



# Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

## January 2025



Cover photo by Mark Swelstad – small natural arch, Dublin OH

## 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:**

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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>January 23-26</b>	Winter Adventure Weekend	Carter Caves: See Suz Gagnon for more info
<b>January 23</b>	COG Regular Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church
<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>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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**As of now, there is no scheduled program for January.**

**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!



**Odds and Ends:**

**Dues**

Individual Dues \$20  
 Family Dues \$25

Dues may be paid during the Grotto monthly meeting, mail, or Venmo and should be paid by the end of March. **Note that you will not receive the gate code or GSP until you have paid.**

Starting this year we are excited to announce lifetime memberships, digital membership cards, and new payment methods to simplify paying yearly dues. Please do be patient as we work to make the new methods available and work through any issues.

For lifetime memberships, the Executive Committee is recommending a cost of \$500 for a member and \$625 for a family which is equivalent to paying dues for 25 years. This pricing structure aligns with the lifetime membership costs of the NSS and needs approved by the Grotto. Until approved lifetime memberships will not be accepted.

For payment methods, dues and donations will be accepted via cash, check, Zelle, Venmo, and PayPal. Currently we can accept cash, check, and PayPal with Zelle and Venmo hopefully setup prior to the January meeting. Due to transaction fees the preferred payment methods are cash, check, or Zelle (\$0.50 per transaction). PayPal and Venmo both have percentage based transaction fees.

Here are the current payment options:

- Cash/Checking
  - Mailing - Reach out to [treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com](mailto:treasurer@centralohiogrotto.com) for more information.
  - In person - Grotto meetings or to the treasurer.

PayPal

- [Membership](#) (includes transaction fees)



- [Donations](#)



When dues are received, a digital membership card will be sent including the new GSP gate code.

**Joe Gibson Memorial Award:**

Congratulations to Wendy Orlandi for winning the Joe Gibson Memorial Award! This is her 2<sup>nd</sup> time winning this prestigious honor, which is awarded by the COG Executive Committee each December to the Grotto Member who best exemplifies our values.

**Grotto History:**

50 years ago, in the January 1975 Squeaks, there was an article by Roger Sperka in which he suggested that cavers need to really be careful caving in flood-prone areas in the winter. This time of the year, there is the potential for rains AND snowmelt, and he wrote that cavers need to be informed of how these things work and be aware of current weather conditions.

Also, Lou Simpson had an editorial describing how the convention in 1974 (in Iowa) had really turned him off to many cavers who seem elitist. He talked about the need for

being open with landowners who may ask for info or pictures of their caves. He was in favor of sharing such info...after all, it IS their cave.

### From the Chair – Andy Schofield

Goodbye to 2024 and welcome to 2025!

2024 was a busy year for the Central Ohio Grotto (COG), we completed some important operational initiatives like becoming a 501c3 non profit and migrating our email and website to new systems. The new email system lets us better communicate information to members who aren't on Facebook which is traditionally how we have communicated electronically. 2024 started our digital transition and you can expect to see more digital options for the grotto in 2025.

We supported the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) with a cleanup in and around Misty Cave. This was a great chance to check out Misty Cave which was the first time for many on the trip and resulted in significant trash being cleaned up from the area. COG also supported RKC and the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve (GSP) at the annual GSP open house by leading many of the volunteer areas and staffing them along with volunteers from other grottoes.

COG continues to attend many caving events like Karst-o-Rama, Cave Capers, Speleofest, VAR, Texas Cavers Reunion, TAG Fall Cave In, Old Timers Reunion, and the National Speleological Society Annual Convention (sorry if I missed one!). If you ever find yourself interested in attending one of these, coming to a grotto meeting or making a post on the COG Facebook group is a great way to organize and find out more information about what these events are like. In addition to the large events you can find COG members regularly caving both in Kentucky and West Virginia.

This is just a small snapshot of what the Central Ohio Grotto was up to in 2024, you

can expect to see more of this in 2025. Hope to see you all underground soon!

Andy  
COG Chair

### Heroes of the 2024 Trashlympics: A Huge Thank You!

~ Jennie Hawkey

In honor of the 2024 Summer Olympics, COG Conservation hosted the “Trashlympics” which sought to promote cave conservation by cleaning up trash from caves and cave preserves. We had a successful year thanks to the many cavers and cave enthusiasts who dedicated time and effort on their cave trips to help remove trash. I was able to record that we removed approximately **32 bags of trash** throughout the year!

Thank you so much to everyone who participated! Your volunteerism and dedication to keeping caves clean and safe for all is inspiring. When we work together as a community, we can do remarkable things!

A special shoutout to Darryl Marsh who had 14 bags of trash out of those 32!



