

The Region Record



Spring 2018



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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 materials to Nikki Fox (1726 Longs Pump Road, Harrisonburg, VA, 22802, or nikkicfox@yahoo.com). Electronic submissions are preferred, but any kind of submission will be allowed. Non-copyrighted material contained in the *Region Record* may be reprinted by organizations that are affiliated with the VAR or the NSS, as long as credit is given to the *Region 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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Cover Photo by Nikki Fox

A big brown bat hibernates in a small hole in New Trout Cave during a recnet bat count. To read more about the bat count at the John Guilday Cave Nature Preserve of the NSS in Pendleton County, W.Va., see page 8.

Message from the VAR Chairman

Well, spring is almost here. Projects are starting up again and we're getting rid of cabin fever.

From the posting on Facebook (thanks Carol), two people have stepped forward to run for John Fox's VAR board member seat as treasurer. John has helped run VAR for the past 20 years. He has always spoken up for what he felt was right. VAR owes him a round of applause for his service. All of the

officers thank you, John.

If there are others that wish to run for one of the other officer's spots, let one of the officers know and we will see you are on the ballot.

I hope to see a large turn out at the spring meeting in Marion, Va.

-Craig Hindman

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From the Editor

I would like to thank Meredith Hall Weberg for being the guest copy editor for this issue. Thank you!

- Nikki Fox

GRIMM GROTTO

by JOHN TUZEK



I'VE COME TO THE CONCLUSION THAT YOU DON'T REALLY CLEAN CAVE GEAR... YOU JUST TRANSFER THE DIRT TO YOUR BODY.

Region Record

2018 Calendar

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| April 13-15 | Orientation to Cave Rescue class by the Eastern Region of the NCRC at Chimney Rock State Park, N.C. |
| April 16 - 22 | Virginia Cave Week |
| April 20 - 22 | Grand Caverns Easter Restoration Weekend in Grottoes, Va. |
| April 27 - 29 | Spring VAR at Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center in Marion, Va. |
| May 3 - 6 | SERA Cave Carnival at Maranatha Camp in Scottsboro, Ala. |
| May 5 | WVASS Meeting at WVACS Fieldstation near Renick, W.Va. |
| June 22 - 24 | Orientation to Cave Rescue class by the Eastern Region of the NCRC in Chambersburg, Pa. |
| July 13 - 15 | WVACS Classic near Renick, W.Va. |
| July 30 - Aug 3 | 77th NSS Convention in Helena, Mont. |
| Aug 17 - 19 | Indiana Cave Capers at Camp Rivervale near Mitchell, Ind. |
| Aug 30 - Sept 3 | Old Timers Reunion near Beverly, W.Va. |

Where's the Undiscovered Cave?

by Mike Futrell

Inevitably one of the topics that will be discussed around the campfire is "How much undiscovered cave is left in southwest Virginia?"

Some might say "The area is played out. WVACS is the place to be." But get a cold beer and pull up a chair. You might hear an old timer talk about just how unexplored these mountains and valleys remain.

Take the three counties along the I-81 corridor — Washington, Smyth and Wythe. If you lived north of here, you'd have to drive past too many caves. If you lived to the south, well, you'd be in TAG and wouldn't come up past the state line. The DOM (Dirty Old Men) week, as well as the FYW (Filthy Young Women) events have always been held well to the west.

Thus, like southwest Virginia in general, it's always been a little far for all but a few local, dedicated cavers.

In over three decades caving in the region I've never been to, nor heard of anyone going to, a Wythe County cave until very recently. I suspect it's among the least explored karst in the state. But is there any way to test something like that? In Wythe there are 106 caves (>5') but only 16 maps, with a median date of 1980, and only about 5 of those maps are "modern." Though it looks like things are changing

Washington and Smyth counties are slightly better, each with about 35 percent of the caves surveyed at some point in time, but only about 20 percent are under the more thorough practices that became widely adopted

in the 1980s. So many caves and cave areas have not been visited for decades. Perhaps these are clues to where new passage is hiding.

There are just over a hundred karst features in the three counties. These are typically entrance only reports, blowholes, For Record Only (FROs), digs or something no one ever got around to following up with. Sometimes these turn into real caves!

