

The FLOWSTONE

Vol 25 Issue 10

November 2018



Bridge Day 2018

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


CULLMAN GROTTO FLOWSTONE

November 2018
Volume 25 Issue 10



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Visit us: www.cullmangrotto.org or 

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: Harold Calvert, on rope at Bridge Day 2018

Photo by: Jessica Massena Fetters



NSS Bat Ball 2018

By Fennigan Spencer (Birmingham, Alabama)



NSS New Year's Eve Party, Member Appreciation Dinner and Fundraiser benefiting the NSS at NSS HQ 6001 Pulaski Pike Huntsville AL 35810

Saturday December 29th, 2018 to noon Wednesday January 2nd, 2019. Grounds and building open for camping from 8:00 AM on Saturday December 29th, 2018 to noon Wednesday January 2nd, 2019. Indoor camping available in case of cold temperatures.

Led wild cave trips vertical, horizontal all weekend, on and off the property. SRT Classes in the rescue shed. Cave art class with Carolina. Vendor and adventure group booths in the ballroom. It's a New Year's Eve event for NSS members and their guests

6 – 8 pm catered New Year's Eve dinner

8 pm – 1 am New Year's Party with DJ, dancing and champagne at midnight

Souvenir cup and T-shirt. Craft libations made by cavers. Toilet facilities available. New and improved caver style showers. Fantastic breakfast, lunch and dinners available in minutes' drive. Saturday and Sunday night entertainment music and movies.

\$40 for adults \$20.00 for children 10 and under.

Online registration only. Registration Deadline December 15th 2018 .

<https://members.caves.org/event/BatBall2018>



TN Bat Working Group Meeting 11/14 in Oak Ridge

By Cory Holliday (Gainesboro, Tennessee)



The Tennessee Bat Working Group meeting has been announced for November 14th at the University of Tennessee Arboretum in Oak Ridge, TN. Attendance is free to students and public citizens who are not professional biologists, resource managers, etc. Last year was the first year for a registration/attendance fee, and I know there was some confusion, but cavers get in free.

There has been no agenda announced, and there may not be prior to the meeting. Typically there are several student and professional presentations focused on bat related research and management projects that have occurred in the state over the last calendar year. As you might imagine, many of these include interesting information on bat caves and bat activity and behavior associated with Tennessee caves.

This meeting is always a good opportunity to see what is happening around bat research in Tennessee, and to interact with professional biologists, researchers, and the next generation that is in college now.



Register for the event here:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdtLJ0cVCU2i0vrfx86icP7zjmlRfwJwr0I7oK4p3O7SUuTg/viewform>

NSS Meet & Greet and Fall BoG Meeting

By Julie Schenck Brown



On Friday, November 9th, the Huntsville Grotto is hosting an informal meet and greet with the NSS BOG at the NSS Headquarters and welcomes all cavers to attend. As part of the festivities, the NSS OVP, Mark Skove will be providing the main course and Huntsville Grotto members will bring side dishes to share. The grotto will also be grilling the meat on the back deck of the NSS HQ (park in the back of the building). And during the day, Geary Schindel Schindel, NSS President, will be giving tours of the NSS HQ and discussing plans to renovate the "back five" as the building is transformed into a world-class educational facility. Tours begin at 2:00 PM Central and the dinner will be served at 6:30 PM Central. To help us plan, please reply to Mark Ostrander or Julie Schenck-Brown via message or email (listed in the NSS Member's Manual).

On Saturday, November 10th, the NSS BOG meeting will be held at

the NSS HQ at 9:00 AM and all cavers are welcome to attend. After the NSS BOG meeting, please join us at Straight to Ale that evening for another informal gathering as we welcome cavers to socialize with the BOG in a private setting. Straight to Ale is located at Campus 805 (2610 Clinton Avenue Huntsville, AL) and this gathering will begin at 6:30 PM. There will be a full menu available, as well as some of Alabama’s finest craft beers.

We look forward to seeing you in Huntsville this weekend!



Alabama Caves Will Become Less Spooky for Endangered Bats

By Dennis Washington
October 31, 2018



Birmingham’s Ruffner Mountain Nature Preserve could become ground zero in an effort to save the nation’s bat populations threatened by white-nose syndrome.

Tuesday, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) announced more than \$1.1 million in grants to combat the disease. Bat Conservation International at Ruffner is one of the grantees working to defeat the fungus behind the disease found in caves where bats hibernate.

The project dubbed “Bats to the Future Fund” is a partnership of the

NFWF, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, U.S. Forest Service, Southern Company and Avangrid Foundation.

Bat Conservation International is working with ultraviolet light and polyethylene glycol, two non toxic agents, to fight the disease-causing fungus.



