

# Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

## February 2025



Cover photo by Mark Swelstad – Ryan Braga surveying in Signature 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



**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 15-17</b> | Onyx Cave & Rock Shop Conservation Project | See Ryan Braga for details: <a href="mailto:ryanbraga1007@gmail.com">ryanbraga1007@gmail.com</a> |
| <b>February 15-17</b> | President Sloans                           | See Suz Gagnon for details   |
| <b>February 27</b>    | COG Regular Meeting                        | Worthington Presbyterian Church  |
| <b>March 22-23</b>    | GSP Spring Warmup                          | See Ryan Braga for details: <a href="mailto:ryanbraga1007@gmail.com">ryanbraga1007@gmail.com</a> |
| <b>March 27</b>       | COG Regular Meeting                        | Worthington Presbyterian Church  |
| <b>April 4-6</b>      | Sullivan Cave & More Indiana               | See Wendy Orlandi for details.   |
| <b>May 17-18</b>      | Open House                                 | GSP  |
| <b>June 6-8</b>       | Karst-o-Rama                               | GSP  |

Contact Info for Questions regarding trips or meetings: [exec@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:exec@centralohiogrotto.com)

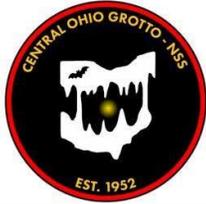
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The next COG General Meeting will be on Wednesday, February 26<sup>th</sup> at the Worthington Presbyterian Church; 773 High St., Worthington, OH. We park in the back and enter through the rear of the building. All are welcome to attend. We normally meet in the youth room (you'll find it). After the meeting, we'll head over to [Villa Nova Ristorante](#) for pizza and drinks. Please bring cash to cover your share.

Our February speaker will be Jason Ballensky, Chairman of the U.S. Exploration Committee of the [National Speleological Society](#). Bio below. His topic will be *2024 Tears of the Turtle Expedition: A Journey to 2,477 Feet Below Ground*.

Jason Ballensky has been conducting cave research since 2001 with a focus on cave discovery and survey. Jason has discovered 297 caves in the United States and organized the survey of more than 90 miles of cave passage. He is Chairman of the U.S. Exploration Committee of the National Speleological Society. He leads the Grand Canyon Cave Research Project that has been ongoing for 18

years and is responsible for organizing the survey of over 80 miles of cave passage within the park, including the longest cave west of the continental divide and the three longest caves in the state of Arizona. Jason is also the Director and creator of the Caves of Montana Project. The project has a MOU with the Montana Forest Service and works with them to map and protect caves. Jason has organized an annual expedition to the Bob Marshall Wilderness in Montana for the past 23 years. This has resulted in over 20 miles of cave survey. The survey includes the discovery of the deepest limestone cave in the United States as well as two other caves over 1,000 feet deep. Jason is a Fellow and Lew Bicking award winner of the National Speleological Society (NSS) and board member of the Alpine Karst Foundation.



## Central Ohio Grotto Membership Dues

Active membership in the Grotto requires payment of yearly dues that help cover operating costs, memberships to other caving organizations, community outreach, events, and updating our book, gear, survey, and vertical libraries. Membership resets on January 1 of each year with members dropped from the active roster if dues are not paid by April 1.

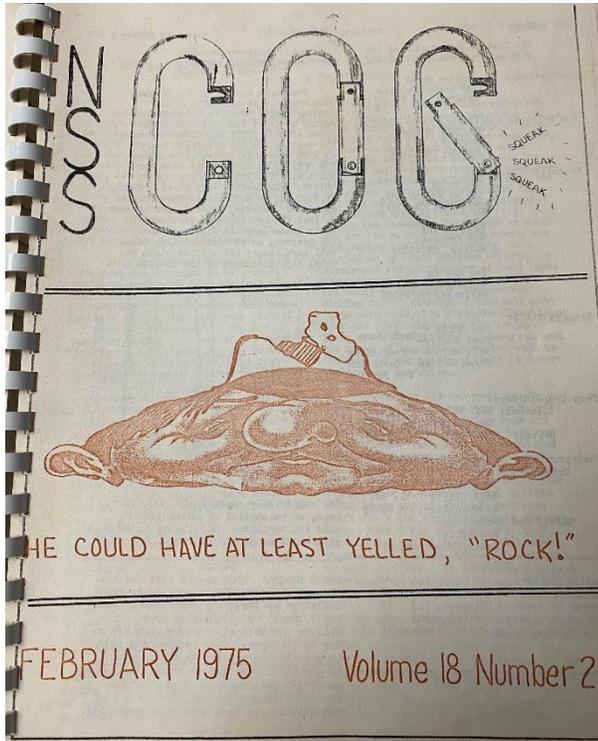
To simplify the process of paying dues, several methods of payment are accepted although they vary in cost due to the transaction fees that are applied by the providers. The table below details the cost per provider including a link to pay where several have a short form to fill out for tracking purposes.

