



GADSDEN GROTTA NEWSLETTER

Summer 2010



30 YEARS
UNDERGROUND

GADSDEN GROTTA
2010 REUNION

Gadsden Grotto

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Newsletter

The Gadsden Grotto *Newsletter* is published on a semi-regular basis by the Gadsden Grotto (GG) of the National Speleological Society (NSS) as its official newsletter.

All material submitted for publication is subject to editing for clarity, grammatical considerations, and to meet space limitations.

Any opinions expressed herein are those of the author(s) named and do not necessarily represent the views of the Gadsden Grotto or the NSS. Unsigned material may be attributed to the editors.

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The Gadsden *Grotto Newsletter* is distributed free of charge to GG members and in exchange for publications of organizations with similar interests.

All original materials submitted for publication will be returned to sender. Electronic materials will not be returned. Digital photographs need not be greater in size than 800 pixels wide.

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Web Page

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/gadsgrotto/index.html>

Minutes of the Grotto Meeting

June 8, 2010

By: Samantha Johnson



In Attendance

Selena Morton, Melanie Butler, Jim Loftin, David Teal, Michael Ray, Anthony Cline, Vonda Johnson, Steve Johnson, Brett Johnson, Samantha Johnson, & Kelly Keener were in attendance at the June 8th, 2010 Regular Meeting of the Gadsden Grotto.

Old Business

30th Year Anniversary T-shirt re-orders which were discussed in previous meetings were put off until further notice due to the committee member's busy schedule.

New Business

There was no new business...except talk of who would be attending SERA 2010 Cave Carnival in Monteagle, Tennessee. The meeting was concluded with a slide show by Jim Loftin.

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About the Cover

The Gadsden Grotto celebrated its 30th Anniversary in May 2010. A commemorative t-shirt was made for the occasion. The grotto gathered at Moses's Tomb to camp and visit caves on the mountain.

Photograph courtesy of Jim Loftin.



In the News **White-nose Syndrome**

What is white-nose syndrome?

From the US
Fish and Wild-
life
Service North-
east Region
[http://](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html)



www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html
In February 2006 some 40 miles west of Albany, N.Y., a caver photographed hibernating bats with an unusual white substance on their muzzles. He noticed several dead bats. The following winter, bats behaving erratically, bats with white noses, and a few hundred dead bats in several caves came to the attention of New York Department of Environmental Conservation biologists, who documented white-nose syndrome in January 2007. Hundreds of thousands of hibernating bats have died since. Biologists with state and federal agencies and organizations across the country are still trying to find the answer to this deadly mystery.

We have found sick, dying and dead bats in unprecedented numbers in and around caves and mines from Vermont to Virginia. In some hibernacula, 90 to 100 percent of the bats are dying.

While they are in the hibernacula, and during affected bats often have white fungus on their muzzles and other parts of their bodies. They may have low body fat. These bats often move to cold parts of the hibernacula, fly during the day cold

winter weather when the insects they feed upon are not available, and exhibit other uncharacteristic behavior.

Despite the continuing search to find the source of this condition by numerous laboratories and state and federal biologists, the cause of the bat deaths remains unknown. Recent identification of a cold-loving fungus could be a step toward an answer.

