

## Articles:

- Christmas Party, December and January minutes
- A trip to Donnahue
- January TAG trip

A synopsis of what is going on in the world of the Near Normal...

## Christmas Party Smash Hit – Armageddon over White Elephant gifts

The Christmas Party was a hit this year at the BroMenn Medical Center. After the meeting, the celebrated White Elephant gift exchange went hot and heavy, with items ranging from Starbucks coffee, to caving books, to a genuine boot pulled straight from the entrance to Sinking Cove Cave and prettied up,

being fiercely traded and bartered. Several slideshows of various caving trips were put on the big screen, and a wide variety of hors d'oeuvres and drinks were available. It was very interesting to see and hear about the wide variety of cave trips NNG people took in 2009!

## December Minutes - verbatim

Minutes of the Meeting December 11, 2009

Present: members Chris Haydel, Don Kerouac, Matt Level and family, Todd, Kaitlyn and Makayla McCartney, Bill, Liz and Nick Morrow, Laura, David and Lauren Pierce, Bill Roth, Ralph Sawyer and Rebecca Rhodes, John Schirle, L. J. Tognetti, Gerry Woltering.

President Todd McCartney called the meeting to order.

Treasurer's Report: Dave Carson reported to Todd that NNG has 569.86 in the treasury. Upcoming payouts were outlined.

Minutes were examined and approved.

Trip Reports

Bill Morrow noted interaction, over the last year, between NNG and Windy City Grotto, Little Egypt Grotto (LEG), and Southeast Missouri Grotto (SEMO).

L. J. Tognetti talked about why some trips are by invitation only. We observed there were problems with inexperienced and out of shape cavers (not cavers from NNG) on our recent trip in Rimstone River Cave with

LEG/SEMO. Cavers on this long wetsuit trip experienced wet passage for ten hours. Most of the trip was in water that was at least waist deep, often we were neck deep, and more than twice we were required to swim.

Laura Pierce described our trip to Echo Pit with LEG/SEMO. A very tight entry into the deepest single drop in Missouri. Matt Level added that once on the bottom of the pit he and other cavers ventured about 1500 feet to a dome that is rarely visited.

Gerry Woltering reported on his trip to Illinois Caverns near Waterloo, Illinois, and a brief examination of nearby Krueger Dry Run Cave.

New Business

Ralph Sawyer invited all NNG members to a trip to Sullivan Cave, Bedford, Indiana, in February. Sullivan Cave offers passage for moderate to masochistic cavers. Bill Morrow stated the cave has plenty to offer for any Joe: Little Joe, Average Joe, and G. I. Joe. Members were asked to submit their preferred dates for the trip.

## December Minutes - continued

Time to pay \$15.00 plus \$5.00 per additional family member annual dues to Near Normal Grotto, P. O. Box 813, Normal, IL 61761-0813.

We elected new officers for the coming year:

President Todd McCartney  
Vice President L. J. Tognetti  
Secretary Ralph Sawyer  
Treasurer Dave Carson  
Member at Large Bill Roth  
December 12 Julie Angel is

taking her geology class on a field trip to Illinois Caverns.

December 12 Chris Haydel is taking his Boy Scout Troop to Buckner's Cave near Bloomington, Indiana.

December 19 a small group will

be surveying and photographing Pautler Cave near Waterloo Illinois.

January 16-18<sup>th</sup> trip to Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia (TAG). Mostly vertical caves with some horizontal. Those caving vertically should own their own gear and be capable of performing changeovers. For information ask [LJTognetti@gmail.com](mailto:LJTognetti@gmail.com).

January 9 and/or 10<sup>th</sup> vertical training from the rafters of Ralph Sawyer's unheated barn. Actually the barn is available most Sunday afternoons – contact [ralphsawyer77@gmail.com](mailto:ralphsawyer77@gmail.com).

Meeting adjourned for treats, white elephant gift exchange, photos and videos.



Mastodon tooth from No Cave

*Went caving? Let us know and send in a short trip report!!!*

## And now... January Minutes

Minutes of the Meeting January 8, 2010

Present: members Matthew Level, Todd McCartney, Jason Kern, Bill Morrow, David Carson, Chris Haydel, Ralph Sawyer, Bill Roth

President Todd McCartney called the meeting to order.

Treasurer's Report: No update, but dues were collected from several members.

Minutes were examined and approved.

### Trip Reports

Bill Morrow told of bad weather and road conditions on the surface and adventures in the Grand Canyon passage and Popcorn Crawl on a family trip in Sullivan Cave.

Sunset Motel of Waterloo IL was recommended. Low rates plus a washer and dryer.

Chris Haydel told about a Scout trip in Buckner's Cave. Chris caved twice, guiding a group of first time cavers, then participating with his Scout troop in restoration activities and sport caving.

### New Business

Bill Morrow asked for short trip reports for the Near Normal News.

### Old Business

TAG (Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia) trip next weekend.

February 12-14 Sullivan Cave, Bedford IN. Contact Ralph Sawyer, [ralphsawyer77@gmail.com](mailto:ralphsawyer77@gmail.com)

May 15-22 National Cave Rescue Commission training in Mentone AL

Vertical practice from the rafters of Ralph Sawyer's unheated barn. The barn is available most Sunday afternoons – contact Ralph Sawyer, 309-657-6130

Tentative Sunday June 13 and Sunday August 15 for vertical training and practice at ISU's rappelling tower.