Head down to the Spring VAR. There are over 500 not-quite previously enjoyed caves totaling 51 miles of passage in the immediate area. Not all of them are small, and the ones that are, are because it has been decades since anyone has looked. And bring your survey gear.

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Virginia Cave Week — April 22–28, 2018

by Janet Tinkham

Virginia Cave Week is sponsored by the Virginia Cave Board and was established as an annual event coinciding with Earth Day. The goal is to promote an understanding of Virginia's caves and the surrounding limestone habitats known as karst by providing resources and educational opportunities to engage the community in conservation efforts. Educators are encouraged to involve their students using in-class activities and visitation to the state's numerous commercial caves.

The Virginia Cave Week Web site (www.vacaveweek.com) is a resource for material related to cave and karst education. Check out the different tabs for

information and links having to do with caves, karst-related education, classroom activities, virtual caves and more.

Virginia Cave Week has focused on a variety of karst-related themes and this year the spotlight will be on the Virginia Cave and Karst Trail, a collaborative project between the governor-appointed Virginia Cave Board and the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation.

The Virginia Cave and Karst Trail has more than 20 stops where visitors can learn about and appreciate outstanding caves and karst features.

The goal of the trail is to educate people about these sensitive environments and to promote their protection. Most stops are in Virginia's scenic Ridge and Valley Province. Each offers visitors a unique experience such as a fee-based tour, an interpretive program, or a scenic view. A few stops have trails or self-guided tours.

During Virginia Cave Week, you are invited to participate in the following specially scheduled events along the Virginia Cave and Karst Trail.

PLANNED ACTIVITIES

Sunday, April 22, 10 a.m. & 1 p.m.

Grand Caverns – Grottoes, Va.

Dr. Dan Doctor (USGS, Virginia Cave Board) will offer two geologic interpretive tours of Grand Caverns. Have a question about how the cave formed? Ever wonder what that formation hanging on the wall is called? Interested in knowing more about the Madison Cave Isopod? Want to know what cave drip water can tell us about climate change? Bring your curiosity! The cave management is offering half-price on these tours — \$10 for adults and \$5.50 for kids. Going on a cave tour with a geologist will be fun and educational. Web site — www.grandcaverns.com.

Sunday, April 22, 1 p.m.

Skyline Caverns Karst Education Trail Walk – Front Royal, Va.

Members of the Front Royal Grotto will host an above-ground walk along the Cave/Karst Education Trail at Skyline Caverns. Learn about the connection between surface karst features and the ground below. Participants will meet in the parking lot at the information kiosk located at the beginning of the trail. For more information, contact Janet Tinkham, janete@shentel.net or at 540-933-6850. Web site — <http://www.skylinecaverns.com>.

Monday, April 23, 7 p.m.

Wildwood Park Karst Trail Walk & Talk – Radford, Va.

Wil Orndorff of the Virginia Natural Heritage Program will lead a walk through Radford's Wildwood Park, discussing the many karst features in the park and the challenges they pose in an urban environment. In addition, participants will get a chance to learn more about the significance of Virginia caves and karst in the New River Valley and beyond. Participants will meet at the trail head. Call 804-786-7951 to register. Web site — wildwoodpark.atwebpages.com.

Tuesday, April 24, 6 p.m.

Falls Ridge Preserve of the Nature

Conservancy – Montgomery County, Va.

Join Wil Orndorff, with the Virginia Natural Heritage Program, to learn more about the exciting karst landforms at Falls Ridge. It will include an 80-foot-high travertine-waterfall complex deposited from karst spring waters, small caves and other karst landforms including sinkholes. This stop on the Virginia Cave and Karst Trail involves moderately difficult hiking of ~3 miles. A shorter loop will also be available concentrating just on the waterfall area starting at 7 p.m. Call 804-786-7951 to register. Web site — www.nature.org/ourinitiatives/regions/northamerica/united-states/virginia/placesweprotect/falls-ridge-preserve.xml.

Wednesday, April 25, 7 p.m.

Rockland Park – Front Royal, Va.

Join DCR Karst Protection staff for walking tours of the Rockland Park home to the federally threatened Madison Cave Isopod. Come learn about the isopod, karst landforms and the steps that citizens, government agencies and businesses have taken to protect these rare and valuable karst resources. Call 804-786-7951 to register. Web site — www.warrencountyva.net/rockland-park.

Friday, April 27, 6 p.m.

