

# Cumberland Valley Caver

published by

## Franklin County Grotto



# CUMBERLAND VALLEY CAVER

Published by  
**FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO**  
An affiliate of the National Speleological Society

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Franklin County Grotto meetings are held the 3rd Monday of the month in New Franklin Fire Department, New Franklin, PA. The fire department is located on PA Route 316, 3 miles east of I-81 (exit #14). The meeting starts at 7:30 PM. Both grotto caving trips and smaller individual trips are planned at these meetings. All members are invited depending on their ability to safely participate. You must attend at least one vertical training session in order to participate in vertical trips. Contact any of the above individuals for more information.

The Cumberland Valley Caver is published a couple of times per year by the Franklin County Grotto PA. All cave related articles should be submitted to the editor for publication. The contents of this publication are not copyrighted unless previously copyrighted by the author. Material from this publication may be reprinted by other official organizations of the National Speleological Society without prior permission provided credit is given to the original author and this publication, and the article is not changed in anyway. Other interested parties must request permission in advance. Franklin County Grotto actively participates in a newsletter exchange program. All exchanges should be mailed to: Ken Jones, 4446 Duffield Rd, Chambersburg, PA 17201. Information regarding exchanges should be coordinated with editor so the exchange list can be updated.

**Cover:** Tim Long at top of Kookan Cave's green house entrance after a tough 5 hour trip to the back side of the cave.

*Photo by: Gordy Ley*

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***From the editor...*** Currently, WNS seems to be the subject that is currently affecting caving more than anything else. It is causing 1000’s of caves to be closed over wide spread areas of the country, and shows the potential to probably cover the entire US if it continues to expand to the south and west. One update said a million bats have already died, and many more millions are at risk. I personally think our access to caves is going to be restricted as never before and we will be dealing with the result of the bat die off for decades. We are requesting our members to support the caving moratorium and published gear cleaning protocols if you are continuing to cave in unrestricted areas.

Since FCG cancelled the majority of its trips this quarter, it was a little more difficult than usual to get the material for this issue of the Cumberland Valley Caver, I’d like to thank Gordy, Terry, Tim, Dane and Ken J. for contributing articles, photos and information used in this issue. I will probably be pulling up a few older unpublished articles from my archive for next issue.

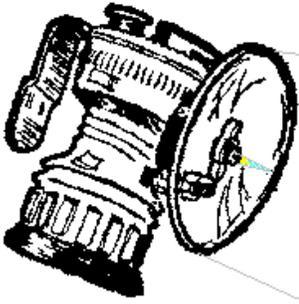
We are making progress with the Cleversburg Sink Water Level monitoring project. Jonathan and I have been working with Professor Tom Feeney, Department of Geography and Earth Science, Shippensburg University. We should be installing the sensor in July, and have a little bit of surveying to accomplish in the meantime.

As far as alternate activities it looks like we are on for a day of Paintball in the fall, some AT hiking throughout the summer, and perhaps a few sinkhole cleanups. The FCGList email group has been updated and everyone that has email should be receiving posts. If you aren’t receiving posts please let me know.

# Speleo-Spotlight...

Dane Wagle

NSS # 7813



**D**ane has only been caving with Franklin County Grotto a few years, but he is a “Blue Jean Caver” from way back when. When I asked him what his favorite caves were he told me School House. As of a few years ago he was still using his double brake-bar for rappelling, but he did use a rack on his last vertical trip to Lightner’s with me.

In 1965 he found a book in his high school entitled “Caves, Caving and Cavers. In the back of the book was the address for the NSS. He wrote them a letter and got connected with some DC cavers and 45 years later he is still at it. Without going into much detail he says the School House and Hellhole trips stand out the most.

One of his “scariest” moments was when he let his daughter drop a pit first in Dewey’s Drop-In Cave in Kentucky, which turned out to be short rigged. She was under a ledge where she couldn’t be seen when she told the rest of them the rope was too short! He talked her through a change-over to ascending and she lived to cave again.

I’ve been caving with Dane three or four times and I enjoy his relaxed, not in a hurry attitude about caving. (It might have something to do with us both being in our 60’s)

Dane went to Fort Hunt High School in Alexandria, VA He currently lives in Fairfield, PA and refinishes furniture and restores antiques for a living.



**Dane rigging double breaker bars to drop Dead Dog Pit in Kentucky**  
*Photo by Gordy*

He also plays acoustic guitar, write songs and is a member of a small band.

When I asked for a little background he kept responding with short, couple of word type answers, so I had to use a larger picture and a larger font to fill in some of the white space. □

# What Was I Thinking?

*By Gordy Ley*

Last summer, FCG made two visits to Kookan Cave. Each time, I was curious about the passage that led off from the climb to the Greenhouse exit. This passage led to the Rover Room, Fool's Pit, and the Domes.

Ken Tayman rallied the troops for another trip this spring to mount an assault on the upstream section of Kookan. We had six cavers lined up, initially. However, Jon Peterson pulled out a week before the trip, and was replaced by Howard White. Todd Roberts was sick most of the week and he declined also, as the date approached. I was to rendezvous with Howard at Roxbury to carpool to the cave. A 6:00 am phone call revealed that Howard had a toothache and would not make the trip either. Another phone call to Pat Minnick, and Plan B started to take shape. I finally found my way to Pat's house, after traveling a couple scenic distractions on the Old, New, and present-day Pen Mar Roads. Pat, Ken, and I loaded into my truck and headed for Kookan.



