

## Articles:

- White Nose Syndrome
- Recent Trips

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

## White Nose Syndrome Confirmed in Tennessee

This newsletter is focusing on White Nose Syndrome. White Nose Syndrome (WNS) has now been confirmed in Tennessee. It has been confirmed in a cave in the extreme northeastern edge of Tennessee, 65 miles away from the next WNS site in Virginia. The political implications of this are huge. Previous decisions have been based on adjacent states next to WNS states. With this development, Missouri, Alabama, and Georgia now become adjacent states. Missouri is changing cave access based on this new development. Illinois and Indiana already have closed all state and federal owned caves, bat hibernaculums or not.

If you are not well acquainted with WNS and recent developments, please check out the National Speleological Society WNS page at :

<http://caves.org/WNS/index.htm>

Decontamination protocols are now being required, involving bleach, Lysol Professional Cleaner, or 409. These decontamination procedures are available at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife WNS page at

[http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white\\_nose.html](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/white_nose.html)

The following article is Ralph Sawyer's experience with an ending commentary by Bill Morrow

## My Experience with WNS Decontamination Procedures *by Ralph Sawyer*

Shortly before a recent caving trip to Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia (TAG), I decided that I would begin following U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) procedures for decontaminating clothing and gear to prevent spread of White Nose Syndrome (WNS). See [http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenose/FIN\\_ALContainmentandDecontaminationProceduresforCaversJune2009.pdf](http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenose/FIN_ALContainmentandDecontaminationProceduresforCaversJune2009.pdf)

I had already decided that I would not use the 1:10 bleach:water solution that is included in the recommendations. Bleach has a reputation of being pretty rough on clothing, and I am chary of using it on rope and vertical gear. Instead I chose to use

Lysol Antibacterial All-purpose Professional Cleaner, which is also included in USFWS recommendations. This is not the same Lysol product that one would find in the hardware store or grocery store – more on that later. USFWS recommends a 1:128 solution (same as 1 ounce Lysol per gallon of water) for a 10 minute soak, or a 1:64 solution for a 5 minute soak.

After my trip to TAG I laundered all clothing including shoes and packs once to get most of the clay and organic matter out. I soaked the clothing in the Lysol 1:128 solution. USFWS does not say to agitate but I think it is important to agitate at least twice during the 10 minutes.

## Decontamination Procedures - continued

USFWS says Lysol is corrosive and a skin irritant but I did not bother to wear gloves. I suffered no ill effects. I did not find the smell of Lysol objectionable.

After the soak I relaunched the clothing, which I would normally do anyway (when my wife washes caving clothes she often washes three times). Besides the clothing I also soaked photography tripods and carabiners. I wiped my camera and flashes with Lysol solution – just enough to moisten the surface of the camera.

I did not save the Lysol solution. I sponged it all over the inner surface of the truck topper and the truck bed. I did not bother to rinse. Cavers who move dirty gear in a car trunk will have to give some thought to how they will decontaminate the trunk or keep it clean.

Vertical gear, rope and rope pads I took to a laundromat and washed in a front loader. Front loaders use less water and tumble the clothes one way, then reverse to tumble them the other way. I was pleased to see that the prewash cycle got rid of almost all of the mud and organic matter. I guessed at the amount of water in the drum and added the appropriate amount of Lysol along with a little soap for the wash cycle, which lasted about 8 minutes. After laundering, my 165' rope was not hopelessly tangled but a longer rope should go into a mesh bag for laundering. I am told department stores have mesh bags. The front loader spins the rope and gear nearly dry and the caver who wishes to use the gear the next day could forego using the dryer. I am making the assumption that the Lysol solution is not going to weaken the rope or the vertical gear.

Lysol from the hardware or grocery store is not same as the Lysol Antibacterial All-purpose Professional Cleaner cited by USFWS. Gallon quantities can be obtained from Fastenal in Peoria (309-637-1331) or Fastenal in Champaign (217-356-3583). [www.fastenal.com](http://www.fastenal.com). At the date of this writing the Peoria store has three gallons on the shelf. Bill Morrow intends to buy all four gallons from the Champaign store, three of which he can resell to cavers.

