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Scott Dankof

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INTERCOM

Volume 47, Issue 5
September – October 2011

Iowa Grotto

P.O. Box 228
Iowa City, IA 52244
Grotto Website: 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.

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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: Coldwater Cave spring entrance. Photo by Scott Dankof.



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 5

C O N T E N T S

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C A L E N D A R

November Iowa Grotto meeting - Wed.
7:30pm. room 125, Nov. 23rd.
December Iowa Grotto meeting - Wed.
7:30pm. room 125, December 28th.
January Grotto Meeting (returning to regular 4th Wednesday schedule)
- Jan. 24th, room 125, Trowbridge Hall.
Joe Dixon will be collecting bat roost data in various small caves every first weekend of the month through March.

**Iowa Grotto
Regular Meeting
September 28th, 2011**

The meeting was called to order at 7:55 with 10 members present after a slide show on recent expedition caving in Puerto Rico. No previous meeting minutes were reviewed. TRIP REPORTS: New Grotto member Tony Tallman reported on his trip with two of his cousins and Mark Jones into Coldwater Cave where a new 125 foot high dome was discovered. Mike Lace described a recent caving/float trip on the Tanama River in Puerto Rico. He also related cave trips by John Lovaas and Jason Rogers to the distant downstream portion of Coldwater to retrieve temperature data as well as a recent trip by Chris Beck, Jason Rogers and Mark Jones into Kemling Cave and a trip by Tim Stenerson and John Lovaas to a finish mapping a sandstone cave in MN. John Donahue described a northern Missouri survey trip with Ed Klausner and Elizabeth Miller to map Historic Newark Cave (Knox Co., MO). Liz Robinson described attending the recent OTR. FUTURE TRIPS: Joe Dixon will be setting up monthly field trips to collect data on Iowa cave bat roosts as part of an upcoming bat research project. Joe also has a cave and spring lead in Muscatine County he will check before the next Grotto meeting. There will be ridgewalking trips in Clayton and Jackson County in October as well as a survey trip to map two caves in Allamakee County (Contact Ed Klausner). Doug Schmucker is hoping to hold a vertical training session soon and those interested in participating should contact him (319-642-7676). The regular Coldwater Cave October trip will be Saturday, Oct. 15th. The 2012 NSS Convention will be held in West Virginia. The 2012 annual Grotto Picnic will on the first weekend in August - location to be announced. OLD/NEW BUSINESS: New Grotto T-shirt sales continue to be brisk. Deb McCarty recently donated numerous cave books and related caving materials to the Grotto Library in Greg McCarty's name.

Cataloging of these items continues and the updated inventory of our library holdings will be made available to Grotto members as soon as it is complete. Several new members have joined the Grotto - Tony Tallman, Ben Tallman and Lindsay Tallman. The November Grotto meeting will be held on the third Wednesday (Nov. 16th) to avoid conflict with the Thanksgiving holiday and the December meeting will once again be cancelled due to historically low attendance. With no new additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:50 p.m.

Iowa Grotto
Regular Meeting
October 26, 2011

The regular meeting of the Iowa Grotto was called to order by Chairperson Mike Lace, at 7:42 p.m. after Ed Klausner's power point presentation on C.R.F. surveying trips in Arkansas, Missouri, Carlsbad Caverns, New Mexico, and the Lava beds in California. There were 15 members and 2 guests present. Minutes from the September 28, 2011 meeting were read and approved. TREASURER'S REPORT: General Fund: \$2767.51; Coldwater Fund: \$99.85; Petty Cash: \$109.10 TRIP REPORTS: Joe Dixon reported on the bat survey conducted at Werden's Cave, with Gary Engh, Mike L., and Doug and Kathy Schmucker. He described the technical difficulties with equipment and the techniques for data collection. Ed K. reported on a lead checking and survey trip to Allamakee Co. with John Donahue, Mark Jones, Teresa Kurtz, Elizabeth Miller, and the landowner, his son and a friend where two caves were surveyed and several sink holes visited. He then reported on a C.R.F. cave surveying trip in Missouri to the Ozark National Scenic River way. He also reported on bat specimen sample collection. Mike L. then reported on Coldwater Cave weekend where Mark Jones, Kevin Mossy, and Tony Tallman ventured upstream just beyond the first sump. He reported that pros-

