Chairman’s Column

It’s Spring!

Well there was not much winter and the cabin fever should not be too severe this year, as we were able to cave almost all winter long. It is time to plan to come to the Spring VAR at Grand Caverns and to tell everyone of the new hole in the ground that you have discovered or the new project you have created and need help with.

There will be a few new things on the agenda this meeting. Bubble Cave wants to put in a motion to change the By-Laws to make it easier to arrive at a quorum at the meetings. 2007 will be Philly Grotto’s 60th Anniversary and they are looking for help to co-host a Fall MAR/VAR at the OTR site in October. If any group is interested, let me know.

Andy Reeder and Meredith Hall Johnson are co-chairing the Easter Conservation Weekend at Grand Caverns. The park has not given us its wish list as of press time, but as soon as we have it, we will get it posted on the Web site & listserve.

The dates still have not been set for three gating projects in the region, but we will have more on that later.

Members of the VAR are looking into a second major sinkhole cleanup (aka Sinkhole from Hell part 2), with an estimated 10 to 12 truck loads of material to be removed. Stay tuned, your backs may be needed.

Hope to see everyone at Spring VAR.

Craig

A Grand Vision: Sustained Cave Conservation Activities at Cave Hill

by Andrew H. Reeder

Cave conservation projects result from a perceived need to act. Grand Caverns, discovered in 1804 and operated commercially in Augusta County, Virginia, since 1806, is one of the most historically and biologically significant. Since 1970, the property, along with nearby Natural Chimneys, has been managed by the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority, which is composed of the Virginia counties of Augusta and Rockingham, and the cities of Harrisonburg and Staunton. Over the years, the Authority has struggled financially and institutionally to operate both facilities, with several attempts, including one currently before the state legislature, to turn the properties over to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to operate as state park facilities.

Cavers, who had always been warmly welcomed at Grand, became concerned in the 1970s and early 1980s when park infrastructure appeared to decline and began looking for ways to help the organization. Now that the need to act had been determined, the question turned on how a volunteer organization like the National Speleological Society (NSS) could assist a cash-strapped commercial cave operation.

At the time, some cavers were not convinced that conservation efforts should be focused on commercial cave operations. To make matters worse, many of the other commercial cave owners in the valley represented what they considered local government intrusion into what had been a purely private commercial cave market. A compromise of sorts was reached when Madison’s Saltpeter Cave was gated by the Virginia Region in 1971, followed a few years later by the gating of Fountain Cave (exact date unknown). By focusing on the “wild” caves located within Cave Hill, such as Fountain Cave and Madisons Saltpeter Cave, are also historically and biologically significant. Since 1970, the property, along with nearby Natural Chimneys, has been managed by the Upper Valley Regional Park Authority, which is composed of the Virginia counties of Augusta and Rockingham, and the cities of Harrisonburg and Staunton. Over the years, the Authority has struggled financially and institutionally to operate both facilities, with several attempts, including one currently before the state legislature, to turn the properties over to the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation to operate as state park facilities.

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(continued on page 3)
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 editor@varegion.org). 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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Region Record Subscriptions

- New NSS members in the Region receive two complimentary copies of the Region Record.
- Current NSS members moving into the Region from elsewhere receive two complimentary 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

- **Apr. 15-16** Annual work weekend at Grand Caverns, Virginia. Help clean the cave, restore formations, and other projects. See additional info in this issue.

- **Apr. 12** Deadline for getting the preregistration discount for the Spring VAR meeting.

- **Apr. 28-30** Spring **VAR meeting** at the Grand Caverns (off I-81 in Grottoes, Virginia. See additional information in this issue).

- **June 15** Deadline for submitting material for the Summer issue of the Region Record.


List Your Event Here

If you have a caving event that is of regional interest please send information to the Editors listed above so it can be included in the calendar.

Check the VAR Limited Access Cave List at www.VAR-caves.us.
A Grand Vision
(continued from page 1)

In October 1983, the Virginia Region hosted CONCAVE I, a massive restoration effort within Fountain Cave to remove graffiti and repair broken formations, which was documented in a slide show by Chip Clark and Paul and Lee Stevens. While some formation damage in Fountain Cave could be attributed to early visitors, souvenir hunters, and commercial tours, other destruction probably occurred naturally as the result of geologic activity. During the course of the event, various adhesives and cements were utilized to mate formations back together, stabilizing them with wire, pins, and wooden frames. Some of these strategies worked-others did not. In the end, lessons learned at CONCAVE I spawned debate across the caving community and served as a model for cave conservation advocates throughout the country.

In the late 1980s, the New River Valley Grotto began hosting two events at Dixie Caverns in Salem, Virginia: an annual Haunted Cave in the fall and a restoration field camp in the summer. The grotto was contacted by Grand Caverns management and asked to help restart the Grand Caverns Haunted Cave. Unfortunately, the Grotto was forced to decline because of its previous commitment to Dixie Caverns. However, a field camp was feasible. In 1989, the New River Valley Grotto began hosting an annual restoration camp at the Grand Caverns property on Easter Weekend, similar to its restoration efforts at Dixie Caverns. Many other local grottos, such as Blue Ridge Grotto, D.C. Grotto, Front Royal Grotto, Baltimore Grotto, Sligo Grotto, and others, helped with the event. The project once again enjoyed regional support when Paul and Lee Stevens asked the New River Valley Grotto to lead a conservation effort during the fall 1990 Virginia Region meeting at nearby Natural Chimneys. The Grand Caverns Restoration Camp has been an annual event sponsored by the Virginia Region ever since.

