CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO
OF THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY,INC

# C.O.G.nizance

**Inside this Issue**

**Announcements** .……..……..……..……..……..2
**Minutes** November, 2011……..……..……..……..…..2
**Treasurer's Report** November, 2011 ……..…..3
**Trip Reports**
**Broken Horn; November 17, 2011 by Dale Amlee** ……..3
**Potpourri**
**Inuit's risky mussel harvesting under sea ice;**
reprinted from BBC contributed by Marc Barker ……..…**4**
**Prehistoric Seas over Oklahoma: Birth of Alabaster** …**4-5**

The December meeting of the Central Oklahoma Grotto will be held at 7:00 p.m., Friday, January 13, at the home of John Talbot.

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

**This picture was taken by Duane Del Vecchio during the Jester Cave Bat count 2011;**

# ANNOUNCEMENTS

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

*The 7:00 p.m. January meeting will be, Friday, January 13th at the home of John Talbot, .

**Remember Anne in your thoughts and prayers. She is at home and her son is staying with her.**

# MINUTES

## CENTRAL OKLAHOMA GROTTO

Minutes of the meeting of November 11, 2011

Host: the hut and lean-to of Steve Beleu, where we ate baloney rollups and Little Debbie snack cakes, and drank grape and orange soda.

**Attendees: Dale Amlee, John and Sue Bozeman, John Talbot, John and Jeremiah Van Dyke, Jon and Kelley Woltz, and Dale Town and Carol Buescher.**

The Honorable Jon Woltz began the meeting at 8:00.

### OLD BUSINESS

Dale Amlee didn't have a chance to try to trick some youngsters into caving and joining our grotto.

### NEW BUSINESS

1. Dale Amlee talked about our next cave trip to Broken Horn and the surveying work that needs to be done there. He claimed that there were only four count them four areas left to survey.
2. Jon read from a printed-out e-mail where the writer said that he/she/it had discovered caves in Colcord, Oklahoma on "New Life Ranch" in far north western Oklahoma. The human asked for our help in "expanding the entrances of the caves". Our answer had to be no since COG doesn't believe in destroying caves to get into them. Since he is also out of our area of caving interest we will dump him, ahem, refer him to Bill Puckett and also to TROG, both of whom dwell in eastern Oklahoma.
3. **Officers for 2102 –**

   Grand Imperial Chairman – Dale Amlee
   Grand Only-Slightly-Less-Than-Imperial Vice-Chairman – Jon Woltz
   Much Beloved Treasurer – John Talbot
   Rat's Ass Secretary and Sergeant-at-Underarms – S. Beleu

4. **Meeting places for 2012 –**

   January – John Talbot
   February – John Van Dyke
   March – Anne Ault if possible
   April – Dale Town and Carol Buescher
   May – Dale Amlee
   June – Duane Del Vecchio
   September – Jon and Kelley Woltz
   October – Art Wallace
   November – Steve Beleu dammit
   December – John and Sue Bozeman

### TREASURER'S REPORT

John Talbot delivered his report.

We concluded the meeting at 8:43 and watched Howdy-Doody episodes which made this nation great.

***There wasn't a business meeting in December so these are the November minutes republished.***

# TREASURER'S REPORTS

**November, 2011**

| INCOME | | EXPENSES |
|---|---|---|
| Dividend | $ 0.01 | none |
| **TOTALS** | **$ 0.02** | |
| CASH ON HAND | $ 77.11 | **PREPARED BY TREASURER JOHN TALBOT** |
| CHECKING | $ 255.99 | **NSS#30254RE** |
| SAVINGS | $ 2,131.39 | |
| **TOTAL FUNDS AS OF 11/7/2011** | **$ 2,464.49** | |

# TRIP REPORTS

**Broken Horn Cave mapping trip**
**11/19/2011**
**Cavers: Dale Amlee, Sue Bozeman, Jon Woltz**
**Report by Dale Amlee**

The objective on this survey trip of Broken Horn Cave was to finish off one of the last few remaining passages of the cave. There was a small, very tight zig-zag passage explored very early on when we first began our examination of this cave, but due to the tightness and overall difficulty level of this particular side passage, it was left until almost last. There is a central area in the cave where several passages come together in a rather complex fashion (near the pancake room, just east of the bat room). Broken Horn Cave consists of three primary arms: North, East and West. The junction of these three arms is right where this last zig-zag passage lies.

Jon, Sue and I suited up at the ranch house this particular Saturday morning, and proceeded to the Jay's Tree entrance. No critters were observed at the entrance, so we crawled inside. The journey down to the central junction was more or less uneventful, with the bats uncommonly quiet (unlike our last trip, where they decided to dive-bomb us for five minutes…. actually, more like crop dusting).