**Pat at pool just beyond bottom of entrance shaft**

*Photo by Gordy*



**Tim is first sliding down the long entrance shaft.**

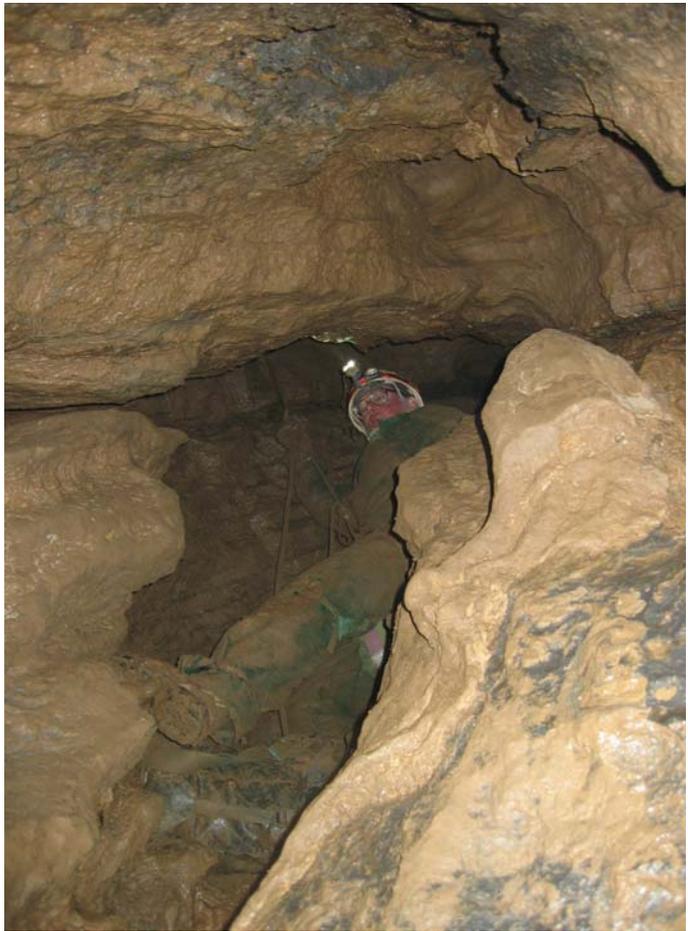
*Photo by Gordy*

We met Tim Long at the cave. Dave Bookhammer was also taking another group into the field entrance for some maintenance and picture-taking. We geared up for the day with me carrying a 50' rope in my pack, Pat had a longer 9 mil, and Tim carried an extra rope bag with two longer ropes for the pit.

Tim entered first, and cleared a lot of loose rocks as he went. I followed; then Pat and Ken. At the turn-off, Tim led. At first, there were some large boulders to climb over and pretty straightforward

passage. We passed a small pool of water, and soon came to a low dog-leg crawl. At the end of the dog-leg, there was a possible lead going down a hole, straight ahead. I dropped down into this chamber, which turned out not to go. Coming back out was not nearly as easy as dropping in! I needed to remove a 9 volt battery from my shirt pocket to fit through! It's amazing how things change when gravity isn't working for you.

We were now presented with an up slope passage that was not very big, or easy. It was like climbing up through breakdown. For some reason, I led off on this pitch. It seemed to go on and on, but I think we may have gained 50 or 60 feet in altitude. As I neared the top, I spotted a hand line hanging the last 10 feet to the top. I clipped into the line and continued to the top, which presented a window. I looked from the window down the other side of what we had just climbed up. I could see a small ledge not too far down on my right. At this point, I rolled onto my back, and reached through the window and grabbed the anchor webbing and hauled



**Last 10 feet going up to top of Saddle** *Photo by Ken*



**Tim chimneying up Crevice toward Saddle (tough)** *Photo by Gordy*

myself through. After squirming my legs through the hole, I swung to the side and lowered myself to the ledge. Then I started thinking... you know... It might be nice to have some more gear right now! Tim passed my pack out to me and I took out my 50' rope and clipped it into the link on the anchor. Tim followed, and then Pat. Ken decided to forgo this particular nonsense! Pat descended the drop using his munter hitch. Tim just climbed down. And I rappelled down using my rack. At the bottom of the drop there was a lead that dropped down and went off to the left. It sounded like Kenny was

right there! The three of us at the bottom decided to forge ahead briefly to see the Rover Room, and not get separated from Ken for too long. We entered the Rover Room from under/behind a huge boulder. The room had some HUGE breakdown blocks suspended in several places. There were also many very large cracks which did not seem to attest to any great stability of the place! In one corner



**Tim on the inside slope of Saddle**

*Photo by Gordy*



**Pat and Tim heading to the Rover Room**

*Photo by Gordy*

of the room, we climbed through some breakdown and spotted a low passage with water in it. This looks to be the way on to Fool's Pit. From a slightly higher vantage point, Tim spotted some PVC pipes which were the remains of some scaling poles which had not made it out of the cave yet.

As we exited, Tim dropped into the small lead and was following Ken's voice. Kenny had dropped his gloves and Tim found them. (or at least one of them) He seemed so close, but no connection is indicated on the map. How nice that would be to circumvent the Saddle!

