confirmed this connection.

From the pile of rodent bones, the parallel passage continued westward for another 35 feet where it ended in a mud fill.

Back in the entrance passage, the cave continued as a nice walking canyon until a six-foot-high dirt plug was reached. It was possible to climb up the dirt plug and crawl over the top for about 10 feet where you could drop back into the walking canyon. There

was also a belly crawl to the right which allowed on to avoid climbing over the top of the plug.

30 feet after the plug is a small tube on the right, which goes north for about 30 feet. But it is way too small for anything but a rodent to traverse. Continuing in the main passage, the cave bends to the left after 20 feet from the rodent tube where a breakdown collapse occurs after another 20 feet. It is possible to climb up almost 200 feet into the cave pretty much ends with impenetrable breakdown dis-

appearing into the ceiling.

The surveyed length Lack's Grotto is 350 feet with a depth of only 15 feet. Members of the Virginia Speleological Survey and the Blue Ridge Grotto surveyed the cave on April 10, 2022. The survey team consisted of David Socky, Doug Feller, Susan Burr, and Jeff Huffman.



Doug Feller surveying in the entrance passage. Photo by Susan Burr



Doug Feller in the entrance to Lack's Grotto.
Photo by Dave Socky

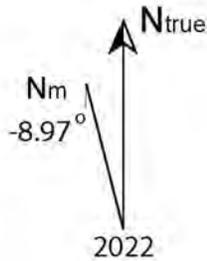


Lacks' Grotto



Botetourt County, Virginia

April 26, 2022



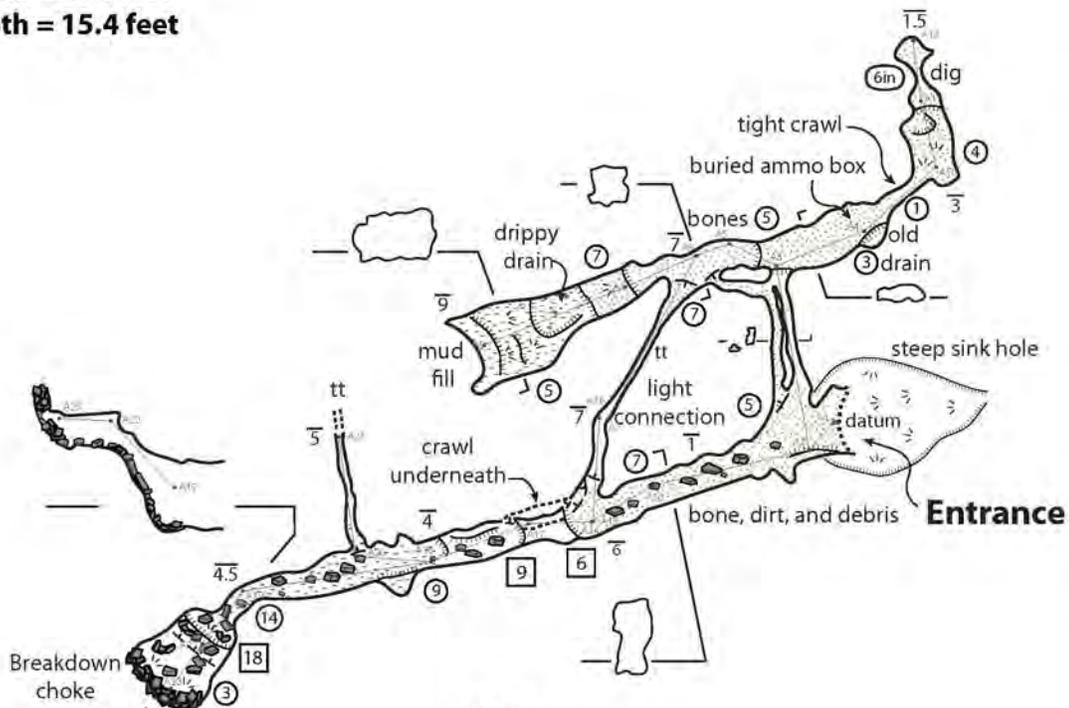
Laser range finder (DistoX2) survey
on April 10, 2022
by the Blue Ridge Grotto (BRG) and
the Virginia Speleological Survey (VSS).

