



GADSDEN GROTTO

SPRING 2012



Wind Flower



Stonecrop



Round Lobed Hepatic



Liverwort



Endangered species
Hart's Tongue Fern



Walking Fern



Foam Flower

Common Plants Found At Cave Entrances

Please be careful where you step!

GADSDEN GROTTO

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- Chairman: Gene Reeves
- 1st Vice Chairman
of Programs and Projects:
Stephen Brewer
- 2nd Vice Chairman of Public
Relations: Michael Ray
- Secretary/Treasurer:
Sharon Brewer
- Newsletter Editor: Michael Ray
- Web Page Design: Michael Ray

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.

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WEB PAGE

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

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Sharon Brewer, Stephen Brewer, Michael Ray, and the Birmingham Grotto



Summaries of the minutes from the Gadsden Grotto Regular Meeting.

For full details of the minutes, see the grotto secretary/treasurer

Regular Business Meeting January 10, 2012

Call to order: 6:40 p.m. By David Teal

12 Attendees.

The business part of the meeting was postponed until after the Ellison's Cave presentation.

There were several comments and discussion concerning past trips to Ellison's. David Teal encouraged everyone to have their own equipment and become proficient in the use of it.

Old Business:

- M. Ray gave a trip report of a recent trips to Holiday Hole and Mandarin's Drip
- K. Lofgren is still testing the decal
- \$26.50 was given to Michael Ray for copies made at Office Max.
- A. Cline brought the old papers/accounts/info to the meeting to give to the appropriate officers.
- One new member joined.
- B. Whorton donated \$10 to the general fund.
- The best price on rope was reported by D. Teal for \$.40 per foot with the total rope being a length of 700-800 feet.

New Business:

- Vote for Anthony to close account at Regions and bring a check for the full amount to the meeting. Michael will open an account at Generations.
- The Gadsden Grotto Facebook page has gone through some changes. Administrators of that page are now Gene Reaves and Stephen Brewer.
- The Gadsden Grotto via the NSS page has been difficult to find.
- David Teal announced that he is taking Shanon Richey to Tumbling Rock and invited anyone who wanted to go along.

David Teal closed the meeting at 7:40.

Regular Meeting of March 20, 2012

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. inside the East Gadsden Com-

(Continued on page 3)

Summary of Minutes continued....

munity Center. Thirteen were in attendance.

Old Business

- Old minutes reveal the price of Patches is \$7.00.
- 30 Decals were given to the secretary. A vote was taken to charge \$5 for each decal.
- With May elections approaching the voting members issue was discussed. Family members do have a vote if the regular member that they are under is an NSS member.
- M. Ray called for newsletter articles.
- The bank account has been opened and two debit cards issued in the secretary's name and M. Ray.
- SERA is May 4th-6th at Paint Rock. Admission is \$29 at the door, and T-shirts are \$15.

New Business

- NSS Elections are on line this year. David encouraged everyone to consider voting for "southern-leaning" candidates.
- Grotto 32nd Reunion will be at Buck's Pocket May 18th-20th. M. Mashburn will be collecting info for the next meeting.
- ACS will be April 21st in Scottsboro, Alabama.
- Cathedral Caverns sent us an invite to lead cave trips in a volunteer role. D. Teal is checking into the details.
- Stephen Brewer and S. Argo worked on and surveyed a new cave called Turkey Shot Pit. It is 110 feet with a 92 feet entrance pit. They also took a small trip to Rivertop Drop.
- M. Ray and several South Carolina friends had a weekend of caving. They went to Jess Elliot and Orr Cave.
- It was announced that a trip to Thunderhole will be March 31st. Wetsuits required as well as vertical experience.

Meeting was adjourned @ 7:25

Prepared by Sharon Brewer March 2012

TREASURER REPORT FOR MARCH

Feb Balance \$303.46

March

Income + 1.12

Expenses -73.58 30 decals

March Balance \$231.00

Regular Meeting of April 10, 2012

Prepared by Michael Ray

General

- Fifteen in attendance
- Secretary/Treasurer was not able to attend meeting. Michael Ray was asked by Chairman Teal to keep the minutes of the April meeting
- Reading of the minutes was dispensed of by vote.

Old Business

- D. Teal made a motion that for tonight's meeting that a patch and a sticker could be purchased for \$10 for this meeting only. The motion carried.

- \$120 was collected from members with 15 stickers sold and 9 patches sold.

- Bucks Pocket had not been contacted concerning the Grotto Reunion. David reported that a contact was not necessary and that we could just go as a group.

- Grotto Reunion is May 18th – 20th at Buck's Pocket.

- David reported that Cathedral Caverns personnel that the invitation to help lead wild cave trips had come from the federal level. The manager said that we could help on the 2nd and 4th weekends.