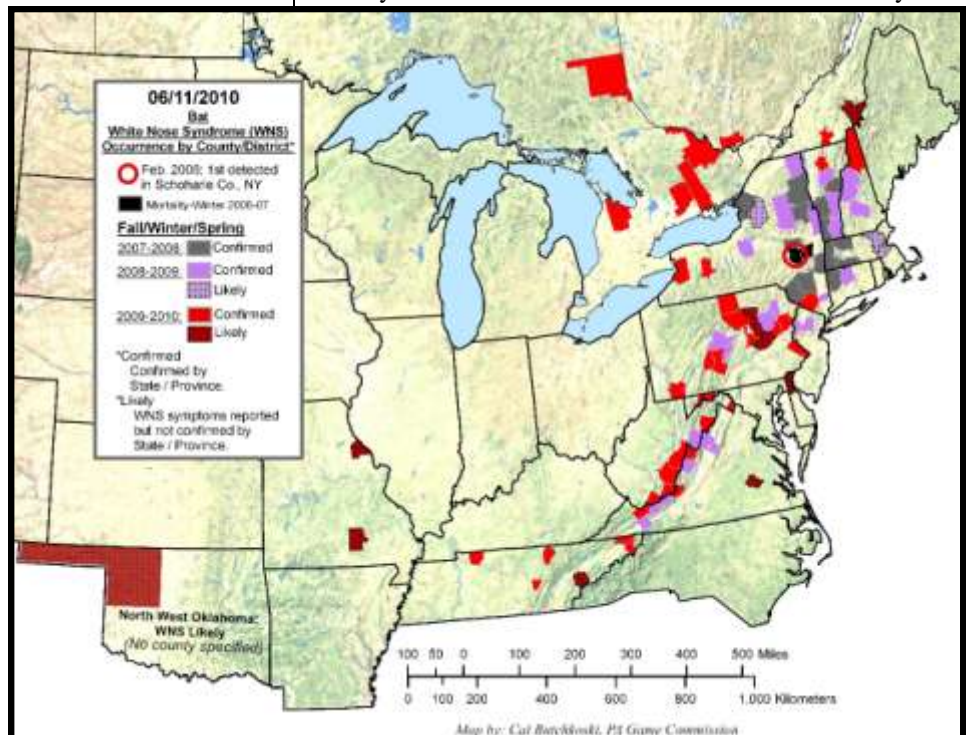


TWRA Confirms First Cases of White Nose Syndrome in Tennessee Bats

Released on Tue, Feb 16, 2010

NASHVILLE --- The Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency (TWRA) has received confirmation that two bats have tested positive for White Nose Syndrome (WNS), a white fungus that is responsible for the deaths of thousands of bats in the Eastern United States.

This is the first record of White Nose Syndrome in Tennessee. The bats were hibernating in Worley's cave in Sullivan County. Three tri-colored bats were collected by the



TWRA and submitted to the National Wildlife Health Center (NWHC) in Madison, Wis. for testing last week.

Last spring the state of Tennessee, National Park Service, and USDA Forest Service and Tennessee Valley Authority closed caves on public lands in Tennessee in an attempt to

White Nose Syndrome Continued...

slow the spread of the fungus. The Nature Conservancy also closed caves located on their lands in Tennessee.

Scientists are trying to determine the cause of WNS and its effects. Once a colony is affected, the fungus spreads rapidly and has killed at least 95 percent of bats at one New York hibernation site in two years. Other northeastern U.S. monitored bat colonies affected by WNS are experiencing similar large fatalities. There have been no reported human illnesses attributed to WNS and there is currently no evidence to suggest that WNS is harmful to humans or other organisms.

Preliminary research results recently released by the United States Geological Survey indicates that the potential exists for WNS to be transmitted between bat hibernation caves as an unwanted hitch-hiker upon humans, their clothing, or other caving gear.

Temporarily staying out of caves and mines is the one thing we can do right now to slow the transmission of White Nose Syndrome," said Cory Holliday, Cave and Karst Manager for The Nature Conservancy in Tennessee. "We knew the bat deaths in the Eastern United States were large. Here in Tennessee we stand to lose the last stronghold of bats like the endangered Indiana and grays. We have hundreds of thousands of bats hibernating in our caves each winter. With a 95 percent mortality rate the loss is catastrophic."

Biologists are concerned that WNS could devastate populations of endangered Indiana and gray bats. Bats play a key role in keeping insects such as agricultural pests, mosquitoes and forest pests under control.

"Bats provide a tremendous public service in terms of pest control, said Richard Kirk, Nongame and Endangered Species Coordinator for the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency. If we lose 500,000 bats, we'll lose the benefits from that service and millions of pounds of insects will still be flying around our neighborhoods, agricultural fields and forests."

The disease causes bats to use up their fat reserves rapidly during hibernation. This causes the bats to fly out of caves during the winter in a desperate attempt to find food, but since the insects they eat are also seasonally dormant, the bats soon die of starvation.

State and federal agency biologists and non-governmental organizations are currently surveying caves in east Tennessee and other portions of the state. These surveys are being conducted as annual bat population surveys and to monitor for WNS.

Links to more information -http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html.

