

RASS REGISTER



Richmond Area
Speleological
Society

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The Richmond Area Speleological Society (RASS) is an Internal Organization (Grotto) of the National Speleological Society. RASS holds its General Meeting on the first Thursday of each month at 5300 West Marshall Street, Richmond, VA (see map). The doors open at 7:00 P.M., and the meeting starts at 7:30 P.M.

The RASS Board of Directors meets the second Thursday of each month at 5300 West Marshall. Board meetings are open to the general membership and attendance is encouraged.

Our office is located at 5300 West Marshall, and is usually staffed during the mornings. The phone number is (804) 673-CAVE. Please leave a message at other times.

Annual membership is \$10.00 for NSS members, and \$15.00 for non-NSS members, due in January. Both memberships include a subscription to the *RASS Register*. If you would like membership information, please call the office, or write for an application.

Material contained in the *Register* may be used and/or reprinted by other NSS affiliated organizations, provided credit is given to the author and the *RASS Register*. Opinions expressed herein are those of the article's author, and not necessarily those of RASS, its Board of Directors, or the NSS. Grottos interested in exchanging newsletters should contact the Editor.

Material for publication in the *Register* can be submitted via hard-copy (delivered, by mail, or fax), 3.5" Macintosh disks, 3.5" and 5.25" PC formatted disks, in just about any popular word-processing format, or preferably, via email to jgmurphy@richmond.infi.net. Deadline for submissions is the second Friday of each month. Fax submissions can go directly to the Editor, at 804-796-3815, or to the RASS office, at 804-673-0118. Computer generated material is the easiest to work with, and "wordsmithing" services are available if you'd like to submit, but feel the need to have an English major help out. We'll even return your disks (eventually). Pictures, preferably high-contrast glossy prints are also welcome. Slides can also be reproduced. They will also be returned.

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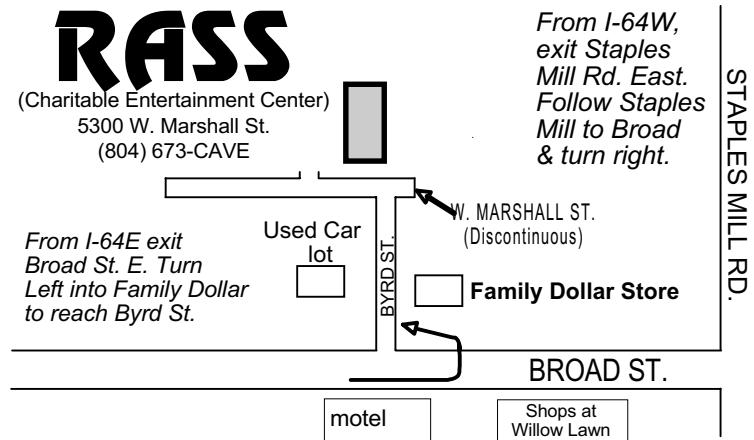
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RASS Field Station, Bath Co., VA

How to find us:



On the cover: From the "lost Register". Last October's Register had this great photo by Mike Williams of Laura Silva exiting Aqua Cave. The issue was lost for three months due to the wrong ZIP code in the address of the printer. Well, it finally showed up, and here's the pic!



Caver Happenings

April

1 Combination Change on BOB's gate
3 Dixie Caverns Cleanup - VAR Project, see flier in this issue for more details
17-18 Work Weekend at Field Station - contact Darrel Worsham for more info
17 Island Ford Cave Cleanup - hosted by Blue Ridge Grotto, contact Leonard McGann, (540)297-6077 for info
30 - May 2 Spring VAR - hosted by Tri-State Grotto at Natural Chimneys, see flyer in this issue for more details

May

1 Grand Caverns Cleanup (during Spring VAR), see flyer for more details
15-16 Spring Cave Conference and Work Weekend at Field Station
28-31 Speleofest (western Kentucky)

