CENTRAL
OKLAHOMA
GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL
SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,INC

C.O.G.nizance

Inside this Issue

Announcements ……..…..….....2
White-Nose Decontamination Protocol; Officers
Minutes: meeting March 11, 2022 ……..…..……..…… 2
Treasurer's Report March 2022 ……..……..…..……..…2
Trip Reports:
Alabaster Caverns by Matt Brasher ……..……..…. 3
A Scout's Venture to the Wild Side by John VanDyke ……..…4
Potpourri:
Sick Bats Also Employ 'Social Distancing' ..……..…5
Most People Don't Know There's a 26-Story Elevator Shaft Carved Into This Stone Mountain in North Carolina 5

Google Meet
Friday, May 13, 2022
At 7:00 central time
Becky will send you an invitation

Pictures taken at Alabaster State Park by John VanDyke.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*No trips planned at the present time.

*Next meeting may be May 13, 2022 on Google Meet. Becky will send out invitations.

WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME DECONTAMINATION PROTOCOL, October 2020

This is the latest formal revision of the national decontamination protocol to prevent spread of the fungus that causes white-nose syndrome. This document is the product of a collaborative effort with multiple federal and state agencies and several non-governmental organizations. Go to this website to view the detailed suggestions listed to help stop the spreading of WNS
https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/static-page/decontamination-information

Wildlife Health Bulletin 2022-01
National Wildlife Health Center
Jonathan Sleeman, Center Director
January 31, 2022

Winter 2021/2022 Bat Submission Guidelines and Highlights of the 2020/2021 White-Nose Syndrome Surveillance Season

Summary
The USGS National Wildlife Health Center has released updated guidance for bat diagnostic submissions for the 2021/2022 white-nose syndrome (WNS) surveillance season. During the 2020/2021 surveillance season, WNS was detected for the first time in Wyoming and Montana, increasing the number of states where WNS has been confirmed to 37. Field testing of several vaccine candidates to prevent WNS in susceptible bat species is ongoing, and field vaccination has proven to be safe in WNS susceptible animals.

Updated guidance from the USGS National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) is now available for bat diagnostic submissions for the 2021/2022 white-nose syndrome (WNS) surveillance season. These guidelines are posted on the NWHC WNS web page and replace all previous NWHC bat submission criteria.

MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO MEETING
APRIL 8, 2022

In attendance: Becky Hunsinger, meeting facilitator; Dale Amlee, Sue Bozeman, John Talbot, Lil Town, John, Tammy, and Andrew Van Dyke, Jon and Kelley Woltz, Steve Beleu

Presiding: Supreme Potentate Jon Woltz
Start time: 8:00

OLD BUSINESS

1. Sue told us that the U.S. Postal Service returned the map of Prospect Cave to her. She resent it to Jon, and he received it.
2. Kelley showed us several of her drawings of an axolotl.

NEW BUSINESS

1. The Van Dykes were going to Alabaster Caverns State Park the day after our meeting to remove trash from their wild caves. Hooray!
2. Lil had sent out a corrected copy of the *COGnizance* on the day of the meeting.

TREASURER'S REPORT

John Talbot read his report which noted that we made several cents that month. Meeting ended 9:10

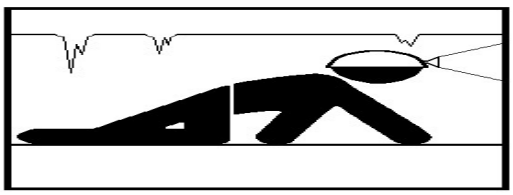
Report by S. Beleu, Secretary and Sergeant at Underarms

TREASURER'S REPORT

APRIL 2022 TREASURERS'S REPORT

	INCOME	EXPENSPES
Dividends	$ 8.00	
Postage	$ 3.10	$3.10
Donation	$ 3.90	
TOTAL	**$ 15.00**	**$3.10**
CASH	$ 106.05	
CHECKING	$ 555.31	
SAVINGS	$ 1,429.81	
TOTAL	**$ 2,091.17**	**4/16/2022**

PREPARED BY TREASURER
JOHN TALBOY NSS #30254



TRIP REPORTS

Trip Report: Alabaster Caverns
Trip Report by Matt Brasher
Date: April 24, 2022

On Saturday April 24th, my wife Brittany and I along with our three boys Gunnison (7), Jenson (6) and Boone (3) traveled from Perryton, Texas to Alabaster Caverns State Park for a weekend of exploring and camping. Looking at the countryside as we drove in reminded me of all the fun trips I had been on with the COG to the Selman Ranch for cave surveying and bat counts. We arrived around 11:30 and had a quick lunch at the picnic tables near the park headquarters. We signed up for the 12:00 cave tour. We donned our hiking boots and pants in preparation for the tour.