Cartography: David Socky

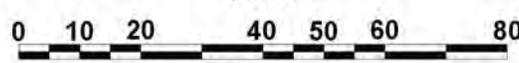
Survey team

Susan Burr
Doug Feller
Jeff Huffman
David Socky

Survey Length = 350 feet
Depth = 15.4 feet



Scale



Symbol Legend

Datum	Ledge	Dirt floor
Breakdown	Under cut	Mud with rocks
Slope (down)	Drip line	Mud floor

7th Finger Survey

McClung Cave, WV

By *Bill Koerschner*

Date: 6 April 2022

Participants: Bill Koerschner, Dave Socky, Joe Zokaites

Objective: Survey the 7th Finger and all side leads

Summary: 32 ACG stations + several pud shots, 1013 ft (200 ft new cave length). Surveyed borehole sized passage to terminal BD room. Surveyed two side leads to fill. Surveyed lower crawl on right past the BD to a squeeze. Pushed beyond the squeeze into 50ft long x 18ft wide borehole fragment – sucking good air.

Report: We met at the cave at 10 am on a cool, windy and overcast day. We managed to get into the cave at 10:30 am and proceeded out to the 7 Fingers area. The stream in 7 Fingers Canyon was up and mud-clouded due to the previous days' rain. We reached our objective in two hours and began a ACG survey to the southwest from the Finger 5 junction. Dave drew plan, Bill drew cross-sections and Joe was on point.

The passage is large and mostly dry borehole that is oriented SW along the strike. Large shelves of sediment fill flank a channel with a tiny trickle stream. The fill consists of 3ft of laminated clay over 2ft of stream gravel. This passage was the master drain of this area in the distant past and is almost

certainly the far upstream portion of the Lindsay Lane borehole. It is heading towards the Maxwellton blind valley and probably carried that flow before the stream diverted into the current Maxwellton Entrance.

We set ACG5 at the junction with Finger 6 which departs left as a stoopwalk with a small stream. We naturally decided to continue ahead in the borehole. We set ACG10 in a 50ft wide room with an enormous block of breakdown lying continuously along the right wall. The trickle creek flows in a low undercut behind the breakdown block and there is a major display of aragonite frostwork on the wall above the undercut. We surveyed back NE from ACG10 to a side lead that becomes too low over fill in 30ft.

At ACG14 we placed one shot into an upper-level pocket on the left. This may have been a passage at one time but it is now plugged with clay. At ACG17 our beautiful borehole headed into a jumble



Formations at the end of the 7th Finger.
Photo by Dave Socky

of breakdown with slickensides (indicative of a fault zone). We surveyed up along the left into a dead-end breakdown pocket with excellent bacon formations. The pocket ends in a cone of surface rubble behind the formations.

We retreated to ACG17 and set ACG27 at the

entrance of a 1 foot high by 10 foot wide bellycrawl in muddy gravel. Joe had to dig his way to ACG28 where the passage hit a joint and improved to a hands & knees crawl. Thank the Cave Gods because ahead was wall-to-wall soupy mud that would have made a miserable bellycrawl.

We were now well off the old map and heading into new cave. The passage was sucking a noticeable amount of wind. We set ACG31 on the left corner of a dropped slab that nearly blocked the passage. The only way ahead was to squeeze along the left side in 8 inches of soupy mud (Hog Heaven). Joe was able to bridge over it at first but soon he was forced to wallow under projecting chert ledges to reach a slope up into a 3 foot high by 5 foot wide breakdown pocket. He set ACG32 on the back wall of the pocket and flagged it with tape. In the ceiling of the pocket, he located a body-tight hole up into a parallel upper-level crawl. Joe attempted the squeeze but soon retreated to let Bill have a crack at it.

Bill's Report: I eased myself along the left edge of the slab until it approached the ceiling and I had to roll off into the slop. The passage is only 1.5 foot high

(Continued on page 42)



