CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,INC

C.O.G.nizance

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The May meeting of the Central Oklahoma Grotto will be held at the home of Dale Town at 8:00 p.m.

Decontamination protocols specific to WNS have been developed and will continue to be revised to incorporate the best available information. All current protocols will be available at the following website: http://www.fws.gov/WhiteNoseSyndrome
Source: DRAFT WNS Plan - v. 10.21.2010 from **A National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-Nose Syndrome in Bats**
Duane has put the decontamination protocols in the COG website at http://okcavers.netfirms.com/wns/index.htm

Possible Cave Closures

Reprint from a Missoula Montana newspaper website
Contributed by Theresa Martinez

MISSOULA (AP) — Officials with the Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service are considering closing caves under the agency's jurisdiction starting May 1 because of a disease that has killed millions of bats, mainly in the Northeast.

But cavers say the move is unwarranted in the Rocky Mountains where bat populations aren't showing signs of white-nose syndrome. The closure would include Montana and northern Idaho.

"If we were to lose our bat populations to the extent we're losing them out east, it would be devastating," Forest Service spokesman Brandan Schulze told the Missoulian. "White-nose syndrome is a big concern, especially as we move into spring. The snow melts and more access to caves opens up."

The disease causes a white fungus to grow on a bat's muzzle and skin. It doesn't let bats hibernate, which can fatally weaken them. Officials fear humans might be spreading the disease.

But cavers say the agency should first take public comments before closing caves.

"It appears they're doing this under an emergency plan that allows them not to take public comments," said Mike McEachern, president of the Northern Rocky Mountain Grotto cavers' association. "That's not the correct way to proceed. It was justifiable in the East when the outbreaks were occurring, but out here they've now had six years to learn about this."

McEachern argued that bat populations in the region are less susceptible to disease outbreaks because they live in smaller concentrations. He also said cavers have embraced decontamination methods to avoid possibly spreading the disease.

The Northern Region of the U.S. Forest Service has 16 bat species, 12 of which hibernate. Six of the species are on the agency's sensitive species watch list.

"When the problem first emerged, it was kind of consolidated in the New York area," Schulze said. "It was a small spread. Then it wasn't until just last year it started jumping huge distances, across the Appalachian Mountain range and over to Missouri and Oklahoma. If it's just being transmitted bat to bat, how is it reaching across these big distances? Is it possible that people could be transmitting it?"

The definition the Forest Service uses for a cave includes most sheltered overhangs.

Several gatherings are planned this spring and summer where researchers are likely to shed more light on white-nose syndrome.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Northwest trips are scheduled the third Saturday of every month. Contract Sue or John Bozeman for details.

*The 8:00 May meeting will be at the home of Dale Town

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Source: DRAFT WNS Plan - v. 10.21.2010 from **A National Plan for Assisting States, Federal Agencies, and Tribes in Managing White-Nose Syndrome in Bats** Duane has put the decontamination protocols in the COG website at http://okcavers.netfirms.com/wns/index.htm

MINUTES

CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO

Minutes of the April, 2011 meeting

Host: the home of COG member Dale Amlee

Attendees: Dale Amlee, Anne Ault, John and Sue Bozeman, Mary Hicks, John Talbot, John Van Dyke, Lil Town and her guest Mart Dennis, Jon and Kelley Woltz, S. Beleu

The Honorable Jon Woltz began the meeting at 8:09.

OLD BUSINESS – none

NEW BUSINESS

- We talked about being rained out when we attempted to survey Broken Horn Cave on March 19. It didn't rain anywhere else in Oklahoma that day.
- We talked about the upcoming trip of April 16.
- We talked about not having our dates to visit and work in Carlsbad Caverns confirmed yet through Duane. We will ask him about the status of this early June trip.

TREASURER'S REPORT
Treasurer-for-Life John Talbot gave his treasurer's reports for both March and April.

We concluded the meeting at 8:41.