Important Moments in Spelean History

By Allen Padgett

On November 1, 1968 a group of young cavers gathered to descend a virgin pit. Richard Schreiber and Della McGuffin were the first two people to descend. Fantastic Pit in Ellison's Cave Georgia became the deepest free fall pit in the US. It has since eclipsed by pits in Alaska and Hawaii however it is still the deepest in the continental US at 586 ft. deep and free. These college age explorers are now fifty years older so few are still active cavers. Many are no longer with us. Imagine the rappel rack was a new invention, everyone climbed with three prusik knot systems, carbide lamps mounted on construction hats were standard. Blue jeans and denim jackets were common cave attire, if it was wet a wool sweater was added. Everyone's NSS number was four digits. Ropewalker systems did not exist, poly clothing did not exist, cave suits were unheard of. Some have called this the golden age of caving in TAG. The cave was discovered by cavers by simply asking a farmer in his field did he know of any caves nearby. Everything below the Warm Up Pit was virgin. The cave was mapped as it was explored and it was an amazing time indeed. So much

virgin cave to see.

Since that day fifty years ago many people have explored this amazing cave.

Visitation has remained steady over all these years at about 300 to 350 people per year. They come from all over the US and the world.

Three people have died there, several have been injured and required rescue.

It will happen again. The lure of the big deep cave calls out to many who lack the skills to survive if anything goes wrong. For many of these folks everything goes right and they unknowingly escape death or injury. Some are not so lucky.

TAG Calendar

November 5
Grotto Meeting
L&N Train Depot, Arnold St 7:30PM

November 10
Grotto Trip
TBA

November 10
NSS Fall Board of Governors Meeting
NSS Headquarters, Huntsville, AL
9AM

November 23
Black Friday Caving Trip
TBA



Bridge Day 2018

By Kuenn Drake

It had been a while - 2012 to be exact - since my last BD....maybe too long. The stars were in alignment and things just worked out for me. Thinking it was too late to register I went to the website (officialbridgeday.com) and saw where Bengy has a late registration in September. So I checked with Harold to see if there was room on a VBATS team and he said "come on".

I have not exactly been burning up the nylon highway this year, more of the asphalt highway, so I wanted to get in shape for the bridge. About six weeks prior to leaving I started climbing rope in the barn in the morning - 3 or 4 times a week. That enjoyment process hasn't changed much. First couple of times ascending 300 feet kinda kicks your tail, but if you persist you start noticing it getting easier.

I wanted to do at least one climb at the bridge, that was my motivation.

By two weeks out I was doing 600 feet in the mornings. Relearning that training pays off - because it did/does.

The traditional wake up at 3 AM on Friday and drive up to Fayetteville West Virginia is a thing of the past. The crew from Alabama leaves on Thursday now, drives about halfway and gets a hotel room making the Friday drive much more relaxing, with plenty of time to get settled in, then set up camp and get registered.

I wasn't able to leave with the main body but joined them in Kingsport Tennessee about 11:30 p.m. on Thursday. Everybody was still up, most everybody, and we were able to get some sleep - eventually. Friday was a nice day, good weather, safety meeting, seeing some old friends, making new ones. Very nice. We found a new place to eat - The Pies and Pints - in downtown Fayetteville. Nice place and great food. Even got to see a parade!

The morning of bridge day dawns early. Got invited to be on the rigging team, so it's even an earlier

start. Don't mind that because you get first shot at the ropes!

The weather was all right. Little misty in the morning, but the rain had finished overnight. Even saw the sun later in the afternoon. After rappelling down Chuck and I decided to go up to the climbing ropes. No waiting!

It was a very pleasant climb. The weather/temp couldn't have been more . We topped out just under 40 minutes. Great time - lot of sightseeing - took some video. I asked Chuck if he wanted to do it again later in the day his reply, "check with me later I'll let you know". I really had another one in me...thanks to training.

Well it didn't work out, but I was able to get in a few more rappels. And I participated in a first - rappelled the bridge two times without ever having to get on the bus. That was sweet!

Found some great Korean chicken at vendor row, did a little more sightseeing on the bridge and then it's time for the de-rig. The day goes by fast.

The traditional evening meal was in a non-traditional place, but it turned out to be a good choice. Plenty of good buffet Chinese/Japanese food a short drive towards Beckley.

This Bridge Day was a huge success, I really enjoyed it. I decided on the drive back that 6 year interim is too long between the BD experience. Not sure I can get back to every year cycle, but I'll definitely be going back soon.



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

October 1, 2018

The regular monthly meeting of the Cullman Grotto of the National Speleological Society was called to order on Monday, October 1, 2018, at 7:40 p.m. by Harold Calvert, Chairman. 6 were present.

The minutes from the September meeting were read. Motion was made by Tracy Calvert to accept the minutes as read and seconded by Harold Calvert. The motion was approved.

The treasurer's report was given.

The editor needs submissions for the Flowstone. Send stuff yesterday!!!!

Announcements:

TAG will be held from October 4th through October 7th.

Bridge Day is October 20, 2018.

Old Business:

There is nothing new on the door project at Rickwood Caverns.

Celebrate the 25th anniversary of the Cullman Grotto in 2019.

New Business:

Christmas party will be held in December. Details to be decided at a later date.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10 p.m