Photo Courtesy of Darryl Marsh

**The 12 Days of Christmas, Grotto-Style**

~ Ryan Braga

On the First day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
A Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Second day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Third day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Fourth day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Fifth day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Sixth day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Seventh day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Seven gloves for gripping,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,

Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Eighth day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Eight survey sheets for mapping,  
Seven gloves for gripping,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Ninth day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Nine cave boots walking,  
Eight survey sheets for mapping,  
Seven gloves for gripping,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Tenth day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Ten stalactites hanging,  
Nine cave boots walking,  
Eight survey sheets for mapping,  
Seven gloves for gripping,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Eleventh day of Christmas, my Grotto gave to me,  
Eleven cave crickets jumping,  
Ten stalactites hanging,  
Nine cave boots walking,  
Eight survey sheets for mapping,  
Seven gloves for gripping,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,

Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

On the Twelfth day of Christmas, my Grotto  
gave to me,  
Twelve bats a-flying,  
Eleven cave crickets jumping,  
Ten stalactites hanging,  
Nine cave boots walking,  
Eight survey sheets for mapping,  
Seven gloves for gripping,  
Six helmets shining,  
Five Petzl harnesses,  
Four carabiners,  
Three ropes for climbing,  
Two Disto X's,  
And a Swaygo for my caving spree!

### Havasupai Backpacking Trip: Part 2

~ Jennie Hawkey

#### **10/16 - Mooney Falls and Beaver Falls (6 mile hike)**

We woke up to a beautiful day at Havasupai. We headed further down into the canyon and reached all the danger and hazard signs and the blue, sticker-covered sign for Mooney Falls, which is named for an explorer whose rope failed and he fell to his death in the 1800s. We started the hike down where lots of interesting rock formations distracted us as we waited in a queue to go down the chains and ladders. There was a cave-like cutout in the rock where steps were chiseled out of the rock. Then we waited in an opening with one chain keeping us from the edge. There were red rock formations that looked like they were dripping down, just like you might see in a cave. Wendy read that much of the red rock was actually other rock, including limestone, that had been stained by the rock in the upper layers... possibly the Kaibab layer? After what seemed like forever, we finally got to the top of the ladders and chains. We selected some old stinky gloves from a pile and started down. I went first and was glad I wore boots for the sole purpose of climbing down this part. It was fun for me, but I imagine for non-

cavers/climbers or those with little upper body strength, that it might be terrifying. When we were down, we noticed Aaron was still way up on the ladders coaching a nervous woman down. He was literally taking her feet and placing them in the footholds because she couldn't see down. Once they were both down, her and her friends were extremely grateful to Aaron. Mooney Falls was absolutely gorgeous. It also seemed less affected by the flood somewhat probably because there wasn't a visible tree hanging off the top, but it was my favorite in terms of beauty. I changed into my Teva's (with wool socks) for the numerous river crossings we would need to do. Aaron came upon 2 prickly pear fruits (the only 2 we would encounter the whole trip) and started eating one. Unfortunately, he didn't peel it all the way first and got pricklers in his tongue and lips. Yikes! He seemed to recover quickly though. The first river crossing was a deep plunge but it was invigorating and a beautiful place. The sunlight streamed through the trees, making the aqua water glow in places. The hike in the canyon had some other notable features, including a rickety wooden board for a bridge, a blanket of some vine plant covering an entire area in one part, some interesting karst features, and a huge oddly placed palm tree. Other hikers told us there was a mini Beaver Falls first but to keep going to get to the main Beaver falls. We did, and had to climb down some rocks that were arguably sketchier than Mooney Falls, but not as tall. We had a great time swimming and climbing over the multiple cascades of waterfalls. I went up to the top and we had the whole pool of water to ourselves. After a bit of swimming, we took a break and ate lunch. The last prickly pear fruit was no where to be seen on our way back. When we arrived back at Mooney Falls, I did a quick swim before changing into dry socks and getting my boots back on. The climb back up the ladders was fun and went by very quickly. As we got back up to the top of the falls, we noticed a group of people literally standing on the edge of the cliff by the waterfall. We had another quiet dinner and we talked about what we wanted to do the next

day. Wendy had been reading about the Carbonate Canyon and an abandoned mine there where you could see crystals. It was a short hike past Havasu Falls, so it was the perfect thing for us to do the day before the hike out. Lastly, we did a water run to Fern Spring to fill up on water for the next day and went to bed.



Mooney Falls - photo by Jennie Hawkey



Beaver Falls - photo by Wendy Orlandi

## 10/17

We had a delightfully slow morning at camp. Ben and Maddy had departed during the night and Aaron promptly moved his and Wendy's tent over to their spot by the larger body of water with beautiful travertine aprons, cascading falls, and sporadic trees growing out of the water. After breakfast, we sat our camp chairs facing the water and it was so peaceful. We then prepared for the hike and made our way back up the canyon, through the campground, up to Havasu Falls. Here we could finally stop and truly look at it since the last time we passed it, we were all exhausted. The evidence of the summer flood was prevalent with lots of plant debris and downed trees. It did not really detract from the experience though. We lingered a short while while we figured out how to cross and find the trail to Carbonate Canyon. It was close to the falls on the left side. There was a hidden picnic table behind some trees and reed plants. We found the trail immediately and the mine was just a few minutes down the canyon on the south wall. There was a mound of gravel which we suppose was placed there during the mining operation to get easier access to the mine. Once we walked up to the chain, we got our headlamps on and we could see lots of places where crystals had been harvested. The ground glittered and I realized it was crystal shards covering the floor, mostly covered in dirt and dust. There were several random pits that I did not want to go to the edge to see how far it went down. There was also some dilapidated track from where mining carts had once been used. I could see through some random windows that there was a lower level, but I didn't want to venture too far in because it might be unstable. We made our way out and back down into the canyon to explore a little more. We kept looking for and finding beautiful red jasper rocks littered over the ground. It started to rain a little so Aaron and I decided to head back while Andy and Wendy kept going further up the canyon. Aaron and I decided to eat lunch at the hidden picnic table we passed earlier by Havasu Falls. Shortly after

