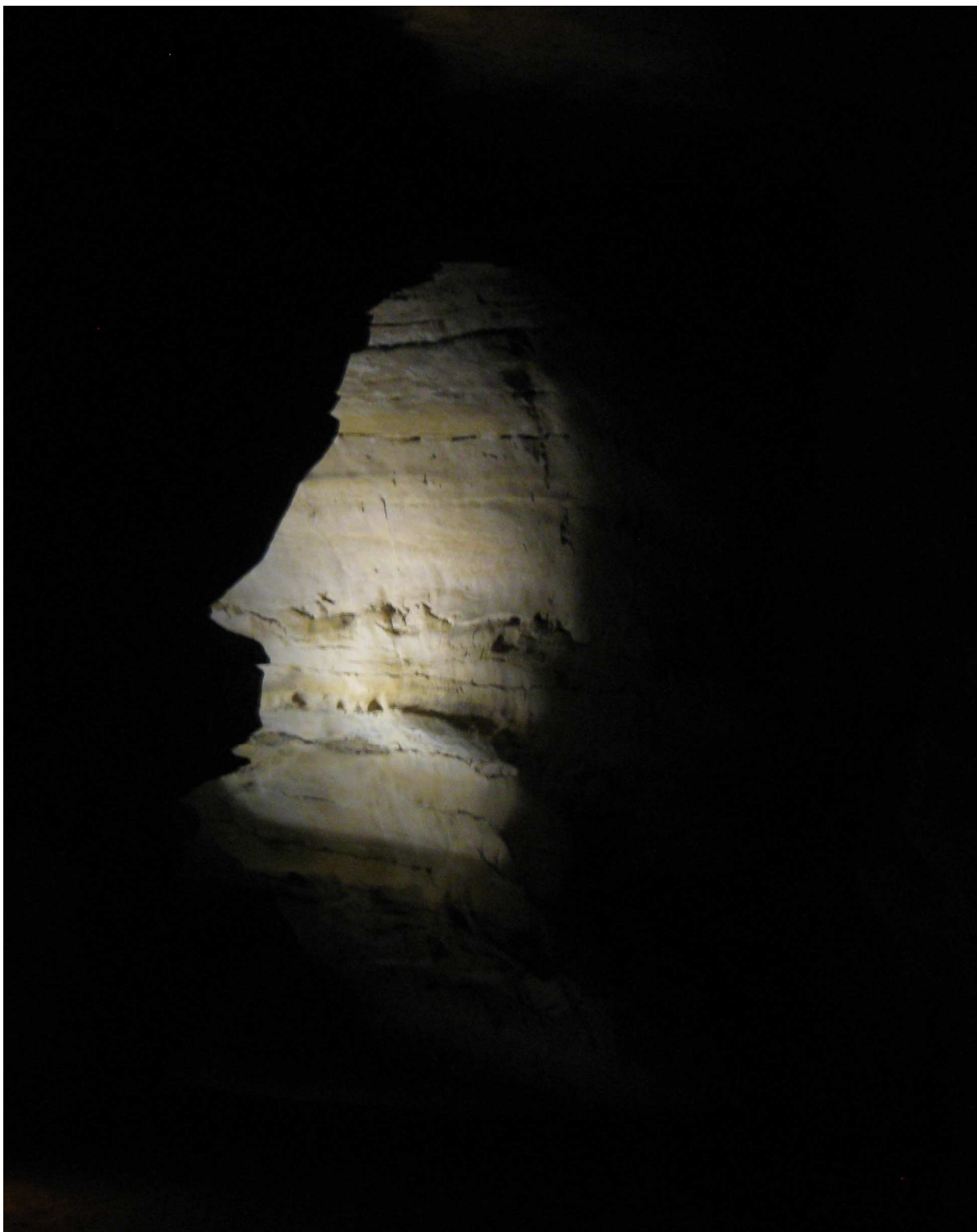


C.O.G. Squeaks

July 2012



THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO (COG)

The Central Ohio Grotto (COG) of the National Speleological Society meets at 7:00 p.m. the fourth Tuesday of most months at the Presbyterian Church on the Square in Worthington, Ohio. Please contact a grotto officer to confirm meeting time and place or better subscribe to the COG list server at [cog @ ontosystems.com](mailto:cog@ontosystems.com) by sending an email to [cog @ ontosystems.com](mailto:cog@ontosystems.com) with the subject "subscribe". The meeting site will be announced there and on the Grotto WEB site.