Pat went up the pitch using his ascenders as an assist to climbing. Tim just climbed up. (naturally!) And I used my ascending gear. It actually was easier to just climb manually near the top. Pat went through the window first. As I got through the window and brought my legs around and in, I realized that the rope was between my

legs and presenting a problem. I called Pat to pull some slack for me, and soon heard him let out a yell. There really was no place to stand on the top of the saddle and he got a cramp. Tim was waiting on my ledge, and it was easy for him to feed some slack up to me so I could get off the rope. Thanks, Tim! Going back down the Saddle was about as demanding as going up. That gravity thing again! We made our way to the exit climb and out. It seemed a long way out! The rope had so much stretch to it in the most inconvenient times! We exited in the greenhouse and made our way back to the truck. As soon as I was standing upright and walking, my lower back and hips started tightening up.

Tim left on his own, and Pat, Ken, and I opted to go to the Spruce Creek Tavern for steak sandwiches and fries. Before we turned, Pat wanted to check out some place



Gordy, expanded his limits on this trip *Photo by Pat*



Ken ( was beat up by the cave) *Photo by Gordy*

at the next crossroads. It turned out that his old college roommate was back up from Florida. We pulled in and had a little visit before heading off for chow. The tavern was REALLY busy all day long, and we were done with our sandwiches and asked three times before we finally got our tray of special low-cholesterol fries.

Leading out on climbs and certain other maneuvers is possibly a little out of character for me. If there is a lesson from this trip, I'd say this: if you are going to be geared up, have all of your gear on or ready BEFORE you need it – not after!

WHAT WAS I THINKING?

## A Day in Rockbridge County

Okay, so what am I doing in Rockbridge County? For those of you who may not know, Rockbridge County is near the head of the Shenandoah Valley about 150 miles down I-81. Lexington is the principal town. Its main claim to fame is Natural Bridge in the southern portion of the county. Rockbridge seems to have been largely overlooked as a tourist destination for cavers. Glade, Fountain, and Grand Caverns in Augusta County to the north, and 3-D Maze, Mad Steer, etc. in Rockingham, north of Augusta, along with Island Forge, Paxton's, Warm River, and Porters in Allegany and Bath counties to the west seem to be the usual caves of choice in that part of Virginia. On hundreds of trips to caves in TAG, lower Virginia, and West Virginia Rockbridge County was nothing more than an entering and leaving sign posted along the interstate.

Out of curiosity, I looked in Douglas' Caves of Virginia and saw that even back then nearly seventy caves were listed for the county. The largest is Cave Spring, with close to a mile of wet muddy passages. The cave is gated but the owner does allow visitation, although he was not home when we checked on this particular Sunday. Our host for the day, Tony Preston, who is a caver and one of the leaders of the Rockbridge County Cave Survey, informed us that there are around 200 caves in the county, most of which have been surveyed.

I still haven't said how I ended up here in the first place. As is generally known, I have a rather fanatical passion for deep pits, especially those deeper than 100 feet. Now wait just a minute, you're thinking; hundred foot pits,

Shenandoah Valley, Rockbridge County??!! Who are you kidding?? Well, I have an old West Virginia caving buddy, John Fredericks, who many years ago had told me of a pit called Murdering Creek, which he had heard about from an old caving buddy of his, John Robinson, who used to live in the area. He, John F., had never been there, but John R. had, and he (John F.) was pretty sure it was in Rockbridge County. It was about fifteen years ago that John F. first told me about the pit. I was skeptical, because, after all, there are no hundred foot pits in the Shenandoah Valley. From 1968 on, I spent many years checking out reported deep valley pits mentioned in Douglas. All turned out to be grossly exaggerated in depth, or else horribly narrow, greatly offset, broken or climbable drops, or otherwise just not very pit-like at all. The geology of the valley is simply not very conducive to the development of a really deep pit, so why would I take such a story seriously.

I had a few phone conversations with John Robinson over the past fifteen years, but he had been living in Atlanta, Ga. since 1990, and seemed to have generally retired from caving. Even his very good friend, John F., had not seen him in many years. As luck would have it, John R. paid John F. a visit to his home in Beckley, W.Va. last November. The conversation turned to past pitting adventures and I guess my name came up. The two Johns called me for chat, and with a little urging I convinced John R. to see if he could relocate a Giles County pit that neither I nor John F. had been able to find. John R. was successful and I drove down the next day. We were joined by another old caving buddy, Randy Rumer, and the four

of us had a great time reminiscing. The pit, John Smith Cave, turned out to be a nice 118 footer. I was impressed by John R.'s ability to find remote holes he hadn't been to in twenty years, and the subject of the Rockbridge County pit came up. John still had family in Lexington, and despite living in Atlanta himself, he offered to see what he could do about setting up a trip to Murdering Creek for me.

Having rambled on for the last four paragraphs, I now return to the focus of this story. The property had changed hands, but John tracked down the present owner who turned out to be a caver himself, the aforementioned Tony Preston. Tony told us the cave went by several names, including Murdering Creek, Chittums, and Cheatams (I later looked in Douglas, and to my surprise, all three were listed, and with a reference to a possible deep pit). Tony said they had mapped the upper level, but to his knowledge, only one small group had actually been down the pit in recent memory. We were more than welcome to check it out. He also told us about a few other caves and pits on his and neighboring properties. Originally one of our trip objectives had been to map a small vertical cave containing a pit in the 70 foot range with some passage within a stone's throw of Tony's house. To this end, I had thrown my survey gear in my car. Unfortunately, the unstable entrance to this cave, called Cabin Cave, had recently collapsed. Tony thought it would take a considerable effort to reopen it, but if we wanted to do some survey, there was a nearby pit with a little cave on a neighbor's property which had not yet been mapped. That sounded like a good plan.

