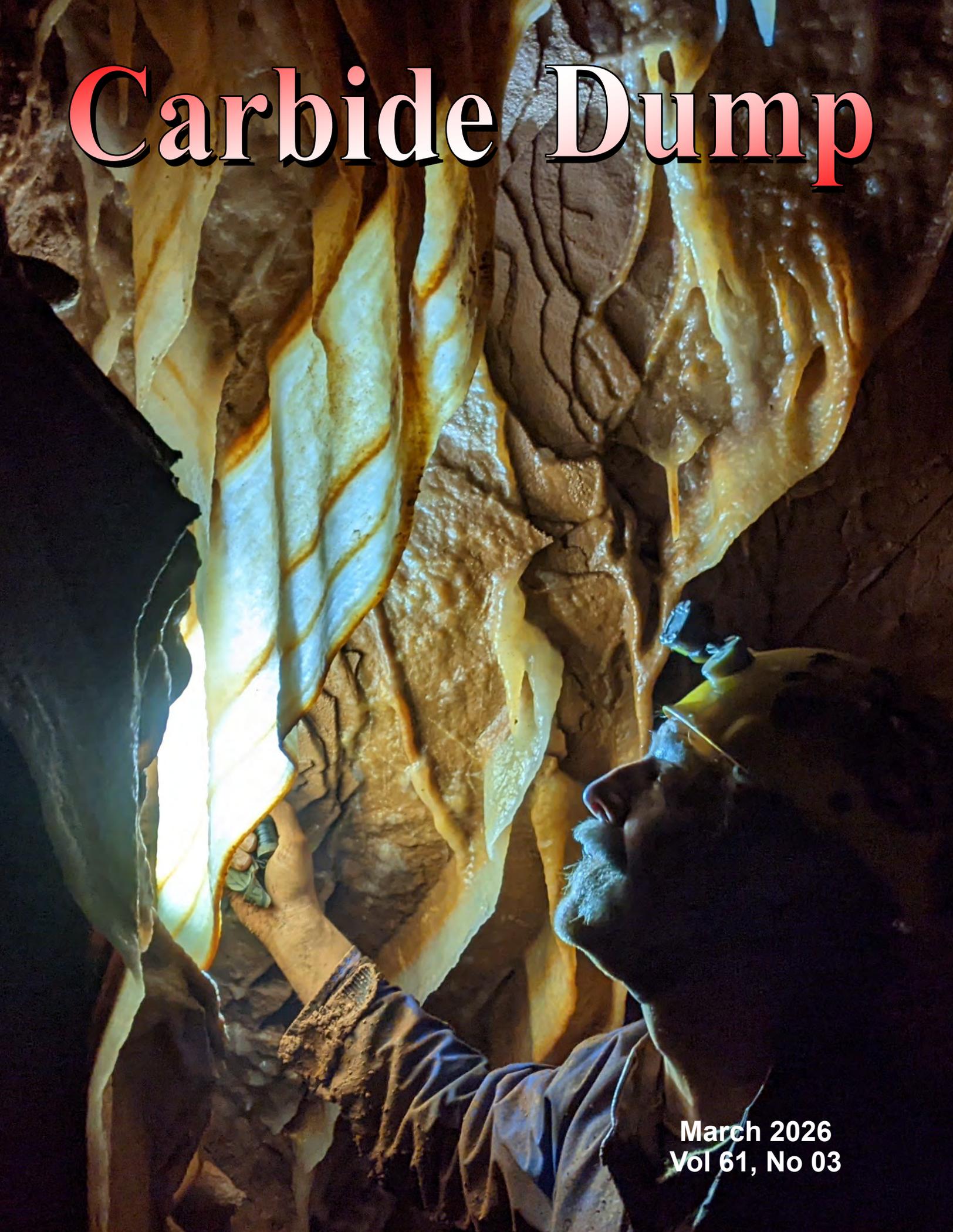


Carbide Dump

A man wearing a hard hat and work clothes is shown in profile, looking upwards at a large, layered rock formation in a dark tunnel. The rock formation is illuminated by a bright light source, creating a strong contrast with the surrounding darkness. The man's hand is visible, touching the rock. The overall scene is dramatic and industrial.