Joe Zokaites in the borehole of 7th Finger.
Photo by Dave Socky

(Continued from page 41)

by 2 foot wide and planking became too exhausting. I flopped onto the quagmire of orange mud pocked with water-filled elbow and knee prints. This I churned to cake batter in my efforts to dive under the projecting ledges and up the slope beyond. Once in the pocket I realized the hole into the overlying passage was angled up over the way I had come and would be impossible to pass unless my legs were behind me. After several failed maneuvers, I was finally able to spin around and get my legs into the low crawl below ACG32. The hole is a straight-jacket but not all that tight on me and I slithered into the upper crawl. This proved to be just the space above a large dropped slab; Dave could hear me through a ceiling crack near ACG31. I crawled the opposite direction about 10ft to a BD pocket with a small, awkward squeeze down though a keyhole into the continuation of the lower passage. Someone had dug through there but it looked way too small for me, so I looked around for an alternate route. I could see

space above the keyhole so I pulled out 3 small blocks and rolled a fourth one into the passage beyond. I was able to slip through the resulting opening with little effort. The passage beyond is 5 feet by 5 feet and about 15 feet long with bedrock on the right and porous breakdown ahead and above. I first looked at the far end and could see open space about 5ft ahead beyond a technical dig. Above where I had entered the 'room' was a rubble covered slope up into overhead space. I dug on this about 15 minutes until I could flop onto the shelf and look behind me. WooHoo! I was looking into black! I flailed about but it was impossible for me to inch up the slope in my 'greased' state. Defeated! I looked around for an alternative route up to the right beneath the room. I crawled up into a BD pocket but it ended in a suicide dig up through choss (*definition: choss (uncountable) Rock that is unsuitable for rock climbing, e.g. because it is too soft, unstable, or overgrown - editor*). I took a slightly different route on the way back and noticed a pile of dig

spoil on the floor; above it was an open rift that I could just scramble up. How could I have missed this! It would have saved me 20 minutes. There was major airflow up the rift into the room. The room is 18ft wide, 10ft high and 50 ft long – clearly a piece of borehole! There are numerous BD leads all over the room but, by this point, I had left my companions to freeze in the mud long enough. I retreated having found enough to justify a return trip. I became completely soaked on my return trip through Hog Heaven so I announced to Dave that I was done. It was 7:00pm anyway so we decided to leave Finger 6 for the next trip. We headed out at a steady pace and reached the surface at 9:00pm for a 10.5 hour trip. It was 60 deg F with no wind – Spring at last!

Work Remaining

Survey from ACG32 into borehole fragment. Bring tools and push every hole to follow the wind to more bore! Survey Finger 6 and the rest of Finger 3.



Joe Zokaites with Bacon.
Photo by Dave Socky



Joe Zokaites & Bill Koerschner in the mud wallow.
Photo by Dave Socky

Breathing Cave, Bath County, VA VSS Monograph #1

Edited by Robert Zimmerman.
Cartography by Robert Zimmerman
and Bob Alderson

Want to know everything about Breathing Cave - its history, geology, photos, access policy, and maps? This is the book for you! \$25.00 each, plus shipping & handling.

Contact Dave Socky sockydr@cox.net
for your copy!

Copies of this book will be available at
2022 Spring MAR/VAR!!

Caver Preparedness Survey

If something unexpected happens on your caving trip, are you prepared?

You're invited to participate in the **Caver Preparedness Study** to help us learn more about how prepared cavers are in times of trouble.

Dr. Amanda Mortimer, Dr. Sarah Truebe, and I are conducting this study and plan to present results on it in the fall.

The survey takes about 10-15 minutes to complete. Thanks in advance for helping out! <https://tinyurl.com/CaverSurvey>

From the NSS Facebook page

Grotto Trip Log

3/19/2022: James Cave VA (BRG trip). Participants included Doug Feller, Susan Burr, Lauren Appel, Jeff Huffman, Nick Schmalenberger, Kelly Perkins. Nice trip. Went in main entrance, exited via the roadside entrance – Thru trip!

4/3: Nick Schmalenberger, Jason Delafield, Alex Faunce, Jason Davidoff visited **Pig Hole, VA**. They did the Eliminator. Below ground vertical work. Jason Delafield was bolt climbing, trying to ascend a tight chimney. They entered and exited via the “dug” backdoor culvert entrance.

4/6: McClung Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaites, and Bill Koerschner. Surveyed the 7th Finger in the Seven Fingers area (skipped the narrow 6th Finger). Mostly big walking passage except for the very end, which was a low, wet, and muddy crawl off the right side of the main passage. We did one shot down a mucky belly crawl where at the end, Joe couldn't fit. Bill went in to check it out and was able to get through. He got into a segment of 20 foot wide by 50-foot-long trunk passage which was bounded by breakdown but reported that could possibly get through with judicious use of a hammer. Bill says he saw maybe 80 to 100 feet of passage that we still need to survey. It was not virgin, but definitely is not on the old map. Both Joe and Bill got totally slimed, after which they didn't feel enthused about surveying the 6th Finger. We headed out about 7pm and exited to a warm evening with no rain at 9pm. We surveyed 1040 feet on a good 10.5-hour trip.