Grotto Mailing Address:

C/O Joe Gibson, 6883 Cedarbrook
Pl., New Albany, OH 43054-9738 614-855-7948
Email: [joe.gibson6591 @ sbcglobal.net](mailto:joe.gibson6591@sbcglobal.net)

Grotto Membership Dues:

\$15 per individual or \$20 per family.

Grotto Officer	Name	Telephone
Chairman	Jamie Thompson	614-402-3235
Vice Chair	Mark Swelstad	614-202-0349
Treasurer	Joe Gibson	614-855-7948
Secretary	Julie Siders	614-264-6069

The C.O.G. Squeaks

The C.O.G. Squeaks is mailed to dues paying members and to grottoes with which the COG exchanges newsletters. The C.O.G. Squeaks is also available by E-mail as an Adobe Acrobat file (PDF) or Word Document. The Squeaks is produced using Open Office. Please notify Mark Swelstad, if you would like a file of the Squeaks to reprint. The Squeaks is available as a PDF at:

Website <http://www.centralohiogrotto.com>

List Server cog@ontosystems.com

Please send trip reports, caving articles, cave fiction, cave poetry, and cave photos to Mark Swelstad for publication.

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Caver Calendar

August 18th – Music in the Mountain. GSP
<http://musicinthemountain.com/>

August 28th – COG meeting.

Labor Day weekend – Old Timer's Reunion

October 20th – COG 60th anniversary celebration.

From the Editor:

Summer is going by so fast and fall is just around the corner. We had great trips in June, Convention was fun (until Friday night), and KOR was a blast as always. We have new members, and as we continue to grow, we need cave trips. If you are interested in leading a trip, please let the grotto know. You will likely have people interested in whatever cave trip you can put together.

Mark Swelstad

Grotto History

Pat Gibson has been very hard at work scanning in previous editions of the Squeaks. Check these out to get a sense of the history of your grotto.

Check out historical editions of the Grotto's Squeaks newsletters. They can be found at

<http://www.centralohiogrotto.com/newsletter.html>

Check out our Facebook group:

<http://www.facebook.com/groups/centralohiogrotto/>

Cover photo – Lincoln's Profile - GSP
Photo by Jamie Thompson

From the Chair:

Dear Cavers,

I hope everyone is having a safe and relaxing summer. It is amazing this year is half way over. I just wanted to say how excited I am to see such a huge turn around in the grotto. It is always nice to see the same old faces in the meetings, and of course it is awesome to see the new faces. To be able to get that new person hooked is what I always like to see. This year has been great with all the trips we have been able to go on and share what we love so much with everyone. I am looking forward to many more trips under and above ground. I am always open for new ideas and things to do in central ohio grotto. Keep the great trip reports and pictures coming in. Hope to see you underground soon!

Cave softly,
Jamie Thompson

COG trip to Sloan's, June,1-3, 2012 – Joe Gibson

Joe Gibson, Pat Gibson, Molly Semones, SR, Cheny(?), Jamie Thompson, Lisa Sinclair, Mark Swelstad and Brian Devine.

I picked up Pat Gibson on Friday morning and made the drive down to GSP. It was a nice drive down.

In our group, we had 2 people that had never been caving before, Lisa and Cheny.

Cheny is a grad student from China. This was her first time camping before too.

Lisa, Mark and Jamie came down earlier in the day and took Lisa for her first cave trip ever to Sinks of the Roundstone cave.

On Saturday we drove to Burnside to have breakfast at Ginny's. Good pre-cave food!

We made it to Garbage pit entrance around 11am.

I had a ladder that was Pat's in my van that we got down in the cave with.

The trip was led by Pat Gibson, basically the same trip we did in January.

We did a through and through trip from garbage pit to Great Rock Sink.

It had been dry down there so the passages were very dry.