March 2026
Vol 61, No 03

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 6:30 pm at Famous Anthony's-Brookside, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke, VA, 24019.

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

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Contributors: David & Mary Sue Socky, Marian McConnell, Susan Burr, Bob Alderson, Nick Schmalenberger, Carol Tideman, Dean Wiseman, Laura Demarest, John DiCarlo, and Jerry Fuller.

Cover: Joe Zokaites illuminating cave bacon (formation) in a Virginia cave. Photo by Dave Socky.

CAVERS CALENDAR

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

April 10-12: VTC Level 1 Course in Williamsville, Virginia. Will teach the Frog vertical system. \$145

April 17: BRG meeting, 6:00pm for dinner, meeting at 6:30pm at Famous Anthony's-Brookside, 6499 Williamson Rd, NW Roanoke VA 24019.

May 1-3: VAR Graffiti Cleanup at Lowmoor Cave, VA. See p.19 for info and RSVP.

May 8-10: Spring VAR @ Endless Caverns, VA. Hosts: Tri-State Grotto.

May 8-10: Spring MAR, @ McClure Bean Soup and Festival grounds in McClure, PA.

May 9-16: National NCRC Week-long, Mentone, AL

May 15: BRG meeting 6p @ Famous Anthony's - Brookside. Roanoke VA

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

May 30 - June 6: Virginia Cave Week.

June 6: VA Cave Day 🦋

June 12-14: WVACS Classic Weekend in Greenbrier Co. WV.

June 19: BRG meeting 6p @ Famous Anthony's - Brookside. Roanoke VA

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

August 22: BCCS Open House, more info soon. See www.butlercave.org

Sept 3-7: Old Timers Reunion, Daily, WV.

Fall 2026: Fall VAR hosted by VPI Cave Club. Date & site TBA.

Sept 25-27: Fall MAR @ Newville Lions Club Fairgrounds in Newville, PA.

June 14 - 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 03/11/2026

Cave Bucks	\$ 117.96
Conservation	\$ 2.00
Equipment	\$ 144.12
General	\$5,515.82
Total	\$5,779.90

BRG Meeting & Trip Notice

The **March 20, 2026** meeting of the Blue Ridge Grotto will be held in a private room at **Famous Anthony's - Brookside** (6499 Williamson Rd). Come around 6 pm to order dinner with the meeting starting at **6:30pm**. Click [here for the location of Famous Anthony's](#).

The program will be a slide show by Nick Schmalenberger about his recent caving trip to Mexico.

Grotto Trip Helictite Cave, VA

Date & Time: Saturday, March 21, 2026. Meet at Hanging Rock Orange Market (HROM) at **8:30 am**. **NOTE:** At the HROM, park in parking lot to the left of the store, near the steps & creek. The front park & ride is closed.

Leaders: Jeff Huffman and Susan Burr.
Coordination: Susan Burr 540-580-9409
pondlady97@gmail.com

Requirements: Intermediate horizontal cave trip.

Limit: This trip is filled.

Description

This cave is called Helictite for a reason - lots of helictites and formations of all kinds. Bring your camera! This is an intermediate trip, with lots of climbs and crawls, but some very nice passage. The cave is around 7 miles in length, so there will be lots to see.



Dave Socky

Upcoming Vertical and Rescue Courses

The National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) and the Vertical Techniques Committee offer many courses on cave rescue techniques throughout the year. Check them out at <https://caves.org/ncrc/>

April 10-12, 2026 - VTC Level 1 Course at Williamsville, Virginia The following Vertical Systems will be taught: **Frog**, \$145 <https://caves.org/event/vtc-level-1-course-2026-04-10-williamsville-virginia/>

May 9-16: NCRC Weeklong, Camp Skyline, Mentone, AL. See <https://caves.org/event/ncrc-2026-national-seminar/> for cost, various levels, equipment needed, etc.,

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.



