

Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

November 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:

Aaron Deal

chair@centralohiogrotto.com

Vice Chair:

Wendy Orlandi

vice-chair@centralohiogrotto.com

Treasurer:

Suzanne Gagnon

treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com

Secretary:

Bethany Widmayer

secretary@centralohiogrotto.com

Former Chair:

Kim Deal

Kim.Deal@gmail.com

Member-At-Large:

Andy Schofield

scho73@gmail.com

Member-At-Large:

Jennifer Hawkey

jcgalletta@gmail.com



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.

November 30	COG Monthly Meeting
December TBD	COG Christmas Party
January TBD	COG Monthly Meeting

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**

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!

From the Editor – Mark Swelstad

Thanks to those who were able to submit material this month. Keep them coming!

Enjoy this month's Squeaks and as always, please send me material to mswelstad@gmail.com.

Note – this is the last issue of 2023. See you in the new year!

Thanks! Mark

From the Chair – Aaron Deal

Thank you for electing me chair allowing me to help guide the grotto over the last two years. We've managed to restart the COG Squeaks producing 9 issues last year and at least 11 issues this year with many thanks to Mark. Membership has grown to over 70 members thanks to everyone inviting potential members and the many trips planned throughout the year.

Looking back at the goals established this year, I think we've made steps towards all of them but still have room to improve moving forward. The first goal was to continue to work towards 75 members by our 75th anniversary in 2027. We are very close to this goal as we have 70+ members, so keep inviting potential members that will uphold the moto of "Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints, and kill nothing but time". The second goal was to provide plenty of activities for members including locally, which happened with several vertical practices, learn to lead promoting youth outreach (Thanks Wendy!), and a couple bigger events like Sloansgiving and Everything but the Squeal. Areas that we would like to expand activities for are survey skills / opportunities and the Ohio Cave Survey. The last goal was to review the membership process including requirements, dues, and payment options. This year we did review the requirements making no changes, but confirming that all members needed to be approved by the executive committee. Dues and payment options still need to be re-evaluated.

As always, send ideas for goals, activities, etc. to exec@centralohiogrotto.com as we start to plan for 2024.

I hope everyone has a safe and happy holiday season! We started the holiday season off with the traditional Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade.

COG Meeting Location concerns

We have been meeting at the Worthington Presbyterian Church for decades, and recently they've let us know that the church is no longer available on our normal meeting night (Tuesday). The board is exploring options but for the new year it's likely we'll meet on a different night of the week. Aaron Deal will be contacting the church to get available days and will bring that back to the grotto.

All meeting dates in 2024 are TBD as of right now. Thank you.

Mark S.

COG Elections – reprinted from last month

Mark Swelstad & Aaron Deal

It's that time of the year...the frost nips at our heels, the leaves are turning, Ohio State is kicking butt and taking names...and COG elects its new executive committee. Aaron Deal asked Pat Gibson, Jonna Cartwright, and me, to serve on the election committee. Since our grotto has grown a lot in the last few years, and we have some new people, I think a refresher of what's involved is in order. The below is taken from Aaron Deal's slides he came up with recently.

COG Positions and Elections:

Officer Positions (current):

- *Chair* – (Aaron Deal)
- *Vice-Chair* – (Wendy Orlandi)
- *Secretary* – (Bethany Widmayer)
- *Treasurer* – (Suz Gagnon)

- Must be held by a minimum of 3 individuals holding the 4 offices.
- Chair may not hold any other office.

Executive Committee:

Positions (By Law)

- Four Officer Positions (Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, Secretary)
- Immediate past chair (Kim Deal)
- 2 Elected Members At Large (Andy Schofield, Jennie Hawkey)

Responsibilities:

- Discusses Grotto business in a separate meeting and brings recommendations to the Grotto at regular monthly meeting (By Law)
- Attend scheduled committee meetings.
- Meetings organized by chair at least 2 per year (by law)
- Eligibility – Grotto member and NSS member

Elections:

- *Nominations*
 - Committee appointed by September meeting to nominate 1 or more candidates for each of the elected positions (By Law)
 - Pat Gibson, Jonna Cartwright, Mark Swelstad
 - Floor nominations accepted until ballots in November meeting.

