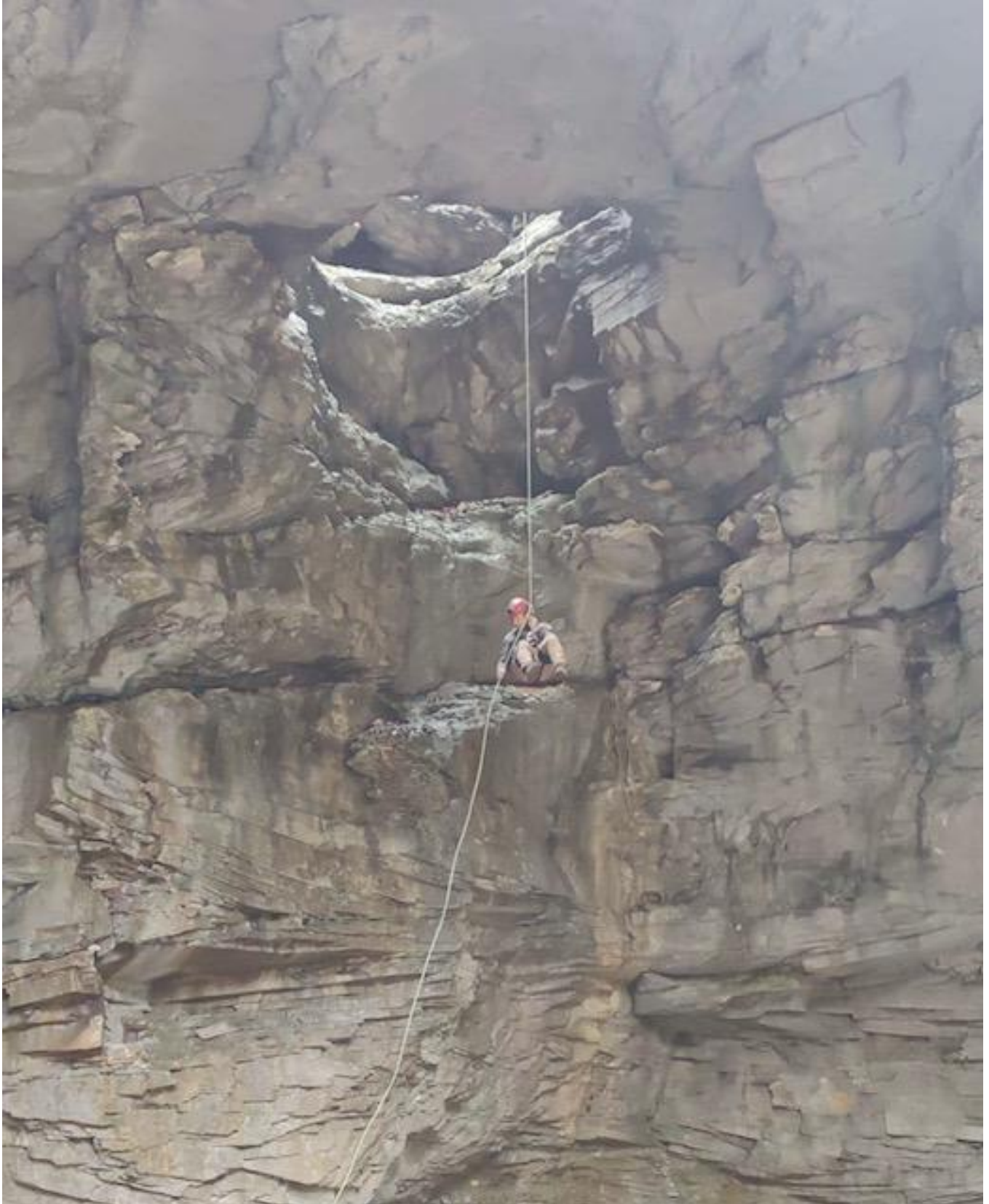




# Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

## February 2024



Cover photo by Nick Wayne – Ryan Braga rappelling in the Carter Caves area at WAW.