Natural Bridge State Park – Natural Bridge, Va.

There will be a free showing of the Catawba Murder Hole video at Natural Bridge State Park. DVDs and books will be on sale, plus lots of free information on caves, bats and karst. Website — www.murderholecave.com.

Saturday, April 28, 1 p.m.

Natural Chimneys Karst Trail Vulcan's Forge – Mt. Solon, Va.

The Highland County Cave Survey will host a guided walk to look at the karst features that feed the aquifer around Natural Chimneys and recharge the

springs along Mossy Creek. Participants will meet at the pavilion at the Natural Chimneys parking lot. For more information contact Rick Lambert, caves@htcnet.org or 540-468-2722.

Web site — www.co.augusta.va.us/government/parks-recreation/parks-facilities/natural-chimneys.

In addition to activities during Virginia Cave Week, the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation will host two events the first weekend of May that highlight the beauty and exceptional biodiversity of extreme southwestern Virginia:

Friday, May 4, 8:45 a.m.

Natural Tunnel State Park – Duffield, Va.

A Field Day in Southwestern Virginia to see natural habitats, rare plants and karst features including a beautiful underground stream. Web site — www.dcr.virginia.gov/state-parks/natural-tunnel#general_information.

Saturday, May 5, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Jonesville in Lee County, Va.

Join scientists and conservationists for The Cedars and Powell River Appreciation Day, which will feature a line-up of great speakers presenting fascinating information on the biology of the uplands, underlying caves, and the Powell River. Between speakers you can browse exhibits and talk to other stakeholders while listening to live performers from along the Crooked Road. The day culminates in an afternoon field trip to see first hand some of these amazing natural resources. Web site — www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/natural-area-preserves/thecedars.

Call 804-786-7951 for more information, or register online at: <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/other/natural-heritage-registration> <http://www.dcr.virginia.gov/natural-heritage/other/natural-heritage-registration>.

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Discovering Caves at the Museum

by Bob Bennett

There are a lot of times when the National Speleological Society (NSS) tries to make itself visible to the public. Recently was such a time in Winchester, Va. The Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum in downtown Winchester held an event that primarily involved caves and cavers. Although the museum is primarily for children, they are accompanied by their parents and grandparents. Of course, they have friends and neighbors. At times the children are bused in for field trips on the weekends and on Friday nights sometimes the place is really rocking.

On Friday, Feb. 2, 2018, the NSS made one of its first appearances at the museum. Carol Jackson spent a lot of man hours (or should I say woman hours) planning and setting up the displays. Carol had some help and one was in the form of her husband Bill Jackson with manual labor.

There were various types of caving venues on display. On the first floor, a table was set up and manned by Paulette and Bob Bennett, Bob Edmonds and Tom Griffin. On the display table were different caving handouts, a bat box, a couple of rubber bats for the kids to handle, climbing rope, helmet, cave pack, carbide lamp, tubular webbing, an assortment of vertical gear, carabiners, a cave map and a booklet on Jones Quarry Cave.

On the second floor there was a 3-D panoramic display of a cave that was set up. Along with the display

there were prints of different caves and entrances on display. These prints were the ones from the Smithsonian travel exhibit, which are now owned by the NSS. There was also a table with helmets and lights so kids can crawl and try to experience what it is like to be caving. Also, there was a display of the Potomac River Basin. Of course, you can't forget the famous "Cave Babe" in all her glory! She was decked out on rope with her rope walking system.

Friday, Feb. 23, 2018 was the highlight of the whole event! Tom Griffin had two ropes set up that were rigged to the rafters. As he manned the ropes several cavers showed off their prowess by climbing rope. Among these were Cheryl & Earl Suito, Bob Edmonds and Tom Griffin himself. Bru Randall set up a phone system like the ones used by the NCRC on cave rescues. Several of the kids said it was just like using a phone-shaped walkie talkie.

Paulette tirelessly manned the display table and handed out pamphlets and

information sheets. Cheryl Suito had several of her cave paintings on display. Bob manned the squeeze box along with some help from Bru and Ben Nerud. The kids really enjoyed seeing if they could squeeze through. Some of the kids balked at trying to squeeze through saying that it was too tight. But seeing others do it would give them confidence and they would jump with glee after sliding through. For about half an hour this was the highlight! Then the novelty started to wear off.

