

Central Connecticut Grotto

October 2003

Newsletter name goes here ... to be continued below



Jeff MacDonald (and Zach's shoulder) going into the wet side of Gage Caverns.
Photo Jansen Cardy



The Central Connecticut Grotto (CCG) is a happy bunch of folks who enjoy the exploration, conservation and science of caves.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The **what is the name of this** Newsletter is published monthly by the Central Connecticut Grotto of the National Speleological Society (NSS). Reprint permission is granted to the NSS and to other grottos, with Author or Editor permission.

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All cavers are welcome and encouraged to submit articles, photographs, and other items for publication in the CCG. Your contribution would be very much appreciated.

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CCG Meetings:

Meetings are the 3rd Tuesday of each month at 7PM. In Plainville CT., just off route 84 near the junction of route 72 at HRP Associates, 167 New Britain Ave. (rt 372) Plainville, CT. For info call 860-793-6899 x134. Non-Members welcome. During the Summer months, meetings are held at member's homes. Be sure to check the activities section of the CCG website for updated information on meeting locations.

Meeting Directions to HRP Associates

From I 84 West: Exit 34 - Plainville Crooked St. exit.

Take a left at the traffic light at the end of the exit.
Proceed to the next traffic light where you will be facing the Bamboo Boutique.

Take a left onto RT 372.

Immediately after you pass the 3-way intersection with KOHLS on your left, take a right into the HRP Associates Parking lot.

From I 84 East: Exit 33 - RT 72.

Exit 33 puts you on RT 72.

Go to the right hand lane when approaching the exit.

From RT 72 take exit 2.

As you approach the intersection with KOHLS on the right, stay in the 2nd to the left lane.

Take a left at the light with HRP Associates across the street.

Immediately after the intersection, take a right into the HRP Associates parking lot.

Dues:

Regular Membership Dues: \$5
NSS members can also pay \$20 for 5 year membership

CCG Website: The Grotto website is:

www.caves.org/grotto/ccg/

This is an excellent way to find out what other caving things are going on that come up on short notice as well as review some of the history.

NSS Information:

The National Speleological Society (NSS) is the national organization of which CCG is a part. The NSS can be contacted about other caving or national caving information at

www.caves.org

National Speleological Society
2813 Cave Avenue
Huntsville, AL 35810-4431

Voice 256-852-1300

Fax 256-851-9241

E-Mail nss@caves.org

NSS News submission guidelines may be found at

<http://www.goodearth.com/nssnews/style.html>

Calendar of Events:

Trips are not limited to what is on the calendar! Contact fellow grotto members to create your own trips. Let the CCG Editor know in advance to post your trip on the calendar. Also, **check the website** calendar and

October

18-19 NCRC Training Schoharie Caves area, NY.

21 CCG Meeting (slide show: Caving in Arizona 101, Ray Keeler)

November

18 CCG Meeting (presentation: open)

December

16 CCG Meeting and Christmas Party (presentation: open)

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NEWSLETTER NAME and RELATED ITEMS:

OK, so what would we like to call this thing you are currently reading. Bob Simmons provided the previous CCG newsletter names with:

LET'S EXPLORE (1960S)
EXPLOREING (EARLY 1970S)
THE UNDERGROUND MOVEMENT (MID-1980S)
THE UNDERWORLD (EARLY TO MID 1980S)

... and then mentioned he was not terribly attached to any of the names.

Jansen has offered:

THE CONNECTICUT CAVER
NUTMEG UNDERGROUND
CONNCAVE

So, at the October meeting there will probably be a lively conversation as to what the newsletter should be called.

We are looking to send this out electronically the Tuesday prior to the monthly meeting. There will be some paper copies made for posterity and those not on the web.

Here's also the chance to comment, complain, etc. on font size, format, and layout (like one column or two) and we'll continue from there.

And, as with all small publications the editor will be always looking for new material to abuse our fellow grotto members with. (Yes, I know I just left a dangling participle ... sorry).

ARTICLES AND TRIP REPORTS:

MAR 50TH ANNIVERSARY, SHIPPENSBURG PA.

September 26-28, 2003
Ray Keeler, NSS 23245

The Greater Allentown Grotto went to great lengths to make the MAR's 50th Anniversary as special as possible. It was held at **Peiper Cave** owned by Kim and Ed Kehs in Shippensburg. They produced a 30 page guidebook with MAR history and 17 maps (many drawn by Bernard Smeltzer) and a Smeltzer biography, two big group meeting tents, porta-jons, a sauna, dinner and two breakfasts, and ran electricity to the meeting tents for lights and microphone for the Saturday evening presentation.

