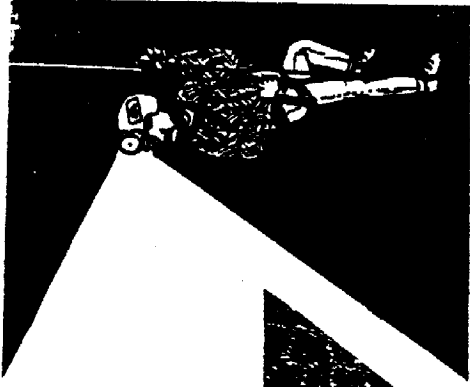


BIRMINGHAM GROTTO NEWSLETTER

NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY

MARCH 1983



The Birmingham Grotto Newsletter is published approximately twelve times a year by the Birmingham Grotto of the National Speleological Society.

Subscription and Membership fees are now due. Annual subscription rates are included in the \$4 membership fee. Outside of the Birmingham area, the subscription rate is only \$2. All are prorated from October.

Editors: Lynn McGill & Nancy Boice
P.O. Box 55102
Birmingham, Al. 35255

The officers for the 1982-83 year:

President - Mike McEachern

Vice Pres. - Jay Clark

Secretary - Nancy Boice

Treasurer - Edna Caudle

The grotto meets the first Monday of each month at 7:30 pm at the Avondale Library.

The meeting after the meeting is at Burly Earl's around 9:00.

SERA WINTER Business Meeting
March 26, 1983
Fall Creek Falls, TN.
Nashville Grotto - Host

*****NOTICE*****

All Grotto and ACS mail should be sent to our new P.O. Box 55102

SERA CAVE CARNIVAL
AUG 5-6-7
HUNTSVILLE

MARCH GROTTOTRIP
SAT 26th 6:00 Krystal

Minutes of February 7, 1983

The February meeting was called to order by Mike McEachern. Minutes of the previous meeting were read. Visitors were recognized including Terry Lynn, John Hart, Robert Downing and Doug Hale.

No treasurer's report.

Old Business:

Gary Barnes and Jay Clark reported on plans for the 25th Anniversary party. The event will be held in May. The grotto voted a \$200.00 limit to what expenses the grotto will underwrite. Hopefully the event can break even, or maybe make a small profit. Jay is putting together a slide show and Milo is in charge of the food. Lee Stubbs is designing a t-shirt which will be submitted at the next meeting. If it is approved, we will plan on making it for the anniversary.

The subject of grotto patches was brought up. After some discussion a motion was passed to table the issue for another year.

New Business:

Joe Dow. reported on NSS society news including new caves and the publication of a new book called Caving Basics.

Mike announced that the Georgia Speleological Society plans to reactivate.

The SERA Winter Business Meeting will be held on March 26 at Fall Creek Falls.

Lynn announced a new grotto mail box:55102.

Margaret and Frank Ray are taking a group of boyscouts caving March 12-13. Margaret asked for volunteers to help lead the trip.

Trip Reports:

Jay and Walter went to Geode Pit, Fargo Well, Slant Well, Bouso Well, Shiftman Cave and found a new 100' pit.

Jet Thomas ridgewalked outside of Smokerise.

Lee Stubbs reported on Limrock and on a trip to a Chandler Mountain cave.

Don Curry reported on Graves Cave.

Les Buryn reported on Gate City.

Margaret Ray reported on Graves Cave.

Mike reported on the grotto trip to Cave Mountain Cave.

Grotto Trip:

Les Buryn will lead the Feb. grotto trip to Ledbedder Cave on Sunday Feb. 20. This trip leaves the Krystal in Tarrent at 7:30.

Program:

Jay and Walter showed slides of Alabama pits including their most recent finds.

Nancy Boice

ECOLOGY OF BATS, edited by Thomas H. Kunz. Plenum Press (\$49.50). Although they are furry, breast-fed kin of ours, the bats have a bad press, whereas their feathered reptilian predecessors in the air catch all eyes. The reason is in the eye itself; bats are in a way the nocturnal equivalent of birds. They are successful aeronauts everywhere, diverse and abundant except at sea and toward the poles. Their world, however, is dark and colorless, so that we diurnal primates can watch it little.

This volume is a collection of 10 expert reviews of what bat watchers have lately come to know. The past 20 years have placed this order of nearly 1,000 species closer to its proper position in our understanding: it is the second order among mammals. (There are still more rodents than bats.) Bat studies are not easy; night work is the rule, with snooperscopes or telemetry receivers, with sonar translators or deep in caves filled with guano. In the laboratory too bats are taxing subjects. The book, whose level is that of the research survey in a set of well-written examples, serves two purposes for the general reader: it gives a clear account of its topic (if one heavy in taxonomic jargon) and it presents an exhibit of the detailed, mathematicized, ambitious (and still incomplete) state of field biology today.

