

# GADSDEN GROTTO NEWSLETTER

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*Amazing Grace!!!*

**THE NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY**

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**GADSDEN GROTTO OF NSS**

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**Membership Fees:** Each Member receives a subscription monthly/ bi-monthly of The Gadsden Grotto Newsletter.

\$10.00 per year to become a member

**Gadsden Grotto Patches:**

\$7.00 each per member

\$10.00 each per non-member

**Gadsden Grotto Meetings:**

Rainbow City Recreation Center

4412 Rainbow Drive

Rainbow City, Alabama 35906

**When:**

Every 2nd Tuesday of each month

**Time:**

6:30p.m.

**For more info. Contact President, Jim Loftin.**

**Front Cover:** Michael A. Davis, gazing at aragonite crystals in Daugette Cave.

**Back Cover:** Rock Zoo in Jackson County, Paint Rock, Alabama.



All unsigned material may be attributed to the Editor.

Statements and opinions expressed in the GGN do not necessarily reflect the policies of the Gadsden Grotto or the National Speleological Society.

**SEND YOUR ARTICLES AND OR PHOTOS TO...**

**GADSDENGROTTO@YAHOO.COM**

**OR TO...**

**KELLY A. KEENER**

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**A Word From The Editor:**

Over the past few months, I have been trying to make our newsletters interesting and exciting. I ask everyone to **"Please"** send me at least one trip report, and or photo, so you can receive a newsletter each month, and on time, or bring to the grotto meetings. It is "very complicating" to do one every month if there aren't any turned in. To those who have already done so...

Thanks ,and keep up the good work.

Kelly A. Keener

### **BOX-**

Boxwork consists of a network of thin blades of crystalline material protruding from bedrock walls, ceilings, or clay floors. The material is generally more resistant than the host rock, and is typically calcite. Probably the most extensive boxwork deposits known are in Wind Cave National Park in South Dakota, where the photo was taken.

One way boxwork may form is by calcite filling veins in the bedrock, which later weathers away to leave the more resistant calcite. This would occur during the phreatic phase, when the cave is filled with water. Another type of boxwork may occur as a more traditional speleothem, in air-filled caves. In this view, calcite solutions seep into shallow cracks and deposit as on other speleothm forms, by degassing of carbon dioxide.

### **Helictites**

Helictites are contorted depositional speleothems which grow in any direction, seemingly defying gravity. They occur in many forms from tiny filaments (as in the top photo) to thick, antler-like forms (bottom photo). Most helictites are formed from calcite.

Helictites are formed by calcite-laden waters seeping through tiny pores in the rock. Hydrostatic pressure forces a small amount of the solution out, carbon dioxide is lost, and calcite is deposited. Growth continues through a tiny, central capillary channel, which the solution flows through via hydrostatic and capillary pressure to emerge and deposit calcite at the tip.

The twisted shapes are due to many factors, including:

- (1) impurities in the deposited calcite
- (2) wedge-shaped crystals cause uneven deposition
- (3) plugging of the central channel may occur in dry periods, and when flow resumes, the pressure may force a new channel out the side of the original one
- (4) air currents may favor growth in a particular direction. Sometimes helictites are found a facing the same direction down a pas-

### **Gypsum Flowers**

Flowers are speleothems with crystal petals radiating from a central point. The petals are fibrous or prismatic crystals growing in a parallel orientation. They are usually made of gypsum, but can be made of epsomite, halite, or various other minerals. Flowers grow from the base, not the tip as does a stalctite. Often they will carry a portion of the wall away as they grow, forming a crust on the end of the flower. Flower growth in crevices may contribute to portions of the wall breaking off and becoming breakdown.

Flowers form in relatively dry, not dripping conditions. They result from local feeding of solutions through pores in the rock, under capillary pressure. In the case of gypsum, the solution is calcium sulfate. Due to changes in flow rate, the flower petals tend to curve, much like helictites.

### **Cave Pearls**

Pearls are a concentric concretion found in shallow cave pools. They can be spherical, as in the lower photo, or cylindrical, elliptical, and even cubical. They range in size from barely larger than a sand grain up to golf-ball sized. In the tropics, large beds of them may be found.

Cave pearls form when water dripping into the pool loses carbon dioxide and precipitates calcite. This precipitate usually forms around a nucleus of sand, bones, or fragments of soda straws or rafts. The typical roundness is due to the uniform growth of the pearl, not to any sort of rotation due to dripping. A sphere allows the greatest amount of deposition for the smallest surface area and is thus most likely, even if the nucleus is highly irregular. The dripping causes vibrations in the pool which may prevent the pearls from cementing (with calcite) to the pool floor, though many pearls are found cemented in. Sometimes excess precipitate will form cups or nests around the pearls.