New Business

- S. Brewer made a motion that the Gadsden Grotto donates \$50 for a NSS building block. M. Ray is to transfer grotto funds to the NSS.

- ACS is April 21st at the Scottsboro Public library.

Cave Trips

- D. Teal has a trip planned to look for historical signatures in an Etowah Co. cave.

- Stephen Brewer reported on a injury and rescue in Tumbling Rock Cave.

Program

- Slideshow of the 2012 SERA location and a slideshow of the 2012 NSS Convention site was shown by M. Ray Meeting was adjourned @ 7:55. An after the meeting-meeting was held at a local Mexican Restaurant.





TRIP REPORTS

Turkey Shot Pit

AL4434

By Stephen Brewer

On March 10, 2012, I went on a solo ridge walk on the northwest side of Sand Mountain, near Lake Gunter'sville. The weather was turning warmer, and I knew the time for ridge walking would soon be ending for the season. The morning was still cold, in the mid-thirties, as I arrived at the boat launch before sunrise. For some unexplained reason, my usually reliable Garmin GPS had been unable to get a position this morning, so I was faced with having to do things the old-fashioned way. I knew that if I found any caves or leads I would have to take careful note of how to get back there again. I went across the lake in my canoe, and then hiked up the steep slope to around 800' elevation. (My GPS altimeter was still working, so I did have that much to go on.) Soon I ran across a familiar karst feature that I had found previously; it was a large sinkhole with a small grotto in the bottom that was about 25' long. Now at least I knew exactly where I was on the topo, which gave me a point of reference in case I found anything. I stayed close to the same elevation and headed northeast, and soon stumbled across a couple of interesting but small holes. None of these appeared to pan out, but then a third one, the smallest and least significant-looking one, offered promise.

I found a small rock to drop into it, and I heard it bounce, then I heard nothing for a second or two, then it bounced again, and so on, for ~4.5 seconds. I got a little excited, but contained myself, thinking of several other



This is one of the hole when I found it

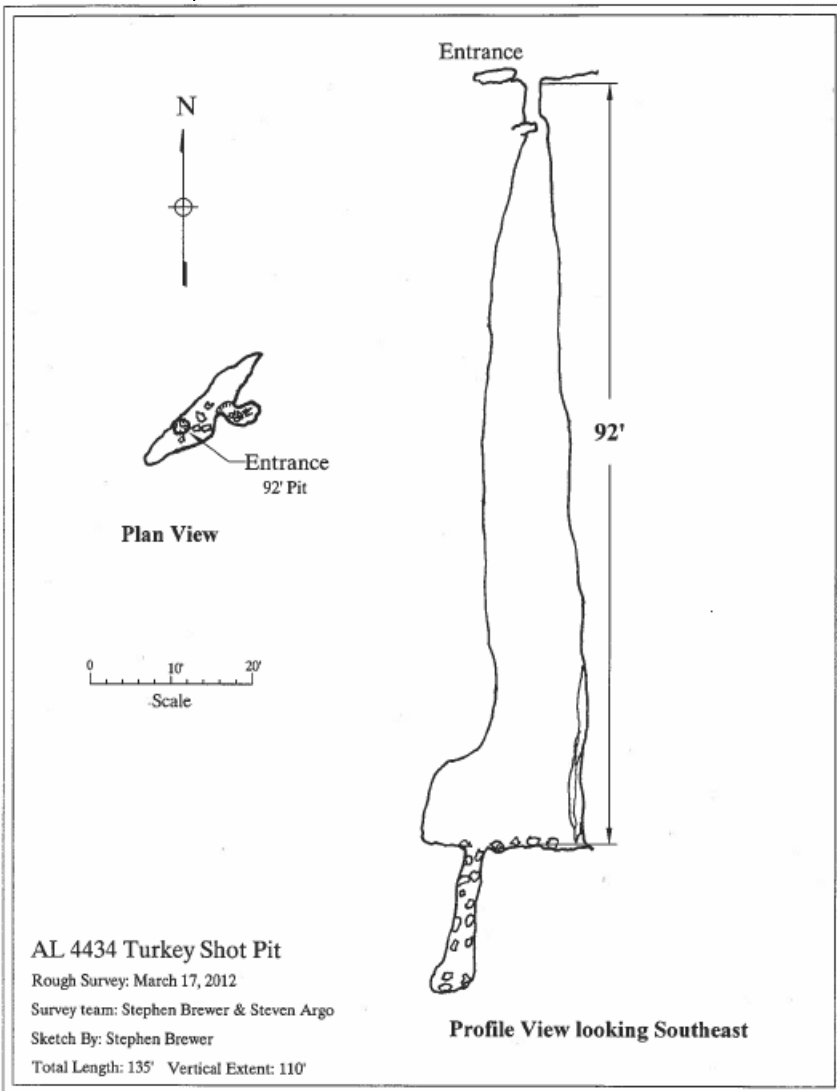
leads that had sounded just as promising, but ended up being dud holes.

