

Carbide Dump

PEACE IN EARTH



FROM THE
BLUE RIDGE GROTTO

December 2025 Vol 60, No 10

Marian

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.

EXCHANGE MAIL

Mary Sue Socky
6572 Woodbrook Dr
Roanoke, VA 24018-5402
H: 540-989-7693
email: sockvmss@cox.net

EDITORS

David & Mary Sue Socky
6572 Woodbrook Dr
Roanoke, VA 24018-5402
H: 540-989-7693
email: sockvdr@cox.net or sockvmss@cox.net

TRIP COORDINATOR

Susan Burr
4544 Cordell Dr SW
Roanoke, VA 24018
H: 540-989-5809
email: pondlady97@gmail.com

The Blue Ridge Grotto holds its monthly meetings every third Friday of the month at 6:30 pm. See the Grotto meeting announcement in this issue for the current location.

GROTTO OFFICERS AND COMMITTEES**Chair**

David Socky
C: 540-529-1591
sockvdr@cox.net

Vice-Chair

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

Secretary

Mary Sue Socky
C: 540-529-3954
sockvmss@cox.net

Treasurer

Marian McConnell
C: 540-309-4707
marian.mcconnell@gmail.com

Opinions expressed in The Carbide Dump are those of the editors, unless otherwise acknowledged. No part of this publication may be reproduced, except by the National Speleological Society and its various internal organizations, without the written consent of the Blue Ridge Grotto.

You can access the **Carbide Dump** electronically at: <https://blueridgegrotto.org/carbidedump.htm>

Copyright 2025 by the Blue Ridge Grotto

Contributors: David & Mary Sue Socky, Marian McConnell, Bill Koerschner, Bambi Marshall, Susan Burr, Bob Alderson, Nick Schmalenberger, Mark Minton, and Jerry Fuller.

Cover: BRG 2025 Landowner Christmas Card. Front artwork by Marian McConnell. Photo of **Dixie Caverns** formation and group photo by Marian McConnell.

CAVERNS CALENDAR

Dec 13: Annual WVACS Christmas Party, WVACS Fieldstation. Contact Nick Socky at 540-529-0413 or sockyns@gmail.com for more info.

Dec 19: NO DECEMBER BRG MEETING. See you next year!

Jan 1, 2026: Happy New Year!

Jan 16: BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019.

Jan 18: BRG Winter Party, Noon - 5 pm, Pot Luck, BYOB, Dave & Mary Socky's house, 6572 Woodbrook Dr. SW Roanoke, VA 24018.

Feb 20: BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019.

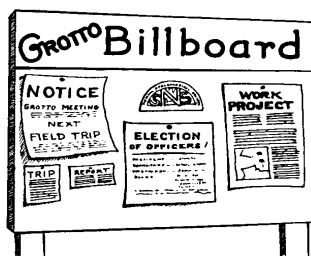
Feb 20: BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019.

Mar 20: BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at **Famous Anthony's-Brookside**, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019.

May 15-17: SCCi's Homecoming 2026 at the Little River Property (former TAG Fall Cave-In site). More info coming soon.

July 6-10, 2026: 2026 NSS Convention, Corydon, IN (<https://caves.org/convention/2026-nss-convention/>)

June 14 to 18, 2027: 2027 NSS Convention. Del Rio, Texas



Long Cave Lists

A legacy of Bob Gulden, now maintained by Paul Berger

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

VAR Limited Access Cave List

<https://var.caves.org/index.php/conservation/closed-caves/closed-cave-list>

Treasurer's Report 11/28/2025

| | |
|--------------|-------------------|
| Cave Bucks | \$ 117.96 |
| Conservation | \$ 2.00 |
| Equipment | \$ 144.12 |
| General | \$5,460.42 |
| Total | \$5,724.50 |

On the back of the BRG 2026 land owner Christmas Card

MERRY CHRISTMAS 2025 & HAPPY NEW YEAR FROM THE BLUE RIDGE GROTTO
"SANTAMANDER" art by Marian McConnell
of the Dixie Caverns "Slimy" or "Sparkle" salamander & formations in Dixie Caverns, VA



Left to right, Back row: Kevin Johnson, Carrie Doupnik, Dave Jackson (CaveSim), Carl Cornette, Geoff Lawrence (CaveSim), Robert Balch, Derek Nash, Susan Burr, Front Row: Marian McConnell, Bambi Marshall, Helene Ferguson, Barry Ferguson, Mary Sue Socky, Dave Socky, and Doug Feller

BRG Meeting & Trip Notice

There will be no December Grotto meeting. Instead, come to the BRG Jan 16, 2026 meeting and the Winter Party on January 18 at Dave and Mary Sue Socky's house. See notice to the right.