- *Voting*
 - During the November Meeting (By Law)
 - COG Regular Members Only (Must be a paid NSS and COG member)
- Elected officers assume roles in the January Meeting (By Law)

Executive Committee Roles & Responsibilities:

Chair

- Responsibilities
 - Preside at all meetings of the Grotto and of the executive committee (By Law)
 - General supervision of the the grottos work (By Law)
 - Maintain proper liaison with the officers and committees of the NSS (By Law)
 - Primary contact person of the Grotto
 - Organize executive committee meetings (min 2) throughout the year as necessary
- Chair can be held for no longer than 2 terms (By Law)
- Benefits
 - Help guide the direction of the Grotto
 - Voting privileges in executive committee
 - Keys to the GSP Kitchen and Cave

Vice-Chair

- Responsibilities
 - Preside in the absence of the Chair (By Law)
 - Succeed the Chair if they resign or otherwise unable

to complete their term (By Law)

- Plan program for the monthly meetings
- **Benefits**
 - Help guide the direction of the Grotto.
 - Voting privileges in executive committee
 - Keys to the GSP Kitchen and Cave

Secretary

- **Responsibilities**
 - Take minutes at all meetings of the Grotto and Executive Committee (By Law)
 - Handle all Grotto correspondence (By Law)
 - Include filing annual and other necessary reports to NSS officials
- **Benefits**
 - Help guide the direction of the Grotto.
 - Voting privileges in executive committee
 - Keys to the GSP Kitchen and Cave

Treasurer

- **Responsibilities**
 - Maintain all Grotto financial records (By Law)
 - Payment of bills (other than normal operating expenses) must be approved by a majority of the executive committee (By Law)
- **Benefits**
 - Help guide the direction of the Grotto.

- Voting privileges in executive committee
- Keys to the GSP Kitchen and Cave

At-Large and former Chair:

- **Responsibilities**
 - Attend Executive Committee meetings.
 - Engage new members at monthly Grotto meetings.
- **Benefits**
 - Help guide the direction of the Grotto.
 - Voting privileges in executive committee

Important: Our bylaws state that we hold a separate ballot for each of the 4 board positions, plus an additional ballot for the at large positions.

Current Nominees:

- Chair – Andy Schofield
- Vice Chair – Wendy Orlandi
- Secretary – Bethany Widmayer
- Treasurer – Suz Gagnon & Aaron Deal
- 2 At Large – Joe Chaput & Mark Swelstad

Natural Bridges Cavern & Grayson Gunnar Cave Trip Report 10/2023

Earlier this year, some members from my grotto, the Central Ohio Grotto, had the opportunity to visit Grayson Gunnar Cave. While I was invited to join, I felt that I wasn't quite ready to dive into wetsuit caving and endure the cold waters. I had started caving in October

2021 but had only been on a handful of trips, such as Sinks and Pinehill. In essence, I wanted more experience before taking the plunge.

After caving almost every weekend from May to October, I received an invitation from Stephanie Suen to travel to Wayne County, Kentucky, and explore Natural Bridges Cavern on Saturday and Grayson Gunnar Cave on Sunday. What follows is a recount of that weekend.

Thursday:

After leaving Columbus, I headed to Cincinnati to stay with my parents, as it reduced the travel time to the Great Saltpetre Preserve (GSP). My place in Columbus was over four and a half hours away with the potential for traffic snarls where Interstate 71 meets 70. However, upon reaching my parents' house, I discovered that I had forgotten all the food I'd prepared, leaving my cooler empty except for a few ice packs. Not a great start.

Friday:

Following a night at my parents' house and working remotely the next day while playing with my dog, I set off for GSP. The drive down Interstate 71, while not exactly relaxing, led me to the iconic Buc-ee's, marking the homestretch to GSP. After a long journey, I arrived at the GSP gate after dark, where I was greeted by the watch dogs Peebles, Zeus, and Rocky. After exchanging pleasantries, I sat and chatted with Neena, Warner, and Josh until we all turned in for the night. When I climbed into my 4Runner to sleep, I discovered that my air mattress had deflated and wasn't holding air, the fourth time this had happened in roughly 35 nights of sleeping in the car. Not an auspicious beginning.

Saturday:

After a night of interrupted sleep, I woke to my alarm at 6:40 am. Despite the darkness and fog, I left the GSP and headed to Wayne County, which was about an hour and a half away, to meet up with fellow cavers for our excursion to Natural Bridges Cavern. At the Hideout (a house for cavers to stay in Wayne County), I met the crew for the weekend: Daisy the dog, Stephanie Suen, Chris Bauer, Katlyn Coleman, and Harry Goepel. After some time playing with Daisy and getting geared up, we prepared to visit Natural Bridges Cavern. Joining us was the owner of Grayson Gunnar Cave, Synda. Upon arriving at the cave's parking area, we were greeted by a friendly dog who accompanied us partway into the cave but wisely chose not to go further, as we soon encountered Grasp and Gasp Lake, a fitting name. We continued in the cave, wading through water and navigating ledges, swimming short distances between them. Despite my initial concerns about swimming in a wetsuit and with a pack, I was pleasantly surprised to find it relatively easy for the brief 20-foot swim. Stephanie, however, managed to stay on the ledge the entire time and avoided the swimming section. Smart, I thought to myself. After traversing the water, with some walking and crawling in between, we reached Plymouth Rock, where we could finally exit the water and start drying off. We chose to keep our wetsuits on and continued through the cave, exploring various formations and climbing some of the largest breakdown piles I had ever seen. After all the ups and downs over the breakdown, we turned a corner and there they were: two stunning natural bridges spanning the cave. I scrambled up the side to summit the larger of the two, and others followed suit