## 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](mailto:exec@centralohiogrotto.com)

**Chair:**

Andy Schofield  
[chair@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:chair@centralohiogrotto.com)

**Vice Chair:**

Wendy Orlandi  
[vice-chair@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:vice-chair@centralohiogrotto.com)

**Treasurer:**

Suzanne Gagnon  
[treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com)

**Secretary:**

Bethany Widmayer  
[secretary@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:secretary@centralohiogrotto.com)

**Former Chair:**

Aaron Deal  
[Aaron.Deal@gmail.com](mailto:Aaron.Deal@gmail.com)

**Member-At-Large:**

Joe Chaput  
[jchaput@gjpepsi.com](mailto:jchaput@gjpepsi.com)

**Member-At-Large:**

Mark Swelstad  
[mswelstad@gmail.com](mailto:mswelstad@gmail.com)



**Upcoming COG Events** – Note: Details of our events can be found on [our Facebook page](#). You do not have to be a member to be in our Facebook group.

<b>February 22</b>	COG Monthly Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church
<b>February 25</b>	Roppel Cave Trip	Contact: Ryan Braga. Note this is a difficult trip.
<b>March 23-24</b>	Zaleski State Forest Beginner Backpacking Trip	Max 10 – contact: Wendy Orlandi
<b>March 28</b>	COG Monthly Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church
<b>March 29-31</b>	Red River Gorge Intermediate Backpacking Trip	Max 8 – contact: Wendy Orlandi
<b>April 6</b>	COG Surveys	Rockcastle County, KY – Contact: Ryan Braga
<b>April 25</b>	COG Monthly Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church
<b>May 22-28</b>	<a href="#">Speleofest</a>	Hosted by the Louisville, KY Grotto
<b>May 23</b>	COG Monthly Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church
<b>May 31-June 2</b>	Bear Heaven and Kees Cave: Intro to Vertical (or not)	West Virginia – contact: Wendy Orlandi
<b>June 21-23</b>	<a href="#">Karst-o-Rama 2024</a>	GSP Preserve – hosted by Greater Cincinnati Grotto
<b>June 27</b>	COG Monthly Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church

Contact Info for Trip Organizers:

- Wendy Orlandi - [wenlo0319@gmail.com](mailto:wenlo0319@gmail.com)
- Ryan Braga - [ryanbraga1007@gmail.com](mailto:ryanbraga1007@gmail.com)

+++++J  
 Join us for our next monthly meeting at Worthington Presbyterian Church on THURSDAY, February 22nd, 7pm in person or online. To join virtually, find remote meeting information in the Discussion in Facebook. You do NOT have to be a member to attend, everyone is welcome.

Our February presenter will be Bill Steele, bio below. After the meeting, we head over to Villa Nova Ristorante for pizza on 5545 N High St, Columbus, OH 43214.



Bill Steele leads the exploration, mapping, study of, and publishing about Sistema Huautla, the deepest cave in the Western Hemisphere and the 28th longest cave in the world.

Bill Steele is a cave explorer and speleologist who has led and participated in expeditions to many of the longest and deepest caves in the USA, Mexico, and China. He has explored more than 2,500 caves across North America and Asia and has written

two books chronicling his expeditions: Yochib: The River Cave, and Huautla: Thirty Years in One of the World's Deepest Caves. TV shows such as National Geographic Explorer, NOVA and How'd They Do That? have aired programs on his expeditions.

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**

**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!

**General Grotto Announcements:**

*Richard Hand*

I was recently notified that a long-time member of our grotto, Richard Hand, passed away on May 20, 2021. Richard was active back in the 1970's and was a regular at caving events for a long time. I remember I kept thinking he was an entomologist and whenever I asked him about that he'd remind me he liked reptiles, not bugs. His wife of many years died in 2004. From his obituary: *He was a veteran of the U.S. Navy and a retired teacher. Richard formerly was also a Docent for the Metropolitan Parks of Columbus. He enjoyed spelunking and reptiles of all types. A very studious person, Richard enjoyed research and learning his whole life.* Rest in peace, Richard.

