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# INTERCOM

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The Iowa Grotto



March - April 2011  
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## **INTERCOM**

Volume 47, Issue 2

March - April 2011

### **Iowa Grotto**

P.O. Box 228

Iowa City, IA 52244

Grotto Website: [www.caves.org/grotto/iowa](http://www.caves.org/grotto/iowa)

Coldwater Cave Project website:

<http://www.caves.org/project/coldwater>

**Membership Dues:** due January 1, \$15.00 per year, includes INTERCOM and Hotline subscriptions. INTERCOM subscriptions only are \$13.00 per year. The Iowa Grotto reserves the right to decline membership during or after a probationary period.

**Due Dates:** for submission of material for publication in the INTERCOM is May 1st. Send material for publication, e-mail, disk or hard copy to:

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**Coordinate photographs** for publication in the INTERCOM with Scott Dankof, the INTERCOM editor.

**Cave Rescue:** Contact the Kentucky Disaster and Emergency Services Central Dispatch at 502-564-7815 for cave emergencies only in the NCRC Central Region of Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

**Iowa Grotto Meetings:** are the fourth Wednesday of each month, third Wednesday in December at 7:30 p.m. in Room 125 or thereabouts of Trowbridge Hall on the campus of the University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

**Cover Photo:** Pat Kambesis surveying a rock art site in the northern karst belt of Puerto Rico. Photo by Mike Lace.



### **IOWA GROTTO**

National Speleological Society

P. O. Box 228

Iowa City, Iowa 52244

Chairman - - - - - Mike Lace  
Vice Chairman - - - - Ed Klausner  
Secretary Treasurer - Phil LaRue

Volume 47

Issue 2

## **C O N T E N T S**

### **Trip reports:**

Meeting Minutes	- - - - - 14
Mystery Cave	- - - - - 15
MVOR 2011	- - - - - 17
WNS Report	- - - - - 17

## **C A L E N D A R**

August 6-7th, 2011 - Iowa Grotto Summer Picnic at Motor Mill County Park, Clayton County, IA.

August Grotto meeting (24th,)-Where: Teresa Kurtz's house - 2620 Glen Elm Dr. NE, Cedar Rapids (42nd street exit; near Kennedy HS) Call/email me if you need directions. (Potluck) Grilled meats provided. Feel free to bring a side dish to pass along. For more information, contact Teresa at 319-551-9115 or email [kurtz.teresa@gmail.com](mailto:kurtz.teresa@gmail.com)

Meeting Program: Jasen Rogers and Teresa will be collaborating on a presentation. Topic: "New to caving, perspective of a first year caver". We think it will be very fun AND informative. Both of us have had some GREAT experiences, lots of photos, etc. See you there!

Sept.24 & 25: Vertical caving workshop. Location to be decided. If you plan on attending, contact Doug Schmucker at [smuckers@IowaTelecom.net](mailto:smuckers@IowaTelecom.net) Also, if enough interest will conduct a rescue day or weekend. (Vertical and or horizontal).



Iowa Grotto  
Regular Meeting  
March 23, 2011

The regular meeting of the Iowa Grotto was called to order by Vice-Chairman Ed Klausner, at 7:30 p.m. There were 11 members present. Minutes from the February 23, 2011 meeting were read and accepted.

TREASURER'S REPORT: General Fund \$2741.40; Coldwater Fund \$99.85; Petty Cash \$103.10

TRIP REPORTS: Mike Bounk reported on his trip to Coldwater Cave with five other cavers. He reported that the water level was high at 1.8 feet on the scale marker, and his group went both upstream and only a little ways downstream. Elizabeth Miller then reported on her bat counting trips with Joe Dixon. They visited Werden's Cave in Jackson County, Doll Cave in Jones County and Starr Cave in Burlington County. No evidence of W.N.S. was observed in any of the caves visited. Ed Klausner then reported on his trip to Buffalo National River, in Arkansas with the C.R.F. where four small caves were surveyed. He then worked on additional C.R.F. work at an undisclosed location.

FUTURE TRIPS: The picnic will be the first weekend in August. Coldwater trips will be the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of the month. There will be a trip to Mystery Cave, Minnesota, the same weekend. The NSS convention will be in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, this summer. The 2012 convention will be in West Virginia. See the Intercom and N.S.S. News for additional trips and events.

OLD BUSINESS: The possible location of the August Grotto picnic was discussed. The T-shirt contest was then discussed; entries will be accepted until May 15<sup>th</sup>. The prize will be two t-shirts with the new logo. Submissions will be reviewed by those in attendance at the May meeting. Contact Teresa Kurtz for details about the contest.

