

BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER



**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR HELP**

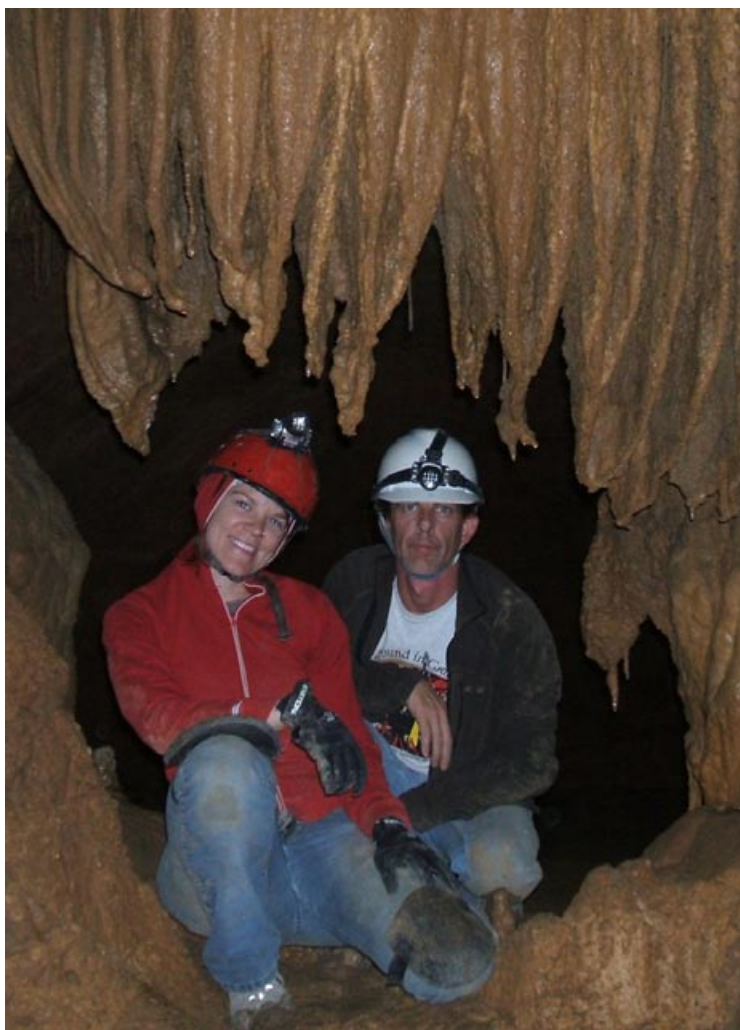


BGN Calendar

NOV 4	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
NOV 5 NOV 7	NSS Board of Governors Meeting in Grand Rapids, MI.
DEC 2	The Birmingham Grotto Meeting begins at 7:00 PM, at the Home-wood Library, 1721 Oxmoor Road.
DEC 2	GROTTO ELECTIONS!!

Thanks to Deirdra Hahn for assistance in maintaining the BGN Calendar.

The Grotto Calendar is being continually updated and is available online at www.bhamgrotto.org. Check it out!



*April Jones and Fennigan Spencer inside Ulla Cave during the 2010 TAG Fall Cave-In.
(Jerrie Patterson)*

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 55932
Birmingham, AL 35255-5932

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.

Birmingham On-Line!
Check out our web site:
www.bhamgrotto.org

On the cover...

Deirdra Hahn in McBride's.
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Tumbling Rock Cave, Part II Tom Chamblee

From the Elephant's Feet, the passage goes on,
to the great white way just beyond.
Flat white ceiling and sculptured walls,
superb plaster work in this very great hall.

Joint lines in the ceiling, right angle lines,
stained so brown, so well defined.
Alluvial fill banks of creek cobblestone,
appear as mesas as I journey along.
Mud Creek, so clear, so cool,
pours into pools, aqua blue.
Into a section, 50ft high x 130ft wide,
subway tunnels on the side.
Subway tunnels beneath an upper floor,
journey in mystery "forever" more.
Up Wildcat Rockpile, up so high,
to Wildcat Pit by my side.
A circular pit, 8ft wide x 50ft deep,
a waterfall bored it, the water still seeps.

Through the Wind Tunnel to the Music Hall,
a room so big, it makes you feel so small.
Ascend to the top, to the Totem Gallery,
a speleo paradise, such a sight to see.
Forests of stalactites, profuse decoration,
forest of stalagmites, such adoration.
Through the sandy Ghost Crawl, through the Hidden Door,
to a passage above on a suspended floor.
Beneath the Kings Shower, I do stand,
climb through the water to a scene so grand.