*COG Meeting Location update*

We have been meeting at the Worthington Presbyterian Church on the 4th Tuesday of the month for decades, and recently they've let us know that the church is no longer available on that evening. The board continues to explore options but for now we will move our meeting night to the 4th THURSDAY of each month. It is understood this causes conflict with a few members but for now this is the best solution.

If you have any ideas or suggestions, please raise them to any board member or at a meeting, which for now, will be the 4th Thursday of the month.

**CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO**



[www.centralohiogrotto.com](http://www.centralohiogrotto.com)

**From the Chair – Andy Schofield**

COG is off to a great start in 2024!

Already in January we've had COG members attend The Dayton Underground Grotto's (DUG) Wormfest and Winter Adventure Weekend held at Carter Caves KY. Both were great events and I encourage everyone to attend them in the future.

Keep a close eye on the calendar and Facebook group as many events are being scheduled. COG Survey efforts for this year are starting to heat up lead by Mark Swelstad and Ryan Braga giving a presentation on survey at the last grotto meeting, a survey trip scheduled for April in the Rockcastle County area, and joint COG x DUG x ESSO survey efforts in and around Carter Caves state park in KY.



**COG Library – Mark Swelstad**

I recently acquired the COG Library from Jamie Thompson, who was our Grotto librarian for probably 10 years or so. Prior to Jamie, the librarian was Joe Gibson, and prior to that, it was Bill Walden.

Having some free time, and being a bit of a library nerd, I have been spending considerable time sorting through many boxes, removing duplicates, and organizing the content. The bulk of the library is old newsletters from the NSS, COG, and other grottos. There are a few books, but most of these were published prior to 2000. This year, I will be proposing to our board of directors that we create a monthly stipend to purchase books that would be of interest and value to our members. Just a couple of examples would be The Caves of Adams County (an Ohio county), On Station, and

many many others. If you have any books you wish to donate to the grotto, please let me know. At this point, we don't need any NSS newsletters. We have a handful missing from previous years, but for the most part we have NSS newsletters going back to almost the beginning. I will be donating and/or recycling the many duplicates we have.

Lastly, I intend to start bringing something from the library each meeting, and of course members are welcome to borrow material. There will be a sign-out process for this to make sure we keep track of who has what. If you would like to come to see the library in person, please let me know and we can make arrangements.



Your COG Library – photo by Mark Swelstad



How to find Kentucky on a map



Helpful Public Service Announcement

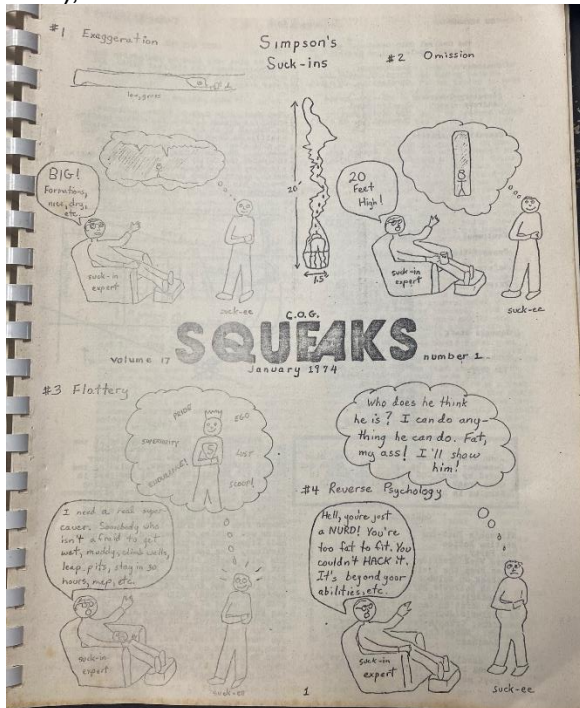
**COG History**

Since moving the library into my house, I've had the job, and pleasure honestly, to read through some old newsletters. Now that they are at my fingertips, I'd like to share some of the grotto history with all of you. I hope you find this interesting and valuable. – M.S.

