



# The Region Record

Vol. XVI No. 1 Winter 2002-2003

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## Chairman's Column

Looking back on the past year, yes another year has come and gone, I find an increase in conservancies acting to purchase or protect caves, as well as individuals buying caves on their own. This all brings a question to mind, why are so many caves coming on the market? Are we actively seeking to bring caves to the market or is there something new, that is hidden to us, causing the general population to be afraid of possible liability associated with owning a cave? In the region there has been some five or six caves that have come on the market and in the country there have been many more. The conservancies have been doing a super job in going after these caves, but why so many in just a short time?

In the last year cavers have joined together to protect caves by gating three in the region, with the owners permission, and some three more are on the agenda in the near future. Most were or are being gated to control access, but still allow caver visitation.

There have been sink hole cleanups, along with cave cleanups.

All year grottos have joined together to get these items done along with many other projects. Thanks to all of you from the Region.

I would also like to thank all the groups and people who have hosted the VAR meets. I hope you had as much fun putting them on as we all had attending them.

Thanks once again and I hope we can make the coming year even better than this year.

*Craig*

## VAR Outstanding Service Awards 2002

by Meredith Hall Johnson

The three winners for the Virginia Region's Outstanding Service Awards for 2002 were: Miles Drake, Fred Grady, and Phil Lucas. Congratulations to them all and thanks from the Region for all their efforts.

Briefly, I will give you an idea why each was nominated and won.

**Miles Drake:** An active and enthusiastic caver for over 30 years, Miles Drake has many cave projects and discoveries under his belt. Among the caves he has helped to explore and map are Hellhole, Simmons-Mingo, and the caves in the Taylor Run area. One recurring accolade from his friends is the fact that Miles really

cares about his fellow cavers. (Thanks to Devin Kouts, Joanne Smith, and Linda Baker Devine for their input.)

**Fred Grady:** From his college days helping to organize Earth Day events, Fred Grady "has never stopped supporting ways to preserve our planet. Attend OTR and you will see Fred quietly slipping all over the grounds picking up collected aluminum cans and crushing them to go to a recycling center." Fred has helped keep the American Speleological History Association alive. And of course all of Fred's work with paleontology. I think every caver in VAR immediately thinks of Fred Grady when it comes to bones or artifacts in caves. He willingly listens to our descriptions and if something sounds promising, Fred will be glad to go take a look. (Thanks to Evelyn Bradshaw for her input.)

**Phil Lucas:** Phil Lucas "has made major discoveries" in the Virginia Region. "He's a Board member for CCV [Cave Conservancy of the Virginias] and he IS the VSS [Virginia Speleological Survey]." Because of his tireless efforts at collecting and documenting information on caves within the state, Virginia now has more than 4,000 caves on record. Without Phil's continued exploration and surveying zeal, many of these would have remained unknown. (Thanks for Walt Pirie for his input.)

## *The Region Record*

The *Region Record* is the quarterly publication of the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society. Any articles, announcements, or other materials of general interest to cavers in the Region are welcome. **Send all material to Bob Hoke (6304 Kaybro St., Laurel, MD 20707 (301) 725-5877, e-mail bobhoke@erols.com)**. Electronic submissions (e-mail or disk) are encouraged, but any form of input is welcome. Non-copyrighted material contained in the *Region Record* may be reprinted by organizations that are affiliated with the VAR or the NSS, provided that proper credit is given to the *Record* and the author. The opinions expressed herein are those of the individual author, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors, the VAR, the NSS, or their internal organizations.

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- New NSS members in the Region receive two complementary copies of the *Region Record*.
- Current NSS members moving into the Region from elsewhere receive two complementary copies. Current NSS members who move within the Region get no freebies.
- When a subscription is going to expire the last issue will be stamped "Time to Renew." No renewal notice is sent.
- When a person attends a VAR meeting he/she is automatically added to the list to receive the next four issues. If he/she is already on the list, four additional issues are added to the subscription.
- When multiple people live at the same address only one copy of each issue will be sent to the address unless a box requesting individual issues is checked on the VAR registration form or a request is sent to the Circulation Manager.

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## **Regional Calendar**

Mar. 15 Deadline for submitting material for the Spring issue of the *Region Record*.

Apr 18-20 **Annual Grand Caverns cleanup.** Help maintain this interesting commercial cave. Free food & camping. See flyer in this issue for more info

May 9-11, 2003 **Spring VAR meeting** at the Old Timers site near Elkins, WV. Hosted by DC Grotto and PSC. See article & flyer in this issue

Aug. 4-8, 2003 **2003 NSS Convention** in Porterville, CA.

### **LIST YOUR CLUB EVENTS HERE!**

If your club is hosting events of regional interest, send a notice to the *Region Record* editors and have the event added to the next *Record's* calendar. There is no charge for this valuable service.