A waterfall domepit, 400ft high,
ceiling disappears into the velvet black "night".
The waterfall. a diamond shower,
one could in awe, looking for hours.
Echoes fade into the darkness above,
traveling into mystery, sounds to love.

Into the hall of Mysteries, 200ft long x 150ft high,
a scene of grandeur, a ceiling so high.
In these rooms, like gothic cathedrals,
spectacular scenes to please all people.
From there the cavern goes on.
to exotic scenes, and great hallways,
of cavers dreams.

The Intriguing History of Ghar Dalam Cave Dave Howell

Caves can eloquently document human prehistory, as we know: witness Lascaux, Altamira, and other European caves in which fine examples of Paleolithic art have been found. A lesser known and particularly intriguing example is that of GHAR DALAM Cave near the southeastern coast of the island of Malta in the Mediterranean Sea south of Sicily. Ghar Dalam, which is about 360' long with passage averaging 20' wide x 15' high, lies 18' above a valley floor arid today, but the site of several massive floods in ages past, the most recent of which occurred at the melting of the Ice Age about 18,000 years ago. The earliest presence of humans on Malta is generally considered to have been 7,000 to 5,200 BC, based on bones, beads, tools, weapons, fragments of incised pottery, and other detritus of human habitation excavated from the upper layer of sediment in Ghar Dalam and other sites on Malta. However, archaeologists excavating deeper into the cave floor discovered 5 lower layers of sediment documenting climate, ecology, and fauna on Malta over the past quarter million years. Following are the layers, described from highest to lowest:

6. *The Cultural Layer*: Contains evidence of Neolithic man from about 5,200 BC on.
5. *The Calcareous Layer*: A thin chalky deposit serving as a clear separator between the end of the Ice Age and the Cultural Layer above.
4. *The Cervus Layer*: Flood deposits dated in the range of 18,000 to 10,000 years ago, so named because it contains large quantities of bones of the Pleistocene European red deer, *Cervus elephas*, an extinct species, as well as bones of wolf, brown bear and fox. Also found in this layer were a stone tool, a human hand bone, and 2 apparently human teeth. ("Apparently" because the type of tooth found are known to exist in certain animals, but in no human species except *Homo Neanderthalis*.)
3. *The Pebble Layer*: This deposit consists entirely of stones and pebbles placed there by a still earlier flood.

2. *The Hippopotamus Layer*: Sediments containing the bones of extinct species of dwarf hippopotamus and dwarf elephant.

1. *The Clay Layer*: This layer immediately overlies bedrock, and contains no organic remains whatsoever.

Interesting, yes? But the truly fascinating part lies in the condition of some of the hippopotamus bones found in the second layer. About 100 paces from the cave entrance dwarf hippo bones were found that had apparently been cooked and opened to extract the marrow for consumption. While not definitive proof, the discovery of bones in this condition strongly suggests a human presence. The dwarf hippo, which is known to also have inhabited Cyprus and Crete a bit farther east in the Mediterranean, became extinct 12,000 to 9,000 years ago, which would, if early humans feasted on hippo in Ghar Dalam, place the earliest known period of human habitation on Malta considerably before that time period generally accepted in scientific circles.

Further supporting the thesis of earlier-than-previously-believed human habitation on Malta was the 1995 discovery of Paleolithic art beneath stalagmitic encrustations, believed to have covered them for some 15,000 years, in nearby GHAR HASAN Cave. This art consists of about 20 designs painted in red, brown, dark brown and black, depicting various animal figures (2 of them elephants), handprints, ideograms, and one human-animal combination. Dwarf elephants existed on Malta in the same time period as the dwarf hippos discussed above.

The hypothesis that humans, at least Neanderthals, were present on Malta in the Paleolithic is a matter of some controversy in paleoanthropological circles. But that's another issue. If you want to know more, check out *Underworld, The Mysterious Origins of Civilization* by Graham Hancock, ISBN 1400049512.

Our species history, it seems, might go back a whole lot farther than we were taught in high school science class. And caves may contain the evidence of it.

TAG Fall Cave-In 2010



(Jeff Harrod)



(Richard Sims)



(Richard Sims)

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Put On Your Voting Pants!

With elections on the horizon it was suggested that we publish our grotto's Constitution and Charter. Here it is! Read up and be ready to cast your ballot in December.