While all this was going on downstairs, upstairs was a showing of the movie "Journey Into Amazing Caves." There were also other cavers who showed up at the venue to show their support. Some of these included the whole Imes family from Maryland, past NSS President Gordon Birkhimer, Ann Muldoon, Alexa Simmons and John Cantrell, to name a few.

According to the people who run the museum, the usual amount of people who show up at the Friday night venues usually numbers about 25. But on the night of Feb. 23 the total visitors numbered 75! This shows that people are interested in caves!

Carol Jackson would like to thank the people who took time out from their busy schedules to help and show up in support of the cave exhibit at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum.



Photo by Alexa Simmons

Earl Suito talks to parents about caving at Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum's display last month.



Gracie Early (left) and Ava Jones look at a 3-D cave in one of the displays at the Shenandoah Valley Discovery Museum in downtown Winchester, Va.



Photo by Alexa Simmons



Cheryl Suitor (from left), Bob Edmonds and Tom Griffin suit up for a vertical demonstration at the museum.

Photo by Bob Bennett



The "Cave Babe" on display dressed in an old Rope Walker.

Photo by Gordon Birkhimer



Children take turns at trying out the squeeze box.

Photo by Bob Bennett



Tom Griffin talks to a family about vertical caving to access caves.

Photo by Gordon Birkhimer

John Guilday Cave Preserve Bat Counts 2018

by Earl Sutor

On Saturday March 3, 2018, the annual bat counts took place for Hamilton and New Trout Caves on the John Guilday Cave Nature Preserve of the NSS in Pendleton County, W.Va.

Four Tri-colored bats from New Trout Cave were swabbed on their exposed skin (snout and forearm) for White Nose Syndrome (WNS) — a fungus called *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*. The samples were sent to a lab at Pennsylvania State University for DNA analysis to determine the geographic location of fungal origin.

New Trout Cave bats were counted first, as per standard protocol. The 7-person team consisted of: WVDNR Biologist Kevin Oxenrider, WVDNR Biologist Berlynn Heres, Earl Sutor, Cheryl Sutor, Nikki Fox, Chris Coates and Meredith Hall Weberg.

The bat species found were diverse with seven different species. There were 33 live bats and three dead ones collected. Unfortunately, the first bat encountered in the cave was a dead Virginia big-eared bat hanging on the wall and it was the only VBEB to be seen. The second dead bat was a Tri-colored bat in the Register Room and the third was unidentifiable due to it being covered in white fungus.

Almost all of the bats counted showed no signs of WNS, but there was one little brown bat that had visible fungus. Kevin was optimistic in the survival of the bat since the hibernation season is nearing its end and the bat was not terribly thin.

The Live Bat Count:

Big brown bat — 8
Eastern small-footed bat — 1
Tri-colored bat — 6
Northern long-eared bat — 1
Little brown bat — 5
Indiana bat — 12

The bats in Hamilton Cave were counted by Earl Sutor, Cheryl Sutor, Nikki Fox and Chris Coates. There were five live bats counted — four Tri-colored bats and one little brown bat. All of them appeared to be healthy with no sign of WNS. The little brown was closest to the entrance, three

Tri-colored bats were the entrance maze and the last one found was in the overhead, anastamotic area before the Slab Room.

Trout Cave bats are counted at this time of the year, on the odd-numbered years. Trout Cave Virginia big-eared bats will be studied this summer for their late night behavior. ✱



Photos by Nikki Fox

TOP: An endangered Indiana bat roosts in the Big Room.

BOTTOM: Kevin Oxenrider, a biologist with the WVDNR, swabs a Tri-colored bat in New Trout Cave.

Michael Irvin Houpt Obituary

NSS 7786 & PSC 406

by Chuck Kipe

Michael Irvin Houpt passed away Nov. 6, 2017, at Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown, W.Va., after an extended illness. He was 68. Michael was born April 13, 1949, the son of Jesse V. and Virginia Long Houpt. He was born and raised in Franklin County, Pa. He resided over forty years in the Franklin, W.Va., area.

He was recognized as a craftsman of hand-crafted jewelry in silver, gold, and copper. He also cut and set stones. Michael was also a musician. He loved to play his banjo and piano, and he loved bluegrass, mountain music, and hymns. He played for anyone who would listen, and he especially enjoyed playing in old-folks



homes.