I set my glove down, took a photo of the tiny hole, and went to work pulling out rocks

and digging with my camp shovel. I got to the point where I unearthed a rock that was just too large for me to completely pull it out, and I was afraid I might lose it and have it block the hole. I took careful note of how to get back to the spot, and went on to other projects for the rest of the day.

The following Saturday, March 17, I invited Steven Argo to go back with me to help me get into the lead. I had seen enough into the hole to know it was going to open up significantly after the rock was removed. Steven had very little vertical cave experience, but seemed very competent on rope when I had been with him at Sand Rock a few weeks earlier. We took along some rock-shaving tools just in case the hole needed additional work. Steven, having a bit more upper-body strength than I, made short work of the offending rock that had halted my progress the week before. Unfortunately, there was a slab of bedrock still in the way. I broke out my drill and we got to work enlarging the en-

(Continued on page 5)



Trip Reports continued....

trance. Since it was the first weekend of turkey season, I wasn't too worried about drawing undue attention to the sound of "gunfire" in the woods. "BOOM," went the first shot. "Someone just shot themselves a turkey," I said jokingly. We both laughed. The shot took off a nice sized chunk, but it still needed a little more. "BOOM," went the second shot. "Another dead turkey," I quipped. The second shot was perfect, taking out a rather large chunk of rock. We inspected our work and pondered whether or not to take out a large rock that was ~5 feet down the pit. I knew I could get by it OK, and as long as it wasn't a threat to come loose, I was OK with it. Steven looked at it and declared that he could get by it as well, so we decided to leave alone. Besides, it made a nice bench to launch from.

I had brought my 120' rope, although I really didn't expect to have to need all of it. I shot my laser down into the pit, but the highest reading I was getting was ~57.' We went ahead and rigged the rope to a nearby tree, and I made the first descent. The pit was mostly free-fall after the pro-



Fossils of Crinoid stems in walls of the pit

truding rock. When I finally arrived on the bottom, I saw that there was only about 6' of rope left. I knew we had used maybe 20' for rigging on top, so I was hopeful that we had a 100'+ pit. I did a laser shot up to the rock, and got 88.' Since the rock was ~5' from the top, I called up to Steven the pit depth: 92 feet! Not bad for Sand Mountain, I thought, although I wished it could have been 8' more! Steven then rigged in and announced "on rope!" Then I heard his sounds of struggling above, and then I heard something falling. I backed a little further under the ledge I was under, and then saw it was only one of his gloves. Soon afterwards, I heard something else falling, but I didn't learn until later that it was one of his helmet-mounted battery packs. (I assumed it was a small rock.) When he got to the bottom, he told me that he wished we would have busted out that protruding rock as well, because it gave him a lot of trouble.

On the bottom there was an additional small pit off to the side, which was climbable without a rope. This pit measured 18' deep, making the cave a total of 110' deep.

The cave had one formation area, a flowstone wall that extended from the floor to about 1/3 of the way up on one wall. Satisfied that we had pushed it to the limits, we began our exit. I had little trouble passing the protruding rock, but Steven had some difficulty. This was in part due to the chest box he was wearing; I didn't have this problem, because I was using the Texas System. After he got out, we discussed possibly going ahead and busting out the rock, but decided to leave it intact.

This pit was Steven Argo's first virgin pit, and it was also his deepest pit yet; his previous record was 75 feet. We discussed several name ideas, and finally settled on "Turkey Shot Pit," because of our earlier conversation about shooting turkeys.



Flowstone at the bottom of the pit

Trip Reports continued....



Pictured left to right: Roy Merin, Marvin Dawson, Lois Dawson, Mike Coward and Michael Ray

Merin. The other cavers visiting on this trip were Lois Dawson and Mike Coward. The first day of their visit we did Jesse Elliot and Tate's cave. The second day we headed to Oar Cave. Marvin and I stayed up half the night before selecting possible caves that the entire group could do with varying skills. Deep pits were out for this trip because Roy had recently had some leg surgery and was just getting back into caving. Although little had been written about Oar Cave and the map did not look extremely interesting, we picked it because the location seemed easy to get to and the pit drop was only thirty feet deep. Sounded like the perfect place to get Roy back up to speed.