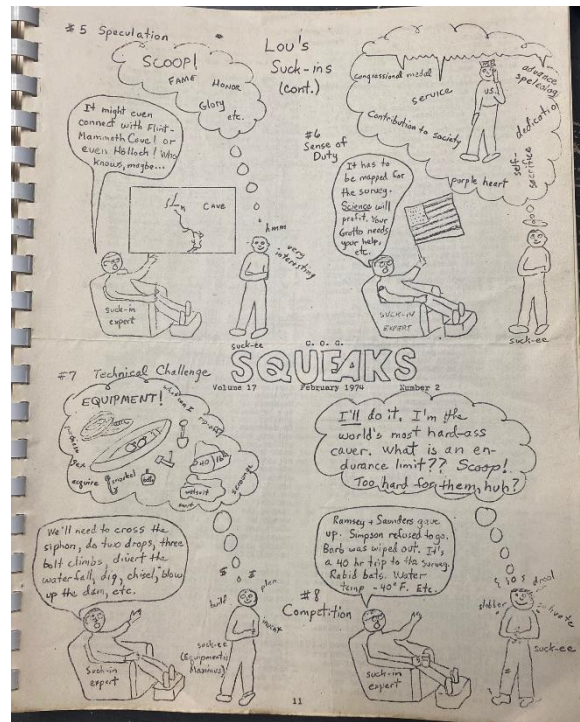
**50 Years Ago**

In the February 1974 Squeaks, Barbie Unger published a trip report about celebrating Christmas at the COG Fieldhouse near Sloan's. One paragraph is of interest in particular: *"Back at the fieldhouse, we learned that the real scoop of the day was made by the Dayton A.S.S. members who had visited Hurricane Cave in Rockcastle County. They had rigged or chimned (sic) several pits and finally emerged from Pine Hill Cave."* (COG Squeaks, February 1974; Barbie Unger). Hurricane Cave is of course now called Hurricane Pit and is one of 3 entrances to Pine Hill Cave.

The cover of the January and February Squeaks were drawings by hand (by Lou Simpson, the newsletter editor at that time), of his famous 'Suck In' comics.



Cover of the Jan. 1974 COG Squeaks by Lou Simpson



Cover of the Feb. 1974 COG Squeaks by Lou Simpson

**40 Years Ago**

In the February 1984 Squeaks, Bill Walden published a letter he had received from a young caver who was interested in learning where to buy caving equipment and how to get on trips. That young caver was named Stephen Clark and is someone many of us have caved with in the past. He was our COG Squeaks editor for a time maybe 10 years ago?

Crawlathon was held February 10-12 that year at Carter Caves State Park.

**25 Years Ago**

There was a 'State of the Grotto' article. We collected \$1093.56 in 1998 and spent \$895.93, the bulk of which was spent on Squeaks-related costs (postage and printing). We still had the fieldhouse down in Pulaski County, and cave projects were listed including Farmers Cave System, Redmond Creek Cave, and Black House Mountain in Fentress County, Tennessee.

The (now defunct) Ohio Valley Region held their annual conservation project at Freeland's Cave Sinkhole in Adams County,

Ohio. This took place in November, 1988 and the report was submitted by John LaMar Cole in the February 1999 Squeaks.

Bill Walden submitted a trip report about ongoing work in Redmond Creek Cave in Wayne County.