-- Editor

CONSTITUTION OF THE BIRMINGHAM GROTTTO of the NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1. The name of the organization shall be the Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS).
2. The purpose of this Grotto shall be the same as that of the NSS, with the added goal of furthering the aims of the NSS within the Birmingham area.
3. Membership in the Birmingham Grotto shall be extended to all persons in the Birmingham area who are interested in caves and caving. All members are encouraged to join the NSS.
4. The Executive Committee of the Birmingham Grotto shall be composed of the Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer.
5. The Birmingham Grotto of the NSS shall be organized without monetary profit to individual members.
6. Any property held by the Birmingham Grotto shall revert to the NSS in the event of dissolution of the Grotto.
7. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds favorable vote at any meeting of the Grotto, provided that notice of proposed changes be in the hands of members 30 days prior to the date of the meeting.
8. The Constitution and By-Laws of the NSS shall be binding on this organization.

BY-LAWS OF THE BIRMINGHAM GROTTTO of the NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

1. The Executive Committee shall have full power to conduct and supervise all business of the Birmingham Grotto, draft and adopt changes to the By-Laws, appoint committees, propose dues, and perform all other functions incident to the proper conduct of the Grotto.
2. The officers of the Grotto shall be the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. They must be NSS members and shall hold office for a period of one calendar year.
 - A. Election shall take place at the December Grotto meeting. \
 - B. Vacancies shall be filled by special election at the next regular meeting
 - C. Election shall be by majority vote of the members present.
3. The Executive Committee of the Birmingham Grotto shall be composed of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. The outgoing Grotto Chairman shall be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee for one year and shall have the same voting privileges as the elected officers.
4. Meetings of the Executive Committee shall be called at the discretion of the Chairman. Notice of the meeting time and place shall be given to all members of the Committee a reasonable length of time before the meeting shall take place.
5. The Executive Committee shall have the power to authorize such publications of the Grotto as may be deemed necessary.
6. An annual report, as required by the NSS By-Laws, shall be prepared by the Secretary of the Grotto.
7. The Grotto shall hold a regular monthly meeting at a time and place determined by the Executive Committee.
8. Dues for membership in the Birmingham Grotto shall be proposed by the Executive Committee and subject to approval by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present.
9. These By-Laws may be amended by a two-thirds favorable vote of those present at a regular Grotto meeting, provided that notice of the proposed changes be in the hands of the membership 30 days prior to the date of the meeting.

Birmingham Grotto Meeting Minutes September 28, 2010

Chairman Dave McRae called the meeting to order at 6:58pm. 31 members were in attendance.

Visitors:

Laura Poythress works with member Allen Bullen. Allen had been trying to get her to go caving since May and they will go to Steward Springs on Sunday. This was her first meeting and she noticed that we are a bunch of freaks. Mike D. came all the way from Pell City. John came back. Melissa (Sinking Cove) has been in school in Atlanta but was able to make this meeting. Richard Brantley was welcomed back.

There was no vote on the September 2010 meeting minutes. Dave Howell suggested that they be read and voted on. Secretary declined, final copy was on her computer.

Treasurer's Report:

Dale Douglas reported that the coffer stands at \$6483.02.

Announcements:

2011 Grotto dues are due now. See Dale Douglas.

Thursday Oct. 21 - Atrox Factory (6:45pm), Meet at Guadalajara Mexican Restaurant (5:45pm)

Wednesday Oct. 27 - Sloss Fright Furnace (6:45pm), Pre-meeting place to be determined.

Oct. 7-10 - TAG Fall Cave-In. About 1700 (1200) cavers. Friday band will be TPH's.

Magz Sims set up a Birmingham Grotto FaceBook page. It's set to private and she wants to know if it should go public. She needs a moderator. Dave McRae and Deirdra Hahn stated that they are not on FaceBook. Request that all information be cross-posted to the Yahoo Group.

Deirdra asked for volunteers to help run the SKTF decon station at TAG as she has a family emergency. Need folks to change out the solutions if dirty. No takers.

Old Business:

Halloween Party! Saturday, October 30th at Alabama Caverns. Volunteers for mowing, weed-eating, port-a-let cleaning, and light bulb maintenance. Dinner will be Pot Luck.

Grotto's donation to the SCCi. Dave Caudle made a motion for \$2500. Deirdra up it to \$3500. Valerie Howell seconded. Discussion of monthly Grotto expenses and "new" SCCi acquisition. Motion passed at \$3500. Check presenters will be Jeff Harrod or Dale Douglas. McRae to call SCCi.

