



The Region Record

Vol. XXV No. 2 Spring 2012

“Spelunking” Added to West Virginia’s Recreational Liability Law

by John Pearson

West Virginia law provides liability protection for landowners who open their property to non-commercial recreational use. After several years of work, both houses of the West Virginia legislature have approved an amendment to the law to add “spelunking” to the list of recreational activities mentioned in the law. The Governor is expected to approve the bill containing the change because it also contains some wording changes needed to obtain Federal Homeland Security funds. Spelunking is the term added to the law because it is defined in the dictionary, but “caving” isn’t.

The change has a long history that has involved a number of cavers and politicians. Here’s a brief summary of the key players and their role.

I initiated the idea several years ago and it was supported by letters from Bob Handley on behalf of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC). A key supporter was Chuck Frostick, the West Virginia Association for Cave Studies (WVACS) Treasurer, who works the capital beat for the Public Broadcasting System in Charleston and who sees the legislators on a daily basis. Chuck knew when the bill would be reintroduced each year because he got all the

committee agendas and he kept me in the loop.

The first year it died in house committee because it was submitted too late for consideration. I wrote letters as a Manager of Bubble Cave LLC to Delegates Thomas W Campbell (Greenbrier County), Ray Canterbury (Greenbrier County) and John Blair Hunter (Mineral County) and Senators Robert A Schadler (Mineral County), Dave Sypolt (Mineral County), Don Caruth (Greenbrier County) and Jesse O. Guills (Greenbrier County). I also prepared letters for Bob Handley’s signature and WVCC for the aforementioned Greenbrier delegates and senators as well as Delegate Craig P. Blair (Berkeley County) and Senators John R. Unger II and John Yoder (both Berkeley County).

I personally received responses from Delegates Tom Campbell and Ray Canterbury and Senators John Hunter, Don Caruth and Jesse Guills. By 2009 Hunter and Guills were no longer senators so my calls went only to Senator Caruth, who passed away in office in 2011.

In 2010, I was attending the Ecology Day thing with Dave Cowan on behalf of WVACS and WVCC (we had a table in the lower rotunda area with the other ecological companies and entities) and I got to meet some of the players in the legislature. That year, it passed the House by 95–5 and was sent to committee in the Senate but not

with enough time in the session to be acted upon.

Last year it also passed the House, but then died in a Senate committee.

I think it is only fitting that Bob Handley’s role in getting this thing started be noted as a final testimony to his caving legacy. Both he and Senator Caruth passed away before the final action on this bill.

Here’s a summary of the law as amended. Many irrelevant parts have been omitted and the new “spelunking” is in bold:

WEST VIRGINIA CODE CHAPTER 19. AGRICULTURE. ARTICLE 25. LIMITING LIABILITY OF LANDOWNERS.

§19-25-1. Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to encourage owners of land to make available to the public land and water areas for military training or recreational or wildlife propagation purposes by limiting their liability for injury to persons entering thereon and for injury to the property of persons entering thereon and limiting their liability to persons who may be injured or otherwise damaged by the acts or omissions of persons entering thereon.

§19-25-2. Limiting duty of landowner generally.

... An owner of land who either directly or indirectly invites or permits without charge as that term is defined

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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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- 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. 1 **Deadline for getting the pregeststration discount** for the Spring VAR meeting. On-site registrants might not get dinner.

Apr. 7 **Grand Caverns Restoration Camp.** Help support Grand Caverns, a commercial cave in Grottoes, Virginia. See more information in this issue.

Apr. 27-29 **Spring VAR Meeting** in Williamsburg, W. Va. See additional information and registration form in this issue.

Apr. 28 **Spring WVASS meeting** at 9:30 am at the Spring VAR Meeting site.

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

June 25-29, 2012 **NSS Convention** near Lewisburg, West Virginia. See www.nss2012.com for info.

Aug. 5-9, 2013 **NSS Convention** in Shippensburg, Pennsylvania. More info later.

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.

Liability Law

(continued from page 1)

in section five of this article, any person to use such property for recreational or wildlife propagation purposes does not thereby ... assume responsibility for or incur liability for any injury to person or property caused by an act or omission of such persons.

§19-25-5. Definitions.

Unless the context used clearly requires a different meaning, as used in this article:

(1) "Charge" means:

(A) For purposes of limiting liability for recreational or wildlife propagation purposes set forth in section two of this article, the amount of money asked in return for an invitation to enter or go upon the land, including a one-time fee for a particular event, amusement, occurrence, adventure, incident, experience or occasion which may not exceed fifty dollars a year per recreational participant. ...