The rimstone passage on the way to the Fountain of Youth was dry as a bone.

The Fountain of Youth was at about 10% of the water dripping off it than what it was in Jan.

From there we went into the stream passage out to the Great Rock Sink entrance.

We made sure not to leave the entrance area.

We all ate lunch there and enjoyed the warm sunshine.

On the way back to Garbage pit, we poked into holes here and there.

The mudslide was a big hit as usual!

We made it out after about 5 hours with no incidence. Back at camp I steamed some broccoli and cauliflower, had stuff for salad, Pat had burgers and veggie burgers too. Plenty of food and drink to go around.

Sunday we stopped at Waffle House for breakfast.

I was the tailgunner for the trip, which worked out perfect for me on this trip. On the way out, Cheny, being that was her first cave trip, was moving cautiously up the climbs at the Hogback and Garbage Pit hill.

The reason it was good for me was I had a blockage in one of my arteries in my heart that had been giving me some minor symptoms. The week before my Dr. set me up for a stress test the Monday after this trip.

I had the stress test, they said I had a "significant" blockage. Cath lab on Thursday showed a 90% blockage. I had 3 stents in to fix it. No heart damage and function is normal! I have been working and caving with no problems since!

It was a great trip, thanks Pat for leading it!



Photo – Mark Swelstad

Wisdom - Brian Devine

How not to do an eardip in a cave:

- 1) get a little puddle in the ear above water
- 2) try to empty it...make sure to scrape your headlamp so you lose track of the passage centerline
- 3) proceed with both ears waterlogged and no visual directional cues into the corner where the ceiling gets lower
- 4) begin choking and going underwater a tad and make educated guess that trailing caver's muffled voice expresses concern over drowning noises
- 5) backtrack to non-drowning area and exit cave
- 6) shiver violently for 15 minutes; laugh uproariously; make note to wear wetsuit/discipline head movement next time

Wiggle – Molly Semones

Wandering through the passageways
I wonder what's beyond
Galumph down the darkened hole
Wriggle through the breakdown
Lugging boots full of water and laughing all the while
Each turn a new adventure, exciting each time a virgin smile

Karst o Rama Expenditures – Molly Semones

KOR Registration: \$25
KOR Banquet: \$10
Camping Thursday: \$5
Gas to get from Columbus to Great Salt Petre Preserve and back again: \$40
RKC raffle tickets: \$5
Nickel sized holes in my heels: Painful
Damp clothing all weekend: Obnoxious

The comraderie of fellow cavers, new and old alike: Priceless.

KOR 7.19.12-7.22.12 – Molly Semones

After planning to depart at 10am Thursday morning, I completed my chores (mostly related to picking up some music for the ride, a new tarp from under my tent which ended up being essential due to the weather this weekend, extra batteries for my new headlamp and some spending money from the bank) and departed by 10:05am. Success!

The ride down involved pouring rain interspersed with periods of sprinkling precipitation, much like the rest of the weekend. Initially I'd been planning to bring along a couple of friends, but for this reason and that, it ended up being just me in my little Fit. Other than the incessant rain, the trip was uneventful and overall not too bad.

I can also assure you, I now know I am capable driving a stick shift on the swervy curvy, and hilly roads that lead to GSP.

I arrived in camp after Joe, Eric and Jamie but before the rain and Mark Swelstad. Entertainment for the evening included a lovely thunderstorm announced on the weather radio as a potential severe thunderstorm with quarter sized hail—the hail thankfully bypassed us—, a trip up to Great Saltpetre Cave (which was mostly deserted, incredibly misty from the rain, and a wee bit creepy the further I traversed in, as the only people I saw in the cave were heading out), and a quick stop off to investigate the KOR sauna and hot tub.

The next morning (Friday) was my first cave trip to Cornhole/Goochland, led by Mary Gratsch. We had a lovely bonus two-and-a-half hour hike to find the entrance (we never did find it through the woods, and ended up having to access it from a different direction). I received complementary nickel-sized blisters on my heels during the hike. Once in the cave, we went through the gruelling belly crawls of Cornhole and splish-splashed through the left side of Goochland. Thinking if Mary could do it, I could, I made an attempt to climb through the Gratsch Hatch. I made it, but there were times when I definitely thought I wouldn't! Once back to camp, a quick soak in the hot tub felt glorious and dinner was just about as good.