TREASURER'S REPORT

March 2011

INCOME		EXPENSES
Dividend	$ 0.02	
Totals	**$ 0.02**	
CASH	**$ 222.49**	
CHECKING	**$ 535.07**	
SAVINGS	**$2,115.41**	
TOTAL FUNDS AS OF 2/7/2011	**$2,872.97**	

PREPARED BY TREASURERJOHN TALBOT NSS#30254RE

April 2011

INCOME		EXPENSES
Dividend	$ 1.33	
Totals	**$ 1.33**	
CASH	**$ 222.49**	
CHECKING	**$ 535.09**	
SAVINGS	**$2,128.72**	
TOTAL FUNDS AS OF 4/7/2011	**$2,886.30**	

PREPARED BY TREASURERJOHN TALBOT NSS#30254RE

TRIP REPORTS

Broken Horn Cave
16 April 2011
Cavers: Dale Amlee, Sue Bozeman, Jon Woltz, Steve Beleu
By Dale Amlee

The weather for this April cave mapping trip was turning out to be somewhat agreeable, compared to the previous few attempts. The cold weather of winter had broken, leaving us with temperatures in the high 60's to low 70's, and the spring rains had not yet begun to soak the landscape and fill the caves with water. We were therefore hoping to finally get a mapping expedition into the center arm of the trident feature on the western leg of Broken Horn Cave. This arm has always held water, and water-filled passages make mapping extremely difficult. Not only is there the goo factor each person must deal with, sinking into the mud while taking shots and so one, there is also the issue of keeping the mapping equipment clean / dry while working. Depending on the size of the passage and the contortions required to negotiate them, this can sometimes pose insurmountable problems.

The four of us met at the Selman ranch, quickly changed into our gear and made our way to the cave. Anticipating a wet survey, I had layered on the polypropylene beneath my coveralls. Sue was doing the book, Steve and I grabbed compass/clinometers, and Jon had the backup laser distance measuring device (Fluke). The entrance of the cave (Barrel sink) was dry and critter-free, so we squeezed in and got to work.

The nice thing about this particular mapping trip is that the last point we had left on this arm was only about fifty feet in past the entrance, so we were starting to take our first readings much earlier in the day than on other past survey trips. We located the last point of the previous survey (TC3) just before noon, and started to survey.

The mud was fairly sticky, but there wasn't much standing water at this part of the passage, so we were able to progress with the mapping at a fairly good pace. The passage here was standing room high, with rocky featureless white walls that required us to use often barely prominent rock outcroppings as our survey points. Steve's compass / clinometers both turned out to be not functional. They were fairly old models, and had served him well for many years, but apparently the mileage had finally caught up with the devices. We tried several backshots and foreshots with them, but could not get the equipment to repeat, let alone verify the readings from the foreshots I made with the Sunnto items I was using. Regretfully, we decided to just use the same Sunnto's to make backshots to supplement each foreshot, which meant I was taking double readings with the same gear. This wasn't that much of a problem, but it was slowing us down.

As we progressed down the passage we encountered deeper and deeper mud, which often required us to get down on our knees and elbows in order to make the compass shots. The areas of standing water became more frequent as well. One particularly wet area of the passage had an unusual number of frogs, some live, some dead. One very large dead bullfrog had the misfortune to be lying directly beneath a survey point (thanks, Steve). I had the choice of either putting my ear against Mr. Dead Frog to make my compass shot, or unceremoniously flinging him across the muddy passage to let him rest in peace elsewhere. Off he went.

The wetness of the passage also had the effect of increasing the stench of the passage. Each boot-step (or elbow-poke) sunk in from four to six inches, and uncovered black slime beneath the reddish brown mud. The black slime had a strong smell to it, sort of a combination of rotten-eggs and methane. Pulling the boot or elbow free from the ground resulted in a small release of putrid funkiness. This slime began to slowly coat our caving coveralls wherever we were in contact with the ground. The ceiling height of the passage slowly got lower and lower as we progressed down the passage, and before long we were just crawling along on knees and elbows, trying as hard as we could to keep the survey gear from getting too clotted with mud and slime. Steve and I were in the fore, with Sue and Jon keeping back a bit. With only one set of survey instruments, there really wasn't a need for everyone in the party to get totally slimed.

We managed to survey for about two and a half hours when we finally came to an area that nobody was willing to enter. The passage had previously offered a few muddy areas interspersed with narrow puddles, and with a little effort, it was possible to stay out of the water for the most part. Steve was in the front, setting points, when he came to an area with a ceiling height of less than two feet, and nothing but water on the floor as far as could be seen. We could see that this room ahead of us continued for at least thirty to fifty feet if not more. From wall-to-wall, standing stagnant water offered no chance at all of staying even remotely dry. We also knew that beneath the water it would be more of the sticky gooey mud. The ceiling height meant that the only way to navigate this passage would be crawling flat on your belly in the water. With only mud to support you, there is a good chance that the only part of a person that could stay above water is possibly their head, the rest of the body would become immersed. Steve named this passage the Room of Godless Muck. Seemed quite appropriate.

We took one last rough compass / distance shot with the laser device to give us an approximate direction of the passage ahead of us. With that last shot recorded, we turned back and started our trip back out of the cave.