(5) "Recreational purposes" includes, but shall not be limited to, any one or any combination of the following noncommercial recreational activities: Hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, camping, picnicking, hiking, pleasure driving, motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle riding, bicycling, horseback riding, **spelunking**, nature study, water skiing, winter sports and visiting, viewing or enjoying historical, archaeological, scenic or scientific sites or otherwise using land for purposes of the user.

(The statute was obtained from www.legis.state.wv.us/nr/code/Code.cfm?cha p=19&art=25#25 on March 13, 2012 and summarized by Bob Hoke. The modification adding "spelunking" to §19-25-5 had not been signed into law, but the pending change is shown in this summary).

Spring VAR

Poor Farm Festival Grounds Williamsport, West Virginia April 27–29, 2012

by J. C. Fisher

Have you registered for VAR yet? If not, you still have until April 1st. Why, do you ask? Because starting now, you can go to our Web site at <http://tristategrotto.net/SpringVAR2012/VARTrips.pdf> and sign up for trips. We have a lot of trips, horizontal, vertical, easy, and some a little harder. George Dasher is leading a kids' trip. We'll save a few spots for Friday night sign up, but why wait? Then there is food. Want to make sure there is a meal ticket for you? Pre-register and your ticket will be waiting.

Spring VAR will be held at Poor Farm Festival Grounds in Greenbrier County, West Virginia. To get there, go to the Lewisburg, West Virginia exit on I-64. Turn north on Route 219 to the little town of Frankford (about 8.5 miles). Turn left onto Williamsburg Road and follow the signs to the Festival Grounds (about 6.3 miles). Please note: this not a campground. Camping will be primitive. There will be water and porta-potties, but no bathhouse or showers. Lots of open pasture to camp. Vendors, registration, food, wine tasting, information, and trip signups will be near the stage area.

Registration will open Friday at 12:00 noon. IMO and B&C Wonderwear have sent in their registration and Barry Duncan has said he is coming. NCRC vertical module training will also start Friday afternoon. Tri-State Chair John DiCarlo will host a wine tasting Friday night beginning 7 p.m. on the stage. Please bring a bottle to share. Your bottle should be a berry wine or have a berry on the label. Try to keep the cost to \$10.00/ bottle. Trip sign up will open at 9 p.m. Registration will close at midnight.

Registration will reopen at 7 am Saturday. Trips will leave at their scheduled times. John Pearson will have a conservation project (rebuilding some steps) on site at Poor Farm Cave entrance. Greenbrier County has many non-caving activities such as biking on the Greenbrier River Trail, floating on the Greenbrier River, Bear Town State Park, Greenbrier State Forest, the towns of White Sulphur Springs, and Lewisburg, two commercial caves, and the list goes on. If you need help, ask at registration. Registration will close at 5:00 p.m. The Festival ground owner's will cater a Bar-B-Q dinner at 6:30 p.m. at the stage. 8:00 p.m. will feature our speaker followed by our DJ John Fox and beer and soft drinks until midnight.

Sunday has Front Royal Grotto doing its super breakfast (extra fee), several trips are scheduled, and the VAR Meeting at 9 am.

Dan and Marian McConnell Receive VAR Landowner Award

by Mary Sue Socky

On January 20, 2012 the Blue Ridge Grotto was pleased to present the Virginia Region's Landowner Recognition Award to a very deserving couple: Dan and Marian McConnell, owners of Catawba Murder Hole in Botetourt County, Virginia.

BRG Chair Pat Sims thanked Dan and Marian for being wonderful cave owners, for promoting safe caving and cave conservation, for offering numerous vertical practice and training sessions, and for opening their property to rescue and outdoor organizations, scout groups, and cavers from around the world.

Dan and Marian seemed a little stunned as they accepted the award. "What did we do to deserve this?" Dan murmured with a smile.

[From The Carbide Dump February 2012, V47, #2]



Left to Right: Pat Sims, Marian and Dan McConnell. Dan and Marian received the VAR's Landowner Appreciation Award in January, 2012. Photo by Dave Socky.

in Burnsville Cove in the last 25 years.

Robins Rift's thrice-dug cave entrance over the past four decades accessed almost 2,000 feet of mapped, blowing cave, but the precarious state of the entrance precluded any sustained exploration and mapping. It has currently been collapsed for nearly a decade.