The kicker was that hurricane Isabel had come through the week before leaving many of the trees down. Basically they had to chain saw their way onto the regional campsite and spent an entire week clearing the property. The area looked great.

Five or six MAR led trips went out Saturday morning. Jeff Mac Donald was able to get on a limited access, ex-commercial cave trip that been arranged for especially the anniversary. They then went to some other caves in the area and Jeff said the "geriatric" cave trip was not that geriatric. I went off to a dig in progress in **Boiling Springs #5 Cave** with Joe Stock, his daughter and a couple. We were happily moving buckets when another caver came in to "help". After saying "Hi, I'm Ray. Can you take this bucket?" and passing it through the belly crawl it disappeared with almost no verbal response. Just a "... bucket ... Ray ... Joe ... dig ..." Hmmm. It reappeared empty. After a couple more words I began to recognize the voice of the caver who was staying conveniently around the corner. Doug Medville! The dig

MINUTES FROM SEPTEMBER MEETING (9/16/03):

Secretary's Report - (Cheryl J. Kenez) minutes of last month accepted.

Treasurer's report - (Bob Simmons) absent due to work obligations, but reported no changes.

Communications - (Steve Adams) made some modifications to the membership area and improved the directions to HRP.

Membership - (Norm Berg) we have a couple of new members.

Safety - (Doug Truitt) here and safe.

Conservation - (Bill Karpowicz) absent

Vertical - (Tom Oakes) absent, but sent report that Chris Nicola will hold a vertical workshop at Cathole on September 21st and November 15th. Call him to confirm.

Vice Chair - (Bob Jacobs) absent

Chairman - (Jansen Cardy) talked about the upcoming NCRRC weekend October 18th & 19th and that our next grotto meeting should be back at HRP.

Past trips - the NRO where John Schwenk won the NCC 50-50 raffle. Some CCG members attended OTR during Labor Day weekend. There were also trips to Mystery in NY and Coon Hollow in MA.

Old Business- nothing

New Business - Norm mentioned that dues were due for the NCC. He made a motion and I seconded that we pay what we paid last year. It passed all in favor. We talked about the NSS youth group liaison survey.

Aaron and Amy Cox accepted positions in the NCC. It was also mentioned that Cub Scouts under 11 years old do not have the insurance to go on caving trips and it is safer to give speeches to those organizations.

Future trips and events - Bob Jacobs will lead a trip to Mystery Saturday September 21st-contact him directly if interested. The NCC meeting this weekend at Speleobooks at 11:00 am followed by a Knox Cave cleanup on Sunday. The next EMS club day will include caving promotions by CCG in the Meriden and possibly Fairfield stores on October 24/25.

There will be a weekend Orientation to Cave Rescue in Schoharie on October 18/19. TAG and Bridge Day in West VA are also coming up soon. OFMC (Old Fat Man Caving) trip to West VA will happen again around Veterans Day in November.

After the business meeting Aaron and Amy Cox will do a slide show on Hawaii titled "Above and Below"

Meeting adjourned.

MAR continued: was immediately abandoned to go to lunch and catch up. We gathered Hazel at the bottom of the hill on the way.

The evening's dinner was excellent and the presentation of the history of the MAR by Will White was in full swing when the rain started and kept up through most of the night.

The Penn. Cave Conservancy meeting was Sunday morning but I was beat and started the 320-mile drive back. All in all, a very well prepared regional and big thanks to Kim and Ed Kehs for providing their land and the Greater Allentown Grotto for the work.

Vertical Practice

Saturday October 4th, Adams Mill, Manchester

Jansen Cardy

Arranged by Jansen Cardy and attended by Laura Ritter, Jeff MacDonald, Chris Mooney and Steve Adams (with late arrival by Ray Keeler). As usual, two drops were rigged. One about 25 feet, the other 15. A 10-foot cable ladder was also rigged.

Laura probably gained the most from the days activity, having never been on rope before. She completed several short rappels, and was introduced to ascending using a Frog System. Jeff, Chris and Steve practiced their ascending techniques and changeovers, and assisted Laura with her rope skills. As the afternoon progressed, the rain settled in but caused no disruption thanks to the nice roof over our heads. The day wrapped up with a quick visit to the nearby rock climbing gym, and with Ray joining us for dinner at a local Indian restaurant.

