

# How to Start and Maintain a Grotto

by the Internal Organizations Committee  
of the National Speleological Society

A rough analysis shows that about half of the grottos active in the NSS are small, that is, they are entitled to only two delegates at the Congress of Grottos, which means they have no more than 15 NSS members. Many of these groups have maintained a successful existence for many years; quality is obviously more important than quantity. One determined caver can start and maintain a grotto. Are you that person?

It's often quality, not quantity, that counts.

Some of the best cavers in the United States are active in small grottos. Believe that you can make a net positive contribution to speleofogy and keep the faith.

## **Starting a Grotto: The Initial Phases**

Here you are in a new community, by yourself. If there are other cavers here, you don't know it. The NSS Members Manual and the NSS website lists no grotto near you. You have been an active caver up until now and you suspect that there are caves within reasonable week-end commuting distance (if not nearer).

Forming an NSS grotto would be useful, to line up some caving buddies, if for no other less self-serving reason.

It will also help NSS. Whenever there is a visible NSS organization, others who become interested in caving will know where to turn and will end up being exposed to NSS philosophy in such fields as safety and conservation. It may cut down on the development of substandard caving practices in our communities, ones that stress adventure rather than safety and conservation. (Not that every advertised caving program is substandard, however; some include very careful training periods and offer a real ser-

vice to disadvantaged or emotionally disturbed children in developing self-reliance through the mastery of the skills of outdoor living. The better programs will probably welcome an opportunity to tell you about what they do and perhaps will offer you a chance to become involved if you are interested.)

Also, a grotto offers a structure through which cavers can work more effectively for conservation and safety.

An outfitter is more likely to refer neophytes buying caving equipment to a club than to an individual caver. The same is true in making presentations to school officials or youth group representatives. In contacts with environmental groups, when you seek allies, you have more status as a grotto representative.

Having persuaded yourself that you would like to start a grotto, what next? First, doublecheck the possibility of an existing grotto especially if you live near a state line. There may be a nearby grotto in the adjoining state. The second step may be to ask the I/O Committee; if there is an existing grotto they will so inform you. Then, if you can join the existing grotto, you will avoid all the hassle of having to start your own group. If road blocks seem to be thrown in the way of your joining, why is this? If you would like to join the existing grotto, but are discouraged, ask the I/O Committee Chair to help. Are they just older and hesitant to take in young people? Have they doubts about your attitude toward safety and conservation? Have they a major commitment to a particular cave project and do they feel uneasy about accepting newcomers in the project at this point? Are they "turned off" by lifestyles that differ from theirs? If it appears clear that your application for membership in their group is not welcome, perhaps you can

recruit their help in offering training to a new grotto and also providing some programs for your meetings. Try to maintain a friendly relationship with them, recognizing the valid reasons for difference.

If you are now ready to make plans to start a grotto, develop a list of potential members. Check the most recent NSS directory that lists NSS members by states; if it's more than a year old, check the names against the more recent alphabetical directory to see if they're still living near you. Write to the NSS office asking if they can supply you with an up to date list of members living in specified ZIP code areas, and put you in touch with a member of the NSS membership committee in case there have been inquiries from prospective cavers in your area. Make the rounds of any local sporting goods outfitters to find out whether they stock caving equipment/literature and, if so, whether they can put purchasers in touch with you. Tell them of your plans so they can refer people in the future.

Is caving on the agenda of local youth groups or science classes or high school/college outing clubs? Get names of contact people in such groups. Put a hard hat with a lamp bracket on the back seat or shelf of your car and you'll be surprised: people who cave will distinguish it from a construction or motorcycle helmet and speak to you.

Be sure to have an NSS decal or tag (or the ever popular bat sticker) on your vehicle; more than one grotto has gotten started when two NSS members identified one another this way.

Hopefully through this process you have found a nucleus of at least half a dozen people who say they would like to start an NSS grotto. You may even have come across an existing informal caving club that will join you.

We are assuming that the existing NSS grotto, if there is one, was of the low profile type that has done no active recruiting and therefore your efforts will not be competitive. NSS may be hesi-

tant to issue you a charter if an existing grotto in the area is uneasy about a second grotto. Be sensitive to the need for maintaining a good relationship with the existing group as you proceed and do not "poach" on their territory.