From <http://news.tennesseeanytime.org/node/4596>



Book Review

By: Samantha Johnson

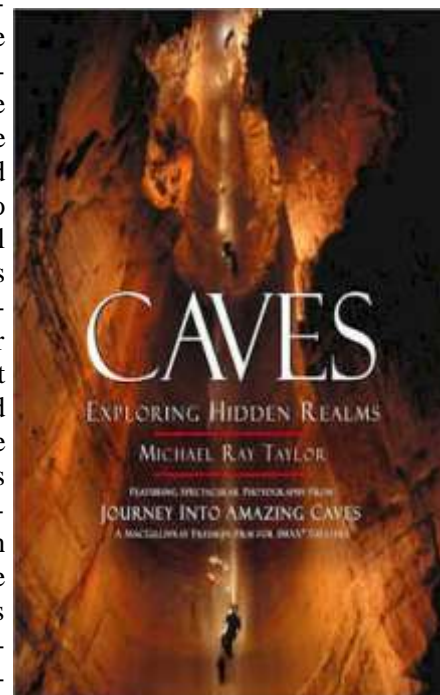


Caves: Exploring Hidden Realms

Author: Michael Ray Taylor

This book follows the same route as the IMAX movie, Journey Into Amazing Caves, which featured Nancy Aulenbach (local TAG caver) and Hazel Barton (caver & scientist from England), as they journeyed into many different types of caves all over the world. The book is divided into 3 sections, ice, water, and earth. Each section gives an in-depth look into the types of caves that form in each of the 3 sections. The purpose of their journey to all of these places is to establish more research on the earths past within the microorganisms that inhabit these once thought uninhabitable places. The study of these organisms could someday prove to be a medical break through as the cure for cancer or some other disease. The first section covered in the book is ice which features some of the deepest ice caves in Greenland. The second section is water, which features the underwater caves of

Yucatan. The third takes us TAG cavers into a more familiar territory, earth. This book not only takes you behind the scenes of the movie, but also gives you information about its stars and their lives in and out of caving. All in all, this book is and awesome addition to my small but well established cave book collection. I highly recommend this book to anyone who enjoyed the movie Journey into Amazing Caves and if you haven't seen the movie I highly recommend that you do! They are both well done pieces of work that show a small peek into our world of the underground.



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30 YEARS

UNDERGROUND ANNIVERSARY



Gadsden Grotto Celebrates 30th Year Anniversary

The Gadsden Grotto celebrated its thirtieth year anniversary this past May with a camp-out at Moses Tomb. A history of the grotto is currently being written for the web page and the next newsletter and will be available at that time.

The Grotto had a good turnout for the camp and cave gathering. An anniversary t-shirt was designed by Michael Ray and is available for sale upon request from the Grotto. The group visited No Rope cave and Mystic Well.



The soon to be married couple took a private trip to visit some waterfalls. No one is sure why they would want to be alone. We all relived the early days of the grotto sit-

ting around the campfire as David Teal told some great stories of past explorations and cave conquests.





Trip Reports

SERA 2010

by: Kristine Ebrey

A few of us was able to attend the SERA 2010 Summer Cave Carnival up in Monteagle, TN. Mark and I was able to arrive on site early to secure a very nice shady spot for the grotto and fellow caving friends that would be joining us. After setting up and the typical sera tornado spun through then we met up with friends and hung out for the rest of the day. Anthony showed up sometime in the middle of the night. Friday, I had contacted SCCi beforehand and secured a permit to Snail Shell Cave. After much persuasion, our little group was in Wal-Mart buying PFDs (Mark and I had ours already) and inflatable boats then onward to the cave. Most in the group were very dubious of our plan of paddling through the cave. With boats in tow, we hiked down



the sinkhole to the entrance. WOW! What a cool entrance! Its very nice of the cave to offer 2 routes right from the rip. We opted for the watery grave...I mean trip first. We inflated our boats and headed into the deeper waters. After tons of giggling and getting as comfy as possible then we set into the cave. Most of us had paddles to aid us in our journey but then there was Mark with his ping pong paddle. It seemed to {amazingly} work good! We went about 1 or 1.5 miles into the cave until we came upon breakdown in the middle of the passage. We opted to turn around not wanting to portage our cheap inflatable's over rocks. I would highly recommend this trip to anyone! Its very fun and unique! After we paddled out one entrance then we entered into the other entrance. We caved for awhile before we decided that it was time to go look for the newly acquired Clark entrance. The Clark entrance is in another parking area\gate before the main gate. Being its in a different area then you need to specifically tell SCCi if you want to visit this entrance for the different gate code. The trail was not flagged well at all and we kind of just stumbled around until we found it. There is a 10 ft. climb-down here that looks more then a 30 ft. rappel. We were not even sure if this was the right hole so we held off on going down

there. We found out later that night that it is the right entrance but looks worse then it is. A note on this area: Its very grown up although they did mow some of a path, it has lots of insects and cactus', and Anthony found bear poop in another hole we poked around in. So...be careful coming out there. We took off from the area and headed back to camp to find Becky and Richard there.