Acquiring this site has been facilitated via the checks and pledges of several generous BCCS members. But we still owe a considerable amount and earnestly welcome whatever you might be able to contribute to this project. Checks mailed to:

Nancy Gibson
4025 Mt. Zion Rd.
Blacksburg, VA 24060

and made payable to the Butler Cave Conservation Society, Inc. Your donation will entitle you to all the legal deductions afforded by contributions to 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations! Nancy will formally acknowledge your contribution with a letter. Please help if you can.

Thanks again for your support. 2012 looks to be a memorable year in Burnsville.

So, when Carol Tideman invited me to help with a unique conservation project in a cave that had been closed for 50 years, I was intrigued and delighted.

The project is to "de-commercialize" a former commercialized cave, at the owner's request.

All light fixtures, wiring, electrical connections, broken glass, etc. are to be removed and the cave returned to its "pre-commercialized state" (as much as possible). Protect the formations, cave life, and historical signatures, of course. There is no electricity or running water in the cave.

The cave in question has been known under a number of names – Harrison's Cave, Blue Grottoes, Virginia Caverns, and most recently Melrose Caverns, Rockingham County, Virginia.

I showed up bright and early at the old Lodge, ready for work. My car was filled with needful things—buckets, four plastic sleds, "granny grabbers," trash bags, a hand pick, etc. Pat Sims pulled in a few minutes later. After taking a quick tour of the Stone Lodge, we grabbed our lights, cameras, and Bob Thren, to tour this historic cave and see what projects awaited us.

First off, the cave is locked and guarded by a huge medieval-looking metal door. Once opened, the cave passage smelled—well, not quite cave. ("Cave" smells natural, cool, and earthy to me). This was like an OLD building that had been sealed for quite a while. No bad manmade odors – no exhaust, or chemicals, or garbage, but it didn't have that "fresh cave" smell. And—the cave passage was almost FLAT! No steps, very little gradient. This would have been a perfect "handicapped accessible" cave.

BCCS Purchases Robins Rift

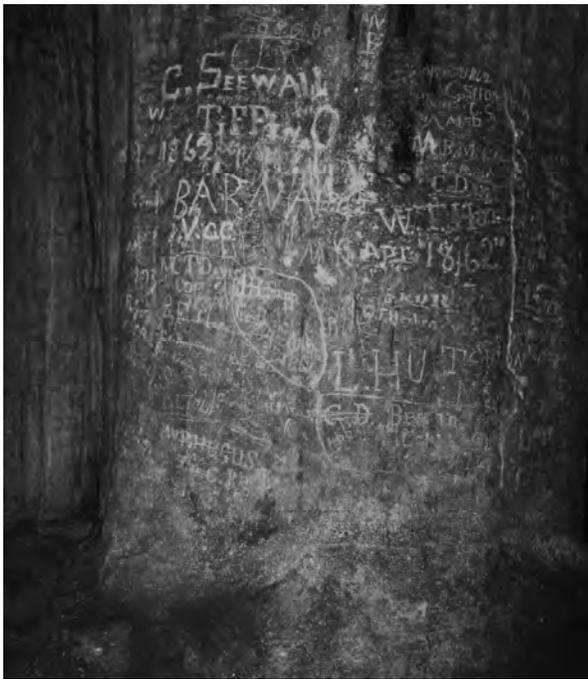
by Gregg Clemmer, BCCS President

I am pleased to tell you that the Butler Cave Conservation Society (BCCS) has a signed and notarized agreement with Bob Robins for the purchase of Robins Rift and approximately 8–10 acres surrounding the site off Virginia Route 614 in Bath County. Once the survey is completed (probably in March) and the deal closed with final payment, we will reopen the entrance...a dig challenge not dissimilar from the more than 15 other cave entrances we've dug open

Chia Pet Cave

By Mary Sue Socky

New projects are neat. You never know what you will find.



Assorted signatures in Melrose Caverns, some dating to the Civil War. The signatures are probably the most important items in the cave. Photo by Pat Sims.



Old lighting fixtures removed from Melrose Caverns. There was also a large trailer filled with old wiring, much of it lead-covered. Photo by Charles Kahn.

