

The Near Normal News

A synopsis of what is going on in the world of the Near Normal. In this issue we have the minutes, another superlative puzzle from Bill Roth AND previous answers, and a trip report by Jason Kern – read on...

May Minutes

Minutes of the meeting May 13, 2011

Present: Ralph Sawyer, George Mattson, Don Kerouac, Billie Kerouac, Gerry Woltering, Jason Kern, Laura McCartney, Todd McCartney, Matt Level, guest Mark Blain

Vice President Todd McCartney called the meeting to order. Members and guest introduced themselves and told their favorite dessert.

Todd presented the Treasurer's Report from Treasurer Bill Roth: Account balance is \$918.06. Responses on donations from NNG: all checks cashed except the check sent to Karst Conservancy of Illinois. We received a Thank You letter from Richard Blenz Nature Conservancy (RBNC) for our donation. NNG member Ralph Sawyer is designated as a member of RBNC. Bill Roth continues to pursue a \$500.00 donation from State Farm Insurance, either for NNG or for National Speleological Society. We have 7 XL green tee shirts, 1 L blue tee, 5 NNG patches. Also Snickerdoodle patches from Roth's personal inventory. Roth is working on gathering remaining dues for 2011. NNG received a letter from Great Oaks Camping & Inner-City Ministries of Peoria asking for a donation.

Minutes of the previous meeting were examined and approved.

Trip Reports

Mark Blain described some of his experiences with high angle rescue, including some work in the arm of the Statue of Liberty to see if it is possible to evacuate a patient from the torch (no). Mark described the recent eighth grade field trip in Sullivan Cave, led by Todd and Laura McCartney.

Jason Kern was one of the guides for the aforementioned field trip. Jason stayed overnight and caved Sullivan the next day with George Mattson and Indiana caver Tracy Heinke. George described his struggles with the Crevice Connection, which remains unfinished business for him. Jason noted plenty of bats and unmapped side passages on the "tortuous route". Also noted gypsum beard on walls and ceiling; it moves when you breath on it. As a group we discussed the No-No Crawl in Sullivan. Only reason to do it: machismo.

May Minutes - continued

Old Business: Nothing new on Vertical Days June 12 and August 14.

George Mattson reminded us of the Father's Day weekend trip to Sullivan Cave. Excellent opportunity for family caving.

New Business: Some potential locations for annual NNG picnic:

Comlara Park near Bloomington, with biking and hiking, fishing, boating.

Lake of the Woods near Mahomet.

Matthiessen or Starved Rock

We discussed access and use of Pautler Cave.

Meeting adjourned.

June Minutes

Minutes of the meeting June 12, 2011

Our meeting was held at Illinois State University's rappelling tower.

Present: L. J. Tognetti, Andrea Tognetti, Kristin Bogdonas, Allen Caulkens, Laura McCartney, Todd McCartney, Gerry Woltering, Jason Kern, Bill Morrow, Bill Roth, Ralph Sawyer, George Mattson with Eric and Rachel, and guest Bill James of ISU.

President L. J. Tognetti called the meeting to order. Members and guest introduced themselves and told their favorite patch. Minutes of the previous meeting were examined and approved.

Treasurer Bill Roth reported a balance of 963.06 in Near Normal Grotto's account. Bill reviewed past donations from NNG to other cave-related organizations. Bill is still working on getting NNG 501(c)(3) status to enable us to pursue a donation from State Farm Insurance. We now need dues from only two "former" members who will no longer receive our newsletter until dues are paid. Bill reviewed our apparel inventory.

Old Business

Vertical practice at ISU's rappel tower August 14th.

George Mattson will head up a Father's Day weekend trip to Sullivan Cave and Donnehue Cave. Camping on the Sullivan property.

We discussed a few possible locations for the annual Grotto Picnic. Ralph Sawyer moved we hold the Grotto Picnic September 11 at Comlara Park. Motion passed. September 18th is the rain date.

New Business

Todd McCartney has reserved a cabin for seven cavers for the TAG Fall Cave-In. TAG = Tennessee-Alabama-Georgia. Andrea Tognetti described the Cave-In, October 6-9th: bands, a giant bonfire, camping, ropes courses and contests, breakfasts, and caving.

Meeting adjourned for resumption of vertical practice.