we started to eat, Wendy and Andy showed up and ate their lunch with us. We discussed what to do for the rest of the day, and everyone wanted to go to Little Navajo Falls and see if they could find 50 Foot Falls. I wanted to keep the mileage for the day low to prepare for the hike out the next day, so I decided to stay back and enjoy Havasu Falls while the others went on their search. I stayed in the water until the last of the sunlight left the pool of water under the falls and it started getting cold. I found a tree stump to sit on and admire the falls as the hot dry air blowing through the trees warmed me up. When we met back at camp later, everyone showed me pictures of Little Navajo Falls, which if I remember correctly, only flows because the original Navajo Falls redirected its flow after a flood in recent years. They were not able to find 50 Foot Falls. That night, we discussed the weather and our planned leave time for the next morning. Rain, wind, and a drop in temperature persuaded us to decide to leave camp by 4 AM at the latest. We took apart what we could from camp, purified our water, ate dinner, and tried to offload our extra food and snacks amongst ourselves so we wouldn't have to carry it the next day. We all turned in early to get enough sleep. I closed my tent window in anticipation of possible rain and wind and listened to my audible book for a short while before going to sleep.



Carbonate Canyon - photo by Jennie Hawkey



Carbonate Canyon abandoned crystal mine - photo by Jennie Hawkey



Havasu Falls - photo by Jennie Hawkey

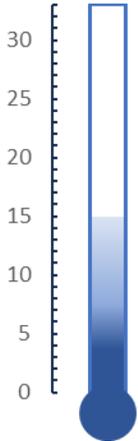
### **10/18 Backpack out to Hilltop and stay in Scottsdale**

I noticed some rain droplets patter on my tent at about 1:15 AM. It fizzled out, so I went back to bed. A short while later, probably around 2 AM, Aaron came to wake us up. He said he had a sliver of phone reception and had seen that the weather updated and it would rain a lot

earlier... in 30 minutes. We decided to haul ass to get out of there before it started to rain. We crammed everything away as it started to get windy. As we departed our camp, it started to rain. We stopped quickly at the bathroom at 2:30 AM and basically speed walked our way out of Havasu Canyon. The attendant at the mule stand called us over to inquire about our trip and invite us to come back with more friends. We stopped for a few seconds at the top of Havasu Falls to take some pics in the beautiful moonlight. With our headlamps lighting the path of sand and gravel, it's pretty much the only thing I looked at until we got to Supai Village. We sat for a few moments to adjust. Some stray dogs followed us for a bit and then disappeared. It was difficult to make out the trail in some areas because of the flood from this summer and it being dark, so we course-corrected several times and we even ran face-to-face with some horses that were out of their enclosure. After we passed the village, we hit the gravel we had been dreading over the last few days. The temperature dropped and the rain continued. Wendy led and kept up a fast pace which kept us warm. We rarely stopped longer than a minute until we got close to the bottom of the Hilltop slope. We ate, I purified my water bottle, etc., all under a rock shelter as the dawn started bringing us light. We encountered the first group hiking in at that point. I started getting pretty cold sitting there and we took off again. Eventually we got to the upward slope before the switchbacks and it started getting difficult. We did the switchbacks and I led for a bit and then Wendy did. My muscles started to get burnt out. When we finally got to the top, the sense of relief and pride that the thing was done was priceless. I immediately went to the car to get some heat. I was damp from the

waist up and it was 40°F!! No wonder we were so cold. I poured liquid IV powder into my water and gulped it down. It felt amazing to be back at the car, and I could not wait to get back to a hot meal and eventually, a hot shower and clean clothes. We drove and got to the checkpoint where the same man said farewell and to come back. As we drove, it started snowing and the temperature dropped to 35°F. We stopped in Seligman for gas, food at A&W, and most importantly, coffee. We drove through Prescott Valley and back to Route 17. It was surreal driving by things I used to live by and places I used to go. The amount of development was insane. We stopped at our Airbnb near Old Town Scottsdale and showered, changed, and relaxed. We went out to dinner in Old Town, looked at some local art, and then went to local bar covered in Christmas lights. One last night of fun until we would fly back to Columbus the following day and back to normal life.

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  
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4211 Caswell Rd  
Johnstown, OH 43031