

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 25 Issue 2

February 2018




A Monthly Newsletter of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE



February 2018
Volume 25 Issue 2

Visit us: www.cullmangrotto.org or 

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The Flowstone is published monthly by the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Items submitted for publication must be received by the 20th of each month for inclusion in the following month's issue.

The Cullman Grotto will exchange by request with any publishing grotto. Republication of items within *The Flowstone* is allowed provided credit is given to author and source.

Membership to the Cullman Grotto is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year for individual or twenty dollars (\$20) per year for family. Dues are payable at the first grotto meeting of each year (January) and includes subscription to *The Flowstone*. Subscription rate for non-members is fifteen dollars (\$15) per year.

The Cullman Grotto meets on the first Monday of each month unless the first Monday falls on a holiday or otherwise noted. In those cases the meeting will be held on the second Monday. Meetings begin at 7:30 p.m. and are held at the old L&N train depot, Arnold St., Cullman, AL. All visitors and prospective members are welcome.

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Front Cover: Collage of pictures from December Tumbling Rock Trip

Photo by: Photos provided by Kuenn Drake



Huntsville Cave Rescue Unit Hauls & Lowers for the Wilderness Environment

May 5-6, 2018

Prerequisites for this class:

(one of the following) HCRU Single Rope Technique OR Alabama Fire College Rope I

Designed to familiarize students in the building and operation of haul and lower systems in wilderness environments. Class and hands-on field instruction will emphasize: choosing natural anchors, rigging and system operation, problem solving, and addressing system problems.

This class can be taught in your area with prior coordination. Group discounts available for Rescue Squads/Fire Departments.

Next Course Date:

May 5-6, 2018 Limited to 30 participants

Equipment Requirements

Participants must provide the following personal gear:

- *Sturdy lugged-sole lace-up boots (no sneakers or sandals)
- *Gloves (with leather palms & full-fingers)
- *Day Pack or similar for personal gear
- *Appropriate clothing (no turnout gear)
- *Kneepads - soft capped are more stable on rock (hard shell tends to slide a lot)
- *Small Personal First Aid kit recommended - we will be outside!
- *Bring cash for lunch on Saturday (not all places nearby accept plastic!)
- *Bring water, snacks & a lunch on Sunday

The following is strongly recommended, to allow the student

the maximum participation (The HCRU can provide these items, however, this class assumes proficiency with climbing and ascending systems. All personal climbing systems must maintain two life safety points of contact at all times - for example, ropewalkers must utilize a knee tether and an upper ascender.)

- *UIAA-Approved helmet, with chinstrap (no fire helmets)
- *Three sources of light, with main source being mounted on helmet
- *Full Seat Harness, Ascending System (Frog, Texas, Ropewalker, or Mitchell), and Descender (Rappel Rack preferred)
- *Three extra locking carabiners
- *Twenty feet of 1" tubular webbing

Age Requirement:

All participants must be 18 years old or have a signed Liability Release Form

Class begins at 0800 on Saturday at Brindlee Mountain Fire Station 1 - 4373 U.S. 231, Union Grove, AL? - (256) 498-3109. This is a NEW station so it may not be in your GPS devices, so please use: 34.47079, -86.56802



SERA Winter Business Meeting

March 3, 2018

As a reminder the 2018 SERA Winter Business Meeting will be held March 3, 2018 in the Dalton Moss Lodge Building at Palisades Park in Oneonta, Alabama. Registration begins at 9am & the meeting begins at 10:30am *All times are CST

The SERA Winter Business Meeting is the annual meeting of SERA. It is hosted by a grotto or cave survey on a rotating basis. Typically, the morning session is a chance for all attending organizations to talk about what they have done over the past year. The official business meeting is in the afternoon in which reports are given, important issues are discussed, motions are made, grants are awarded, and the SERA Officers of the Governing Committee are elected. Each organization gets one vote.

During the meeting, there is the SERA Map Salon and the SERA Photo Salon. After the meeting, the awards committees meet to determine this years SERA Awards. During this time, other committees and groups can meet.

In the evening, there is a banquet with a speaker or presentation. The winners of the SERA Awards and the salons are announced.