As commercial caves go, there are no spectacular, outstanding “pretties” in this cave. There are a few shields, formations, and some nice sawtooth flowstone draperies (“cave teeth”). The amazing thing about it is the Civil War signatures and engravings! Both Union and Confederate forces used this cave, and you can see where the soldiers visited—their names, divisions, dates, etc. are on the walls and formations throughout the caverns. (Craig Hindman, Carol Tiderman, and Pat Sims recorded some of the names and traced their owner’s activities through a “Civil War site.” They found that some of the soldiers died slow deaths from their wounds, while others did survive and went home after the war.) There is “The Soldier’s Target,” a large bullet-scarred column that the troops could not destroy. There are also numerous broken formations throughout the cave, to be attributed to the soldiers as “passing time” and taking souvenirs of their “time underground.”

Near the back of the cave was one of the weirdest things I’ve encountered underground: a roofed-in 20-foot deep sinkhole. This was the big

natural entrance. The owners had plans to build a hotel over the sinkhole and use the cave air for natural heating and A.C. The hotel was never built; but the old metal cover remains. Creepy! You can see how birds, bats, and all sorts of wild things are getting into the cave through gaps in the man-made roof.

This brings me to my nickname for this cave. Evidently every wild thing with a digestive system has visited this cave in the past 50 years and “left its mark.” There are impressive mounds of decaying pack rat and raccoon—um, feces—everywhere. These piles are actually ecosystems for rove beetles, fungus, gnats, etc. and, like the old wood, need to be left in place as “food for the cave life.” Since they have not been disturbed for decades, an amazing variety of fungus grows from each pile. You don’t notice the piles as

much as the long, delicate “fungus fur” covering each pile. Yes, they did look like “Chia Pets,” and that is my nickname for this cave. It was the odor of fungus and natural decay that everyone could smell throughout this cave (except for Charles Kahn, who had a bad cold).

On to the project: **This is NOT a “photo-op/breeze in-and-out/bag another cave for the list” project. There are no “off trail” passages to explore.** MCP is for cavers who



Mold growth on organic debris in Melrose Caverns that prompted the name of this article, Chia Pet Cave. Photo by Pat Sims.

want to WORK HARD for hours, for the weekend. And work hard we did. Hauling out old cinderblocks. Removing old green sheet metal lighting fixtures, some with ceramic sockets and unbroken bulbs still inside. Shoveling out small pits of broken light bulbs and glass. Cutting and pulling miles of lead-sheathed electrical wire from the side passages. We did not have nearly enough cable cutters to go around! Everything was piled at strategic areas to be carted out for recycling and disposal (that is where the wheelbarrows and sleds came in handy). Removing fasteners from the walls. AND—digging up the dirt floor to remove the well-buried electrical cables and junction boxes placed two feet down, then backfilling the trenches. My back ached and began seizing up after 4 hours of work. People would trade off on work sites so they would not get bored or start hurting too much from doing one type of work for too long. Progress was made, but there will be work for months to come.

The next MCP weekend is approaching. If you have a strong back and a weak mind and want to help restore a cave to its natural condition, let Carol Tiderman (ctider@ymail.com) know. Bring your tools, shovels, mattocks, and bolt cutters. Oh yeah, and bring a personal dust mask/respirator if you are the least bit allergic to mold and fungus—and take your Benadryl, too. If you can't be around mold, you can always work outside, pulling ivy from the stone walls and cutting weed trees in the courtyard and on the property. The old Stone Lodge is also musty; allergy sufferers would do well to sleep in their cars or in a tent outside. Plan to put in a full day, or a full weekend with the MCP project. Don't worry, Carol and Craig **will** find something productive for you to do. No lollygagging allowed!

[From The Carbide Dump *March* 2012, V/47, #3]

Dr. David S. Blehert Talks About White-Nose Syndrome

by Meredith Hall Weberg (from notes)

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) hosted one of its own employees, Dr. David S. Blehert, a microbiologist at the USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin, to present a program on white-nose syndrome (WNS) on March 7, 2012. A number of cavers attended, including Ellie Florence, Bob Hoke, Cheryl Jones, Barbara Moss, Gary Moss, John Pearson, Susan Posey, Steve Stokowsky, Chris Swezey, Susi Weston, and me. Although very informative and detailed, the lecture was geared towards an audience of non-cavers and non-scientists.

Dr. Blehert began by introducing bats, which are the only mammals capable of “self-powered flight.” Although nocturnal and producing only one young a year, bats are the second largest group of mammals—there are about 1,100 bat species out of about 5,500 mammals. (Rats are the largest group!)