Grotto Trip

Tawney's & Links Cave, Giles County, VA

Date & Time: Saturday, December 20, 2025. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market at **8:30 am.**

Leader: Susan Burr.

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

Requirements: Beginner horizontal cave trips.

Limit: 12

Descriptions

Tawney's Cave: Horizontal cave. This is a perfect beginner cave. There is mud, an active stream, breakdown mountains, exposure, walking passage to belly-crawls, mud, saltpeter 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.

We will go to the sinkhole entrance, then to Fat Man Squeeze to see if anyone wants to do it, and then head out.

Links Cave: This is a good horizontal beginners cave. Once you get past the harmless guardian cave spiders at the entrance, you will find Links contains interesting tight squeezes, floorless canyons and dome pits. Everything is free-climbable. Or you can stay on the floor. Some pretty formations, flowstone, too. The cave has about 1530 feet of surveyed passage and takes about 2 hours to explore if you really take your time.

BRG Winter Party

The Blue Ridge Grotto Winter Party will be held Sunday, January 18, 2026.

- **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!

Contact Mary Sue Socky at sockymss@cox.net or call 540-529-3954 if you need directions.

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



Prismatic jointing in Rapps Cave. 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.



BRG Winter Party: BRG Christmas/Solstice/Holiday/New Year/Winter Party will be held **Sunday, Jan 18, 2026** at the Socky's house. Potluck, BYOB, Noon to 5 pm. BRG Will hold **Jan 16, 2026** meeting in addition to the party.

T-Shirts: There are 12 remaining T-shirts! \$12.00 each. L or XL, various colors: red, gold, grey, green, light blue, etc. Contact Susan Burr pondlady97@gmail.com for more information.

BRG Online Payments: BRG can now accept payments through ZELLE, a 'free' cash app. Use the following email through your banks' ZELLE app:

blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com.

BRG will also continue to maintain the BRG PayPal account (which charges fees). Anyone who pays BRG through the PayPal account will be charged a \$1.00 convenience fee for the transaction. Use blueridgegrottoofficers@gmail.com for PayPal.

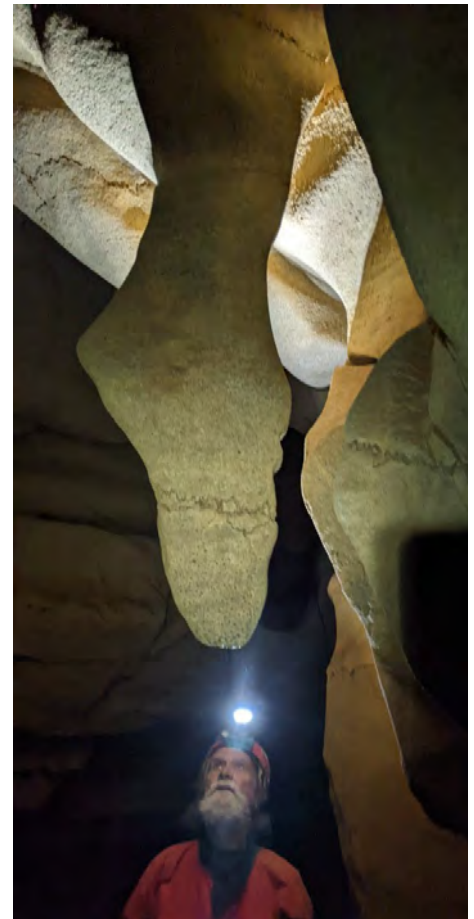
ROCKS - the Warm Springs Valley Project meets every Wednesday, and some Saturdays. Contact Dave Socky if you would like to participate at the following email: sockydr@cox.net.