Figuring that Murdering Creek would occupy the most time and result in us getting pretty sleazed, I opted to survey the unmapped pit first. Tony said they (Rockbridge County Cave Survey) often preferred unusual names. He didn't have one for the new pit yet, but the property owners name was Burrows. I put that on the map and told Tony they could give it another name later if they wished. The pit dropped 32' from the cleaner high side rig point. It was a wall drop, but pretty spacious. True to Tony's description, there wasn't much cave at the bottom. Just two shots from the base of the entrance pit took John and me to deep water, with no observable leads. Total depth was 52.2 feet, with about 45 feet of passage. I sent a copy of the map to Tony and included a copy for this article as well. Having completed this task, John and I went back to my car to get a much longer rope for Murdering Creek and off we went for more underground fun.

Murdering Creek Cave seems to be developed along a deep fissure. When John dropped the pit decades ago, he said he had threaded his way down through a narrow crevice just inside the entrance. Tony suggested that it would be best to work our way to the far end of the upper level passage, staying near the top of the narrow canyon, before rigging the pit. We tied my 250 to a large tree at the entrance and I started into the cave with the end that was to go down the pit. Traversing the fissure needed care, but was not especially difficult. There were sufficient hand and foot holds, and in places the canyon was narrow enough for chimneying. A slip would not have resulted in a fall down the fissure anyway, because it was too narrow or else blocked by breakdown in most places. After about sixty feet of traverse, I

popped out into the top of a somewhat larger room about 20 feet long and five feet wide. The walls were steeply sloping and coated in flowstone. There was indeed a deep looking crack at floor level about fifteen feet below my entry point into the room.

At the far end of the room two stalagmites on the steep flowstone wall looked like good rig points. I carefully chimneyed down to the bottom of the room and peered down the drop. The pit was basically a long crevice about two feet wide near the top and seemed to be fairly deep. John had been uncoiling the rope at the entrance as I traversed the canyon so it wouldn't get tangled. I fed all the rest of the 250 down the drop, and by the time John arrived, the pit was rigged. I estimated there might be as much as 150 feet of rope in the pit, but it didn't have much weight. I figured it was most likely laying in a big tangle somewhere on a ledge. At this time I still wasn't expecting the pit to be very much.

While traversing the top of the fissure, reverberations from a large waterfall sounded up from the depths. John said there had been just a small falls when he had done the pit those many years ago. Tony told us we might run into water because it had been raining heavily a few days prior to our visit. I was fully expecting to rappel into deep water. I took the dummy end of my 200' tape and started into the pit. The fissure maintained the same two foot wide dimensions as I descended. About thirty feet down, I could see that the rope was piled about twenty feet below me on what appeared to be a breakdown bridge. The pit continued downward on either side of the bridge at about the same width. There was a slight offset about ten feet past the breakdown bridge.

This was the only part of the drop that I would call snug. It was more awkward than tight because you had to slide under a ledge and the rope tended to pull back into a crack when it was loaded. I made a mental note to put in a bolt for re-belay here should I ever return. The rest of the drop continued pretty much as before. The roar from the falls was increasing. I could see rippling water far below me.

The last part of the drop had some thin chert ledges, but other than these, there was nothing I would really call gnarly. A six-inch ledge right at water level made changing over easy enough. The end of the rope trailed in the water with only a couple feet to spare. The fissure was 3-4 feet wide and continued in both directions. Everything was wall to wall water. I could not see the falls, but the noise from it made communication nearly impossible. I signaled for John to pull up slack on the tape. We got a measurement of 109' from the actual lip, 119' from the first rig point, and 124 from the top backup rig point. Both rig points were on the wall right above the pit with little offset, so the depth could be subject to different interpretation. Plus, if the bottom hadn't been full of water, this would also add to the depth. Tony said he thought the other group actually got a measurement of 136', but they may have taken a reading from the top of the room above the pit, and also there had been no water at the bottom at that time so they might have been able to go a bit deeper. I'm not going to say that Murdering Creek was a great pit, because that would be a lie. I will say that considering its location it was much nicer and more vertical than I would have thought possible. Average dimensions were 2-3 feet wide. The drop was basically two long freefall sections with only one

minor offset. I have certainly been in worse pits. John elected not to go down and we de-rigged.

Earlier in the day Tony had shown us a cave right above his driveway, that his wife and friends had dug open. Named Scurry Cave, this turned out to be several hundred feet of fairly decent cave. Tony had installed a neat cedar pole ladder down one of the short drops. There were even a few bats and some formations. Nothing like having caves in your backyard. I still had some time left so we thanked our host, Tony, and John showed me his parent's house in Lexington, which was only about a fifteen minute drive away. He took me to a nice little horizontal cave called Bathers located in the cliffs above the Maury River and within view of an impressive bridge where I-64 crosses the river. The cave had a picturesque stream issuing from the walk-in entrance and then cascading down the cliffs to the river. The cave was mostly of walking dimensions and was most noted for a section containing rimstone pools, which were quite pretty when water was flowing over them.

It was dark and getting colder when we got back to our vehicles. I thoroughly enjoyed my day of caving in Rockbridge County. Many thanks to John Robinson for his leg work in making all the arrangements for a smooth trip. A special thanks to Tony Preston for his gracious hospitality. I plan to return sometime and help with some of the surveying in the county. To conclude; nice people, pretty country, interesting karst, and the only hundred foot pit in the entire Shenandoah Valley.

A great caving adventure.

