

Bexar Grotto Meeting

Date: 3/27/17

Attendees: 40

Arron Wertheim called the meeting to order at 7:03pm.

Visitors

Rain Tanner and Jeff Tanner from National Grotto

Treasury report provided by Pam Campbell:

\$14,082.66 plus \$55 in gift cards

Organization Reports

TSS - Books for sale. No news, but there will be announcements at the convention.

TSA - Presentations will be announced as soon as it is complete. Amy is still trying to organize another workshop and will announce the schedule when ready.

TCMA - Table set up at Spring Convention. Breakfast will be provided Sunday. There will also be a members meeting Sunday. If you would like to donate to the auction see Bennett or Pam. There will be a toga theme.

NSS - Geary attended the Board of Governors meeting. The NSS is struggling because the membership is declining. He thinks it's a combination of aging membership. Furthermore, white-nose syndrome is causing issues with new caver recruitment. The younger generation is not as interested in caving and outdoor pursuits. This membership decrease is being seen in most outdoor associations (e.g. Audubon Society, Sierra Club). They talked about how to improve membership services, address the digital age, and how to attract cavers into the organization. They've had two very large donations to NSS for the headquarters. Roger Spurka donated \$500,000. He donated his entire estate when he passed away. An anonymous donor donated \$400,000. This has helped pay the HQ mortgage. The NSS had a commercial loan and was going through a re-finance issue when this windfall occurred. They were able to borrow against life membership dues. When they pay the money back they'll be paying it back to themselves. They will also have a new fundraising focus to try to pay off the mortgage. There is not a lot of extra money in the organization. William Shrewsbury is stepping down and Geary was elected as president elect.

Bracken - No representative present.

Old Business

The homeless individual living at Robber Baron was there when Cheryl arrived. She waited for an hour for the police. The police told him he was trespassing. He took his beer but left his belongings. Police told her to dispose of his belongings. The man's name is Johnny Lee Lucas. His stuff was brought to the meeting in a box. He is mentally ill. He was making it very uncomfortable to visitors of Robber Baron and the surrounding park. Mike Harris went by Saturday and found a bag with beer cans

and peaches but nobody was there. If you see him at the cave, call the police and refer to the case number. He will be arrested the second time he is caught there. Joe Mitchell also announced that you should call Alan or Joe for the case number before you call the police. Gregg announced that the man should not be interacted with or confronted. Alan would like for TCMA to return his belongings to him if he calls TCMA. Gregg would like to be informed of this and he will personally return his belongings.

Arron: The policy committee has a draft of the giving policy, but there is not a final draft yet.

New Business

Tom received an email from Alicia Good, the casting director of a new survival show. Other cavers have also been contacted. The show is a survival show based on being underground with six other people. If you would like the email, Tom will pass it on.

Rob: White-nose has been detected in Texas. TPWD has had an action plan ready for many years. They put out another in February 2017. The action plan has recommendations of how to prevent the spread of white-nose. Rob has been asked to create a task force that can determine what types of caves should have restricted access. He didn't want a knee-jerk reaction to the discovery. Rob will try to help find members to serve on the task force. There are many state property managers who don't know that there are recommendations in effect. White-nose has not been detected in New Mexico, which is where the NSS convention will be held. All Texas cavers should follow decontamination procedures prior to leaving the state. It's not just enough to decontaminate your gear. It's also what you do with your gear. We might need to come up with a class and a way to help cavers verify their knowledge and approach to decontamination.

Fran: He doesn't want the cavers to be blamed for spreading the fungus. The bats are already doing that based on their migration and hibernation patterns. We have to be careful of how this affects our access to caves. Familiarize yourself with the decontamination procedures. If you're doing any caving in OK, AR, or the panhandle, know that if those caves have bats, they will be contaminated. It will continue to spread. The hibernating bats are the ones who are most susceptible to the fungus. We should see die-offs (98% of colony wipe-out) within a couple years. The fungus will be moved south for the winter. Some will go to Mexico, some will go to central Texas. If you're in a cave with bats, assume that it is contaminated. Consider not going into caves with bats. If you do, you really need to decontaminate your gear. It is a lot of work. You have to use special chemicals to kill the fungal spores. If you're going to the convention and plan on caving, make sure you have thoroughly decontaminated your gear. The only bats susceptible are the hibernating bats. We have two new species that were added to the list. We're up to 9 species of bats that are susceptible. The tricolor bats (like in Robber Baron) are particularly susceptible. The fungus eats away at the skin and when the bats wake up from hibernation to deal with the irritant, they burn off their fat reserves and starve to death. The non-hibernating bats will survive because they have better immune systems and more fat reserves. The fungus has been in Europe for over a thousand years. It is likely that the fungal spores came over on a human. Bracken bats are not at risk because they migrate. Bracken will become a vector. TSS and NSS websites

have decontamination procedures. Know the protocols. Limit your visits to caves with large bat colonies. People have separate sets of gear to take to different states. The fungal spores are very resilient (boiling for 35 minutes and bleach does not kill the spores). Fungal spores can last for decades. This fungus thrives and grows very quickly under 50 degrees. We will have a presentation on the decontamination procedures. BCI is working with the TPW state mammologist. We want to demonstrate that we're doing the right thing so that cavers do not get blamed for spreading the fungus.