VAR Limited Access Cave List can be found at this [link](#). Please send changes and updates to Brad Blase at blase@virginiacaves.org or Dave Socky at sockydr@cox.net

Winter Bat Closure for some caves. These closures are primarily for hibernacula.

♦ WV: closed Sept 1 - May 15

♦ VA: closed Oct. 15 - Apr. 15



Mark Minton checking out a pendant in Rapps Cave. Photo by -Dave Socky

Warm River Cave, VA, Hot Stream

Article by *Mark Minton*

(NOTE: Warm River Cave is closed except for science and survey trips through the Warm Springs Project group with express permission from the owner.)

November 5, 2025

Back in April, 2025, we had a climbing trip into the historic Hot Stream in Warm River Cave. On that trip we discovered that significant upper levels exist above the stream. On November 5, Bob Alderson, Dave Socky, Joe Zokaite, and I returned to push a lead that Bob had bolted to in April. Water levels were low, but surprisingly, the Hot Stream did not seem particularly hot.

Since we needed to rig a drop where Bob turned around last time and we suspected that we might encounter others, we took a drill and rigging gear in addition to survey and digging equipment. Rather than climb with heavy loads, we decided to pull the packs up to the lead. That didn't work very well due to the sloping nature of the top of the drop, so next time we'll just climb with the packs. It was very hot in the upper level, even with a breeze.



Dave on the first drop in the PLP survey (Joe Zokaite)

While the others wrangled the packs, I enlarged a couple of squeezes that Bob had dug through previously. There was good airflow into the lead, which was likely responsible for the curious rims formed in the popcorn at the pinch points. Then I rigged the drop ahead, which entered a nice-looking canyon covered with frostwork. Dave and Joe brought up the survey, with occasional help setting stations from Bob and me. We named the survey PLP for Phil's Lost Passage, because we were confident we would drop into that lead about 300 feet away.

Bob was first down the short drop, and was soon exclaiming about what I would think of the passage ahead. It looked like a smaller version of the Conundrums, a major upper level we had found beyond the Hot Tubs in the new section several years ago. Bob's ceiling rose to around 35 feet, and just as with the Conundrums, the frostwork only reached about halfway up the walls, with bare bedrock above. I presume that has to do with airflow.

Almost immediately, an upper level developed on the left side. Bob and I managed to throw a rope over some popcorn-covered ledges, and Bob carefully climbed up while I spotted him. Bob then rigged a proper rope, and the rest of us went up. The upper level was nice, but short lived before it dropped back down to rejoin the passage below. We surveyed it and then pulled the rope down.

After a brief constriction, the main passage regained its ample dimensions. More potential upper levels appeared, but some will require bolt climbing to reach. Holes also began appearing in the floor, and a stream was visible below. The holes got progressively shallower until eventually our level joined the stream passage at a small climbdown. In addition to the holes, massive formations appeared on the left wall. Some were fresh, but several were old, dry, and eroded or broken. Bob managed to squeeze up into another upper level there with even more formations and a couple of leads that we saved for next time.

The stream passage had very good airflow in the upstream direction, but it was a belly crawl over chert or shale ledges that we did not pursue this trip. Down-



Borehole continues (Joe Zokaite)

stream was larger, and it dropped steadily as it cut through more ledges heading back under the upper passage. Soon we came to a 12-foot pit, which I rigged. At the bottom the passage degenerated to a crawl heading off at a right angle back toward the Hot Stream. Bob pushed it 30 or more feet to breakdown that would require digging. There was little airflow, and he was only about 20 feet above water level, so it likely reconnects as an infeasible.

With that we were done. We surveyed 480 feet, but did not get very close to our namesake, Phil's Lost Passage. In fact, we didn't even head very directly toward it, and probably ended up too low in the downstream direction anyway. I guess we'll still have to push Phil's from below. This was a very successful trip into nice virgin passage that cavers have walked by (below) for decades. Warm River Cave is now 4.15 miles long.