Goals and objectives of the project over the last 16 years have focused primarily on three main areas: work inside Grand Caverns, restoration activities in Fountain Cave, and work outside of the caves on trails, buildings, and other park infrastructure. From the beginning, it has been important that the project was open to any interested individual, and that at least some of the activities be geared towards youngsters and noncavers.

The Grand Caverns Restoration Camp has always been as much about the journey as the destination. There are several reasons for this that are worth noting. First, working together allows for the sharing of new conservation skills and the dissemination of knowledge. Second, the event brings cavers and resource managers together, and reinforces the value of good cave stewardship practices among all the participants. Third, the event promotes awareness of regional cave conservation activities on both the local community and NSS membership levels. Fourth, actual work is accomplished. The mending of caves allows cavers to give back something to the caves that have given us so much. Finally, the social aspects of the event allow numerous opportunities for cavers to just relax and enjoy themselves.

Early work in Grand Caverns included removal of tons of debris from inside the commercial cave, including the old lighting system, wiring, cases of broken bulbs, and other assorted debris. Cavers also encouraged management to switch to softer clear and amber in-cave lighting and away from the more garish reds, greens, and blues that typified commercial cave lighting at the time. New wiring was concealed and repairs made to handrails, stairways, exposed lighting, and other mechanical equipment. In addition, a five percent bleach and water solution was sprayed annually on light shields and impacted formations to reduce and inhibit moss and algae growth. The toughest task in the commercial cave has been hauling tons of gravel into the cave. Over the last 16 years, the bucket brigade, usually supervised by Lyle Teftt, has been honed to a back-breaking science. Luckily, much of the work over the last few years has involved raking existing gravel and moving it around in the cave.

Work outside the cave, supervised by Carol Tiderman and others, has run the gamut from trail relocations, painting, landscaping, planting trees, parking lot repairs, and removal of dilapidated structures (cavers love to tear things down). Several gates have been installed to prevent in-cave mining and unauthorized entry. Recently, a major rock fall caused considerable damage to the entrance building and railing. Craig Hindman and his crew supervised and conducted repairs, including new handrails and extensive fall protection along the cliff face, saving management thousands of dollars. Much of this work is performed by skilled volunteer tradesmen (and women), who bring their own pipe-fitting, welding, and other equipment to the cave to complete these important repairs. Certainly one of the strengths of the NSS as a whole is the diversity and dedication of its individual members.

Efforts in Fountain Cave have consisted primarily of repairing broken formations -- one at a time. Many volunteers have commented on the difficulty of finding matching formations. There are literally thousands of caramel-colored, broken formations strewn throughout the cave. Under the expert direction of Meredith Hall Johnson and Jim McConkey, volunteers first lo-
cate two mated formations. The exposed ends are then cleaned and dried with a propane torch. Depending upon the type, size, and location of the formation, a specific two-part epoxy is selected and applied. If necessary, the formation can be pinned internally or externally, braced or wired for added stability. The formations are then given an identifying number and tagged with a waterproof wire tag.

Other activities in the cave have included gate repair and digging out the steps leading down into the cave. Children particularly enjoy hunting for formations. A large number of youngsters experienced their first underground adventure inside Fountain helping to mend the broken cave. Experiences like these can only have positive results.

Work in the caves traditionally begins early on Saturday morning. Cavers are split into teams to tackle the various projects, with instructions to meet back at the picnic shelter for lunch provided by the Virginia Region Conservation Committee. After several false starts, it became apparent that to retain cavers all day required feeding them on site. Left to their own devices for lunch, volunteers tend to wander off and output is reduced severely. Traditionally, the groups switch members after lunch, with those hauling gravel in Grand moving over to Fountain or other duties. The point is to make sure everyone has an opportunity to contribute in multiple ways. In the afternoon cavers usually work until about 5:00 p.m. and head back to camp. Originally camping was at nearby Natural Chimneys, but over the last several years it has proved much more convenient to camp at Grand Caverns itself.

Over the years a core group of cavers has shown up for this event year after year. The group receives feedback from Grand Caverns staff on things they would like to see accomplished several months prior to the event and communally decide on the weekends activities. There are a few things that we try to make sure happen every year. Don “Doc” Anderson provides first aid and helps with the logistics of the event. Someone is usually assigned the job of taking pictures of the event. One person is designated to coordinate the day’s activities with Grand Caverns staff and take care of the administrative details. Other folks like Pauline Apling, John Fox, Bob Hoke, Mike “Tiny” Manke, Ann Muldoon, Anne Reeder, Mary Sue Socky, Janet Tinkham, and a host of others show up to do the lion’s share of the work.

After a hard day's work, the volunteers enjoy a good meal with great friends, along with some of their favorite beverages. Past meals have included: portabella ravioli with asagai cream sauce, chicken divan crepes, ratatouille, seafood scampi, chicken and beef kabobs and saffron rice, and other skillet-licking grub. As was mentioned before, the social aspect of this event is an important part of rewarding volunteers. A little extra effort preparing foodstuffs can go a long way in soothing sore muscles and aching backs.

Sundays at Grand Caverns are usually devoted to wrapping up any unfinished business. The day is also reserved for Easter Egg Hunts (depending upon the number of kids), photography trips, and tourist trips inside Grand Caverns. It’s a great way to wind the weekend down and start planning next year’s event.

To date, close to 200 cavers (many of whom show up year after year) have logged over 6,500 volunteer hours over the course of the 16-year history of the Grand Caverns Restoration Camp. These hours do not include planning, cleanup, or administrative hours. In addition, approximately 30 tons of crushed stone has been hauled into Grand Caverns, two 5-gallon buckets at a time, with another two tons of debris removed from the cave. One hundred gallons of five percent bleach solution has been sprayed in the cave and hundreds of light bulbs replaced. In Fountain Cave, approximately 500 formations have been successfully repaired, the gate and entrance restored to working order, and the trail treadway repaired.

