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CaveTalk

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE NATIONAL CAVES ASSOCIATION

Diane Thompson, Coordinator

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March 2011

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From the Desk of the NCA President

Dear Members,

Hopefully by the time you read this we will all be busy with Spring Breakers or School kids! The NCA recently held its mid-winter meetings in St. Louis at the beginning of March and spent 2 days working very hard on your behalf. I would first like to thank the Regional Directors and Committee members who attended for all their input and efforts. They all go to great personal expense (both time and money) to help enhance our organization. Please don't hesitate contacting them at any time with input or concerns and look forward to hearing from them soon. I also encourage everyone to visit NCA's website as Diane has worked diligently over the past few months at updating and general housekeeping of the site. You will also be able to find updates from our mid-winter meeting as well as some exciting committee news. I would also like to share with everyone that we are in the final phase of the Coordinator/Office transition. Effective immediately Diane is taking care of all day to day operations of NCA and Susan will continue her efforts coordinating the Luray Convention. Over the past 18 months both of these ladies have worked very hard making this as seamless as possible. I would like to personally thank them both as I know many extra hours have been put in on behalf of the organization. Finally, even with higher fuel prices I continue to remain optimistic with regards to 2011 visitation. My sincere hope is that attendance will be high to our wonderful Natural Resources.

Best Regards,

Eric Evans
President, NCA



Air Quality Committee

Steve Runkle & Steve Thompson report that 31 members have been recertified to date with 6 more pending approval. That puts us at a half way point in getting all of the members recertified. Please check your Alpha Radiation book and send them to Steve Runkle or Steve Thompson as soon as possible if your plan needs recertified. The NCA requests you do not send your plans directly to Ozark Underground Lab without being reviewed by the Air Quality Committee first.

Steve Thompson
steve@bridalcave.com



Convention Committee

During the NCA Mid-winter Meeting, Susan Berdeaux was appointed by the Board of Directors as Convention Committee Chair.



Finance Committee

The finance committee has been appointed. The two members at large are Matt Doyle and Dennis Boyer along with the Executive Committee.



Low Cost Gift Shop Merchandising & Webinars

Hope your winter has been a productive one. We've added 1,200 sq. ft. to our gift shop and look forward to introducing Bowling Green to a 'more than souvenirs' shopping experience.

I'd like to recommend a website for e-education that I've found quite helpful. www.susansweeney.com You'll find a series of helpful webinars to grow your Facebook presence. I have my notes from the last webinar if anyone would be interested in looking them over, please contact me.

Also, I've found a book on low-cost gift shop merchandising. The author Linda Cahan might make an excellent speaker for the 2011 or 2012 meeting. Check her out at www.lindacahan.com
Here's wishing you a strong spring break,

Rho Lansden
Friends of the Lost River, Inc.
Office - 270-393-0077 / Fax - 393-0076



Membership Committee

Membership Committee reminds everyone to remember the NCA Affiliate Membership when ordering from Vendors. The Membership is only \$300 for the vendor and a big benefit to the NCA.

Steve Thompson
steve@bridalcave.com





Public Relations Committee

The Board of Directors approved a “America’s Best Show Caves” marketing campaign that will include a new iPhone app, a new website www.americasbestshowcaves.com and counter top brochure racks for NCA brochures. Details to follow shortly.

A BIG “Thank You!” goes out to Steve Runkle for his donation of \$500 (in the name of Lou Carey) to the Public Relations Campaign, along with his second \$500 donation to establish a “Heritage Award”.

Steve Thompson
steve@bridalcave.com



Retail Committee

Spring is almost here and I bet most of us are rather excited to see the snow melt away! The retail committee just wanted to give you a brief update on what’s going on.

Awareness Bracelets: have been ordered and should be here by mid May. We did correct the saying for this second run and they now say, “Bug Patrol We use Sonar”. The lettering will also not be printed on the bracelet but the letters are actually cut into the bracelet. If you would like to order some for your cave gift shop please just send Claudia an e-mail, Claudia@squireboone.com. You can get them in any quantity and they will be .55 cents each, same as last year!

Gift Show Update: The IGES (Sevierville) show will be Nov. 3 – 7, 2011. Smoky Mountain Gift Show (Gatlinburg) show will be Nov. 4 – 7, 2011. The Smoky Mountain show has been bought by Urban which owns several other gift shows across the U.S. We have not heard much about new plans for the show but I’m sure we’ll be hearing things in the future. When you make your plans to visit the two Tennessee gift shows please keep in mind that the IGES sponsored dinner for the NCA’s Buyers will be on Friday November 4th. IGES will be providing us a shuttle from the Event Center to Partridge and Pear Restaurant in Pigeon Forge. Traffic on Fridays is pretty bad so they will be taking us there via shuttle and back roads (much quicker).

Penny Books: The NCA Penny books for your penny press machines are available. Please get with Diane to order! We have plenty in stock and ready to ship to you!

