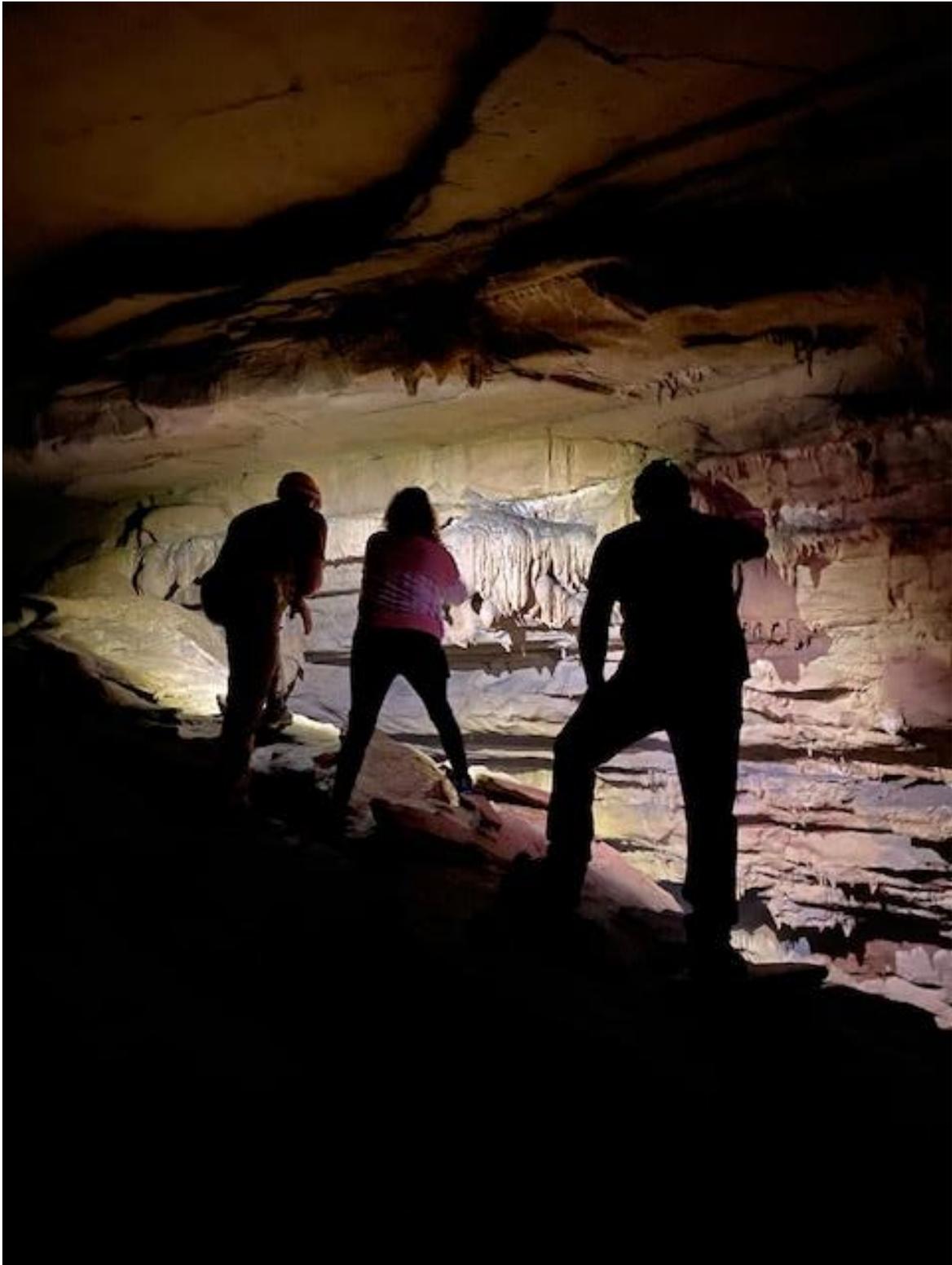




Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

December 2025



Cover photo by Mark Swelstad – Pat Gibson, Scott & Debi Pavey looking down Garbage Pit Hill, Sloan's Valley Cave

THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO (COG)

The Central Ohio Grotto (COG) of the National Speleological Society meets at 7:00 p.m. the fourth Thursday 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:

\$20 per individual or \$25 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:

Andy Schofield
chair@centralohiogrotto.com

Vice Chair:

Wendy Orlandi
vice-chair@centralohiogrotto.com

Treasurer:

Aaron Deal
treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com

Secretary:

Bethany Widmayer
secretary@centralohiogrotto.com

Former Chair:

Aaron Deal
Aaron.Deal@gmail.com

Member-At-Large:

Ryan Braga
ryanbraga1007@gmail.com

Member-At-Large:

Tera Williamson
trwilliamson84@gmail.com

Member-At-Large:

Jennie Hawkey
jcgalletta@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.

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--|
| December 13 | COG Christmas Party | 6pm @ Wendy Orlandi's house (see below for more details) |
| January 24 | COG Regular Meeting | Worthington Presbyterian Church 7 pm |

Contact Info for Questions regarding trips or meetings: exec@centralohiogrotto.com

+++++



Let's party, COG! BYOB. Bring a side to share. If you'd like to participate in the white elephant, bring a gift (\$20) that you'd like to see someone take on their next cave trip.



Odds and Ends:

Grotto History

The December 1975 issue of the Squeaks had a trip report about a cave in Adair County, KY called Fanny Holladay Cave. There was also a report about another survey trip to Zarathustra Cave in Fentress County, TN. Louis Simpson mentioned he packed in a bunch of stuff and his pack weighed 60 lbs walking to the cave entrance! Also, there was a nice article about hypothermia and how to treat it. Lastly, they mentioned that dues were due. At \$2.50, it was a great value!

Elections

Grotto elections were conducted. In 2026, the COG Executive Committee will be comprised thusly:

- Chair – Wendy Orlandi
- Vice-Chair – Andy Schofield
- Treasurer – Aaron Deal
- Secretary – Bethany Widmayer
- Members at Large:
 - Ryan Braga
 - Nick Wayne
 - Kevin Lorms

Congrats to the new board, and thanks to any outgoing board members for your service!



Sloan's Valley Cave – 11/14/2025 By Nick Wayne

Trip Participants: Nick Wayne, Tory Roland, Andy Schofield, Caroline Kuiken, Aaron Deal, Patrick Gibson, Auggie Kuiken

In 2024 a trip was led into the railroad entrance to try and find the connection into the main drag of the cave system. The connection was not made but after 5 hours of caving we were sure we found the canyon we needed to be in to continue with the connection. This year we made it the goal to go in the railroad entrance and make our way out to the Scowling Tom entrance. What took us 5 hours of exploring to find in 2024 only took us 50 minutes to reach this time. We made our way through a breakdown pile into a narrow canyon. We spent about an hour navigating through the canyon. At one point Aaron and I chose a low path while Andy chose the high path, but it became very apparent the upper path was the approach we should have taken so we had to contort ourselves in one of the hardest moves I have done to get to the upper path. Eventually we popped out into a stream passage that was breathtaking, we made our way past a large flowstone (picture attached)



Photo courtesy Nick Wayne

towards the sound of a waterfall. There was a wonderful 2 tiered waterfall that was about 8 feet for the first level and then about 15 feet to a pool and a very tall extended room. We continued through a crawl until it was apparent to Patrick and others on the trip we had made the connection to parts of the cave they knew. We continued down the railroad river, past Moby Dick, and up Erisman's ledge. Once we got to S.T. junction we stumbled upon a Spotted Salamander. Spotted salamanders are terrestrial mole salamanders that are not adapted to the cave environment. I emptied my Nalgene and coaxed the salamander into it and put him in my Swaygo. We quickly made our way through the crawlways to Scowling Toms and then navigated on the surface back to our cars at the Railroad entrance. I released him next to a log and then he quickly crawled under it. I am so glad we were able to make the connection and finally get it checked off of Patrick's bucket list. It was a pretty sporty trip with decent amount of crawling and I would love to do the trip again now that we know the route and try and take more pictures as it was extremely impressive passage.