### WAW Recap – Ryan Braga

Where does the trip even begin? I suppose it all starts with the drive down. While driving the last hour to Carter Caves (where Winter Adventure Weekend takes place), it's all back roads, and when it's dark, raining, and one of the foggiest days of the century (just trust me on that), you don't have a good time. After arriving, we checked in and got settled while attending a talk on backpacking. The next morning, I had planned on doing a 1-mile fun run as it was Dana's birthday, and he was organizing the 5k. Little did I know I'd be guilt-tripped into running a 5k... I've been running a mile about 3 times a week for the past month; however, I haven't run more than a mile since sophomore year of high school (over 6 years ago). After barely surviving running the 5k, I got my much-coveted sticker

and was on my way to hang out before going to drop some pits. We ended up going to seven seventy and haunted (70-foot pit and 45-foot pit), and I did two drops into haunted and one into seven seventy before our trip was done. After, some of us went on a carbide trip through Cascade, which was pretty neat seeing what the old-timers used for caving. Thanks but I'll stick with my 1000 lumen zebra.



*Photo courtesy Ryan Braga*

After all this, I ended up hanging out at the staph cabin and decided it would be fun to squeeze through a wooden chair. This prompted us all to have fun, and what came from this was very bruised shoulders.

The next morning, I had an 8:30 am trip to do a lot of hiking and a bit of caving. Let me tell you, I was not feeling it when I woke up after doing a 5k and a good bit of vertical, so I decided to do some fun stuff instead. First, I went over to Natural Bridge and did a couple of rappels with Dana. He claimed that my short micro rack would not feed the 1/2 inch rope, but boy was he wrong, and I didn't even have a big breakfast! After this, I went over to the Leap of Faith where Jared and I devised a plan to throw a frisbee as I jumped off the edge of the cliff for the swing and catch it in mid-air, and we got it first try! When doing

shenanigans, you often have to take risks and accept the consequences. For example, when I took Dana's wallet when he was stuck in the chair the night before, there's a good chance he'd whoop my a\*\*.



Photo courtesy Nina Soluski

With catching a frisbee while jumping off a cliff, when your full attention is on the frisbee, you forget that when you swing back, you'll run into the cliff face and need to brace for it. In the pure bliss of catching the frisbee first try, I did not brace myself and ended up busting up my left leg. After these shenanigans, there was the squeeze box contest where I placed 2nd; however, I got quite a few friction burns from the box. After this, Nick and I went into the cardboard cave, and after getting separated, I decided I wanted to scare Nick. To do this, I needed to get to the level above me. With this in mind, I stand up and get to the next level through a tight hole in the ceiling of the cardboard cave. Once getting my arms and chest through the tight wood square, I started to push my way up and by forgetting to put my belt on, my pants started falling down to my ankles as I stood with my arms above my head in the

ceiling of the cardboard cave. Karma. Luckily, with no one around, I was able to slip back down into the floor and pull my pants up without incident. Let this be a lesson to always wear a belt when trying to fit into a tight ceiling to scare your friend.

Later, some COGers and some scouts went to Horton Hobbs cave. I may or may not have forgotten all my cave gear which held us up, but that's old news. The predominant feature of Horton Hobbs cave has to be that it's filled with raccoon sh\*\* at every which turn. Wendy and I, however, made the best of it by admiring the stalactites that were made of gypsum which was super unique!



Photo courtesy Jennie Hawkey

After some more fun at the staph cabin, I went to park outside our cabin; however, there were no spots left so I parked in the grass. The next morning, the 4Runner was stuck in the now soaked and muddy grass on the side of a hill. After lots of struggle and determination, Nick and I got the 4Runner out so we could make it to our Carter City connections trip. This was a super fun trip which ended with a very tight keyhole that you have to squeeze through, which not everyone on our trip could get through. Jennie was nice enough to help push me through. Once leaving the cave and starting our drive home, Nick and I stopped in Portsmouth, Ohio, to get Sonic. Turns out if you get a milkshake and suck the straw too hard, you can pull your buccinator muscle. Overall, it was a fun, action-packed weekend! Cheers to everyone that made it memorable.