## Silers Cave Gate Repairs

by Jim McConkey

As previously reported in the *Region Record*, many VAR cavers were involved the construction of the new gate in Silers Cave in the spring of 2001. In our rush to get the project completed in one weekend, we apparently forgot to weld one of the bars on the smaller side gate. The piece was wedged in so tightly when we put the gate up that no one noticed that it wasn't welded. Of course, it didn't take the vandals long to find it! They were able to remove the bar, squeeze through the gate, and get into the cave. Once inside, they could easily destroy the main lock. The route to the main parts of the cave involved squirming past and sliming a nice column, so we decided it was better to leave the main gate unlocked until we could repair the unwelded bar.

The cave is also regularly visited by Mid-Appalachian Region (MAR) cavers. Many expressed a desire to help with the original gating project, but few could show up for various reasons. When the MAR decided to hold its Fall 2002 meeting just down the road from Silers, the temptation of a large number of pre-organized helpers was too great to pass up. We asked anyone visiting Silers during the MAR to help haul the generator, welder, and other supplies up to the cave on their way in, but otherwise told them to enjoy their trip. Craig Hindman, Mike Eppley, Meredith Hall Johnson, John Pearson and I spent the day repairing the unwelded bar, removing the old manacle gate, and blocking off a crawlway which was a potential bypass to the gates. We accomplished everything we set out to do, and the cave is once again locked.

For anyone who doesn't know, Silers is the second longest cave in the panhandle of West Virginia, and the longest cave in that area

generally open to cavers. In accordance with the landowner's wishes, and to protect a rare amphipod, access to the cave is limited to two trips a month, and absolutely no cave-for-pay operations are permitted. The cave has its own e-mail for obtaining access: [SilersCave@myrealbox.com](mailto:SilersCave@myrealbox.com). It is set up to automatically reply to all inquiries with the access restrictions and current bookings. If you just want to check when the cave is available, just send a blank message with "Just Checking" in the subject. If you write back requesting a date, I will e-mail a confirmation back. Those without e-mail can call me at 410-526-6224. Now that the cave is locked again, I will need time to send you the key. Please do not call on Friday expecting to get in over the weekend!

More information on the cave, along with pictures of the new gate construction and repair projects can be found at [www.caves.org/grotto/sligo/silers.htm](http://www.caves.org/grotto/sligo/silers.htm).

## Tri-State Grotto Paints Another Gate

by John Pearson

On October 12, 2002, members of Tri-State Grotto, working with the West Virginia Department of Natural Resources (DNR), painted the gate to Sinnett Cave. Shortly thereafter, I was asked just how is that a conservation project?

Back in 1998, the American Cave Conservation Association, under the direction of Roy Powers, replaced the gates of Sinnett and Thorn Mountain Caves to protect the maternity colonies for the Virginia Big-Eared Bat (*Corynorhinus townsendii virginianus*), a Federally endangered species that resides in large numbers in some of the caves of Pendleton County, WV. Roy has designed and built

numerous bat-friendly gates to keep cavers out during the times that the bats use the caves. The gates are built from four inch angle iron beams that are reinforced and welded in such a fashion that they do not hinder bats from coming and going. Placement of the gates is carefully considered, because predators can sit at the gates to wait for the bats as they slow to leave the cave through a gate.

However, these gates do rust and eventually weaken so that cave vandals and trespassers can attempt to do their thing. It has been discovered that by allowing these gates to rust for a period of time, you can paint them with Extend ©, a paint that chemically bonds with the rust to form a protective coating. This prevents further rusting and thus maintains the integrity of the gate. The paint is quite expensive and is thinner than paint that you would use on your house. It looks like a cream color in the can, turns a silver color when it bonds with the rust and is black if you spill any on yourself.

Tri-State, along with many other volunteers and organizations, have worked with Craig Stihler, the head non-game biologist for DNR, building and painting quite a few gates over the last few years. The reason that I wanted to help out on these projects is because the caves that are gated, happen to be some of the more famous caves in the annals of NSS history. Schoolhouse Cave was gated back in 1999. As this cave had always been closed since I can remember, it was my only legitimate opportunity to see the cave entrance before the new gate was completed. Those that remember the cave prior to the gate being built will remember a chain link fence around the sink hole, which prevented one from actually seeing the cave entrance. Roy says that that is the largest cave gate that he ever constructed.

Other gates that have been constructed include Hoffman School

Cave and Minor Rexrode Cave back in 2000, with the painting project done in the early autumn of 2001, after the bats had left. Again, this was my only opportunity to see Minor Rexrode. I had visited Hoffman School back in the early 1980's while ridge walking the area, back before I knew better. There are at least six other caves that Tri-State, along with other groups, have helped gate prior to my time, including Kings Quarry, the C&O Canal Mines, Cave Hollow – Arbogast, Jones Quarry, Molers and Lamberts.

As we had a lot of rain prior to the date that we painted the Sinnett gate, the painting of the Thorn Mountain Cave gate was postponed due to dampness. We will be re-scheduling the painting project for next year at a date that has yet to be determined.

## **Weather — Frightful, Cave Conservation — Delightful!**

by Jeff Bray

So we're finally getting a real winter around here! For some, that may restrict caving activities due to nasty roads, and for others, it just makes caving more thrilling. Either way, the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC) is working to at least keep the caving option available.