Gage Caverns

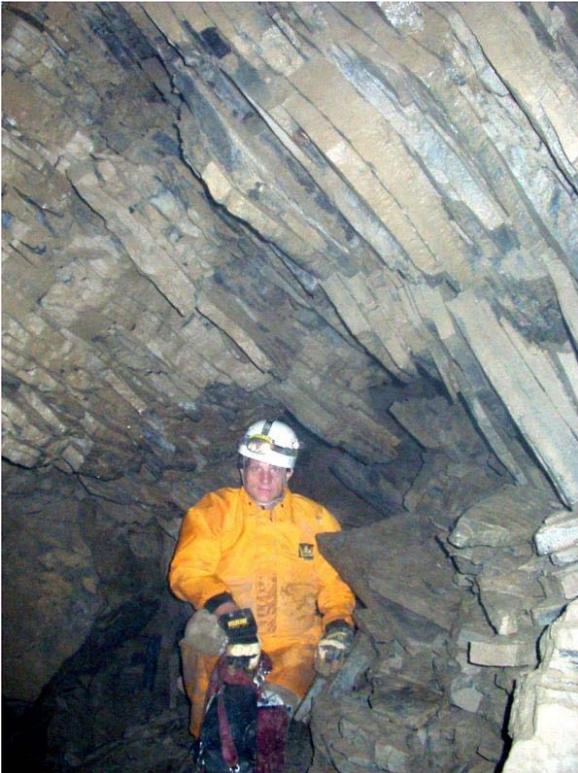
Sunday October 5th, Schoharie County, NY

Jansen Cardy

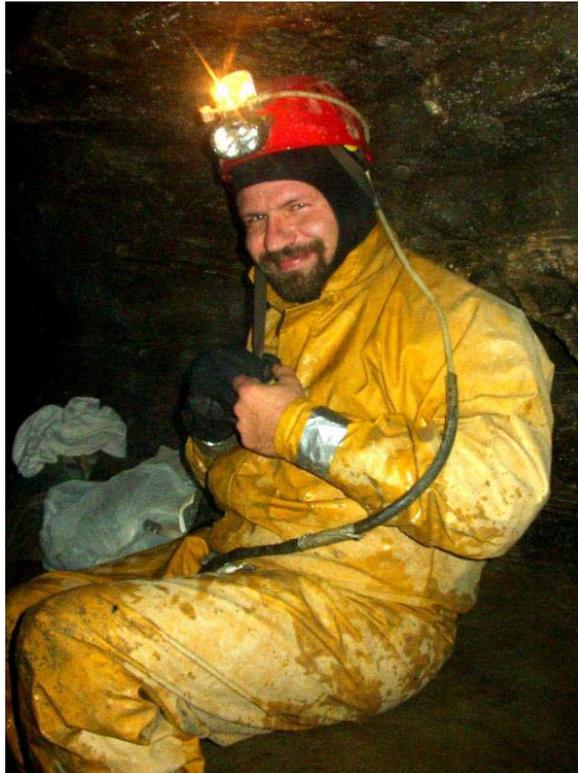
Arranged by Steve Adams and attended by Jeff MacDonald, Ray Keeler, Zach Deutscher, Laura Ritter, Steve Janesky, Ken Nichols, and Jansen Cardy. We met up at the Dunkin Donuts, before proceeding to Speleobooks to sign the paperwork, and then to the nearby Barton Hill Karst Preserve. After the mile-or-so walk to the cave, we rigged and rappelled the 50-foot drop next to the ladder. Laura did very well with her newfound rappelling skills. After stashing vertical gear, we headed for the dry side of the cave. Careful not to disturb the bats, we moved through the amphitheater and into various crawling passages. Ray busied himself taking photos, and Steve J and others delighted in coercing Laura and Zach into checking out the tighter crawls. On the way back out, Jeff, Steve J and Zach donned wetsuits and plunged into the wet side for a brief look. Jeff rescued a small snake from the bottom of the pit, carried it up the ladder in a Nalgene bottle and released it back into the wild. It seemed to like the bottle, and took some convincing to leave it's new home. After a pleasant walk back to the vehicles, we ended the day with some well-deserved pizzas.



