

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO

NEWSLETTER

October 2011



VOLUME 41

NUMBER 10

BGN Calendar

OCT ??	Grotto group trip to area haunted houses. To be determined at meeting. See Scott Fee/Dave McRae for details.
NOV 8	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM. Location TBD. Contact Dave McRae for details.
DEC 13	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM. Location TBD. Contact Dave McRae for details.

Halloween Bats Dave Howell

Bats have long been associated with Halloween but the connection is by far less ominous than some would suspect.

A common practice among our ancestors at the time of summer's end (Samhain, Oct. 31) was to build tremendously brilliant bonfires. These fires would blaze through the night for many reasons: Warding off evil spirits, soften the chill in the air, prepare harvest feasts, mark the occasion with a powerful solar symbol, etc. Attracted to the warmth and bright light of these fires were many small flying insects - natural food for hungry bats. People saw the bats flickering in and out of the firelight during these festivals and they became a feature of Halloween lore. By association, bats are viewed to be connected with this holiday's theme of magic and a time of passing from one phase of life to another (both in the timeline of human life and seasonal cycles).

The link between the bat and Halloween became strengthened with the discovery of the Vampire Bat in the 17th century. Tales of bats that drank blood had circulated throughout Europe for centuries before, but it wasn't till the Spanish exploration of Central and South America that there was physical proof. It was a natural association for a dark holiday, a creature that laps the life blood of its prey in the dark of night.

The *Birmingham Grotto Newsletter* is published twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto, Inc. of the National Speleological Society, Inc. Other NSS Internal Organizations may reprint material provided credit is given to this publication and the author.

Annual dues are \$15.00 per individual and \$20.00 per family which is payable on October 1st. Dues are prorated for anyone joining during the year. The subscription rate is \$15.00 per year. The Birmingham Grotto will exchange publications with other NSS Grottos. Exchange newsletters should be sent to:

Birmingham Grotto
PO Box 55102
Birmingham, AL 35255

Articles, Trip Reports, Graphics, Poetry, and any other speleo-related material should be sent to the Editor via email at the address noted below. Naturally, the Editor will accept typed text in practically any form; however, electronic submission reduces the risk of typographical errors. Submissions via e-mail should be directed to: editor@bhamgrotto.org. The deadline for publication is the 20th of the month; however, the Newsletter is limited to 12 pages and often fills up quickly.

On the cover...

Images from Graves Cave.
(Dave McRae)



Disclaimer

Caving trips posted are led by volunteers. No grotto committee reviews any trip leaders' qualifications. New cavers should inquire about the nature of the trip and the experience of the leader in advance. Those participating in the trips should be aware of their limits. On vertical trips all participants are expected to supply their own gear and be knowledgeable about rigging and safe practices.

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Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes September 13, 2011

The meeting was called to order by President Dave McRae at 7:00pm.

Visitors

Teresa Barnett, Jack Dewberry, Molly Cashion, Daniel Lewis-Rzeszutek were recognized.

Treasurer's Report

Beginning Balance	\$3422.42
Expenses Wild & Scenic Film Festival	100.00
Ending Balance	\$3322.42

Money still owed from 2010 Gunter'sville Auction \$271.25

Announcements

SERA location has been decided. It will be at Paint Rock Valley Lodge in Estillfork, AL on May 3-6.

Program

Slides of the SERA site

Additional Announcements

SERA Planning Meeting will be at 2209 1st Av. N on Tuesday, 9/20 at 7:00. All interested members were encouraged to attend.

TAG will be on 10/6 thru 10/9. Work weekend is this weekend.

Deadline for SERA T-shirt design is the October meeting.

Old Business

There was a long discussion of various ideas of how to make this year's SERA memorable.

Judy Ranelli announced a 3.0 earthquake had been felt in Center Point tonight.

Newsletter - It was mentioned that this was the second month without a newsletter at the meeting place. Jeff said Toby would relinquish his duties as editor if someone else would take it up. Edna said that Dave and Valerie Howell had mentioned that they would be willing to take over the duties. Kim Waits also mentioned some interest in the job. Since the Howells were on a road trip, the discussion was tabled until their return.

Correction from Scott Fee by email: 'For the record, the August newsletter and the September newsletter had been printed and was awaiting pickup at the Staples on 280 which I planned to do upon leaving work that night. Unfortunately, a last minute "must do" project developed so I did not get the newsletters until 8:10 p.m. on grotto night. If I was not stressed out that afternoon I probably would have thought to contact someone to go get them. Bottom Line: the September newsletter was ready and printed on time for the meeting; however, I was unable to get them to the meeting and spaced it during the afternoon so I did not arrange for alternative courier. I think it should be noted that the newsletter editor was not "the issue" with regards to the September BGN not being at the meeting.'

New Business

Someone asked if we were having our usual Halloween Party this year. Since Halloween is on a Monday, the party would probably fall on October 29th. Dave McRae said he would not be there, but that Scott Fee, who was not at the meeting tonight for the first time in recorded history, would need to be consulted on this. Further info should be available on the egroup and/or at TAG.

Trip Reports

A lot of members went caving this month!

Magz Sims was promised a caving trip if she survived Burning Man. She did & went to Weaver Cave. This was her first caving trip since December.

