



Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

January 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.

COG Executive Committee:
Email: exec@centralohiogrotto.com

Chair:

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Member-At-Large:

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Member-At-Large:

Jennifer Hawkey
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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.

January 24	COG Monthly Meeting
January 26-29	Winter Adventure
February 28	COG Monthly Meeting
May 20-21	Open House - GSP
June 26-30	NSS Convention
July 14-16	Karst-O-Rama – GSP
August 4-6	Cave Capers – Indiana

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**

From the Chair – Aaron Deal

I hope everyone had a happy holiday season! A new year means new resolutions/goals, which is what the executive committee discussed during our initial meeting for the year. From the discussion three different themes became apparent: continued growth (75 members by 75th anniversary), monthly activities, and membership process review.

The 75 members by the 75th anniversary (2027) is a continuation from last year, which we made good progress towards as we reached over 50 members. Once again, if everyone simply gets one new member over the next 4 years, we will easily reach this goal. New membership brings in new ideas, excitement, and volunteers for the leadership roles, open house, etc.

Monthly activities provide plenty of opportunities for potential members to become interested in the grotto while also keeping our current membership active. These activities don't have to strictly be caving events. We'd like to host local events which included rigging clinics, kayaking, and hiking last year. Some of the activities we'd like to highlight this year are survey skills, youth outreach, and involvement in the Ohio Cave Survey. If you have ideas for activities, please send them to the exec committee (exec@centralohiogrotto.com).

The last goal for the year is to review the membership process which includes the requirements, dues, and payment options. We want to make sure the membership process is easy while ensuring that new members will uphold the motto of "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, and kill nothing but time". We will be holding an exec

meeting in February dedicated to this topic, so watch for the time if you have thoughts on this topic.

Looking forward to another fun year of caving! As always, if you have comments or concerns, please send them to chair@centralohiogrotto.com.

Thanks,
Aaron Deal

From the Editor:

If anyone is interested in taking over the newsletter or wants to learn about it, please let Mark know. Thanks! mswelstad@gmail.com



Courtesy <https://parks.ky.gov>

January 26 - 29, 2023: Winter Adventure Weekend — Get back outside in eastern Kentucky at Carter Caves State Resort Park's weekend of hiking, canoeing, wild and commercial cave tours, kayaking, rappelling, winter survival, and other adventures. Participants will select from a list of trips that range from beginner to advanced skill levels. All of the trips and events are led by guides. To get familiar with the event you can see past event offerings, trip level descriptions and photos at www.winteradventureweekend.com. The website will be updated with 2023 information December 2023. Online Registration will start shortly after the website goes live. The minimum age to participate is 6 years-old. What kid doesn't want to technical tree climb, rappel rock formations and crawl in a cave?

Wendy Orlandi has rented a nearby cottage Friday - Sunday for a ladies only weekend. Contact her at 412 965 7870 or use fb messenger if you'd like to join the women of COG for WAW.

Save the date! – NCRC Training at GSP!

The Central of the National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) will present an Orientation to Cave Rescue (OCR) training at the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve on the weekend of April 15-16.

This is an awareness-level class for cave rescue. It will include both classroom instruction and field work. Coursework will include considerations for the underground environment, communication systems, operations, patient care, and extraction techniques.

This class is highly encouraged for cavers, emergency service personnel, and rescue management personnel. Registration will go live on Sunday January 22 at <https://ncrccentralregion.regfox.com/2023-great-saltpetre-cave-preserve-ocr> Camping is available at the GSP for \$8/night.



Orientation to Cave Rescue

April 15-16, 2023

Presented by: Central Region of the National Cave Rescue Commission

Hosted by:



To the Well Pipe and Beyond – Aaron Deal

Dan Forcum, Brent Smith, Aaron Collier, Scott Gibbons, and Aaron Deal entered the Sloans Valley Crockett Entrance (formally known as Garbage Pit Entrance) around 11am with a goal of making it to the Well Pipe room and the Post Office entrance. The rain the Sloans Valley area had received several days before was apparent as we climbed down Garbage Pit hill.