pects look good for caving upstream this winter. John Donahue then reported on his trip to Kemling Cave with Chris Beck, Teresa and Tyler Kurtz, Jason Rodgers and Brandi Zinn to the land of oz. He described the adventures of the wippy dipp and his new caver outfit. Doug Schmuecker reported on his trip to Natural Bridges Park in Texas. Phil LaRue reported on his trip to the states of Oregon and Washington where he visited a lava tube known as Ape Cave, near Mt. St. Helens with his sister, Janelle, and niece, Bianca. FUTURE TRIPS: Joe Dixon will be continuing his Iowa bat surveys. Contact him if interested. There will be lead checking trips and survey trips. Contact Ed K. or Mike L. for details. There are Coldwater Cave trips the third weekend of each month. Doug S. stated there will be a beginner's vertical workshop at a future date. See the Intercom and N.S.S. News for additional trips and events. OLD BUSINESS: The review of the items donated by Deb McCarty to the Grotto library continues. NEW BUSINESS: This is the time for nominations for 2012 Grotto officers. Liz Robinson made a motion that the current officers retain their office for another term. Phil LaRue stated that he would be declining that nomination as secretary and treasurer for 2012. Teresa Kurtz was then nominated for this office. As she was not present to decline the nomination, and no other nominations for office were made, she will take office in January 2012. Maria Perez will be giving a presentation "Coming Together at the Map" Exploration and Representation in Venezuela's cave landscape on October 28th. The November slide show will be a selection of Greg McCarty's cave slides. Kevin Mossy then lead a discussion regarding a possible photographic project at Coldwater in which a time-lapse photograph study would be made of speleothem development over a long period of time. Discussion followed with no decision being made. With no additional business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Old Timers Reunion

(OTR) 1-5 September 2011
Dailey, WV
Liz Robinson and 1520 people

We (Brad Smith and I) left Milan, IL Thursday 25 August in the afternoon down I-74 which ends and begins Dav-enport, IA (our area) and Cincinnati, OH. We got to the OTR site on Sunday (after a day at the Pennsylvania Trolley Museum and a ride on a tourist train out of Elkins) and set up camp.

At this OTR there were some issues with the plumbing at the Sauna. The stage was well utilized this year with music by Grateful Gary Gibula, a welcome addition to the late night saunas. I also built the dam for this year and helped take the wire for the privacy screen across the river. As usual I worked many hours of registration. In fact, I missed much of the memorial ceremony this year because I was working registration and our relief had not yet arrived.

We had a hard rain on Monday after more pleasant weather earlier in the week. Unfortunately when Hurricane Lee came along this was just a taste of what we were in for. We got more rain off and on the remaining nights, but by Sunday onward it was heavy rain. We finally ended up just shoving all of our gear into the back of the truck Tuesday morning when we left, as it was raining too hard to neatly fold and sort. One redeeming feature of the weather was that the nights were a perfect temperature for any activity that anyone might choose. The rain was probably good for adding mud to the obstacle course but when the thunderstorm hit the annual Sunday river party, it was definitely not good for that.

Brad and I did the fun run this year. As usual I came in last, but I did have someone to walk with. That made it a lot more fun. We finished the race before the rains hit that afternoon. Our friend Steve Gaines from Syracuse who camped with us got on a dig for a couple of days and

enjoyed it very much,

Speleosoap was there for the first time on vendors Row. They were a welcome addition. It would be nice to have more vendors on Vendors Row.

As far as registration goes, it was ironic that those of us who pre-registered had to wait to pick up our registrations; however it saved us the hassles of paying and trying to use the computers on site. The packs were not made up in advance as they are at Conventions. Overall there were some improvements in registration with new hardware to replace the old computers. I expect that next year it will be further improved if the lessons of this year are put to use. Best yet, we did not have a drop in the numbers this year but went up by almost 20 people. As I have been saying since we started, with the drop in attendance after the 50th OTR, TRA needs to survey the potential attendees to find out what can bring back former attendees and attract new ones. We have a lot of guesses but no firm information that can be used to help TRA plan to spend their money so they'll get the most bang for their bucks. One thing that I think was a really helpful step forward was the Virgin Books. There was one version for children and one for adults. Each OTR Virgin (attending their first OTR) was given a list of things to do and places to go as well as people to meet. The purpose was to get all new attendees to explore the opportunities for fun and to learn more about what happens at OTR as well as to meet the chairman and the TRA staff. This way there would be almost nothing that they would miss. Among the things were visiting the sauna, entering one of the contests, visiting the med tent etc. Those who completed their books and turned them in were eligible for a special door prize drawing. The booklets were a real hit with the virgins who felt that being drawn out of their comfort zones gave them a better picture of the event. I assume that the books will be reviewed and issued for next year's events.