Created:December, 1998

Author: Dave Bunnell

## Trip Reports

### Survey Trip Back To The Devil 's Well

Written By: Mark Medlen NSS# 24445

On a cloudy Sunday morning, we once again set off on another survey trip to the " Devil 's Well ". We entered the cave by the 66 ' ft. entrance drop, then went straight forward down the main passage which consisted of a climb-down, and then down into a walking passage with a high ceiling with a large flowstone mound on the right wall. The walking passage stopped at a crawlway. The crawlway went straight ahead then it made a 90 degree turn to the left. After the turn to the left, the passage was partially full with debris. We squeezed through a tight spot, and then entered a small room with a passage to the right, and a pit to the left. The pit to the left we measured to 34 ' ft. deep, and it was not climbable without a rope. The passage to the right went about 5 ' ft. and then went into a climb-down. As we climbed down, the cave started to look like Swiss Cheese with holes, cracks, and tight canyon going in every direction. We scooted through a small crack and then came out on a ledge on the side of the pit. We continued the climb-down to the bottom of the 34 ' ft. pit, then we found passage that went to the left and the right, and we began to survey to the left. The passage was mostly small with popcorn formations and a lot of mud. We surveyed down that passage until we reached a room with two climb-downs. The first climb-down had two grim leads at the bottom. The second climb-down went to a room with a passage to the right, a tight passage straight ahead and a crawlway going down at the bottom. We sat in that little room and ate lunch, and then afterwards we decided to check out all four leads before we decided to survey. Jim checked out the lead to the right, and said that it was tight and it circled around. The crawlway that I went down, was low

room, and then down into the rocks and boulders and no other way to continue following the water. I believe that this water is the main waterfall in " Blow Hole ". Seen no way to go any further, so I went back into the small room and then we began to turn around and climb back out of the cave. Jim Loftin, Mike Davis, Kelly and I all ascended the entrance drop, and reached the surface before dark. It was raining when we got out of the cave, and made our way back down the mountain to the Jeep. The End. Mark Medlen NSS# 24445



**Congratulations Michael A. Davis-** Mike and his new Pack. He was the lucky one that entered his name on the raffle tickets from IMO for the Swago Push Pack, and his name was chosen. Inside the Devils Well.



# Gadsden Grotto's Recent Trips October / November



**TRIP REPORTS CONTINUED****A Day Of Ridge-digging****Written By: Kelly A. Keener****November 21, 2003**

Friday morning, Mark's boss gave him the day off from work. We had nothing to do really, so instead of being lazy on our rear ends watching television all day, Mark asked me if I wanted to go ridge-walking. As you know, I am always ready to go ridge-walk or caving anytime except when I am too ill to go, or if I have first priorities that I have to take care of. I have been wanting to ridge-walk this one certain mountain for at least a couple of years now, so I asked Mark if we could go and walk that mountain. He accepted the idea, and so that was our "plan of action" for the day. We got our things together and took off. We drove into our usual little hiding spot where we usually park. The cars that pass on the road really can't see us, and it is also a good place to change into nice clean clothes after a good day of caving or digging holes open. We started walking up across the mountain, looking for holes and sinks as we went. We poked around in a few holes but they didn't go anywhere. We then began to start walking at the elevation that we thought would be a good place to start searching, so Mark and I parted off. He took the upper ridge and I hiked the lower one. We searched for awhile with out any luck, and Mark was about ready to give up, turn around and head back over the ridge and start searching for holes at a lower elevation. We ended up walking just a little bit further, before we turned to go back the other direction. I wasn't quite ready to turn back yet, because for some reason had a gut feeling that we needed to continue walking onward at the elevation that we were on, we would possibly run into a good area. We hiked about 20 to 30 more feet when Mark spotted a deep limestone sink that made him curious. As he was checking out that possible dig, I walked up about 50'ft. or so higher and found a pit that didn't need to be dug open. Rare to me. Looking down inside it is a nice perfect round pit, that is probably a freefall. The wall is mostly solid limestone, and peeping in a little bit further, appeared to look like another pit, or a climb down, or passage. The only problem I had was "I HAD NO ROPE!!!" It usually turns out that way when you ridge-walk any how. I called to Mark's attention and told him to come up to see what I had found, when he got to the pit,

