

C.O.G. Squeaks

March 2022



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.

Check out our Facebook group:

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

Check out our Website:

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

Grotto Mailing Address:

C/O Pat Gibson, 4211 Caswell Rd
Johnstown, OH 43031 614-496-5345
Email: kd8ion@gmail.com

Grotto Membership Dues:

\$15 per individual or \$20 per family. \$40 for non-NSS members.

The C.O.G. Squeaks

The C.O.G. Squeaks is emailed to dues paying members and to grottoes with which the COG exchanges newsletters. Please send trip reports, caving articles, cave fiction, cave poetry, and cave photos to Mark Swelstad for publication.

Mark Swelstad
mswelstad@gmail.com

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COG Executive Committee:

Email: exec@centralohiogrotto.com

Chair: Aaron Deal
chair@centralohiogrotto.com

Former Chair: Kim Deal
Kim.Deal@gmail.com

Vice Chair: Wendy Orlandi
vice-chair@centralohiogrotto.com

At-Large: Fred Ball
ballassociates@yahoo.com

Treasurer: Kevin Lorms
treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com

At-Large: Ana Scherschel
stoplookingatmefreak@msn.com

Secretary: Bethany Widmayer
secretary@centralohiogrotto.com

Upcoming COG Events:

See the Facebook events page for more information about these events:

March 20	COG Monthly Meeting – Worthington Presbyterian Church
April 26	COG Monthly Meeting – Worthington Presbyterian Church
April 30-May 1	Open House - Work Weekend
May 14/15	Open House - GSP
May 24	COG Monthly Meeting – Worthington Presbyterian Church
May 27-30	Speleofest Lone Star Preserve, Kentucky
June 13-17	NSS Convention – South Dakota
June 28	COG Monthly Meeting – Worthington Presbyterian Church
July 8-10	Karst-o-Rama Great Saltpeter Preserve, Kentucky
July 26	COG Monthly Meeting – Worthington Presbyterian Church
August 5-7	Indiana Cave Capers

From the chair:

Greetings! I'm Aaron Deal, the new chair for Central Ohio Grotto trying to carry on the great work done by Kim Deal in her 2 years as chair (my editor told me to add that bit). See this post for some fun facts about Kim and I with one big addition of our son Elliott that keeps us on our toes. He's almost two now and showing signs of being a great caver (probably hear his scream throughout the cave if he got even slightly stuck though).

I just wanted to take a couple minutes to discuss my thoughts and goals for the grotto in 2022 although somehow it's already the middle of February.

The first goal is to keep everyone safe and healthy, which is why we will continue to have a virtual option for all meetings. For those who have joined virtually in the past, we've recently upgraded our virtual setup that has greatly improved the ability for folks to participate and hear the meeting.

Secondly, I'd like to increase the number of grotto planned events and trips including the central Ohio area. The increase will provide more opportunities for current members to mingle, exciting opportunities for interested members, and visibility to the public. This goal will be aided once again by the Caving Stimulus program that provides \$50 to trips (up to 4) that Post the trip, have at least 2 grotto members, and report the trip at a meeting. (Editor note: see more details in the last page of this newsletter)

The last goal is to increase membership although we did rebound well in 2021 with roughly 40 members. I like Kim Deal's idea of 75 members by our 75th

anniversary in 2027, which only requires each current member to get 1 new member. Along with increased events, other ideas to recruit new members is workshops at REI, flyers at outdoor gear stores, or hand out "ask me about caving" stickers. A larger membership will provide more folks to fill volunteer opportunities, create more exciting events, and hopefully work into the executive committee to provide new ideas for the direction of the grotto.

CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO 5-YEAR MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

75 MEMBERS ON OUR 75TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2027

Why

More members mean a larger pool of volunteers, leaders, and trip planners. Younger members mean that we can continue our grotto into the future.

How can you help?

If every current member brings in just 1 new member over the next 5 years, we will be close to meeting our goal. Recommendations from active members is the best way to build a solid group of cavers. But showing up to a meeting or two isn't enough! We are looking for people committed to maintaining ACTIVE membership within the grotto.

Additional recruitment ideas (we NEED volunteers to make these happen!)