### **The Next Step: The Organizational Meetings**

Find a time and place for an initial meeting that is convenient for a substantial proportion of the people to whom you have talked. You are unlikely to attract more than twenty people; a private home would do for the first meeting unless you have ready access to a pleasant meeting room in a public building such as a library or civic center. As socialization will be a prime ingredient of this meeting, a home may be ideal.

Communicate the time and place to everyone you think might be interested, with a telephone number or two where they can ask for information. (Some will call to express interest and regret that they cannot come this time.)

Advertise the gathering in the calendar portion of the local newspaper(s). You just want a small notice that some people may see. Experience has shown that even fairly blatant publicity does not result in huge crowds and, after all, you're not inviting people to go caving, but to come to a meeting of cavers.

Pass the word along to the outfitters, the science teachers, the Chamber of Commerce information desk, the public library, the museum if it has a science section, etc.

If you mail a notice to everyone, it will cost money. How much is it worth to you to organize a caving grotto? Chances are, most successful attempts to start a grotto did involve the contribution of startup funds by one or two interested people. NSS does not budget funds for developing new grottos but will supply some brochures and membership applications. You can minimize the cost factor by telephoning, taking notices drawn with a markalot pen on paper to

various key points like the outfitters, giving the story to the newspaper and radio stations, and leaving out any individual mailings. If you can afford to have beverages and munchies on hand for the initial meeting, fine., If you can't, pass the word along to "bring your own beverages and munchies." Or the initial meeting may be in a public building and you adjourn to a nearby pizza parlor and everyone buys their own during the social period. About all that you plan to accomplish at this first meeting is formal agreement that it would be good to start an NSS grotto. Some who are not NSS members may be ready to complete individual NSS applications (have some on hand), Also, discuss how to reach other possible cavers in the community; some may take a responsibility for specific contacts. Learn something about the talents and backgrounds of those interested in starting the grotto. It's probably premature, however, to make specific plans for trips or training. Set the date for your next meeting (the organizational meeting) and, if possible, the place, allowing time to get an application packet from NSS if you don't have one yet.

Maybe someone will emerge at this preliminary meeting with a natural bent for leadership and he or she will pretty much take over control of planning. That let's you off the hook; don't fight it! A grotto has more stability if leadership is shared from the beginning. If another mailing will be required, you might pass the hat to collect some postage money. (You have no dues yet.)

If none of your potential members has ever belonged to an NSS grotto or similar club before, it might be helpful to invite to the organizational meeting a person from a grotto in a neighboring city or an NSS leader if there is one relatively near you. Perhaps they will be flattered enough to be asked to advise you in your organizational stages to accept readily. But don't feel that you can't go ahead unless you have this kind of assistance.

By the time of the organizational meeting, you should have received the NSS application packet, which includes the formal application document for charter members of your group to sign, a copy of the NSS Internal Organizations Policy, and a set of guidelines for writing up your own constitution and bylaws. Many grottos operate very successfully with only the very simple sample constitution proposed by the NSS for grottos. If you need a copy of the NSS constitution and bylaws for reference, it is to be found in the annual NSS Members Manual.

At the organization meeting and subsequent meetings you need to do the following things.

1. Become familiar with the I/O Manual

The I/O Committee has produced an I/O Manual to guide you as an I/O. You can find it at [www.caves.org/committee/i-o/](http://www.caves.org/committee/i-o/)

Become especially familiar with the sections that explain your obligations to the NSS and what you can expect in return.

2. Choose a name for your grotto.

Most cavers use a geographical designation for the grotto name. This helps identify it at regional and national meetings. Other options are names of local historical significance speleologically or geologically speaking. Check with the I/O Committee about the name. You will not be allowed to use a name that is already being used by another I/O. Sometimes even a similar name will be discouraged by the I/O Committee. If you prefer not to be called a "grotto," other possibilities are the XX Speleological Society or the YY Caving Club, etc. A name should not include "survey", "region", "study group", "section" and "project" since they are reserved by NSS for other activities. If you choose a name

because you like the acronym formed from it, do not choose a name that sounds frivolous or inappropriate (it may backfire when you try to establish credibility with the IRS or local or state officials, etc.). The I/O Committee can provide a list of names of current and defunct grottos in your state (and also in neighboring states).