NCA Playing Cards: have been redone and Impact is ready to take your orders. You can contact them at Impact Photographics 800-950-0110 ext. 19 (Matt will be your contact). You can also e-mail him at mattn@impactphotographics.com. The cards come in groups of 40 at \$2.10 per pack. Impact also has other items that are cave related, just ask Matt when you call.

NCA’s Buyers Group: is growing every month. If you have not joined us yet and you would like to join, just drop Claudia an e-mail and let her know you would like to be a part of the group. It’s just an easy way for the cave gift shop buyers to share information and ask questions!

Have a wonderful spring!!

Claudia Yundt
Claudia@squireboone.com



Website: www.cavern.com

Two new documents are now available on the website under the WNS icon:

“Bats Matter” - The Education Committee produced a document that could be used for WNS training for guides specifically geared towards students. Ann Wescott did an excellent job putting this together.

“Life Without Bats? Help us Protect Them.” – A brochure for your guests.





Wisconsin WNS Misadventure

Dear Cave Colleagues,

As I prepare for our busy season and spring visitors begin to arrive, I am reminded that I am lucky to be having a season at all. Here in Wisconsin, Cave of the Mounds along with Crystal Cave, have recently faced a serious threat to close our businesses because of WNS regulations. After many long hours of work, and more than \$20,000 in legal fees we have reached an agreement with the Wisconsin DNR that will allow us to continue our operations without much serious change. I hope that my experience can serve some purpose by helping my fellow NCA members if / when they find themselves in a similar situation. Our successful efforts would not have been possible without credibility conveyed by our NCA membership, the technical expertise from the NCA, WNS and executive committees along with the generous legal defense contributions from some individual NCA members. In addition, our existing relationships with DNR staff members and our local caving community were invaluable in providing us an inside track. Finally, we hired an attorney who specializes in natural resources law. I would urge every NCA member to stay informed about local WNS developments, maintain professional relationships with potential allies and continue involvement with the NCA as quick reaction will be necessary when WNS regulation comes your way.

I would never have guessed that Wisconsin would be the first place where the closing of commercial caves would be proposed, but unfortunately that is what happened. First, in September 2010, the Wisconsin DNR named *Geomyces destructans* (Gd the fungus associated with WNS) as an invasive species and listed the four Wisconsin bat species as threatened. Next, in October there was a proposal for an emergency rule to either close all caves to people and / or bats with a provision for some to require decontamination of visitors where they would allow visitation. Even though Cave of the Mounds has never been bat habitat, this rule would apply because the cave could be an incubator for Gd. **So, the lack of a bat habitat is not insurance against regulation!** In both these cases, the actual rules were posted just a day before the board meeting where the adoption was to take place. Clearly such short notice makes opposition very difficult, and this is where professional relationships with your State Department of Natural Resources staff, U.S. Fish and Wildlife personnel and caving community are invaluable. Through our contacts we were able to mount an opposition and delay enactment of this rule for commercial caves. During this respite we worked with DNR staff to negotiate cave specific management plans regarding bats and visitors. These plans allowed us to work with DNR staff in a less adversarial way to propose solutions that account for the varying conditions at different caves. In addition, we worked to change the tenor of discussions to convince them that Show Caves are working to solve this problem and can be an important tool to educate the public about this issue. For this reason, I urge all members that are making contributions towards WNS education and research to notify the NCA office of the details so that we may all take credit as a group for the work we are doing. Our DNR has created a program where they now actually promote us as a “bat friendly destination” that may be visited without potential harm to bats. Another important item was to change the language of discussion; for example, we now use “preventative measures” rather than “decontamination protocol” when discussing how to stop the spread to an uninfected cave. In the end, our negotiations with the DNR led to the Wisconsin NCA caves receiving formal exemptions from the new regulations based upon us following our management plans.

Our Wisconsin WNS misadventure is hopefully done for now, but I am afraid that other NCA caves will be facing similar struggles. I urge everyone to follow the updates from the NCA and form relationships locally so that the eventual regulations will not adversely affect your operations. Best wishes for a successful season.

Joe Klimczak

joe@caveofthemounds.com

Cave of the Mounds,

National Natural Landmark





In Loving Memory



Richard Bell
November 05, 1928 - March 29, 2011
Bellevue, Ohio

It is with great sadness I write to inform you of the death of Richard 'Dick' Bell, March 29. He had been ill over this winter during he and Denise's annual stay in Florida. When it became clear that Dick needed to get back to Ohio, thru the generosity of both the Graves and NCA families, Dick was flown home this past Saturday. Dick's passing is a profound loss for all of us, professionally and personally. He will be greatly missed by many people. There will be a huge void at our meeting this fall. His love for Denise, Seneca Caverns and the NCA was apparent to all and his spirit will live on. Please keep Denise, and the rest of Dick's family, in your thoughts and prayers.

Susan Berdeaux

