

# Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks February 2023



## 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 by sending an email to cog @ ontosystems.com with the subject "subscribe." The meeting site will be announced there and on the Grotto Facebook page.

**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.

**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: mswelstad@gmail.com

NSS organizations have permission to reprint material from the C.O.G. Squeaks so long as the author and Squeaks are given credit, unless otherwise stated.

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## Upcoming COG Events:

See the Facebook events page for more information about these events or email a board member.

Note: All COG Monthly meetings (except December) are at the Worthington Presbyterian Church.

February 28	COG Monthly Meeting
March 28	COG Monthly Meeting
April 25	COG Monthly Meeting
May 20-21	Open House - GSP
June 26-30	<a href="#">NSS Convention</a>
July 14-16	<a href="#">Karst-O-Rama</a> – GSP
August 4-6	<a href="#">Cave Capers</a> – Indiana

### CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO 5-YEAR MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

**75 MEMBERS ON OUR  
75<sup>TH</sup> 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**

## From the Chair – Aaron Deal

Looking to get more involved in COG? The executive committee has assembled a list of potential new positions that we need people to fill. We are also looking for feedback on these positions and their responsibilities. Interest and feedback can be provided at <https://forms.gle/VMxvGuzuWU8Gu26d8>.

On a more personal note, Elliott took his first plane and ferry ride this month as we took a family vacation to St. Johns in the US Virgin Islands. Thankfully everything went smoothly, and we had a wonderful warm week spent on the beach. Elliott really enjoyed digging in the sand and eventually warmed up to swimming in the ocean. Kim and I got to see sting rays, sea turtles, fish, and a starfish.



Photo courtesy of Kim & Aaron Deal

Kim made sure the week was more like a trip to GSP than a stay at the McMansion as we had a tent on the beach complete with a

shower house. In all fairness, it was a luxury tent with a ceiling fan, queen and bunk bed, and a camp box with all the necessary cooking supplies.

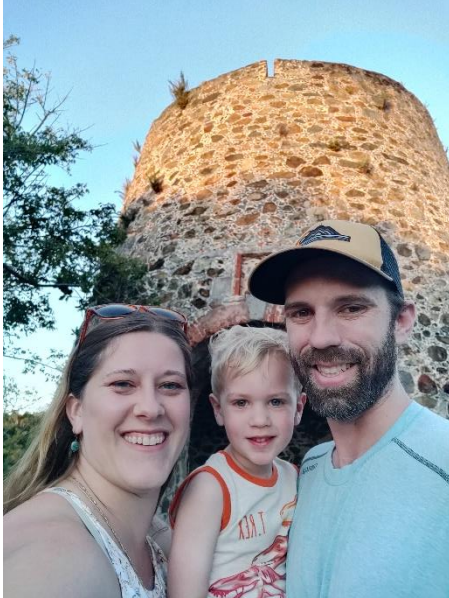


Photo courtesy of Kim & Aaron Deal

### Thailand Caving - Dale Andreatta

For much of December 2022 I was on the island of Phuket working on a volunteer project. On the last Saturday that all the volunteers were present, our leader rented a van and a driver, and we headed over to the mainland to see some things. Without knowing that I was a caver, our leader planned for us to include two caves in our day's trip, both is them unique.

The first cave was short, but large in volume. It contained a Buddhist shrine, including a reclining Buddha. You don't see that in Kentucky. Reclining cavers maybe, but not a reclining Buddha.



Photo courtesy of Dale Andreatta

There were also life-size figures of past monks, which at first, I thought were mummified remains, but not. That would have been really creepy.

The second cave was longer, maybe 1000 feet long, all nice walking passage, and it was the most heavily decorated cave I've ever seen. Almost every spot in the cave was covered with decorations of some kind, from drapery to soda straws, to helictites of all shapes, 'tites, 'mites, and columns. Pictures never do it justice, but here is the best of my pictures (but far from the best of the scenery).



Photo courtesy of Dale Andreatta

As the only caver among the five of us I could add a little information about cave passages and what we were seeing. There really weren't any side passages to speak of, but I at

least poked my head into a few holes. We spent perhaps an hour in this dazzling cave, then went on to the next item on our tour, which, being in Thailand, predictably involved spicy food.