to stand on the larger and smaller land bridges for a photo. It was a bit ironic that we summited these bridges on October 21, 2023, also known as Bridge Day, when many people rappel off the New River Gorge Bridge. While our bridge wasn't as tall as the NRG bridge, I was always reminded that size doesn't matter, it's personality that counts. While I always thought I was told this to make me feel better, let me tell you these natural bridges left a lasting impression. After taking photos and marveling at the beauty of our world, we sat down to enjoy some snacks. I finished my snack of beef jerky and a granola bar (my go-to cave snacks) and nearly dozed off. Once we were ready, we packed up our snacks and retraced our steps to exit the cave, fortunately taking a shortcut to minimize the breakdown climbing. Upon reentering the water, which seemed colder than when we first arrived, we made our way out. After changing and being greeted by the dog again, we returned to the Hideout. There, Harry prepared a delicious pizza and Chris cooked up some fantastic chicken fajitas, my favorite. We also learned that Daisy had devoured all the fancy bagels left out, along with a few pieces of bacon from the trash. Considering Daisy's small size, scarfing down six bagels was impressive. Despite our initial frustration with Daisy, she was forgiven and we headed over to spend time with the GGC owners at their house, engaging in lengthy conversation. After watching some of the Michigan vs. Michigan State game and enjoying beer and bourbon, we called it a night and returned to the Hideout.

Sunday:

Waking up in the eerie attic of the Hideout, I got up and joined the others downstairs for some of the best bacon

ever. Kyle Kreutz arrived, and we all dressed in our wetsuits, ready for our trip to Grayson Gunnar. Our group for this adventure consisted of Harry, Stephanie, Kyle, and I. At the cave entrance, two dogs, Chuck and Timber, followed us. They stuck with us even past the first pool but stopped when the water was waist-deep. While attempting to follow, Chuck would jump into the water behind me and in front of Stephanie, swimming to the adjacent ledge and shaking himself dry as soon as he got close to me. So much for avoiding a wet dog when I was already waist-deep in water. We continued into the cave, climbing rimstone dams and having a blast. During this part of the journey, we encountered cave fish, countless crayfish, and a handful of spotted tail salamanders. After navigating the rimstone dams, we reached the monkey bars, a section of the cave where we had to move along a ledge as the water was too deep to touch the bottom. Fortunately, the water was relatively low, so it wasn't much of an issue. We followed the water for a while and eventually reached the third climb up, entering a higher passage on our way to the Great White Lady, a stunning formation. After contending with some incredibly thick mud and nearly losing my boot multiple times, we finally made it through the bypass and continued to explore the passage and visit the Great White Lady. After traversing more water and admiring beautiful formations, we encountered an ear dipper, a first for both Kyle and I. Thankfully, we made it through with little trouble and continued through the lower passage, eventually reaching the catacombs, which, to me, seemed like the most captivating part of the cave. After spending considerable time in the catacombs, we connected back to the main passage and took the same route