SERA 2011/2012 still up in the air. No response to Grotto letter.

Start working on a design for a grotto T-shirt!

New Business:

Dave Howell reported on a recent NPR News item that stated that approximately 4500 Alabama non-profits are not recognized by the IRS. Mentioned that the Birmingham Grotto is a recognized non-profit due to the work of Dale and Deirdra.

Moe/Jason/Damon will get the Grotto trailer to TAG.

Scott Fee proposed a poll: How many members would be willing to move the Grotto meeting to another night so we could continue to use Room 101 (large room) instead of Room 116 (small room)? Discussion: Nights to consider are the first Tuesday and second Thursday of the month. First Tuesday - out (Birmingham Canoe Club meeting). Magz offered to research other venues and to report back for the November meeting. Grotto not able to answer how much we're paying the library for room rent. Gary Barnes suggested we expand the options to include the second Thursday or the second, third, or fourth Tuesdays for the Homewood Library venue.

Howdy announced that the Howdy Puff Fest would be December 10-12, 2010 at Moses Tomb.

TAG Group Meal will be a Pot Luck at 5pm eastern on Saturday. Bruce White offered to pick up precooked BBQ Boston Butts at a cost of \$25 per butt. Dave McRae motioned \$100 for purchase of Butts. Valerie seconded. The meal will be \$5 plus a side dish. Paper products count as a side dish. List will be started on the Yahoo Group.

Jeff Harrod announced that the October Grotto trip will be lead during TAG.

Trip Reports!

Dave Caudle: Wards survey on hold. Went to Sauta and Cave Spring Cave with Gator Gates of USFWS. They were checking to see if folks had gone into these bat caves and were looking for guano and fungus - saw black sh*t. Hadn't been in Sauta since the '70s and didn't remember the rimstone dams. Noticed a path and thought it might be a water drip that runs along the sidewall. Gator told him it was a pack rat trail. Did find some graffiti, though not from the '70s as it read C.D. BRYANT! USFWS will be using data loggers to monitor for WNS. Dave wore a Tyvex suit and rubber boots so deconning was easy.

Hazard spent time up in Fiery Gizzard Cove. Did Sawmill Well, Spiegel Tilted Tower, and Fiery Top Drop. Rigged all three drops. Fiery Top is 168 foot in fractured rock.

Dave Howell announced that Danger Judy would report on Chalk Cave. DJ said it's located in Tarrant and not easy to find. They called Scott Fee, waded through poison ivy and brambles, just missing it. The cave is unique for the Birmingham area and has one large room. Dave added that it was his first time to Chalk Cave. It's a single passage that was mapped by Steve Attaway. Dave's nephews were with them and wanted to know what the "floor pits" were. Chalk Cave was a Native American burial cave but had been plundered in the 20's and 30's. Also, there is an actual trail to the entrance.

Damon Moats was delegated to give the Grotto trip report to Snail Shell. He said it was his first cave with his new kayak. The water was a little cold. Got in a little rappelling and it was Donna's first rappel. Alan Cook, Dave & Sam McRae, Jeff Harrod, and Deirdra Hahn also attended.

Bruce White took about 15 people to Tumbling Rock. Bruce broke his finger. Brent had an uncontrolled descent, but was OK.

Birmingham Grotto Newsletter

Howdy took a 5 day canyoning trip out to Zion, Utah. Considered it above-ground caving. The sandstone was multi-colored. The pools were full and had a 600 foot swim and the water was colder-than-sh*t! Did Pine Creek Canyon, Subway, and Mystery Canyon that opened out into Zion Narrows. The last bit was a slippery water fall climb in public view.

Moe Rausch, Jason Wall, and Frank Case went to OTR. There were 1501 other cavers present. The bands and water were good. Saw TinY, Nikky and Jean Cates. Speleo-Olympics had running water this year. They headed up to PA and went

to Ringing Rocks. The put in at Easton, PA and took out at Riegelsville, NJ.

Meeting adjourned at 8:3(?) pm.

Program:

Dave Howell entertained us with a couple of slide carousels of caving from days past. Had great pictures of cavers, caves, cookouts, and, of course, cars.