Water Sinks Cave Preserve, VA

Article by *Susan Burr*

Blue Ridge Grotto Trip, 11/22/2025

Participants included Jeff Huffman, Susan Burr, Doug Feller, Trish Geiger, Lauren Appel, Bambi Marshall, Jessica Hester, Ben Hester, Alex Thompson, and Derek Nash.

This grotto trip was a little different from others. We went to **Water Sinks Cave Preserve**, VA which was donated by Phil Lucas and is managed by the **Butler Cave Conservancy (BCCS)**. The first 8 people listed above had a permit to go into **Subway Cave**. The permit has a trip limit of 8. The whole group had access to **Owl Cave**, **Waterfall Cave** and **Upper Water Sinks Cave**. You can also walk the trails throughout the preserve.

No one in our group had been here since it became a preserve. A few of us had been to Subway Cave before, but it was many years ago. Our first stop as a group was to Owl Cave. This cave was super fun. It has two entrance openings on the side we went in. We made it to the other end of the cave which also has an entrance. Many of us went out that entrance just to see it from outside & then we went back into the cave to finish exploring. It is not a large cave, but we were in there for a little over an hour. It is a mazy cave and we wandered around all the passages we could find. We saw 7 bats inside. Also, this cave did have many spiders!

Our next stop was Waterfall Cave. No waterfall today though. I believe the cave name comes from what is probably a small waterfall in the stream next to the cave. Water levels are VERY low now. Some of us stuck our head into the cave, but we decided to save our energy for



Owl Cave entrances (Bambi Marshall)

Subway Cave. Derek & Alex took off on the trail to explore some of the preserve while the 8 of us left headed over to Upper Water Sinks & Subway Cave.

Subway Cave entrance is in the middle & below Upper Water Sinks Cave. There are wooden bridges & platforms to this entire section. We headed into Subway Cave first. It starts off with a wooden ladder down a pipe & then switches to rebar rungs the rest of the way down a total of about 20 feet. The entrance area is a huge passage that is highly decorated. We spent a lot of time taking pictures there. We basically explored all of the large passages & some of us explored several of the side passages. After a couple of hours or more, we headed out to go into Upper Water Sinks Cave.

Upper Water Sinks Cave is directly above the entrance to Subway Cave. There are wooden trails & ladders through some of this area. This cave is small and mazy, where you can do a lot of loops, but not get lost. You can go in one side & come out the other side. We saw about 7 or 8 bats in this small section. There were probably even more! After we played around in there, we decided that we would head back to the cars.

On the way back part of our group decided to go into Waterfall Cave. I ended up first, much to my dismay. It is a really small, all crawling on smooth wooden planks, with LOTS of spiders on each side! Some of the group referred to this cave as Spider Cave. I just looked forward and was careful not to rub



Water Sinks Preserve (Bambi Marshall)

up against one of the walls. The passage just dead ends and we turned around & headed out.

Across the field where we parked is a tiny dug out cave with painted wooden boards at the entrance. A few of us went over to check it out as well.

We all had a great time & look forward to hopefully going back again next year.



The Subway (Bambi Marshall)

Warm Springs Project - Dunn's Cave Dig, VA

Article by *Bill Koerschner*

Date: November 20, 2025

Participants: Bill Koerschner, Keith Sweeney, Amos Mincin, Bob Alderson, Joe Zokaite

Objective: Continue dig in Dunns Cave

In: 11:30 AM **Out:** 6:00 PM (6.5 hours)

Summary: Advanced 3x3 dugway 10ft to a squeeze into a small room – continues.

Report: On Wednesday November 20th we met at Keith's house at 10:00 AM and, together with Rick Lambert's data logger team, headed over to the Dunns Cave parking area. We suited up and entered the cave at 11:30am. We walked to the dig and got right to work. Amos scratched a mark on the left wall at the dig face and burrowed ahead like a badger. There was a loud whoomph when a wall of clay peeled off the bedrock exposing a 4ft long pocket stretching ahead

along the left wall. The sediment had been sucked out from beneath a 3" thick bridge of rotten flowstone. The airflow was coming from above the bridge but the pocket did save us some digging.