67th Annual SERA Summer Cave Carnival

May 3-6, 2018

The 67th annual Sera Summer Cave Carnival is proudly being hosted by the Birmingham Grotto in 2018! It is being held at a beautiful facility located on the always stunning lake Guntersville May 3-6,2018. Camp Maranatha has graciously agreed to let us use their camp and conference center for what should be a very memorable SERA.

Sera will be held in the very cave rich area of Scottsboro, Alabama with a list of surrounding caves to long to list. Scottsboro is surrounded by thousands of caves with some being only a short canoe ride away. That's right, gear up and get in your canoe. We plan to lead many cave trips with the help of many of our friends here in TAG.

The Birmingham Grotto is planning live music for both Friday and Saturday.

This camp has a lot offer as far as entertainment and we will have access to many of their amenities such as the pool, The Sky Swing, the pier and many more. The Central Alabama Grotto will be running the Hungry Caver Cafe and more than 12 vendors have signed up to be there.

We will have a Banquet Saturday night offering a 10 oz. baseball cut Angus sirloin with caramelized onions, smashed potatoes, southern style green beans, and a choice of key lime or chocolate pie. We will also have for our Vegan and Gluten free friends a Red Quinoa and wild rice stuffed tomato with grilled spring vegetables.

Come share with us what it shaping up to be a very memorable SERA Summer Cave Carnival on the lake in Scottsboro, Alabama!

Largest Flooded Cave System in the World Discovered at Tulum

By Raul Alzaga, Freelance Journalist
January 16, 2018

Tulum, Q.R. — An exploration group has connected two of the largest flooded cave systems in the world in Tulum.

The exploration group Gran Acuífero Maya (GAM) have connected two of the largest flooded cave systems in the world, Sac Actun and Dos Ojos in Tulum.

The caves of Sac Actun and Dos Ojos have a tunnel that connects them, a discovery that makes up the largest flooded cave in the world. According to the world rules of speleology, the largest cave absorbs the small, so Dos Ojos becomes part of Sac Actun.

GAM released a statement detailing the extent of the 347-kilometer flooded cave, which displaces the largest on the planet to another underground point in Tulum, in this case Ox Bel Ha of 270 kilometers.

GAM exploration group also recorded a system with a length of 18 km so far called “The mother of all the cenotes” north of Sac Actun whose maximum depth is 20 meters.

The importance of the finding is that it gives rise to, and supports, a great biodiversity and represents a large reserve of fresh water, which has given life to this region of the Yucatan Peninsula.

GAM is a project directed by Guillermo de Anda, underwater archaeologist and explorer of National Geographic.

The project is an initiative developed with the support of Aspen Institute

Mexico, the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH), the Technological University of the Riviera Maya (UTRM), National Geographic and the Development Bank of Latin America (CAF).



TAG Calendar

February 5

Grotto Meeting

L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30PM

February 10

Grotto Trip

TBA

March 3

SERA Winter Business Meeting

Palisades Park, Oneonta, AL

Registration Opens at 9AM

April 28

Tennessee Cave Survey Spring

Presentation Meeting

Sewanee, TN

May 3-6

67th Annual SERA Summer Cave Carnival

Scottsboro, AL

Hosted by the Birmingham Grotto

May 10-19

NCRC National Training Seminar

Camp Skyline - Mentone, AL

July 28 - August 4

2018 NSS Convention

Helena, MT

College Student Spent 60 Hours in Cave Before Rescue, Licked Walls for Water

Fox News

A 19-year-old Indiana college student contemplated foraging for crickets and licked damp walls for water after getting locked inside a gated cave for nearly 60 hours.

Indiana University freshman Lukas Cavar didn't end up eating the small insects but did use two energy bar wrappers to collect moisture and empty water bottles to collect rainfall and puddled cave water.

The Bloomington man, whose parents are Indiana University linguistics professors, was on a spelunking trip to Sullivan Cave when he became separated Sunday afternoon from 12 other members of the university's Caving club.

He said when he reached the cave's entrance, he found that club members had padlocked the gate, unaware he was still inside. With no cellphone signal, Cavar could only scream for help in hopes of motorists at a nearby road might hear him.