Respectfully submitted, Deirdra Hahn, Secretary

Birmingham Grotto Treasurer's Report September 28, 2010				
Starting Balance - September 2, 2010				6,477.51
Expenses				
	Printing & Postage	69.49		
	Grotto Splash Shelter	25.00		
	Total Expenses	94.49	94.49	
Income				
	2009 Getaway Auction*			
	2010 Getaway Auction**			
	Dues	100.00		
	Interest			
	Total Income	100.00	100.00	
Ending Balance - September 28, 2010				6,483.02
* 2009 Getaway Auction Balance Owed - \$160.25				
** 2010 Getaway Auction Balance Owed - \$134.25				
2010 Total Getaway Auction Sales \$1023.50				



Amy Strickland and Dale Douglas presenting grotto donation to SCCi at TAG .
(Scott Fee)



Jason Wall didgeridoo-ing at TAG .
(Jeff Harrod)

News & Notes

Dave Howell

*** November, the month of cooler temperatures, better visibility in the woods with the falling of autumn leaves and the commensurate onset of ridgewalking season, and - my personal favorite - Thanksgiving Day. Not only do the cooler temperatures stimulate our impulses to hit the woods and caves of TAG, they also stimulate our appetites (or mine, at least), so here is a public service announcement: Overindulgence at the Thanksgiving table can lead to increased difficulties in those tight crawls, as well as an additional bar or two on your rack. November 25 is a good time to practice moderation in all things (including moderation).

*** As has been the custom for 33 years now, October brought us the TAG FALL CAVE-IN, more recently known as TAG on the Mountain. The weather could not have been better, balmy and crystal clear, dry but not so much so that the bonfire couldn't take place. I guess more folks than just me noticed this, as the attendance count was a little over 2,000. The event brought in many old friends, including some we haven't seen in a while: BRITT THOMPSON was there, as was BILL McINTOSH, down from his digs in Minnesota, first time he's hung out with our Grotto in about 35 years! The Saturday night Grotto dinner was fine, with delicious catered BBQ arranged by BRUCE WHITE, homemade ice cream by JASON WALL, and potluck by everybody else. The bonfire was a good one, accompanied by the music of One Hour Drive, TONY TOMASELLO's band. (They were great!) MISTY TOMASELLO took home a door prize, the only Grotto member to do

so, although JUDY RANELLI won a prize in the SCCi raffle. SCCi - that's another thing: a new SCCi acquisition was announced, JACOBS COVE with its 65 known caves has been leased! This area was a prime caving and ridgewalking destination until it went off limits to cavers at the end of February 1986 - thanks and a tip of the Grotto helmet to the Southeastern Cave Conservancy for opening this area to cavers for the first time in almost a quarter century. Access is by permit only, check out the SCCi website for info. And while you're at it, consider making a donation or a sustaining pledge to continue the SCCi's important work. An excellent TAG, the 33rd, and already looking forward to the 34th.

*** If you weren't at the October Grotto meeting - it was held on a weird night, after all, in late September to avoid conflicting with TAG - you may not be aware that there is a motion on the floor to *consider* moving Grotto meeting to a different room, night, and/or place. Our regular room wasn't available the night of the non-TAG-conflicting meeting, so we met in a bigger one down the hall. The larger size was to everyone's liking - "Why can't we meet in here all the time?" The answer is that the larger room is not available the first Thursday, so that's how the question of moving the meeting to another night came up, perhaps the first Tuesday. Then somebody suggested looking into other meeting places altogether, and a loose committee was formed to ideate and investigate. If you have ideas, or if you're just interested in participating

in the process, the Meeting Time & Location Committee is a loose one, consisting of anyone who wants to help. Got an idea? Call JEFF HARROD, nominal Committee chairman, and discuss it with him. Stay tuned, more on this later.

*** Last month I ran into our former Secretary, Dr. LEE BURNETT at the Greek Food Festival, there with his sweetie JESSICA and their son, LEE Jr. (Did you know they had a son? I didn't know they had a son!) Lee Jr. is already, at only about a year old, a handsome boy with fair hair and blue eyes like his Mama. Is he crawling yet, Lee & Jessica? Let us know when he does, we have leads that need to be checked.

*** When caving is discussed between cavers and noncavers, the word "claustrophobia" frequently comes up. This is a familiar term, everybody knows what claustrophobia is. But how about nyctophobia? How often do noncavers bring that up in conversation? Nyctophobia is the fear of darkness or night. It generally afflicts children, although adults are certainly not immune, and the disorder, when severe, can be disabling. Obviously cavers can be considered universally unafflicted with nyctophobia. Indeed, exactly the opposite. There are those among us who *prefer* the dark, seek it out at every opportunity. How many times have you yourself willing, eagerly traded a gorgeous sunny day for the eternal darkness of a cave? Just as cavers are universally not nyctophobes, we are just as universally nyctomaniacs, yes?

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