Mud Cone Dome is dead; long live Beginner's Luck/Rookie Dome!

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County,
Iowa
By Mark Jones
September 17. 2011

The regular weekend trip into Coldwater for September was shaping up to be a fine one with some newcomers joining several veteran cavers. John Lovaas needed to retrieve information from the furthest data logger in Sinus Passage so Jason accompanied him while I took XXXX, XXXX, and XXXX for a short trip downstream to Cascade and loop back up Dead Coon. John and Jason left at 10:00 while we went in an hour later. Since XXX and XXX had never been in Coldwater and XXX only once we spent much of the trip taking in the sights and sounds. With a water level of 0.58' at the shaft, traveling downstream was very easy since many of the booby-traps in the stream were exposed. Not far from the shaft we noticed a small rodent decomposing on a piece of breakdown in the stream. This poor creature washed in to become part of the food chain in the cave.

Much of the Coldwater lore was told so that they could appreciate the history of the cave and the people who first explored this Midwestern gem. With over 17 miles of cave there were many stories to share with my captive audience. When they asked about virgin cave I replied that it did indeed exist but it was far from what we'd see today. They'd have to pay some pretty heavy dues to actually scoop any passage at Coldwater. I figure it's at least two miles and many hours of intensive caving to reach an area where new cave beckons. Numerous formations were in full color with a steady stream of water flowing over them. Since we had plenty of lights much of the mainstream could be lit up to show the expanse of the passage. Pothole Country challenged the group in maneuvering through the water. Several mainstream domes were shown off as we made our way down to Cascade. At Cas-

cade we crawled upstream into clear cold water past Wellpipe Passage and to the junction with Dead Coon. I related how recent "events" (i.e. massive flooding) had scoured sediment from behind the rimstone dams to enlarge the void. From here we turned left to begin our loop up Dead Coon.

Just ahead I pointed out a small crawlway off to the right that would be a good introduction to much of the type of cave that leads to virgin cave. I crawled in a boxy 2' passage that quickly opened up with a 7' ceiling. Shining my light overhead I noticed several rusticles from 6" to 18" in a packed gravel ceiling. I'd never seen such a roof in any part of Coldwater. A fantastic 6" rust spot was growing in a puddle on the floor. Glancing ahead my light shone on a 6' chunk of ceiling breakdown stuck in the floor. Sweeping upward I noticed the hole where the 6' chunk once hung. Unbelievably the former 7' Mud Cone Dome was cracked open to reveal a giant hidden dome behind it! Although Coldwater is known for its numerous domes, it was the largest dome complex that I've had the pleasure of discovering. A short chimney climb brought us to the base of this newest addition to the cave. We estimated a height of 125' that extends 16' beyond the former Mud Cone Dome. A constant stream of water fell to the floor from the top of the dome. Several flowstone formations were scattered throughout the dome. The group worked together to get everyone up into the dome. Shining my light back to the crawlway I noticed that the packed gravel ceiling was separating another 3' crawlway above it that trended back to Dead Coon. We looked for survey chips just in case someone had been here previously, but did not find any. At this point I mentioned that all the people who had ever seen this dome were in it at that moment. We took several minutes to take in the beauty of the newly christened "Rookie Dome". I shot several photos to document the day as we returned to Dead Coon to complete the loop. Several hundred feet of stoop-

walking and crawling became rather tiring for my companions since they were wearing rental wetsuits. The crawl through the dry section got us good and hot before reaching the mainstream. As we arrived at the water I heard John and Jason just ahead. Checking with John about the passage, I was even more convinced about the possibility that we had discovered a new dome. I was full of excitement for the rest of the trip to the platform. Once on the surface we checked the map and described the passage to Mike Lace and Chris Beck, who agreed that we had stumbled into a new dome. We cleaned up for pizza at Cresco and returned to the compound for stories at the campfire. The boys said they'd like to return next month to assist in the survey; we're looking forward to having them join us in adding to the map. Eighteen miles may not be such a stretch after all.