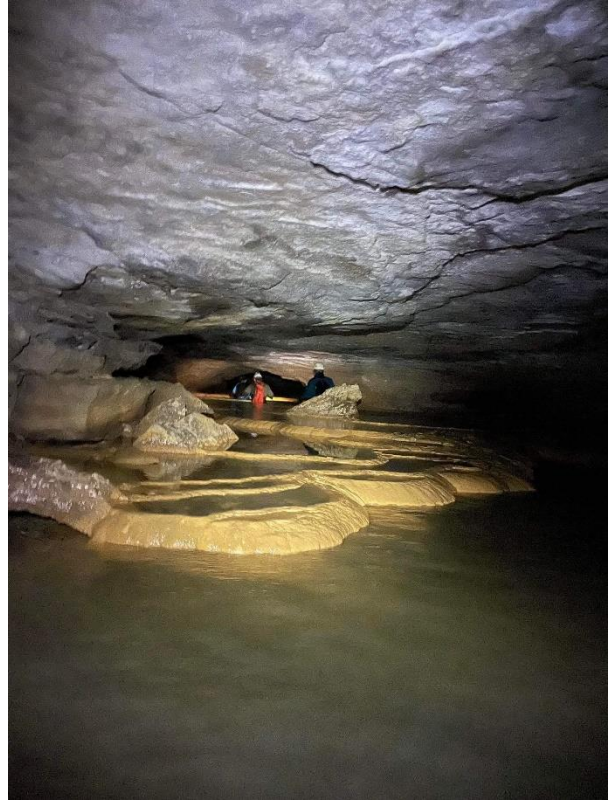
out from the third climb up. Climbing down the rimstone dams and tossing the Swago in the water, and jumping in after it, was even more enjoyable than climbing up and over the rimstone dams on the way in. I even got to slide down a natural slide, thinking it wasn't very deep. However, I was mistaken, and I sank and went under, realizing that nothing would stay dry. This amusing incident was captured on video, and I'd be happy to share it upon request. After a failed crayfish rescue mission, we finally saw daylight and emerged from the cave after an exciting adventure.

Conclusion:

Overall, it was an unforgettable weekend, and I wouldn't hesitate to say yes to future invitations to visit either cave. We all had a great time on these trips, even with the numerous breakdown climbs, and had the opportunity to witness extraordinary natural wonders. I want to extend my gratitude to Harry Goepel for leading us through the caves, Stephanie Suen for the invitation, and the landowners of both Natural Bridges Cavern and Grayson Gunnar Cave. Ryan Braga
NSS 72371

All photos courtesy of Stephanie Suen:





The Sloan's Catacombs – Aaron Deal

Saturday morning of Sloansgiving Andy, A'dra, Tori, Ryan, and Aaron entered the Garbage Pit entrance of Sloans with the primary goal of exploring the catacomb area and a secondary goal of exploring around X-corner looking for an upper level.

After climbing down Garbage Pit Hill, the group noted the hole/climb down to the left which was believed to be where we would be exiting the catacombs. We continued down the bypass route towards Echo Junction stopping right after the slide down. On the left you'd see a large flow stone with a passage underneath called Paul's Passage. We went to the left starting out as a nice walking passage that slowly lowered to a hands and knee crawl. We continued crawling until we noted a passage off to the left, but reviewing the map we continued on straight until we reached a ledge. Determining that we couldn't easily get down the ledge we decided to go back to the noted passage to the left as there should be another entrance to the area past the ledge from the catacombs.

The passage was hands and knees leading to a short belly crawl that opened to a small room. On the right you could crawl through some breakdown, but didn't seem to go anywhere. On the left there were some mud slopes down to some tight passages that went both to the right and left. Reviewing the map once again we thought that the lower passages may connect into the catacombs area. The right passage appeared to fizzle out, but the left passage did go after a tight belly crawl. The belly crawl popped into a small room where straight led to the catacombs and right after squeezing through a hole was 15ft tall and believed to lead to the waterfall area next to Garbage Pit Hill.



Photo by Tori

Heading towards the catacombs was a small tube with tons of blind crawdads and surface crawdads with one being about 10 inches long. Following the tube popped out into an intersection of 4 passages, so another map review ensued. We determined that the leftmost tube gets us back to the end of Paul's passage with the tube being quite muddy. Shortly down the tube we found some breakdown on the left that as expected had us on the bottom of the ledge we sat on earlier in the day. We explored the mud sloping passage with several different passages taking off. We were quite surprised by one area that the map showed as a pit, but was now a 15' mound. We later confirmed with Patrick that in fact there had been a pit there 10ish years ago when he visited the area.



Photo by A'dra

We decided to exit the area back into the catacombs after yet another map review to complete a loop that would dump us back into the 4 passage intersection room. The loop was similar to the rest of the catacombs easily making it back to the intersection room taking a short break. The last of the 4 passages was our route back to Garbage Pit Hill, which didn't take too long to reach after 1 quick map check.

After popping out to the surface for a potty break, we headed off to X-corner where we first took the straight path and then down the mud slope to checkout the waterfall in the wall. The waterfall was flowing, but not reaching the other side of the passage today. Coming back we went to the end of the passage where we found a breakdown pile that is mapped to have a small passage that leads to an upper level. We carefully navigated the breakdown trying to find a passage, but in the end couldn't find the passage we wanted. Although we did find some awesome bacon that was probably 6ft long, which was worth all of the squeezing we did.



Photo by Andy

The exit was uneventful making it back to the house just as the water had warmed back up from the first round of showers.



Photo by Andy