Unless you've been literally living in a Virginia cave the past few months, you've probably heard that there's been some activity by the WVCC over in West Virginia. Actually, it's been quite busy over here. The annual WVCC Banquet took place on the second Saturday of November in Lewisburg. About 60 people attended and enjoyed a great evening of spirits, dinner, and saw a presentation about the work I've been involved in using

Microgravity to locate caves. This technology has produced a number of interesting results and has been quite successful for our endeavors. Many of the projects that I've worked on with many others were highlighted in this talk.

Of course, that included the work that was completed involving the search for Maxwellton Sink Cave. This cave has been on the WVCC's radar screen for quite some time, and finally in October, after a great deal of Microgravity work and digging, we can safely say that we have re-entered the cave, which had a short "open" lifespan in the early 70s. The owner and WVCC has negotiated a lease, but the cave won't be open until the entrance is stabilized completely. This may take a little time, but it's all in an effort to make this a safe way in for cavers to enjoy for a very, very long time. More information on this project's history is in the upcoming issue of *The Open Cave* (WVCC's newsletter).

We're also pleased to announce that the final payment was made on the Lightner's Cave Preserve property, containing the Lightner Entrance to McClung's Cave! This cave was our first outright purchase, and it's great to have this project paid off quickly. This is also just in time since we have also entered into a contract to purchase the Persinger Entrance to Benedicts Cave. This has also been on our radar screen for some time, and finally will be completed by year's end. We had to do some digging to get back into the cave, but wow! It sure seems like it will be a pleasant cave to visit: lots of nice trunk passage, and a total of over 14 miles of cave altogether. Watch for announcements about the official opening of this cave, and there is more information in the upcoming issue of *The Open Cave*.

Don't worry, Virginia, we're not forgetting about you! We want to help out everywhere we can, as evidenced by our ownership of Island Ford Cave. The board is

working to find ways to keep folks from dumping garbage in this cave. It creates an interesting dilemma since it is so close to the highway, and there has been a great deal of garbage dumped in the cave recently. We're thankful for all who have done cleanups there, especially recently, and want to encourage everyone to continue this work. Setting an example is the easiest way to educate, and hopefully the continued example set by the VAR grottos at this cave will catch on. We do need more eyes throughout the region, so Virginia and Maryland, keep informing us of projects in which we may be able to help!

That's not all that's been happening. We've got a new board member, a new membership secretary, a new Web site, and a new president! You can read all about this in the upcoming issue of *The Open Cave* as well. If you don't get *The Open Cave*, then your membership is not up to date! Go to our Web site: [www.wvcc.net](http://www.wvcc.net) and print out the new membership or renewal form, and send it to us. Our address is: WVCC, PO Box 243, Frankford, WV 24938. Pretty soon you will even be able to renew online. We also take credit cards now! And all your donations are tax-deductible. Since we have this new property to pay for, we need your help. So please, take the time to renew or join, or help us out any way you can, whether it's through donations, volunteering some time with cleanups, at events, or on committees.

## **Fall VAR 2002 Re- cap**

By Meredith Hall Johnson

Thank God it's over! Hosting a VAR is a big job. When I volunteered BATS to host this past fall's VAR a year ago, I knew what I was getting into. I had chaired Spring

VAR 1984 (or was it 1985?) for RASS. My only regret after that was not having a sound system to play music after the band quit playing. The party kind of died after that.

I guess I saw a chance to redeem myself by chairing this VAR. I had a lot of good help. Gordon Birkhimer arranged for most of the printing and designed the "3 stalactites with bats" logo. Jacque Miley took care of getting a caterer. Janet Tinkham procured the all-important port-a-potties. Ray Herlong arranged for the many and crowded cave trips that went out. Ellie Florance set up and manned the Coffee Saloon, an idea I loved even though I don't drink coffee. I put together the Web site and edited the Guidebook. Michael Young did the design and layout for the Guidebook. Many other BATS members helped in ways too numerous to mention. And most jumped right up during the event whenever I asked for help, which was fairly often. Thanks all.

Many non-BATS folks helped out immensely as well. In particular, Wade Berdeaux of Endless Caverns made many suggestions and improvements on the campground in anticipation of VAR. His mom, Martha, and sister, Kathy, were very helpful too. My daughter, Kelsea, and I stopped by Endless Caverns many, many times to ask questions, look around, finalize plans, and just enjoy the place. All the folks who own and work at Endless Caverns were nice and helpful. That made the planning of such a big event much easier. And John Fox, who played the wonderful tunes on Friday night, came to the rescue on Saturday night. When a large and unexpected glitch came up (the band could not come at the very last minute), John graciously agreed to play music again. Too bad I didn't have as much dancing energy that night as I had the night before!