Saturday, Mark and I headed over to vendor row first thing to harass Kelly Smallwood and Jason Hardy in the information booth. They hooked us up on all kinds of awesome areas\locations that were nearby. First stop of the day was Big Mouth Cave. This cave was 10 minutes from the camp



site down a gravel road in a cluster of awesome caves! It has a HUGE entrance which is hidden by trees until you are almost inside the cave. It was a very cool, huge borehole cave. We look the left branch and caved for awhile until wading was necessary. We had a full agenda so we didn't want to get wet this early in the day. On the way out then we found the entrances to Big Room Cave (15 ft. rappel) and Paynes Cove Cave. We need to fully investigate this area\caves when we have more time. Maybe on a grotto weekend to Snail Shell then we could swing by here? Next on the list was Martin Springs High Hole. This cave has been known about for years but recently when Jason Hardy was surveying the drop then the discovered more then 1000 ft. of virgin passage.



This cave was right down the road from SERA site too so we were there in no time. We spent some time at the resurgence which is on the side of the road below the cave. Kelly was right...The water was so cold that your bones would hurt. With good directions from Jason then we located the non-trail and started to hike a hell of allot more then stated

Trip Reports continued....

Sera 2010 continued

in the directions. Straight up hill. We finally located the pit and Mark rigged the broken 117'. Some technically issues occurred and long story short only Mark and Anthony bounced the "lovely" little horror hole. Becky and I agreed



never to go back. We made it back to camp in time for everyone to start cooking some dinner before the announcements. Mark and I decided to head for the Mexican place instead...and lots

of margaritas later came back to camp only a little late for the announcements. Mark won a SCCi hat on raffle!

Sunday, Everyone had other things popping for Father's Day so nothing was planned. Mark and I went to Foster Falls before heading home. It was a fun trip and I really wish we had more time to explore the caves up there. I foresee another trip there soon.



Holiday & Birthday Caving

By: Samantha Johnson



On Saturday July 3 (my 19th Birthday) we (Steve, Vonda, Brett, & myself) decided to have Mark & Kristine meet us up in Jackson county to check out a dig in which we have been working on for the past few weekends. After moving about a ton of rocks we still couldn't see any real leads within the void, but the amount of air coming out from the hole keeps us hopeful that something might be there. After giving up on the dig for the day we headed up to Sinking Cove with Mark & Kristine to do some wet caving! We started out with Overlook cave, after hiking the steep trail to the cave we laid down on our bellies and started the army crawl into the cave. After what seemed like miles of crawling we made it to an area in which we all could stand up.

After locating Mark & Brett who ran ahead of the rest of the group we continued on. But to our dismay came to another crawl. This one was short but wet, so we crawled through the icy water and finally made it to the big room. The big room has a shower like water fall coming from the ceiling and is highly decorated with formations. A rope is rigged to the passage above the water fall but one must be rather brave to climb it.

After coming to the end of the cave we decided to turn back and head out. While crawling through this one crawlway we all noticed a rather large amount of hickory nuts. We soon found out that these were the stash from the many pack



rats living in this cave. Kristine found a momma and 2 babies in a nest along the wall; we stopped to take pictures but soon retreated in fear of the momma after she made her way towards us. After hiking down the hill we then headed to Custard Hollow cave. The road to Custard hollow was extremely rough partly because of the many creek beds that are used as roads. After waiting for two car loads of Birmingham grotto members to pass by and head back to camp we finally made it to the cave. We headed up to the higher



entrance where we could stay dry a little bit longer. After sending Brett ahead to check the water depth we all followed after. The first passage of water was about knee deep and ice cold. After that we managed to stay out of the water while enjoying the borehole passage. Then we came to a point where the water got thigh deep then continued to get deeper by the minute. So we decided to abort the trip and head out to get warm and dry.

After this Mark & Kristine took us to see the main entrance to Sinking Cove cave which was really amazing, we decided to save that trip for another weekend.



We are back ... or this is our back!

GADSDEN GROTTO 2010 REUNION

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