Finally, conservation projects like Grand Caverns imbue cavers with a spirit of accomplishment and push back preconceived notions of what is possible. Sitting around the shelter at lunch one day the discussion turned to the desire for a real map of the cave. Craig Hindman, Carol Tiderman, Jim McConkey, and others are making that happen with the Grand Caverns/Cave Hill Survey Project.

There is no secret to running a successful cave conservation project. During the projects at Grand Caverns, we have built capacity through communication, work, and social interaction. Successful cave conservation activities will always have a social dimension and a role for the local grotto. In the case of the Grand Caverns Restoration Camp, communal lunches and dinners, combined with door prizes, adult beverages, and a convivial atmosphere have helped to cement long-standing relationships amongst the various cavers involved. This has, in turn, fostered a sense of communal pride and resulted in strong individual loyalties towards the project and its members. Even with regional support, in the beginning it was very important to have the New River Valley Grotto co-sponsoring the event. All collaborative cave conservation projects begin with communication. Having a single grotto assisting with a project over time ensures good communication and an ample supply of volunteer labor. Over the years, other regional cavers have stepped up to the plate year after year and now form the nucleus of a volunteer committee.
that actually runs the event. The Grand Caverns Restoration Camp is a shared vision.

The NSS has long enjoyed an association with the caves of Cave Hill, including a field investigation in April of 1948 during the first NSS Convention (they had been referred to as symposiums or meetings between 1941 and 1947), chaired by Burton S. Faust. The cavers of the Virginia Region are proud to carry on the traditions of the Society through projects like CAVECON I, the Grand Caverns Restoration Camp, and the Grand Caverns/Cave Hill Survey Project. We invite one and all to attend current and future events, and take part in the festivities. We believe that we have as much to learn from you, as you from us. The success of projects such as these cannot be ascribed to one person. The greatest credit must go to the individual cavers, grottos, and leadership of the Virginia Region, without whose continued and unflagging support these projects might never have been sustained.

WVASS Update

by Bill Balfour

The spring meeting of the West Virginia Speleological Survey (WVASS) will be held on Saturday May 6th at the Cave Hollow Farm home of Bill Balfour (the same place as last year). It is located near Lewisburg, West Virginia. The business meeting will begin at approximately 4 p.m. After the meeting Juliet has promised food for all. After dinner we will have an informal program for slides if anyone wants to present a program.

There are plenty of caves in the area so anyone who wants to show up early will have many options to chose from.

WVASS is the organization behind all of those incredible bulletins that you can purchase with maps and descriptions of caves all across West Virginia. Those publications are the end result of countless hours of volunteer support from people who ridgwalk, survey, report and compile data on new and known caves wherever they are found. And WVASS is committed to learning all there is to know about the West Virginia underground.

Now WVASS is happy to introduce to the caving public its new online cave report form. This secure form allows you to share your own spelean discoveries with WVASS, contribute to the growing body of cave knowledge in West Virginia, and get your name published in future WVASS bulletins.

When you use the report form, you will have complete control over the content of your record, and you set the releasability of the information that you submit. In this way you can rest assured that your discoveries are on the record, but won't be shared until you're ready to share them.

And it's not just limited to caves, either. Feel free to report springs, sinkholes, or any kind of karst related phenomena. The more the better.

So go to http://submit.wvass.org to register and start your personal data collection now.

VAR History

Proceeds donated to WVCC

by Bob Hoke

As reported in the last Region Record, the book History of the Virginia Region, Part II: 1971-2000 has sold out. At the Fall VAR's business meeting the membership voted to donate the net proceeds from the book sales to the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC).

The sale of the book resulted in a net profit of $1,453.77 and the WVCC has received this amount. Jeff Bray, WVCC President, expressed his appreciation to the Region for this generous donation. He said the money will be used to continue the Conservancy's work to protect West Virginia's caves and karst features.

The Conservancy currently owns, leases, or manages seven West Virginia caves (Maxwelton Sink, Rapps, the Persinger Entrance to Benedicts, Lobelia Saltpeter, Lightners, Donaldson, and Haynes) and one Virginia cave (Island Ford). More information about the Conservancy or the caves can be found at www.wvcc.net.

Proposed Changes to VAR Organization Membership

By John Pearson

Bubble Cave LLC proposes changes to the voting rules for members of the VAR. In the past, it has been difficult to get a quorum for the VAR to do business at times. For instance, the VAR hosted by Pine Mountain Grotto down in Cumberland Gap could not do
business because there were not enough people to have a quorum.

It is proposed that if a member group has not attended a VAR meeting for three consecutive meetings, that their voting privileges be suspended. Those privileges will be reinstated when they next attend a meeting.

There are currently 10 groups that do not regularly attend the VAR meetings. By suspending their voting privileges, it will be possible to have a quorum to conduct business.

Lastly, it is proposed that the quorum requirement be deleted in its entirety. As long as the VAR meeting time and place have been approved by a previous VAR, then whatever groups attend that meeting will be allowed to conduct business.

To those organizations that will be affected by this proposed change, now is your chance to speak up or forever sit down and not complain about what is done in your absence.

Also, I have it from a good source that if you do not submit your required annual report to the IO [the NSS’ Internal Organization Committee], your group will be dropped from the Virginia Region. So get those IO reports in.

Fall Board of Governors Meeting Coming to Woodbridge

By Meredith Hall Johnson

The Battlefield Area Troglodyte Society (BATS) will host the Fall 2006 NSS Board of Governors (BOG) meeting. This will take place on Saturday, November 4, 2006, at Potomac Senior High School in Woodbridge (okay, so it's actually Dumfries). BATS won the bid over two other groups. I think they were the Western Region and the Indiana Convention hosts. There will be a small meet-and-greet party on Friday night.