3. Adopt a constitution and bylaws for your grotto.

This may take several meetings and rewrites. The I/O Committee has a sample set of documents on its website. You will find it easier if you follow the documents and keep it simple.

4. Decide upon a dues structure as part of the bylaws. Note that it's not necessary to charge dues, but the grotto may have some expenses that must be paid.
5. Write a short history of the organization process.
6. Elect officers.
7. Complete the NSS Application for Internal Organization Status

Send the application along with its supporting documents to the I/O Committee. Be prepared to answer questions and respond to possible rewrites of portions of your constitution and bylaws.

***You may have regular meetings and caving events while the I/O Committee processes your application.***

8. Choose a meeting place and time for regular meetings.

A regular location at a regular time is important. Meeting once a month is prob-

ably often enough, especially if a full program is expected at each meeting. One grotto meets for business once a month and for a program or social time on a second time during the month. Some meet at the Regional meets, and some meet once a year at the NSS Convention.

Eating/drinking places seldom work out for business sessions (may be OK for "after meeting meetings"). Such an environment is seldom suitable for conducting business. Meeting in private homes, if grungy caving types are welcomed, is not out of line, but many a spouse begins to object after the initial phase. Libraries, schools, banks, recreation centers, colleges, churches all often allow public meetings without charge (although an annual bonus to a janitor may be in order in such cases). Avoid a place that charges a regular fee; this is likely to be beyond the budget of a small grotto. Be sure to leave the meeting place as neat or more so than you found it.

9. Receive the Charter from the NSS

Celebrate!

### **No Other Cavers in your area?**

But suppose there just aren't other potential cavers in your area and no caves within miles (it happens). Our best advice to you is: (1) to maintain an active individual relationship with the nearest Region and the NSS, and attend as many national and regional gatherings as possible, and (2) to cast about for one of the national active environmental organizations with a local chapter which will at least put you in touch with people who share many of the environmental goals of the NSS. The Sierra Club, for instance, has many local chapters. This contact will provide you with an opportunity to instill an awareness of the problems of cave conservation among some potential allies; you may even

be able to schedule an occasional caving trip for some of the members or show a caving video at one of their programs. Another useful project during this period would be to improve your emergency first aid skills and attend a cave rescue seminar.

### **Problems Within an Existing Grotto?**

Another possibility is that your motivation to start a new grotto is because several of you have belonged to an existing grotto in the area and factionalism has developed. You feel that the best solution is to have two grottos. Be prepared for the possibility that receiving an NSS charter may take longer in this situation.

NSS will want to be assured that having two perhaps weak grottos in an area is better for NSS than one strong one. Viewpoints will be sought from interested and disinterested cavers in the area. NSS is committed to the thesis that it is usually better to have one strong grotto in a city. However, a grotto rent by factionalism is not a strong grotto. What is the future? A split along geographical or age lines may eventually result in two viable grottos. But if the future holds only two weak grottos competing for the same membership, some other resolution than a split may be the answer. We suggest you seek advice from your region or the NSS in such a situation.

### **Mailing Address**

Many grottos feel it is best to rent a post office box as the grotto address, rather than having mail come in care of a private individual. But decide if you can afford the box rental. If you can, be sure and prepay box rent regularly; if you don't, come the new quarter and no rent in hand and the post office will start returning all incoming marked "Box closed" without your knowing it. It's also the grotto's responsibility to keep NSS advised of any changes in mailing address. We suggest using the address of a member who attends regularly and whose ad-

dress is fairly permanent. It is not necessary that the grotto address be that of the chairman. In fact, this may be a bad choice if it means an annual change of address.

### **Conducting the Business Meeting**

Welcome new faces (Your grotto-greeter should have met them before the meeting.)

Committee reports including summaries of material from exchange publications

Old business

New business

Trip reports

Trips in the future.

Program (See **Appendix A** for suggestions.)