NEW BUSINESS: There will be a bat and cave program, Sunday, March 27, 2011, at the Jackson County Conservation Nature Center, north of Maquoketa, IA. The August Grotto meeting will be at Teresa's house.

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:23 p.m.

Iowa Grotto  
Regular Meeting  
April 27, 2011

The regular meeting of the Iowa Grotto was called to order by Chairperson Mike Lace, at 7:58 p.m. Mike presented a power point presentation on his recent trip to Caracao, Dutch Antilles, for cave consultation work, which included assessment, karst geology and survey work for the Carmabi Foundation with Pat Kambesis, Eric Larson and John Mylroie. They were also assessing the stability of certain caves and evaluating bat habitat. A total of 44 caves were mapped during this trip. There were 12 members and 1 guest present. Minutes from the March 23, 2011 meeting were read and approved.

TREASURER'S REPORT: General Fund: \$2698.53; Coldwater Fund: \$99.85; Petty Cash: \$103.10

TRIP REPORTS: Liz Robertson reported on the Bat and Cave Program given at the Jackson County Nature Center, March 27th. She reported on the concern for the bats due to W.N.S. and the closure of state managed caves in Iowa by the I.D.N.R. Loren Schuett was also in attendance at this presentation and commented on his discussion with a person about the closure of caves in Wisconsin despite the fact not all caves are used by bats. Ed Klausner reported that there was a trip to Mystery Cave. Doug Schmucker reported on his trip with Scott Dankof to Fayette and Winneshiek Counties to photograph springs and waterfalls. He commented that Glenwood Cave has more graffiti at the entrance. Mike L. reported on Coldwater Cave weekend. Mark Jones led a trip of students from the Redwing Environmental Learning Center on a site-seeing trip. He commented that water levels remain high in the cave.

FUTURE TRIPS: The picnic will be the first weekend in August. Coldwater trips are the 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend of the month. Doug S. will be conducting a mock rescue training session during the June

Coldwater weekend, and a beginner's vertical workshop September 24 and 25, 2011. More information will be provided at a future date. There will be a survey trip to Mystery Cave, MN. The NSS convention will be in Glenwood Springs, Colorado, this summer. See the Intercom and N.S.S. News for additional trips and events.

OLD BUSINESS: The possible location of the August Grotto picnic was discussed. Joe Dixon's bat hibernacula study supported by a grant from the I.D.N.R. was discussed. The T-shirt contest was then discussed; entries will be accepted until May 15<sup>th</sup>. The prize will be two t-shirts with the new logo. Submissions will be reviewed by those in attendance at the May meeting. Contact Teresa Kurtz for details about the contest.

NEW BUSINESS: The Klausner's announced the birth of their grandson, Jose' Paxtian- Klausner. The August Grotto meeting at Teresa's home was discussed. The May presentation will be by Elizabeth Miller on histoplasmosis.

With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

### Mystery Cave

Mystery Cave, MN, February 2011  
By Jasen Rogers

I went into the cinder block hut entrance with John Donahue and Teresa Kurtz around 11:30AM. The snow was about one foot deep on top of the picnic tables, but the path through the woods had been plowed. We went down the steps, staged some gear where the entrance passage meets the main passage, and headed to the Carousels area to extend the survey. After climbing up and down for a while, we came to an upright oval shaped passage with a crack in the floor. It didn't look passable to me, but John went through, using his knees, thighs, and elbows to move forward while staying out of the crack. Having only been in the cave for 15 minutes or so, I wasn't quite ready for something that exciting. At the same time I also didn't want to say "no" so early in the trip, so I went through. Using John's technique I was able to cross without any issues. At this point it was

mentioned that there is another way through that bypasses the oval passage. This alternate route was said to be rather tight, but there is a floor, so we tried the bypass. We all went through the tight area and preferred this alternate route.

We were back in more passage with a floor crack. Depth seemed to be about 20 feet, and averaged six inches wide. The floor down below was flat, so if you accidentally slid down to the bottom, you could stand there, get your bearings, then chimney your way back to the top. Soon it was time to start the survey. Teresa was on lead instruments, I was on rear instruments and inventory, and John was the sketcher. We had two things that I really like having on a survey trip, a laser range finder and an LED fishing bobber light, (for marking survey stations).

Eventually we came to a four way intersection. The plan was to cross from one side, with a rather wide crack, to the other side, where the passage was lower and the floor crevice was narrow enough to be a non-issue. Problem was all of the wide, black space down below. John and Teresa crossed the canyon to the low side, went around a slight bend and were out of sight. I watched how they crossed, and John came over to give me some tips. For whatever reason I just didn't feel comfortable hovering low over such an area. I believe it was at this point that John told me about his bathroom inspired technique for crossing such passages "Treat the top of the canyon like a toilet seat... you'll hang there, but you won't fall in."