The BOG meeting will begin at 9:00 a.m. on Saturday and last until the evening. After that the group will eat dinner at Don Pablo’s Mexican Kitchen near Potomac Mills mall. We will show slides of VAR caves and have a speaker showcasing the VAR-sponsored Grand Caverns/Cave Hill Survey Project. BATS really wants to show off the region!

All VAR cavers are welcome to come sit in on the BOG meeting, except for the closed portions. The point of contact is me, mere-caver@yahoo.com. Attending a BOG meeting is one way for local cavers to get to know the cavers who run the NSS and to have questions and concerns addressed.

Minutes of the Fall VAR Region Meeting

September 26, 2005

RASS Field Station, Virginia

The meeting was called to order at 9:10 a.m.

Reports

Secretary -- Carol Tiderman
A motion was made by Bubble Cave to accept the minutes as published in the Region Record. BATS seconded. Motion passed.

Treasurer -- John Fox
A financial report was presented. A motion was made by Monroe County Cavers to accept the financial report. BATS seconded. Motion passed

Vice Chair -- Judy Fisher
She will be attending the VCC meeting next week.

Chairman -- Craig Hindman
Report given later in the Agenda.

Conservation Co-Chair - Meredith Hall Johnson
April 15-16, 2006 - Easter Conservation Weekend
The Karst Trail is still alive and anyone interested should contact Andy Reeder.

Island Ford Cave - Fall - Front Royal, scheduled for Oct. 8

Goodwin's Cave Management -- Blue Ridge Grotto
The cave is doing fine.

VAR Outstanding Service Award - - Meredith Hall Johnson
Awards presented to John Fox, Jim McConkey, and Bob Bennett. Please get submissions in by July, there is a form on the Web site.

Landowner Recognition Awards -- Janet Tinkam
There were no nominations.

Landowner Legal Support Committee -- Bob Hoke
No report.

Region Record -- Bob Hoke
Needs material - The deadline is December 15.

VAR List Server -- Walt Pirie
It is going smoothly. There are several new members -- currently approximately 170 members. Please keep your address up to date.

VAR Web Site -- Jim McConkey
No report.

Cave Bucks -- J. C. Fisher
No report.

VSS -- Phil Lucas
Virginia has 4,290 caves; 479 miles of passage; 1,946 caves mapped or sketched; 1,285 mapped; 590 feet average length; and 366 significant
caves. The longest caves are Sugar Run (22.5 miles), Omega (21.95), Chestnut Ridge (17.49), and Butler (16). There will be a VSS meeting next week at Phil Lucas’s home.

WVASS -- George Dasher
No report.

History of the Region -- Mary Sue Socky and Meredith Hall Johnson
BATS moves to donate the profits to the WVCC -- DC Seconded -- passed unanimously. This can be removed from the agenda. Reprints can be done where there are orders for 25 or more.

West Virginia Cave Conservancy
-- Meredith Hall Johnson
The annual banquet will be on November 12.

New Dixie -- Dave Socky
One more survey trip -- approximately 100 feet of passage remain to be documented.

Cave Management Forum -- Joey Fagan
Resources are available to support dye tracing programs in Virginia. The National Caves and Karst Symposium will be held in Albany, New York, on October 31 - November 1. A Symposium on Karst will be held in Lewisburg on October 18-19. There will be a $70 fee. The Cave Board will meet on December 3 -- location to be announced. There are Virginia Karst Trails meetings around the state.

SCCI -- Walt Pirie
South Pittsburgh Pit has been purchased. Funds are needed. The cave is open to cavers.

Grand Caverns/Cave Hill -- Chris Woodley
We have 3.79 miles of surveyed passage. The work in Grand is winding down. There is still lots of work to be done on the hill. Folks are needed to Adopt a Grid and transcribe the signature data from the photographs to a spreadsheet. The Grand Caverns Haunted Cave is looking for people to serve as cave haunters on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Starting in February -- the 200th Anniversary Celebration -- each month there will be a special presentation at the cave, including geology, bats, etc.

Virginia Cave Board -- Joey Fagan
The meeting will be held on December 3 - location to be announced.

Wilderness Proposal -- Mary Davis
Preferred alternate sites will triple the amount of forest cutting. Comments are needed by November 14. The comments should be regarding how much you like a particular area. Contact information to be put on the VAR list.

Virginia Karst Trails
Interested parties should send Andy Reeder contact information.

Host Grotto Report -- RASS (Rich Geisler)
RASS said there were 283 registered attendees. They have stew for sale. There were thanks from the attendees.

Old Business
Handled above.

New Business
Host Grotto for Spring 2006 - Grand Caverns/Cave Hill Survey Project
Host Grotto for Fall 2006 - no volunteers
Host Grotto for Spring 2007 - Front Royal

Grant Requests
None submitted.

Elections
CCV moved to elect the current officers -- DC seconded -- motion passed.

Announcements
• VAR Host thank you for your help. Please take out your trash.
• CCV meeting will be held after this meeting.
• Blue Ridge - Dixie Caverns Haunted Cave -- nine nights of hell -- contact Mary Sue Socky.
• Bill Biggers - expressed appreciation to host group.
• Cheryl Jones -- come to Cave and Karst Symposium in New York October 31 - November 1.
• NSS board meeting November 5 - Albany New York - tours to some of the NSS cave preserves on Sunday.