### **Recruiting and Retaining Members**

The reference packet includes some tips on recruiting techniques and some letters or editorials written by rank and file members on why they joined NSS and what are some reasons to join. Also, you might ask the nearest member of the NSS Membership Committee for acceptable ways to increase membership without creating "instant" cavers who may only add to the vandalism chain.

The best technique for finding new members is for your members to bring in as members those of their friends who seem like good prospects.

### **Communications: Newsletter/Website**

Almost everyone agrees that the single most important communication device to keep a small grotto viable is a regularly published newsletter. It does not have to be elaborate; it can be published on the web. Publishing monthly, even if it's only a single sheet with mostly calendar

items, seems to be most effective. If you publish bimonthly, be sure to plan your calendar two months ahead.

You will find guidelines for newsletter editors in the new grotto reference packet. It may also be secured from the office or the I/O Committee.

## **Activities and Projects**

The strongest grottos are those that continue to have varied activities and projects. See **Appendix B**.

### Leadership

This is a problem whether you have ten members or a hundred. Someone has to do certain work, like filling out annual report forms, keeping membership records, minutes if you have business meetings. Some day you may want a history of your grotto. Make sure files contain the data to make this possible.

Rotating officers in a very small grotto seems to work well. It may be useful if the bylaws limit the number of consecutive years anyone can serve in any one post, to force this rotation so it will occur without bitterness. Problems can arise if a person becomes entrenched in the chairmanship, no matter how well this person carries out the responsibility. What happens if he/she moves away, for instance? You can play musical chairs if there are not many of you. NSS requires that every officer is a currently active NSS member. Look for creative ways to insure that this happens. You may sometimes be able to award a year's NSS membership as a recognition for meritorious service if a leader has real problems paying dues because of special circumstances, for instance. Make use of "assistant" treasurers or secretaries when the pool of eligible and qualified NSS members to hold office shrinks.

What happens if the chairman can't chair effec-

tively? In a small grotto, this ought not to matter. The entire grotto should be working as a team. If you are the person determined that the grotto will persist, be the editor, treasurer, or webmaster. Good communications is what matters.

When you have a personality conflict in a small grotto, the impact can be disastrous. The psychological background of this may be endemic in the nature of many cavers and due to their need for the sense of importance they gain from their prominence in the grotto. Only in the grotto may they have this feeling of importance or self worth. When someone else enters the circle trying to take over leadership, they are threatened and conflict ensues. One solution may be showing appreciation and respect for the talents of the deposed leader and helping to find suitable alternative outlets for his/her energy.

Are you yourself one of the principals in such a struggle? If not, stick to your editorship and see that some projects continue. If you are, ask what is best for the grotto and for the NSS and the caves. Focus on this and not on the personality struggle which is trying to take center stage. Do not fall back on constitutional questions as supporting you and not your protagonist; it seldom does away with the underlying problems. What satisfactions can be given this newcomer who also has a need for importance? Why not alternate project choice and leadership, unless you want a grotto split. Do you?

Plan Executive Committee meetings for discussion of business, so that visitors will not be turned off by these personality debates. When an argument seems divisive in the Executive Committee and no resolution seems acceptable to a substantial number of the grotto, it may be smart to refer the subject to a committee to study various solutions and reconsider the whole matter at a later date in a new guise.

## **Grotto obligation to the NSS**

A grotto must maintain at least five NSS members who claim it as their Primary Affiliation. It's up to the grotto to inform their NSS members on how to designate their grotto as the NSS member's Primary Affiliation in the NSS database.

A grotto must submit an annual report to the I/O Committee at a time and place designated by the committee. The report must be accompanied by a grotto membership roster.

A grotto must abide by the constitution and bylaws of the NSS as well as its own.

A grotto must have any amendments to its constitution and bylaws approved by the I/O Committee.

### **History**

You do have a history, believe it or not. Don't rely on memory to reconstruct it years hence when the Region does a history or you get ready to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the club.

Keep in a file or notebook(s) items such as the following (each dated at the time it is created): Notices of meetings, especially the first organizational one

Minutes, if taken

Newsletters, if any

Record Keeping

Cave Maps presumably would have been sent to special repository.