One of his greatest loves was caving. From an early age, he and some local friends explored, opened and mapped

caves. He was a member of the NSS, York Grotto, Mercersburg Speleological Association and honorary member of a few more organizations. He had an incredible knowledge of caves in West Virginia, Virginia, Pennsylvania and Maryland. He attended many Old Timers Reunions, MAR events and NSS conventions. His caving friends are essentially his family.

Michael was very well known in all the activities mentioned above. More importantly, he was loved by people from all walks of life and always had time for anyone who needed a hand. It is an honor for this writer to have had Michael as a very close friend.

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Remembrance Day for Mike Houpt

A memorial service for Mike will be on Saturday, April 14, 2018, at Thorn Springs Park south of Franklin, W.Va. For those traveling from out of the area, there are cabins and campsites available. Some of us will be there for the whole weekend. There will be a service and afterwards, a reception with food. This will be an opportunity to share thoughts of Mike and meet with old friends. Anyone wishing to speak at the service please let Chuck Kipe know. All are invited.

Anyone wishing to spend the weekend, these are the rates:

Cabins are \$13 a night, per person. The cabins available are:

- 2 – 20-person cabins
- 1 – 16-person cabin
- 7 – 8-person cabins

There are 10 tent sites with picnic table and fire ring. Water at some sites, but not all. Cost is \$5 a night, per person. There is also field camping available for \$5 a night, per person. RVs can be accommodated. Anyone interested in the above sites, call John Simmons at Thorn Springs Park — 304-358-7737.

This will be a day of remembrance of a special person. Please bring pictures and memories of what you have of Mike to share. Let Chuck know if you're coming so that the proper amount of food is prepared.

Contact Chuck Kipe at either 717-328-0133 or 717-552-4306. Or email at: chuck.kipe@yahoo.com.

White-Nose Syndrome May Have an Achilles' Heel

source: USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station

In the course of genomic analyses of the fungus behind white-nose-syndrome, a devastating disease that has killed millions of bats in North America, US Forest Service scientists discovered something very surprising: brief exposure to UV-light kills *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*.

In the course of genomic analyses of *P. destructans*, a team of scientists from the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture and the University of New Hampshire found that the fungus is highly sensitive to UV light. *P. destructans* can only infect bats during hibernation because it has a strict temperature growth range of about 39-68 degrees Fahrenheit. However, treating bats for the disease during hibernation is challenging, so any weakness of the fungus may be good news to managers trying to develop treatment strategies.

In a study published on Jan. 2 in the journal *Nature Communications* titled "Extreme sensitivity to ultra-violet light in the fungal pathogen causing white-nose syndrome of bats," the research team suggests that *P. destructans* is likely a true fungal pathogen of bats that evolved alongside bat species in Europe and Asia for millions of years, allowing Eurasian bats to develop defenses against it. In the course of comparing *P. destructans* to six closely related non-pathogenic fungi, researchers discovered that *P. destructans* is unable to repair DNA damage caused by UV light, which could lead to novel treatments for the disease. The study was funded by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.



Photo by Nikki Fox

A Tri-colored bat infected with WNS.

"This research has tremendous implications for bats and people," said Tony Ferguson, Director of the Forest Service's Northern Research Station and the Forest Products Laboratory. "Bats play a key role in the health of forests as well as the production of food in the United States, and developing an array of tools with which we can treat bats for white-nose syndrome is important to preserving these very important species."

The research team generated annotated genomes for *P. destructans* as well as six non-pathogenic *Pseudogymnoascus* species in an effort to gain insight into the origins and adaptations of the fungal pathogen of WNS. Using comparative genomics, the research team noticed that *P. destructans* lacked a key DNA repair enzyme, prompting them to expose the fungi to DNA damaging agents, including different wavelengths and intensities of UV light. They found that a low dose exposure of UV-C light resulted in about 15 percent survival of *P. destructans* while a moderate dose exposure resulted in less than 1 percent survival.

These values translate to only a few seconds of exposure from a hand-held UV-C light source.

"It is unusual that *P. destructans* appears to be unable to repair damage caused by UV-light," said Jon Palmer, a research botanist in the Northern Research Station's lab in Madison, Wis., and the lead author of the study. "Most organisms that have been found in the absence of light maintain the ability to repair DNA caused by UV light radiation. We are very hopeful that the fungus' extreme vulnerability to UV light can be exploited to manage the disease and save bats."