June

5 Virginia Cave Board Meeting - hosted by RASS (5300 W. Marshall)
11-13 SERA Cave Carnival
19-20 Work Weekend at Field Station

July

12-16 NSS Convention, Twin Falls County Fairgrounds, Filer, Idaho. Contact: David W. Kesner, PO Box 1334, Boise, ID 83701; (208)939-0979; email drdave@micron.net
17-18 Work Weekend at Field Station
30-Aug. 1 Summer Cave Conference (Field Station)

Fall, 1999

Fall VAR - hosted by Front Royal Grotto

Spring, 2000

Grotto

Spring VAR - hosted by VPI



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The RASS Website has moved!!! Now we have a cool new URL, and much cheaper space! You can find us at:

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

And, there's a new feature on the site: The *RASS Register Online* edition! Saved as an Adobe Acrobat .pdf file, it contains all the material of the print version, plus, starting in January, COLOR versions of the black and white pictures in your monthly newsletter.

Requires Adobe Acrobat version 3.0 or greater to read.



Helmets OFF!



by: Rich Geisler

I would like to take the opportunity to thank you all that have volunteered to help with Bingo. Thanks a lot to the volunteers who helped when we really needed you! Folks, we have to have more volunteers, many nights are running short handed. If you can volunteer for either Sunday or Monday (especially) games, please call me at 261-1214. It only takes from 6:30 to 9:30 PM. I will have the sign up sheets at the General Meeting.

Here's a list of our volunteers for January, 1999:

**A SPECIAL THANKS TO ALL THOSE WHO HELPED OUT AND FILLED IN DURING RICH'S RECENT "EXTENDED" MEXICO VACATION! **

Margot Geisler

Rich Geisler

Art Heifetz

Ted Kayes

Cheryl Kayes

Mickey Bracey

Becky Bracey

Tray Murphy (showed up sick - because only 4 people had volunteered - and wound up in St.

Mary's ER before the game was over)

Chris Hayes

Scott Klaus

Drew Harrison (A

BRAND NEW member VOLUNTEERS!)

Larry Hart

Mike Williams

Ted Kayes, III

Chase Kayes (visiting for the holidays from Oregon, he worked 2 nights of bingo while in town!)

Jackie Heifetz

Billy Pickett

Glen Todd

Garrie Denson

Mike Friedenberg



**April:
Bob Handley is
coming to present a
program on the caves
of West Virginia.**

**Thanks to Glen
Todd for a great South
Dakota and Virginia
caving slide show at
the March General
Meeting.**



News Items

Educational Trips

We have a large number of church groups, boy scout groups, and community groups who would like educational trips. Please call Art Heifetz at home (672-2800) or work (262-6595) or e-mail (caveart@sprintmail.com) if you would be willing to lead a trip or help with a trip. We can arrange the trip to fit your schedule.

from: The Oversight Committee

Darrel Worsham, Chairman of the 1998 Awards Committee, presented two belated awards at the March General Meeting:

Ted Kayes was awarded a Certificate of Appreciation for his work at our bingo games. He has called, conservatively, over 400 nights of bingo since he became involved as a caller. His tireless efforts have ensured that RASS has been able to continue its important work in providing funds for worthy caving causes and local charities. We thank him for his unselfish attitude and constant concern for RASS' well-being.

Bill Biggers was recognized for his recent experience, "Kicking the Skunk".

We apologize for the lateness of these awards, but they are as heartfelt and meaningful as all the others we presented. Thanks to both of these members for their support and help of RASS and caving!

Combo Lock Change

We said it would happen, and it is: the combination on the Field Station's gate will change on April 1st. The key lock will be removed. If you want to use Bob for your functions, call the office to get the combination before you go up. You must be a regular member of RASS to get the combination.

And while we're on the subject of gates and locks: Folks, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out how to relock the gate to the property. Do not lock it across any other locks, it should be a link in the chain. If you lock it across the other locks, other authorized users of the gate cannot get by, nor can other members of the grotto get in. DO NOT drive around the gate, even if you have a vehicle capable of it. We do not own that property, and you are destroying it by going cross country. This area will be barricaded in the near future.