he said that it looks like it qualifies. I sat around and ate 1/2 of my 3 Musketeer Bar while he was looking around and inside the pit. As I was putting the other half of my candy bar back in my pack to eat later, that was when I decided to name the cave "THREE MUSKETEER PIT". We finally got a streak of luck in us, and it got Mark all hyped up and ready to find more. We hiked 53'ft. further, when Mark found a sink. We took a stick and poked around in a small hole and dirt started falling inside of it, so we scraped the foliage away from the hole and dirt was falling off into it. I grabbed a long stick and handed it to Mark and he stuck it into the hole and it swallowed it whole. We dug on it until Mark was able to fit down into it. He got onto a little ledge and saw a void. Well we need rope for this one too. We took a digging break, Mark got his Nestles Crunch Bar, and that was when he decided to call this cave "NESTLES DROP". After breaking we dug the hole open a little more before we packed up and started to head back to the Jeep. On the way back across the mountain, we spotted another sink. There wasn't any limestone, just foliage and trees. Not much of nothing, just a little bowl shaped sink in the leaves. We used a primitive tool (a stick) to clear around the sink. Mark poked a stick into it, like the other hole he found and that one ate that stick. I found a dead tree about 12'ft. long, and handed it to Mark to throw down into the hole and it got swallowed up also. Mark also threw a large rock into it to see how deep it may be, but it got stuck. We need rope for this one too. Mark is going to call this cave "INSTANT KARMA" because there was nothing there, then it suddenly was. We really needed to head back to the Jeep before it got dark, so we took off back across the mountain got in the Jeep and went home. When we got home, Mark e-mailed every one who may be interested in going with us on a ridge-digging trip the following day was more than welcome to go. To Be Continued... >>

Written By: Kelly A. Keener  
NSS# 48045 Scci.# 1023

## RIDGE-DIGGIN ROUND-UP

Written By: Mark Medlen

November 22, 2003

Jim, Kelly and I took off to meet Joe Brothers, Ralph Nunn, and Andy Bowen at the store in the Y by Nocoulu Falls to go dig open and drop the pits Kelly and I found yesterday. We arrived at our parking spot and walked up the mountain to look for the holes that Kelly and I found the day before. We got to the open pit that Kelly found first, rigged the rope and Kelly was the first that went down. We measured the pit to be 24'ft. deep. Then there was a 10'ft. climb down, at the bottom of this was a small passage with a small crawlway dig turning off to the left. The cave totaled about 36'ft. deep with 20'ft. of passage, so Kelly named it "3 Musketeers Pit". Then we walked over a little further to the next dig. A small sink that we dug open the day before. We rigged it with a 100'ft. rope, then I went through a root covered entrance hole and made my way down a slanted drop, clean washed but it dead ended. After I came back up, Andy went down and carried the tape measure and the pit measured 53'ft. deep. I named this pit "Nestles Drop" While everyone else bounced the pit, Ralph and I walked down the mountain and started digging in another sink. This is a small bowl shaped sink which really had no lead or hole, but we began digging and soon hit a void. In just a few minutes we had the hole dug big enough for a person to fit down into the hole. Jim came down the mountain from the last pit, so he went down into the hole. He came back out saying that it did not go. Then we headed across the ridge to the next dig. Kelly and I started digging on this hole the day before. After about 10 to 15 minutes of digging, I rigged and entered this very tight pit carrying the tape down as I went. After about 10'ft. it opened into a clean washed limestone pit. It is 35'ft. down to the first ledge, that has about 25'ft. of passage and through a small crack in the

Drops down about another 10'ft. and with about 10'ft. of passage at the bottom. I named this pit "Instant Karma Pit". Andy and Ralph had left while I was in the pit. Then we checked out a hole that Jim found about 50'ft. higher. It was a small hole covered in moss, and when a rock was dropped down inside the hole, it rolled for a long ways. After we dug it open, I slid in feet first and found myself in a small room with a passage going to the left, and a passage to the right going down. The passage going down went about 15'ft. then dead ended. The passage to the left went 47'ft. where it dead ended in flowstone with a short passage of 15'ft. long branching off to the right. Jim named this cave "Poison Ivy Trap Cave" because it was difficult to get out of, and the entrance was covered with poison ivy roots. After this, we walked the ridge back to the Jeep, and me made it back to the Jeep before dark.