True to its title, the collection tends to look away from the form and function of single bats. There is little on flight aerodynamics (perhaps too little) and almost nothing on the sonar system: the fierce mouths for pulsing shrieks and the labyrinthine directional ears. Roosts and fleas, reproduction, growth and survivorship, energetics and size relations, feeding strategies for both insects and fruit—these are the topics of comparison and conjecture. A motif that recurs, rather wistfully, is the desire to determine ecological niches from the form and ability of species. It is hard to see how it is that so many distinct species with such distinct pulses hunt so well the same mixed bag of bugs in flight. There is a lot going on we do not know.

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gest have a wingspread close to six feet. They roost externally, often in the very trees where they feed in the warm tropical nights. Mousy Temperate Zone bats, gregarious in their caves by the 10 million, or widespread in the belfries, are insectivores, demon echo-locators of insects by dawn and dusk. Their enclosed roosts call for fancy navigational skills without light but reward them by keeping out the freezing chill of winter. Birds that in warm weather live on the insect hordes generally migrate a long way toward the Tropics once cold weather ends the buzzing life for the season. The bat counterparts migrate in time rather than space; they take the winter off not in Florida but in hibernation, a complex and well-studied state, energy-economic because the animal's temperature approaches the ambient one. This strategic choice is not yet understood.

In flying at night bats avoid the fiercest birds of prey. It has lately been recognized that owls, the silent night hunters, take an important toll of bats. The deeds have been witnessed from blinds with the infrared image amplifier, and the search of owl pellets for bat bones has confirmed the indictment. In the rich study of bat and light rhythms reported here one striking graph shows the measured activity of two bat species and two owl species as a function of light levels. There is overlap, because bats need enough night hours of work to make a living. But the peaks are sharply displaced: bats prefer to work at the light level of the dark of the moon, owls at that of the full moon. During a recent lunar eclipse the activity of bats showed an unexpected small-hours peak.

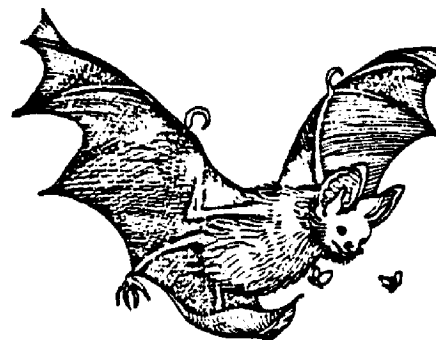
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is fully home now to the little bats, as much later it became a refuge and a home to our own lineage.



PIPISTRELLE



Regular Meeting at
Liberty Nat. Life Insur. Bldg.
June 11, 1964
Birmingham Grotto

Chairman Tidwell called the meeting to order and the minutes were read and approved. Wayne Adams then gave an up to the minute Treasurer's report and we ended up with about \$75 after paying for the cable ladder which has already been ordered.

Stuart Harris was voted in as a regular member and Dennis Covington and John Troxler as junior members. Congratulatory letters to the 3 of them. Effective as of now a motion was made by Charles Snider, seconded by Rob Turner and passed by the Grotto that any new prospective members before being eligible for Grotto membership must meet the following qualifications: (1) attend at least 1 or more monthly Grotto meetings. (2) make every honest effort to try and make the connection at Anderson Cave being led by at least 1 regular or junior member of the Grotto in good standing and who knows the connection. (3) only in dire circumstances will the initiation in Anderson be changed to something else of equal skill.

Since Stuart Harris was the only volunteer to ask to serve on the Publication Committee, Chairman Tidwell enlisted the help of B.J. Powell and Frankie Drev with their approval and possibly Thomas Smythe Sr. The latter also volunteered the use of the church mimeographing facilities which was greatly appreciated.

Articles from any Grotto member on caving or its related fields are now being accepted for possible publication in the Grotto paper.

Chairman Tidwell then informed Charles Snider of the Executive Committee, ruling that he was now the Grotto Trip Co-ordinator. It will also be his job to try and get all the Grotto equipment located and centralized once again as well as go over the Topo map situation.

A motion was then made and amended by Charles Snider and seconded by Charles Armstrong that the "trip leader" himself (on one of the various cave trips made by the Grotto during the month) or by someone appointed by him turn in a brief resumé of the cave trip to Charles Snider at the monthly meeting who will keep it in a log for the record and possible publication.

The secretary asked for Grotto Stationery and Chairman Tidwell said he would speak to Jim Dewberry and get about 250 envelopes and engraved sheets for \$15.