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

CLOSED CAVES

- **Rapps Cave, WV:** new restrictions. Cave now closed Oct 1-May 1 for hibernating bats.
- **Cave Spring Cave, Lexington, VA** has been sold to the Maury Service Authority (regional water company).

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

- ◆ WV: closed Sept 1 - May 15
- ◆ VA: closed Oct. 15 - Apr. 15



Membership Updates

Ben Hester is BRG's newest Associate member! Susan Burr and Lauren Appel sponsored Ben. Ben was voted in as BRG's newest Associate Member at the February 20 BRG meeting. Welcome, Ben!

Ben Hester
17 Autumn Circle
Boones Mill, VA 24065
540-797-7002 C
hesterbt@gmail.com

Ed and Marianne Saugstad's new address was garbled – here is the correct version.

Ed and Marianne Saugstad
Lower Prescott, Rackenford Rd
Tiverton EX16 5NB
Devon, UK

Ed Saugstad
304-992-1942 (US #)
011-44-740-495-0062 (UK #)
Suunto1942@protonmail.com

Marianne Saugstad
304-992-1904 (US #)
011-44-740-533-2872 (UK #)
waterwitch@protonmail.com

Lowmoor – Return of the Iron Ladder

Article by *David Socky*

On April 11, 2025 cavers of the Triangle Trogs (North Carolina) did a great job of replacing the rickety old iron ladder in Lowmoor Cave, VA with a sturdier safer aluminum ladder. With my OK, they took the old iron ladder out of the cave.

After a lot of discussion with Bob Alderson, it was decided that the old iron ladder should not have been removed because of its historical significance.

So, on March 4, 2026, Bob and I drove to Lowmoor Cave to try and find the old ladder and return it to its rightful place. The low water bridge had a healthy stream running across it. We stopped just after crossing the bridge and looked on a scrap heap just on the left. This is were Mark Daughtridge of Triangle Trogs said they had left the ladder.

Bob had stopped by Lowmoor just this past Sunday (March 1) on his way back from Shovel Eater Cave, but he didn't find it. I was resigning myself to the reality that the ladder was gone. But when we took a look at the scrap heap, there it was, plain as day, sitting right on top!

Bob said that the ladder was a lot more

rickety and looked a lot different than he remembered it from seeing it years ago. That's why he didn't see it.

We loaded the ladder on top of Bob's car and drove into the Sofa section of the mine. We geared up and between the two of us, we carried the ladder up and over the hill and into the mine. It was pretty nice using the ladder at the little climb-up from the mine to the cave.

The trip into the cave to the small pit where the aluminum ladder is located was uneventful. We had no problems maneuvering through the cave and soon had the iron ladder back in its new final resting spot on a mud slope next to the aluminum ladder.

After taking some photos, Bob climbed down into the little pit that is under the aluminum ladder -just to see what was down there. He found a bunch of old rotten wood, some of which still had nails in it. We surmised that the wood was from a wooden ladder which predated the iron ladder. Ah, the history! We took a piece of wood and placed it next to

the aluminum ladder. The plan is to make a little plaque which will describe a little bit about the ladders so that visitors can appreciate the long history of this cave.

We then made our way back out, happy that we had accomplished our goal. It was an interesting and fun trip of 1.5 hours.

Note: It's funny that the crew that removed the iron ladder in 2025 visited Lowmoor just 2 days after we returned it. Mark Daughtridge said on Facebook "We were very surprised to find the old ladder back by the pit traverse this weekend! We speculated it may be haunted and had returned on its own."



The iron ladder is back home (Dave Socky)



Dave using the iron ladder at the climb in the mine. (Bob Alderson)



Dave on the new aluminum ladder (Bob Alderson)

Spring VAR 2026

May 8-10, 2026 Endless Caverns, VA

Contact: John DiCarlo (Tri-State Grotto) dicarlo@myactv.net or 301-432-2323

Cost: \$50.00 (\$45 for 16 years old or younger)

Camping: Both tent and RV camping, flush toilets, and hot showers in the club house, with extra porta-pots in camp. There are also nearby hotels.