Adjourment
Bubble Cave moved to adjourn, WVCC seconded
Meeting Adjourned 10:06 a.m.
Respectfully submitted: Carol Tiderman

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The Caves of Cave Hill (Part II)
by Jim McConkey

All of the Cave Hill caves described in this issue [on the following pages] lie within the boundaries of Grand Caverns Regional Park. Most of them will be available for self-guided tours during the upcoming VAR. TI-59 will be off-limits. We just found a turkey buzzard nursing two eggs there. Please stay away. The dig mentioned in the description of Jefferson Cave will probably continue during VAR. Look for a sign-up sheet.
Baby Grand Caverns

Baby Grand Caverns is the southernmost cave on the Grand Caverns park property, about 1,400 feet south-southwest of its namesake. Although much smaller than Grand Caverns, the cave’s floor-plan is nearly identical, but a mirror image of, the historic section of Grand.

Most of the cave consists of a single passage composed of five principal segments meeting at nearly right angles with one another. The 2-foot x 1.5-foot entrance drops into a downward sloping 20-foot crawlway trending north-northwest. This passage ends at a large formation pile where it is possible to stand up. Just before the formation pile a narrow canyon drops down about six feet to a passage leading south-southwest, with breakdown blocks at the end. Here the passage turns left and proceeds about 35 feet past some formations. At Custer’s Last Stand the passage again turns right and enters the fourth and longest section of the cave. This section is about 95 feet long and begins by dropping into a shallow canyon. A small crawlway in the southwest wall of the canyon was previously described by Kastning (1995) as unexplored. It is now known to connect through the breakdown to another passage just ahead on the right on the far side of the canyon. At the breakdown pile just across the canyon, lies a four-way junction. The right passage, heading west-northwest, leads to an alcove about 10 feet long and 8 feet high, narrowing to an impassable crawlway. A small crawl on the north side of this passage connects to the previously unexplored crawlway in the canyon. The eastern passage from the four-way junction leads to the southern entrance through a very awkward crawl. After crossing another canyon, the main passage makes a right hand turn into the fifth and final segment of the cave, which quickly becomes too tight to pass. Just before the last turn the initials “W W” and an 1811 date are seen on the western wall.

The cave’s main passage is aligned N15º E and the three other segments, including the two entrances, are aligned N10-20º W. The cave was reportedly surveyed in the 1980s by Tom Spina, Kelli Riordan, Chris Squyars, Al Stubbe and Melanie Ratcliff, but we have been unable to locate any such map of the cave. We resurveyed it in December 2004 and January 2005.

[This description is heavily derived from Kass Kastning’s description in the 1995 NSS Convention Geology Field Trip guidebook.]
BABY GRAND CAVE
AUGUSTA COUNTY, VA

COMPASS, CLINOmeter, TAPE AND DISTO SURVEY
BY SCOTT DAVIS, ROD MCCLUREN, IRA MCCONKEY, ARON MOORE,
DAVID BRETT ANDY, JASON 2006, 2006 AND CHRI 2006ES
DECEMBER 9, 2006, JANUARY 9, 2007 AND APRIL 30, 2007
SYMBOLS ARE NOR STANDARD UNLESS LABELED IN THE LEGEND
MAP INCORPORATED 2006

CAVE LENGTH: 269 FEET
CAVE DEPTH: 42 FEET

LEGEND
• FLOWSTONE
# SSOPT
• SOOT
Forgotten Saltpetre and Lichen Alcove

These two caves are located in the limestone escarpment just above the driveway leading up to the entrance of Grand Caverns. They are not 40 feet from one of the several resting benches, but the entrances are not visible from the path and very few people know they are even there.

Lichen Alcove Cave is a small shelter cave about 30 feet northwest of Forgotten Saltpetre Cave. It is about 14 feet wide and 7 feet high at the entrance and forms a 8-foot recess into the cliff. The floor, composed of sand, clay, rock fragments, and organic debris, slopes to a depth of five feet at the rear of the cave. Here a very small alcove extends to the west. The cave was mapped in 1993 by Kass, Ernst and Karen Kastning and is shown on the map of Forgotten Cave. The current survey project ran a new line survey down the cave so that we could determine its relation to the new section of Grand Caverns. It is parallel to passages in the New Section, but too far away to possibly connect.

These two caves were probably part of Grand Caverns at one time. The hill runs north-south here, and the caves trend NNE-SSW. From this point and further to the north, the South River and other erosive forces have sliced off the east side of the cave. Further to the north, dried out flowstone columns can be seen in the face of the rock, further indicating that what is now on the outside used to be inside.

Forgotten Saltpetre Cave is located a few hundred feet south of the entrance to Grand Caverns. The entrance is seven feet wide and two and a half feet high. Although the cave had been mined for saltpetre in the 1800s, the cave was undocumented until it was rediscovered by Kass Kastning during geologic mapping of the hill in 1991. The map was first published in the 1995 NSS Convention Geology Field Trip Guide.

The cave has a total length of approximately 185 feet and reaches a depth of 19 feet below the entrance. It consists of a single chamber, 30 feet wide and 4-7 feet high, that slopes downward for the first 75 feet and is floored by sand and rock fragments. An alcove continues downward along the western side of the cave, ending in about 15 feet. The main passage of the cave continues to slope downward and becomes narrower and lower. Approximately 125 feet from the entrance the passage divides into two very low crawlways that become impassable after a few feet. These are approximately 20-25 feet in length, 5-7 feet wide and 1-3 feet high. The cave is dry throughout.

The cave was mined for saltpetre during the Civil War. Evidence includes a trench and shallow pits in the rear half of the cave and tally marks in the ceiling accompanied by a signature, “Samuel Baker” and a “17 April 1862” date. More recently vandals have spray painted “Bear Shit Cave” on the ceiling. After declaring “we ain’t afraid of no bears,” one of our scouting trips noticed an extra pair of eyeballs in a cubbyhole on the west side of the cave. We beat a hasty retreat. Of course, we had to return the following month, when we found bear shit covered with bear hair in the cubbyhole.

