

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO

APRIL 2011

NEWSLETTER



VOLUME 41

NUMBER 4

BGN Calendar

APR 12	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
APR 16	Earth Day Clean-Up at Bryant Mountain Cave. Meet at Logans at 9:30. See Annoucement on page 23
MAY 10	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
MAY 14	Alabama Cave Survey meeting in Scottsboro Public Library. Starts at 9:00 am.
JUN 14	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
JUN 9 JUN 12	SERA Summer Cave Carnival. Monteagle, TN.
JUL 12	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
JUL 18 JUL 22	NSS Convention in Glenwood Springs, CO.

Spelean Sea Tom Chamblee

Across fields of golden sage, brilliant in the sun,
following a stream, so swiftly does it run.
Into the forest, tree tops high above,
following the stream into a sink cove.
Entering a cave, walls chalk white,
down a high passage, I make my flight.
The passage, shaped like a whales throat,
on the edge of a lake, I inflate my boat.
Up on a bank, tall stalagmites are.
covered in glitter, twinkling like stars.
Forest of stalagmites, rise so high,
like cathedral spires, shining in the night.
Float across the lake, a subterranean sea,
ceilings high above, grandiosity.
The lake is so expansive, fathomlessly deep,
In this vast chamber quiet water seeps.

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.

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 59607
Birmingham, AL 35259

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...

Jonathan Gladden dropping
into Old Blowing Cave.

(Dave McRae)

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Bryant Mountain Cave Cleanup and Earth Day Grotto Outing Kid-Friendly Event at the Caudle's House April 16th

Meet at 9:30 at Logan's Store - I-65 north of Birmingham - exit 285
Or come by the Caudle's earlier for coffee.

We'll begin the work at Bryant Mountain Cave and continue until lunch. We'll have garbage bags and burlap sacks to contain any garbage that we find in Bryant Mountain Cave. Our emphasis this year will be on mud-washing spray-painted graffiti from the cave walls. We'll be careful to avoid any signatures that are over 50 years old. We'll provide the buckets and brushes for this work. You should come prepared with gloves, as well as your normal caving gear, since much of what we will pick up is glass. Be prepared for climbing down the canyon, if you are inclined.

We'll break for lunch at the Caudles. Bring your sandwich materials & drinks, and join us on the deck. After lunch, if you want to do more clean up, Lawrence Breland, owner of both Bryant Mountain Cave and Bryant's Corkscrew Cave suggested that a clean up of Corkscrew would be nice. If not, you can check out the caves in the vicinity. Through trips in Bryant Mountain, dropping Bryant Mountain Pit, Rickles' a/k/a Hackney's Cave, Tim's Ice Hole, and Mulberry Cave are all available. If you want to leave that mountain, Hamilton Mountain Pit Cave, Pollock Suck Hole, Hamilton Mountain Spring Cave, and Rickwood (commercialized) are just across the interstate. If you'd rather stay closer to the party for afternoon caving, there's Gaut's Shortcut Cave, Bamboo, Wine Cellar, Bryant's Corkscrew, and Mill Creek Squeeze within walking distance of the Caudle's house.

As the muddy cavers straggle in, we'll prepare for an evening meal. Everyone is welcome to use the Caudle's showers. Please bring a side dish to share, as well as whatever soft drink, beer or other liquids you might desire. If you wish, feel free to bring your dish/drinks to the Caudles before the cleanup. The kitchen is open for any prep. The Caudles will be providing BBQ pork for the meat dish.

This is a kid-friendly gathering. Many of the caves are kid-friendly. With the grandkids next door, there's a trampoline, fort, and other toys available. There's a creek to play in; we'll have the rope in the tree for kids of all ages to climb on; and lots of woods to explore. Becca is planning either another scavenger hunt or an Easter egg hunt with the kids.

If you can't make it to the cleanup, we'd love to have you for whatever part of the outing you can make. We're at 544 Mill Creek Road, Warrior, AL. You can call us at 647-2221. DIRECTIONS: Take I-65 north out of Birmingham to exit 287. Exit to the right, then turn left at the first possible road, between the Conoco station and Rock Creek Church of Christ. Bear right at the junction, and continue about ¼ mile. Turn into our drive at the double-dome house (our son's house) & come on down the hill to the gray house in the woods. If you stay late and/or drink hardy, bring your sleeping bag, & stay the night.