The caves we visited, by the way, were at the other end of the country from the famous cave where the soccer team was trapped for many days. It appears that large parts of the country are full of limestone, and thus full of caves. The mountains often rise straight up out of the land or the sea, forming a landscape unlike anything I've seen elsewhere.



### **Carter Caves – WAW – Jennifer Hawkey**

#### *Intro to Rock Climbing*

Asbury University's Center for Adventure Leadership organization led a group of 5 participants to teach basic climbing skills. We jumped right in by rappelling off the sandstone cliff near the Carter Caves Cross Country trail. Three top rope climbs were set up for us. One climb was through a crevasse in the cliff, so being able to use caving techniques made this one the easiest to complete for the group. The other two climbs were a bit more difficult, and the group generally didn't get past the midpoint on either. We got to witness the orienteering trip participants run down the stairs to a

hidden checkpoint near us and nearby was the new "Leap of Faith" rope swing.



Photo courtesy of Jennie Hawkey

#### *Bat Cave Backdoor*

A group of 20 (with 11 boy scouts) entered Bat Cave through the back entrance so as to not disturb the large bat population at the other end.



Photo courtesy of Jennie Hawkey

There was a nice variety of cave wildlife including not just bats, but also cave fish, crayfish, crickets, and orb spiders. Many participants elected to go through the toilet bowl and get wet up to their shoulders. We also had a nice break in the clay room where the scouts enjoyed making mud pies. Upon exiting, the leader recalled times where water would rise up from the sinkhole at the cave entrance and completely flood the cave, bringing in debris and tree trunks that can be seen near the ceiling of some parts of the cave.

#### *Up For Idiots Rope Climb*

Having found ascending difficult on past vertical trips, I decided “Up for Idiots” would be a good chance to learn the right technique for ascending and to get comfortable with the gear. Since my vertical experience has been primarily out west, the ascending system is a little different.



Photo courtesy of Jennie Hawkey

The equipment used on this trip was the ropewalker system with a chest plate and roller. I convinced the leader to let me go twice and after both climbs, I felt much more confident in my abilities. I attribute it to the system I used which kept my chest close to the rope, and I did not exhaust my upper body by trying to stay upright. And the view from the top of Smoky Bridge is breathtaking! Happening at the same time was the rope climbing competition which I plan on doing next year.

#### *Carter City Connection*

This cave system is open once a year during Winter Adventure Weekend. The trip was led by Jake Lewis whose family donated some of the land that now makes up Carter Caves State Resort Park and they are still stewards of Carter City Connection.



Photo courtesy of Jennie Hawkey

Usually, a trip to this cave requires a scramble up the side of a mountain with no trail, but

luckily due to the light rain, Jake decided to drive us up the private road. It's a fun cave that requires some technical skill. There's one area of exposure that can be avoided. This system has many entrances and we popped in and out visiting different parts of the system. There is a wall in the cave that separates two parts of the system and you can hear people on the other side. Jake took us through the keyhole which is an extremely tight crawl for about 20 feet. We exited what I think is the West Entrance which Jake said only a few people have gone through in the last 30 years, so it felt like a special trip. We also visited mushroom rock which is a minute down the mountain.

#### Winter Adventure Weekend (WAW) at Carter Caves

- Tera Williamson

About 2 months ago some of us COG'ers started talking about attending Winter Adventure Weekend hosted by Carter Caves State Resort Park. The more discussion that occurred, we decided to make this a girls only trip. Those attending were Bethany Widmayer, Jennie Hawkey, Mandy Birdwell, Shelia Sands, Suz Gagnon, Wendy Orlandi, and myself (Tera Williamson). We found a VRBO home in Olive Hill, which gave us a cheap cozy place to stay for the weekend and was also only about 20 minutes south of Carter Caves. I decided to go down on Thursday while everyone else waited until Friday afternoon/evening to arrive. We all participated in a variety of field trips throughout the weekend, then gathered together at the house in the evenings to chat and relax.