SYMPATHY

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Richard Cartwright and his family, on the recent passing of Richard's wife Phyllis. The Cartwrights are long-time members of RASS, and she will be missed by all. To Richard, Aimee, and the rest of the family: our thoughts and prayers go out to you.



Trip Reports

O DEGREES TO Oblivion

Wedged head-first in a narrow passage with a sharp downhill slope, like a newborn about to emerge from the birth canal, I attempted to sight the next station with my compass. Each time I raised my head, a steady stream of gravel fell in my left ear.

"30 feet. 20 degrees negative."

"Are you sure?" asked Glen. "That doesn't seem right. Let me have a look. I don't think you're holding the compass level. Looks more like 45 feet. And don't hold your maglight so close to the instruments. It could throw off the reading."

I was already sliding downhill towards the next station when Glen decided that I should change places with Kibby and mark the final location of the passage. I pushed on until I could squeeze no further. Peering through a child-sized hole, I could see another room, but unless I cut off my left shoulder, my chances of getting through were nil. I put a chalk mark on the rock above me and held up my light. Then I cautiously moved backwards until I found a space large enough to turn around in.

"Are we having fun yet?" I said.

"Don't get discouraged. We're going to give you another crack at the instruments," Glenn promised.

Meanwhile, the third member of our intrepid survey team, Shawn, was about to give birth to something we were all convinced would resemble the creature in "Alien." I checked my SOG to make sure it contained the proper midwife instruments. Shawn's job was to record all the measurements in the survey book and when he wasn't holding his stomach and groaning, he did a helluva job.

The other team, composed of Drew, Wilford, and Will, chose the high road on the next survey. This might not be a good idea for politicians, whose love of mudslinging is legendary, but it turned out to be a good choice for them. The low road was, unfortunately, nearly washed out and if the predicted heavy downpour

materialized later in the day, it was going to be a pretty flooded road, suitable for salamanders perhaps, but no place for cavers without SCUBA equipment. This, of course, was the road that our team took. Fortunately for the others, I soaked up most of the water by slithering through the narrow crawl. I did manage to hold the compass level, though, on this go-round.

Any resemblance between surveying and caving is purely coincidental. Caving usually involves a lot of mobility in parts of the cave which hold some interest. Surveying, at least in a cave like Porters which had been surveyed for five years, involves crawling in slow motion through parts of a cave which no sane person would visit. I was going to say "be caught dead in" since I was beginning to feel the effects of the cold water and my energy was disappating to the point at which I thought we'd better get moving again.

The other members of the team agreed. Wilford and Drew had family obligations back in Richmond. Shawn was anxious to get an ultrasound and see whether it was a boy or a girl. And I was about ready to sink my teeth into a nice juicy T-bone steak. So we headed for higher ground and the waterfall room. We had some interesting climbs and saw numerous helectite and popcorn formations, some of which rivalled those in Paxtons. It was a part of the cave I had never seen before and I made a mental note to return for further exploration.

Meanwhile, Wilford "Serious Exposure" Mills cautioned us at every climb up, climb down, and step across that unseen perils awaited us in the form of deep drops, thin shelves, and for all we knew, creatures from the black lagoon. Now I love caving with Wilford but I do have an unspoken fear that one day I will pooh-pooh his warning and step gingerly to my death in what turns out to be a 100 foot shaft that I assumed to be the usual piece of cake. My dying words will undoubtedly be: "Holy s---t Wilford, you were right, that was some serious exposure." If I am part of a surveying team at the time, I will be attempting to hold my compass straight and hold my light at the proper angle as I cry out "O degrees to oblivion!"

It was certainly a deep drop off that awaited us in the Waterfall Room. Across a vast chasm we could make out the nearly black rock over which the water passed.

"Don't get too close to the edge," Wilford cautioned. "There's some ..."

"Serious Exposure," we all cried in unison.