With Saturday came Smokehole, led by Scott Pavey. I can say it was one fun trip, and there was much wriggling through tight spots, climbing about and investigating. Writing this now, I'm realizing I really should write these reports directly after going into the cave so I remember more about them. I do remember I had a blast. And that I had to go back to camp three times before I was ready to go as I kept forgetting things I would need. (Food and water? Don't need that. Change of clothes? Naw. Contacts so I can see? Who needs to see underground? There's no sunlight there!)

The evening was filled with cleaning off the day's grime, helping set up for the speaker in the cave, the KOR banquet, numerous raffles and the Howdy Party. Despite dire predictions on my part that I would be out cold by midnight, somehow I found myself wide awake, having a great time hanging out with newfound caving friends, and bewildered to realize the music and party were winding down before I was. The rest of the night (and well into Sunday morning) was spent doing a dark walk-out from GSP and being shown the historical petroglyphs and signatures and learning about the history of the GSP. After hanging out at camp for a while, I crawled into my tent to sleep for two hours before waking in the morning to go on my last cave trip of the weekend (which, despite the evening's adventures and two hours of sleep, I did survive).

Sunday's trip was to John Griffin (again led by Scott Pavey), where we went through Maze rock and Smiley, splish-splashed through some water and generally had an enjoyable, easy Sunday wind-down trip. Also, during this time I was told my helmet was too clean and had dirt smeared on it (yet again) by a fellow caver.

Then, it was back to camp, pack up the car, clean up the me, and time to sally-forth back to Columbus propped up by copious caffeine consumption and a clean shower.

My new headlamp (a Tikka) performed admirably, my boots ate my feet, everything remained damp all weekend from the incessant rain (which let up on Sunday when everyone went to leave), picked up my bat sticker (I am now an official caver!),

and I met some really great cavers I hope to cave and survey with in the future. Overall, not a bad time for a first Karst o Rama.

The Shadow Man in the Great Saltpetre Cave

Eric Gibson

Sometimes the mind plays tricks on us. Things appear in the peripheral. An unknown sound will spark a vision. A strange sighting prompts an audible hum; most likely the blood on its adrenaline rush through the veins. The heartbeat becomes more acute, piercing, possibly the only thing we hear thereafter, other than a hurried breath. Perspiration takes its perch upon clammy skin. Questions abound and plausible answers skitter around. But sometimes the mind is not playing tricks on us. I'm not sure what to think of what I saw in the cave Saturday night at KOR. Shortly before the experience, I found myself wobbling in awe at the sight of the Chinese lantern lazily flickering its way up into the dark heavens. And as per each KOR I've attended since acquiring my Fender acoustic guitar, time has been put aside to peel off from the crowd to seek a tonal odyssey within the depths of the Great Saltpetre Cave.

I've often found people in Echo Auditorium as I walk to the stage to sit and play. The ubiquitous Frisbee is usually being tossed around, or some teenagers bounce between cliques. Parents gather the young, and some old timers ponder amongst the relics of bygone eras. At any rate, the cave is usually active. Not this time around. I was surprised to not find anyone in the cave on my march from the entrance up Bunker Hill and into Echo Auditorium. "Cool, I've got the place to myself". At least that's what I thought.

The guitar case is unzipped and my six stringed girlfriend glistens out from within. A quick tune up and I'm ready to travel the sound waves. By now, the excitement has the hairs standing up on the back of my neck. My mind is electric and the ceiling is dripping. The cave seems to be breathing. The walls of the ballroom ebb and flow with each breath. I confuse my breathing for that of the caves', or vice versa. It doesn't matter. All that exists at that moment is myself, my guitar, and the awesome expanse yawning before me. I go into an A major, just slamming away at the strings. Several minutes pass and I find my fingers are following the lead of a song I've newly written. The B minor comes into play and tosses back and forth between the G and D majors. My mind is swirling, the sounds are hypnotizing me, and the cave seems to be laughing, almost jovial to the fact that it's my sole audience. I can't help but burst into laughter myself. Time has come to a standstill as the notes from my guitar splash off the walls, and, in true namesake, echo across the auditorium. Truly a one of a kind experience, unlike anything I've ever encountered. I look forward to this moment all year long leading up to Karst-O-Rama.