Photo courtesy Nick Wayne

11/15/2025 Trip to Peter Cave
By Tory Roland

After spending our first day of Sloansgiving at Sloans making the Railroad connection, Nick Wayne and I along with Justin Turpin of the Bluegrass Grotto made a side quest to visit a cave further south called Peter Cave. This was largely an exploratory trip, as we had descriptions of what we could expect to see in the cave but not a map. After driving to the end of a road on top of a hill overlooking what looked to be a large field, which we later were told was actually a large sinkhole called Redman's Sink, we made only a short hike to reach the large cave entrance also facing out



Photo courtesy Nick Wayne

towards the expanse.



Not too far into the main passage we found ourselves in an impressive room, which we poked around in for quite a while trying to find a lead we knew would lead to the bigger rooms. Pushing forward seemed to only be sending us into a mud pit, which led to one other small pit that may have been climbable, but we weren't too confident we'd be able to get ourselves out due to the slickness. We turned back and eventually found a side passage to the front right of the room that led to the square shaped manmade passage pictured.



This led into a section of belly crawling that took us to the largest of the rooms. We noted a number of bats and some leads we might want to check if we make it back at some point but otherwise sat down and had some cave snacks and then made our way back to prepare our dishes for dinner.



Photos courtesy of Tory Roland

Equipment Discussion – Replicating a Helmet Mounted Light – Shawn Madore

During a caving trip in September 2025 to West Virginia with the Central Ohio Grotto team, Jason Glancy’s helmet light caught my eye for both its luminosity and the compactness of its assembly. The optimization and functionality of his set up was evident, and it inspired the decision to upgrade my helmet and lights for horizontal caves.

I had previously used Speleo and Scurion lights for all caving but decided that the cordless and strapless assembly Jason had with the Zebra lights was better suited where crawling and low ceilings were prevalent to prevent the cables and battery packs from being caught on and scraped against the rocks. Note that I now use this assembly for horizontal caves but still use Scurion for vertical caves because of the luminosity and battery capacity.

Through advice via correspondence with Jason in October 2025, I purchased the equipment necessary to replicate Jason’s setup. All the equipment is listed below (Exhibit 1) and comes to a total cost of \$374.98 including a new helmet and battery charger. If you already have these two items, then the cost drops to \$234.50.

| | | | | |
|------------------------------|---|--|----------------------|----------|
| Helmet (1) | A | PETZL, Vertex Vent | Amazon.com | \$104.85 |
| Flood Light (1) | B | H600Fc Mk IV 18650 XHP50.2 Floody 4000K High CRI | Zebralight.com | \$99.00 |
| Beam Light (1) | C | H600d Mk IV H600d Mk IV 18650 XHP50.2 5000K High CRI | Zebralight.com | \$99.00 |
| Batteries (X2 @ \$9.50 each) | D | Panasonic/Sanyo NCR18650GA 3450mAh 10A 18650 Li-ion Flat Top | Zebralight.com | \$19.00 |
| Mounting Bracket (1) | E | Zebralight Dual Mounting Bracket | Elevatedclimbing.com | \$15.00 |
| Bolt (1) | G | ¼ Inch Threaded Bolt – 1.5 Inches Long | Home Depot | \$0.30 |
| Wing Nut (1) | H | ¼ Inch Wing Nut | Home Depot | \$0.15 |
| Washer (1) | I | ¼ Inch Washer | Home Depot | \$0.05 |
| Drill Bit (1) | J | 5/16 Inch Drill Bit | Home Depot | \$2.00 |
| Battery Charger (4 slot) | K | XTAR VC4SL | Amazon.com | \$35.63 |

Exhibit 1 – list of Equipment

Once all the parts were purchased, it took approximately 30 minutes to set up a helmet (I set up two exactly the same). See the image below for each item (Exhibit 2).