[This description is heavily derived from Kass Kastning’s description in the 1995 NSS Convention Geology Field Trip guidebook.]
FORGOTTEN SALTPETRE CAVE 
and 
LICHEN ALCOVE CAVE 
CAVE HILL 
AUGUSTA COUNTY, VIRGINIA


NORTH

Forgotten Saltpetre Cave

Lichen Alcove Cave

Piled Rock

Pick Marks; Excavation and Sediment Bank

Recorded Names and Dates

Samuel Baker
April the 17th 1862

George Kline
Co A 7th Reg
LA Vol New Orleans 1862

Miss Mary Matthews
June 12, 1862

Byrd J. Daniel(s) ?
June 12 1862

Drafted by Kass Kastning
Jefferson Cave

Jefferson Cave is a small, yet moderately complex cave, with a total length of about 220 feet (67 meters). Passages in the cave connect at nearly right angles. The funnel-shaped entrance, right next to the park's nature trail, is about 12 feet wide and a few feet high and slopes downward toward the south-southwest for about 35 feet before dropping about 4 feet into a westward-trending passage. This passage is a tall, narrow fissure with a false floor about halfway up. The passage proceeds in the upper section, about 5-7 feet high, about 50 feet to the west-southwest until it makes an abrupt turn to the south. After 20 feet of 3-foot-high fissure, the passage enters a low room to the east that is about 1 foot high. At the eastern end of the room, the passage continues south as a low crawlway and after 20 feet it joins a perpendicular passage at a T-intersection. This final east-west passage is too small to allow further exploration.

Just to the west of the four-foot drop marking the end of the entrance passage, you can drop down to small room about 8 feet high on the lower level. From here it is possible to enter the lower half of the fissure and follow it westward for about 10 feet. Kastning described another passage leading off of this small room to the northeast, which reportedly lowers to 2 feet high. The passage supposedly proceeds about 35 feet until it joins with a perpendicular passage at a T-intersection. Both branches are reported to be about 20-25 feet long and 5 feet high. Phil Lucas has confirmed having visited this passage in the 1980s, but said it was tight even then. We could not locate this passage when we first entered the cave, but we later determined that it had been completely filled by dirt and detritus washed in from the entrance. We have been digging to reopen the passage, but have not succeeded in doing so yet.

The cave was surveyed (probably in the 1980s) by Ronald D. Morton and others, but we could not find anyone who knew of or had ever seen the map. The map presented here is an interim map until we can dig the silted passage open.

[This description is heavily derived from Kass Kastning's description in the 1995 NSS Convention Geology Field Trip guidebook.]

Entrance to Jefferson Cave. Photo by Jim McConkey

Jefferson Cave
Augusta County, Virginia

Map by Jim McConkey & Dave Socky
Suunto & Tape Survey
March 6, 2004 by:
Matt Colson
Tina van Horn
Meredit Hall Johnson
Jim McConkey
Dave Socky
Mary Sue Socky
Nicholas Socky

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VAR Grand Caverns Survey Project
Kastning mentions a small cave, called Fire Cave, located about halfway between TI-59 and Baby Grand Caverns, but said little was known about it and that the cave had not been mapped. Phil Lucas sent me a very brief description of the cave, which described it as a phreatic crawlway. We located a “cave” about halfway between TI-59 and Baby Grand Caverns, but is about five feet high and three to four feet wide -- hardly a crawlway! The passage has obviously been blasted, and one-inch drill holes can be seen along the walls. Dave Hubbard claims to have been to Fire Cave and remembers that it was on the top of the hill, not in the steep eastern face where this cave was found. Since the description of the cave and its location do not seem to match the Fire that we were looking for, we have called it False Alarm.

This “cave” is somewhat of an enigma. It appears that there was some sort of natural crack here, but any natural opening that occurred here has been unnaturally expanded. Mother Nature is taking her revenge by slowly coating the walls with thin flowstone layers. The limestone face outside the cave has been heavily mined, although it is not clear where the mined rock went. In the 1800s a limestone kiln was supposedly located somewhere at the eastern base of Cave Hill. No one at the park and no one in town we have talked to knows anything about any such mining on the hill. If you have any information on this cave, the “real” Fire Cave, or the mining, please get in touch with me.

False Alarm Cave
Augusta County, Virginia

Map by Jim McConkey & Dave Socky

Suunto and Tape Survey
March 6, 2004 by:

Matt Colson
Tina van Horn
Meredith Hall Johnson
Jim McConkey
Dave Socky
Mary Sue Socky
Nicholas Socky

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VAR Grand Caverns Survey Project
Fake Snake Cave

The story goes that Phil Lucas used to be in the habit of carrying a pocket tape recorder with him on survey trips to record important details that he might otherwise forget. On the occasion of visiting this cave, Phil had the aforementioned tape recorder in his back pocket. While exploring the foot-high room in the back of the cave he bumped his ass on the ceiling, inadvertently hitting the Play button. With the volume up, a loud hissing sound surprised him from behind. Much to the amusement of his colleagues, Phil reportedly ran circles for a few minutes trying to escape the deadly beast that was chasing him!