- Lead **trips** intentionally geared toward recruitment
- **Sponsor local events** or participate as vendors in events that get exposure
- Put together a **guest information packet**
- Teach **classes** at REI
- Hold **joint meetings** with related groups in the community
- Work with students who need **volunteer opportunities**
- Ask me about caving **stickers**

I would encourage everyone to checkout the updated website (centralohiogrotto.com) and to provide feedback on how it could be improved. I'm especially looking for someone that can provide good content for the "About Us" section as we have a much longer and interesting history than the 2 sentences currently written. In the process of updating the website, I noticed how the old newsletters provided an archival of our history and was especially cool to see

some of the hand drawn cover pages from the early editions. Hopefully this post will be the first of many that archive the fun events of COG in 2022.

Let's make 2022 the year of mud! Feel free to reach out with any feedback, questions, or concerns (chair@centralohiogrotto.com).

Your Chair,
Aaron Deal

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**Keyhole Filter – Aaron Deal**

Aaron Deal, Kim Deal, Patrick Gibson, Matt Mezydlo, Nate Iden, Zach Glancy, Bethany Glancy, Jason Glancy, Ellie Long, Dave Long, Kelly McNamara, Kyle Rinehart, Bill Steinhoff, Jon Swelstad

Where: Sloans Valley  
When: Sloansident Weekend (2/19/22)

The large group staying at the McMansion defied caver time and made it to the Crockett entrance by about 10am with this trip being the 2nd of 3 groups entering the cave with the goal of making a loop by visiting Scowling Tom's and Bare Bevs. Entering the cave felt great on a somewhat cool Saturday morning after climbing down the ladder to the entrance.



Down Garbage Pit Hill – photo by Kim Deal

After descending garbage pit hit, the group ducked under a rock to the left to head towards the music room where we were met with the common Sloans Valley mud. No music was heard in the music room as we started crawling towards X corner taking the RIGHT to head towards ST junction. At ST junction we cooled off on the large rock as the group reassembled and decided to check out Grand Central Station. Patrick pointed out the exposure connection and crawl connection with Kelly and Matt deciding to explore past the exposure connection while the group talked and snacked.

We turned around to head back towards ST junction where we encountered some unexpected headlamps of the first group, which we thought would have already been past this point. There were varying stories, but the group had taken a LEFT at X corner which allowed the 2nd group to get ahead. After the funny discussion (depending on who you talked to), we crawled back toward ST junction where we took a left towards Scowling Tom's entrance. The route was pretty straightforward with Patrick's instructions indicating to turn left when you reach a passageway about 8 to 12 feet in height. The group reached a junction with about 3 to 4 feet of height with a left/right option where I decided to head RIGHT as the passageway appeared to increase in height in a short distance. As expected, the passageway opened up, but as Patrick reached the same junction he indicated that a LEFT should have been taken. The group squeezed back into the smaller passage and headed the other direction, which eventually opened into a larger passage with another passage coming in slightly above where we entered. Based on the exploring I had done in the RIGHT passage, I realized it

connected so either route would have worked as long as you took one of the LEFTs.



Step Up – photo by Kim Deal

We continued on in the passage that slowly curved and gained elevation as we approached Scowling Tom's entrance. There was a climb up that proved somewhat tricky due to a ledge sticking out that made it hard to get a hand or foot hold to climb up the 3ish ft to the next level. The climb was suited for taller cavers, which led Kim to exclaim "You want me to put my knee where?". With everyone safely up we (Aaron, Kim, Nate, and others) explored the area trying to find Scowling Tom's entrance without much luck although we knew it was close as we found the registration bottle that had been waterlogged. To keep the trip moving we headed back to the group and continued down the passageway towards the keyhole.



The Squeeze – photo by Kim Deal

Bill led the group as we approached the

keyhole and made an unsuccessful attempt to pass the short narrow section right after a 90 degree turn. He backed out allowing Patrick, Aaron, and Kim to make it through. Bill attempted a second time trying several approaches, but the height of passage was too restrictive. After some discussion it was decided that about half the group would backtrack to Scowling Tom's and take the short trek above ground to the Crockett entrance. The remainder of the group would continue on to complete the loop underground and exit via the Crockett entrance.