4/9: Cricket Maze Cave, WV. Participants included Lynn Ott, Gene Harrison, Bob Gulden, Dusty & Odin Gulden, Jim McConkey, John Powers, and Kim Fleischman. This was basically a “surface trip” to clean up and repair the property. Of course the gate was checked and entered! Cricket Maze Cave is doing fine.

4/9: Larry Manning and NCRC cavers have been doing many scouting trips for the upcoming NCRC Weeklong in July 2022. **Lowmoor Quarry** and **Lowmoor Cave, VA** were

checked out. WVACS cavers took them to a bunch of WV caves, including **McClung** (historic and **Lightner** entrances) and **Higginbotham Caves 1-3**.

4/10: Larry Manning scouted out **Crossroads Cave, VA** and the cliffs at **Clarks Cave, VA** for NCRC. The Weeklong NCRC classes have been moved to Dabney Lancaster Community College in Clifton Forge, VA.

4/10: Red Skull Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Susan Burr, Doug Feller, and Jeff Huffman. Owners: Tasha Lacks, Jessie Lacks, Xander Lacks (son), and friend Nelson Oliver. This is the small cave we checked out for the Lacks. They had contacted Susan about a cave they wanted checked. Turned out to be 350 feet long, with two parallel passages and a buried ammo box. Lots of coon poop. Very dry. Everything ended eventually. No digs or small squeezes.

4/12: Marian McConnell and Cole Frantz invited friends in a hiking group (Tom, Beth, Frank, and Melissa) to see **Catawba Murder Hole, VA** and the Miracle Ridge property.

4/13: Catfish Pit, VA. Participants included Socky, Brian Williams, and Joe Zokaites. The owner had contacted cavers via Facebook. Steph Petri, Brian, and I were supposed to go out in February, but heavy rains cancelled the trip. This time we made it. It was reported to be a six second pit! We were expected at most a 100-foot pit. Turned out to be a very nice 135-foot-deep virgin pit up near the top of the ridge near Lower Copper Creek. It was a bit of a steep climb to get to it. We put a 160-foot rope in first, but it seemed like it wasn't on the bottom. Jaydon actually offered to run down to Brian's truck and bring back the 300-foot rope. We accepted the offer. That one was long enough. Brian went first, then I went down, then Joe. The 160-foot rope was just barely touching the bottom. Nice fluted walls and a free fall rappel. The floor was covered in logs, branches, and leaves with the northern end dipping down a few feet to where the water drained through the dirt. The diameter as about 30 feet by 15 feet. There were a couple of little leads

at the bottom, but they were way too tight little drain cracks. There was a high lead near the top against the back wall, but it would take some funky bolting to get to it and the likelihood of it doing anything is low.

4/13: Catfish Caverns, VA. Participants included David Socky, Brian Williams, and Joe Zokaites. Jaydon told us about another caver along the ridge, so we checked it out. Beautiful large entrance at the base of a limestone headwall near the top of the ridge. The entrance was large and dropped steeply down into the hillside. Steep dirt slopes covered with leaves with one spot being a drop off of about 5 feet. We put a rope down for a handline, which made the climb back up a lot easier. The slope closed down to a smaller opening and eventually developed into a narrow tall canyon that wound around north, south, and then finally east were it got too tight at a 55-foot narrow dome. A rock hammer could potentially be used to know off fins and protrusion to make it possible to progress a little more into the narrow canyon. But it probably is too tight to continue. The canyon is old and phreatic with very old formations and flowstone. It was pretty dry except for dome where it was a bit drippy. Plus a bunch of brown banded cave crickets were living back there. The canyon was about 50 to 60 feet high, but it was narrow. We had to climb up off the floor where we could traverse. We surveyed a total of 183 feet.

4/14: Lowmoor Cave, VA. Participants included Socky and Jessica Bowser. Jessica Bowser does a Podcast on Virginia outdoors activities. She went on a trip to Butler with Mark Hodge back in May 2021. I took her to Lowmoor, and we spent about 5 hours touring the cave. She took lots of photos and videos with her phone. She did well and enjoyed the trip very much.