The group worked its way towards Echo Junction passing the many blind crawfish in the puddles just before the large passageway. Continuing on we climbed up to the hogback, made the connection to by-pass the second lake room, and stopped for a snack at the top of the breakdown pile in the Big Room. After a short break for snacks, the trip continued on past the third lake room (no issue with the lake at 688') towards the passage to Great Rock Sinks. Nearing the passage, you could feel the cold air pouring out, which felt like an air conditioner in the cave.



Break – photo by Dan Forcum

We moved on towards the Fountain of Youth and the upper Fountain of Youth area, which had a decent stream/waterfall due to the recent rain. Next, we climbed up 15' through breakdown with a minor squeeze at the top.

After a short belly crawl, we were in another walking passageway that led to the well pipe room. Navigating a couple up and downs we ended up in the well pipe room with the several feet of the pipe showing on the right way as we entered.



Formation – photo by Dan Forcum

As we took a short break, Dan continued on to investigate the connection to the Post Office entrance. When the remainder of the group joined Dan still hadn't found the connection, so we continued to poke around. Finally, Dan believed he found the connection which was a small hole in the ceiling of a 10' climb up that connected to a crawlable tube. Aaron and Scott continued on to try and find the entrance. The tube connected to a walking passage with the Post Office entrance down the left passageway. The Post Office entrance is a narrow 2' to 3' pit entrance about 25' tall that was also wet with some light visible at the top.

The trip out was uneventful until we reached the end of the hogback where we ran into another group of 15 or so. The group was a combination of cavers from the Bluegrass Grotto and a Texas Grotto making their way towards the Great Rock Sinks entrance. The funny part was as they passed Brent was taking off his outer layer putting on a show for

the passing cavers, since he was getting warm. The cool air exiting the cave was appreciated.

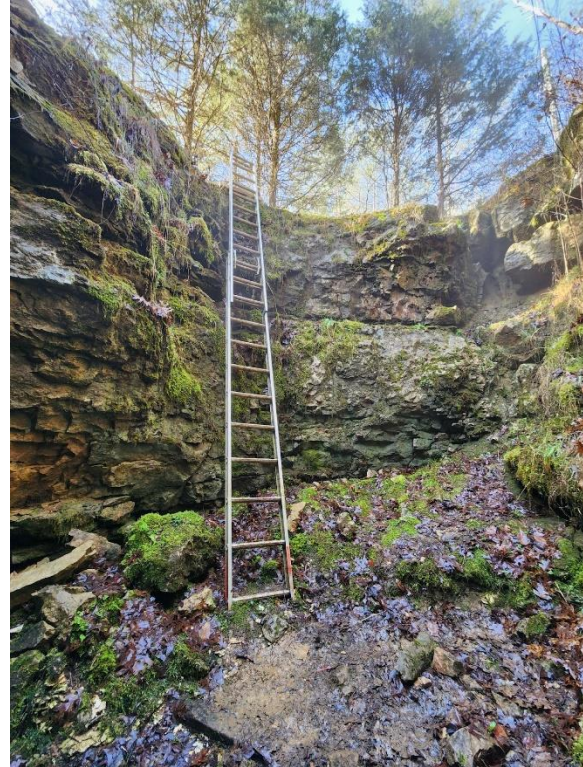
Everyone was quite amazed how white Scott's shirt had remained on his first cave trip.



Photo by Scott Gibbons

King Sloans Fountain of Youth Trip - Take Two Wendy Orlandi

You've heard the saying "always a bridesmaid, never a bride," but change a couple of words - "always a tail gunner, never a guide" and you have an apt expression that describes many recreational cavers. One of Central Ohio Grotto's finest membership perks is a trip to Sloans Valley twice a year. Patrick Gibson arranges accommodations for all of us in nothing less than a mansion complete with heated pool and hot tub. On this trip, MLK Jr. Day Weekend 2023, I invited Dennis Melko from Pittsburgh Grotto and his partner, Melissa, to be our guests. I didn't intend to lead a trip but their very late arrival the night before necessitated leaving a bit later than the other groups. I've been to Sloan's many times but have never led my own trip from Garbage Pit to the Fountain of Youth, yet I reluctantly knew it was time.