Laura on her first rappel into Gage Cave, NY
Photo Steve Adams



Steve Adams in the thinly bedded room before the Balls Down crawl



Steve Janesky suited for the wet side photos by Steve A. or Jansen

Knox Cave Restoration September 21, 2003
 (And **Wards Gregory Cave** September 20th and other Stuff)
 Ray Keeler, NSS 23245

Some say that one of the measures of “was it was a good cave trip or not” is the goal of spending at least one hour underground for each hour driving. However if this measure were used in my particular case, I would be at a serious deficit. I.e. 3000 miles driving from Arizona to Connecticut followed by the 360 mile round trip to the Schoharie Co., NY. Caves.

On Saturday, October 20th there was a Northeastern Cave Conservancy (NCC) meeting being held at Speleobooks, 10 miles from Knox Cave. I could go to the meeting and then the restoration the following day. This would work. Directions were obtained (thanks everyone) and the plan was put in motion.

While following the directions and traveling down a country road west of Albany there appeared five people looking dirty and grubby ... and two were wearing helmets walking along the shoulder! Ah, spelunks, I suspect! The question raced into my mind “Should I continue going to the exciting NCC meeting or go underground?” At the next wide spot in the road the car quickly turned around and I began trying to persuade someone I had never met along a roadside that I was not a complete basket case even though the story line was pretty obscure (something like ... “I just drove 3000 miles and have to get underground. Can you help?”) And Dave of the Appalachian Mountain Club, after going to another entrance just up the drainage, gave directions to the parking lot behind June’s Diner in Clarksville where cavers park to go to Wards-Gregory Cave. After some easy gearing up and a pleasant ¼ mile walk through the woods the trail comes to a large sink with a comfortable entrance in the bottom.

As I’m standing in the entrance changing batteries a group of college students walked up with helmets and mostly hand held flashlights. But one was a thin, older woman with two lights mounted on a very used helmet. “Peg Palmer?” I asked and then Art bounded into the sink to say “Hi”. He had seen the Arizona license plate and told his students that “The farther away the caver was from the better the chance that he knew them.” It was his hydrology class on a field trip. Art and Peg were hoping to show the class the cave while it was in flood stage as this weekend was right after hurricane Isabel blew by. Fortunately the hurricane had missed the Albany area and the stream inside was at low levels.

Wards-Gregory Cave is a pleasant, mostly walking stream trunk to the east and a mazier, crawling/crouching section to the west. It has three entrances and is one of the few caves in the area where landowner permission is not required to visit and is very well known. The NCC is also currently working on gaining management control for the cave and was a part of the discussion at the NCC meeting.

This was Laura Ritter’s first cave and she did quite well negotiating the crawls, crouching, water, dark and generally caving types of stuff. After a couple of hours underground and some photos it was off to Emily’s and Speleobooks arriving just after the NCC meeting finished. Later Saturday evening was the Helderberg-Hudson Grotto meeting around the bonfire in the back yard.

Joe Armstrong coordinated the **Knox Cave** restoration day with about 20 in attendance. Teams weed-whacked the trail to Knox and Cross Bones Caves, removed pipe handrails and lumber from inside the cave, and several spent a considerable amount of effort digging debris and fill out of the passage to the Gun Barrel.

Laura Ritter, Ken Nichols and I were detailed with making a short climb down in the entrance less treacherous. There were several slick boards and rocks that needed removal or relocation. Mostly, the overall tone was one of relaxed work and productive. Ken gave us a nice tour to the front part of the cave and we opted to not go to the back due to the Gun Barrel crew actively transporting buckets. Ken also offered to take us caving on some future weekend, which we took him up on with the Gage Caverns trip.

CAVE FOR SALE:

A nice house with 18 acres that includes Cat Hole Cave and the adjacent Kitten Hole Karst in New Marlboro, Mass. is on the market. Own your own cave (6th largest in Mass.) for a mere \$475,000.00!

<http://www.lancerealestate.com/residential.html>

click on "Southfield" listing

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER ITEMS

Dick Graham (NSS9694) died from a fall in **Lori Cori Canyon Cave** in southwest Virginia on Saturday, September 27, 2003.
(From Peter Haberland)

NCC is reporting a loomer of a rock in **Levy's Cave** on the Sellecks preserve. The smooth chock stone is apparently just barely holding up a sizeable part of the ceiling just 20 feet from the entrance.

There is an interesting article on **River Bluff Cave** in Missouri. The road cut workers intersected it and it contains pristine paleontology.
<http://www.msnbc.com/news/968572.asp?vts=092320031235>