By the time we started to climb the ladder out of the cave, I was thoroughly exhausted, more from my inactivity in the "trenches" than from any great amount of hiking. In four hours, we

had pushed the survey perhaps 100 feet. A heavy rain had begun to fall as I negotiated the muddy slope back to the road, taking care not to twist my poor swollen left ankle.

Back at the Bob cabin, I fired up my T-bone and contemplated the events of the day. I had acquired a new respect for those hardy souls who slogged through narrow muddy passages to map another few feet. The wood stove was giving off such a great amount of heat that I could barely keep my eyes open. Almost in mid-sentence, I drifted off to sleep. I felt as if I were falling into a long, dark pit.

"Watch out for that exposure," Wilford yelled down to me.

"And be sure to hold the damned compass level," Glen added.

Helictite Cave

Part I

By Mike Manke, July 27, 1998

Our recent trip to Helictite Cave was a once in a lifetime experience. Phil Lucas has done a great service to the caving community in discovering and managing this new and beautiful cave. His invitation to our grotto to view and explore this cave was both a proud and unselfish act that deserves recognition.

The entrance formations in this cave are some of the most delicate and beautiful I have ever seen. Pure white helictite crystals surrounded with pure white stalagmites, stalactites, and flow stone ribbons line the ceiling and walls. Soda straws pierce the blanket of delicate crystals to hang delicately from the ceiling. With all of these beautiful formations in such tight cave quarters just at the entrance ... it is understandable why Phil keeps his caving groups to only 5 people.

The monument room was truly impressive. It's soaring heights are decorated with crystal white flow stone formations. Ribbons of flow stone decorate the walls at various intervals all the way up to the ceiling. The floor is covered with stalagmite and flow stone creations that twinkle in the light. Extremely rare white cave pearls lie nestled in their limestone water pools beneath dripping stalactites. The limestone pools cascade down over their crystalline edges in a series of steps to the cave floor.

On July 22, 1998, four members of Bats, Raymond Herlong, Mike Manke, Larry Ryan and Mathew Ryan, joined

Phil Lucas for a tour, and partial survey of the newly discovered Helictite Cave. The cave was dug into at the bottom of a fissure on March 19, 1996, and has been the topic of wonder and excitement ever since. The cave is named for the massive helictite displays near the entrance. Several cave pearls have been discovered, the largest being 1.19" in diameter, and it is only .009" out of round. To date, over 6.48 miles of passage have been surveyed, with over 68 leads remaining to be surveyed. The Owner has four rules that are strictly enforced:

1. Groups must be small, comprised of experienced cavers to minimize impact,
2. Cavers must keep to established paths,
3. No scooping is allowed, only surveyors push leads,
4. The Owner or his representative travels with each group.

This is Part I of the Helictite Trip Report, prepared by Mike Manke:

The river room was one of the largest stream beds I have ever seen. Phil has done a commendable job in preserving its natural setting by outlining a single walking path through it to keep it from becoming another sea of footprints. The gentle waves in the silt with the drill holes from ceiling drips would be destroyed quickly without a marked path through them. It is amazing that a single drip of water every now and then can drill a perfect hole over six feet into the rock, silt and sand.



I also enjoyed the dog tooth pools very much. To see the cave floor carpeted with dog tooth spars for 20 feet with some over an inch in size was amazing. It was remarkable to see that one passage covered the spars with a crystal pool of water and the adjoining passage held the same formations in a dry pool bed. I hope that Phil discovers passage around these formations one day because the flow stone appears to literally carpet the walls and floor of the room and passage just beyond the pools.

Currently that room is inaccessible because you would have to destroy the dog tooth spars to gain access to it.

The slip and slide room was an excellent example of a fault zone. It is the largest exposed fault room I have ever seen. Examining the ceiling with the etched grooves of a sliding fault also showed that faults are not always flat in the same plane as one would think. The way the rock waved and dipped without ever loosing the grooving action of the sliding fault was very interesting. I do believe I will try Phil

and Raymond's proven method of "head first" exit from the "crack up" at the edge of the fault. Although it appears to be suicidal at first to slide head first out of the fault to the breakdown 5 feet below..... It seemed much easier and safer than backing out and blindly search for foot holds while your head and chest are still pinned in the fault zone.