**SAVE THE DATE!**  
 Washington, DC Grotto Presents:  
**SPRING VAR 2024**  
 The DC Grotto Turns 85!  
 Celebrate by getting down and dirty with us!



**EVENT HIGHLIGHTS**

**Led Caving Trips**  
 We need trip leaders! If you're interested in leading a trip in Pocahontas County or the surrounding areas, please email Donnie Hammond at: [theglobetrottingdonnie@yahoo.com](mailto:theglobetrottingdonnie@yahoo.com)

**Saturday Night Dinner**  
 Catering provided by the local Elks Club

**Birthday Party**  
 When DCG has a birthday, we do the surprising! You won't want to miss the epic activities we have in store.

**PRICING AND REGISTRATION To Be Announced**  
 Mark your calendars!



**MAY 3-5 2024**  
**EAST FORK CAMPGROUND**  
 RT 250 MAIN STREET  
 MEADOW LANE DRIVE  
 DURBIN, WV 26264



Roundstone Creek in mid-November.

**Trip Report – Sloansgiving Weekend – November 16,17,18 2023 – Mark Swelstad**

All photographs taken by Mark Swelstad

For Sloansgiving, I had previously arranged to go caving on Saturday with Janeen and others to Natural Bridge Cave in Wayne County and decided to 'poke around' a bit on Thursday and Friday. On my way to our rented house near Monticello, I stopped in Rockcastle County to check out the seldom visited creek entrance to Sinks of the Roundstone Cave. I have never made the connection as this part of the cave is usually sumped, and always has deep water, and hadn't visited those entrances in decades. I parked my car in the mostly dry stream bed of Roundstone Creek and walked downstream. There are really 2 cave entrances; one is a really nasty overflow cave that hydrologically connects to Sinks, and the other is the actual downstream entrance itself. I took some pictures and poked my head inside for a few minutes, then headed back to my car.

When I pulled out onto the gravel road, a train had stopped on the tracks, blocking my ability to get back to US25. I waited for about 20 minutes, ate an orange, and it still hadn't moved. I turned the car around and headed for the long way around 1004. Just before I got to that paved road, I encountered a huge flock of Common Grackles (a blackbird) in the woods. There were probably over a thousand birds. Truly amazing. Now I know where they go in the winter.



The really nasty overflow resurgence – Photo by Mark Swelstad

## THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO (COG)



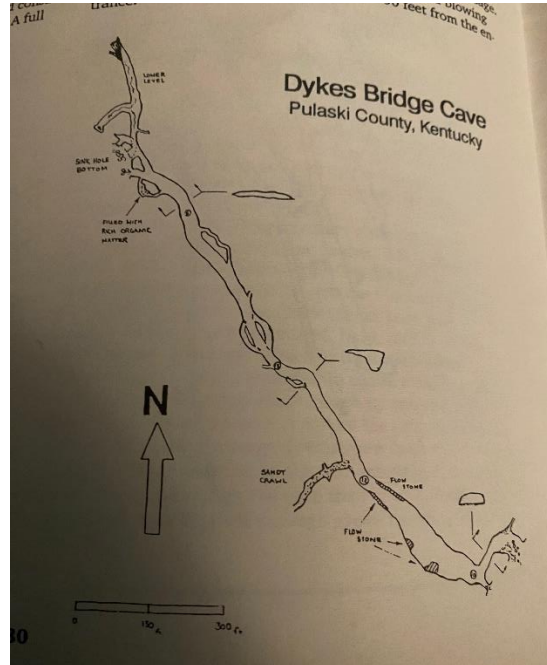
The creek entrance to Sinks – note the railroad bed foundation at the top.



Looking into Sinks' seldom visited creek entrance. This floods so be smart if you visit.

Friday, a small group of us visited some caves in Pulaski County. Taking advantage of the dry weather, I thought we could get into some that normally are pretty wet. We started off by visiting Dykes Bridge Cave – I've been in this before but it almost always has at least ankle or knee deep water and haven't gone that far inside. This day it was more or less

completely dry and we nerd caved to the back entrance and back. It's pretty heavily graffitied and is obviously frequently visited by non-cavers but it's still an interesting cave to visit.