Then it becomes serious. I feel a battle coming on. The D major fights with the A minor. Back and forth, back and forth. Occasionally in between the echo of each high flying chord my fingers dance up the frets, creating a dialogue of triplets and sixteenth notes, almost as if my guitar is trying to talk to me. Then back to the sparring D and A minor. Each chord duking it out for twelve beats before being overrun by the other. It becomes fierce, I start to sweat, the red glow of the Dressing Room oozes out around my being. And that's when I see it. For a brief moment, when I open my eyes to gaze about the madness, a shadowy apparition drifts into the auditorium. My eyes blink as they follow the dark mass. The battle between D and A minor ensues, and I can't stop. I'm in too deep. The shadow man is floating without any discernable limbs or clothing. Just a hazy figure of black, and not a mere three seconds after we see each other it disappears into the Atlas Pillar, some one hundred feet away. Vanished. Gone. It resembled a large man, whose back was hunched, like it was sulking, sneaking around the cave not wanting to be noticed. But I noticed it, and it saw me. A face with curiously empty eyes stared back. And of course it heard me. Any spirit in the cave at that time must've heard the commotion coming from those six strings.

I gathered myself and continued the battle between the D major and A minor, but it began to wane. Shortly thereafter, maybe another fifteen minutes, the lights in the cave flickered on and off. By this time the warring chords were growing tired. I interpreted the flashing lights as a cue that the cave was closing. I finished the song, or rather; the song was finished with me. I stood up, turned around and placed the guitar back into her case. But before I began the trek out of the cave, I fished out a small flask of whisky from a pocket and offered a toast to the red glow emanating from the dressing room. What had been watching me may have come from there. Maybe the shadow man was just trying to get back to his domain. The sound coming from my guitar may have been blocking his entrance. Or maybe he was simply enjoying the paranormal sounds.

So I staggered across Echo Auditorium and down Bunker Hill towards the south entrance. On the way I passed three guys wearing blue shirts who were in charge of clearing out the cave. They asked if I had encountered anyone else in the cave. Obviously they noticed the guitar slung over my left shoulder. I said no and continued on my way. The gates were already closed, and for a second I thought I was locked in. But with some effort I managed to pull open the hefty iron gates. The outside air was damp and sweet with the sound of crickets and leaves rustling in the breeze. The DJ was still cranking out the tunes down below in the shelter house. I crawled up onto the rock ledge just outside of the exit, next to the garbage can, and rolled up a cigarette. The sounds of KOR wafted up from the valley and I became lost in a daydream. Eventually the three guys wearing blue shirts who were clearing out the cave emerged from the exit. I could hear their voices several moments before they came into view. Although this time there was another man with them, a bearded guy wearing a red shirt.

We all greeted each other and the gate was locked. One of the guys in a blue shirt asked what kind of music I was playing, but I struggled to find an answer. Caught off guard, I thought for a moment. Then the guy in the red shirt offered the simple explanation, "Music". I couldn't have said it better myself.

We got to the stairs that lead down to the shelter house. The three guys in blue shirts bid farewell to the man in red and turned to walk down the steps. I stopped and turned to say so long to the red man but he was already gone, faded into the darkness. I stood briefly in bewilderment before bounding down the steps, not sure if he had really been there or not. On the way down I passed some friends on the path and told them the cave was closed. They were a little disappointed. One of them mentioned that she didn't know I played guitar. I said, "Yeah, I play, or something plays it for me." She smiled at that comment. Some musicians know of that effect of the instrument they play. Sometimes it's not us who plays, but instead a muse. Maybe that's why it's called music. My friends and I chatted and bumbled around the shelter house. Then Bill Carr pulled up. And with the guitar still slung over my left shoulder we sped off on the hayride. But even as we flew around GSP, with my friends laughing next to me, I couldn't shake the realization that a shadow man may be lurking up in the Great Saltpetre Cave, just waiting for his next incantation.