Once everyone was through the Keyhole, we continued onto another vertically challenged passage called "Bare Bev's Bellycrawl". The name didn't lie as we pushed through on our bellies exiting after maybe 100ft with Nate coaching everyone through the last S curve section to avoid the extra tight locations. After a short break, we continued on with Nate in the lead reaching an area with an arrow pointing through an opening. With Nate and a couple others through, Patrick indicated that was the wrong way stating we should have stayed high. Matt took the route Patrick suggested and Nate continued on since they appeared to head in a similar direction, and did eventually meetup. Nate continued to lead where he was getting quite annoyed by the frequency of spray painted arrows in the cave with up to 3 arrows right next to each other and the next set less than 10ft ahead in the passage. Eventually we reached our last destination of the Oasis room that has nice flow stone formations with a lot of water (at least today) flowing over them. On the other side of the room there is a shelf with tons of formations including soda straws.



Crawl, Dave, Crawl – photo by Kim Deal

Leaving the Oasis room, we headed towards garbage pit hill which looked massive when approaching from the other side. Climbing up the hill to the ladder and out of the cave, we met up with the group that had exited through Scowling Tom's and found out we were the first group out of the cave. Nate, Kim, Matt, and myself decided to hike over to Scowling Tom's to determine where exactly the entrance was that we couldn't find from inside the cave. After a short exploration, we determined that Nate and Kim were maybe 10ft away from the short passage that led to the entrance.



### 702 Lake Room 3 – Aaron Deal

Aaron Deal, Kim Deal, Patrick Gibson, Dave Long, Kelly McNamara, Kyle Rinehart, Andy Schofield, Danielle Demaris

Where: Sloans Valley

When: Sloansident Weekend (2/20/22)

The remaining Sloansident weekend cavers reached the Sloans Valley Crockett Entrance around 11am and descended the ladder into the cave around 11:30am with the goal of exploring some of the bigger passageways in Sloans Valley including Echo Junction and Big Room. Nothing too eventful happened as we took the bypass towards echo junction, climbed the break down to the hog back, and made the connection to the big room. As we entered the big room, my curiosity to explore the bedroom quickly dissolved as Patrick indicated it was at the top of a massive pile of breakdown that you would both need to climb and descend for a somewhat uneventful room.

Atop the breakdown we all stopped to sing happy birthday to Kim to celebrate her birthday as she ate a piece of cake. Kelly found a candle nearby that Kim wasn't keen to put on her cake, but happily blew it out and made a wish on her special day week month. After Patrick finished assessing his first aid kit, we descended down the breakdown pile towards Lake Room 3 to check the level as the group the day before had decided to turn back at that point. With webbing in hand, we started across the muddy and slippery banks of Lake Room 3 with Lake Cumberland at a pool height of 702 ft. The group waited as Patrick went ahead to check conditions, which required slowly

stepping into about waist deep water but he managed to make it across to the other side of the room.



Dave Long in Lake Room 3 – photo by Kim Deal

The rest of the group continued on to test the water and managed to make it to the other side also without falling in.

The group continued on to the fountain of youth to recharge with a lights out moment while listening to the rushing water.



Fountain of Youth – photo by Kim Deal

At this point we headed back towards Lake Room 3 but ducked into the passageway that headed out to Great Rock Sinks. There was plenty of water in the entry passage but we continued on to the final goal of an exit via Great Rock Sinks. Patrick continued to assess the passageway ahead of the group as he stood waist deep in water and determined that the best course of action was to turn back to exit through the Crockett entrance

stating, "4ft lower and we could have made it".



Too Deep – photo by Kim Deal

As we exited the Great Rock Sinks passageway Patrick slipped into the water about chest deep, so we maintained a steady pace on the way out to the nice 60ish degree Kentucky day waiting for us. We did stop after the Hog Back for some cave bacon and at Echo Junction to get several good slides down the mud slopes in where Kelly almost took out Danielle.



Day One cavers – photo by Mark Swelstad?

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## Headlamp Hike - Andy Schofield

Who: Nate, Joe, Kim, Aaron, Elliott, Dana, Andy, Gary, Mary Beth, Rob

Where: Highbanks Metro Park, Overlook trail

When: March 9th, 2022

The group of cavers gathered at the Overlook Trailhead Parking lot around 6pm and after doing introductions, headed out on the Overlook trail towards the Olentangy River overlook. The trail is 2.1 miles and is a loop with a short spur trail leading to the overlook. The trail is a gravel trail and not rocky at all, making for relatively easy travel. It meanders over and around several rolling hills as it winds through part of Highbanks metro park. Upon arriving at the spur trail, the group went towards the overlook to catch the end of a brisk colorful sunset. The overlook sits atop a hill above the Olentangy River providing great views of the river and surrounding area. Kim brought up that there is a bald eagle's nest that is high atop a tree within viewing range however the tree believed to hold the nest was quite a distance away and it was difficult to see the nest without binoculars and in the fading light.