White-nose syndrome is considered an “emerging fungal disease of bats” and occurs during the periods of “natural immunosuppression” that occur when bats hibernate.

Dr. Blehert explained in very simple terms how the fungus causing WNS, *Geomyces destructans* (*G.d.*) affects the health of bats primarily by invading the wing membrane and disrupting important physiology. One of the slides showed the critical functions of a bat's wings, other than flight: heat dissipation, water control, gas exchange, and blood pressure regulation. Dr. Blehert explained that, despite its name, WNS's “greatest damage is to wings.”

G. destructans has been found in the soil of caves with WNS-infected bat populations and can remain dormant if conditions are not quite right for it to propagate. A cold-loving fungus, it thrives in temperatures between 40–

59°F. There is no cure for fungal infections, which I didn't know; you can treat them—think of athlete's foot—but you cannot fully get rid of them. I think this is because of their ability to remain dormant for long periods of time. Dr. Blehert called this a “second life phase” and a bat is a “hibernating jar of fungus food.”

WNS is caused by the fungus *Geomyces destructans*, which Dr. Blehert named. It turns out that this fungus also exists in Europe and probably had a “single point introduction to the United States.” It was discovered in New York by biologists in the winter of 2006–2007, but had been photographed a year earlier by a caver. By the winter of 2008–2009, WNS had been found in Virginia, about 9,000 kilometers from its epicenter. It has spread continually each year, although more slowly, and though the maps show Oklahoma and Missouri as possibly having WNS, DNA tests prove it is “not yet confirmed” in those states. There are fewer caves infected west of the Appalachian Mountains than along this line of East Coast mountains.

Six species of bats have been hard hit: little brown, big brown, northern long-eared, eastern small-footed, tri-colored (formerly known as *Pipistrelles*), and Indiana, which is an endangered species.

By 2008, Dr. Blehert's lab in Wisconsin was involved “in earnest” with WNS research. Dr. Melissa Behr, formerly of the New York Department of Health and now with the Wisconsin USGS lab, collected samples of the fungus from bats in caves; the “hooked spores” of *G. d.* seen in her photographs were the first time this shape had been found in a fungus and clearly differentiated it from the many other, common *Geomyces* species. Scientists have learned that *G. d.* has an upper temperature limit of about 66 degrees; it requires cold dampness for growth. “*Geomyces destructans*” basically means “destroying soil fungus” in Latin.

Dr. Blehert discussed Koch's Postulates and the importance of that process to determining that *G. d.* was indeed the cause of WNS:

1. *G. d.* must be found in abundance in all organisms suffering from the disease but should not be found in healthy organisms.
2. The fungus must be isolated from a diseased organism and grown in pure culture.
3. The cultured fungus should cause disease when introduced into a healthy organism.
4. The microorganism must be re-isolated from the inoculated, diseased experimental host and identified as being identical to the original, specific causative agent.

These tests proved *Geomyces destructans* causes WNS.

Other research confirmed transmission of *G. d.* from bat to bat. This same study would seem to prove that transmission by air was not possible, though Dr. Blehert believes that this might have been due to forced air circulation around the bat cages and that further research is necessary.

By the nature of fungi, including being hearty and resilient, the possibility exists that humans may carry *G. d.* from cave to cave via clothes or boots. This concern was the impetus behind the widespread moratorium on recreational caving a couple of years ago and the development of decontamination procedures for clothes and gear used

in caves.

Dr. Blehert talked about the study that was based on 550 samples of soils taken from 120 caves by both biologists and cavers. The study was "able to culture viral fungus from the soil" and observe their DNA. Scientists then replicated the fungus based on the DNA, infected some healthy bats with it, collected fungus from the bats, and determined that this was the same *G. d.* Out of 24 soil samples, 11 different species of *Geomyces* were identified.

By looking back at past records and photos, scientists learned that WNS had been observed in Germany in the early 1980s and has now been identified in 12 European countries. Scientists can only theorize why European bats seem unaffected by *G. d.*, and why the bats are not dying there as they are in eastern North America. Bat populations are smaller and more disbursed in Europe than in this continent. Perhaps WNS killed large populations generations ago and those that remain have a genetic resistance. European bats are larger than those in North America—perhaps this has provided protection. Our smallest bats have the highest mortality rates.

However there is hope for bat survival. Another study woke up sick bats and provided food, water, and warmth. These bats made a full recovery, one reason being that bats can grow new wing skin, thus repairing the damage.