I especially want to thank all the cavers who led cave trips: Aqua-

John Pearson; Cave Mountain-Pauline Apling and Mike Kubatz; Cedar Hill-Rafi Reyes and Allan Weberg; Church Mountain-Carrie Bader and Nikki Bennett; Glade-Ted Dangerfield and Kelsea Johnson; Holsingers-Susi Pearce and me; Linville Quarry- David Elkowitz and Reine Winote; Shenandoah Wild-Kevin Franke and David Johnston; Sites-Vitas Eidukevicius and Jonathan Peterson; 3-d Maze-Alan Staiman; and Chris Reasonover- Crystal Caverns Conservation trip. Sorry but thanks to those of you I missed; I never did get a good list. Thanks to Mike "TinY" Manke, Steve Bennett, and Josh Babcock for teaching the well-attended vertical class too. Also thanks to those parents who took a bunch of young kids to Sugar Nut; while it was not an "official" VAR trip, it certainly helped out. Because of all these cavers giving their time to show some local (and not so local) caves during VAR, between 180 and 200 people got underground that day. I wonder if that isn't some sort of record.

I'd also like to thank all the people who wrote articles or blurbs for the Guidebook: Wade Berdeaux, Gordon Birkhimer, Brad Blase, Jeff Bray, Fred Grady, Jim "Crash" Kennedy, Devin Kouts (and for speaking about the Caves of Taylor Run and Hellhole!), Mike "TinY" Manke, Marion McConnell, John Pearson, and the New Market Chamber of Commerce for letting me use information from their Web site.

I want to point out the nifty Bat ID Chart that was included in the first 300 Guidebooks--laminated it and put it in your cave pack. I find mine very useful, especially the millimeter chart my friend, Rob Buscher, made for me. Thanks, Rob! You won't be losing any info, as it's all in the sidebar within the article.

By now, you're probably glad that I'm not up on stage doing all this thanking. Like at those awards ceremonies. Well, I didn't start this out intending to go this route, but it

seemed appropriate to give public recognition for these folks' efforts. I know how much work went into hosting this VAR. It may be another 18 years before I do another one. And even though I tried to thank folks in person or in a note, it's just kind of cool to see your name in print.

I don't know what else to say. If you were there, I hope you enjoyed yourself, despite the minor glitches. If you weren't there, you missed a good one! I think the final count was 337, despite what I announced at the meeting. I'm not sure where the discrepancies lie but I know we did have a little problem with Registration that first day. I was proud of the way Nikki Bennett stepped in and took over and made it work despite not having a final pre-registration list on-site. And thanks to all the other BATS who helped man the Registration Tent. Other things didn't go as I had planned them and I had to deal with these as they came up. Hopefully none of you noticed too much. I do know we never ran out of beer and that's saying a lot with over 300 cavers around.

Well, that's it. I think, for me, Fall VAR 2002 is finally, finally over. Thank God!

## **VSS report to the Fall 2002 VAR Meet- ing**

by Phil Lucas

The Virginia Speleological Survey today has 4056 recorded caves in Virginia and 447 miles of surveyed cave passages. These totals, in the past twelve months, represent an increase of 118 caves and 15 miles of new surveys! There has been 71 maps drawn this past year. Of course these numbers only represent some objective measurement on the amount of information that

is being collected. There is a lot more data, important data, being collected that is difficult to quantify. Here are some examples:

- A Highland County cave was found to have a passage that intersects an igneous dike, a first for Virginia.
- Because of the extreme drought conditions this year, connections have been made between caves and new caves discovered and new passages found.
- It is suspected that large concentrations of Harvestmen insects can cause an adverse physical effect on cavers.
- A well drilled in the piedmont intersected a cave that blows air.

The primary mission of the VSS is to collect and store cave data. Accordingly, I would like to recognize and thank the following folks who have contributed information this year on Virginia caves. They are: Jim West, Paul Gaskins, Bill Keith, Rick Lambert, Don Anderson, Doug Dalrymple, Josh Rubinstein, Dave Hubbard, Scott Wahlquist, Mike Mankie, Brad Blase, Gregg Clemmer, Zenah Orndorff, Wil Orndorff, Dave Socky, Tanya McLaughlin, Ron Simmons, Ben Schwartz, Ken Walsh, Russ Carter, Dave Collings, Hoyt McKagen, Janet Tinkham, Tom Malabad, Bob Thren, B. Bayles, Chris Wezyk, Joe Zokaites, Bob Alderson, Mike Futrell, Mike Ficco, Ed Smith, Joe McNeely, Benny Korzendorfer, Bill Balfour. Hopefully I have not omitted anyone.

Thanks also for the Grotto newsletters. They are gleamed for information that is included in the database. They are: BATS News, Carbide Dump, Mudslinger, Underground Mountaineer, DC Speleograph, BCCS Newsletter, The West Virginia Caver

The Virginia Cellars is once again on schedule. Brad Blase is the editor and is doing a great job. We've got a lot of good material in

the Cellars and if you are not already a subscriber you may want to consider doing so.

The VSS has a Web site. It is [www.VirginiaCaves.org](http://www.VirginiaCaves.org). A special thanks to Brad Blase who is our webmaster for the great job with its design and maintenance. On the Web site there is a cave report form-quick to locate and easy to use.