Caving: There will be self-led and guided trips.

Friday: Arrive, register, set up camp, Friday night sign-up for guided cave trips.

Saturday: Go caving, go exploring, visit friends, relax.

Saturday Dinner: Catered dinner guaranteed to all who pre-register.

Evening Program: TBA

Sunday: VAR Business Meeting: 9:00 AM

Registration: <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/spring-var--2026>

VAR Graffiti Cleanup at Lowmoor Cave

May 2 - 3, 2026

Brush up on your conservation goals. Pack up your elbow grease and some grotto members, and then join the VAR Conservation Committee efforts to scrub graffiti from a much-maligned Virginia cave near I-64's Low Moor exit.

Camping is available Friday & Saturday evening at the RASS field station.

Lunch and water will be provided Saturday, but please bring your own snacks and extra water. The cave is mostly dry and much warmer than most Virginia caves.

Sponsored by VAR Conservation Committee—we need and appreciate volunteers!

Supplies to Bring

- Wire and plastic brushes
- Extra toothbrushes
- 1- to 3-gallon containers
- Spray bottles for water
- Rags

Details and sign-up can be found at [this link](#). *Please RSVP to help us plan lunch and how many cave walls we may be able to clean.* Ken Walsh

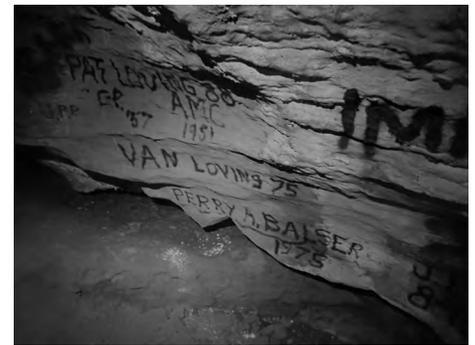


Photo credit: Mark Daughtridge

2026 NSS Convention Info

Howdy Cavers!!! On behalf of the 2026 NSS Convention crew, we are excited to welcome you to historic Corydon, Indiana for the big event - July 6-10! Join us in the Ohio River Valley for a week of great times, amazing friends, and the beautiful caves and wild places of southern Indiana and Kentucky! Hundreds of caves within an hour's drive await, as well as the longest cave in the world just three hours away in Mammoth Cave National Park! Other excursions include hiking in Hoosier National Forest and other nearby state parks (O'Bannon Woods, Clifty Falls, and Spring Mill State Park), floating on the scenic Blue River, or visiting one of the many beautiful commercial caves in the region. Other sights worth visiting include downtown Louisville, West Baden Springs Hotel, Holiday World, and the National Cave Museum, to name a few!

The 2026 Convention will also feature copious learning opportunities at various

sessions and workshops throughout the week as well as dozens of fantastic cave vendors, Junior Speleological Society activities, and more! Guests can have the joy of listening to tunes and enjoying a cold beverage at the campground each evening with old and new friends. Pre and post-convention camps are also being planned for those arriving early or staying late in the area. There are plenty of adventures for everyone! Stay tuned as more information will continue to be added to the website (caves.org/convention) and social media pages (facebook.com/NSSconvention)

Questions? Want to volunteer? Email us at 2026convention@caves.org

Can't wait to see y'all there!

Sincerely, Your 2026 NSS Convention Team. "Hundreds of Caves, Hundreds of Miles"

VA Cave Week

Virginia Cave Week, **May 31 to June 6, 2026**, promotes an understanding of Virginia's caves and the surrounding limestone habitats known as karst. Sponsored by the Virginia Cave Board, the week is used to highlight the importance of caves and karst and provide resources and educational opportunities to engage the community in conservation efforts. Educators are encouraged to involve their students using in-class activities and visitation to the state's numerous commercial caves.

Blue Ridge Grotto and Cave Day

Dixie Caverns has given Blue Ridge Grotto permission to celebrate **Cave Day on Saturday, June 6, 2026**, in the Dixie Caverns parking lot.