Yet I still didn't feel confident. I stood up and grabbed some high handholds and felt better in that position. I looked into some options for just stepping across. Eventually I realized that when going from a high section with a wide crack, to a lower section with a tiny crack, you're probably safe to jump across. So I did. I'm glad I joined them on the other side, as the nature of the cave changed over there. We were still in an upright oval, but the walls were much more wet and flowing on the other side of the intersection.

The floor crack came and went as we moved forward through the passage. This area eventually came to be shaped like a triangle - wider down below, and narrower towards the ceiling. The walls were getting close and there was no room to stand up, so it was a hands and knees crawl. We started having problems getting the yellow pen to mark survey stations on the wet walls, and towards the end I accidentally erased a survey station by brushing up against it.

At this point we decided to take a break and head out. We tried our best to mark a solid station for the next group of surveyors. The area where we turned around was getting bigger, and would be worth pursuing.

Back at the four way intersection, John and Teresa crossed safely. Yet there I sat. Jumping from a low point up to a high point was not going to work, so John positioned himself over the canyon in such a way that I could use his knees as footholds, and I got across. He moved like a spider through these crevice passages, securely locking his hands, elbows, back, knees and feet against the rock. Being close to the entrance, we just hiked up to the surface and took a break there.

After the break, we went back into a different section of the Carousels. This section was rather hilly at first, with some sliding up and down, and I got to take some steep shots on the clinometer. The passage was also rather cramped in places, and we all got to know each other rather well as we climbed and slid around, trying to get into good positions at the survey stations.

Eventually we came to a long, straight, tight, tube passage. This was a narrow little belly crawl that Teresa had explored on an earlier trip. If you stayed with it, you could rejoin the main cave passage. Teresa went in first, then myself, then John. Arms out in front, push your pack ahead, worm forward. After some time Teresa mentioned that the passage got really tight up ahead. She made it through, but had to take her helmet off.

Then it was my turn. I wiggled up to the tight spot, but sure enough the mud

floor rose up even closer towards the stone ceiling. I didn't think I could make it through. Had it been normal cave tight spot, I would have tried it, but a really tight spot in the middle of an already tight tube didn't sound too appealing to me. On the other side of the pinch, Teresa tried to get comfortable in the somewhat larger passageway. She told me that I could exit the Carousels, enter the main passage, and come back in to her section when I saw their lights, thus bypassing the pinch. So it was time for me to back out. Problem was, John was behind me. Instead of us backing all the way out, John lowered himself flat on the floor, and I did my best to carefully crawl over him. As I was leaving, I heard John making his way forward through the pinch.

Back in the main passage I stretched out and walked around until I saw some light spilling out of a crack. I yelled in and told them I was on my way. The passage went uphill on a muddy slope, then through a tight triangle shaped squeeze, then turned left and continued uphill on a second mud slope. I had problems getting through the triangle, and was tired by the time I rejoined John and Teresa. I took a rest and watched their legs and boots pop out on occasion as they weaseled around surveying the second half of the tight tube. Finally we set a nice survey station in the ceiling of a wide, flat passage, and called it a day. It shouldn't take too many shots to tie this tube into the main cave.

On the way out, instead of turning and going through the triangle, John and Teresa just slid straight down the mud slope and rejoined the main passage, nice and easy. No tight triangle for them. It turns out that I came in a little too early when I first saw their lights. Had I kept walking along the main passage, I would have seen the easier approach up into the second half of the tight tube.

A short walk took us back to the entrance, where we changed before walking out into the cool night air.

## MVOR 2011

MVOR, Waynesville, MP 29 Apr-1 May 2011  
About 300 people including Brad Smith  
and Liz Robinson By Liz Robinson

We left for the Mississippi Valley Ozark Regional meeting on Friday morning after packing up. and getting going. I got out an hour early on Thursday which left us sufficient time to begin packing and running errands including buying this new ergonomic keyboard to help met with my carpal tunnel issues that I started having last month. (I have an appointment with my orthopedic lady on the 9th) I did not plan to cave until after my doctor appointment but apparently for some reason Brad did not plan to cave either since he told me that he was not packing gear. I also wondered how much caving would be practical considering that there is a lot of flooding going on in both the Mississippi and its tributaries as well as a lot of rain.

We got in about 9:10 Friday night and registered. We had the MVOR sauna with us since it had been given to us for custody about a year ago. It was too late at night to set it up and it was quite windy as well. Not real good circumstances for building a fire, We also got in too late for the howdy party, but we went over to the Windy City camping area for a pleasant evening visit. There were vendors there but not many and we wondered how much they were actually selling. We are waiting until Convention and OTR to buy things.