Upon arriving Thursday afternoon, I checked in at registration and then became familiar with the three locations that my field trips would be meeting at throughout the

weekend. Thursday's field trip was the Three Bridges Beauty Hike which was about a 3.8mi loop hike along with Three Bridges Trail. This trail consisted of three beautiful natural bridges (or arches) and was a very well maintained and well-marked trail. We started at the trail head from the lodge parking lot and shortly after starting the trail we made our around and down the concrete steps leading down to the bottom of Smoky Bridge.

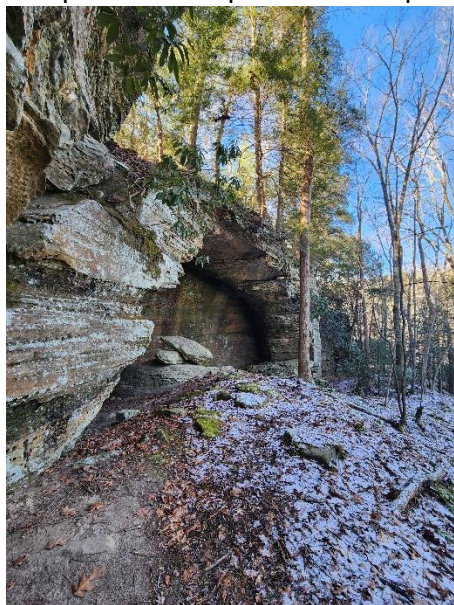


Smoky Bridge – photo courtesy of Tera Williamson

From there we continue clockwise along the trail and at about the two-mile mark we arrived at Fern Bridge. Here we stopped and talked for a few minutes about different hiking, biking, and backpacking trips everyone had done in the past. Then we continued on to the trail and at about the 3-mile mark we arrived at Raven Bridge. Then it was just a short walk to the end of the trail and back to the lodge parking lot. Participating in this hike was a group of 6 that had all just met each other at the time of the trip.

Friday morning once arriving at Carter Caves I sat in on a drop-in presentation for Hiking 101 which was presented by Andy Niekamp from Dayton Ohio. After this presentation I had a

couple hours a free time, so I decided to take off to hike the Box Canyon Trail which was a short loop hike just shy of one mile. I went counterclockwise along the Box Canyon trail loop, which means the first rock feature I came across was Box Canyon. What was cool about this rock was the shades of green, brown, grey, black, and white which made colorful stripes down the canyon walls. As I continued along the trail, I then came upon Cascade Bridge. With this bridge there isn't much of a gap between the bridge and the rock wall that sits directly behind it. On past this bridge I continued along the trail to complete the loop back to the parking lot.



Cascade Bridge – photo courtesy of Tera Williamson

Friday afternoon Suz Gagnon and I, along with 13 other WAW participants signed up for a field trip to Rimstone Cave and Horn Hollow Cave. This started with about a 3/4-mile hike that led us to Rimstone Cave which of course was filled with several dry rimstone dams of all sizes. From here we backtracked and took a right-hand turn into an army crawling connection passage that led us to Horn Hollow Cave. Within this cave there were some dripping dome rooms, scalloped rock passages and some breakdown. Also, along

this cave trip we had the chance to see several different entrances.

Friday evening Mandy Birdwell and I, along with 6 other WAW participants signed up for the Carbide Lamp field trip through Cascade Cave. Throughout this trip we learned the history of the carbide lamps and had the opportunity to go caving with just a carbide lamp and no other light source. We all used a Supervisor Carbide Lamp, as these had an easy to carry handle on them; and the one I used was a Justrite brand lamp. This was a neat experience, as I didn't realize how much you could actually see while walking with a carbide lamp. It also gave off a nice ambiance glow within the cave.