Bats are not considered migratory mammals, but do move up to 200 miles between summer and fall

homes. As we know, they are predators of insects "that cause vector-borne disease and impact crop and forest health." Mortality from WNS in some areas "has been documented up to 100 percent." The average decline is 80 percent.

Dr. Blehert said that decontamination of clothing and articles used in caves is "something that should be encouraged." We met him after the talk and told him we decon as best we can and he agreed it is difficult even for researchers to decon in the field.

Author's note: Thanks to Cheryl Jones for fact checking and heavy editing!

Some WNS Links:

USGS National Wildlife Health Center in Madison, Wisconsin www.nwhc.usgs.gov/disease_information/white-nose_syndrome/

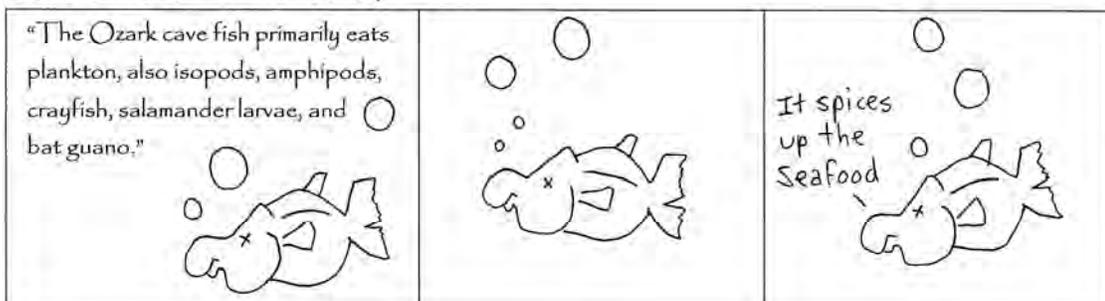
U.S. Fish and Wildlife White-nose Syndrome page www.whitenosesyndrome.org

National Speleological Society White-nose Syndrome page www.caves.org/WNS/index.htm

Virginia Cave Board Main Web page with links to WNS policy: www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural_heritage/cavehome.shtml

Geomyces Destructans and Fungal Diseases:
Presented by Dr. David Blehert
WNS Webinar Series
<http://gallery.usgs.gov/videos/527>

STEVE KARP



Virginia Cave Board News

by Meredith Weberg

The Virginia Cave Board (VCB) is a unique group—the only government organization in the country devoted to the preservation of caves and karst! The VCB Web site says, “The Virginia Cave Board was established to conserve and protect caves and karstlands of the Commonwealth and advocate the wise use of these resources.” We are made up of geologists, biologists, museum employees, and regular cavers, like me. The Cave Board exists to serve caves and karst in the Commonwealth.

Some of the things VCB does is to educate cave landowners, real estate developers, and others on the importance of caves and karst. We produce a periodic *Virginia Cave Owners' Newsletter*. One visible event VCB supports and promotes is our annual Virginia Cave Week, which is April 22–28 this year. Once again, Dixie Caverns, Grand Caverns, and Shenandoah Caverns will offer a

Cave Week discount if you ask for it. Another increasingly visible sign of VCB is the nascent Virginia Cave and Karst Trail.

Recently VCB sent a letter about cleaning lampenflora in show caves. This is now the policy and is on the Web site. Lampenflora is algae, moss, ferns, and other photosynthetic organisms that grow in the lights in commercial caverns. VAR cavers have been using the best practices listed in the VCB policy for quite some time.

The other news is that Tom Lera finally realized five and a half years is long enough to chair such a worthy organization. I was voted chairman at the November meeting. I hope I do as good a job as Tom did.

Cave Gating Gurus...

by Janet Tinkham

Have Welder Will Travel... is a phrase that pops into my head when I hear about a cave gating project that is being organized. Along with this phrase are a number of individuals who come to mind who have donated their time, expertise, and resources over and over and ask nothing in return (except maybe some beer and amaretto creamer for their coffee). Having participated in a few gating projects, I've been able to observe and admire the teamwork developed between Craig Hindman, Carol Tiderman, Kevin Mulligan, and Anya Crane. Additional welders are Greg McCoy, Scott Davis, Pete Bracken, and others. The guys do the welding and the gals do the measuring, cutting and welding from their end before sending the pieces off to be installed on the actual gate. Communication is through two-way radio and sometimes runners. As easy as they make it look though, cave gating is not an easy task. The



Carol Tiderman (l.) and Anya Crane preparing to cut steel during the construction of the Baker Quarry gate in West Virginia. Photo by Janet Tinkham.