|                 | <a href="#">Mail</a><br> | Zelle<br><b>COMING SOON!</b> | Venmo<br><b>COMING SOON!</b> | <a href="#">PayPal</a><br> |
|-----------------|--|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| Member          | \$20   | \$20.50                      | \$20.50                      | \$21.25  |
| Family          | \$25   | \$25.50                      | \$25.60                      | \$26.50  |
| Member Lifetime |  |                              |                              |  |
| Family Lifetime |  |                              |                              |  |

Once a payment is received a digital membership card will be sent from [treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com) including the Great Saltpetre Preserve gate code for the year.

New members joining after September 1 can pay a reduced due for the first year according to the table below.

|                      | Cash/Check | Zelle   | Venmo   | PayPal  |
|----------------------|------------|---------|---------|---------|
| New Member Half Year | \$10       | \$10.50 | \$10.30 | \$10.85 |
| New Family Half Year | \$15       | \$15.50 | \$15.40 | \$16.00 |

**Odds and Ends:****Grotto History:**

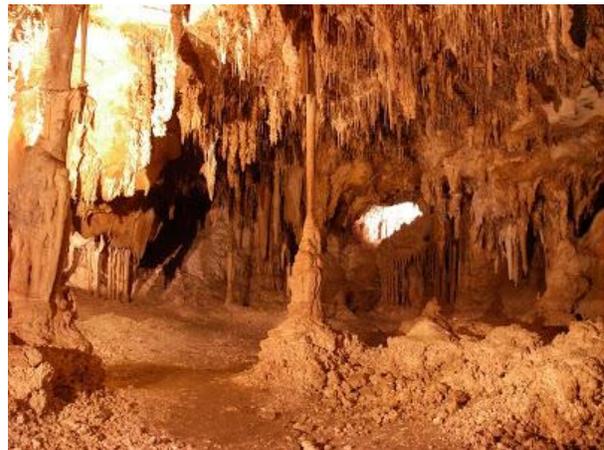
50 years ago, in the February 1975 Squeaks, there was an article by Phyllis Redshaw titled "Grand Opening!!!! The Great Humongous Underground Railroad and Excavating Company". It describes a trip on January 18<sup>th</sup> of that year a few COGsters took to Humongous Pit (I believe this is part of Cave Creek, not the more well-known Humongous Pit in Rockcastle County). They rappelled in, did some work on a dig (actually involving a device to haul dirt via a 'track' like a RR), and then they had to climb out. Phyllis described the difficulties of prusiking out.

In January 1974, several cavers narrowly avoided being trapped, or worse, in a Sulfur Mountain cave and a year later, Lou Simpson wrote an article titled "The Sulfur Mountain Survivors – Where They Are Today". He posed a series of questions to the cavers that were involved, basically seeing how they felt a year later. Some had stopped caving, some got right back into it, and all of them had

become very leery of water in caves, even those that aren't prone to flooding. Reading the responses from many of these cavers was interesting. Lou summarized his feelings this way: "At this point I am somewhat apologetic for hashing and rehashing all this over, but the experience made more difference to me, I think, *because I was more confident that I knew what I was doing. It was more of a shock to me to have my judgment prove faulty.*" (Italics mine) All of us would do well to stay humble in the face of nature and constantly challenge our confidence in things we believe to be true about cave safety.

**Karst-o-Rama Update!**

From the Karst-o-Rama committee: We are happy to announce that KOR 2025 will be multi-grotto managed. If you are interested in volunteering, please reach out to [Matt Sumner](#) or [Meg Lee](#). More info to follow! Note: you don't have to sign up for an official position to help out. There will be plenty of opportunities to take a 2 hour shift at registration, in the kitchen, helping with garbage, security, cave trips, and so on. Many hands make light work!



**The Cogster's Win Trivia!**

By: Tera Williamson

On Thursday evening of Winter Adventure Weekend, a group of us set off to the lodge to participate in the Winter Adventure Trivia. Our team consisted of Suz Gagnon, Jennie Hawkey, Camille Anderson, Chris Baker, Barbra Baker, and myself.