The VSS has two new county coordinators; Josh Rubinstein in Augusta County and Jim West in Lee County. They are looking for help. We have a new database on karst springs with over 1600 springs already recorded. I must thank my wife, Charlotte, for this huge contribution, spending many hours at the computer inputting data. Zenah Orndorff is also thanked for providing a lat/long conversion that saved us many hours of work. This is just a beginning and we will be adding many more springs as they are reported (another input needed from the caving community).

Information is where all conservation and preservation programs begin. If we care about our VAR caves, we must support our state surveys. All cavers should contribute. Here's how:

- Report all new caves and karst features and karst springs
- When you find new cave- "Survey as you go"
- Participate in at least one survey a year
- Expand your knowledge about aspect on caves and learn how to make good observations about that aspect
- Make every cave trip count in some way that will add some knowledge about that cave. For example write down and report an observation, such as old names scratched on the walls.

## Put a Thermometer in your Cave Pack

by Phil Lucas

Most of us have "grown up" as cavers with the impression that the temperature in a cave generally represents the mean surface temperature in that area.

But we are coming to realize that this is not always true. It's often just not that simple. Some caves have cold air traps while others have warm air traps. Some have both. Sinking surface streams and thermal waters can raise and lower the air temperature in the cave. Strong convection currents can dramatically affect temperatures deep within a cave. In some caves, temperatures may swing markedly as the seasons change. Considering the numbers of Virginia caves, relatively few records of temperatures exist.

A pit in Southwest Virginia where some temperatures were taken during this past Thanksgiving weekend had some interesting numbers. The 20 by 40 foot pit drops 40 feet down to a middle level and then continues down a steep slope to a depth of another 100 feet to an area of large dimensions where the remains of saltpeter operations were discovered. The outside temperature was 32 degrees. The middle level away from the pit had a temperature of 50 degrees. However at the junction with the pit the temperature was 40 degrees. Seventy feet deeper the temperature had dropped to 30 degrees. This cave is a cold air trap.

Recording cave temperatures is a simple thing that all cavers can do. All that's needed is a thermometer, some paper and a pencil. Some suggestions on where to take temperature readings include:

- the surface temperature outside the entrance

- about ten feet inside the entrance at a point halfway between ceiling and floor
- at a low point somewhere inside the cave where cold air may be settling
- at a high point where warm air may be rising
- at a selection of other locations where strong drafts are felt, where the air is still, etc

If you record temperatures for a Virginia cave, please send a copy of your results to VSS, HCR 4 Box 104, Burnsville, VA 24487. As this data accumulates it will help to give clues about our caves' climates, biology, speleothem development and possibly the extent of passages not yet known (a topic interesting to most of us). Since we aren't experts on the topic or the equipment, I encourage input from other cavers.

## **Bowden Cave to be Gated... Caver Help Needed**

by Bob Hoke

Bowden Cave is a very popular cave near Elkins, WV. The cave is mostly on U. S. Forest Service land and that part of the cave is currently closed due to a dangerous collapse that occurred in April, 2002.

The collapse occurred shortly beyond the upstream end of the Water Course and blocks the way to the "rear" parts of the cave (and makes through trips impossible). Forest Service personnel and a group of cavers recently visited the collapse area and reported that it looks like it will not be possible to safely reopen the collapsed area and it will be unstable for the foreseeable future.

The Forest Service recognizes that Bowden is a significant recreational

resource in the Forest and they want to reopen the popular "front" part of the cave (including the Water Course), but can't do that until they have a way of ensuring that visitors do not enter the collapse area. They have determined that it is practical to install two relatively small gates in the narrow parts of the passage just beyond a small room at the upstream end of the Water Course. This will allow the most popular part of the cave to be reopened to visitors. Until appropriate provisions can be made to prevent visitors from "checking out" the collapse from the rear, the back entrances to Bowden will remain closed.

The bad news is that the gate will be about 1,800 feet from the entrance. This means that all supplies and equipment will have to be hauled that far. Most of the passage is walking, but the sherpas will get (at least) wet feet since they have to go through the Water Course. Needless to say, a lot of volunteer labor will be needed to haul material. Volunteers are also being sought to help fabricate the gate (including welding it in the cave).

The Forest Service originally hoped to have a big work weekend in December to get the gate installed, but that plan fizzled out for several reasons (weather, short planning time, holiday parties, etc.). It is now likely that the gate will be installed next summer or fall when the water levels are low. Until that time, the portion of Bowden Cave that is on National Forest land will remain closed.

Help is needed to make this project happen. In addition to many willing workers to haul material, more skilled volunteer help is needed to fabricate and install the gate. If you have experience in any of these areas and want to help, we would like to hear from you. Contact either me, Bob Hoke at (301)725-5877 or bob-hoke@erols.com, or Linda Tracy,

the Monongahela National Forest's Cave Specialist, at (304)636-1800 x275 or lltracy@fs.fed.us.

Additional information about the gating plans and schedule will be made available as it develops.