Craig Hindman (l.) and Kevin Mulligan welding the gate at Rapps Cave (West Virginia). Photo by Janet Tinkham.

welders spend lots of time sitting in cramped positions, and periodically have hot sparks flash at them. The base crew has to haul big pieces of steel, measure and cut accurately and arrange to have the pieces transported to the gate by other volunteers.

For the most part these projects run smoothly, but once in a while something happens to lend a little extra excitement. One memory is of the time we were gating Front Royal Caverns in Warren County, Virginia, to protect the Madison Cave Isopod. Kevin was looking forward to nightfall as he had a brand new spotlight that he wanted to use. As darkness fell, he turned it on, and boy what a beacon it was. It lit up the whole work area and more. As the night wore on, something in the surrounding woods caught my eye, little bobbing lights. As we paused and watched the lights come closer they eventually emerged as uniformed patrolmen, wondering what in the world we were doing. Apparently, the information we had provided to the day shift of the Warren County Sheriff's office did not get relayed to the evening shift. Kevin's spotlight had caught the attention of these officers and they responded thinking we were having one heck of a field party. After explaining, they wished us well and left.

Cave gating involves a lot of planning from designing the actual bat-friendly gate, to ordering materials, setting up the site, and organizing volunteers. Thank you to those who volunteer their time and resources...you are appreciated.

Spring WVASS Meeting on April 28

by George Dasher

The Spring Meeting of the West Virginia Speleological Survey (WVASS) will take place at 9:30 a.m. on the Saturday of the Spring VAR, April 28th. The meeting will be at the VAR site and will (hopefully) be short so people can go caving.

This is an open meeting and anyone can attend, and anyone with an interest in documenting and surveying West Virginia's caves should attend. For more information, contact Brian Masney at 304-288-2705 or masneyb@gmail.com.

2012 NSS Convention Registration To Be Ruffled at VAR

by John Pearson

The 2012 NSS Convention will be in Greenbrier County, West Virginia, on June 25–29, 2012. Communications Design Consulting Group (CDCG) is a corporation that is helping support the convention. CDCG has offered to donate the cost of a full convention registration, convention Guide-book, t-shirt, pin, and patch to be raffled off to a lucky caver. Tickets will be available for \$10 each at the Spring VAR meeting and the drawing will be held at the VAR's Saturday evening party.

More information about the 2012 NSS Convention is at www.nss2012.com.

Minutes of the Fall 2011 VAR Meeting

October 15, 2011
RASS Field Station, Virginia

Meeting was called to order at 9:07 a.m.

REPORTS

Secretary: Carol Tideman

A motion was made by New River Grotto to accept the minutes as published in the *Region Record*. BATS Grotto seconded. Motion passed.

Treasurer: John Fox

Bubble Cave, LLC moved to accept the Treasurer's report as published in the *Region Record*. Sligo Grotto seconded. Motion passed.

Vice Chair: Judy Fisher

No report.

Chairman: Craig Hindman

Will be covered in the agenda.

Conservation Co-Chair: Meredith

Hall Weberg

Panther Cave needs a cleanup.

- Whittings Neck Cave needs a cleanup and restoration after graffiti discovered.
- Bubble Cave, LLC and D.C. Grotto will be performing a cleanup in Island Ford Cave on 10/15/11.
- Grand Caverns Restoration will be held on the Easter weekend.

VAR Outstanding Service Award

- Meredith Hall Weberg

Award presented to Rick Lambert and Marian McConnell.

Landowner Recognition Awards:

Janet Tinkam

No report.

Landowner Legal Support

Committee: Bob Hoke

No new is good news.

Region Record: Bob Hoke

Send articles and pictures -

Deadline for next issue December 15.

VAR List Server: Walt Pirie
No report.

VAR Web Site: Jim McConkey
Use the forms. Contacts need to be updated for grottos.

Cave Bucks: JC Fisher
Still works. It's easy. For more information contact JC. Send the funds in, don't hold onto them.

Virginia Speleological Survey:
Rick Lambert
A weeklong camp in Omega added a couple of miles.

WVASS:
No report. Bill Balfour stepped down as chair after 25 years. Brian Masney is the new chair. A new bulletin and monograph have been released.