Cavar tried to pick the lock with a paper clip. When that didn't work, he had to figure out how he was going to survive with barely any supplies.

"It took me a little while to wrangle my emotions and sort of approach things analytically, sensibly, to come up with a game plan to survive," Cavar said Thursday, two days after he was rescued.

His parents filed a missing person report with university police when he didn't arrive back to campus with the club. A high school friend later informed the Caving Club's president Cavar was missing.

Two club leaders immediately returned to the cave late Tuesday after finding a pile of clothing in a vehicle club members used to travel to the cave two days earlier. They found Cavar uninjured and asleep behind the locked gate.

"I'm really glad to be alive. It feels like I've been given a second chance," said Cavar, who returned to classes Thursday and has no plans for another spelunking trip.

A message posted by the Caving Club's president on a website for Indiana University student organizations says the club's "rigorous protocols" for accounting for members during cave excursions had failed.

"We had a failure in our leadership to closely follow all these safety procedures," the message states, according to Indiana Daily Student. "The risk that our member was exposed to as a result of these failures is a vivid reminder of why we have protocols."

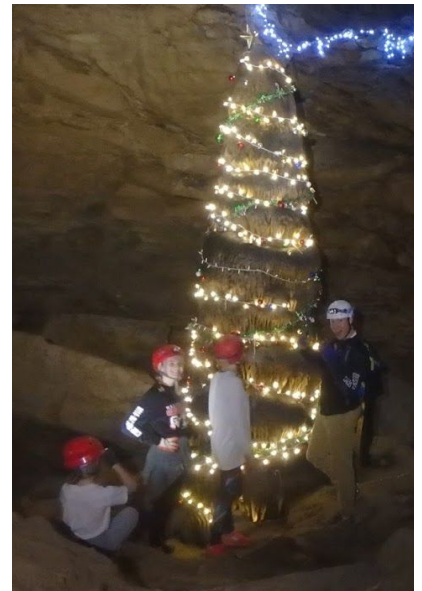
In a Facebook post on Tuesday, Cavar assured his friends and family he was safe.

"Just wanted to let everyone know that I'm safe and sound!" he wrote. "Just got rescued about 30 minutes ago. Boy, it's good to be back on the surface!"



Party of 20 - Your Cave Is Ready

by Kuenn Drake NSS 36723



The round trip to the Christmas Tree formation of Tumbling Rock Cave in December is a holiday tradition... if not, it should be. Based on the distance to get there and the amount of trimmings, it is quite apparent that a lot of effort goes into decorating and lighting the whole shebang – a TAG caver's virtual attempt at neopaganism! But I like it.

At first gaze upon this electrified calcium carbonate spectacle (if your mind works like mine) it congers up memorable quotes by the father (Darren McGavin) in the holiday classic of Ralphie Parker's troubled journey for a Red Ryder BB Gun in "A Christmas Story". It is:

"Indescribably beautiful!"

"A Major Award!"

"FRAGILE (FRA-GEE_LAY)"

"The soft glow of electric sex gleaming in the window."

“It reminds me of the Fourth of July!”

And “You should see what it looks like from (in) here!”

Enough of the hyperbole, on to the report.

The trip’s participants would include 4 members of the Cullman Grotto (Harold, Micah, Micah’s daughter Ally [who finally wrangled her dad into taking her caving] and me), and several members of the Sandstrom family; including Dad (Leif), five children (Sophia, Samuel, Noah, Ben and Emma), two sisters (Malia, Nanette), brother-in-law (Thel), and several nieces and a nephew (Kaylin, Whitney, Samantha, Mary, Anna, Constance and Oliver). Oliver traveling all the way from Finland for this subterranean event! Age range 11 to however old Harold is these days (the cowboy patriarch).

We managed to scrounge up helmets and lights for the entire company. Amazing what resources cavers have in buried in their closets.

We had discussed putting a trip together about a month or so earlier. It started out innocent enough, but just kept growing in numbers as time got closer... and it was all good.

The holiday season brings family and friends together, what better way to burn up those extra calories than a spirited cave outing.

For a large group, this group moved more like a party of 8; staying together, helping the person in front/behind... a real team effort.