Fungi Cave and Fantastic Fossil Pot

Allamakee County, Iowa

By Mark Jones

October 8, 2011

Ed Klausner had made contact with a landowner about possible caves located on his timber ground north of Monona. No current grotto members had ever explored or mapped this cave although it had been explored in the mid-1970s. Now Ed, Mike Lace, Elizabeth Miller, Teresa Kurtz, John Donahue and I met on a beautiful Saturday morning to document this cave. The landowner, his son and a friend accompanied us on the trip. Following a path through the timber we drove down to park in a clearing by the sinkhole entrance. The entrance was a beautiful 12' wide by 18' high sinkhole entrance that gradually sloped into a hillside. Once inside the cave continued in this boxy shape for another 40' before dropping to hands-and-knees crawl. A great deal of surface debris littered this area and was embedded in the mudbanks in the pas-

sage. Since there were very few formations, I was compelled to look closer at the rest of the cave and did discover that the tree branches in the mudbanks were decaying, leaving a perfect mold of the branch. There were a couple of bats hunkered down in some ceiling cracks and numerous crickets clinging to the wall. About 20' into the crawlway we entered a pinch with a mud ledge immediately after squeezing through. A slippery slope gave way to a tacky 10' mud pit. This pit doubled-back for 15' before pinching out. Here Elizabeth, John, Theresa, Ed and I began to survey our way out. Elizabeth took book while the rest of us offered moral support as we took compass shots and inclinometer readings. After reaching the lip of the pit everybody exited the cave but Elizabeth, Ed and I. We continued the survey through the tighter spots where additional assistance wasn't needed. Soon we'd arrived at the hands-and-knees crawl and within two shots were at the dripline of the cave. A quick addition of the length gave us somewhere around 177 feet for Fungi Cave. After we returned to our vehicles we drove a short distance to an interesting sinkhole up the trail. Our last cave to inventory was just up the road where we walked a couple hundred feet and chimneyed down a 15' pit. According to the landowner it continued deeper at one time (up to 90 feet in total depth), but had silted in over the past decades. John took book for this little gem before we wandered several hundred acres of timbered ground with dozens of sinkhole winking at us to investigate. All of us took a crack at opening one of these sinks, but alas it wasn't meant to be. We are fortunate that the landowner has preserved this valuable cave area for future generations.

Beyond the Sumps 2011

Coldwater Cave, Winneshiek County,
Iowa

October 15. 2011

By Mark Jones

After the successful September Coldwater trip downstream to the newly discovered H.G.'s Grave Dome I was prepared to return for the survey trip. Unfortunately there weren't enough cavers entering the cave to make that possible. Mike Lace had planned to stay topside to spruce up the compound for the coming winter season leaving Kevin Mossey, Tony Tallman and myself to drop the shaft. Since Kevin has not been in the cave before and Tony hadn't been upstream we decided to attempt The Spong Siphon when we discovered the water level was 0.52'. This is the first of several sumps that lead to upstream survey. The water was very clear revealing all the rocks and pitfalls that are normally hidden in the murky water. On the way upstream I pointed out the many outstanding formations along the way. Just before the Jumping Off Point we stopped to view the wonderful crinoid beds in the huge ceiling breakdown blocks in the stream. As we moved further along we noted how much the mudbanks had eroded since the spring flooding. Just past the Rock River Formation Tony and I hooded up at the breakdown blocks to navigate through The Spong while Kevin waited for us. Once in the water we took off our helmets to give us better clearance in the sump. Picking up the diveline I floated slowly through the 40' of 3" airspace to the other side. Once there I turned around to guide Tony through for his first time. With my Sten light I had no problem lighting up the narrow passage for Tony. With some encouragement he worked his way to join me. It wasn't too long before we crawled to the big room to take a break. I was excited to make the first successful attempt for the 2011-12 winter season. If the normal precipitation falls for the next four months we should be traveling upstream until the spring thaw. After the break it wasn't long before we'd rejoined Kevin at the breakdown blocks. On the way back to the platform I was able to photograph several formations. Next month should prove

to be very interesting for upstream exploration.