W. Va. Cave Conservancy:
Banquet will be held in November.

Southeast Cave Conservancy:
Will open all caves next Spring, back on the old schedule.

Grand Caverns/Cave Hill: Jim McConkey
The dig continues in Fountain Cave. The property has been resurveyed, but permanent markers have not been installed yet. Signature work continues in Grand.

Virginia Cave Board: Meredith Hall Weberg

Will meet the 3rd weekend in November at Grottoes Town Hall. A water line easement by Madison's Cave will be discussed.

Spring Survey Project: Joey Fagan
Accepting applications for grants.

Crystal Cave at Hupps Hill:
The NSS still has it hung up with the legal committees. May look to MAKC to take it over.

Youth Group Liaison – Joey Fagan

Host Report: Tidewater Grotto and RASS
158 registered, 142 on site. There were cave trips, food and a camp fire. BAT'S Grotto moved to thank Tidewater Grotto and RASS. New River seconded – motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

VAR Hosts:

Spring 2012: Tri-State hopes to have information in the next *Region Record* at Greenbrier or Seneca. Will be on the last weekend in April 27–29.

Fall 2012: Roland Moore – Rockbridge County.

Spring 2013: Possibly Front Royal Grotto.

WNS:
Virginia—clean your gear between

trips.

West Virginia—no report. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service gave a grant to the 2012 Convention for decontamination and education.

NEW BUSINESS

None

Grant Requests:

No requests.

Elections:

New River Grotto moved to reelect the current slate. Bubble Cave, LLC seconded – motion passed.

Announcements:

- Take your trash away.
- MayaCon CD is available for grottoes to pick up.
- We need to get folks to attend the VAR and meeting.
- Karen Kastning was awarded the Outstanding Service Award at the NSS Convention.

ADJOURNMENT

Bubble Cave, LLC moved to adjourn, New River Grotto seconded. Meeting Adjourned at 10:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:
Carol Tiderman

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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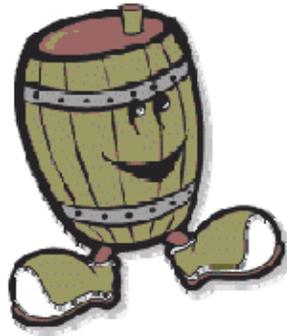
City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

E-mail _____

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

Please make checks payable to VAR and send to: **John Fox, 204 Fifth St., Radford, VA 24141**

If You Enjoy a Frosty Beverage with Your Chocolate-Covered Eggs Join Us for The...



21st Annual Grand Caverns Easter Restoration Camp April 6-8, 2012

Hop on down to the GRAND CAVERNS EASTER RESTORATION CAMP, sponsored by the Virginia Region of the National Speleological Society on April 6-8 (Friday - Sunday), 2012. If you enjoy the camaraderie of fellow cavers, join us for our annual gravel-hauling express through beautiful Grand Caverns. Fix broken formations. Improve cave-owner relations and a whole lot more! A great way to kick those Old Man Winter Blues!

Primitive camping, socializing with fellow cavers, and food and beverage provided for Saturday lunch and dinner! And, best of all it's all free (okay, the Easter Pig is accepting donations)!

Directions:

From I-81, take Exit 235 to SR 256, [turn left if traveling South on I-81, and 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 (Rt. 825), 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] and then turn right immediately after passing the entrance gate to the big pavilion. Phone (888) 430-2283.

For more information, contact:

Andy Reeder, cavecon@earthlink.net or
Meredith Hall Weberg, merecaver@yahoo.com

Spring 2012 VAR Meeting

April 27-29, 2012

Registration Form

The Spring 2012 VAR Meeting will be held at the Poor Farm Festival Grounds located in Williamsburg, West Virginia. The Grounds are off Route 219 near Williamsburg, West Virginia, just north of Lewisburg. Make a left in Frankford and follow the signs.

Early registration by April 1st 2012 –Full = \$30.00 _____

Early registration by April 1st 2012 –under 15 years old = \$26.00 _____

On–site registration – Full = \$35.00 _____

On–Site registration –Under 15 = \$31.00 _____

Please check if you want Vegetarian Option _____

Make check payable to: Tri-State Grotto

Please fill out a form for each person

Name: _____

Address: _____

Grotto: _____

Phone number: _____

E-mail _____

MAIL FORM to Judy Fisher

PO Box 276

Berkeley Springs, WV 25411