The normal stops were made along the way, Saltpeter works, Elephant’s feet, Wildcat breakdown, Hidden window, Totem Pole gallery, King’s shower, Topless Dome, and all places in between.

The King’s shower was flowing enough to bring out a few screams and squeals! And a little damming buffoonery, of course.

Tumbling Rock’s management team does a commendable job with the decorations, tinsel and lighting for the Christmas tree formation. The battery power pack and timer are pretty cool as well. , for a minute I wasn’t sure that getting it operational was going to be a snap. Took a few minutes, but then... *“A few sparks, a quick whiff of ozone and the lamp, (um tree), blazed forth in unparalleled glory!”*

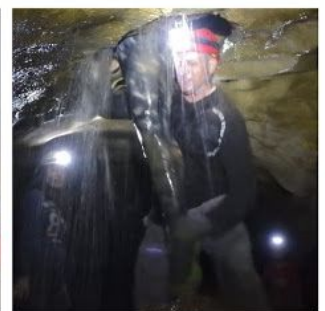
Many pictures were taken, discussion of the challenge that adventuring deeper into the cave presents from

this point. We had not planned to go back to the Pillar of Fire on this trip, so we left it for another day. The group seemed to have had their outing’s fill of class III scrambling and crawling.

Time to head out!

No mishaps, no injuries, just good ole fashion caving in a TAG classic....that’s what I call a Yuletide Festival!

Many thanks to Jay, Nathan and company for providing the attraction that augments this underground wonderland!



Minutes of the Meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society

A weak excuse offered by the secretary, "the minutes are missing and presumably (much like the youngins homework) eaten by the dog."

Had they not been misplaced they would go something like this:

The January monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto was called to order. Two hundred and thirteen were present. (Now counting teeth.)

The minutes were read, *because they were not lost*, and seconded.

The trip report was given. Chairman Calvert complained about the lack of caving and said the monthly beatings will continue until they increase.

The editor complained about the lack of trip reports, citing a direct correlation to the number of caving trips.

The Safety officer is AWOL...go figure, it's what that office does to a caver.

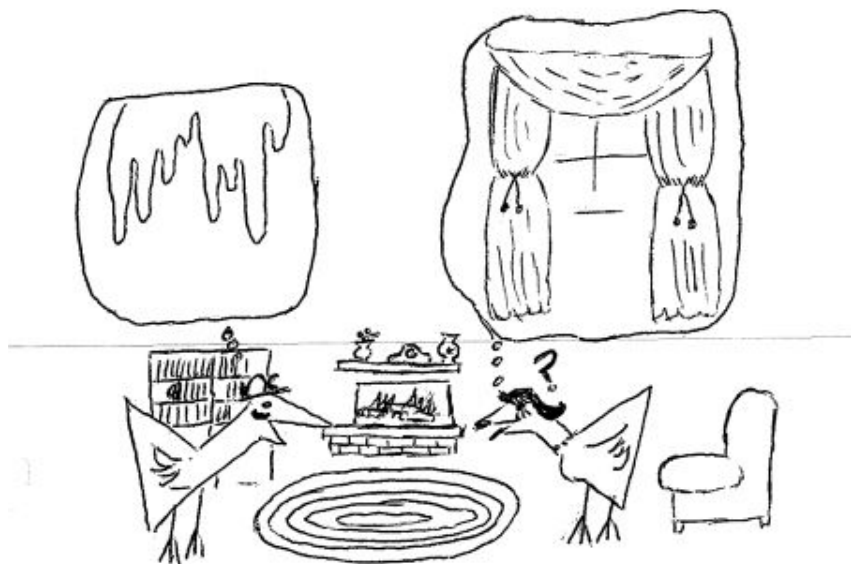
The Trip Advisor was absent because he still thinks the meetings are on Tuesday, which ironically due to Bama's #17 National Championship Win the night before, it was on Tuesday. But still absent.

Dues are due in January, time to pay up.

Meeting was adjourned at 9:04:13.

FROM THE ARCHIVES
Jan 1998

BIRDS OF A FEATHER



"BABY, THE DRAPERIES IN THAT CAVE WERE AWESOME!"