Equipment, Equipment, Equipment

Chris Beck, Teresa Kurtz, Tyler Kurtz, Jasen Rogers and Brandi Zinn, and John Donahue
October 22, 2011
By John Donahue

It was a beautiful fall October day, sunny and warm, when everyone showed up at 10 AM for a survey trip into the Land of Oz. If you've never been back into the area you should really consider joining us next time... if you enjoy mud baths that is.

I titled this trip 'Equipment, Equipment, Equipment' because of my own equipment failure(s), which I will explain shortly. But a short description of the cave itself is needed first.

In order for us to get back in to the Land of Oz we need to first go through two sumps. The first called the U-tube (now renamed the Pre-Dip). This sump is normally water filled and needs to be bailed to allow passage. The second is called the Whippy Dip and is a mud sump with the mud being the viscosity similar to that of pudding. Normally this sump also needs to be dug free again from the constant mudslides, and due to this years earlier flooding in the area we expected it to be worse than normal.

My first equipment failure happened within minutes of our arrival. I realized I had forgotten my boots on the dryer at home. My only other option was to wear my sneakers instead, which worked, but I may never wear them again. Having been on a couple trips back in the Oz, I decided to try something new to keep myself dry and as clean as possible for the actual surveying. I wore a blue Tyvek suit with my frog suit underneath. The idea was simple. Once we were through and into the dry area, I could slip out of the Tyvek, put it in a garbage bag, and then slip into my Meander suit, which I was carrying

in a second backpack with a few extra shirts, gloves, a hat, and many other items I wouldn't actually ever use.

We entered the cave around 10:30 and found the entrance drier than normal which raised our hopes of finding easy passage through the rest of the cave. The cable ladder into the Grand Canyon was put up and everyone made the decent with ease. Soon we found ourselves at the first sump and as expected it needed bailing. Although not as much water was present as normal, the water had turned into a soupy mess. Chris soon had it cleared for passage, and he decided that it now needed a new name since it resembled more of the Whippy Dip, hence the 'Pre-Dip'.

As I was passing thru the sump I had my second malfunction. My Tyvek ripped and needed to be removed. Luckily I had my frog suit on underneath so I was able to just rip the Tyvek off and leave it to retrieve later on the way out.

When we finally reached the Whippy Dip we found that it had truly sumped. We spent about the next 2 hours taking turns digging... if that is what you can call it. On my first trip into the hole I had the misfortune of getting a face full from one nasty little mudslide. It fairly covered my whole face and helmet causing my lights to go dark, so I backed out to get things cleaned up. On my second trip into the hole I realized my third equipment malfunction had occurred. My frog suit pants decided they did not agree with the added weight from the mud and wanted to hang out around my ankles. Needless to say I spent the majority of my time lying on my belly in 4 or 5 inches of mud with my pants around my ankles and digging in my underwear. I count myself fortunate that it was dark and the mud covered everything anyway. I also tried not to pay attention to the chatter going on behind me about the benefits of naked caving.

Eventually I did break through and was able to get myself into the room on the other side. The size of the

room has grown and you can actually see up into a small area where the mud is coming from. The small ledge that normally we use to lay on before climbing into the tube has disappeared. This is good in that the amount of mud that can slide down into the Whippy is less, but it will make it all the much more difficult to climb up into the tube.

At this point we decided to call it a day and gathered ourselves for the trip out. I removed my caving suit from my pack and changed. This allowed me to walk, but now I had to deal with carrying two sets of clothing that were covered in mud and weighed an additional 50 pounds. By the time we were out I could swear they weighed ten times as much. I'd like to give my deepest thanks at this point to the two ladies in our group. They burdened themselves with sharing the weight of carrying my second pack out for me. Thanks Teresa and Brandi, without your help I might still be covered in mud. When I finally climbed the ladder up and out of the cave, I collapsed with fatigue and couldn't move for some time.

Lesson learned.



John before all the mud and equipment malfunctions. Photo by Jasen Rogers.



John Donahue unlocking Kemling Cave entrance. Photo by Jasen Rogers.



John, Tyler, and Jasen in their muddy best. Photo by Teresa Kurtz.



What Mud? Photo by Jasen Rogers.