Photo by Kim Deal

As the light faded the group headed back to the cars via the second half of the loop. It was just beginning to get dark enough

for headlamps which Kim made sure to use, it is a headlamp hike after all! On the way back the group stopped while crossing one bridge to admire the architecture.



Photo by Kim Deal

Continuing on the rest of the hike was uneventful with the exception of a stop to look at the stars. The group made it back to the parking lot around 7:30, taking about 1.5 hours to hike 2.1 miles and take time to chat at the overlook. After the hike some of the group headed to Nocterra where we feasted on tacos from a food truck while sitting by the fire.

Great social event to connect with other cavers in the cave-barren land of Ohio!



Photo by Kim Deal

## Water Always Wins – February 2022 – Mark Swelstad

(Note: I sometimes write up a summary of what I did the previous month. This contains more than just caving stuff so if you want, you can just skip ahead! ~ Mark)

February 2022 was bookended by two geo-political events. The first, the winter Olympic games in Beijing, which can only be classified as a geo-political event because of the non-stop, highly politicized media coverage (a la 15-year-old Russian figure skaters as symbols of evil Russia) and the looming threat of war in Ukraine (the actual fulfillment of the threat on February 24th being the second bookend – actually evil Russia, or at least Putin).

The weather turned cold early in the month and kept me and my 18-month-old black lab off the Metro Park trails we had been exploring on many weekends (YOU try walking on icy and uneven trails with a black lab dragging you along) so most of the month was spent reading and watching movies in front of the fireplace. In keeping with tradition, my promises to myself to get to the gym to get into shape were broken, although I did drop a few pounds by cutting out a lot of carbs. This low-carb regimen works for me when I'm at home and it's convenient. Introduce any change to my routine and I quickly find that eating low-carb is simply impossible...and more important – I never want to be 'that guy' who just has to have a special meal when everyone else is eating spaghetti (with apologies to vegetarians and vegans who do this EVERY meal).

Such was the case when my son Jon (the Etruscan warrior) and I drove to Somerset, Kentucky to meet a large group of cavers, most of whom were members of the local group I'm in (the Central Ohio

Grotto, or COG for short). My son has been exploring classic rock lately and after podcast or two, I turned on a playlist I had made showcasing some of the best rock songs from 1969. That year, it turns out, is a GREAT year for rock and the playlist is one of several I had created thinking of what year could be deemed the 'greatest year in rock history'. I don't think 1969 will win said contest but it was a fun playlist to listen to as we sped down I-75. Incidentally, I've done 5 of these podcasts now with more on the way. I'll get back to you on the final decision.

My friend Pat had rented a large lake-house near Lake Cumberland for this weekend, which being the wrong season for boating, was pretty affordable. We arrived around 9:30 at night and after a quick tour, settled into a night of bourbon (thanks Jeremy!) and beer while catching up with old friends.



Photo by Mark Swelstad

The next morning, after a communal breakfast, we made our way to the cave. Sloan's Valley Cave is a long cave system not far from Lake Cumberland so some parts of the cave are only accessible when the Army Corps of Engineers (those bastards!) draw down the lake level for the winter. The large group was divided into 3 smaller groups, each with a different level of difficulty. I was asked to

lead the 'easy' trip, a task I quickly relinquished to my friend Jamie, who knew the route much better than I did. Our goal was to reach a place called The Fountain of Youth, in which a large cave formation (flowstone) has water pouring down its sides and through a hole nearby. It's absolutely stunning and worth the effort to get back there to see it...but as the joke goes, Damn the Army Corp of Engineers for the dam that created Lake Cumberland as the water level was a bit too high for our group and we turned around at the Big Room (just a few hundred feet away from the Fountain of Youth) due to high water (water always wins). As it turns out, a group did make it to the Fountain of Youth but not much further). The Big Room, by the way, doesn't seem to quite do justice to the volume of empty space there. It's a REALLY big room, carved out over millions of years of flowing water. The thought went through my head that 'water always wins, and sometimes it wins big'.