Postscript: Linda Tracy reviewed this article and noted that one gate will be about 4 ft x 6 ft (rectangular) and the other about 4 ft x 2 ft (triangular). Neither gate will have a gate since they will simply be removed if the collapse area ever becomes safe to visit. The gates will be bat-safe and will be based on gate designs from Bat Conservation International. The Forest Service will supply the materials.

## **Grant County WVASS Bulletin**

by George Dasher

I have recently taken over the Grant County West Virginia Speleological Survey Bulletin. Grant County doesn't contain a lot of caves, but it does contain some significant karst, caves, and springs. I don't really want to spend a lot of time doing field work (I'd much rather just be the secretary!), so if anyone wants to ridgewalk in the county and locate, map, describe, or provide pictures of any of its caves, I would really appreciate the help. Just contact me first, so we don't duplicate any one's effort.

At present, we have only two good maps for Grant County--Elkhorn Mountain Cave and Smoke Hole Caverns, and Smoke Hole has a lead in its lower level that requires checking (does anyone want that?). I also have only one good picture, of the entrance of Elkhorn, so all entrance pictures, interior pictures, maps, locations, and text descriptions are going to be most welcome.

My contact addresses are:

George Dasher  
63 Valley Drive  
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304-965-1361H, 304-558-2108W  
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gdasher@mail.dep.state.wv.us

The wvcaver e-mail will only accept ASCII with no attachments. My work email will take just about anything; however, I would prefer-- if you could-- that you send all information to my house. I would also prefer the maps and photos in hard copy, and please write on the back of each picture what the picture is of, what cave it is in, who took it, and the date. And don't forget pictures of the above-ground Grant County karst, if you find something you think is interesting.

The following is a list of the known caves and springs in the county. The locations have been lost for those features with an asterisk. I can provide you with locations for the others if you ask. And, as always, please feel free to add any caves, FROs, springs, and other karst features you know about but that are not on this list.

PLEASE HELP!!

Thanks!

Alonzo Sites Cave \*  
Alonzo Sites Pit \*  
Berg Cave #1 \*  
Berg Cave #2 \*  
Brick Church Spring  
Burnt House Spring  
Cedar Hill Cave  
Charles Knob Cave  
Cricket Cave \*  
Deaheart Cave  
Disappointment Cave \*  
Disappointment Stream Cave \*  
Doug Kesner Cave  
Duck Walk Cave \*  
Elkhorn Mountain Cave  
Goldizen Cave \*  
Greenland Gap Cave  
Hanline Cave  
Hartman #2 Cave \*  
Highway Department Spring  
Howletts Hole #1 \*  
Indian House Cave  
Jim Cave  
Kesner Cave

Kessel Cave  
Klines Gap Cave  
Lemons Spring  
Liller Farm Spring  
Marl Spring  
Mays Gap Cave  
Munsing Pit  
Patrick's Cave \*  
Peacock Cave  
Poor Farm Spring  
Powers Hollow Cave \*  
Smoke Hole Caverns  
Spring Name Unknown  
Spring Run Cave  
Spring Run Spring  
State Trout Hatchery Spring  
Veach Cave  
Veach Cave North \*  
Williamsport Marl Caves  
Wind Cave  
Wolf Den Rocks Cave  
Wolf Den Spring  
Wolfpen Cave #1 \*  
Wolfpen Cave #2 \*  
Wolfpen Hollow Blowhole \*

## VAR Web Site Update

by Jim McConkey

Vitas Eidukevicius envisioned and created the VAR Web site back in the late 90s, and he has managed it and continually added to it since. I began assisting Vitas with the site starting in 2000, primarily trying to keep the Events section up-to-date. After many years of hard work, Vitas has decided it is time to retire, and has left the site in my care. At the Fall 2002 VAR meeting, the attendees heartily approved a motion to thank Vitas for all of his hard work. Give him a beer at the next VAR!

If you have never visited the VAR Web site at [www.varegion.org](http://www.varegion.org), the site includes contact information for all the grottos and organizations in the Region, conservation and closed cave information, an extensive listing of all Regional events and surveys, cave protection laws, and much, much more. If you haven't already, please stop by and see everything the site has to offer.

I have started a massive update of the site. Some of the changes are just to keep the information current, others will make the site friendlier to users, and some are strictly to help me and my successors maintain the site. The changes involve modifications to hundreds of files. As with any effort that large, I expect a few things will break temporarily along the way. I would greatly appreciate the help of all VAR web site users in letting me know of outdated information, bad links, etc. There is an e-mail link to [webmaster@varegion.org](mailto:webmaster@varegion.org) at the bottom of almost every page to make it easier.

The site has gotten very large, and the effort involved in keeping hundreds of pages up-to-date and all working together has gotten considerable. One of the bigger structural changes, which should generally be invisible to the average user, involves the switch from HTML to SHTML files. This will greatly cut down on the number of files we have to update in response to certain other changes, and will save the web site staff a lot of work. Unfortunately, this means that many old links will no longer work. Right now, the old pages are still available, but I will start removing them as soon as I can implement a custom file-not-found page. The custom file-not-found page will help you find what you are looking for if your old bookmarks cease working.