*Crockett's Entrance
photo credit: Tera Williamson*

Dale Andretti and Kevin Lorms also joined us. Melissa isn't a caver, but she has a delightful personality and humors Dennis who enjoys her company while underground. We took a slow but steady pace, admiring the albino crayfish, clambering over rocks in Echo Junction and making it across the Hogback. At that point, Melissa called a hard stop knowing she needed to devote her remaining energy to the return trip. While Dennis waited with Melissa, the rest of us forged ahead but, alas, we didn't get very far. A side passage off of the Hogback takes you through a maze of breakdown and into the Big Room while bypassing the treacherous Lake Room #2. I was able to recall the first few twists and turns but couldn't remember the entire route so after a little exploring, we headed back to rejoin Dennis and Melissa. While I was thankful my guest's stamina matched my limited memory, I was still disappointed in

myself that I wasn't able to make it to the Big Room and the Fountain of Youth beyond.

The next day, I was determined that I would make it all the way through. After consulting my old notes and looking at the maps one last time, I was ready. This time Patrick would be observing me from behind but would also be withholding guidance. Patrick, Dale, Suz Gagnon, Tera Williamson and I headed out to meet Mike and Mick Harrington at Crockett's Entrance. Mike forgot his helmet so the girls, Dale and I decided to go ahead while he went home to retrieve it. I don't often get to simply just be in Sloan's. It's always a timed march to one location or another but, with time to kill, I knew I wanted to explore a side passage in which I've always wanted to take a closer look. Without knowing its given name, we nicknamed the passage the "Cave of Wonders" because it has a lovely decorated entrance. It did not disappoint. I let out a squeal when I found a beautiful specimen of what I believe to be the spore-bearing lepidodendron of the Pennsylvanian Age. Our commitment to "take nothing but pictures" meant I had to begrudgingly leave it behind but a little more exploring led to another fascinating discovery. The primary food source of many species of cave beetles are cave cricket eggs. Where cave beetles are present it's common to find numerous tiny piles of silt/sand where they have been digging for eggs in the substrate. This passage had more evidence of cave beetle activity than I've seen in any cave!

As we were coming out of the side passage (which I was told leads to the catacombs) we met with the rest of our group. Once again, we flew past the crayfish, through Echo Junction and over the Hogback.



Wendy Orlandi admiring the "Cave of Wonders"
photo credit: Tera Williamson

My notes confirmed that through the tunnel, hard left upwards at the constriction and between what I once described as the "Cards of Death" (which neither look like cards nor are deadly in any way) were all correct moves. I walked cautiously forward with Patrick assuring me I was headed in the right direction. This time I saw the hole under the rock I had hastily walked over the day before. I remembered! After that, the rest came back to me and before too long we were in the Big Room. We amused ourselves on the way by sharing how we all named rocks to serve as mnemonic devices to help us remember the way through difficult passages. To me, a rock shaped like an alligator snout pointed the way to the next passage while another caver thought the same rock looked like an unmentionable! Whatever works...

After heading up the "Rimstone Staircase" to the Fountain of Youth, we goofed around a bit on the upper level taking pictures. On the way back, there was some chatter about leaving through Great Rock Sink which was tempting, but I knew if I didn't return the same way we came my ability to guide the next trip would be compromised. Everyone was a sport and back through the Big Room we scampered. I was relieved we did because after climbing up

a little slide on the right of the passage, I missed the “big flat slab” (Thank you Mike Harrington for that one!) with the crack on the right of the wall that took us back to the upper level.