We were quite glad to have the warm spring weather while we changed out of our mud-soaked gear back at the vehicles. A quick check of the survey notes showed that we had managed to survey 204.3 feet of passage, with another 53 feet of estimated distance added on from the last rough survey shot. With an eye towards cave gear disinfection, we bagged up our gear and headed back to the Selman ranch for our much needed hot showers and eventual pizza.

POTPOURRI

C.O.G.nizance Editor: John M Wilson, President of the Appalachian Cave Conservancy, sent an e-mail to grottos to see if they would be interested in donating to the purchase and development of Gilley Cave. I've reprinted the following article to preview to see C.O.G. is interested .

SIGNIFICANT SOUTHWEST VIRGINIA CAVE ACQUIRED By Appalachian Cave Conservancy

http://www.acave.us/

Joel Stevenson and John M. Wilson

Gilley Cave is located near the town of Pennington Gap in Lee County, Virginia. The cave, located in a steep hillside above the town, has been known to organized cavers since the early 1950's and has long been popular with both locals and cavers in Virginia and from surrounding states.

Gilley is a significant cave, both because of its geologic features and because it is a well known and heavily used recreational cave. It ranks 173rd among American caves in length with a surveyed extent of 7314 meters. According to Bob Gulden's 2009 cave list, Gilley ranks as the 142nd deepest cave in the country with a depth of 137 meters. The cave is developed in the Chepultepec Formation, of Cambrian-Ordovician age, and lies along the SE flank of the Chestnut Ridge anticline. The drainage of the cave flows into the nearby Powell River.

For many years both local residents and cavers enjoyed good relations with the cave's owner, Mr. Ron Moore, who lived adjacent to the cave entrance. Ron respected the cave and controlled access, largely keeping out vandals and others who would abuse it. Although Ron had wanted the cave to go to the local community college after his death, he died without a will. Without Ron's presence, the cave entrance gradually became a gathering place for drinking and illicit drug use and in 2006 Ron's widow Jean attempted to persuade the University of Virginia, the successor to the local college, to accept ownership of the cave. When the University was unable to do so, and after several conservation organizations had declined to take ownership of the property, the misuse of the cave had become so disruptive to the neighborhood that Jean considered asking several of her relatives to permanently close the entrance to the cave using whatever means might be necessary.

At that point, members of the Appalachian Cave Conservancy, who had been consulting with her about her options regarding the cave, offered to construct a gate across the entrance, and to devise a minimal management plan that would allow control over entry into the cave. Jean wanted the drug and alcohol use to end but she was concerned that the cave should continue to be available both for serious scientific study and for responsible recreational caving. The ACC proposal was acceptable to her and construction of the gate started in the fall of 2009.

As construction of the gate progressed during the fall and winter it became apparent that the several heirs that had inherited interests in the cave property, which is a significant tract of 11.5 acres, were interested in selling the property and that they would be receptive to a proposal that would allow the property to be owned and managed as a nature preserve. The Conservancy hired a local appraiser who determined that the two subdivision lots in which the cave is located have a market value of $12,000.00 exclusive of the value of the cave and without assigning any value to the partly completed cave gate. He was unable to make any determination of the value of the cave and therefore assigned it no value in his appraisal.

The owners and members of the ACC Board, after extensive negotiations, agreed that the cave should be valued at $6,000.00 and the Board made a formal offer to the owners for purchase of the property for the sum of $18,000.00. The offer was accepted and the property was purchased by ACC on 25 January 2010.

The Conservancy obtained private financing, without interest, for a period of three years and is soliciting donations to defray the cost of the acquisition of this important cave.

Although the Gilley Management Plan has not been completed, it will include liberal provisions for recreational caving. However, ACC has temporarily closed all caves that it manages because of the WNS crisis and, at the present time, no trips of any nature are allowed in Gilley.

The construction of the entrance gate has been a cooperative project between ACC and area grottos. The gate, scheduled for completion in April of 2010, was designed by Tony McGee, who has also done the majority of the fabrication and erection. Joel Stevenson and Gary Fielden have coordinated the work sessions and John Mathews has overseen the extensive concrete work involved in the gate's construction. Numerous members of ACC, of Mountain Empire Grotto and of Flittermouse Grotto have contributed hundreds of hours of work on the Gilley project. Many more hours of planning and work will be involved in developing the nature preserve and implementing a management plan for the cave and the land above it.