Written By: Mark Medlen NSS# 24445



TRIP REPORTS*Trip To Flowing Stone Cave*

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

No-

On Saturday morning, Jim Loftin, Mark & I went to meet Steve Brewer at Blue Spring on Pigeon Mountain to go to Flowing Stone Cave. We walked two miles to the cave, and the trail to it was not that bad of a hike. On the trail a lot of cling ons ( little brown burrs) were sticking to my legs, I felt like a Velcro dart board. We arrived at the cave, and Jim was the first to repel down the pit. Inside side this cave, you need to "tread lightly and keep to the very edge of the wall" due to all of the pools of water and rim stone surrounded by ripple mounds of flow-stone. If any one has not visited this pit needs to, because it is one of the most pristine caves that I have ever been in. There was a baby ring-neck snake that had fallen down into the pit, and if any one that has gone caving with me, knows me, I always have to rescue the little critters out of the caves, (that don't belong) because I don't want them to be trapped and not be able to get back out. It is only in my nature to do so. While I was at the bottom, I had taken several photographs of this beautiful cave to add to my photo collection. I finally climbed out of the cave, with the snake in my back pack all wrapped up in my poly pro top along with my digital camera. I sure am glad that I have an Otter Case to place it in, because on the way climbing out of , I stopped at the ledge inside the pit at the top, to make sure that the rope was on the pad correctly. There was not much room for me to maneuver around with my TAG pack on, so I took it off and placed it as close to wall as I could, so I can turn around and place the rope on the pad. Bad Idea!!! First of all, my brand new PRO-LITE II went out on me the znon light went out on the way climbing back up, so I had to feel my way making sure that the rope was safely on the pad. A second later, my pack rolled of the ledge and fell down the pit, with my camera and with the snake inside it. Luckily it didn't fall to far, it got hung on another ledge. I climbed on out. Steve rescued my pack, and no damage was done. Steve handed over my pack, and the first thing I did was to make sure that the poor little snake was ok, and yes he was. I took it out of my pack, and my poly pro kept it cushioned and warm. The snake was happy, and also nosey. He was crawling all around my arms and through my >>>>

Fingers. He was starting to get a little too nosey because he climbed up my sleeve. I was wearing a poly pro top and a neoprene top, it was a little chilly that day. Any way the snake crawled in between my two sleeves of my shirts, and he ended up squiggling around on my shoulder. I was trying to get it out of my shirt and I think that I startled it a some, because it urinated and crapped all in my shirts, Then I smelled like stinky snake until we were able to hike back to our vehicles to change into my clean clothes. I was so happy that I had some extra clean clothes. Mark and Jim would have had to deal with the nauseous snake smell all the way home. That would be a gagging ride on the way back. Just imagine if I had to go inside a restaurant to eat, (like we usually do) but instead, we went into a McDonald's Drive Through. There went that good Mexican meal and a margarita. All and all, I had a very bazaar and very wonderful time.

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

NSS# 48045 Scci.# 1023





## CAVE POEM

### No Rope!!!

Written By: Kelly A. Keener

We were walking across the mountain side, Ridges ahead of us vast and wide. Hiking the contours full of pride, for virgin cave to go inside.

As we were walking I found a pit, A boulder with moss all over it, We didn't have to dig a bit, It was already an open pit. Free fall, and no rope to rig it!!!

We hiked on further across the ridge, Mark found a nice sinkhole to dig. We didn't have tools but we had some sticks, it did not take long to dig this pit.

We scraped and scraped around the edge, Till Mark was able to reach a ledge. He stooped down further to look in the pit, A deep dark void he saw in it. No rope, so we could not drop this pit!!!

Onward across the ridge once more, Searching for another pit to explore. Mark found another one so we checked out that hole. No limestone around it just a bowl, So we cleared around the bowl shaped hole.

Mark asked me to go find a stick, So that he can poke around the pit. He stuck a dead tree inside the bowl, The void took the tree and swallowed it whole!!!

I handed Mark a large rock on the ground, Mark said Shhhhhhh, Do not make a sound. He dropped the boulder, we heard a boom, The boulder falling into the gloom.

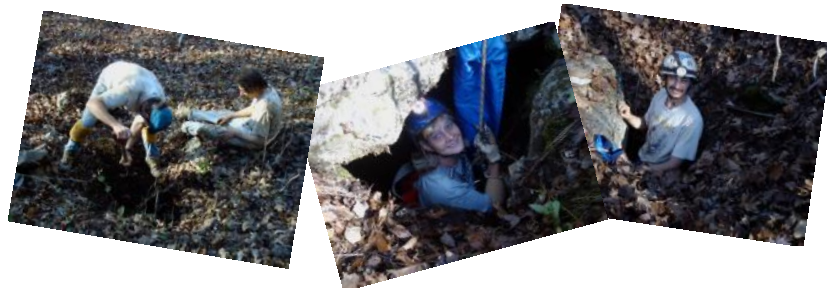
Three pits today we found so far, We worked our butts off until we were tired. Finally we opened the hole to fit, But still " No Rope to go down into it!!!

We'll come back tomorrow and that is no joke, And we're going to make sure that we have that darn rope!!! The following morning we met with some buddies, With rope this time and the rope was not muddy!!!

We made our way over to the pit that I found, Some dropped it and some stayed above ground. We went to Mark's pits with a shovel and tools, We opened those suckers like ridge-digging fools.

Jim found a cave and that topped our day, Which is now another one for cavers to play. The sun was setting so back to the jeep, We packed up our gear feeling all tired and weak. I can not wait till we get something to eat!!! We made it home I got cleaned up and neat. I got in the bed and then I went ot sleep.

I woke the next morning and got out of bed, Covered with Poison Ivy full of misery and dread.



Written By: Kelly A. Keener

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