Research on potential treatment using UV light is under way. Daniel Lindner, a research plant pathologist with the Northern Research Station in Madison and the corresponding author on the study, is leading follow-up research to determine if UV-light can be used as a treatment for bats suffering from white-nose syndrome. The study will measure the survival of little brown bats during hibernation after being treated with UV-light compared to control groups. The researchers are also exploring whether there are any non-target effects by measuring changes in the bat skin microbiome (both fungal and bacterial communities). The study, which is funded by a grant from the, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Bats for the Future Fund began late last year.

Co-authors on the study include Kevin P. Drees and Jeffery T. Foster of the University of New Hampshire.

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Minutes of the Fall VAR 2018 Meeting

Sept. 24, 2017 — Submitted by Carol Tiderman

Meeting was called to order at 9:06 a.m. at Spruce Knob, W.Va.

REPORTS

The Secretary – Carol Tiderman
A motion was made by Blue Ridge to accept the minutes as published in the Region Record. BATS seconded. Motion passed.

The Treasurer – John Fox
Financial report was provided.

The Vice Chair – Judy Fisher
Thanks for a lovely day in the meadow.

The Chairman – Craig Hindman
No report.

Conservation CO-Chair – Meredith Hall Weberg
Sinkhole cleanup in Rockingham Country is ongoing effort. Next date is Oct. 14.
Sinks of Gandy cleanup on Sept. 23. Seneca Caverns wants assistance with algae abatement.

VAR Outstanding Service Award – JC Fisher
Awarded to Earl & Cheryl Suitor
Submit nominations.

Landowner Recognition Awards – Janet Tinkham
No nominations received.
Submit nominations.

Landowner Legal Support Committee – Bob Hoke
No report — no news is good news.

Region Record – Nikki Fox
Deadline for material is December 15.
Nikki is doing a fantastic job.

VAR List Server – Philip Balister
Everything seems to be in order.
Responding to requests.

VAR Website – Jim McConkey
Still here.
Keep grotto contacts up to date.

Cave Bucks – JC Fisher
Alive and well.
Tri-State has collected & donated over \$7,000.

VSS – Dave Socky
Meeting Nov. 18 at Natural Bridge from noon to 5 p.m.

WVASS – George Dasher
Database contains maps, survey data and pictures. Report to county coordinators to fill in the gaps.
Next meeting on Oct. 5 at WVACS Fieldstation. Bring a covered dish.
Will send a list of county coordinators to the *Region Record* for publication.

WVCC – Carroll Bassett
Not much going on.
Nick Socky surveying Windy Mouth.
Annual Banquet on Nov. 11.

SCCI – Walt Pirie
No report.

Grand Caverns/Cave Hill – Jim McConkey
Continued trail maintenance, re-

placing lights and algae abatement. Dig on the hill progresses. Surveying close to complete in Fountain Cave.

Virginia Cave Board – Meredith Hall Weberg
Meets quarterly.
Developed the Virginia Cave and Karst Trail. Need volunteers.
Spring tour this past year was a success and will do it again.
More signage is planned for the trails at commercial locations.

Cave Conservancy of the Virginias – Dave Socky
Doing well, well funded.
Grants are available for projects, etc. Go to Web site to apply.
Online membership application.
Meeting in Morgantown on Nov. 11. Has a Facebook page.

Spring Survey Project – Joey Fagan
Still happening.
Five temperature loggers are installed in West Virginia — collecting baseline data.

Youth Group Liaison – Joey Fagan
Program is active and coordinating info on trips.
Northern Virginia is active.

New River Cave
No report.

Dominion Pipeline
North Carolina and West Virginia pulled the 401 certificates which deals with stream crossings.
Letters need to be written in Virginia to get them to pull their

401 certificate.
DCR provided alternate routes.
Dominion has political power and money.
Mountain Valley pipeline — same concerns.
2000' blast zone.

Host Report

151 registered. Thanks for coming.
Great weather.
Should break even.
Will make payment to VAR.