Chris Garrison, Howdy, Damon Motes, Hazard, Vicky Parker and her friend Jordan, and Alan Cook went to Natural Well, O'Shaughnessy Pit, Sheldons, Gourdneck, and Dug Hill Pit.

Dale Douglas and Bruce White also went to Dug Hill as well as Hoopers Well

Howdy, Hazard and Damon went to Natural Well and were involved in a rescue of two people there.

David Caudle, Jerry Saulsberry and Lin Guy went to Gary Smith Cave today continuing their mapping project. The cave is not at an end yet.

Randy Donaldson, Daniel Wood, and Sonya Erickson made a 14-hour trip to Ellisons.

Alan Cook, Sam and Dave McRae, Damon Motes, and Randy Donaldson reported on a trip to Water Well.

August's Grotto trip was to Gourdneck. Those going in the cave were Dave & Sam McRae, Gary Barnes, Hazard, Andy Zerbe, Chris Garrison and girlfriend Lindsey, Matt Spearman, Alan Cook, Kathy King, and Randy Donaldson. Milo Washington, Jonathan & Sherry Gladden, and David (Bo' Weevil) Rowe camped out but didn't go into the cave.

At Pupfest Hazard went to Neversink and South Pittsburg Pit. He reported that he was the last person to rig to the dead tree. When he came out, the property manager was there to cut it down & pointed out to him that it was dead. Seems Hazard hadn't looked up at the top of the tree when rigging.

Gary Barnes went to Graves with Demi and Bob Stano, friends from Boise, Idaho. Andy was along on the trip but couldn't get through the squeeze at the entrance. Gary told Dave McRae that he was most impressed with the gate there.

September Grotto trip will be to Gross Skelton in a couple of weeks. The exact date/time will be posted on the egroup.

Respectfully submitted by Edna Caudle, sitting in for The Howells.

News & Notes Dave Howell

*** October is here with its rich golds and fire hues of autumn, and its balmy temperatures - particularly welcome after this summer's heat - as well as the beginning of the 2011-12 RIDGEWALKING SEASON. As this coincides with HUNTING SEASON, here is a list of days when we are at maximum risk of getting shot in the Coon/Skyline WMA:

Archery: October 15 - January 31

Guns: November 12, 14-16, 19, 25-26, December 16-18, 28, January 1, 6-7, 19-22

Achtung! Caution: Do not hunt by this schedule! The actual hunting schedule is a good bit more complicated, with youth days, primitive weapons days, etc. If you're hunting game rather than caves, consult an official State hunting schedule available on line or in outdoor stores. *Do not wear white!* You really can be mistaken for a whitetail deer and dealt with accordingly. (I just hate it when that happens.) *This schedule is for the James D. Martin/Skyline Wildlife Management Area only!* If you're caving or ridgewalking in other areas of Alabama or in other states, consult the applicable hunting schedule for gun days. Good luck, be safe out there, and be sure to report your finds to the Alabama Cave Survey. (Need to know how to do that? I can help. Call me.)

*** A lot has happened the past month, with the finalization of the site for the SERA Summer Cave Carnival that the Birmingham Grotto is hosting, and the concomitant commencement of SERA Committee meetings. Everyone is welcome at these meetings, and everyone is especially welcome to volunteer for one of the subcommittees, registration, publicity, security, guidebook, etc. Want more details? Call El Presidente, DAVE McRAE. He'll let you know where help is needed. See you at the next SERA meeting!

*** Looks like we picked a win-win weekend to host the 2012 SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL: not only will our SERA include Cinco de Mayo, both nights that weekend, Saturday and Sunday, will also be a full moon. Also! For the paddlers in the caving community, the SERA site is on the banks of Hurricane Creek, and within sight of its confluence with the Paint Rock River, so if you want to bring your boat...

*** It seems the Grotto had quite a contingent at BURNING MAN near Gerlach, Nevada this year. JEFF HARROD was there as he always is, joined by MAGZ and RICHARD SIMS, and LEIGH DUDROW. Of course SHANE STACY is a regular at Burning Man too. Welcome home to you all. I heard a lot about the Burning Man gathering after SHAY attended last year, it sounds like

a fascinating event. (How about a trip report for the Newsletter?)

*** Speaking of trip reports, by the time you read this the TAG FALL CAVE-IN will have taken place last weekend (October 7-9). Didn't go this year myself, but a number of other Grotto members were there. The next Newsletter will be thick with trip reports of this year's TAG - right? If anybody needs typing/submission assistance, give me a call, I'd be happy to help with that too.

*** And speaking of trip reports, I was along on a recent trip to an exciting new find. However, I promised the Birmingham Grotto cavers who found and are pushing it not to divulge it, so I offer the following report: On September _ I went with _ and _ to _ Cave, a new find in which 1,800 feet of virgin passage has already been mapped with no end in sight, and a possible connection to _ Cave not far away. Sorry about all the blanks, but if I reveal the details, _ and _ will _ me.

*** The Grotto's condolences go to PETER MICHAUD on the recent death of his mother, Matilda "Tillie" Michaud of St. Charles, Missouri. We're very sorry for your loss, Peter. You are in our thoughts.



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P.O. Box 59607
Birmingham, AL 35259

Forwarding & Address Correction Requested

***Time to pay your annual dues and
renew your grotto membership!
Remember, you must be a member
to vote in elections and receive the
grotto newsletter!***