Terry McClanathan

## Dale Ibberson

The memorial service for Dale Ibberson was held at the Linglestown American Legion on March 20th, 2009. Dale would have been proud of the number of cavers that turned out for the occasion as well as those in the other areas of his life, not cave related. Attendees from the F.C.G. were Pat Minnick, Anne Shepard, R. Lee Peck, Don Arrowood and myself. Some others there were Joel Jacobs, Alan Horn, George & Karen Bange, Randy Hurst, Jay Herbein and dozens more of whose names escape me but were just as important to Dale and family. Judy, Dale's longtime friend and companion spent a good part of her life sharing Dale's dreams and successes and like so many of us, will miss having his advice and knowledge of nearly any subject that he was asked about.

Dale has been a part of my entire caving life since I was introduced to the sport in 1980. When I had a question on collecting caving history, Dale would tell me if it was worth buying or if it was common. If you needed to know the status of a cave, if he didn't know, he would either find the information and call you back or refer you to someone who had the answer. Dale was a part of the exploration of McFaddens and Fantasy Caves in Huntingdon County. By the hundreds they came to say their good-bye to Dale Ibberson and to make their comments and farewell addresses. The caving community has lost a great asset and the hole will not be easily filled. So long old friend.

Ken Jones

# Loan should allow Mo. family to stay in cave home

By BETSY TAYLOR, Associated Press Writer – Tue Mar 10, 3:27 pm ET



AP – In this Feb. 26, 2009 file photo, the home of Curt and Deborah Sleeper is seen in Festus, Mo.

ST. LOUIS – An eastern Missouri family expects they'll be able to stay in their home built inside a cave after accepting an offer of a private mortgage contract. Curt Sleeper said Tuesday that a New Jersey-based business offered a 15-year loan with a low interest rate that should allow the family to keep their home in Festus, about 30 miles south of St. Louis.

"We're excited about it." To celebrate: "We're throwing a party at a friend's cave," he said.

Curt and Deborah Sleeper fell in love with the unique geography of an old mining cave in 2004 and figured out how to build a house inside of it. But they were having trouble making a large payment that was coming due on the property, prompting them to put their home up for auction on eBay.

They no longer plan to auction the home through the Web site, but Sleeper says the house will remain there until paperwork is completed on the loan.

Jon Demarest, owner of Logical Source Inc., confirmed that his the Fairfield, N.J.-based archiving and medical record company offered the Sleepers a mortgage.

"I was intrigued by it," Demarest said. "Someone who has put that much into it shouldn't lose it."

The Sleepers built their cave home with the help of friends. A gray timber frame exterior was constructed in the 37-foot-tall opening of the cave. Thirty-seven sliding glass doors also are used as windows throughout the three-story, three-bedroom home, allowing natural light throughout the finished sections of the home.

The walls and ceiling are natural cave stone, but it has amenities including a large soaking tub in one bathroom and a fully equipped kitchen.

Sleeper said his family's struggle to keep their home has resonated with many, including some who have been unable to pay their own mortgages.

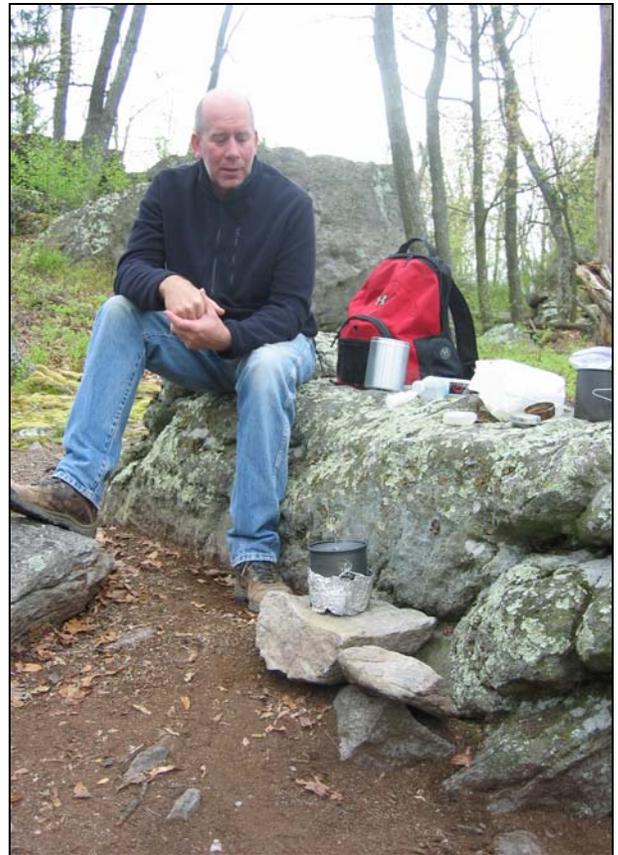
"I've got 8,000 e-mails in my inbox. Everyone wants to wish me luck, but also tell me their heartache," he said.

"It's certainly been almost life changing — except I'm keeping my cave, so not that life changing," he said. "I'd love to hear the end of the story read, 'and they lived happily ever after.'"