Mandy Birdwell enjoying a crawl with her Carbide Lamp in Cascade Cave – photo courtesy of Tera Williamson

Saturday morning Suz Gagnon, Bethany Widmayer, and I, along with 13 other WAW participants signed up for the Tygart Gorge Hike and Cave Trek field trip. We met up with everyone at the lodge and gathered into 2 vehicles and drive for about 15 minutes to the property that these hike/cave sat on. This field trip was about a 45-minute hike down the hill, across the swinging bridge and through Tygart Creek Gorge before we arrived at Tygart Creek Saltpeter Cave. We explored around in the cave for a while and some of us poked into different holes to see



where things would go. As we all finished exploring this cave, we then hiked back through Tygart Creek Gorge and made our way over to Skyscraper Cave. The first 15-20 feet was a sideways shimmy sort of straight forward through a canyon passage which opened up into a small room. Then there was another 30ish foot sideways shimmy canyon passage which had some twisty turns throughout it. I attempted to navigate through this canyon passage but started to feel a little overly snugged within the first few feet. At this point I decided to turn back and go sit outside and soak up some sunshine while the other continued on through the canyon. As the sideways shimmy was about 12 inches wide and having the twist and turns throughout it made it a little difficult for me to feel comfortable squeezing my way through. Once everyone exited the cave, we walked the creek bank back over to the swinging bridge and hiked back up the hill to the cars.

In between trips on Saturday, I stopped by the Mug Ruggin' It drop-in class and had the opportunity to weave a mug rug on a multi-harness floor loom. A mug rug is a smaller version of an Appalachian Rag Rug and is typically used as a coaster.



Tera's Mug Rug coaster being woven on the multi-harness floor loom – Photo courtesy of Tera Williamson

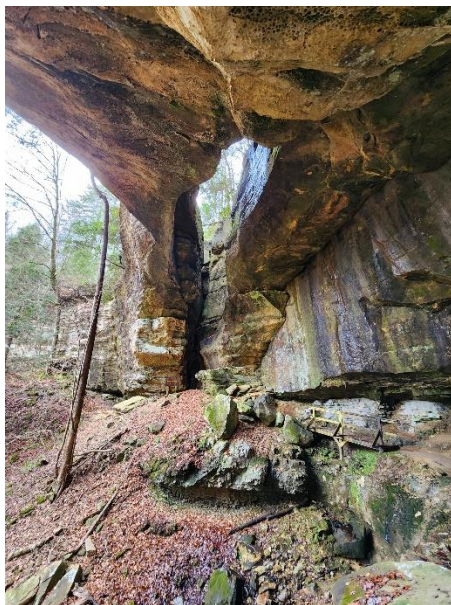
Saturday afternoon Suz Gagnon, Bethany Widmayer, and I signed up for the Natural Bridge Rappel field trip which was about a 60ish foot rappel off the top of the Natural Bridge. We started with about a short ¼ mile hike up to the top of the Natural Bridge. As we arrived at the Natural Bridge, we got into our harnesses and was then handed a Figure 8 descending device and was explained how it worked. As it was my turn, I was handed the rope and was asked if I remember how to rig the Figure 8. As I get the Figure 8 rigged, I climbed over the railing to set weight into my harness and descending device; then I was on rappel. I choose this trip because the descending devices being used was a Figure 8, and I was interested in trying a rappel using a different descending device. As I was descending, I felt like I had less control with the Figure 8 compared to using a rappel rack; and only tried this rappel once. Maybe I am just way more comfortable using the rappel rack and maybe I wasn't wanting to become comfortable using a new device.



Dana Sutherland photo bombing at Natural Bridge – Photo courtesy of Tera Williamson

Sunday's field trip was supposed to be an Intro to Rock Climbing, but it was rainy this morning so I switched to the Knot Your Daddy's Knot Class; as did Suz Gagnon and Bethany Widmayer. During this class we practiced tying the following knots: Figure 8, Figure 8 on a Bight, Double Figure 8 (Butterfly), Directional Figure 8, Clove Hitch, and the Double Fisherman's. Most of these I was already familiar with except for the Directional Figure 8.