Due to the 2018 front entrance collapse the tour started off with a tractor ride. We boarded a covered trailer along with several other cave enthusiasts for a lift to the back entrance. This was an added bonus for our young boys. When we arrived at the entrance we were told by our tour guide that the temperatures in the cave would be much cooler and our eyes would need time to adjust. The entrance was through a set of steep stairs through a metal gate. Some of the initial instructions from our guide included tips on how to prevent getting a severe headache, which was better information for me than the boys.

The cave was dark and the floor was damp. The patch was fairly smooth and a little slick in spots. The cave was fairly well lit highlighting the interesting features on the walls and revealing a few side passages. There were just a few places for me to duck through. We saw several active drips from the ceiling and a small flowing stream. I could tell we descended as we progressed and the route had plenty of handrails for the few steeper inclined sections. The tour guide held several stops pointing out the interesting formations and filled us in on the ins and outs of gypsum caves. There were two or three features that resembled 'upside-down bath tubs' that were generated by whirlpool currents. Some of them had rims that were deposits. Unfortunately, one highlight of the tour, black alabaster, we were told was no longer visible due to the front collapse. We were told the collapse occurred after some heavy rains. Our best chance to see black alabaster was samples at the Smithsonian in Washington D.C.

Near the back of the cave we stopped and observed two bats that were resting maybe 10 feet from each other. One was a tri-color bat and the other was a cave myotis, if I recall correctly. One small and the other extremely small. We heard that the best time to see bats would be November through March. The boys enjoyed getting to see the bats. The tour turned around for our journey out. We made a few more stops at other points of interest and gained a new perspective on the cave. Near the exit our tour guide offered a more adventuresome pack down a low ceiling side passage back to near the entrance. The boys and I, of course took the route which was only about 20 yards in length. There was some ducking and crouching involved but no crawling. It was fun to be off the beaten path.

The tour inside the cave lasted about 45 minutes. At that point Boone was getting a little chilly wearing only jeans and a T-shirt so I carried him the last section of the tour. On our way through the exit the tour guide, who knew we were camping in the canyon, told us we should be able to see several bats at dusk.

For the remainder of the day the boys and I had a blast hiking up all of the trails around the main creek. We saw several boy scout and church groups wild caving and camping. That's now on my list for future trips with the boys. While following several of the trails we located Owl Cave which had a very large entrance. We also found Water Cave, which we could hear a stream running through it. At the base of the effluence from water cave was a pretty moss covered water fall. This was one of the favorite hiking spots of the boys. We visited this spot again on Sunday morning.

After dinner at our campsite we hiked north up the canyon and found Little Bear Cave. The trail was very sandy and steep. The boys thought the trail made a great dirt slide. Brittany and I relaxed at our site while the boys rode the slides for over an hour. The weather was pleasantly warm.

At dusk Brittany and I kept our eyes open for bats. It seemed that all at once they started fluttering throughout the valley with some very near to us. We took the boys out of the tent to see. They later said this was one of their favorite parts of the trip. A cold front came through overnight that dropped the temperature into the 50's. We all slept well! This was a fun weekend for our family and I am determined to take the boys on some wild caving at Alabaster in the future.

A Scout's Venture to the Wild Side
By John VanDyke

April 9th dawned bright and cool for 3 travelers north of their normal shelter. Andrew, the youngest COG member, and vaunted Scout had chosen to perform his required conservation-related service unlike so many of his peers – in the peace and darkness of caves.

This all started about a month earlier with a question that was quickly answered by Super Duane with an idea to do clean-up in the Wild Caves of Alabaster. Several emails later, Mr. Mike Caywood had everything arranged. So began the trek, and Andrew would soon get his wish.

We (Andrew, his mom and dad) departed the main area of Alabaster and arrived at Owl cave at 8:55 am. It was about 40-45 degrees outside yet the cave entrance felt even cooler. About 50 feet inside the cave, we encountered a single myotis crawling on the cave floor, looking for some place to hide. We noted no traces of humans, very little litter, and very few animal tracks. The cave had slumbered well through the winter months. Andrew did his duties and at a reasonable point we turned back, exiting the cave around 10 am.