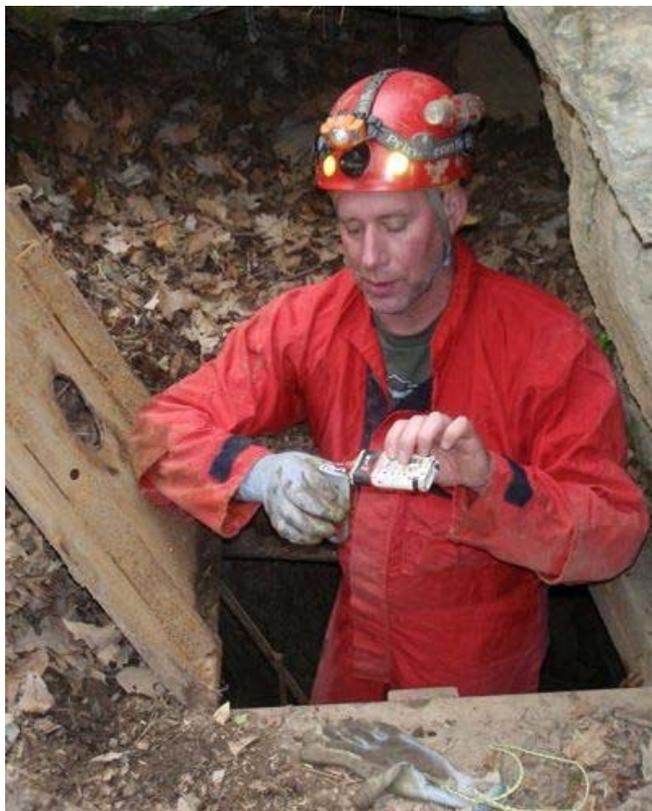
## Cleversburg Sink Water Check & Five Mile AT Hike

With Jonathan's new work schedule where he works Thursday thru Monday and my schedule where I work Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and every other Wednesday we find that the only day we are off at the same time is every other Wednesday. This makes scheduling a caving (or hiking) activity a little tight.

We had set aside April 29 as a possible day to work with the Shippensburg guy who wants to install an electronic water depth gauge in Cleversburg Sink. We planned to take an AT hike in the morning, then work with him in the afternoon if he could make it. As it turned out, it was final exam week at the university and the water gauge project would have to be rescheduled for May 13. So Jonathan and I planned to do our hike and then stop by



**Jonathan at Chimney Rocks on AT boiling water for lunch on Ken's Alcohol Penny Stove. Photo by Ken T**



**JP doing lock maintenance.**

*Photo by Ken T*

Cleversburg to measure the water level and police up any trash.

We started our five mile hike on Coral Ridge Rd on South Mountain and hiked south over Buzzard Peak, stopped by Chimney Rocks, cooked a small lunch, then continued down past the Hermitage Cabin and the shelters at Tumbling Run to Old Forge Road. All in all it took 4 hours. The weather was overcast all morning and five minutes after we arrived at the car and started heading to South Mountain to pick up my car, it started to rain. Good Timing!

We arrived at Cleversburg around 1:00 PM grabbed helmets and lights and headed toward the cave. The Kiosk is in good shape. Howard's recent tacking job is holding well and the Kiosk looks very presentable! The lock opened easily. Jonathan handed out several small logs that had been tossed into the entrance through the lock access hole and we descended. We brought along a small shovel to scrape some of the 12 inches of deep mud that had accumulated by the old gate inside where you had to kneel down and slide through to the entrance room. We'd found that that mud would trash you even if you just spent 5 minutes checking the water. It helped a lot. The water level is still very high.

We figure it to be about 29 feet. (10 feet above the top of the new ladder). With the water that high, it would have been a difficult day to place a water measuring instrument in the window in the wall that overlooks the passage at the bottom of the ladder.



**Jonathan scraping a foot of mud from in front of old gate.**



**Water in entrance room covering crevice down to ladder About 30' deep.**

The window was half submerged, leaving an opening of only a foot with which to work. It would have required some swimming to get to the wall. We took a few pictures and headed out. Jonathan did some lock maintenance and we hauled out a large hose that had been tossed into the sink. All in all everything is in good shape.

We saw no bats, dead or alive or white nosed.



Hauling a long piece of hose out of the sink

It was a nice day! Ken Tayman. □

### NSS News Cover Photo Credit

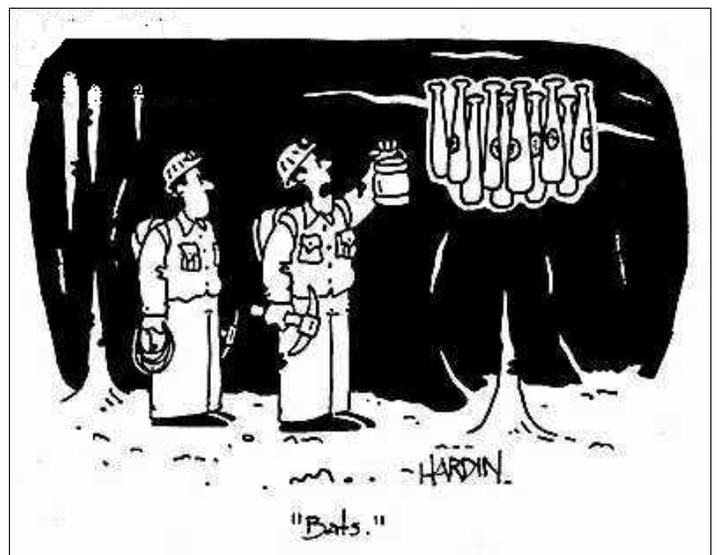
Franklin County Grotto member, Todd Roberts, had his close-up photo of a cave cricket selected for the cover of the April issue of NSS News. It's a Great Shot! He says he took it on a VAR '07 trip to Roadside Pit. A caver up ahead of him was jammed up at a rebelay, and while he was waiting for the traffic jam to clear, he figured he would play around with his camera and just take a few pics. Todd's photos have also graced the cover of several issues of the Franklin County Grotto's news letter the "Cumberland Valley Caver"