Copies of annual reports to National Speleological Society

Approved application from NSS (and charter, if not framed for display)

Lists of members, as periodically prepared  
Financial statements

Constitution, articles of incorporation if incorporated, and bylaws. Both the initial documents and any subsequent revisions, each clearly showing date of adoption

Scrapbook: Newspaper clippings etc. mentioning your group or one of its members

If the group is dissolved, the file of archives may be sent to the NSS Internal Organizations chairman to become part of the file on your group.

## Appendix A

### Suggestions for Grotto Programs

<p>Slides presentations by members</p>	<p>Speakers from outside the grotto (new faces)</p>
<p>Reports about NSS conventions, regional meetings, other events</p>	<p>If you have an outside (non-grotto) speaker, it may be appropriate to take him/her to dinner first and/or buy drinks at the “after meeting meeting” and, if they are from a distance, arrange overnight hospitality with a member.</p>
<p>Auctions (many grottos do this once a year, featuring items that will appeal to cavers. Also, a new grotto can auction off low grotto membership numbers once. If you don't have many solid items, try a services auction instead where people auction everything from an hour with a pickup truck and one's work to a gourmet meal cooked for two, or sealed directions to a “secret “ cave)</p>	<p>Encourage the Region to develop a list of speakers willing to travel and give programs</p> <p>Talks by geologists, biologists, mineralogists, hydrologists, environmentalists, etc.</p> <p>Talks on rescue techniques</p>
<p>Photo salon (for excellence, or holding contests like “Can you recognize this cave?” Many grottos do this once a year.</p>	<p>History of caves (research old newspapers, historical museums, elderly residents)</p> <p>Talk by oldtime caver</p>
<p>Jackpot drawing at start of meeting (to get people there on time)</p> <p>Annual meeting, with elections and/or installation of new officers, perhaps a potluck supper and awards, etc.</p>	<p>Talk on photography</p> <p>Supercavers flatter' ein and they'll come</p> <p>Members of NSS committee in your area, such as Safety/Techniques.</p>
<p>Workshops on techniques, mapping, surveying, knots</p>	<p>Invite nearby BOG member to talk</p>
<p>Caving seminar, with outsiders invited</p>	<p>NSS slide shows or videos (involves equipment to view the presentation)</p>
<p>Safety talks knots, vertical techniques, also first aid presentations or classes</p>	<p>Movies on first aid (Red Cross is a good source. Ask for one on hypothermia, for instance) Joint meetings with conservation or environmental groups</p>
<p>Art of leading trips</p>	<p>Founders Day/Homecoming (or whatever). Invite oldtimers in your area and former grotto members now living at a distance. Have a banquet or potluck and a social time.</p>
<p>Discussion of issues for Congress of Grottos agenda</p>	
<p>Christmas party. Share slides, do caving stunts like crawling under chairs. Have fun!</p>	

One grotto reports a very enjoyable program when each member present was asked to share his/her most exciting caving experience, or most embarrassing one, etc. Another said they would read out loud from their exchange publications from other grottos. It is possible to turn meetings into training programs. For instance, one small grotto may decide to take a Red Cross first aid or CPR course for one night a week for several weeks, with some of these nights falling on the regular grotto meeting night. Or, if a project is training some Scout leaders in caving techniques, the classroom orientation might be scheduled in place of the usual grotto meeting.

The more you can involve the members in being part of the programs, the better attendance is likely to be. In a small grotto, you may not need a program chairman. Suggestions can be discussed at a regular open grotto meeting, and

different members undertake responsibility for specific future program plans.

Discover and use the talents of members for programs, as in drafting, photography, etc.

The research done for history of caves and early cavers in the area may also be used to write a feature article for a local newspaper that will give the grotto more visibility in the community and possibly attract more members.

An annual event such as an anniversary dinner can be a social affair in which the spouses who are not cavers will enjoy participating. If cost is a factor, arrange for a potluck (this also avoids the necessity of knowing in advance how many are coming).

Encourage neophytes to report on their trips.