NSS Convention 2012 – Lewisburg, WV – Mark Swelstad - photos – Mark Swelstad

Sunday: Arrival

My son Jon and I left Columbus Sunday morning and drove the 6 hours to Lewisburg. The drive was uneventful, even a little boring, and we were both relieved to arrive at the convention site. The campsite was (typically) at a fairground and we set up our tent in the quiet camp area. We sat around and read and planned out our week.

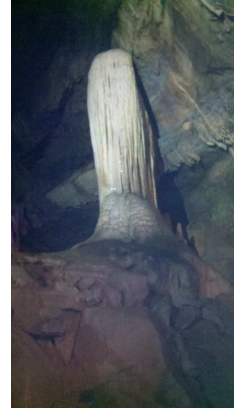


Monday: The Flood?

On Monday, Jon and I took a tour of Organ Cave. The cave is actually quite large but of course only a small section of it is part of the tourist trail. There were some

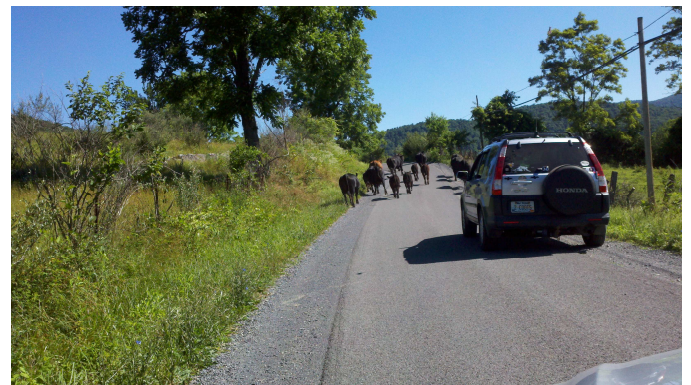
formations and saltpeter mining remnants and the creepiest mannequins in the world. The tour guide notified the group that the cave was formed by Noah's flood about 5,000 years ago. He mentioned that the anastomosis in the cave was actually hollow and the result of decaying bodies, both human and animal, floating to the ceiling and releasing their CO2 into the ceiling. Who knew.

After Organ Cave we visited Lost World Caverns. While better grounded in geology, I thought that many of the formations were overly covered with algae, perhaps due to the lights in the cave. Despite that, this cave's main room is worth seeing. We ran into several conventioners in this cave.



Tuesday: Norman/Bone Cave

Tuesday we geared up and met our group to go caving at Norman/Bone Cave. After battling some cows for the road, we got to the parking area and finished gearing up. Norman Cave is a long cave that apparently connects to the smaller and dryer Bone Cave via a really tight connection. We didn't attempt the connection and opted instead for the Great White Way passage. I don't usually take pictures in caves but I really regret not having a camera on this trip. This passage was simply stunning, one of the nicest I've caved in. By the time we got back to the entrance, my knee was screaming bloody murder and didn't get better until Thursday.



Wednesday: Beartown

We had planned on a couple of sight-seeing days this week; today was the first. We stopped at Beartown State Park.

A boardwalk led us between sandstone boulders that had slumped off the hillside. Almost across the street was a park on the site of a small Civil War battlefield. We drove up to Monongahela National Forest and walked around the cranberry bog. Not really the right time of the year but some of the flowers were in bloom and it was neat to see. On the way back to camp we visited Pearl Buck's childhood home – I've not read anything by her yet but seeing where she lived as a child was interesting. Afterwards we did some shopping at the vendors.



Thursday: Seneca Rocks

We got up really early and were on the road by about 6 am; we had a long day ahead of us. We drove up to Seneca Rocks, not far from Elkins and took a mile and a half hike up the hill to the viewing platform. The view was breathtaking.

Afterward we visited the National Radio Observatory which was really interesting. They have a great tour where they take you out in a bus and show you the different telescopes they have. It's a requirement that you keep your phone off (they really mean it) as any electronic device can negatively impact the telescope. I highly recommend this as a place to see – it's a bit off the beaten path but well worth seeing.