Announcements:

Marvin will be teaching a survey class and would like to borrow some instruments. Please let Marvin know if you have personal instruments that he can borrow.

Geary: Meeting Thursday at 7pm on the Hydrogeo workshop.

Steve: Bob Liebman has cancer. He is wondering if grotto could make a contribution to the GoFundMe account to pay for cancer expenses. Sue made a motion to donate \$100 for the account. Steve thinks we could do better than that. Jill seconded that. Fran thinks this should be taken up by budget committee. Arron would like to go by the policy. Geary doesn't think it will matter that he has to pay taxes on the donation. He has stage 4 blood cancer. Sue amended her motion to \$500. Tim made the motion to make a promise to match any personal donation. Geary brought up that Bob has donated an incredible amount of time and money to caving at a national level and he has been a friend to cavers for a very long time. Greg M. pointed out that we haven't officially adopted a policy, but we have adopted a budget. Rob said that while it's nice that we have money, there are a lot of people in the grotto who have become ill who have not been helped. The grotto discussed passing the hat to help cavers. Gregg doesn't know why we're so afraid of giving money. Geary's opinion is that if someone is sick, helping them would be good. Jill brought up that there is a lot less discussion when someone asks for money for a port-a-potty. Pam thinks that the money should not go through GoFundMe because a portion goes toward the website. Gregg mentioned that there is no policy yet. Arron reported that there is difficulty for non-profits to give money to individuals. Steve would like to know how churches give money to individuals. Geary thinks we should have flexibility within the group because we will continue to get odd requests that haven't been thought of. Geary thinks the grotto can decide to vote to not follow the guideline. Katy seconded the motion for \$500. Arron said he would table the discussion. Geary said that you cannot table the motion and that we have to vote on it. MJ brought up that we could possibly buy something from him for \$500. Sue was reading an IRS policy on giving to needy individuals from a non-profit individual. It is acceptable there was no specific dollar amount. We're going to do an anonymous ballot for the motion. The anonymous vote came to 32 YES and 7 NO.

Upcoming Trips:

March 29th: Wednesday at 6:30pm Robber Baron will be open but no gear will be available.

April 1st: Trip to Deep and Punkin this weekend. If you want to go, see Bennett.

April 1st: Ezell's Cave work day. Southern part of San Marcos, little preserve, goes all the way to the aquifer. The cave has a new gate and they hope bats may re-inhabit which will encourage the salamander population to re-emerge. They will cut brush, haul rocks, trash, cut cactus, and work on trails. Please bring hand tools and chain saws. There will be no work in the cave at this time. Contact Michael Cicherski. Notifying early means you get part of the lunch. Pizza and water will be provided to those who RSVP. If you want to go into the cave at the end of the day and see the aquifer window, you can go. 9am will be start time.

April 1st: Also Government Canyon day for Karst Survey. Aggies will be coming. Marvin will be camping Friday and Saturday night. 9am both mornings.

April 9th: Another firefighter/EMT training exercise at Robber Baron. The trip will probably start at noon.

April 15th: Lamar University would like to go in the cave. Joe Mitchell is not available that weekend so if you are able to lead that trip, please let us know. No time known yet.

April 22nd and 23rd: San Antonio and Austin will have a March for Science weekend. It's at 10am. Aspen reported that there is a Facebook page if you'd like to march. It's also Earth Day.

April 28, 29, 30th : TSA Spring Convention at Hill Country State Natural Area; there will be \$20 pre-registration email blast sent out. There will be in-cave workshops. There will be workshops on coordinating GPS to cell phones. There will be an in-cave rope and rigging workshop (8 people). There will also be a number of other presentations. Registration is open now on the TSA website.

May 6th -7th: Bamberger Ranch Cookout will be held on Sunday, but volunteers are needed for both days to prepare lunch for 350+ people. See Fran and Rob for more details. Annual fund raiser. Prep and setup Saturday, meeting 7am Sunday to start cooking and feed from 11-1pm. They make a sizable donation to the grotto (\$1000). Be on the lookout for an email. They invite us back for recreation trip. They have a 15 acre spring-fed lake and we have a potluck dinner on July 4th. They also have a silent auction and native plants on sale from the ranch.

May 13th: Deep and Punkin Work Day (last big work weekend) and Don's birthday bash. There will also be a Government Canyon weekend.

June 12th: Grotto meeting at Bracken. There will be a potluck and bat flight viewing. Make sure to bring a lid for your food and an ice chest for perishable items. There is no electricity and no running water.

Things to look out for: Bexar Grotto has been invited back to Cave Without a Name and the trip should be scheduled soon.

June 19th: NSS Convention in Rio Rancho, New Mexico. Consider getting a hotel because camping in New Mexico in June in a parking lot is not comfortable. Go to the website.

September 15-17th: Hydrogeo Workshop

September 23-30th: International Association of Hydrogeologists in Croatia

October 12-15th: Texas Caver's Reunion. We need people to help cook. Stefan has given up. If we don't get volunteers then we might have to do catering or fend for ourselves. Theme: Vikings.

Trip Reports

This will be done next time because we ran out of time.

Program Announcement