## **Appendix B. Suggestions for Activities and Projects.**

Developing good relations with the local rescue squad, getting them to teach you first aid while you share caving techniques with them, and try mutually to develop the skills needed in cave rescue, can pay off in many ways. If you first need training yourself in cave rescue skills, find out when this is available in your Region or through an NSS Committee and sign up.

Even the smallest, most trashed up cave can use a cleanup. Everyone should be able to help with this. Experience shows that usually, once a cave has been really cleaned up, it is less readily messed up afterward. Information has been published about various techniques of removing letters and paint from walls, using an acid, wire brushes, etc. Use epoxy to mend delicate formations where most of the parts were still there. If lots of manpower is needed, enlist some youth group and/or environmental groups to assist. Communicate with the NSS Conservation Committee if you need information on

special techniques. You don't need to worry about publicity hurting this project, as the cave wouldn't be so trashed up if it weren't very well known already. You may even cut down on the vandalism by your publicity.

Caving trips, of course, are a project that sustains the life of many grottos. Planning trips is often the major agenda item of business for grottos. These should vary. While not all trips should be of the purely tourist variety, there should be some such. If the grotto lacks skilled cavers to coordinate some major speleological projects, usually arrangements can be made with some other nearby grotto to help with one of their ongoing projects. For instance, a grotto in the Washington DC area used to welcome units from other grottos to assist in the Organ Cave System Survey in West Virginia. It could be pleasant at least once a year to set up a "family trip" in which children and spouses can participate, with a "beginner's" cave on the trip.

Plan one major “expedition” each year, probably on one of the three-day holiday weekends on the calendar. Raise funds for nonpersonal supplies needed.

Plan to attend regional meetings en masse.

If there is some annual outdoor event in your community where displays are welcomed (a fair, for example), do a caving display each year. It need not be glamorizing wild caves; could be about bats and their benefits to society, or outdoor safety, or groundwater pollution, or cave owners, those wonderful people we all know and love (and do they love such publicity!). Demonstrate rappelling and climbing techniques.

A good “armchair” project is developing good caveowner relationships. Some grotto members seem to be very talented at making friends with these mostly rural people, and nurturing their interest in their cave and the cavers who want to explore it.

The relationship can include giving the owner pictures taken in the cave, a copy of any map made, greetings at holiday seasons, etc. Study any state cave protection legislation and be able to clarify the liability situation for the owner if it's included in the law. (As a general rule, such liability clauses exempt the owner from liability for adults to whom permission is given to explore a cave without charge.) If the owner should provide special privileges such as camping space or parking, some special gift periodically may be appropriate.

Some NSS Regions have occasionally set up projects in which grotto members can participate (and are usually needed).

Investigating the feasibility and getting the grotto incorporated is another possible project.

Sometimes a demand develops for speleology courses in community colleges, high schools,

recreation departments, etc. If payment is involved, the net proceeds can swell the grotto treasury for items like equipment purchases. You may find that to sign a contract to provide a service for pay, the grotto needs to be incorporated (otherwise the payment becomes taxable income for the individual(s) signing the contract). If you undertake to provide a speleology course, the quality should be good. If you are paid well, you should not hesitate to spend some of the money for travel costs or even honoraria for guest lecturers to cover fields in which you have no expertise (bats, for instance, or hydrology).

The District of Columbia Grotto may still have copies of the curriculum of a course they developed for the Smithsonian Associates which ended, after lectures and orientation, with a field trip to a commercial and a wild cave.

Provide caving trips for youth groups on request. One word of caution: when offering a caving trip to young people it is advisable to stipulate that no one can go on the trip who does not attend the orientation session(s). Experience has shown that behavior is more questionable when young people bypass the orientation.

Along the same lines, an “introduction to caving” seminar can be offered at a county fair or independently. This includes talks, demonstrations, and displays. It may reach existing cavers who don't know much about organized caving.

Make up your own slide show on beginning caving, tailored to your area, and “telling it like it is”; mud, crawling, water but including some attractive caving scenes of areas that are easily accessible. Taking the pictures and putting the slide show together can involve several grotto members. A cassette tape may be prepared to accompany the slide show. Video and PowerPoint presentations have also become a practical medium for such presentations. Video cameras may be rented for a reasonable sum if no one has access to a privately owned one.