I don't think the decontamination procedure is too much trouble. It adds only one step to the laundry sequence. It is definitely more work if vertical gear is involved. I see changes in behavior ahead for vertical trips to TAG – in the past we have done multiple caves and adopting these new procedures will mean some work in the evening, limiting valuable drinking time. Labeling gear will become even more important than it has been in the past if several cavers are dumping their gear together to make a full load for a washing machine.

Like many cavers, I do not believe that humans are the main vector of WNS. I believe WNS is going to spread regardless of the decontamination procedures we practice between trips. I do not want to be even a small part of the problem, however. Aside from that, the perception of the public that cavers are causing WNS must be tempered by the image of the fastidious responsible caver, cleaning and decontaminating his or her gear. The days of allowing one's coveralls to dry in the back of the truck, and shaking out the dust before the next cave trip are over.

## Thoughts on White Nose Syndrome Decontamination

*by Bill Morrow*

White Nose Syndrome is going to be a fact of life. It is a very controversial subject in the caver community. The possibility of transport by human vector relative to probability of transport is a very lively discussion right now, as is the effectiveness of decontamination protocols. I'm just here to opine that, effective or not, reasonable or not, I am deconning now – if only to try to be a good soldier.

I have now bought 4 gallons of Lysol Anti-bacterial All Purpose Professional cleaner as specified by USFWS decon protocols. That stuff ain't cheap. However 4 gallons is way more than I need. If anybody would like to buy a gallon, I was able to avoid the hazardous waste shipping costs and obtained it for a little over \$18 a gallon with tax. I believe Ralph got socked about \$28 for his first gallon.

On the plus side, it is just one more step if

you actually clean your gear in the first place. Soaking in a Rubbermaid tub was fairly easy, and I was able to do multiple rinses to get any odor (to my nose) removed. All personal gear has been deconned, with gear such as helmets, wiped down with Lysol wipes.

Here is my confession, at least as of the moment. I have not deconned my vertical nylon gear – yet. When it comes to it, I will, I believe. But for now, I cannot bring myself to decon nylon life-protecting gear with chemicals with unknown reactive properties (bleach is known to be a degrader, and Hazel Barton's work is still preliminary, in my opinion).

We need to do what we can right now, not only to minimize risk of transmission but to also minimize the risk of the non-caving community pointing their finger at cavers as contamination vectors.

Please send in your comments, thoughts, and opinions to the editor. They will be published.

## 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/>

## Recent trips

There was no meeting February 12. LJ and Andrea Tognetti were the only members to attend. Many people were on a Near Normal Grotto group trip to Sullivan. A few got more than they bargained for.

Ralph Sawyer, Bill Roth, Chris Haydel, and Matt Level completed a long tour of the Rise at Sullivan. John Schirle, Jeffery Gosnell (and TJ), Jason Kern (and Katelyn), Marshall Kuyper, Kyle Wanner, and Jared ? and his friend all went through the Water Room Passage, Rectangle Crawl, Grand Canyon, and other parts of Sullivan Cave. A select few had the opportunity to do The Backbreaker multiple times over the weekend.

### *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,

The next day Jeffery Gosnell (and Tj), Jim Duncker (Ben and Patrick), and Bill Morrow (Nicholas) gave Donnahue a short tour and enjoyed the natural arches. Bill Morrow's trip was tempered by his car being broken into and his cell phone and iPod stolen – a word of warning to future Donnahue visitors.

February 21, Bill Morrow led a group of University of Illinois students and friends through Buckners Cave. They met a group of 20 Purdue Outing Club members outside the cave but did not see them again until the two groups met in the Waterfall Passage, a tight sinuous fluted limestone passage. This made for some interesting passing.

Please send in your trip reports!

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!



Buckners Cave, February 21, 2010  
Photo by Marshall Kuypers