Anyone inclined to help ACC meet the financial obligations it has undertaken with this project should contact the ACC Treasurer Stu Syms, 84 Preserve Ct., Hendersonville, NC 28791-2803, Phone 828.696.4885

World's Biggest Cave Found in Vietnam

By James Owen for *National Geographic News*
Updated January 3, 2011 (Published July 24, 2009)
http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2009/07/090724-biggest-cave-vietnam/

A massive cave recently uncovered in a remote Vietnamese jungle is the largest single cave passage yet found, a new survey shows.

At 262-by-262 feet (80-by-80 meters) in most places, the Son Doong cave beats out the previous world-record holder, Deer Cave in the Malaysian section of the island of Borneo.

Deer Cave is no less than 300-by-300 feet (91-by-91 meters), but it's only about a mile (1.6 kilometers) long.

By contrast, explorers walked 2.8 miles (4.5 kilometers) into Son Doong, in Phong Nha-Ke Bang National Park, before being blocked by seasonal floodwaters—and they think that the passage is even longer.

In addition, for a couple of miles Son Doong reaches more than 460-by-460 feet (140-by-140 meters), said Adam Spillane, a member of the British Cave Research Association expedition that explored the massive cavern.

Spillane was in the first of two groups to enter the cave. His team followed the passage as far as a 46-foot-high (14-meter-high) wall.

"The second team that went in got flooded out," he said. "We're going back next year to climb that wall and explore the cave further."

Laser Precision

A local farmer, who had found the entrance to the Son Doong cave several years ago, led the joint British-Vietnamese expedition team to the cavern in April.

The team found an underground river running through the first 1.6 miles (2.5 kilometers) of the limestone cavern, as well as giant stalagmites more than 230 feet (70 meters) high.

The explorers surveyed Son Doong's size using laser-based measuring devices.

Such modern technology allows caves to be measured to the nearest millimeter, said Andy Eavis, president of the International Union of Speleology, the world caving authority, based in France.

With these laser-measuring devices, the cave sizes are dead accurate," he said. "It tends to make the caves smaller, because years ago we were estimating, and we tended to overestimate."

Eavis, who wasn't involved in the survey, agreed that the new findings confirm Son Doong's record status—despite the fact that he had discovered Borneo's now demoted Deer Cave.

"This one in Vietnam is bigger," Eavis conceded.

However the British caver can still claim the discovery of the world's largest cave chamber, Sarawak Chamber, also in Borneo.

"That is so large it may not actually be beaten," he said. "It's three times the size of Wembley Stadium" in London.

Noisy and Intimidating

Son Doong had somehow escaped detection during previous British caving expeditions to the region, which is rich in limestone grottos.

"The terrain in that area of Vietnam is very difficult," said expedition team member Spillane.

"The cave is very far out of the way. It's totally covered in jungle, and you can't see anything on Google Earth," he added, referring to the free 3-D globe software.

"You've got to be very close to the cave to find it," Spillane said. "Certainly, on previous expeditions, people have passed within a few hundred meters of the entrance without finding it."

The team was told that local people had known of the cave but were too scared to delve inside.

"It has a very loud draft and you can hear the river from the cave entrance, so it is very noisy and intimidating," Spillane said.

Bigger Caves Waiting?

Of more concern to the caving team were the poisonous centipedes that live in Son Doong.

The explorers also spotted monkeys entering through the roof of the cave to feed on snails, according to Spillane.

"There are a couple of skylights about 300 meters [985 feet] above," he said. "The monkeys are obviously able to climb in and out."

A biologist will accompany the team on its return visit next year to survey the cave's subterranean wildlife.

Eavis, of the International Union of Speleology, added that there are almost certainly bigger cave passages awaiting discovery around the world.

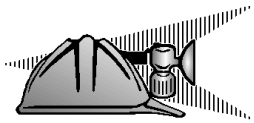
"That's the fantastic thing about caving," he said.

Satellite images hint, for example, that caves even larger than Son Doong lie deep in the Amazon rain forest, he said.

See virtual tour of cave on utube, it's incredible! http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOH4gbW18Ts and See more pictures of the cave, plus full coverage and an interactive map

Central Oklahoma Grotto is a non-profit organization and a chapter of the NSS (National Speleological Society), Cave Avenue, Huntsville, AL., 35810. 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 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, Oklahoma, 73521. All submissions to the newsletter should be sent to the editor: Lil or Dale Town, 3208 Gettysburg Dr., Altus, OK 73521: Telephone: (580)477-4027: E-mail: oklmt@cableone.net. 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. *Club Website:* *http://www.okcavers.com*

Remember the May meeting is Friday, May 13th at Dale Town's



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