The entrance to the zig-zag passage starts out as a tight sinusoidal horizontal feature, with high enough overhead to allow a person to walk upright, although the tightness of the passage quickly forced us to turn sideways to navigate along. Jon and I were setting points and doing compass shots, Sue was on book. Trying to describe this complex area of the cave would best be put as several more or less horizontal passages stacked on top of each other, with occasional breakthroughs between them to allow a person to crawl up through the ceiling of one passage into the one above it. This made the mapping shots very difficult, as our equipment isn't really well suited to high angle shots. The solution we came up with was to use a piece of string fifteen to twenty feet in length with a weight tied to the end of it (a small hex nut borrowed from Jay's barn) to do occasional pure vertical shots through those occasional breakthrough openings. These hanging nut shots turned out to be huge labor savers for our surveying efforts.

We squeezed our way upwards through the various levels, noticing in doing that the effort involved was much worse than we remember it being from our earlier exploration of this section five years ago. Either the passages had gotten tighter with time, or the cavers had gotten… well, clearly the passages had gotten tighter.

We eventually mapped our way to the uppermost area of the cave that we could reasonably fit into. The last section of this area got progressively more and more filled with breakdown boulders. There was one tiny dome room above the rest, but exploration showed no visible light or chance of an exit for a human from this section of the cave. There were numerous tree roots visible on the ceiling and walls of the uppermost portion of this arm, so we knew we were right next to the surface. Also, animal droppings and grass / leaf deposits showed that there must be some way in. However, despite all of our best poking and squeezing, we could not find an exit.

We terminated the survey effort for the day and made our way back the way we came. It was still daylight when we got out of the cave, but in the lateness of the fall season the sun was setting fast as we drove back to the ranch house to change into our clean clothes, with the promise of cold beer and hot pizza on our minds.

# POTPOURRI

**Inuit's risky mussel harvest under sea ice**
**By Megan Lane**
**Copied from BBC News January 25, 201**
Contributed by Marc Barker

**The Inuit of Arctic Canada take huge risks to gather mussels in winter. During extreme low tides, they climb beneath the shifting sea ice, but have less than an hour before the water returns. Working fast before the tide returns**

The 500 people of Kangiqsujuaq, near the Hudson Strait, go to great lengths to add variety to their diet of seal meat, seal meat and yet more seal meat.

This settlement and a neighboring community on Wakeham Bay are thought to be the only places where people harvest mussels from under the thick blanket of ice that coats the Arctic sea throughout the winter.

The locals can only do this during extreme low tides, when sea ice drops by up to 12m (about 40 feet), opening fissures through which the exposed seabed - and its edible riches - can be glimpsed. The best time to go is when the moon is either full or brand new, as this is when the tide stays out the longest.

**Filmed for the BBC's Human Planet**, they lower themselves into these temporary caverns to gather as many fat and juicy mussels as they can before the tide rushes back in. It is a risky operation. The ice above is no longer supported by water, and it shifts and groans ominously during the harvest.

**Collecting and eating mussels**

Mussels grow plentifully on coastline rocks and stones, and are cultivated in coastal areas
Only collect shellfish from unpolluted waters. Mussels at their best in colder months

A look-out keeps watch for the returning tide, but warning shouts cannot be too loud in case the echoes bring down the ice.

Then it's a scramble to get out before the shifting ice closes the escape hole and seawater refills the caverns.

"We all know stories of mussel hunters who didn't make it out in time. If you can't get out, you die," Mary Qumaaluk told the Human Planet team. She later died in a quad bike accident.

Mussel gathering is a tradition that goes back generations in Kangiqsujuaq, on Quebec's Ungava Peninsula.

But the locals say it is getting harder to find places safe enough to venture beneath the ice, which freezes later and melts earlier than it did even a few decades ago.

Although very few statistics exists, there is anecdotal evidence that travel in the arctic - by snowmobile especially - has becoming more hazardous as sea ice is thinner year by year.

This is a remarkable video of gathering the mussels in the ice caves.
rehttp://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-12241053

**Alabaster Caverns State Park: Oklahoma's Geological Wonder 76**

By Urbane Chaos
http://urbane-chaos.hubpages.com/hub/Alabaster-Caverns-Oklahoma

**Prehistoric Seas over Oklahoma: Birth of the Alabaster Caverns**

Two hundred million years ago, a vast sea stretched across America from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Appalachians in the east. Small mountain ranges dotted this great sea, studded with rain forests typical of those found in equatorial regions. This shallow sea, called the Western Interior Seaway, slowly began to recede during the Late Cretaceous period (65-55 Million years ago), leaving behind thick marine deposits and a relatively flat terrain where the shallow seaway once existed.