Friday: Higgenbotham Cave/ The Storm

On Friday Jon and I did a self-led trip to a small cave called Higgenbotham #1 Cave. This is a really neat stream cave with almost all walking passage and some flowstone. It was really hot that afternoon (about 100) so being underground was very refreshing. Jon had gotten a new cave suit and he was really happy to try it out. There's a small side passage that leads to a second entrance.

After the cave we got ready for the banquet. Dinner was held in a large fairground building with a metal roof so given how hot it was, and how many people were in there, the air conditioning wasn't keeping up. The wine bottles were covered with 'sweat' as were many of the people. After dinner we listened to the awards. Sometime during the Lew Bicking awards the power went out. I had been checking the radar application on my phone and watching a line of storms moving really quickly through Ohio and into West Virginia. I remember thinking that they were moving too quickly, that it didn't seem right. Once the power went out, my instincts got the better of me and we left to go tear down camp. We lowered the shade tent, chairs and used the car as a wind block, but didn't get our tent down. The wind hit all at once, there wasn't the normal build up, and when it hit, it quickly became obvious that this wasn't a normal storm. In the span of about 5-10 minutes, we watched metal garbage cans literally blowing in the wind, tents and chairs being tossed carelessly in the air, and even a small pop up trailer rolling over a couple of times. Glancing around, I remember thinking that it was as though the storm had erased the convention. Tents were gone, paper and garbage was strewn all over, and many people were driving off, simply abandoning camp. Amazingly, we didn't lose anything and managed to stuff everything into the car. We were detoured around town due to downed trees everywhere. Obviously the power had been knocked out city wide. Once we got on the highway, I decided to drive as far as I could and get a hotel room. That ended up being all the way home since the hotels were full or out of power, or both. We got home to Columbus at 3 am and of course had no power. Our power came back on the next day so we were lucky.

What is it about NSS conventions that bring out the bad storms?



Photos on this page by Jamie Thompson



Photo by Lisa Sinclair



Photos on this page by Jamie Thompson except where noted.

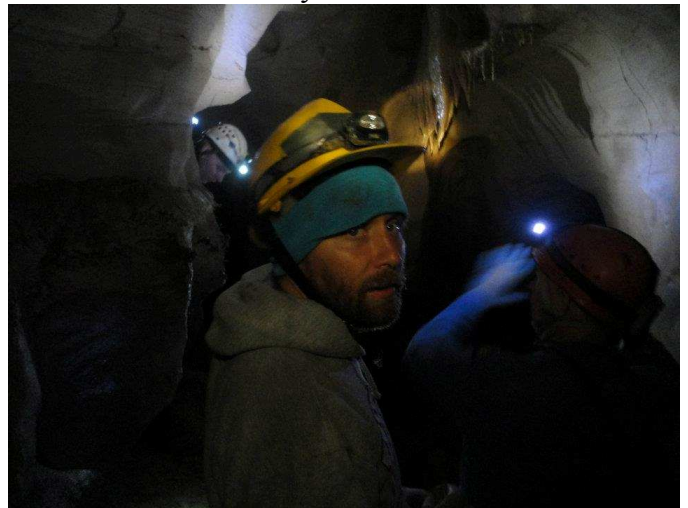


Photo by Lisa Sinclair



The Central Ohio Grotto is hosting their 60th anniversary celebration on October 20th, 2012.

Please join us in remembering the last 60 years of caving, fun and friends, and help us plan the next 60. A potluck dinner will be held: meat dishes will be provided; please bring a side dish or dessert to share. Bring your own beverages. A \$10 donation at the door is requested to help offset costs.

More information can be found at www.centralohiogrotto.com/60th.

When: October 20th 6 – 11 pm

Where: Holiday Inn Express, Grove City, Ohio (room discounts may apply)
3951 Jackpot Rd. Grove City, OH 43123
(614) 801-9000

What to bring: A side dish or dessert, something to drink, and your stories! There will be a silent auction as well so be prepared to place your bids! T-shirts will also be available.

RSVP: Contact Mark Swelstad at mswelstad@gmail.com.