*View approaching the Fountain of Youth with rimstone dams
photo credit: Tera Williamson*

Cave of Wonders, Cards of Death, Rimstone Staircase - for me, all these are very necessary markers as I commit a route to memory. Given all the creative place names on most surveys, I suspect I’m not the only one who uses these types of mnemonics to orient themselves underground. Yes, sometimes I also rely on maps, sometimes I count vectors and sometimes I even write a trip report to help firmly cement a route I hope to one day successfully lead and then, finally, be a guide.



*View behind the Fountain of Youth and waterfall
photo credit: Tera Williamson*

Sunday Stroll – Aaron Deal

Andy Schofield, Scott Gibbons, and Aaron Deal entered the Sloan's Valley Scowling Tom entrance at around 11am with a goal of reaching the Oasis and exploring around X Corner. Hiking from the Crockett parking lot to Scowling Tom entrance we saw many of these ice formations at the base of plants believed to be formed from the warm moist air from the cave coming up through cracks. The formation was in the shape of a closed flower with many thin layers of ice.

Entering Scowling Tom entrance we headed towards the key hole which was wet, but the soft mud made for easier crawling. The passageway to the key hole was a little longer than I remember, but we made it through the crawlway and keyhole without much issue. Heading towards Bare Bev's we had to stop to verify with the map that we were heading down the correct low height path. After navigating the low but wide passage we stopped for a minute to allow Scott to cool off, since he was steaming. From here we navigated towards the Oasis assisted by many arrows added to the route with the Oasis flowing nicely from the recent rain.

We decided to continue onto the Appalachian Trail towards the first lake room that required navigating over many boulders and a couple breakdown piles. We reached the first lake room based on the sloping mud hills on either side but no water was visible, so we decided to take the by-pass to see the lake room from the other side. Entering Echo Junction, we headed left instead of the normal right and quickly hit the first lake room after climbing up some very muddy slopes. The view from this side confirmed that we were just on the other side. We headed back towards Garbage Pit Hill using the by-pass route, but Andy

decided to check out a passage to the left with muddy slopes. The passage was easy to navigate leading to the well pump at the end hose from the entrance of Garbage Pit hill. Following the pit eventually connected us back up to the by-pass route, which we continued to follow back towards Garbage pit hill. Near Garbage Pit hill Andy decided to take another passage off to the right this time, which quickly got small. I was able to poke through some breakdown that popped out at the beginning of the route to the Oasis with the others following.

After taking a quick pit stop outside, we poked around the bottom of Garbage Pit hill as I had discovered there is a nice flowstone/waterfall formation off to the right at the bottom of the hill. Trying to figure out how to reach the bottom of this formation we found there was another flowstone formation behind it, which seemed to be tucked underneath the Garbage Pit hill breakdown. This area was quite muddy with a very small handline to help get back out. Highly recommend checking this area out which is always blown by to reach further destinations in the cave.

The last planned stopped for the day was X corner so we climbed partially back up the hill and poked through the other side to head towards the music room with X corner a short crawl after that. At X corner we took the left route and dropped down into the stream passage. Walking up the stream passage you could hear a waterfall getting louder and louder, which turned out to be pouring out the side of the wall with quite a bit of water. Continuing on past the waterfall the passage got smaller and smaller, which Andy had checked out the day before. Today I decided to check it also as Andy thought he could feel some air movement, but I didn't feel much air movement even though the passage

continued where I decided to stop. There were many loose stones that you had to crawl over and in the area I reached I don't think I could have rotated my head around and probably would have needed to back out as there wouldn't have been room to turn around.

On the right side of X corner Andy wanted to find the end of the passageway his group had been in the day before. On the map it showed going under the right passage of X corner, so we popped down in the general area and believe that it would have ended in a pool of water under a flow stone formation. Andy said that would need to be a dedicated trip as you would be soaked after going through the pool of water. Satisfied with the day we headed back to Garbage Pit hill.



After Day 2 – photo by Scott Gibbons



Mullins Springs trip – September 2022 – photo by Mark Swelstad

2023 Central Ohio Grotto Programs

COG meets on the 4th Tuesday of every month (except December) at 7pm at the Worthington Presbyterian Church on High St. in Columbus, OH. Each month we feature a presentation from a speaker who is an expert in a cave related field of study. Everyone is welcome to attend.