Once you have such a show, you can “take it on the road” for orientation programs for youth groups, to show the local Sierra Club chapter at one of their membership meetings, etc. Bat Conservation International has some excellent videos and slide shows on bats that show them as appealing creatures, without the snarling faces amateur photographers often catch. The content of a presentation can be varied somewhat depending on what you want to accomplish: explaining groundwater problems to a group of farming people, acquainting a group of Explorer Scouts with the need for a cave cleanup and demonstrating some of the techniques involved, or seeking collaboration from the citizenry in general in limiting access to a tragically threatened cave. Incidentally, such presentations have been very effective as part of campaigns at the state level to arouse interest in cave protection legislation.

Initiating a cave survey if there has never been one in your area or state, or if it needs updating, is an excellent project even if the caves are mere ratholes! Both Mississippi and North Carolina cavers have undertaken such projects seriously, despite a dearth of spectacular caves in their respective states. Flittermouse, a North Carolina grotto, is located in a state with little limestone, mostly Precambrian metamorphic rocks. But, as the chairman wrote, “If life hands you a lemon, squeeze it and make lemonade.” They’ve turned up some fabulous fissure or tectonic caves in those ancient metamorphic rocks as well as some respectable limestone caves in their limited calcareous deposits. The grotto is small in number but they are enthusiastic and they hunt for new caves. They have already published several volumes of a North Carolina Cave Survey.

Form a tie with a grotto that’s near caves if you aren’t, or vice versa. Develop some joint project that you can do together, perhaps just once or twice a year, but you couldn’t handle alone.

Cooperate with your existing state survey if there is one.

Participate in national NSS conventions.

You may feel that caving is your life, but not all grotto members may share your total commitment.

Multifaceted projects with something for everyone maybe desirable. Some explore caves while others look for new leads above ground, carry out surface surveys to locate cave entrances with respect to other landmarks, or cultivate the friendship of the cave owner.

Participation in the NSS Study Project, Contemporary Cave Use Study (CCUS), is possible for any grotto with members able to visit a particular cave or caves fairly regularly. This involves placement of a cave register, visiting it at intervals to remove data sheets and inserting new pages, and possibly helping to enter the data on a computer (if that’s not feasible there is probably someone in your area who has volunteered to do that). See the Members’ Manual Projects under the Executive Vice President for an address from which information and register sheets and other supplies can be secured.

Raising money for cave conservation can involve all grotto members. Paper drives, collecting aluminum, car washes are ways to do this. One grotto earned \$2000 winning a contest for collecting the most used beer cans of one brand. Another raised a modest amount by encouraging members to donate all the spare pennies each found in his/her change purse at meetings (it turned out that their per capita support of a particular Region drive was one of the largest in the Region!).

Set up and maintain a grotto library. It may consist solely of exchange publications, or you may be able to add books, including some on caving techniques that you can lend novices, as well as books of general interest. One grotto acquired a set of SpeleoDigests. Managing the library becomes another ongoing project, of course.

Particularly in areas where any caving trip requires a weekend just to get there, run through a cave, and get home, you may want to schedule an occasional local activity featuring other sports that are popular in your area. Most cavers and their friends are outdoor sports enthusiasts, and if you can cave only rarely this will give the group more chance to develop friendships in congenial surroundings. (Vertical practice should be possible and fun locally).

Establish a field house in your prime caving area. However, avoid the trap of finding activities in such a house so enjoyable that maintenance of the house becomes a higher priority than caving. Occasionally it's possible to negotiate for use of a house for no more than paying

the bill for electricity (if there is electricity in the house). An alternative (and one that may be less expensive) is the development of a campsite for regular use on a landowner's property.

Contribute articles of interest to local papers (cleanup efforts, historical items, folk legends relating to local caves). When the North Carolina grotto mentioned above sent out a press release about their work on a state cave survey, this elicited some new leads to caves from readers. Bats, for instance, need a lot of good public relations to offset the general public dislike for this useful insect-devouring mammal. Why not write a feature about them and their important role helping mankind.

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