On a more visible front, I have switched to a more readable font and have tried to standardize the look and feel across the entire site. The menu options have also been reorganized to make them easier to use.

The first page you encounter at [www.varegion.org](http://www.varegion.org) is now a list of all the organizations in the Virginia Region. A link to the VAR organization itself is at the top. After many years of neglect, I have attempted to update the list to include all grottos and organizations in the region, along with their

current Web sites and contacts. I've used the latest information from the 2002 *NSS Member's Manual*, but some of that is already out of date. I would like a member of every grotto in the Region to check their listing and send me any change to their Web site or contact person.

To make it easier to contact the various VAR officers, who occasionally change, I have also instituted a series of permanent e-mail addresses. You can now send e-mails to any of the following, and your message will be forwarded to the current holder of that office:

chair@varegion.org – Chair  
 vicechair@varegion.org – Vice Chair  
 secretary@varegion.org – Secretary  
 treasurer@varegion.org – Treasurer  
 conservation@varegion.org –  
 Conservation Committee Chair  
 webmaster@varegion.org –  
 Webmaster

The VAR web site is already a great resource, and all these changes should make it even better. Please pardon the dust while we remodel, and feel free to pipe up with your suggestions!

## Spring VAR Meeting May 9-11, 2003

by Bob Hoke

The DC Grotto and Potomac Speleological Club are hosting the Spring VAR meeting, which will be held at the Old Timers Reunion site near Elkins, WV. There is a detailed flyer in this issue that describes the event and includes a form for preregistering at a discount. Please take a look at the flyer for more information.

A major part of any VAR meeting is the led cave trips. These provide an excellent way to see a cave that you have not visited before. In addition to the cleanup activities in Sharps Cave, we are hoping to have led trips to Simmons Mingo Cave,

My Cave, Cassell Cave, Stillhouse Cave (and the Sinks of Gandy if the weather is decent), and others. We also hope to have leaders for vertical trips to Cass Cave, Elkhorn Mountain Cave, and Harpers Pit. There will also be a guidebook with descriptions and driving directions to a number of other caves for those who wish to venture out on their own.

Notably absent from the list of caves to be visited is Bowden Cave, which is essentially closed due to an April, 2002, collapse. (See the article in this issue for more information about a pending project to gate off the collapsed area and reopen much of the cave). The significant area beyond the Agony Crawl is still open, but almost all of the rest of the cave is closed.

If you are new to caving, or you are new to the Virginia Region, the VAR meeting is a great way to meet other cavers, visit the speleovendors, and see some new caves. The weekend will be informal and a lot of fun.

The Mid Atlantic Region (MAR) will also be hosting their spring meeting in conjunction with the VAR meeting. This is not a "joint VAR/MAR meeting", but the two groups will be sharing the campground, cave trips, Saturday dinner, and Saturday evening activities. You can register for either the VAR meeting or the MAR meeting. The fee for the MAR registration is \$2.00 more than VAR registration. VAR gets \$3.00 from each VAR registration and MAR gets \$5.00 from each MAR registration. The remainder of both registration fees goes to pay meeting expenses. Anyone registering for one group may opt to subscribe, for the appropriate fee, to the newsletter for the other group at registration. (VAR \$3, MAR \$5).

PSC and DC Grotto have a policy of not making a profit from caving events they host, so all profit from the Spring VAR will be donated to

one or more worthy caving organizations.

If you have any questions about the Spring VAR meeting please contact me at (301)725-5877 or bobhoke@erols.com. You can also check the Spring VAR's web site at [www.psc-cavers.org/springvar2003.html](http://www.psc-cavers.org/springvar2003.html) for additional information.

## ***NSS Members Manual*** to be Published in June... **Is Your Contact In-** **formation Current?**

by Gordon Birkhimer  
(2003 *Members Manual* Editor)

The 2003 *NSS Members Manual* should appear in your mailbox in late June. If you have changed your name, address, e-mail address, or telephone number since the last *Members Manual* went to press (on May 1, 2002) you should make sure the NSS Office has your updated information. The NSS Office is where all membership data is accessed before printing.

If you have Internet access you can log on to "[www.caves.org/info/changeinfo.shtml](http://www.caves.org/info/changeinfo.shtml)" and fill in the current information. If you don't have Internet access you can phone the NSS Office at (256) 852-1300 and give the current information. In either case you will have to supply your NSS number and name as well as the current information.

Last year a few anguished people were left out of the *NSS Members Manual* because their membership had lapsed when the snapshot of the database was taken for the *Manual*. If your membership is coming up for renewal in the spring, be sure to renew promptly so you won't be left out of the 2003 edition.

Chocolate & beer can only mean one thing....