4/15: Karen Kastning and a few NRVG folk did yet another cleanup on Hickman Cemetery Road at **James Cave, VA**. They collected 21 bags of

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(Grotto Trip Log continued from page 43)

garbage. Karen found a backpack with personal info and 8 credit cards, etc. – the police were notified because this appeared to be stolen property. Never a dull moment when you are cleaning up an ‘dumping area’. Great job, NRVG!!

4/16: McClung Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Joe Zokaites, and Mathieu Salès. We finished the 6th Finger of the Seven Fingers area of McClung Cave. This was a particularly fun trip because one of our team was a caver from France – Mathieu Salès. He had just arrived from France on Friday, and on Saturday went on a 10-hour cave

trip in West Virginia. Gotta love cavers! We surveyed 722 feet and left one good ‘small person’ lead that only Mathieu was able to fit into.

4/23: Endless Caverns, VA. Participants included David Socky, Mary Sue Socky, Ken Walsh, Emily Graham, Meredith Weberg, Carol Tideman, Kim Fleischmann, plus a bunch of other cavers (24 volunteers) worked at the VAR Spring Conservation project to clean algae off the rocks where lights shine in Endless Caverns.

4/30: McClung Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, and Joe Zokaites. They

Finished off the Third finger of Seven Fingers. Lots of narrow stuff. Pushed a number of small tight leads. We left a couple of ‘small person’ leads. Seven Fingers is now done, except for small person leads and high technical leads. We surveyed a total of 760 feet on a good 13-hour trip.

5/7: McClung Cave, WV. Participants included David Socky, Silas Springer, Riley Taylor. Also on the trip was Greg Springer and Lilly. We all went back to the Broomstick Passage near Second Breakdown. Silas, Riley, and I surveyed 750 feet of cave, finishing up this area of the cave. It was a good 10-hour trip. 🦇

Cave Spring Cave, VA

4/16/2022 BRG Trip Report

By *Susan Burr*

Participants: Doug Feller, Susan Burr, Lauren Appel, Jeff Huffman, Kelly Perkins

The owner came out to show us where to park & also gave us a can of WD-40 for the lock. Doug & I were the only ones that had been here before & it was about 10 years ago. I basically remembered nothing about the cave other than I knew there were some areas that were more difficult or scared me. Now I remember why I don't go there much! I will admit that we all had fun & will potentially go back???? We did have webbing to use in one area & we found a go around on the way out, for another area I did not like.

There were lots of drops & climbs that were a little more difficult than some of the others caves we visit. With help from each other, we all made it safely through the cave.

We did drop down into the stream passage & go to the back of the cave. We saw lots of beautiful formations with Buttermilk Falls being the most magnificent of them all. We also saw some salamanders.

Overall I believe we were in the cave about 3 ½ hours. Afterwards a nice meal in Lexington at Macado's.

Island Ford Cave, VA

5/7/2022 BRG Trip Report

By *Susan Burr*

Participants: Susan Burr, Braven Womack (Susan's 8 ½+ yr. old grandson), Doug Feller, Jeff Huffman, Hillary Huffman, Erin Bejjani, Nuriel Bejjani (Erin's 8 ½ yr. old son), Eloise Bejjani (Erin's 6 yr. old daughter),

This trip was to see how well Erin's son did on his first wild cave trip. She would

like to take him to Tawney's & I said we needed to visit Island Ford first. She brought her daughter along as well. I took my grandson, Braven, who has been here 2 other times. I thought having a kid who is familiar with the cave would be helpful with the 2 newbie kids. Braven lead most of the trip. In fact he seemed to know the cave better than I did in many places.

Right off the bat, I was excited to see Nuriel & Eloise following Braven around & entering the small hole in the entrance area of the cave as we finished getting ready. The kids loved exploring a lot of the little side passages & holes going into the cave too. Even in the sections that required adult assistance for the kids, there was no hesitation on their part. Again, I was super impressed!

We made our way through the cave to the back where the spring is. We had a break there & ate some snacks. Then the kids played with my laser & explored a little across the stream while the adults chilled out. Next stop was into the wet muddy section where the old cave bear skeleton was found. Once we got back out of there, we headed to the stream & over to the salamander nursery where we only saw 1 baby salamander. We did see about five adult salamanders on the trip, but no bats were seen.

We got back on the trail heading out until we got to the stream cross over. Here we dropped down a side passage to the stream. Most of the adults & all the kids took the stream passage out to the front of the cave.