We will have a kiosk with cave and bat info, display boards, the squeezebox and we will entertain the public for a few hours.

Just like we did in 2025.

Grotto Trip Log

12/6/2025: Warm River Cave, VA. Bob Alderson reports more survey; a new discovery by Corey Hackley & Keely Owen. Found a perched water pond and other stuff.

1/3: Ryders Mill River Cave, KY. Bob Alderson and other CRF members continued survey in the cave.

1/7: Roppel Cave, KY Cave survey by Bob Alderson and members of Cave Research Foundation (CRF) in the 'Chilly Willy' section. .

1/8: Nick Schmalenberger explored **Sotano de Cuerda Corta, Mexico** with Rolland Moore, Aaron Zumpf, Julian Benson, and Amy Bredes. This is a semi-annual exploration and survey project in a Mexican karst area.

1/10: Nick Schmalenberger returned to **Sótano de Cuerda Corta** with Rolland Moore.

1/17: Paxton Cave, VA. Susan Burr, Jeff Huffman, Lauren Appel, etc. Good, typical grotto trip

1/18: BRG Winter Party. Dave Socky, Mary Sue Socky, Keith Goggin, Lisa Goggin, Jeff Huffman, Hillary Huffman, Lauren Appel, Jen Suggs, Helene Ferguson, Barry Ferguson, Alex Sproul, Marian McConnell, Susan Burr, Trish Geiger, Mary Lou Holland, and Tom Beaman. Nice afternoon with delicious food and caver tales.

1/31: Dunn's Cave, VA More digging, exposing passage and surveying by Bob Alderson & WSP Survey team.

Jan: Jonathan Constatine did some puttering around in **Island Ford Cave, VA.**

2/8: Derek Nash and Dave Socky checked out the *rumor of a cave* in an old NE Roanoke quarry. There are several potential candidates. All leads must be reached by boat or by rappelling in. Derek will get more info.

2/9: Dixie Caverns, VA. David Socky and Mary Sue Socky went to the back of the cave to clean up the now small but still-muddy Wedding Party Pool. We took a shop vac to suck up all the pool water and mud.

Tested the 1-gallon sprayer. 2-hour conservation trip.

2/11 Dunn's Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, Joe Zokaites, and Bob Alderson. Bill and Dave finished the two leads in the NW branch of the cave. We then went to the clay/sand dig in the main upper branch where Joe and Bob dug all day. There is still a tight spot that Bob can't get through, but you can see into a bigger room or passage. Could be walking and there is air movement. The dig face is rock, but the floor up to it is really muddy. It was really drippy in the whole cave this day because of the melting ice and snow outside. We did use our micro spikes and crampons to get to the entrance. We were out by 4:30 pm with 116 feet of survey.

2/14 – Shovel Eater Cave, WV. More exploration and survey by Bob Alderson and members of the Germany Valley Karst Survey (GVKS).

2/14 – Organ Cave (Lipps Entrance), WV – Nick Schmalenberger & members of Greenbrier Grotto: Mystik Miller, Randy Wilfong, Jenny Varuska, Angela Rao visited Organ Cave via Lipps entrance for Mystik's birthday.

2/25: Dunn's Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Bill Koerschner, Joe Zokaites, and Bob Alderson. We dug through the tight spot and found 12 feet of barely walking passage. The room devolved into another technical dig. We did make a voice connection to D19, about 20 feet away. But it still may be worth digging further. We surveyed a whooping 42 feet. It was a fun 5-hour trip.

2/28: Warm Springs Project Digs, VA. Dave Socky attended a dig in the Warm Springs Project area with 22 cavers! We dug on 3 new blow holes just up the road from Jenga Cave. Two of the blow holes were blowing LOTS of warm and humid air. The temperature was measured at 65F! The 3rd blow hole was blowing cool air. Lots of technical digging, but still more digging is needed. The two warm blowholes seem like they might be

connected by a narrow canyon. It was a beautiful and warm day topside - mid 60F or higher.