The five categories were:

- Caves of Kentucky
- Caves, Ice, and Disasters
- History of Carter Caves and WAW
- Branches and Birdsongs
- Winter Weather Wonders

Once we were given categories, we were given the chance to choose a category for double points. We chose to go with Caves of Kentucky. For this first round, we scored 7 out of 10 and this category was related to the following answers: limestone, white nose syndrome, sinkholes, dome pits, saltpetre, speleothems, and troglodites.

The second category was related mostly to past cave explorers and the third category was mostly specific dates related to Carter Caves, Crawlathon, and WAW. We failed horribly in these categories by getting one point in each. In the fourth category we were fairly good with identifying tree leaves, but failed with the bird sounds. For the fifth category, we only gained a couple points, with the answers to these questions mostly related to winter weather and or locations with record snow fall or below zero temperatures. Overall, we answered 16 out of 50 questions correctly and by getting to double the points for category one that brought our total points up to 23 points.

At the end there was a final trivia round where we were able to wager a certain number of accumulated points on a single question. This would essentially risk some points for the chance to significantly increase our total score if we answered correctly. Without knowing what the category was going to be, we chose to wager 20 points. These questions were

along the lines of what causes helictites to grow horizontally or diagonally, with the answer being wind. This brought our total score up to 43 points and we were announced as the 2025 WAW Trivia winners!

It was a great way to kick off Winter Adventure Weekend!



**Wells, Short Creek, and Dykes Bridge Caves Shenanigans**

Ryan Braga  
NSS 72371

On the Friday of Sloans Weekend 2024, Nick, Tory, Danika and I took an alternate trip to explore a few caves instead of joining everyone else in Sloans. This trip started with visiting Wells where we spent most of our time on the left side of the cave. Near the end we ventured into the right side but only looked through the breakdown, not much further as we had a big day ahead of us. We will most definitely be coming back to explore more of the large cave system. After Wells, we drove by Dykes Bridge cave which promised to be a fun walk through nice passage. While it was sad to see all the graffiti on the walls, it was a fun through trip in big walking passage. After this we had one more stop before heading back to the house which didn't necessarily involve a cave trip but was high up on the list of places to see. Once pulling up to short creek, we got out of the car and walked around but didn't cross

the water nor go into the cave. This will have to be a future trip as we were tired but still interested in checking out the associated cave along with stabb cave across the way. Overall it was an action packed day with multiple cool sites to see but lots of driving.



Short Creek Cave – photo courtesy of Ryan Braga



Wells Cave – photo courtesy of Ryan Braga

### Signature Cave Survey trip

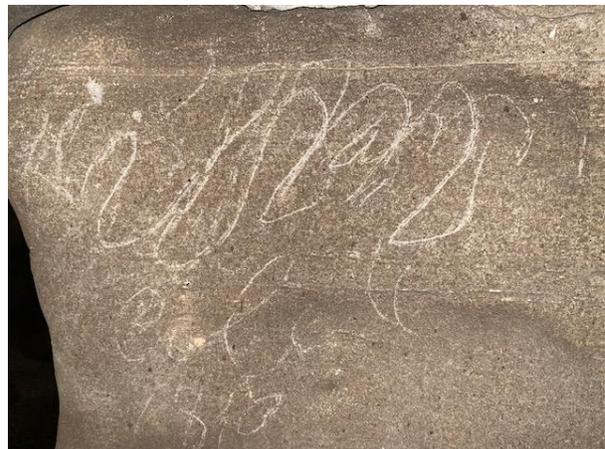
Mark Swelstad

On Saturday, February 1, Ryan Braga, Nick Wayne, and I spent about 2 hours surveying 75 additional feet of Signature Cave in Rockcastle County. In addition to the additional footage, we were able to get Nick trained on using a Suunto device instead of a digital device. While digital devices are preferable for speed and perhaps accuracy, they are expensive and not readily available. Having an understanding of how to use the analog tools will help keep the grotto surveying, even if a bit more slowly than preferred. In my opinion, the Central Ohio Grotto should consider investing in one or two digital surveying devices to facilitate our grotto's increasing interest in mapping caves.

All photos courtesy Mark Swelstad.

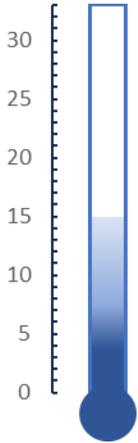


Nick Wayne looking at some popcorn



One of many historical signatures in the cave

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