Meeting adjourned followed by a show and tell session of a variety of cave packs brought to the meeting by members.



Bat skeleton from No Cave

## Parkland College Geology Trip to Donahue Cave

Parkland College Student Trip To Donahue Cave, Bedford, IN *by* Julie Angel

On December 6, 2009, I took four introductory geology students from Parkland College and fellow instructor Mindy Tidrick to Donahue Cave, Bedford, IN. Mindy and I try to provide at least two opportunities each semester for students to get out and see geology up close and personal, so this is the third semester I've offered an optional cave trip. We originally planned to go to Illinois Caverns, but due to two cases of food poisoning (Mindy on the Friday before the trip and me on Saturday), we had to regroup and figure out where we could take them on Sunday. So we headed east to Donahue, spent 5 hours in the cave, and had a blast!! I've always wanted to take students there, but worried about how some of them would handle the rimstone crawl. The group did great and I was especially proud of the over 6 foot tall, almost 300 pound student who crawled and climbed and didn't complain or hesitate once!! I took them downstream in main passage to see the natural bridges and then took three of the four into the upper level. The cave looked like it had recently flooded as there were no footprints and quite a bit of leaf and twig debris. We also saw more cave life than usual; an orange and black salamander, a crayfish, isopods, and of course, a number of Little Brown bats. The students were not ready to leave the cave when it was time to head out, so the trip was deemed a success. We treated them to dinner at the Golden Corral in Bedford and headed back to Champaign.

P.S. I went back to Donahue this past Thursday with Sam Panno and Keith Hackley (ISGS), Walt Kelly (ISWS), Sam Frushour (retired scientist from Indiana Geological Survey) and Mirona Chirienco (U of I graduate student). If you plan to cave in Donahue during the winter when the ground is frozen, take any forecast of rain seriously. We spent most of the time in the dry upper level passage and it rained while we were there. When we came back to the connection hole to the lower level, the water had risen from ankle deep to knee/thigh deep during the hour or so we were doing our work. Knee high water doesn't sound like much, but the velocity was very fast and it took a lot of extra energy to fight against the current. Had it been waist high and the same velocity, I believe it would have been nearly impossible to make it back to the entrance. Water was pouring through the square entrance hole and through the rebar at the culvert entrance, making it more difficult than usual to squeeze through to pull our selves out. During higher than normal flow conditions, debris collects along the outside of the rebar and causes water to back up in the area immediately outside the culvert entrance. When I climbed out, the water on the outside was up to mid-hip. Had the water been much higher, it would have been necessary to retreat to the upper passage to wait it out. Lesson learned and we were happy to be out safe and sound. We had a lovely stir-fry dinner at the Bloomington home of Sam and Patty Frushour and then headed back to Champaign.



LJ ascending out of No Cave

## Near Normal Grotto

Meeting at BroMenn Medical Center, Normal, Illinois. Second Friday of the month.

E-MAIL:  
nngwebmaster@yahoo.com



We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/nng/>

## Trip to TAG in January

This January, LJ Tognetti, Andrea Tognetti, Todd McCartney, Laura Pierce, Ralph Sawyer, Jason Kern, Andy Pukniel, and Bill Morrow made the trek to TAG country to sample some more fine southern caving. The group met the Little Egypt Grotto down there, but unfortunately were not able to cave with them.

The first day consisted of No Cave. What started out as a replacement cave (for another cave that was right in a prime spot during hunting season) turned out to be a beautiful three-drop cave with exciting canyon passages to gingerly step across, water flume passages to wade, and beautiful formations. A mastodon tooth and perfectly preserved bat skeleton were also highlights in the cave.

The next day, Laura and Todd visited Cagles Chasm and Gourneck Cave with renowned local caver Andy Zellner, while the rest went to Beyers Cave, absolutely the most vertical 'horizontal' cave I have ever visited. The cave started off with a hike of about a mile

over more vertical terrain than we had been used to lately. However, when we did find the cave, it was worth it. Beautiful waterfalls and formations combined with challenging passage defined this cave. A few 'filter' spots had me momentarily worried, but were successfully dealt with. TAG cavers Peter, Jane, Brenden, and Eric joined us for this trip, which made the cave trip a social event as well. It was perfectly concluded by more TAG caver hospitality when Chuck and Patty Henson had ready at their house a fantastic dinner to feed our weary bones.

Our trip ended the following day in warm 60 degree sunshine with South Pittsburg Pit, a beautiful 160-foot pit with several feet of passage at the bottom. To get to the passage, one had to first descend 160', and then ascend a 20' rope. From the top, two passages branched. One led to a nice multi-level passage with some pretty rimstone formations and dams. The other passage led to an intimidating rope pendulum swing climb down that Andy and I took to see another

## Coming up....

Well, where did the space go? I had originally planned for a "Blast From the Past" article by Ralph Sawyer titled (don't jump to conclusions) "An Experience With Bad Air?" and a trip report about a

trip to Sullivan this December with 8-year old kids and bad weather, but the space has dwindled. Next issue!

## About Our Organization...

The Near Normal Grotto is a non-profit organization dedicated to the study, exploration and conservation of caves and cave life. Our members come from all walks of life – landscapers, camp counselors, carpenters, geologists, mechanics, teachers, and students,

name a few. In other words, people like you. Our interests may vary from exploration to conservation to photography, but we all share a passion for caving. If this interests you and you would like to know more, feel free to attend one of our monthly meetings!