Bill took over at the face and continued the process of scooping the bottom foot of fluffy sand out of the dig face to create an overhang and then collapsing the shelf of red clay onto the drag sheet. Rapid progress was made. We soon had 4 foot wide by 3 foot high crawl floored with cemented sandstone cobbles.

After lunch, Bob took over at the face and soon exposed a rise in the ceiling about 3 ft ahead. We redoubled our efforts despite flagging energy levels. The rotten flowstone shelf gradually thickened as the dig advanced. This became harder to remove because there was no way to pry against the underlying bed of soft clay. At 4 pm we were about to give up when Joe arrived with fresh arms. We took



Bill Koerschner showing the 'undercut' technique from Oct 29. Photo by Dave Socky

turns at the face until Bob finally broke through about 5:30 pm.

Bob squeezed ahead above the flowstone shelf into a small room that divides ahead around a robust flowstone haystack. A hole high on the left of the haystack and another one low on the right rejoin ahead; both are too small to pass without shaving. The room continues beyond the obstacle; the floor drops out of sight over a drop-off of unknown depth. There was no echo.

We are following a paleo lift tube that is filled with a classic abandonment sequence of stream cobbles overlain by cross-bedded sand and capped by laminated clay. The trend is along strike towards where the main passage dives into flowstone at D19. Hopefully the passage will get much bigger after the two paths join.

Bill Koerschner



Bill Koerschner in the dig from Oct 29. Photo by Dave Socky



Photo trip into Rapps Cave, WV with Martyn Farr and Rachel Smith. Photos by Dave Socky

PAY YER 2026 DUES!!

It's that time. Dues are due! Current BRG members and BRG Subscribers:

- 2024 BRG dues are \$10.00 for regular or associate members, \$5.00 for additional family members. Discount for members under 18. Subscriber fee is \$10.00 per person.
- Make checks to **Blue Ridge Grotto**.
- Families, additional dues payers – there will be printed info on your family rate at the Jan 16 BRG meeting.
- If you mail in your dues, please include a piece of paper with your current address, phones, email, NSS number (and NSS expiration month), and primary grotto affiliation.
- You can pay for multiple years.

Pay your dues at the January 16 BRG meeting, the January 18 BRG Winter Party, pay by PayPal or Zelle (see page 72 for details), or mail them to:

Marian McConnell
BRG Treasurer
46 Palmer Trail
Troutville, VA 24175

Can't remember if you've already paid? We do! Check the list of member who have already paid:

Bob Alderson - 2026
 Lauren Appel - 2027
 Susan Burr - 2026
 Joseph Caldwell - 2026
 Carl Cornett - 2029
 Miriam Cuddington - 2032
 Martin DiLeggi - 2028
 Carrie Douplik - 2029
 Joey Fagan - Life
 Cheryl Feller - 2028
 Doug Feller - 2028
 Barry Ferguson - 2026
 Helene Ferguson - 2026

Cole Frantz - 2028
 Trish Geiger - 2026
 Gene Harrison - 2031 S
 Jessica Hester - 2027
 Jeff Huffman - 2030
 Kevin Johnson - 2029
 Larry Manning - 2026
 Dan McConnell—2026
 Marian McConnell - 2026
 Sharon Mohny— 2026
 John Pearson - 2026
 Jen Perdue— 2026
 David Rose - 2034
 Suzanne Rose - 2034
 Gordon Smith - 2028 S
 David Socky - 2026
 Mary Sue Socky - 2026
 Nick Socky - 2026
 Alex Sproul - 2026
 Jennifer Suggs - 2028 S
 John Taylor - 2026
 Meredith Weberg - 2029
 Brian Williams - 2030

Not a BRG member? Ask any officer how to begin the membership process. 🐾

John Charles "Chuck" Hempel Obituary

(From the Randolph Funeral Home, Valley Bend, WV)

December 12, 1949 to November 1, 2025. John Charles "Chuck" Hempel, 75, a resident of Dailey, passed from this life Saturday, November 1, 2025, at home. He had been in his usual health and death was unexpected.

Chuck was born Monday, December 12, 1949, in McKeesport, PA, a son of the late John Samuel Hempel and Sara Florence Banner Hempel.