The VIRGINIA REGION  
of the  
NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
Presents the

# Grand Caverns Easter Restoration Camp

April 18th-20th, 2003



## Chocolate & Beer? Are you crazy?

Spend a fun-filled weekend of frolic amid some of the most historic karst deposits in the Virginia's. Enjoy a CAVING EASTER and join us for our annual gravel hauling express through beautiful Grand Caverns (and our equally exciting sinus plugging, epoxy FILLED escapades in NEARBY Fountain Cave!). Repair broken formations. Eradicate moss. Improve cave-owner relations. EAT great food and find PRIZES. A great way to kick those Old Man Winter Blues (and it beats making license plates)!

### FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT:

Andy Reeder, VAR Conservation Chair  
840 Twin Lakes Rd., Green Bay, VA. 23942  
(w) 434-847-1640 OR (h) 434-392-7452

or

[andrew.reeder@lynchburgva.gov](mailto:andrew.reeder@lynchburgva.gov)

### Directions:

Primitive camping will be allowed at Grand Caverns on Friday and Saturday. A short orientation will begin at 9:00, on Saturday (April 19<sup>th</sup>) morning at the picnic shelter next to the caverns parking lot (look for the VAR banner) prior to beginning conservation activities. Bring standard caving gear, work clothes, and gloves. Saturday lunch and dinner will be provided (along with copious amounts of your favorite beverage). On Sunday morning cavers can participate in an "Easter-Cave" hunt with assorted chocolate goodies and caver prizes.

**Grand Caverns:** From I-81, Exit 235 East to Grottoes. Turn right at small store/gas station ( past ball fields). Follow signs and take right into Caverns.



SPRING 2003

# VAR MEETING

at the Old Timers Campground, Dailey, West Virginia

## May 9-11, 2003

The DC Grotto and Potomac Speleological Club invite you to the Spring 2003 meeting of the Virginia Region of the NSS. The event will be held at the site of the annual Old Timers Reunion near Dailey, WV, on May 9-11, 2003. There will be caving, dinner, a program, a party, and generally a good time in relaxed atmosphere.

**Why Attend?** If you are new to caving, or you have never attended a VAR meeting, this is a great way to meet other cavers, see some new caves, check out the vendors, and see what is happening in the Region.

**Camping & Facilities:** The Old Timers Reunion site hosts 2,000 cavers for OTR each year so there is plenty of room for camping. There are hot showers, city water, and portable toilets. Unfortunately, it will be too early in the season to have the sauna & hot tubs operational. There are no electric or sewer hookups. No pets are allowed on the site.

**Special Cleanup Trip:** The conservation project at this VAR will be to clean Sharps Cave, a 4-mile cave located about an hour's drive south of the campground. Participants will also have the opportunity to tour the cave while helping to clean it. Lunch will be served to workers outside the cave.

**Cave Trips:** There will be several led trips to caves relatively close to the campground. Most of these trips are suitable for novices and all will return in time for dinner. There will be signup sheets at registration. There will also be a guidebook describing the area's caves and driving directions to them for those who wish to go caving on their own.

**Saturday Dinner:** Dinner on Saturday will be catered by Koonie's Road Kill Grill. The menu for carnivores will be slow-cooked beef BBQ, but there will also be a vegetarian option.

**Saturday Evening Program:** After dinner on Saturday there will be a presentation by Craig Stihler on bats in West Virginia. Craig works for the WV Dept. of Natural Resources and is an expert on the bats in the state.

**Vendors:** We expect to have several speleo-vendors and this will be a good opportunity to purchase cave related items.

**Directions:** The campground is located off US 219 about 10 miles south of Elkins, WV. If you are coming from the north go south on US 219 for about 8.5 miles after the stoplight at US 33 on the south side of Elkins. Turn left after the huge Bruce Hardwood factory onto Back Road 38. The campground is on the right in about a mile. From the south go about 8 miles north of Mill Creek and turn right on Back Road 38 after you pass through the hamlet of Dailey.

**VAR Business Meeting:** The VAR business meeting will be at 9 AM on Sunday. Everyone is welcome to attend.

**More Info:** Check the latest VAR information at [www.psc-cavers.org/springvar2003.html](http://www.psc-cavers.org/springvar2003.html). If you have any questions please contact Bob Hoke at (301)725-5877 or [bobhoke@erols.com](mailto:bobhoke@erols.com).



### Spring 2003 VAR Meeting Preregistration Form (please print)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Name you want on name tag: \_\_\_\_\_

Vegetarian meal? \_\_\_\_\_ Number of people @\$15.00 per person: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount enclosed: \_\_\_\_\_

Preregistration cost is \$15 per person (on-site registration is \$18). Sorry, no discount for kids. Send this form, and a check payable to "DC Grotto," to Spring VAR, c/o Bob Gulden, 1333 Chapelview Dr., Odenton, MD 21113. Preregistration payment must be received by **May 3, 2003**. If you want to register multiple people please include their names on the back of this form.

National Speleological Society  
6304 Kaybro St.  
Laurel, MD 20707-2621

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## Winter 2002-2003 Regional News

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ NSS Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Grotto (or other caving organization that I claim as my primary caving affiliation) \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to VAR and send to:  
**Meredith Hall Johnson, 8061 Kittiwake Ct., Springfield VA 22153**