The 'dreaded' Hogback – photo by Mark Swelstad

I have never been a fast caver in the best of circumstances and in the best of shape. I really enjoy poking along and seeing the cave up close and probably frustrate other cavers who prefer to move more quickly. I started cursing myself for skipping those workouts at the gym, and the weekend walks with the black lab as my pace became even slower than normal. I was exhausted and had trouble catching my breath. Several friends kept pace with me or helped with my pack...probably hoping I wasn't dying! Not today. It was one step after the next and I heard the little blue fish, Dorrie, from Finding Nemo chanting 'Just Keep Swimming'. Just keep caving. Just keep moving. Eventually I made it out of the cave and back to the car. I remember saying to Jamie that this would be my last trip into that cave...but I think I've said that before. Time will tell.

Back at the mansion, I showered off the cave grime, most of the shame, and joined a few people in the heated pool where we watched dozens (hundreds?) of Turkey and Black vultures circling above. I was told that the previous afternoon a bunch of them had roosted behind the house; perhaps they knew I was caving the next day and were getting ready but...not today, vultures!



McMansion – photo by Mark Swelstad

More bourbon and beer and great camaraderie, (and that spaghetti dinner!), and even some great tunes by my friend Aaron. And then at last...the sleep of the dead. Nothing helps cure insomnia like caving, a heated pool, and bourbon.



Aaron Collier – photo by Mark Swelstad

The following morning, a few of us packed up and headed to Cumberland Falls. This has been on my 'to see' list for a while and I'm really glad Jamie suggested it...to be clear, there was no chance in hell I was going back into Sloan's and probably any other cave that day. Cumberland Falls, famous for its rare moonbow which we did not see obviously, was busier than I expected. The parking lot was approaching full for a mid-February Sunday and it was nice to see people taking advantage of a nice day to get out and see something. It seems to be the case that everything is busier and more crowded than normal these days, perhaps a rebound effect from the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic which by this point

seemed to be (still seems to be) on the decline.



Cumberland Falls – photo by Mark Swelstad

Melt water and recent rains contributed to (I guess) a higher-than-normal flow over the falls and all I can say is that is worth the trip to see it. I believe I read that Cumberland Falls are the largest, by volume, falls East of the Mississippi River, and South of the obviously much larger Niagara Falls. The sun was positioned just right to see rainbows in the mist (that should be a title of a song or a movie) and in these smaller falls from a nearby tributary.



Rainbow in falls – photo by Mark Swelstad

The paved path gets you pretty close to the falls and we had to talk loudly over the sound of the water (water always wins). As always seems to be the case, the pictures I took don't seem to capture the power or even the beauty of the falls. I find a lot of my pictures are of details – the water at the lip of the falls, the boil of water at the base of the falls...but nothing quite captures the moment in the way I saw it.



Photo by Mark Swelstad

We poked around downstream a bit. A bit of a sandy beach had formed there and a number of dead logs had collected along the back side where the sand met the hillside (water always wins). Once again humbled by the force of nature, we returned to our parked cars, said our goodbyes, and headed home.

A few days after the Kentucky weekend, Russia invaded Ukraine and as has happened too many times in the last two years, our world changed before our eyes. Less history please and thank you.



Jon Swelstad – photo by Mark Swelstad

As a happier coda to the month, my Dad and I were able to go to a Columbus Blue Jackets hockey game, care of my friend Joe and his company (thanks Joe!). I am not a huge hockey fan but I love live sports or music, or anything. Dad and I were grateful to take our minds off of the horrible events occurring on the other side of the world.



Blue Jackets game – photo by Mark Swelstad



# Central Ohio Grotto

<http://centralohiogrotto.com/>

The Central Ohio Grotto (COG) is proud to present the 2022 Caving Stimulus Program, which will provide \$50 for up to four trips. The primary goal of the program is to supplement the cost of caving trips to encourage grotto members to cave together. Secondary goals include growing the COG community by including potential new members, encouraging an active COG community, and giving back to members.

The trip must meet the following requirements below to qualify for program funds.

1. POST
  - a. Create a Facebook Event on COG page at least 2 weeks prior to event
  - b. Open to all grotto members (trip maximums and skill requirements are allowed)
2. GO
  - a. Minimum trip of 4 with at least 2 current grotto members
3. REPORT
  - a. Create a trip report and post to Facebook/Blog
  - b. Discuss trip at next monthly meeting

Qualifying trips will be reviewed and approved by the executive committee with payment provided to the trip leader (current grotto member). Allocation of the funds to the trip members is at the discretion of the trip leader.

Reach out to Aaron Deal with any questions.