**Additional Photos from WAW – all photos courtesy Tera Williamson**



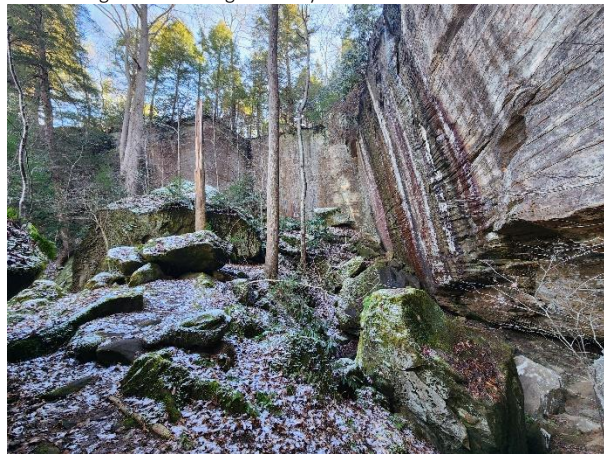
Fern Bridge - Three Bridges Beauty Hike



Who crawled the belly crawl passage in Horn Hollow? Suz or Tera?



Raven Bridge - Three Bridges Beauty Hike



Box Canyon along the Box Canyon Trail



Rimstone dams inside Rimstone Cave



Formations inside Rimstone Cave



Suz and I inside one of the entrance passages of Horn Hollow Cave



Swinging Bridge along Tygart Creek Gorge



Looking towards the entrance of Tygart Creek Saltpeter Cave



Looking out into the gorge from Tygart Creek Saltpeter Cave



Bethany Widmayer on rappel at Natural Bridge.

## Wildflowers of GSP – Wendy Orlandi

### Hepatica

In addition to my affinity for all things cave related, I've been an avid wildflower buff since I was a child growing up in the hills of Western Pennsylvania. Being raised by my grandparents served as my primary inspiration for learning to identify native plants and in some cases consuming or using them medicinally. The idea to showcase the wildflowers of GSP throughout the year came from Mark Swelstad and I'm happy to oblige.

We are going to start with an early bloomer that we should see in just a few short weeks on the preserve. Hepatica, my favorite spring wildflower, is actually an evergreen herb in the buttercup family. So, while other spring ephemerals are still sleeping, Hepatica already has a head start, the leaves usually darken or turn a purplish color over winter.

These pictures were taken by me on 2.18.23 near Lloyd Mullins. Notice the difference in color.



Photo courtesy Wendy Orlandi



Photo courtesy Wendy Orlandi

Once the leaves begin to receive more direct spring sunlight, photosynthesis kicks in and the leaves begin turning a more vibrant green again.

There are two species growing in Kentucky soil, *Hepatica americana* (round lobed) and *Hepatica acutiloba* (sharp lobed). Hepatica is Latin for liver, hence its common names, liverwort or liverleaf. As you can see the leaves have three lobes, just like your liver, but hopefully without the spots! Many ancient herbalists believed that a plant resembling a human organ must be beneficial for treating that organ. Native Americans used hepatica as a leaf tea to treat liver ailments, indigestion, as a laxative and a wash for swollen breasts, which I have never tried. In 1833, a "liver tonic" boom resulted in the consumption of 450,000 pounds of the dried leaf.

When the buds appear they are covered with fine hairs as well as the stems, which may protect the plant from the last vestiges of snow. The number of petals, which are

actually sepals, usually vary from 5-9 and come in shades of pink, blue, white and, most commonly in my experience, lavender. Hepatica is a low plant, about 4-6 inches in height and prefers dry, rocky woodlands.

Here is a picture taken several years ago right outside of the main entrance to Sinks of the Roundstone. Note the new leaves beginning to unfurl at the base of the plant.



Photo courtesy Wendy Orlandi

If you are hiking our beautiful, 300-acre preserve and find something interesting, text me (412 965 7870) the general location and a few pictures with as much detail as possible and I may feature your shots here in the year to come. Remember, take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, and kill nothing but time!

## COG Shopping List

COG is in the process of adding wetsuits to our equipment library. We are planning a wet trip in the Spring and would like everyone to prepare for it ahead of time.

### Buying Tips:

- Buy second hand. They can be found for as little as 5 bucks.
- Buy big. You will need room to flex your cave moves.
- Buy thick, 3-5 mm will be warmer if you tend to run cold.
- Buy ANYTHING. Farmer John's, shorties, it's all good!
- Buy extra. I'd like to build a library, so donate an extra if you find a good deal!