Cave Puzzle Five -- Long Cave Word Search

By Bill Roth Near Normal Grotto Bloomington, IL ©, copyright, Roth, 2011



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|--------------|-----------|-----------|----------|-------------|--------------|
| AbrogastCave | Chris | Foglepole | Jewel | Moore | Russell |
| Hollow | Climax | FoxHole | Jugornot | MountainEye | Sloans |
| Anvil | CoralCave | Gap | Kazumura | Mystery | SpringHollow |
| Benedicts | Crevice | GreatX | Keala | NewRiver | TheHole |
| BigBat | Dry | Groaning | Lee | OldBellamy | Webster |
| BigBone | Duncan | Guess | Lilburn | Omega | Wells |
| Binkleys | Ennis | Helictite | Lisanby | Organ | Wind |
| Bowden | Espey | Hellhole | Mammoth | Pahoa | |
| Byers | Farmers | HueHue | Marengo | PaulPenleys | |
| Cass | Fern | Illinois | McClung | Pautler | |
| Chinn | Fitton | James | McFails | Rice | |

Answers to Puzzle Three

Across: 1. Raft, 3. Vertical, 9. Mammoth, 10. Apron, 11. Tusks, 12. Ethnic, 14. Nodule, 16. Offers, 19. Marble, 21. Rifle, 24. Usual, 25. Cleaned, 26. Transfer, 27. Wind.

Down: 1. Rimstone, 2. Fumes, 4. Echoes, 5. Trash, 6. Carbide, 7. Lung, 8. Fossil, 13. Ascended, 15. Dracula, 17. Farmer, 18. Rescue, 20. Bulbs, 22. Fungi, 23. Duct.

Answers to Puzzle Four – “The Bat Puzzle”

Across: 3 Up, 7 TGIF, 10 Stoniest, 13 Horn, 15 Danau, 17 Li, 19 SA, 20 It, 21 As, 22 Ti, 23 Oscan, 26 FCT, 29 Fossil, 30 So, 31 DEA, 33 Wind, 35 EW, 36 Ep, 37 Fern, 38 Scoop, 40 Oriya, 43 Omega, 45 Zlot Gate, 49 Na, 50 National, 51 Oy, 52 Open, 55 Dibs, 56 Hubcap, 59 Norman, 62 Neat, 63 Or, 64 Oho, 65 66 DP, 67 Awe, 68 Ta, 69 EL, 70 EE, 71 Rearward, 76 Sialis, 77 Dram, 78 En.

Down: 1 Static, 2 NSS, 3 Unis, 4 Pits, 5 Its, 6 Insert, 8 Guano, 9 FL, 11 Taffy apples, 12 Salamanders, 13 Hi, 14 Rodeo, 16 Newses, 18 Ice, 22 Top, 24 Canyon, 25 Hangdogs, 28 Two, 30 Sea, 32 Mountain, 34 Don, 37 Fly, 39 Pahoia, 41 Inaner, 42 At, 43 On, 44 Eloped, 45 Zones, 47 Air, 48 Tb, 53 PE, 54 Eat, 57 Uh, 58 Bo, 60 Ma, 61 Aw, 72 Aid, 73 Rare, 74 WLAN, 75 Aim.

Sullivan’s Crevice – by Jason Kern

On Saturday, May 7, 2011, George Mattson, Tray Meinke, and I decided to try our skills with a map and compass in Sullivan Cave’s Crevice passage. We had heard rumors of the Connection (joining the Flood Route passage) being the most difficult part, so we dedicated ourselves to this section first. As we caved toward the Crevice Connection, we were letting Tray take in the sights as this would be his first time into Sullivan. With the Connection in front of us, we decided George would be first and I would be last. As I have witnessed in times past, the mud was clearly winning as he tried to gain inches up the four foot slope. George made it up to the first part of the “S” curve and as he started to twist around, his body said “no.” The game has begun, mental and physical roles are being played out in a place where help is far away.

George reverses, works his body back around, and easily slides out the entrance. Tray is asked to go in first instead, dives in, and succeeds in sliding around the first “S” curve into an area I thought was a very small room. I was wrong. Just enough wiggle room was all Tray had and he had somehow turned around to be able to coach George’s tall body up and around and down on mud with his hips unnaturally twisting to finish this first part. Tray then finishes the Connection by working his body up six feet high for the next part of the Connection that is at ceiling height through a “T” crawl which is another “S” curve and makes it. He also makes his way back to coach George up to the ceiling -- but he can’t see George! Foiled by the “S” curve! George thinks he’s in over his head -- we try to encourage him and coax him into that place where Death is sitting there smiling on one side and you’re stupid friends with outstretched hands on the other.