Charles Armstrong then reported to the Grotto that Bill Varnadoe sent out an SOS to all the Grottos in Alabama asking for any revisions on old caves or locations and maps of new caves, etc. as he is trying to get a new Alabama Cave Review Report published as soon as possible. He went on to emphasize the fact that

Chairman Tidwell then read the letter about the 1964 Annual SERA Carnival Convention to be held September 4-7 at Crossville, Tenn. This is located in Cumberland Mountain State Park and all interested parties should contact me for further details about reservations, etc.

The program was then turned over to Conrad Kussner who reported on his succeeding in getting the Bell Telephone Co. local division to come in and agree to make a wild cave in the USA. (15-20 minutes in length). He then reported that all the electrical, hardware, lumber and photo supplies have already been procured by local and national sponsors.

Charles Armstrong then talked on what the movie would encompass and area it would cover as well as its objectives, and Dave Moyes discussed the electrical set up necessary for such a venture.

Then Conrad appointed Gene Leslie, Charles Snider, Rob Turner, Stuart Harris and Lillie Herbst as head of the individual production crews and to head the production crew chiefs. Bob Tidwell was assigned. The chief were informed that they should personally contact at least 5-6 Grotto Members not having any position with the movie already. These members must be willing to work for them regardless of their assigned duties in order to make this movie a success.

Assigned to the cast which was limited to 4 were: Jack Hetrock, David Moyes, Charles Armstrong and Conrad Kussner. Producer --- Parke Scott of The Bell Telephone Company. Director and Script--- Mike Cram.

Conrad then emphasized the fact that everyone will do something in making this production and that no one will be intentionally left out. Furthermore, everyone is invited to participate and all suggestions, ideas and help will greatly be appreciated.

A motion was then made and passed unanimously by the club that if necessary the Grotto Treasury will donate from \$25-\$30 with the possibility that this might be paid back when the movie is over.

Because of this movie venture, no monthly trip was planned but by the same token no individual smaller trips would be discouraged.

Charles Armstrong ended the program by showing beautiful slides on what he calls the "Classic Series of Commercial Caves". He also showed some slides on Guffy and Tuscaloosa's slides on Anderson and the topographical features. New members must go through in order to be initiated into the club as regular members.

Respectfully Submitted,
Conrad Kussner, Sec.

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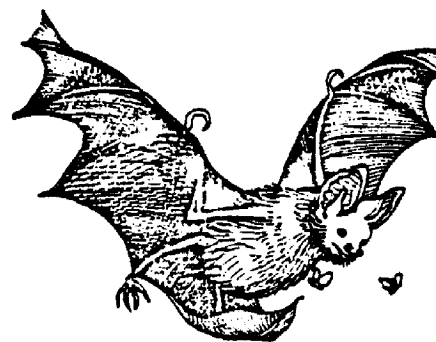
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PIPISTRELLE



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HURT TREE PIT

By Marion O. Smith

A small thorny tree (Aralia spinosa) usually known as hercules'-club or devil's-walking-stick, but called by some of us as simply the "Hurt Tree," was the inspiration for the naming of a recently located pit in Jackson County's Williams Cove. Discovered November 14, 1982, by Pam Duncan and Jim H. Smith, it has a five by ten foot opening and drops free for 77 feet before becoming offset down a 20 foot pit, 15 foot slope, 10 foot pit, 10 foot slope, and 10 foot pit. Lacking sufficient rope, Jim, the only one to enter, failed to get down the "final" 10 foot drop.

On December 4, Jeff ~~Loehke~~, Gerald Moni, Marilyn Osterlund, and I ridge-walked from the mouth of the cove toward Pam and Jim's new discovery, locating and exploring along the way 63 foot and 108 foot pits. We were briefly joined by Buddy and Lori Lane, but when it began raining both they and Marilyn retreated to the cars.