Left to cherish Chuck's memory are four children, Luke Hempel and wife Holley of Kerens, John D. Hempel of Fort Benning, GA, Daniel Hempel of Washington, PA, Laura Hempel of Elkins, grandchildren, Cassidy and Myles Hempel, the mother of his children, Jennifer Boyle, and his caving family.

Preceding him in death besides his parents was one sister.

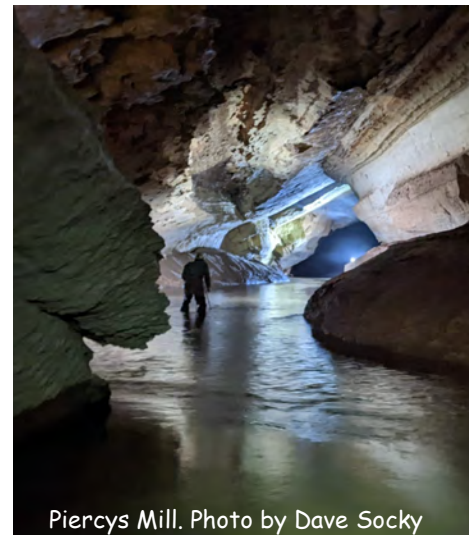
Chuck graduated high school in McKeesport, PA. He then joined the United States Coast Guard, serving also as a rescue swimmer. Following his time with the Coast Guard, he obtained his bachelor's degree from West Virginia University. He was a geologist for



NSS #9439RL FE, CM

over thirty years and owned his own company, EEI Geo Physical. Chuck was an avid sportsman and outdoorsman. His passion was caving. He taught cave rescue classes and was a published author. Chuck wrote the highly rated book, "On Call A Complete Reference for Cave Rescue". He will always be remembered for his caring nature and always willing to help others.

Visitation will be held at the Randolph Funeral Home Wednesday, November 5, 2025, from 5 pm until 7 pm. Chuck's request for cremation will then be honored.



Piercys Mill. Photo by Dave Socky



Piercys Mill. Photo by Dave Socky

Grotto Trip Log

8/30: Bob Alderson, Bill Koerschner, Michael Raymond surveyed in **Shorts Moonshine Cave, KY** as part of CRF.

8/31: Bob Alderson, Tom Brucker, and Tim Green visited, surveyed in the *Elysium* area of **Mammoth Cave, KY**

9/13: Shoveleater Cave, WV. Bob Alderson, Daniko Maybrook, Adam Happensack, and Mike Shank surveyed and explored the *Three Column Hall* area to the *Gaping Blackness*.

10/4: Susan Burr and friends visited **James Cave, VA** as a pick-up trip. Everyone had forgotten how difficult James can be. The roadside entrance of James Cave can use a cleanup – glass shards are everywhere! BRG needs to get with NRVG and plan a conservation trip here in 2026.

10/11: Bob Alderson, Bill Koerschner, and Mike Conover surveyed in the Popcorn Canyon section of **Roppel Cave, KY** (CRF)

10/12: Bob Alderson, Bill Koerschner, Sully Sullivan, Tress NLN surveyed in **Rider's Mill Cave, KY.** (CRF)

10/18: Warm River Cave, VA. (NOTE: *Warm River Cave is closed except for science and survey trips through the Warm Springs Project group with express permission from the owner.*) Bob Alderson, Mark Minton, Corey Hackley, Keely Owens surveyed. Bob reported that breakdown climb past the 'Mouse Hole' resulted in a major breakthrough in Warm River Cave – it may bypass the sump.

10/19-20: CaveSim visited GO FEST in downtown Roanoke, VA. Dave Jackson and Geoff Lawrence say THANKS to Robert Balch, Susan Burr, Doug Feller, Barry Ferguson, Helene Ferguson, Jeff Huffman, Bambi Marshall, Marian McConnell, Derek Nash, Jen Perdue, Nick Schmalenberger, Dave Socky, and MarySue Socky for helping with CaveSim. 1042 visitors crawled through CaveSim! See report under Old Business.