January 24 Carlsbad and Lechuguilla



Derek Bristol has been caving since 1989 and is involved in the exploration, survey, and cartography of several significant systems including Carlsbad and Lechuguilla Caves. He has produced a series of videos on caving trips and techniques hosted on YouTube.

February 28 Robotic Cave Exploration



Dr. Wennie Tabib is a subterranean robotics scientist at Carnegie Mellon. She holds advanced degrees in both computer science and robotics. Her current research develops methods to enable aerial systems to explore subterranean environments.

August 22 Sermons for Speleotarians



Caving expert Anmar Mirza will lead the fold into an introduction to Speleotarianism and expound on The Pros from Dover, lessons learned from a lifetime of cave rescue. He recently took on the role of the Central Region Coordinator for the new NSS Vertical Training Commission.

September 26 Migration of the Indiana Bat



Mike Armstrong is the Southeast Region Bat Recovery Biologist for the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the Kentucky Field Office. He will be speaking about Indiana bat migration and the distances this species travels to survive.

October 24 Hot Caves of Puerto Rican Karst



March 28 Quarry Trails Goes Vertical



Metroparks will join to discuss the Via Ferrata and other climbing opportunities at Quarry Trails. The Via Ferrata is the brainchild of our speaker, Dan Kaderly, Metro Parks operation manager and former manager at Quarry Trails.

April 25 Grayson Gunner Cave



Harry Goepel or Janeen Sharpshair from GCG will present on Grayson Gunner Cave, located in Wayne County, Kentucky. We will follow the presentation with a COG trip to GGC led by Harry and Janeen. Wetsuits are required and participants must be able to swim.

May 23 Insights into Research



Johnsy Carrion Cabrera is the president of La Federación Espeleológica de Puerto Rico (FEPUR). He will be speaking on the definition and presence of hot caves in Puerto Rican karst.

November 28 Cave Paleontology



Molly E. Hunt will join us in person to speak on the topic of Cave Paleontology. She welcomes members to bring their fossils to the meeting. Molly is a geologist, paleontologist, and the Public Information Specialist for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Geological Survey.



Find us on Facebook

The Central Ohio Grotto welcomes everyone to our meetings and does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, culture, sexual orientation, gender or identity.

Dr. Hazel Barton is a renowned microbiologist and cave explorer in search of extremophile microorganisms and how they adapt and evolve in the cave environment. She is a professor at the University of Akron where she serves as the Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies and the Director of the Barton Lab Cave Research Group.

June 27 100 Days at Cheve



COG welcomes guest speaker Abigail Mack, who will be presenting '2021 Sistema Cheve Expedition: 100 Days at Cheve'. Abigail, a former COG member, joined the 2021 Cheve Expedition, spending over two months on expedition, including one 30 day stint underground!

July 25 Explore. Study. Protect.



Mike Hood will join us in person to discuss the benefits of being a member of the NSS. Mike is a former president of the National Speleological Society and was the founding president of Ohio Cave Survey.



Are you an adventure seeker looking for a new and stimulating pastime? Look no further than joining the Central Ohio Grotto!

As a member, you'll have the opportunity to explore the underground world of caves and caverns. Through monthly programming from experts in their respective fields, you'll learn about the geology, hydrology, and ecology of these unique environments and discover the rich history hidden within their depths.