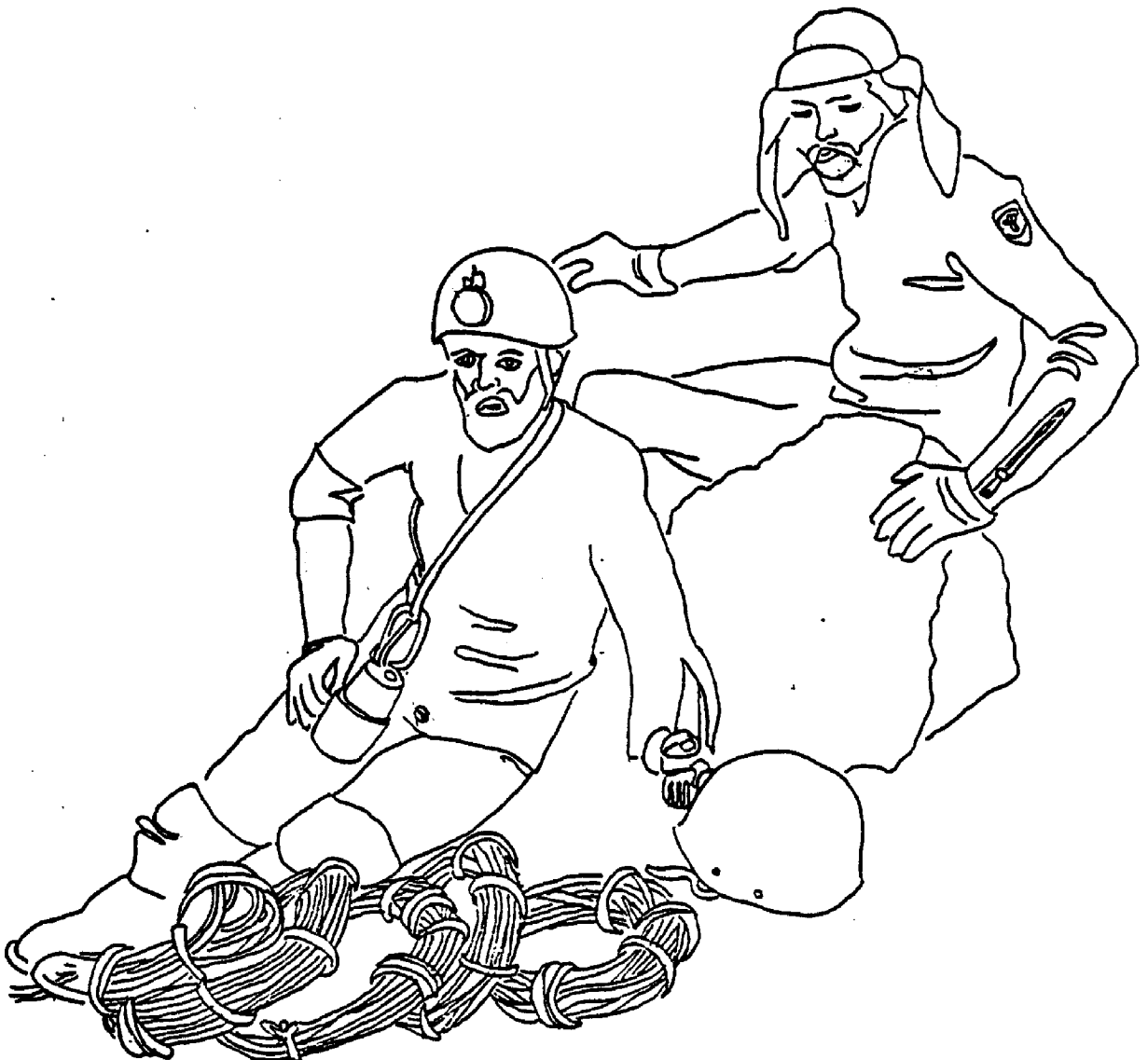
The rest of us continued to Hurt Tree Pit with the intention of simply yoyoing it, not understanding that Jim had not reached the bottom. But since we had two ropes we descended the 10 foot pit that had stopped Jim and immediately found a 10 foot climb and 10 foot slope to an estimated 31 foot second pit. At the bottom of this was about 150 feet of crawl and stoop passage, broken by a 30 foot wet dome, which led to a wet third pit for which we had no rope.

A little over a month later, January 8, Jim, Pam, Gerald, Dan Twilley, Buddy Lane, and I returned to "push" the cave. The day was disagreeable and people were in a wimpy mood and ~~were~~ generally disinclined to don their wet-suits for the virgin pit. Gerald and Pam did not enter the cave, Dan only yoyoed the entrance pit, and Buddy went only as far as the crawl at the bottom of the second pit.

Jim and I managed to get down the wet virgin drop, estimated at 79 feet,

but within seventy-five feet downstream we were stopped "cold" by very formidable breakdown. The only other easily accessible passage was a couple hundred or more feet of an updip tributary, which only took a few minutes to explore. Somewhat disappointed, we derigged the cave, which we estimated at 550 feet in length and 275 feet in depth.

Hurt Tree Pit is probably the source of the water in Williams Cove Cave, which has its entrance on the north side of the cove nearly a half mile away, and which trends up the cove. Hurt Tree on the south side of the cove is very close to the main streambed and drops deep enough to reach below the level of the streambed. The breakdown collapse is probably somewhere close to this streambed.



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NON-PROFIT
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Dave & Edna Caudle
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IF BOX IS MARKED, THIS IS YOUR LAST ISSUE
PLEASE PAY DUES.