The cave obviously takes its name from this incident, but it has also been known by Good Intentions Cave and Sandstone Cave over the years. As the latter name suggests, this cave is one of two on Cave Hill known to be formed in the narrow sandstone band that crosses the hill. The walls are very angular and tend to follow either a 45º or 165º orientation. The entrance slopes down into a cave about 40 feet long, mostly about 4 feet high and 6-9 feet wide, with a flat ceiling. At the rear of the cave, the passage drops down to enter a 10-foot diameter room which is only about a foot high and covered with rocks. At the base of the eastern wall is a narrow crevice that has been covered and/or filled with breakdown. We have not made any serious attempt to dig this out yet.
Incisor Cave

Mike, the Grand Caverns maintenance man, often hikes Cave Hill and reported a small opening only about 50 feet from the trailhead of the park’s nature trail. We investigated and found a small cave and mapped it the following month. The entire survey consisted of one 17-foot shot. It took us three shots to tie it into the surface survey.

Three cavers fit in the cave comfortably. Any more have to wait outside! The boot-shaped cave never gets more than two and a half to three feet high. We found a small fire ring in the back, and a shelf about a foot off the floor, which leads to a very low alcove. This cave lies directly over top of Forgotten Salt Petre Cave, but is too high to have probably ever connected. The name is a bad pun. I had recently discovered a cave I named Mohlers, after one of Grand’s most famous guides and explorers, and someone decided that since we had a “molar” we had to have an incisor.

Incisor Cave

Augusta County, Virginia

Map by Jim McConkey
Suunto & Tape Survey
May 8, 2005 by:
Jim McConkey
Aaron Moses
Dave Smallwood

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VAR Grand Caverns Survey Project
While exploring and mapping Fountain Cave, Phil Lucas and friends noticed a lot of air movement in the 3D maze at the back of the cave. Because of the 3D complexity of the cave, they could not determine where the air was coming from, and decided they would have better luck looking from the outside. The first programmable calculator, the Texas Instrument TI-59, had recently come out and Phil decided to put it to use. From the Fountain survey, he knew the azimuth, bearing, and distance to the location of the air. Phil wrote a program that would take survey measurements starting from the Fountain datum, and tell him the direction and distance to the air source. He recruited a hardy gang to survey across the hillside (no easy task, since the hill is 50-60º in that area!) with the calculator urging them on. By mid-afternoon, the crew was ready to mutiny, when the calculator finally said they were within one tape's length of the air. Allowing Phil one final chance before they threw him down the hill, they followed the calculated bearing and came to a 12-foot high opening in the rock face which lead into a single room about 30 feet across and 6-15 feet high. At the back right of the room is a pit about six feet deep filled with rocks. The bottom of this pit is only about 25 feet from the nearest point in Fountain Cave. There is no doubt this was the source of the air and it was probably another entrance at one time, but it is completely impassable now. At the back left a near-vertical slope leads about 25 feet up to a second entrance, about a foot high and 3 feet wide.

Many local animals use this cave for shelter, most recently a turkey buzzard nursing two eggs. The park bear visits occasionally, and several survey trips have had to be aborted. One survey trip was cancelled due to "something very large snoring down here." We returned a month later and I got stuck with the job of checking the cave out. I was all the way into the cave when a pair of eyes popped up from behind a rock. The survey notes read "See Jim run!"

References:
17th Annual
Grand Caverns Easter Restoration Camp

Hop on down to the GRAND CAVERNS EASTER RESTORATION CAMP, sponsored by the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society on April 14th - 16th (Friday – Sunday), 2006. If you enjoy the aroma of melting chocolate eggs and napalm, 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, wrestle with WILD rabbits in the Wesson-oil PIT, and a whole lot more! A great way to kick those Old Man Winter Blues and it beats making license plates! Primitive camping, socializing with convicted felons, and food and beverage provided for Saturday lunch and dinner! Easter egg hunts for the kids on Sunday morning! And, best of all it’s all FREE (okay, donations are accepted)! If arriving at night, check the left-hand gate, it is usually left with the hasp in-place so it appears locked to the uninitiated.

Directions to Grand Caverns:
Take I-81, Exit 235 onto SR 256, Traveling East [Left if traveling South on I-81, Right if traveling North on I-81, toward Grottoes] Travel East on SR 256 for 7 miles to Grottoes. At the intersection of Dogwood Avenue, turn South [Right] on Dogwood. Travel South on Dogwood Ave. for 1,000 ft. Turn Right into the Entrance of Grand Caverns [Grand Caverns Drive]. Phone (888) 430-2283.

For more information contact VAR Conservation Co-Chairs:

Andy Reeder, 840 Twin Lakes Rd., Green Bay, VA. 23942,
(W) 434-455-5876/ (H) 434-392-7452 or e-mail at: cavecon@earthlink.net; and

Meredith Hall Johnson, 8061 Kittiwake Court, Springfield, VA 22153,
703 451-3637 or e-mail at: merecaver@yahoo.com
The 2nd National Cave and Karst Conservancies Forum is a national meeting scheduled to promote education and interaction between cave and karst based conservancies in the United States. Any board member, committee member or involved general member of these organizations should be able to benefit from and contribute to this forum.

The purpose of this forum is to improve and maintain institutional knowledge among all cave and karst conservancies; to make sure good ideas and sound methods stay in circulation.

Pre-registration is only $45.00 until September 4, 2006. Payable online at www.wvcc.net/forum or by check or money order. Registration forms are on the Web site. Regular registration after September 4 is $60.00.