3/2: Shenandoah Wild Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky, Blaine Schubert, Davis Gunnin, Shea Gunnin, Dave Hubbard, and Greg McCoy. Carol Tiderman was surface support. Dave Socky was one of the first in and helped get packs down the entrance series. While the main science crew headed into the cave, I helped Greg set 2 bolts for the second drop. The bolts went in the ceiling making for a very nice on/off lip. Plus, a clean rope was very nice. We then met up with the science crew who were working at two sites. After a lot of working in tight, muddy, cramped conditions our time limit was finally up. Things got packed up and we started moving out at 4 pm. The ropes were very nice, and the top of the second drop was sweet. Greg and I used his haul system to pull packs up. We finally got out 6:20p to a half inch of snow on the ground.

3/4: Lowmoor Cave, VA. Participants included David Socky and Bob Alderson. Bob and Dave drove up to Lowmoor to find and return the iron ladder that had been removed last year. See article on p.18.

3/7: Benedict Cave, WV. David Socky, Bob Alderson, and Bill Koerschner. We continued the survey up the Persinger Creek tributary, tying into Greg Springer's REC survey. It was a warm sunny day. The survey started easy (Dave was sketching), but we soon got into a breakdown mess. Huge blocks with multiple levels and leads all over. It was an area that was complicated and hard to draw. There were high leads that were very scary to climb or would require bolts to do safely. We did one loop and surveyed 650 feet over 32 stations. It was a fun 8.7-hour trip.



Vote for your Favorite Five

These **CARBIDE DUMP** covers from 2025 are eligible to be entered in this year's NSS Cover Art Salon.

Send your votes by email to Mary Sue Socky at sockymss@cox.net.

Selected **CARBIDE DUMP** covers will be displayed at the NSS Cover Art Salon during the NSS Convention, July 6-10, 2026 in Corydon, IN.

Anyone can vote. Any number of times!

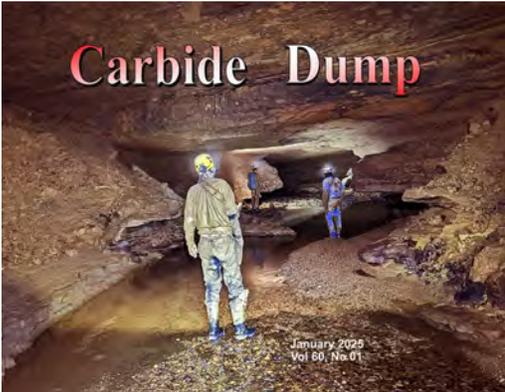
Vote 5 times for your favorite. Or, vote only for sketched artwork. Vote for any photo that has green in it. Vote against your previous

vote – we don't care! BRG knows how to pick 'em!

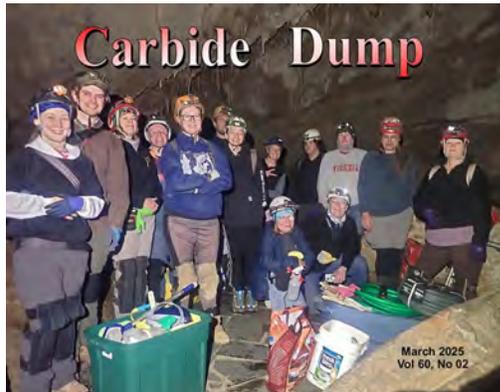
Voting ends April 25, 2025.

The covers are much more stunning in color – look at them on-line for the best viewing at <https://blueridgegrotto.org/carbidedump.htm>.

