



Central Ohio Grotto Squeaks

July 2025



Cover photo by Ryan Braga – Canyon passage in Courtesy 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.

July 3-6	Bear Heaven Vertical Wknd	CANCELED
July 18-20	Everything but the Squeal 2	GSP
July 23	COG Regular Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church
August 1-3	Conservation Weekend	GSP – Misty Cave Cleanup
August 27	COG Regular Meeting	Worthington Presbyterian Church

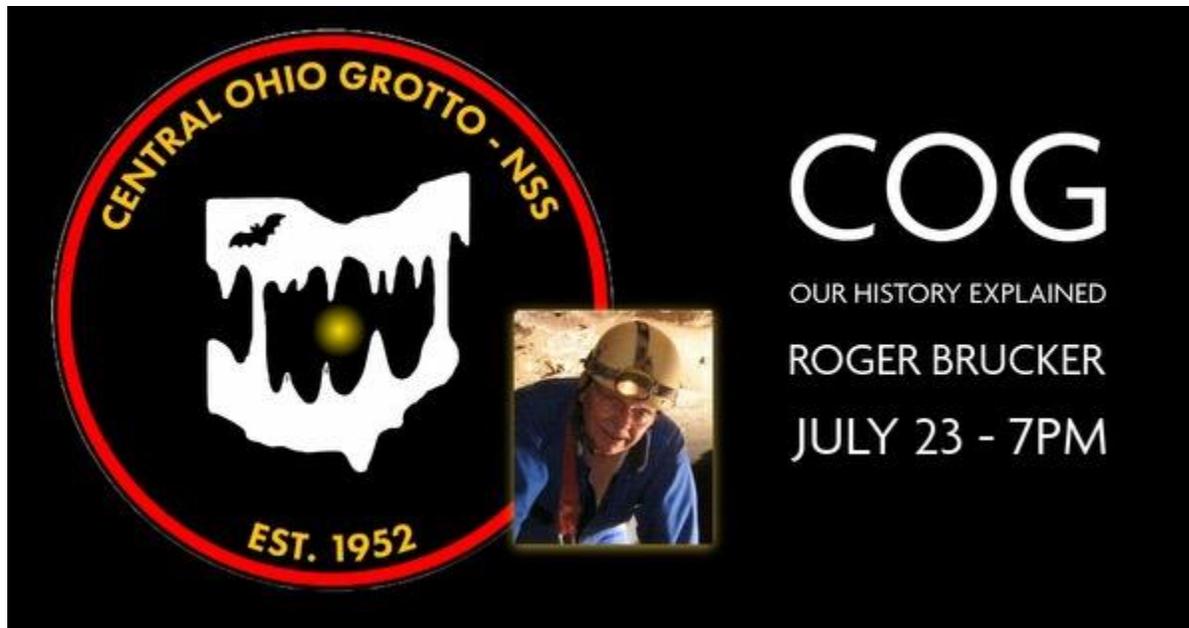
Contact Info for Questions regarding trips or meetings: exec@centralohiogrotto.com

+++++

Join us for our next monthly meeting in the Worthington Presbyterian Church Youth Room on WEDNESDAY, July 23 at 7 PM in person or online. To join virtually, find Google Meet on COG's Google Calendar or facebook. You do NOT have to be a member to attend, everyone is welcome. After the meeting, we'll head over to Villa Nova Ristorante for pizza and drinks. Please bring cash to cover your share.

COG Monthly Meeting
 Wednesday, July 23: 7:00 – 8:30pm
 Time zone: America/New_York
 Google Meet joining info
 Video call link: <https://meet.google.com/zfc-wktg-wzz>
 Or dial: (US) +1 662-674-1233 PIN: 431 213 899#
 More phone numbers: <https://tel.meet/zfc-wktg-wzz?pin=8923801100058>