We had a nice 2 hour or so trip. The kids did GREAT!!! 🦇



Cave Spring Cave. Climbing down the tricky spot. Photo by Jeff Huffman



Island Ford. Nuriel, Braven, and Eloise at spring. Photo by Susan Burr

Spring MAR-VAR 2022

Grand Caverns, Grottoes, VA

May 20-22, 2022

Mark your calendars and save the date for the upcoming **2022 Spring MAR/VAR Field Meet on May 20-22**, hosted by **Charlottesville Grotto & Seven Valleys Grotto**. More info will be posted on the MAR and VAR websites as it becomes available:

<http://var.caves.org/index.php/events/spring-var> or

<http://mar.caves.org/fieldmeets.htm>

COVID - All Grand Caverns staff and visitors are required to wear face masks while indoors (including bathhouses) if they are not vaccinated. Please be respectful of the choices made by others and staff while visiting. All COVID restrictions are subject to change. Please stay tuned.

Registration - Pre-registration is closed. On-site registration is \$38 per for adults and \$30 for children 5-14. [Click here for online registration](#)

T-Shirts—available, but only guaranteed with pre-registration. \$15—\$19.50.

Camping - Shaded camping is available with ample picnic tables, shelters, and facilities. Smaller campers are welcome, but larger RVs might have a difficult time in that there are no hook-ups. Showers and water will be available.

Dogs - Well-behaved and leashed dogs are welcome!

Hotels - There are a number of hotels and motels in Harrisonburg and Verona VA (~10 miles from Grottoes, VA).

ALCOHOL—the park is under new management and **alcohol is strictly prohibited on park grounds** in accordance with Virginia State Law—“consumption or possession of an open alcoholic beverage in public is prohibited, regardless of age.” We expect the local police to make periodic passes. **Please leave your alcohol at home this time.**

Friday, May 20

We will open the weekend Registration on Friday morning at **NOON** for those who want to come for a long weekend.

Cave on your own on Friday.

There are a number of area Show Caves to visit, as well as wild cave trips.

There are numerous above ground activities as well!

Vendor: Marissa Loftus - Cave packs Survey bags. Ask about custom made cave suits.

Saturday, May 21

SWAP - 11:00 a.m. Saturday & Sunday at Pavilion I. Now that you have upgraded your gear, it’s time to spread the joy! Bring your old gear to sell or trade!

Cave Trips (Led)

- Butler Cave
- Endless Caverns (wild section)
- Fountain Cave **
- Grand Caverns **

- Madison Saltpeter Cave
- Porters Cave
- Trout Cave
- Hamilton Cave

** Additional fee applies

All other caving is on your own. Be sure to sign out (and back in) at Registration.

Conservation Project: Conservation work on Cave Hill Natural Area Preserve. See VAR/MAR site for details.

Other Activities—see VAR/MAR site.

Dinner: Saturday's dinner will be catered by Battarbee's.

Evening Program: in **Pavilion II** with the Presentation Titled “*Thomas Jefferson, Speleologist*” by Bert Ashbrook

DJ: Tommy Carpenter will be on site to entertain, keeping John Fox’s legacy alive.

Sunday, May 22

Breakfast! [Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy](#) (PCC) will offer a fundraising breakfast. Suggested donation \$5/person

Meetings: VAR & PCC meetings beginning at 9:00 a.m.

SWAP: 11:00 a.m. Saturday & Sunday at Pavilion I. Bring your old gear to sell or trade!

Then it’s time to head home. 🐾

CaveSim Convention 2022

Dave Jackson of CaveSim recently sent an email to grottos and cavers: “I’m really grateful to have support from the Vermont Cavers Association and the East Tennessee Grotto to bring CaveSim to the 2022 NSS Convention. If your grotto would like to support this trip as well, you can do so at www.cavesim.com/support

Since the BRG is not meeting in May 2022, and NSS Convention will be over by the June BRG meeting, Marian

McConnell made the request that BRG should do an electronic vote on this request.

Marian McConnell made the motion: “*I move that BRG donate \$100 to CaveSim for support for their participation at the 2022 NSS Convention*”

Dave Socky Seconded the motion.

A request for email voting was sent out. The votes are in.

YES: 13
NO: 4 MOTION PASSES.

\$100 will be sent to CaveSim from Blue Ridge Grotto. Several BRG cavers will volunteer their time at CaveSim, too! 🐾