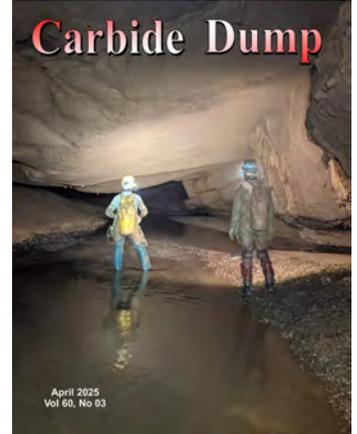
Below are covers from the 2025 **CARBIDE DUMPS** 



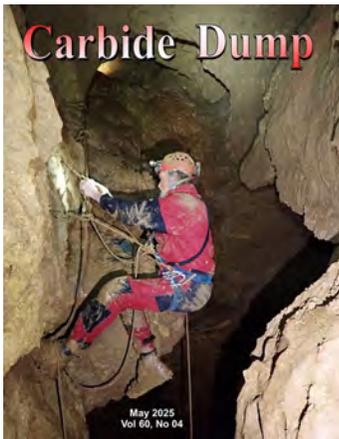
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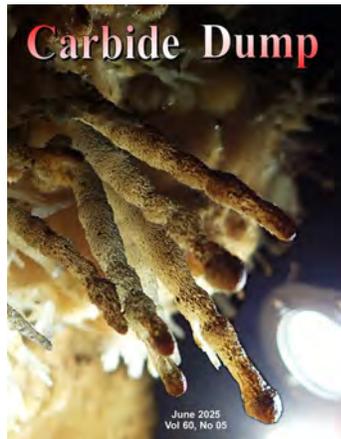
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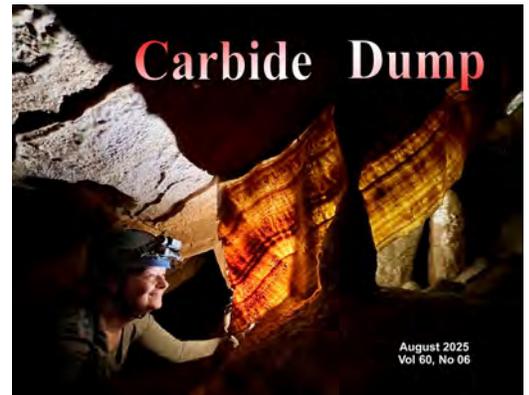
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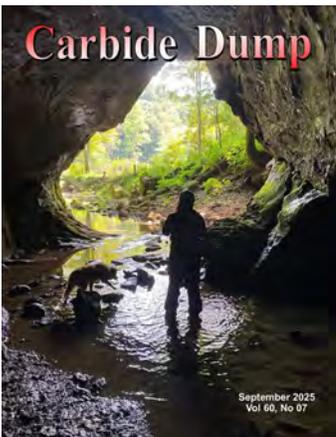
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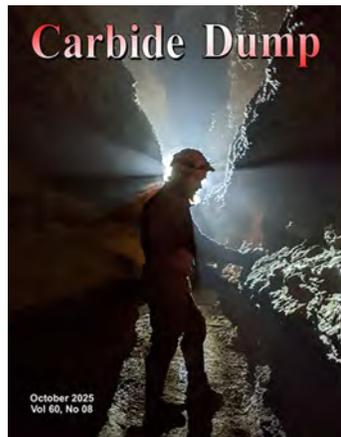
June 2025 v60 n5



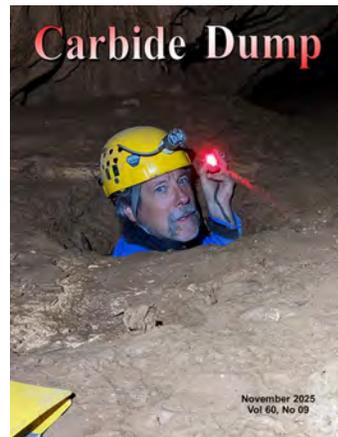
August 2025 v60 n6



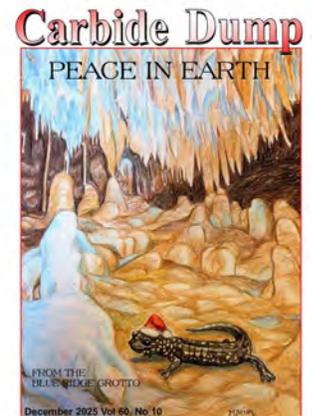
September 2025 v60 n7



October 2025 v60 n8



November 2025 v60 n9



Dec 2025 v60 n10