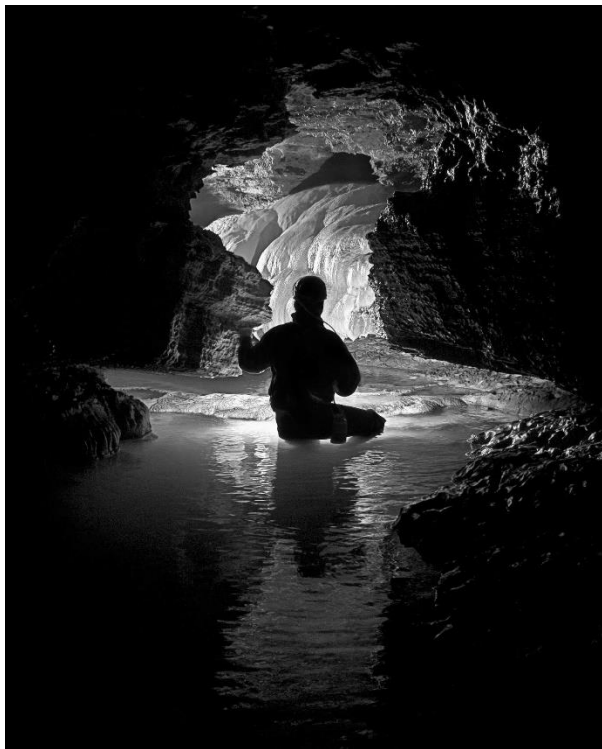
But caving is about more than just exploration and education – it's also about safety, teamwork and community. The Central Ohio Grotto is made up of a diverse group of individuals who share a love for caving and the outdoors. We offer monthly group field trips, scout trips and presentations, conservation projects and vertical training sessions to help our members improve both their skills and knowledge.

No experience is necessary to join – we welcome beginners and experienced cavers alike. All you need is a sense of adventure, a willingness to learn and a deep respect for the natural world. Please come join us and discover the amazing world of caving. We can't wait to meet you and share in the adventure!

The following photos (as well as the cover photograph this issue) were all taken by Rob Coomer. Rob is a long-time member of the Greater Cincinnati Grotto and is a noted artist and photographer. He was willing to share some of his photographs from Grayson Gunner Cave, many of which have won various NSS photography awards. Titles are included where provided. I encourage you to check out his website at:

<https://robertcoomer.com/>

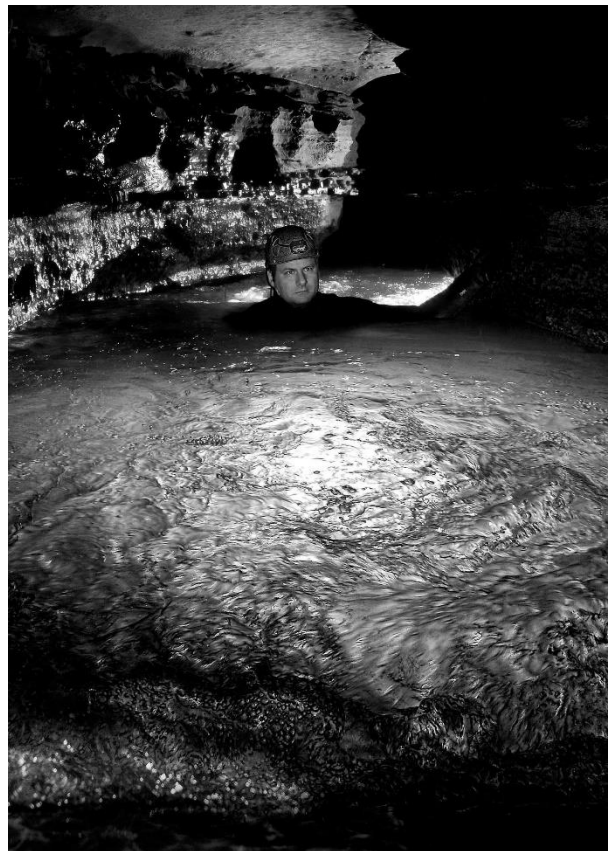
Note that there will be a presentation on Grayson Gunner Cave at the April COG meeting.