As the Western Interior Seaway slowly evaporated, large deposits of gypsum and other minerals were left behind. Around 60 million years ago, a great upheaval of the earth (called the Laramide orogeny) raised the gypsum bed close to the surface, and over time, water streams tunneled caverns through the formation.

It was during this great upheaval that the Prehistoric Alabaster Caverns in Northwest Oklahoma were born.

**Alabaster Caverns**

A massive cliff overhangs the entrance of the main cavern, appearing as if it could suddenly topple in at any moment. Dense vegetation surrounds the mouth of the cave, and if it weren't for the steps leading up to it, the entrance would be nearly invisible.

Once inside the Alabaster Caverns, one feels as if they have entered into another world. Cocooned inside the water swept cavern the temperature suddenly drops to a chilly 50 degrees Fahrenheit. Light slowly diminishes as

*(Continued on page 5)*

one moves deeper into the caverns. With a maximum height of fifty feet, and a width of sixty feet, the walls seem to sparkle like stars at night. Violet formations of selinite crystals peek out from small crevices in the cavern walls as the trickle of a small stream echoes through the chambers.

Walking through the caverns, one may come across uniquely named boulder formations, such as "Ship's Prow," and into chambers called "Devil's Kitchen" or "Crystal Vault." During certain times of the year, one may also encounter many unique species of bat, including the western big-eared bat, eastern pipistrelle, western big brown bat, and Mexican free-tailed bat.

Oklahoma Caves: The Alabaster Caverns were once filled with water from a great sea.

Today, Alabaster Caverns State Park runs amidst a series of deep, rugged canyons, and is the largest natural gypsum cave system in the world. The many caverns in this park contain an abundance of several types of gypsum, mostly in the form of alabaster; white gypsum, pink gypsum, and the extremely rare black alabaster. Black alabaster can be found in only three veins in the world, one in the Oklahoma State Park, one in Italy, and one in China. Amongst the massive formations of alabaster, large, beautifully sculpted selenite crystal formations run the length of the cavern.

The main cavern runs is nearly a mile long, framing a slow moving perennial stream that flows through the length of the cave. In prehistoric times, this small stream was once a mighty river, as evidenced by the obviously water-sculpted gypsum formations. According to geologists, this underground river was once capable of completely filling the 2,256-foot long caverns.

The Alabaster Caverns provide shelter to five species of bats. With the bat population fluctuating up to ten thousand, tourists can encounter several species of bat, including the cave myotis, western big-eared bat, eastern pipistrelle, western big brown bat, and Mexican free-tailed bat throughout the year. While some of these species of bat are solitary, others are colonial, living in large numbers in places such as Alabaster Caverns. Roosting sites provide daytime shelter from the sun, and a place for those bats not migrating to hibernate during the winter months. The Mexican Free-tailed Bat migrates to Alabaster Caverns in the spring from Mexico to bear their young, and then return to Mexico in the fall.

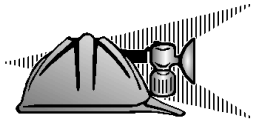
**History of the Alabaster Caverns State Park**

No official record of first discovery of Alabaster Caverns has surfaced to date; however, the caverns once served as safe haven for outlaws. Undisputed evidence suggests that the first known exploration of the caves occurred in 1898 when Hugh Litton homesteaded the area during the Cherokee Outlet Run of 1893. From the early 1900's until 1939, limited touring of the locally known "Bat Caves" was offered for a nominal fee. In 1939, Charles Grass bought the land comprising Alabaster Caverns and opened the land for public tours. Grass spent many years developing the area around the caverns for just this reason. Charles Grass first called the area "Alabaster Caverns."

In late 1952, five businessmen from Freedom and members of the Waynoka Railroad Labor League spearheaded a movement for the State of Oklahoma to purchase the cavern land. Charles Grass had numerous health problems and could not continue to maintain the area, so he readily agreed to the sale. On September 1, 1953, Oklahoma purchased the two hundred acres from Grass for thirty-four thousand dollars, at which time the caverns came under the jurisdiction of the Oklahoma Planning and Resources Board. After a few additions to the property, the state reclassified the area as an Oklahoma State Park in 1956.

**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 Town, 25692 Mosier Circle, Conifer, Colorado 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**

# The January meeting will be Friday, January 13, 2012 at the home of John Talbot. Happy New Year!



**Central Oklahoma Grotto**
**1117 NW 74th St.**
**Lawton, OK 73505-4234**