10/26: Nick Schmalenberger reported that he went to **Ripley Cave** in Monroe County, WV with Greenbrier Grotto. There was some climbing

along pools kind of like **Rimstone Falls** cave and I fell into the pool, got kind of a scrape but was ok. After the cave we walked with the owner to a different pasture to look at some sinkholes & maybe a different entrance to the same cave?

11/5: Trish Geiger attended *Chuck Hempel's memorial service* (See p.76 for obituary). It was well attended by cavers and neighbors. Chuck will be missed

11/8: Nick Schmalenberger visited **Higinbotham #4 Cave** with Chad Burrall, Jenna Breeckner, Geary Schindel, and Tomislav Gracanin.

11/8: WVCC Banquet had a great turnout and a nice dinner at the Clingman Center, Lewisburg, WV. Mark Minton & Yvonne Droms were the guest speakers on "**Recent Discoveries in Warm River Cave, VA.**" There was a Gurney Can at the silent auction! BRG members present were Bob Alderson, Joey Fagan, Gene Harrison, John & Lyn Pearson, Dave & Mary Socky, Nick Socky, Nick Schmalenberger, Alex Sproul, Meredith Weberg.

11/9 Lowmoor Cave, VA. After the WVCC Banquet, David Socky, Mary Sue Socky, and Meredith Weberg went to **Lowmoor Cave**. Visited the Devils Kitchen and just a little bit down the main passage. The purpose of the trip was to show Meredith spray paint and one place not to go to in preparation for a VAR conservation trip in 2026.

11/11 and 11/18: BRG conservation efforts continue in **Dixie Caverns, VA.** Mary Sue Socky, Marian McConnell, Susan Burr, Trish Geiger, Abbey Mays, Alex Thompson, and Jenna Fidler are removing green lampenflora and gently cleaning flowstone. The black algae at the Wedding Party Pool has returned. Two Dixie Salamanders & several cave crickets were seen on 11/18!

11/14 & 16. Dave Socky and Nick Schmalenberger participated in a **SPAR** (Small Party Assisted Rescue) course at *Carter Caves State Park, KY*. Caves visited for the course included **Cascade Cave** at Carter Caves State Park, and then on Tom Wood and Steph Petri's property: **No Thanks Brad Pit, Ox Barn Cave, and Toothbrush Cave**. Nick reports: All the caves were fun and great to practice some rescue skills in.

We made a cross haul to bring Dave across Big Sinking Creek in returning from Toothbrush Cave.

11/17, 18, & 19. David Socky helped on photo trips for Martyn Farr and Rachel Smith from Wales. Geary Schindel was the main organizer. Mark Minton and Yvonne Droms helped as guides (they had done Butler, Helectite, and Lowmoor earlier). Tom Black and Tomislav Gracanin also participated as helpers. Over the three days we took Martyn and Rachel into **Lost World Cavers, Piercys Mill, McClung, Rapps, and Organ Cave** (Note – we got special permission from the owner for *Organ Cave*. *Organ Cave* main entrance is not normally open for caving.)

11/19: Dunns' Cave, VA Bob Alderson, Bill Koerschner, Amos Mincin, Keith Sweeney. They dug under a flowstone floor, and made more passage.

11/22: Graham Pit and Triplet Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Rick Lambert, Keith Sweeney, Andrew Newton, Aubrey Stallard, Conner Smith, Mia Blyseth, and Jason Sargent. Graham Pit was a new cave that is located just above Triplet Cave. At first I thought it would be too tight to get down the short drop, but after getting a closer look, it looked big enough with nice footholds. At the bottom past a ceiling height change, the cave opened up into a small room. It continued to the right. I traversed across a mud floor and up a slight slope. A smaller crawl presented itself with a 6 foot climb down into another small room. Unfortunately, there were no leads out of this small room. But definitely enough to survey. We got everyone down to help (except Keith) as there was plenty of room. This was Aubrey's first cave trip, so she got a good experience. Surveyed the whole thing in 7 shots for a total of 74 feet. We then moved to Triplet Cave for digging. At Triplet, we spent the rest of the day opening up the keyhole slot to make it easier to traverse. Jason Sargent got into the lead about 1.5 body lengths, but it will still have to be mined.