Exhibit 2 – Equipment

The set up requires drilling one small hole in the front of the helmet to accommodate bolting the lights to the helmet via the mounting bracket. Be careful not to damage the suspension system inside the helmet with the drill bit. See the image below (Exhibit 3) for the mounting location. The hole was carefully drilled with a 5/16 inch bit to permit the ¼ inch bolt to tightly pass.



Exhibit 3 – Helmet and mounting hole location

When installing the light, the bolt gets pushed from the inside of the helmet to the outside and the washer is on the inside of the helmet snugged to the head of the bolt. Once the bolt is installed, the threaded half of the mounting bracket goes on first and threads tightly up against the helmet. This method permits the unthreaded half of the bracket to be easily installed and to permit easy removal, adjustment or replacement of the lights. See the image below (Exhibit 4) for the initial installation method.

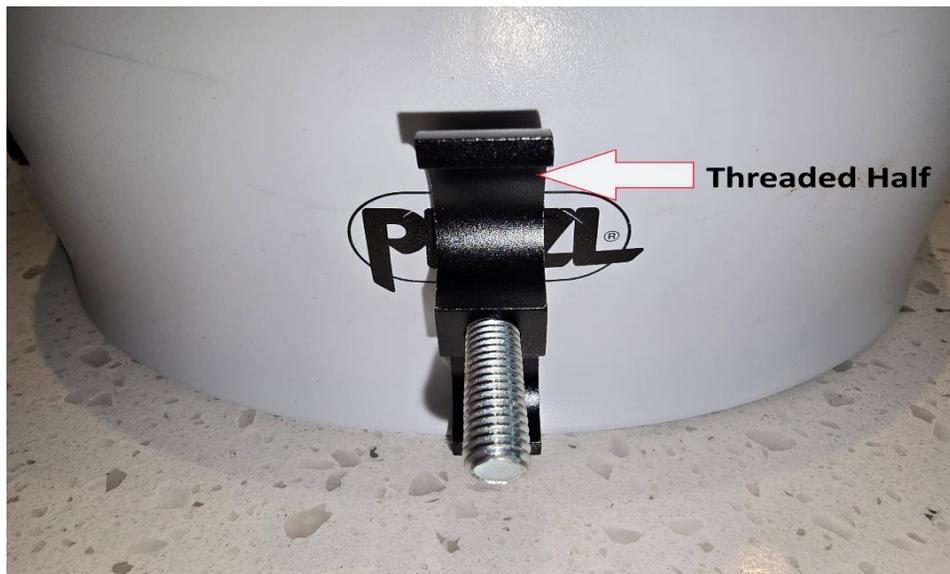


Exhibit 4 – First Installation

With the difficult part of assembly now complete, all that remains is installing the unthreaded portion of the bracket, inserting the lights and tightening the wing nut. Do not overtighten the wing

nut and remember to install and test the batteries in the lights. I forgot to put batteries in the flood light this first setup but fortunately carried spare batteries in the caving bag.

The magic of this setup is streamlined installation, no cords or straps to get tangled, no external battery pack, plus it is light weight, the batteries are easily replaced in a cave (always carry spares), and the lights can be easily removed for replacement or cleaning. Add of course that these lights are powerful and reasonably priced. I installed the flood on the top and the beam on the bottom to facilitate rigging, but it really does not make much of a difference.

Important Notice: Drilling holes can potentially affect the helmet's structural integrity, so it's important to do so carefully and know the risks.

See the image below (Exhibit 5) of the final setup!



Exhibit 5 – Final Setup

Happy and bright caving!

Shawn Madore

Central Ohio Grotto, Greater Houston Grotto & Middle East Cave Exploration Team