We journeyed to the camp site nearest Bear cave and then set out on the trail up to the mesa. We looked around, thought we'd made a mistake, and so turned back and returned to the camping area to reassess. After studying the crude map, we decided to go back up the mesa trail (yes, we really did go back up that billy-goat path). This time we found the entrances up yonder. The temperature was rising steadily, in the 60's, which made the cool entrance to Bear Cave West feel even better. The entrance area was dry, clean, very few bugs, and almost no signs of animals. Additionally, there were no signs of human interference – but that would soon change.

It was then that a strange attitude arose. We began, almost instinctively, to count bats. Without the trusted pencil and small notebook, we broke out our phones and kept tallies. I can't believe how much I missed that.

About an hour into the cave a large group came upon up on us. There had to be 20-plus in the group of adults and teenagers (from Kansas). Unknown to us, this would be the first weekend of the year that the wild caves were open to anyone. They were traveling at break-neck speed so we decided to sit and rest and let them pass. We made our turnaround just short of the "Pipe" (knee something) and made it back out around 12:45 pm.

After another short jaunt we arrived at Ice Stalactite cave. A group of 7 entered before us, so we dallied a bit and entered at 1:30 pm. As with the others the cave was relatively free of trash and human markings, but there were many two-legged footprints. Footing began to get a bit dicey where wet soled shoes had been before. Inside a large hall we noticed a single Tri-Colored (Pip dammit, Pip!) perched all alone on the cave ceiling. We hit a good turn-around point and began back tracking to the entrance – we had to be out by 3 pm.

It was good to see that the caves looked healthy. There was very little trash – Andrew collected maybe a quarter of a kitchen sized trash bag of items, and I suspect many were leftovers from the previous "open" season or perhaps washed in. It was unusual to encounter other individuals but we had several nice, short conversations. It was also unusual to count bats this late, but it felt so natural to take the time to do so.

We stayed for the Bat Wing Ding that evening.

We were able to spend some quality time with Big D and Melinda, and we got to meet and thank Mike Caywood in person for all he had done. Duane and Melinda introduced us to their newest tech-toy, an attachment to a mobile computing device that picked up the sounds made by the bats. The sound is inaudible to humans but this device is so good it can not only pick up the sounds we can't hear but can also determine the species of bat from whence it originated. It had the attention of all the young folks in attendance that evening. Needless to say, we departed very late for the homestead.

Footnote one. On the way back from dinner, on a serious country road, we were run into by a turkey. Yes, I said a turkey. Big guy, too. My final souvenir of the trip will be a replacement windshield.

Footnote two. We got to pondering that evening and had a bit of epiphany; Tammy had taken Andrew to Alabaster when he was about 3, and at one point we went into the Cave of the Winds in Colorado, but Andrew (even younger) stayed in the visitor area with family. Wild caves are really all Andrew has known.

Sick bats also employ 'social distancing'
Science News
June 1, 2021
Tel-Aviv University
http://www.sciencedaiily.com/releases/2021/06/21061121738.htm

In a new study, researchers demonstrate that sick bats, just like ill humans, prefer to stay away from their communities, probably as a means for recovery, and possibly also as a measure for protecting others.

The Covid-19 pandemic has introduced us to expressions like 'lockdown', 'isolation' and 'social distancing', which became part of social conduct all over the world. Now it appears that bats also maintain social distancing which might help prevent the spread of contagious diseases in their colonies.

In a new study published in *Annals of the New York Academy of Science,* researchers from Tel Aviv University demonstrate that sick bats, just like ill humans, prefer to stay away from their communities, probably as a means for recovery, and possibly also as a measure for protecting others. The study was conducted by postdoctoral researcher Dr. Kelsey Moreno and PhD candidate Maya Weinberg at the laboratory of Prof. Yossi Yovel, Head of the Sagol School of Neuroscience and a researcher at School of Zoology at the George S. wise Faculty of Life Sciences.

The study monitored two colonies of Egyptian fruit bats -- one living in an enclosure and the other in its natural environment. To examine the behavior of bats when they get sick, the researchers injected several bats in each group with a bacteria-like protein, thereby stimulating their immune response without generating any real danger to the bats. Tests revealed symptoms such as a high fever, fatigue and weight loss, and the 'ill' bats' behavior was tracked with GPS.
The researchers discovered that the 'sick' bats chose to keep away from the colony. In the first group, they left the bat cluster of their own accord and kept their distance. In the second group the 'ill' bats likewise moved away from the other bats in the colony, and also stayed in the colony and did not go out in search of food for two successive nights.