- Planned sessions will build from past topics that had been expressed during NCKMS sessions and from the 2004 Forum. These topics will likely include but not be limited to: Management Plans, Access Regulations, Protection of Cave Critters (Practices and Aid), Working with New Neighbors, Public Awareness for Karst Conservation, Looking for and Help with Grants, Conservancy Organization and Land Trust Resources, Conservation Easements, Insurance, and Financial Issues.
- Conservancies can make an introductory presentation on the mission and status of their organization.
- Papers are invited for selection. A session of talks is scheduled. An abstract of the proposed paper should be submitted no later than July 1, 2006. If accepted, a full version of the paper or an extended abstract should be provided to the Special Publications editor by July 31, 2006. Contact Mike Warner (mike@speleobooks.com) as soon as possible if you wish to submit a talk. If you have a poster, please contact John Pearson to help us determine if a poster session should be organized. He can be reached at 304-497-3939 or jpearson@rcc.com.
- A meeting of the National Speleological Society Cave Conservancies Committee is tentatively scheduled.
- A special publication sponsored by the Steering Committee of the National Cave and Karst Management Symposium, which will include outlines with related material from each of the sessions as well as articles on cave conservancies and cave conservation efforts in the U.S., will be published in advance of the forum and be included with the price of registration.
- Registration will open Wednesday afternoon, September 20. Registration includes hosted hospitality each evening and break foods between the sessions.
- It is likely that an annual regional gathering (Fall VAR) will be held within 1.5 hours driving time from Lewisburg over the weekend, and all forum participants are invited to attend. This gives you the opportunity to visit some caves and other cavers while in the area. A shuttle will be provided from the Forum to VAR on Friday afternoon for those registering for both.
- Transportation from regional airports, such as Roanoke, VA, or Charleston, WV, has been arranged and will be organized upon your registration. Lewisburg does have a large airport reached by regional shuttles.
- There will be focused “cracker barrel” discussions on Wednesday and Thursday evening on subjects of interest to the attendees. Front Royal Grotto and Bubble Cave LLC will sponsor food and beverages.
- At the 2004 Forum, money left over after all expenses were paid was split among all non-profit cave conservancies represented. This year we will distribute leftovers by drawing 3 participants’ names from a hat. Those whose names are drawn will then select one or more of the non-profits represented at the forum to receive their portion of the surplus. It is important to tell us which non-profit cave and karst conservancy you are representing at the time of registration.
- Sessions will be all day Thursday and Friday, September 21 and 22. All primary sessions will run consecutively to allow attendees to participate in each. A block of rooms has been reserved for the Cave Conservancies Forum. Please make your reservation at the time of pre-registration, and tell them you are with Group #258—WV Cave Conservancy. Unused rooms in the room block will be released 30 days prior to the start of the forum.
- The Conference will be at the Brier Inn Motel & Convention Center (On highway 219 just south of I-64), 540 N. Jefferson St., Lewisburg, WV. Phone: 304-645-7722 Room charges are single $66.08 per night, double $71.68 per night.
The VAR Grand Caverns Survey Project invite you to the Spring 2006 meeting of the Virginia Region of the NSS. The event will be held at Grand Caverns Regional Park, near Grottoes, Virginia, on April 28-30, 2006. 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 Grand Caverns Park has ample space for tent camping. There are genuine flush toilets, but no showers. There are no hook-ups available.

**Cave Trips:** There will be a variety of cave trips offered, both led and self-guided:

- A kids’ trip to Fountain Cave is planned.
- Trips to less demanding caves such as Church Mountain, Linville Quarry, and Island Ford Caves will also be available.
- Other more challenging cave trips will be 3-D Maze, Lyles Pit, Glade Cave (one of the muddiest caves in Virginia), and Cave Spring Cave (which has a most spectacular wall of flowstone called “Buttermilk Falls”).
- A trip into Crozet Tunnel (an old railroad tunnel) is planned.
- In addition to guided trips into Grand Caverns (sorry, not the new section!), you will be able to explore the hillside above Grand Caverns and check out many of the "new discoveries" on Cave Hill.

**Friday Night:** There will appropriate beverages and DJ music provided by John Fox. This is a great time to unwind, meet other cavers, and plan your Saturday activities.

**Saturday Dinner:** The menu for Saturday night’s catered dinner is chicken bake, meatloaf, salad with assorted dressings, mashed potatoes, Macaroni & cheese, California blend veggies (cauliflower, broccoli, carrots), rolls & butter, brownies, banana cake, carrot cake, cheese cake, Cookies, tea, lemonade. Preregistration will insure you get dinner.

**Saturday Evening Program:** After dinner on Saturday there will be a presentation of a new Grand Caverns Video by Dave Socky, a talk on Cave Hill by Jim McConkey, and photos of the “New Section” from various contributors. The presentations will be followed by more music by John Fox.

**Vendors and Other Attractions:** We expect to have several speleo-vendors and this will be a good opportunity to purchase cave related items. The infamous Guillotine Trough Squeeze Box will be set up so folks can see how small a space they can squeeze through.

**Directions:** Take Exit 235 on I-81 and go east (toward Grottoes) on Route 235. After about 6 miles turn right onto Dogwood Avenue, Route 825. After about .2 mile turn right to enter the Park.

**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.VARegion.org](http://www.VARegion.org). If you have any questions please contact Carol Tiderman at (301)792-0742 or ctider@us.ibm.com.

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**Spring 2006 VAR Meeting Preregistration Form** (please print)

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**Prices:**  
- **Adult** (anyone 15 or older) preregistration cost is $25 per person (on-site registration is $27).  
- **Child** (ages 4-14) preregistration cost is $20 (on-site registration is $22). Kids under 4 are free

Send this form and a check payable to “DC Grotto” to Carol Tiderman, 7600 Pindell School Rd., Fulton MD 20759

Preregistration payment must be received by **April 12, 2006**.
If you want to continue receiving the *Region Record*, please read this . . .

If this page is marked “TIME TO RENEW” it means that your *Region Record* subscription has run out and this is the last issue you will receive. Subscriptions are automatically extended when you attend a Spring or Fall VAR meeting, or you can subscribe to the *Region Record*. The last issue you will receive (Volume-Number) is indicated on the top line of your mailing label. More detailed information about subscriptions is listed in the box on page 2.

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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