OLD BUSINESS

VAR Hosts

Spring 2018 — Walker Mountain hosting on April 27–29 near Hungry Mother
Fall 2018 — VPI to host. Possibly near New River Cave.
Spring 2019 — James River Grotto

hosting near Lynchburg area.
Fall 2019 — DC Grotto.

NEW BUSINESS

A. NSS Congress of Grottoes Report

1. Passed a motion to gender neutralize bylaws.

2. Bernice Gotshalk will write a request for publication regarding cavers planning their estate to leave gear, data and logs to the NSS.

3. We expect the NSS Board of Governors to give a detailed accounting of how money is spent for the office and how long the NSS can remain viable with membership declining.

4. \$28,000 is needed to repair the indoor bathroom & \$28,000 is needed to build outdoor showers.

B. We need to get student groups

involved.

Elections

Baltimore Grotto moved to reelect the current slate. CCV seconded; motion passed.

Grant Requests

No requests submitted.

Announcements

Rich Geisler — a bid will be submitted to host the 2020 NSS Convention at the TRA site. Improvements have been made. Will be looking for help.

Adjournment

Dingo Grotto moved to adjourn, Tri-State seconded.

Meeting Adjourned at 10:17 a.m.

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2018 WVACS CLASSIC

July 13 through 15, 2018

Renick, W.Va. (WVACS Field Station)

Activities

- Reblay course
- Grapevine pit
- Saturday evening dinner
- Guest speaker (Nikki Fox — Sweetwater)
- Fireworks

Caving

- Guided cave trips
- Self-led cave trips

Classes

- Vertical Class
- Learn how to survey
- Learn how to sketch

Information

- Per person cost is \$10 for the meal and \$15 field station fee.
- There is bunk space, but bring a tent. There is plenty of camping space.

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Spring VAR 2018 — April 27–29, 2018

Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center in Marion, Va.

Walker Mountain Grotto is excited to host this event at the foot of our namesake Big Walker Mountain in beautiful Marion, Va. Our site location is the Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center, a private 58-acre camp located adjacent to Hungry Mother State Park and the Jefferson National Forest. The site offers easy access to many caves, mountain biking and hiking opportunities, rock climbing, fishing and canoeing on Hungry Mother Lake, and shops and restaurants in downtown Marion.

Don't worry about southwest Virginia's fickle spring weather! We have reserved the entire camp and have access to many covered and indoor spaces, including a large pavilion, dining hall, and bunkhouse with hot showers.

DIRECTIONS

Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center, 772 E Hungry Mother Dr, Marion, VA.

From I-81 exit 47, follow US 11 (N. Main St.) south for 1.1 miles. Turn right onto VA-16 North (Park Blvd.), following signs to Hungry Mother State Park. After 3.8 miles, turn right into the park entrance, just after passing Hungry Mother Lake. You do not need to pay an entrance fee. If there is a ranger on duty, tell them you are passing through the park to the Retreat Center. Follow the main road through the park (VA-348). Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center is on the left, 1.5 miles beyond the state park entrance. Registration is at the cabin on the left, just across the bridge.



SCHEDULE

Check for precise schedule details at the registration area.

Friday	Registration opens 2 p.m. Self-guided cave trips
Saturday	Guided and self-guided cave trips Conservation project Banquet dinner Evening program: Mike Futrell on "The Unknown Caves of Southwest Virginia" Live music from The Kind
Sunday	Continental breakfast provided by Front Royal Grotto (minimum \$3 donation) VAR business meeting at 9 a.m. Site closes at noon Self-guided cave trips

LODGING

Plenty of flat space for tent camping and RVs will be available (sorry no RV hook-ups). We also have a cabin available for rent as well as two large bunkhouse rooms that offer communal sleeping arrangements. Showers, flush toilets and port a-potties are available on site. Several hotels are available nearby in Marion.

SITE RULES

We are guests at HMLRC and Walker Mountain Grotto asks that attendees be respectful of the camp, and of the neighbors across the road.

- ◆ No pets.
- ◆ No indoor smoking or tobacco/nicotine products.
- ◆ No campfires in the tent camping area — a communal campfire will be maintained near the dining hall.
- ◆ The event is BYOB. Please be discreet with your drinks.
- ◆ Official camp quiet time is 10 p.m. to 8 a.m. Out of respect for the camp and our neighbors across the creek, please keep quiet in the tent camping area after 10 p.m. Indoor and outdoor space for socializing after 10 p.m. is available at the top of the hill in the vicinity of the dining hall and bunkhouse.