## CAVE BUCK\$

*As of May 2009*

Franklin County Grotto sponsors a "Cave Bucks" program that solicits voluntary contributions from its cavers of \$1.00 per cave visited during the month. The money collected is then forwarded to a Cave conservancy or other organization for the specific purpose of buying or leasing caves. Since starting in February 1998, FCG has collected and donated almost \$900.00 to the following organizations:

Tytoona Cave Preserve.....	\$ 40
Southeastern Cave Conservancy.....	\$ 54
Pennsylvania Cave Conservancy.....	\$232
West Virginia Cave Conservancy.....	\$271
Mid-Atlantic Karst Conservancy.....	<u>\$286</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$883</b>



# Water Level Research at Cleversburg Sink

*by Ken Tayman*

Finally, after 15 years of fruitless discussions and suggestions to implement some type of scientific study of the fluctuating water levels in Cleversburg Sink, FCG appears to be on the verge of participating in just such a project.

Professor Tom Feeney from the Dept of Geography and Earth Science at Shippensburg University contacted Jonathan Peterson a couple of months ago to determine if access to Cleversburg Sink was possible and described a project he and some of his grad students were involved in. He was checking water flow in several streams and ponds and wanted to include the cave's extreme water levels fluctuations in the study.

Jonathan and I met up with Tom on Wednesday, May 13<sup>th</sup>, and re-familiarized him with the cave entrance and current water level. Tom had never seen the water quite this high before. It was still at about 10 feet above the top of the ladder, with only the tops of a few pieces of the large breakdown protruding through the top of the water.

We discussed placement of the sensor in the window on the entrance room wall and running the data cable up thru the blue drain pipe to the upper side of the old concrete gate. This would allow for the periodic collection of data without going down into the entrance room, and also insure the end of the cable remains high and dry, even if the water rose to extremely high levels that completely flood the entrance room. Jonathan said he has seen the water all the way up to the bottom of the concrete gate.



**Prof. Thomas Feeney, Dept of Geography and Earth Science, Shippensburg University** *Photo by Ken T*

He will be acquiring a new submersible water level sensor and data logger with 75' or 100' data cable. It will log depth, temp, time and chemical properties of the water at preselected time intervals, ranging from seconds, to minutes to hours or days.

Tom also mentioned that his students had been doing a surface survey of streams and ponds in the area that it had stopped at the Cleversburg gate. One of our tasks would be to survey from the inside of the cave where the sensor would be located, up to the gate and tie that into the surface survey.

Dollars for this project have been approved but won't be available until July 1, 2009. □

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## “Quote of the quarter”

Its "Rupert" Cave, not "Ruperts"

*TL to JJ re sink cleanup*

\*\*\*\*\*

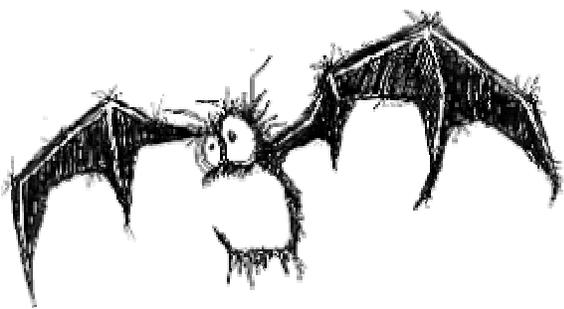
## Scout Trip to Peiper’s

*March 7, 2009*

One of our long time members asked the grotto if they could “**help**” arrange a trip for his son’s scout troop. So, Pat made arrangements for Peiper’s Cave. He pulled together the grotto helmets and lights, made sure all the releases were signed.

He also asked that the trip be announced on the grotto calendar and request assistance from other adult members to help on the trip. The calendar went out and three additional adults showed up to assist with the kids. They were Gordy Ley, Jim Hart and Lee Peck.

According to Gordy, the trip went well and all seemed to have a good time. Pictures were taken. □



**White Nose Syndrome!!!!!!**

## Newsletter Dilemma!

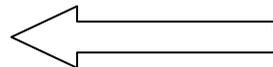
Since the grotto has been cancelling most of its activities due to the moratorium on caving, getting articles for the newsletter has been even more difficult than usual. So I have been trying to come up with a few new ideas to round out the issue.

One idea is to do an Op/Ed page. This would be where you could express an opinion regarding the moratorium, closing of caves, present ideas on how we can get back into caves in the foreseeable future, Etc. If you’ve been reading the FCGList posting you may have seen a few examples that might fall into the category of “Opinion”. I would ask that you keep the opinion to a length no longer than this article here. (150 -200 word limit) It’s OK to disagree, but no name calling please. Some sarcasm is allowable. I will edit as necessary. Ken T. □

### Cleversburg Sink

The current water level is: **29 feet**

**>Entrance room**



Top of ladder (19’)

Mid ladder

Base of ladder

Sand room

Crawls sumped

Dry

Checked by: Jonathan Peterson and Ken Tayman on May 13, 2009. Not more than a few inches of change since April.

# WNS Updates

*I am sorry to say that all of the recent news regarding the spread and effect of WNS is bad. Below are "excerpts" from some of the more recent announcements and actions taken to hopefully slow down the spread of this bat killing syndrome.*

## **More bad breaking news from Virginia.**

**(February 25)** Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation biologists entered Breathing Cave and found several signs of an early stage of WNS outbreak. The bats were roosting in their normal areas and most were in typical hibernation states. A few were awake and active with 10% to 15% of the little brown bats showing fungal growths around their muzzles, on forearms and wing membranes. The only mortalities we found involved three eastern pipistrelles. Other species were noticed but did not appear to be affected. Based on our observations the owners of Breathing Cave have closed the cave.