The entrance to heaven under earth!

The frog room was also a new experience for me. The serenade of sounds that single drops of water falling from the high ceiling into the deep water filled drill holes sounded like an orchestra as we sat in the still darkness and listened. It was very interesting to listen to the melody of tunes produced by this simple act of nature. I was impressed by the deep mellow sounds of base the radiated though the passages. I wish I had brought a tape recorder to capture this "cave music" to share with our grotto.

The intricate nature of the many "mud cities" very interesting. These soft and fragile features are probably the first to be erased by the travels of man in many caves. These "cities" seemed to be every where in this cave. They ranged in size to massive "metropolis" areas as large as a desk to mini radial "star burst" communities the size of your hand. A good picture with a macro lens and nothing to indicate

formations reminded me of crystal white Easter eggs. These seemed to be in great abundance in many areas. Some areas were decorated by egg type formations that appeared to be the birth of stalagmites. Again the flow stone accented the formations without obscuring them with their deposits.

Cave Pearls... Unbelievable

The most amazing thing about this cave to me was the constantly changing nature of its passages and the inclusion of minute and beautiful formation in every area. The character of cave went from breakdown to eroded passage to flow stone and crystal formation to fault line to depository stream and silt to drip carved mud and fossil walls. As we all know ... many caves have "ugly areas" where nature has carved bland and bare passage from the rock without ornamenting it with formation. This cave is a true exception to this action. Along with the dedicated efforts Phil Lucas has taken to preserve these features, nature has blessed this cave and every passage with ornamentation. A close inspection of nearly every surface in this cave reveals beauty. Delicate and minute crystals abound on nearly every wall. Small but beautiful "pop corn" clusters of white rock growth appear everywhere. Dark black magnesium oxide coatings line almost every rock pocket in many passages. Fossils appear from nearly every wall, ceiling and floor. Even the gentle waves in the undisturbed silt radiate in intricate patterns of beauty. And last but not least ... the sharply defined designs carved in the mud by the water drips creates images of wonder with every drip.

Stay tuned for Part II, in the next Bats News



Cityscape in cave silt

scale would make them seem like futuristic settlements in a far away land.

The fossils that abounded throughout the cave seemed to bring to life a forgotten past. Coral, brachiopods, scallops, worms, sponges and other fossils were evident in almost every passage. Some were just protruding from the cave walls as they were exposed by the water that formed the cave while others lay in deep carpets as they were freed from their silt and rock bed by the constant drips from the ceiling. Two of the prettiest sights in the cave were where the fossils freed by the drips are coated in a pure white paint of flow stone and crystals. These formations accented the fossils without obscuring them with their depository action.

Another depository formation of the same likeness that was breath taking was the area where flow stone and crystals encased cobblestones. The several areas we saw with these



Speleofied Ads



Great for pond fishing! No, not Maria. But instead a beautiful blue V-bottom jon boat for sale. 12', trailer/trolling motor. Ready to go. Asking \$600. Call Wayne and Maria.

Found, Kodak Camera in Steve Wood's blue station wagon, probably on a fall cave trip. Identify and claim by calling Steve at 230-9356

Lost, orange bag containing blue rainsuit, call Steve Wood at 230-9356



A Paxton's Cave Adventure

Bob Barns and Patti McDonald took her daughter Kelly, and one of her friends, Jude, to Paxton's Cave. Here's some pictures from the trip! Opposite: Bob and Patti. Top left: Jude; top right: Bob, again; bottom left: Kelly; bottom right: Patti, again. Photos by Bob and Patti.



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Ray Herlong sent a Trip Report and pictures.

MORE RASS Awards!!

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The combo lock is changing - BE ALERT!!

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