LIVE MUSIC

Saturday evening musical entertainment will be provided by Blacksburg-based hillbilly psychedelic folk-rock legends, The Kind.

FOOD

The Saturday night dinner will be pork barbecue sandwich and plenty of sides (vegetarian option available by request).

VENDORS

We have verbal commitments from Speleobooks and Inner Mountain Outfitters. Be sure to thank them when you see them!

ACTIVITIES

Guided and unguided caving trips, vertical workshop, a conservation project of a clean-up at a local cave, plenty of hiking, rock climbing, fishing and more — all within short drives of the campground.

GUIDEBOOK

Professionally bound with a color cover, 78 pages, 18 contributors, 35 pictures, event information, history, biology, geology, non-caving activities, and maps/descriptions for 35 caves, including many never-before-published maps.

T-SHIRTS & DOOR PRIZES

T-Shirts are available featuring the “Hungry Bear” event logo, pictured above. Available to pre-order with early registration.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

If you don't want to go underground, southwest Virginia has plenty of other things to do outdoors, such as hiking, bicycling, rock climbing, canoeing, whitewater kayaking (dependent on local water levels), world-class trout fishing and more. There are 18 miles of hiking and mountain bike trails available in Hungry Mother State Park, immediately adjacent to the VAR site. The newly reopened cliffs at Hidden Valley outside of Abingdon boast some of the best rock climbing available in Virginia. Grayson Highlands State Park and the Mount Rogers high country offer outstanding opportunities for hiking among the highest mountains in the state. Many other ideas for outdoor activities are described in the guidebook. Hungry Mother Adventures (2382 Old Lake Road, Marion, VA), located just outside the state park, offers zipline tours and tubing on the Middle Fork of the Holston River. For more information call (866) 305-1953.

REGISTRATION DETAILS

Registration includes camping, the Saturday evening meal and a guidebook. Early registration is \$35 through April 6. The price increases to \$40 on April 7. Early registration includes the option to pre-order an event t-shirt. To ensure a meal ticket, please pre-register by April 20. After that, registration will be on site only.

The cost for minors/children ages 10-17 registering with an adult is \$25. Children under 10 are free. The free/reduced rates do not include an additional guidebook.



Visit our website at —
<https://walkergrotto.wordpress.com/var/>
&
Join our Facebook group
“Spring VAR 2018” for news.

Space in the bunkhouse is available on a first-come-first-served basis. The price is an additional \$5 for the weekend. The bunkhouse consists of two large, simple rooms with bunk beds. Guests must provide their own linens or sleeping bags. The adjacent bathroom includes hot showers, which will be available to all VAR guests.

Online pre-registration will continue to be available through April 20. After that, registration will be on-site only.

Register online at <https://walkergrotto.wordpress.com/var/registration/> or print and mail the form on the next page. Payment can be made by check or via PayPal using the link on the online registration page. *

Spring VAR 2018 Registration Form

April 27-29, Hungry Mother Lutheran Retreat Center, Marion, VA
Hosted by Walker Mountain Grotto



Registration includes camping, the Saturday evening meal, and a guidebook. Early registration is \$35 through April 6. The price increases to \$40 on April 7. Early registration includes the option to pre-order an event t-shirt. To ensure a meal ticket, please pre-register by April 20. After that, registration will be onsite only.

The cost for minors/children ages 10-17 registering with an adult is \$25. Children under 10 are free. The free/reduced rates do not include an additional guidebook.

Primary registrant: _____

Email: _____

NSS number: _____

Grotto affiliation(s): _____

Mailing address: _____

Additional registrants: _____

If one or more vegetarian meals are required, indicate the number: _____

Number of registrants (adults): _____ x \$35 = _____

Number of children (ages 10-17): _____ x \$25 = _____

Event T-Shirt (pre-order by April 6): _____ x \$15 = _____

quality/size: [] Sm [] Med [] Lg [] XL [] 2XL

Bunkhouse spaces: _____ x \$5 = _____

TOTAL COST: _____

Mail your registration form and check (payable to Walker Mountain Grotto) to:

Walker Mountain Grotto
c/o Tanya McLaughlin
704 Holston Hills Ln
Marion, VA 24354-1670