Dyke's Bridge Cave

After Dyke's, we popped down to Well's Cave and looked at the entrance and planned our future conquest of this huge system (there is a future kayak trip to the River Entrance to this cave this summer!).



*The spectacular entrance to Wells Cave, owned and managed by the NSS.*

At this point, a few people headed back to the house, while Jennie Hawkey, Tera Williamson and I headed to Short Creek Cave. This is a really interesting system and is probably the resurgence of much of the water that flows through Sinking Valley (don't quote me – I'm not a geologist!). The three of us were able to get most of the way through the cave and were able to see the back entrance but a fairly deep pool of water blocked our passage out. Not wanting to get TOO wet (remember, we were nerd caving) we turned around and headed back. Crossing the street, we headed towards the Boiling Pots along a trail....well...not really a trail. In fact, there was really NO trail at all as we made our way through brambles and slippery rocks. We found what I believe is an

insurgence to the Short Creek Cave system just as the rain started. After a hastily abandoned search for the boiling pots, we headed back to the car and the dry warmth of the house back in Monticello.



*Inside Short Creek Cave*



*Jennie Hawkey at the Short Creek insurgence.*



*Tera Williamson at the Short Creek insurgence.*



Jennie Hawkey on very slippery rocks.

Saturday, I went with Janeen S., Dana S., Mary G., and Synda to Natural Bridge Cave. Being a large guy, I looked ridiculous stuffed into my wet suit vest, but I was glad to have it as we entered the cave and swam maybe 20 feet through deep water. This was a great trip – about 4 ½ hours. Lots of water and amazing chert formations (round chert balls, ceilings of chert weirdness, and more!) in the first half of the cave, and the large dry rooms, huge breakdown piles, and of course, the star of the show – the 2 natural bridges themselves. I'd love to show you pictures but I didn't bring my camera. Trust me, it's worth seeing. I wrenched my left ankle a bit in some breakdown which is still giving me a bit of grief but it wasn't that bad. I really enjoyed this trip a lot.

It was a fun weekend of caving!



### Marler Hallow 01/06/24 - Nina Soluski

All photos courtesy Nina Soluski.