**(March 3)** VADNH personnel visited Clover Hollow Cave in Giles County, and found numerous dead bats, approximately 200 individuals staged near the entrance of the cave, and evidence of fungus on individual bats, following reports of a bat flying daytime outside in the snow.

**(March 4)** The owner of Clarke's Cave in Bath County, Virginia has closed the cave. This decision was reached after consultation with Virginia's Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Clarke's is an important Indiana bat cave.

## **Three new WNS suspect sites in Virginia:**

**Cumberland County:** Photographs of a bat on the side of a building showed the bat appeared to have the fungus.. Results are pending. This is a county that does not have karst and still trying to determine the origin of the bat. There are a couple mineral mines that need to be looked into.

**Bland County:** (Newberry-Bane) This cave is one of our larger little brown sites and contains both Indiana (about 250 individuals) and VA big-eared bats (small numbers, 6-10 individuals). This site was surveyed back in January and we were happy to NOT see signs of WNS. Over this past weekend the site was revisited to see if bats had left the cave or not. Upon reviewing photos of little browns we spotted the classic white muzzle on an individual in the middle of a cluster. Specimens will be collected and sent to Madison.

**Rockingham County:** (Endless Caverns). Members of the VA Cave Board held a meeting at the conference center and were given a tour of the cave after the meeting. There are a couple of small clusters of little browns (60-80 individuals) along one of the passages and noted the fungus on the wings of some of the bats. Several specimens were collected and sent them to Madison. We are working with the owners to incorporate a WNS education component and decontamination procedures.

**Indiana DNR closes caves to slow bat disease spread** Caves on state properties will temporarily close as a precaution against the uncontrolled spread of white-nosed syndrome (WNS), which is killing bats in unprecedented numbers This is effective May 1 and extends through April 2010. This closes public access to all caves, sinkholes, tunnels and abandoned mines on DNR-owned land, except Twin Caves at Spring Mill State Park. Twin Caves is able to remain open because it is a water cave with controlled boat access only and the WNS fungus settles in soil. The Hoosier National Forest has closed all caves, as has Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

*WNS update continued...*

### **Forest Service tries to halt spread of bat fungus**

The U.S. Forest Service is preparing to close thousands of caves and former mines in national forests in 33 states in an effort to control a fungus that has already killed an estimated 500,000 bats. Forest Service issued an emergency order last week for caves in 20 states from Minnesota to Maine. A second order covering the Forest Service's 13-state Southern region should be issued later this month. The sites will be closed for up to a year. This follows March's request by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for people to stay out of caves in 17 states. Last month, officials closed all of the caves in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

Many people who explore caves are not part of organized groups, so education will be key. The Forest Service order says people caught in a cave or mine face up to six months in jail and fines of up to \$10,000. Ewing said Forest Service officials will enforce the bans.

### **US Fish and Wildlife Service Northeast Region:**

***Moratorium*** The Service's cave advisory asks that cavers curtail all caving activity in WNS-affected states and adjoining states to protect bats from the spread of WNS. (at the time this advisory was issued, this included states from Maine to Tennessee and Kentucky to Ohio) The advisory also asks that cavers beyond WNS-affected states and adjacent states use clothing and gear that has never been in affected and adjacent states. And finally, cavers everywhere should avoid caves and mines during the bat hibernation period (winter) to avoid disturbing bats.

### **Franklin County Grotto:**

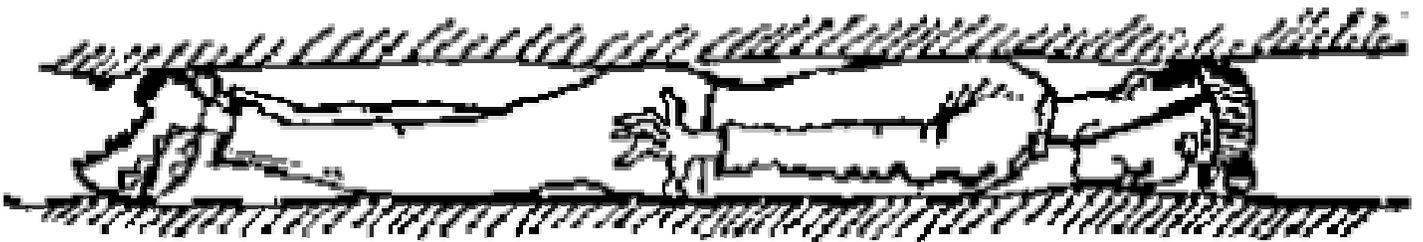
FCG has cancelled grotto caving trips in the near future in support of the moratorium. We have also sent out advisories to our Carnegie Cave User list requesting they honor the moratorium and avoid caving in Carnegie Cave. Also, we are attempting to educate the informal caving community of the serious nature of WNS by sending them periodic updates regarding new discoveries of WNS and keeping them informed of various agency's actions taken with respect to investigation, research and closures. We also sent \$100 to the BCI WNS Emergency Response Fund.



**Infected bats with the classic fungus growth around their noses that was the origin of the name White Nose Syndrome**

Kenneth Tayman, Editor  
13373 Sunrise Drive  
Blue Ridge Summit, PA 17214

## FRANKLIN COUNTY GROTTO



The Thumb Crawl Maneuver