Sullivan's Crevice - continued

George's comment on this situation:

"Shortly after entering the crevice, I realized that it was too technical and tight for me. Jason and Tray helped me out, but I was afraid of getting into something that I couldn't get out of. So I decided to drop out. I'd still like to work my way up to more difficult trips. But the Crevice was too big of a step up for me right now."

That being said, we did push George to his limits, and then some. He did get past the part where his body said "no." Where his hips were unnaturally twisted, he had to try twice, committing himself to Tray to get him out if his butt hit the ground before his feet. We already pushed his mettle twice so why not more? We **are** his stupid friends you know. George says he does not have, he repeats, does not have the upper body strength to make it to the ceiling and I reply "get up as high as you can and I will get under you for support." This works for about one foot. Mud, no foot holds, nothing to hang on to except slick mud going down around a curve that my body would not accept. I give in to defeat along with George. As Tray backs through the "T" crawl, George and I head back into the main passage. George had been to Sullivan enough times to find the entrance; a scout group also was coming our general way as well, so it seemed reasonable to let George head back by himself. Tray and I feel competent enough as well trying a difficult passage neither of us has been in with a map, a compass, and Ralph's strong suggestion of "KEEP A FINGER OF WHERE YOU ARE ON THE MAP."

While I was making my way to the Mud Room, Tray scouted around enough to find our next path. As we both prepared to start, Tray and I both agreed where we were going, what our compasses read, where the next side passages should be, and where the changes in the passage should happen. Everything from the Mud Room to the Bat room made sense. In the Bat Room we found bat bones, including jaw bones, but no skulls. The room is larger than I expected with many places to explore, more so than what the map I had in my hand indicated. This was good caving. Neither of us was in a big hurry so we both wandered into the different pits, crevices, old stream channels, the current waterfall, and a place I didn't try hard enough to get into but had more passage. A mental note was made to someday come back here and push this area. We studied the map again and took compass readings before heading out. There seemed to be two places to leave the Bat Room and we didn't really know which one we were in until we came to the 13' climb. As we climbed into the main passage I thought the passage we decided to take was more interesting as well as being better at ripping our clothes. Yes, this passage likes to eat! As we make our way to the side crawl we find another passage not on the map. Noted. Now the Side Crawl appeared. Did it. Took 20 minutes too long. It's a side crawl. At the Connection Y, we took a rest and checked the map and compasses. We made no wrong turns so far and I was getting a little more confident in Tray and our consistent agreement of where we were on the map. On our way to the Waterfall Crevice when it seemed logical to climb up this one area and this was o.k. until -- the wall started to give away! Yeah, that's right, the wall was loose rock with a thin layer of mud. I realized this when Tray went to stand up from sitting on the wall and part of his rock seat pulled from the wall. As I test the rest of the area, all I find are loose rocks. My heart pounds harder as more of the wall fall the floor 10' or so below me. What's to say my one and only foot holding me up is secure? Is it safe to turn around? Is it safe to back up? A controlled slide?

Near Normal Grotto

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

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See us at:
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/nng/>

Sullivan's Crevice - continued

Maybe just jump! I realize I need to relax, calm down, and think. After about three minutes I am able to compose myself enough to back up a ways and climb down a little. Passing the Waterfall Passage we find it easier to move ahead and before we know it, we are at the "Lazy B" or "Figure 8". No, it's not on the map, but it should be since there is nothing noted for this area. We are surprised at arriving so quickly that we check out the two circle passages then head straight east. Before leaving the lazy B area we can hear a waterfall and -like with all waterfalls - you can hear voices. The first time we heard the voice we looked at each other immediately but second-guessed ourselves. As we were heading south, we heard the voice again and knew the voice was real, but the source behind the voice could not hear us. As we were entering the Backbreaker entrance, Tray found a little black snake with an orange ribbon around its neck and it was moving very slow but still alive. He laid the snake back down and as Tray passed the Backbreaker entrance, I remarked that I knew where we were and explained to him how close we were to the outside entrance. Knowing this, Tray finds the snake again, picks it up, and leaves the cave with one hand holding the snake the entire way out. We also saw a lot of bats along the Crevice Passage. None of them were together.

And George? He met the scout group in the Backbreaker and caved with them the rest of the day. The voices? The scout group and George. They exited the cave about fifteen minutes before us.

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, engineers, geologists, mechanics, nurses, teachers, insurance professionals, and students, to 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!