The next day we continued with our visits in the campground and later went out to eat while things were at lunch prices. We came back in time for the guest speaker, a naturalist at Onondaga Cave, who talked about the work that is going on there. We also attended the business meetings. They have a schedule for the next MVORs for this fall, spring 2012 and fall 2012. Our next MVOR will be in southern Missouri in Dallas County. Spring will be in Perry County again, where Berome Moore is. Incidentally the effort to purchase Berome Moore was successful. Unfortunately the hosting grotto was unable to find a campground willing to

host that MVOR so they had to resort to another farmer's field. I am hoping that they will not have another "MUDVOR" that weekend like the one where those of us lucky enough to arrive late were camped out on the side of the road while others got stuck in knee deep in mud and the surface of the soil got broken down. We shall just have to wait and see when the time comes. We are planning on attending at any rate.

We were also able to pass on the MVOR sauna to the grotto that is sponsoring the fall MVOR. We think that since the sponsoring grotto generally is the first to arrive and the last to leave, it is most appropriate for them to take responsibility for the system.

There was also a memorial for Jane Fisher who died in February and had been an active participant in MVORs when her health permitted. Several of the door prizes were videos that contained stuff about her as well as shots of her.

## WNS Report

Lecture on WNS 27 March 2011, 3:00  
Hurstville Interpretive Center,  
Maquoketa, IA Lots of People Attending  
By Liz Robinson

One of the public affairs people at work sent me an email telling me about a program on WNS that was going to be at the Hurstville Interpretive Center that weekend. She asked me to spread the word about it in the cave community and to attend it myself. It sounded interesting. That night I sent the notice to Mike Lace, the Iowa Grotto Chairman and Brad Smith and I talked it up at the meeting the next night on the 20th. We decided to go ourselves, leaving early enough to allow us to get lost as well as to see what else was in the center.

We arrived about an hour early after not getting lost. The Center has some nice exhibits on the local wildlife as well as the lime kilns that operated in the company town of Hurstville between 1870 and 1920. Limestone was brought to the three kilns at the edge of town and baked in wood fired furnaces. The lime was taken out of the furnaces, allowed

to cool, packed in barrels and was sold for construction. During the time the kilns were operating the lime was used in construction much the way Portland cement is used today. Indeed it was Portland cement that put lime out of business as it was a superior product and less costly to produce. After the lectures, we did visit the kilns (which are a national historic landmark) and take a hike along the trails. But I digress. . .

The speaker for this even was Professor Jeff Huebschman, University of Wisconsin at Platteville who is a bat biologist. Much of the talk was an overview of the known history of WNS as well as bringing the story up to date with the latest maps from the Fish and Wildlife Service. The audience was very responsive and asked a lot of really good questions. He also discussed the bats of Iowa and which bats species are most involved in WNS, as well as why some of the species are more affected than others. As this is largely farming country it did not take a great deal of persuasion to convince the audience of the importance of bats to people, both as farmers and those who enjoy outdoor activities without being eaten alive by biting insects. The questions from the audience included matters pertaining to the evolution of geomyces destructans, including why it was not killing European bats, was it ever as destructive in Europe as it is here, are there any signs that bats are evolving immunity. Of course, since the fungus is in both Indiana and Missouri now, there was a considerable concern about it moving into Iowa which it has not thus far. Maquoketa Caves State Park is just a very short drive from this center. The caves in the park have been closed by the state to prevent possible contamination from people entering the caves. John Maehl, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, also gave an explanation as to why the caves are closed. The hiking trails within the park are still available and he encourages people to come out and enjoy the trails without going into the caves. Decontamination protocols were also discussed.

A cave owner in the audience asked what he could do. I suggested to the audience that caver gatherings now feature mandatory decontamination both before and after the trip, and that any cave owner could make this a requirement for visitors to privately owned caves. A woman asked if a bat in the house might spread WNS. She was told that this would not spread WNS and that the bat could be evicted by encouraging it to go out an open window, or be evicted from attics through identifying the egress, butting up a nylon stocking at the egress, and sealing up the hole once the baby bats leave with their mothers. The matter of bat houses was also discussed. Everyone was encouraged to put up bat houses. It was explained that because bats do not hibernate in bat houses, they would be more useful as a summer home than a hibernaculum. The cave owner in the audience spent some time talking with Brad. He does allow visitation to his caves. Brad suggested that he get in touch with the Iowa Grotto for more information on cave conservation and specific things that he can do.

#### Grotto T-shirts

Winner of the t-shirt contest was Joe Dixon. 2nd place went to Phil Larue. Congratulations to both Joe and Phil. See winning designs on page 19.

T-shirts will be printed in all three designs. Tshirts will be available at the Grotto picnic in August.  
Cost: \$15



Joe Dixon



Phil Larue