Research student Maya Weinberg explains that this social distancing behavior is probably caused by the need to conserve energy -- by avoiding the energy-consuming social interactions in the group. Weinberg emphasizes, however, that this behavior can also protect the group and prevent the pathogen from spreading within the colony. Moreover, the fact that sick bats don't leave the cave, prevents the disease from spreading to other colonies. "The bats' choice to stay away from the group is highly unusual for these animals. Normally these bats are extremely social creatures, living in caves in very crowded conditions," says Weinberg. "In fact, the 'sick' bats' behavior is very reminiscent of our own during recovery from an illness. Just as we prefer to stay home quietly under the blanket when we are ill, sick bats, living in very crowded caves, also seek solitude and peace as they recuperate."

Prof. Yovel adds that the study's findings suggest that the likelihood of bats passing pathogens to humans under regular conditions is very low, because sick bats tend to isolate themselves and stay in the cave. "We observed that during illness bats choose to stay away from the colony and don't leave the cave, and thus avoid mixing with other bats. This suggests that in order to encounter a sick bat, people must actually invade the bats' natural environment or eliminate their habitats. In other words, if we protect them, they will also protect us."

Most People Don't Know There's A 26-Story Elevator Shaft Carved Into This Stone Mountain In North Carolina
April 18, 2022 by **Robin Jarvis**
http://www.onlyinyourstate.com/north-carolina/hidden-elevator-in-mountain-nc/

There are no records available of the total number of steps found throughout Chimney Rock State Park in North Carolina, but it suffices to say that if you pay a visit to the unique state park and its main attraction and don't end up sore a day or two later – you probably didn't see much of the park. Thankfully, though, there's an elevator placed deep inside the mountain that takes visitors almost all of the way to the very top of Chimney Rock itself. Take a look at the coolest North Carolina elevator ever and then be sure to check it out when you take a day tip over to Chimney Rock.

Chimney Rock may be North Carolina's most famous natural attraction. In 2021, 412,684 visitors passed through this park, many of them eager to stand high atop the chimney to check out the view below.

And while some may have chosen to take the long way up to the perch (499 steps, to be exact), others found their way to the elevator hidden away inside the mountain.

Visible from all the way down in Chimney Rock Village, the park's namesake stands a full 313 feet in height and getting to the top can be a breeze - if you know the fastest and easiest way to get there.

In 1946, engineers began excavating an elevator shaft 258 feet tall inside the mountain. When finished it would make access to the top of the chimney easier for most visitors.

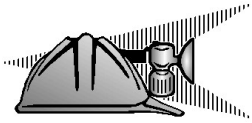
Today the same shaft is still used, although elevator upgrades have taken place over the years. In the 2010 decade, the elevator was closed much of the time as upgrades were worked out. But by 2018 the elevator was entirely operational once again. Visitors access the elevator by walking through a haunting 198-foot tunnel carved into the mountain. It's the longest pedestrian tunnel in North Carolina.

Come on over and check it out. But remember, elevators all over the world can still have down times, so if you absolutely require the use of the elevator then you'll want to call ahead to make sure it's operational on the day you visit. Chances are really good it will be! And if an elevator isn't enough to entice you to make day trip, then...
Maybe the park's Sky Lounge at the top of the mountain is!

Have you ever taken the long way up to the top of Chimney Rock by way of the 499 stairs? Care to guess how many stairs (TOTAL) there are in the park? We have no idea!
Address: Chimney Rock at Chimney Rock State Park, Chimney Rock, NC 28720, USA

Central Oklahoma Grotto is a non-profit organization and a chapter of the NSS (National Speleological Society), 6001 Pulaski Pike, Huntsville, AL, 35810-1122 USA. Phone (256)852-1300. Dedicated to cave conservation and safety, C.O.G. published general information in a monthly newsletter ($6.00/year) and detailed cave surveys and related Speleological items in a yearly publication, *The Oklahoma Underground* ($3-$8/issue) Membership is by sponsor and is $12 per year for adults, $6 for spouses and students, and $3 if under 18. Central Oklahoma Grotto meets once a month on the second Friday of each month. For information, write Lil Town, 25692 Mosier Circle, Conifer, CO 80433: All submissions to the newsletter should be sent to the editor: Lil Town, 25692 Mosier Circle, Conifer, CO 80433: Telephone: (580)471-1238: E-mail: cavemoose@gmail.com. The deadline for submissions for any particular month's issue is the 20th day of the previous month. If you wish material returned. Please include a SASE with submission. All materials in this newsletter is available for reproduction, provided proper credit is given with the article when you print it. Trade publications are welcomed. *Cave softly and safely!* Website: http://www.okcavers.com

Friday
May 13, 2022
There will be a virtual meeting.
See you online!



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