Caught Between the Dark and Light – Robert Coomer



Photo by Robert Coomer



Double, Double, Toil and Trouble – Robert Coomer

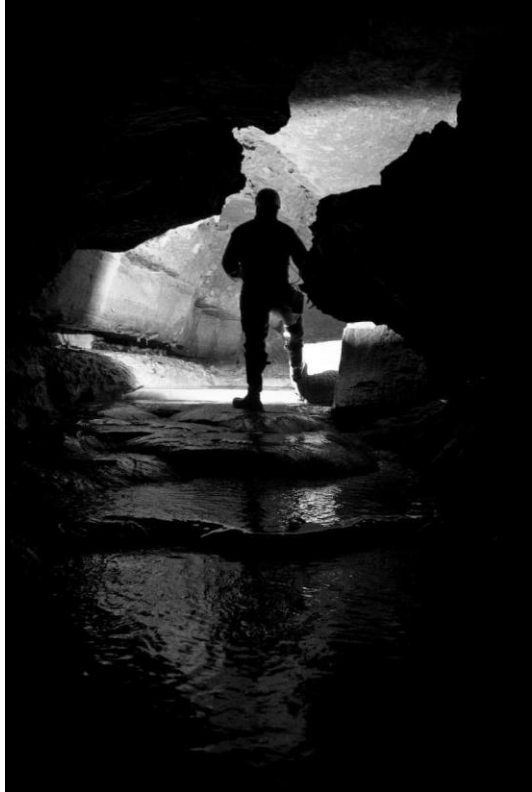


Photo by Robert Coomer



Photo by Robert Coomer



Photo by Robert Coomer



Dark Water Falls – Robert Coomer



Watch the Dancing Ladies – Robert Coomer



Photo by Robert Coomer

COG EQUIPMENT LENDING LIBRARY REGULATIONS

Central Ohio Grotto has a free equipment lending library for members in good standing. It is the responsibility of the borrower to carefully check the condition of the equipment to ensure it is safe to use. COG is not responsible for any injury that occurs while using Grotto equipment.

Sign Out

Members wishing to borrow equipment need to fill out a shared Google document indicating which items will be checked out from inventory and the dates item(s) have been received and returned. The Google sheet will be available to all members and sign-outs will be transparent for all members to see. Access can be found [here](#).

The officer currently in charge in the Equipment Lending Library is:

Wendy Orlandi

and the Equipment Library is housed at:

79 E. College Ave
Westerville, OH 43081

The borrower is responsible for picking up and returning equipment at the address above, however, if the officer is also attending the same event/location, it's completely reasonable to request they bring the equipment you've signed out with adequate notice. The officer is not responsible for delivering or picking up equipment from the borrower but may make an exception if it is convenient to both parties.

Generally, items are available first come, first served with the exception of survey equipment. Survey equipment is expensive and requires routine calibration. As we often have multiple members on different projects, survey equipment may not be checked out for more than two consecutive weeks. The officer will work with all parties requesting equipment to ensure equitable distribution.

Equipment must be received by the officer for a condition check during return, not handed off to another grotto member. Failure to observe this condition may result in the original borrower being responsible for loss or damages incurred by the other party,

Return

Cave equipment should be returned within 6 days of sign out. If equipment needs to be held longer you must contact the officer for permission to extend the return date.

All gear must be reasonably clean and in proper working order when returned.

1. Helmets should be wiped down with disinfectant.

2. Wetsuits should be cleaned, disinfected, and hung to drip dry. (It's ok to return still damp.)
3. Electronic survey equipment should be wiped down and returned fully charged. If calibration is required, calibration will be the responsibility of the member borrowing, not returning, equipment.

The officer accepting the gear has the responsibility of checking it to make sure it has been cleaned and has not been abused beyond the normal wear and tear expected on a caving trip.

If gear has been damaged, the borrower is expected to tell the officer when the gear is returned. The officer will then decide whether the damage was caused by normal or improper/abusive usage. In all but extreme cases, the officer will not hold the borrower responsible, since cave gear typically endures a great deal of abuse during the course of a normal cave trip.

If equipment is not returned, the borrower will be asked to reimburse the grotto for the full cost of replacement, regardless of the condition of the equipment.