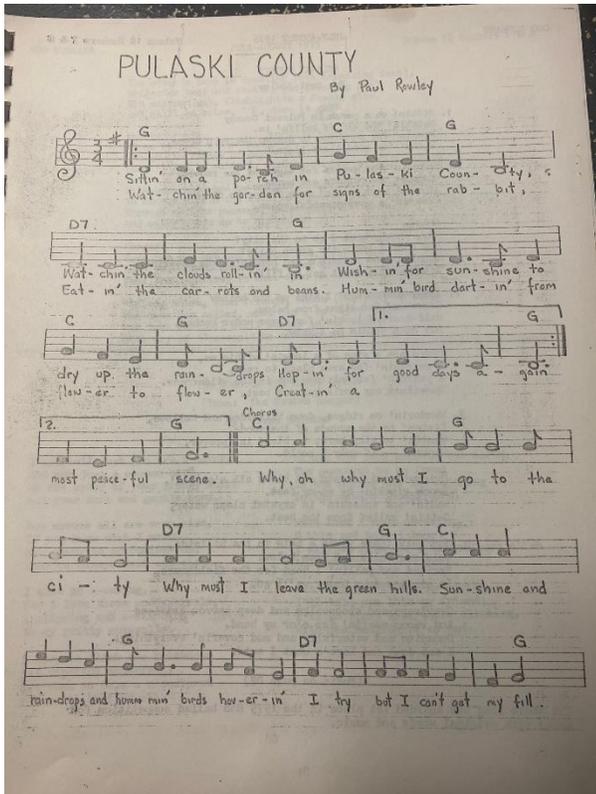
Our July speaker will be the legendary Roger Brucker IN PERSON! He will present COG: Our History Explained. While many cavers are familiar with the many achievements of Roger Brucker, perhaps not as many are aware that he has been closely associated with the early days of The Central Ohio Grotto along with Roger McClure and Phil Smith. Bring all of your questions and any copies of his books for signing during this very special evening.
 Bio: Roger W. Brucker first went to Mammoth Cave when he was only 8 years of age and thus began a lifelong love affair with that region of Kentucky. Along the way, Roger would establish relationships with such legends as Jim Dyer and Bill Austin. And, he would help to found the Cave Research Foundation—an organization that developed appropriate and repeatable approaches to working with the National Park Service. Among many other skills, Roger is a prolific author who has penned many books about caves and caving such as The Caves Beyond and The Longest Cave.



Odds and Ends:

Grotto History

The July 1975 issue of the Squeaks was partly dedicated to some cave ballads. Paul Rowley won 1st and 3rd places at the NSS Ballad competition. Here's a picture of one of the songs; this one won 1st prize!



Everything but the Squeal 2

The Central Ohio Grotto invites the Central Indiana Grotto and Pittsburgh Grotto and friends to a weekend of caving, music, and food at the Great Saltpetre Preserve.

We are working to finalize a schedule of events but planning cave trips for each day, live music, and local hiking (this has since been completed and is posted on Facebook).

Cost is \$15 per night that includes a Saturday night pig roast (thanks Pittsburgh Grotto!),

Saturday morning breakfast, Sunday morning breakfast, and camping fees. If you have a GSP camping pass then its only \$5 a night.

Payment can be made before using Zelle (preferred), Venmo, or PayPal noting that its for Everything but the Squeal 2 (links for each are at the bottom of <https://centralohiogrotto.com/membership.html#dues>). Cash will be accepted at the event.

COG Conservation Weekend @ GSP

Save the date for a weekend of conservation! On Saturday we will return to the RKC owned Misty Cave to check the preserve for remaining trash and debris and do some light cleanup if necessary. We will also take a trip through the cave which is an important hibernaculum for Indiana bats in the winter. On Sunday, we will explore GSP to identify and take inventory of pollinator plant species during their peak in the summer. More details to follow!



Central Ohio Caving Chronicles

June 2025 – Ryan Braga

This story starts out like many other cave stories. I got wind of a large cave — large by Ohio standards — and decided to head over and knock on the door.

When I pulled up, I was greeted by an older house with a "No Soliciting" and "Private Property" sign in the front yard, along with a camera doorbell. After trotting up and ringing the bell, I was greeted with a "hello" through the camera. While the connection wasn't great, I was able to pitch what I was looking to do, and the landowner gave me his number so we could have a proper conversation — the doorbell mic just wasn't cutting it.

After talking with Jerry on the phone for a bit, we set up a time to meet at the property and check things out. The following week, I brought Nick Wayne with me, and we met with Jerry to see several of the sinkholes on the property. (We know of five!) Jerry also shared some of the property's history.