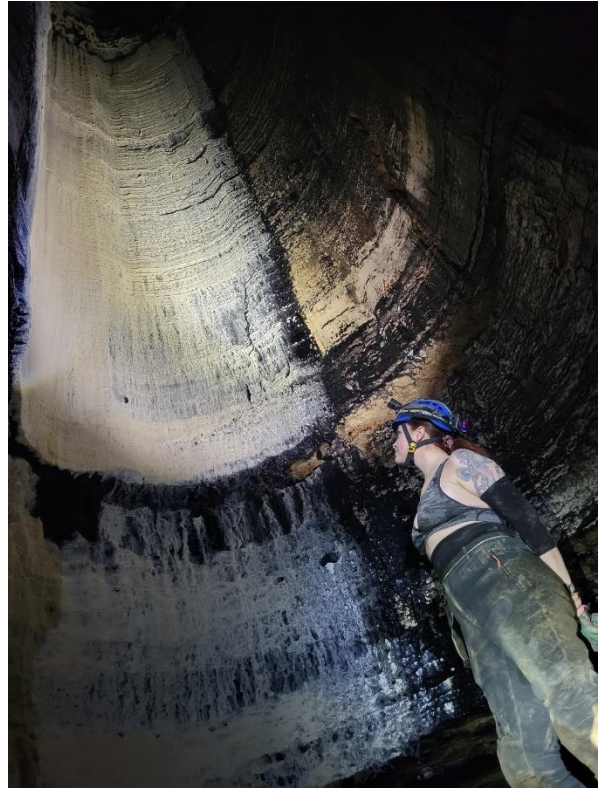


Friday morning at *Wormfest* was a chilly one, clocking in at 17°F. Saturday, I wandered around Great Saltpeter property looking for ways to help with the Hot Tub build, as no one had signed up for my trip to Bob Dobbs Cave. There were so many handy people helping that I was not much use. I did move 2 carpets for the mud though! I did something. Gold star for Nina! I drove to the upper mondo to visit Tim Hale & Brad "Hippie" Dixon and crew. *The High Voltage Grotto* was just getting up at the crack of noon with some refreshments. They debated where they wanted to cave, but we ultimately landed on Marlow Hallow at the request of Ryan. Tim, Ryan, Megan, and I loaded up and got to the cave entrance at 2pm. Ryan is feeling sick, so he stays in the truck. It is a short 50-yard walk to the entrance: a low-lying creek level opening. A short 20 feet crawl on hands and knees and you are in standing area. There is a water passage to follow, but what I found most fun was canyon walking on the ledges just above the water. It is maybe only 2 feet wide: comfortable width. There are many "levels" of ledges, so one could be one the "2<sup>nd</sup> floor", and another on the 3<sup>rd</sup>. There is a wide opening where you must submit to walking through the water, but the water level was low and there was a beautiful small waterfall trickle coming along the right side of the wall. Then back up on the ledges to walk

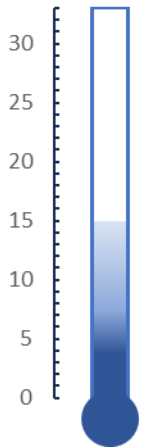
to another wide opening, where someone has fashioned two planks of wood as a bridge to cross the waist-deep swell of a pool. Coming to a tight squeeze, with no water, I was warned of a mattress cushion. I was expecting a tattered kid's size mattress, what I was not expecting was to step on a couch cushion covered in mud. It jarred me and I shrieked in shock. Laughing in embarrassment, I never wanted to feel that weird sensation of possibility stepping on a decaying animal. Thank goodness it was not. We come to a fork in the passage, turn right and climb over breakdown and slide down some sleek mud trails. After coming to a nice low but slippery passage, Tim falls on his shoulder and we decide to break for water & snacks. We shoot the shit and giggle to each other for about 45 minutes, then we decide to trek on. It is not a long jaunt with weird black/blue substance covering the rocks in the water (which we avoid) before we come to one of the most spectacular chimneys I've seen in Kentucky: "the Ivory Tower" or "Ivory Chimney". It is probably 100 ft tall with white, maybe Magnesium Calcite, covering the walls. After a little photo shoot, I start to explore ways to get to the second level passage. My tig ol' bitties are too much to fit through the little step opening I find, but Megan is petite and slides right up there. Tim & I hang back and look around and take more photos. It is 5pm at this point, and we don't want to miss the free dinner, so we head back to the entrance. While coming back, Megan falls behind, and we shout for her. No answer. I start to head back to find her; she has fallen in a shallow pool of water, but she is fine. Just in shock from the cold water. She shakes it off and we all make it safely out by 5:45pm. A beautiful cave with a lot of other passages we didn't see, I highly recommend.



THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO (COG)



Be a part of History, Join the GSP 33!  
We Need 18 more people to meet our goal!



Will you be one of the 33 who will commit to supporting GSP with a small \$25 monthly donation over the next 5 years?

Proceeds are used to pay off the loans used to purchase the Caretakers Residence.

Are you interested in a free family camping pass for the next 5 years, a free polo shirt, and a celebration at the end of the commitment period?

Please contact Patrick Gibson for more details!  
614.496.5345, kd8ion@gmail.com

Payment Options:

1. Mail a check Monthly or some other defined period such as quarterly/yearly
2. Pay once in Full
3. Paypal as a recurring payment with GSP 33 in comment

Payments should be made out to "Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve" and mailed to

GSP 33  
% Patrick Gibson  
4211 Caswell Rd  
Johnstown, OH 43031