News & Notes

Dave Howell

*** April, the month of balmy temperatures when the woods explode in glorious bursts of green and gold of new leaves and the gorgeous colors of new blooms! Ah yes, SPRING, with its rains to nourish the new growth, the consequent rise of water levels in streams and rivers, the seasonal flooding of cave passages... the tornados sweeping in from the Great Plains, or hurricanes making landfall from the Gulf... the rattlesnakes, copperheads and cottonmouths emerging from their long sleep of winter hibernation to lie in wait for... ahem. Well. Spring is the loveliest season, never mind about getting flooded, blown away, bitten, afflicted with burgeoning poison ivy, or whatever. Oh, by the way, did you hear that the Birmingham Grotto will be hosting SERA this year, 2011, instead of in 2012? Guess we'd better get a move on.

*** April Fool! We really are hosting SERA in 2012. (Are you having cardiac arrhythmia, DAVE McRAE?)

*** Thanks and a tip of the Grotto helmet to STEVE PITTS for his excellent talk and slide show on FERN CAVE, our program at the March Grotto meeting. Fern is truly a world class cave, and still has the capacity to surprise us 50-some years after its initial discovery. Exploration is ongoing, albeit on hiatus because of White Nose Syndrome. However, just this past month I read on Grotto e-groups that no WNS was discovered in a recent investigation of Fern's bat population; if this means a slowing of the spread of WNS, it

is indeed good news. Although the specter of cavers never being permitted to resume regular trips to Fern is abhorrent, we should keep in mind that that is a worst case scenario, only one of a number of possible outcomes to the WNS situation. Be patient. The present situation *will* change. Thanks again, Steve.

*** A couple of dates to mark on your calendar. The first, and most immediate, is April 16, EARTH DAY - that's this coming Saturday, if you're reading this at Grotto meeting. As in previous years, the Grotto will have a cleanup trip to BRYANT MOUNTAIN CAVE, followed by an afternoon barbeque and party at DAVID & EDNA CAUDLE's house in Smoke Rise, not far from Bryant Mountain. Past Earth Day cleanups and celebrations have been great, don't miss this one. I will see you there!

*** Another date to note is that of this year's SERA SUMMER CAVE CARNIVAL, which will be June 10-12 at Cavers Paradise Campground, 900 Old Sewanee Road in Sewanee, Tennessee. This is another annual event that's always fun, so make plans to attend, register early to save \$. I will see you there, too!

*** And! If you aren't satiated with caving-related travel, and if you still have some vacation days left, mark July 18-22 for the 2011 NSS CONVENTION, to be held this year in Glenwood Springs, Colorado. Beautiful venue! Watch the NSS News, TagNet, and the Grotto e-groups for further info on this event.

*** Congratulations and best wishes to ANDY ZERBE on his retirement this month! After years of "iffy" weekends and missed Grotto trips, now you can go caving any time you want. We're very envious, Andy. Of course it'll also be nice not to have the stress of the workaday world, too. I guess it can now be revealed: that grocery store job was just a cover for your *real* job as international assassin for the CIA. Glad all that's behind you, Andy. Congrats again.

*** Colbert County is not one of the usual destinations for Birmingham cavers, but you might want to take a closer look at this part of northwest Alabama. There is a story of a treasure trove in REDBONE CAVE, Colbert County, in which a young 18th century hunter was captured by hostile Chickasaw Indians and imprisoned in a cave, later named Redbone. The boy escaped, but not before a skylight illuminated stacks of gold ingots and chests of gold jewelry and coins in the cave. Another "cave of gold" legend? Perhaps, but this one is lent credence by the documented discoveries in 1971 of a gold ingot near the Natchez Trace bridge in Colbert County, and another gold ingot in a farmer's field near Smithsonia in Lauderdale County, both Spanish in origin by their markings. Were these finds part of the Redbone Cave treasure? Alas, Redbone Cave does not appear in the Alabama Cave Survey (or at least not by that name), but was said to be on the bank of the Tennessee River near the location of modernday Muscle Shoals. Ridgewalk, *anyone?*

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