After digging for a bit on one sink, we decided to turn our attention to the main cave we'd heard legends about and try to open it back up. After extensive digging from Nick and I, we left it in a much closer-to-open state than we found it.

The following week, I organized a small group of grotto members to return and help with the dig. Those who came included Nick Wayne, Grace Crosswell, Nate Iden, another name I'm blanking on, and myself, Ryan Braga. We also had two non-grotto members join after hearing about the project at a grotto meeting.

Grace focused on the sink that Nick and I had started digging previously, and she made a ton of progress — enough that there's now a small hole moving just a bit of air. The issue

with this hole is all the metal scraps that've been found inside, which makes digging difficult. Grace plans to keep working on it and see where it leads.

The rest of the group focused on the main goal: Courtesy Cave. We rigged an elaborate setup with two come-along winches and managed to lift out a massive boulder — we estimate it weighed between 200–250 lbs! After that and a lot more digging (and my superb supervising skills — Mark Swelstad would be proud), we got it open enough for me to slide in and finally enter darkness.

After squeezing for about ten feet, the passage bends and opens up into a canyon with a floor that drops into a pit roughly 20–25 feet deep. After cleaning up the entrance, everyone took a look at the pit, and we called it a day.

The next week, Nick, Andy Schofield, and I returned to rig and drop the pit. I went in first to determine bolt placement. The tight canyon made it difficult to find good spots, and the rock quality wasn't great. I brought out my new drill and started to work — the bit went in very easily. Was that because the drill and bit were that good, or because the rock was piss poor? (I'm guessing the latter.)

After placing the bolt, I needed a backup — you never rappel on just one bolt — and we decided that a sketchy natural anchor would have to do. (Trust me, that was the best option available.)

In the cramped canyon, I awkwardly put on my vertical gear while sitting down and got on rope. After rappelling only about 3 feet, I realized how tight it was — tight enough that there was no chance I'd be able to climb back out. After backing out, Andy gave it a try, but had the same result.

While all that was happening, Andy spotted a previously unnoticed sink about 15 feet to the northeast, actively taking water. I began digging on it and opened it up a bit, but it's full of bottles and scrap metal. Still — there's karst!

Overall, this has been a super fun project, and I'm very thankful to Jerry, the landowner, for letting us poke around on his property. We're currently discussing next steps for how we might get into the pit and explore further — along with surveying.

Stay tuned for the next update!



How Nick and I left it



First look at the clogged cave – Braga



Nick and I working on opening it up

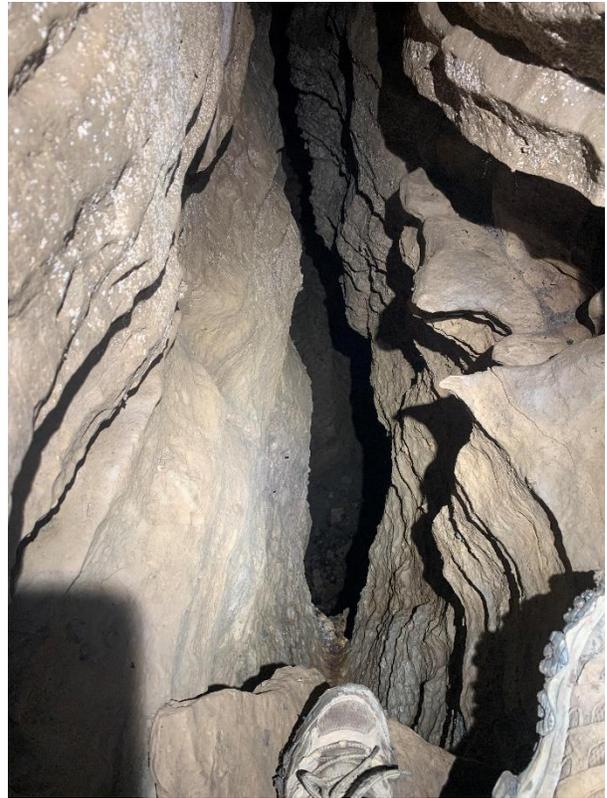
THE CENTRAL OHIO GROTTO (COG)



Grace and I digging on the back sink moving air



200lb + rock moved out



Canyon to pit