Oar Cave Trip With SCIG

March 2012
AL2200

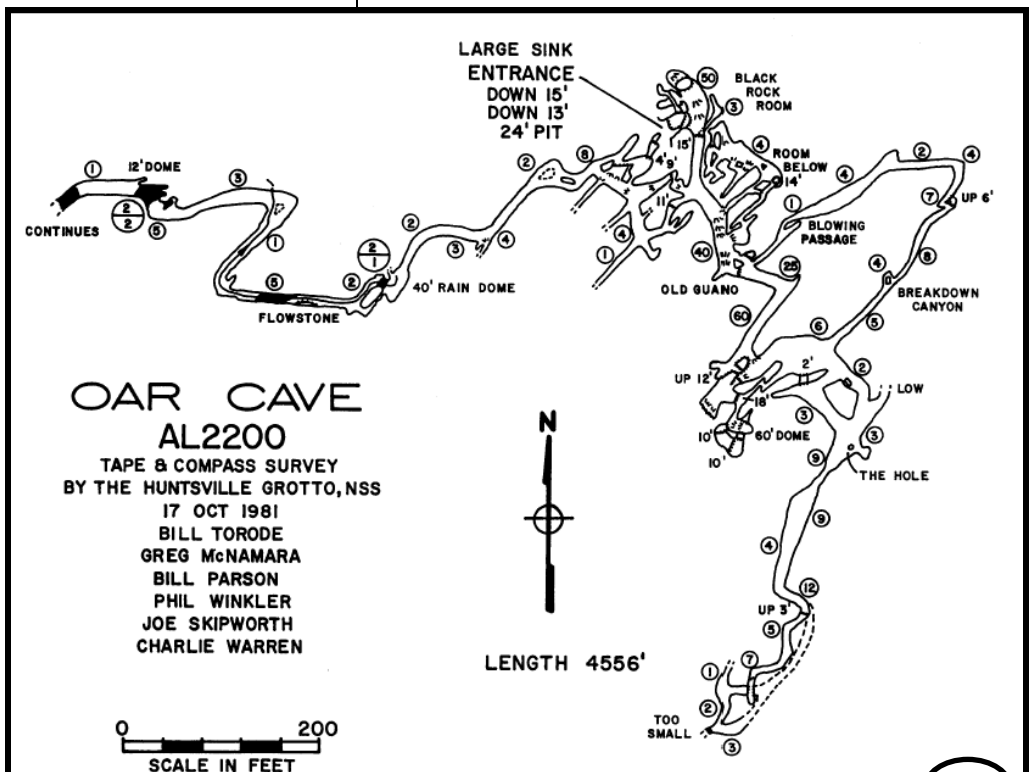
By: Michael Ray

Oar Cave is located on the Swearingin Topo and has 4,556 feet mapped. After reviewing the location using Google satellite views, we discovered that there were new building structures at the beginning of the suggested trail up the mountain. When we arrived at that location we found a locked gate. So we drove to the top of the mountain and blazed a trail down to the cave. The entrance is in a big sink

(Continued on page 7)

More than twenty years ago I moved to South Carolina to become the Head Curator of Natural History for the South Carolina State Museum. While there, I found a few NSS members and we started to work to form a grotto in the state. There were very few caves in SC and so most of our caving was done by interstate to another state. So the grotto name was easily established as the South Carolina Interstate Grotto or SCIG. After twenty years, they are still traveling.

Now that I live in TAG, these SCIG cavers come to visit me often for a stay at hotel Ray's house and we head out for some great TAG caving. Two of the cavers were original charter members of SCIG. They are Marvin Dawson and Roy



Trip Reports continued....



The climb out was difficult. Each drop rigged over a boulder and was a lot of work to get up and over. It took longer than it should for all of us to get out. The thought that this cave was a good “getting back to caving” selection for Roy and a good training for Lois turned out to be quite a challenge. When we got out of the cave it was dark. So the hike up the mountain to the cars was very difficult. We were thoroughly worn out by the end of the day.



Mike Coward

and is beautiful. The climb down to the rig point was very steep. A hand line should have been rigged just for safety.

We stood around at the pit for several minutes looking for a good rig point. If Gene had been with us he would have had his drill with him and would have a bolt set in a second. We rigged a temporary line to the side of the pit so I could climb down to a ledge and look for the best drop



Roy Merin

point. Although the drop was listed as only thirty feet, it took a lot of work to rig a rope for an easy descent and climb out. The first drop ended up over a large rounded boulder which was going to be work to climb over on the way out. At the bottom of this drop we went over a few feet and found a second

drop of about thirteen or fifteen feet. One guide book said this drop is a climb down. Free climbing this drop would be very hazardous. I reviewed the map and found Bill Torode’s name was part of the survey team. I then instructed the group that any map with Bill’s name on it that says “climb down” should be considered a rope rig.

We rigged this short drop and began exploring. The cave does not have beautiful formations, but the eroded limestone rock features are some of the most spectacular I’ve seen. I could not get good pictures of the walls due to the large size of the features. Oar cave has many high canyons and several passages to explore. I truly enjoyed this cave (maybe because I didn’t have to do any belly crawls).

SCIG will be back for more caving soon. I look forward to taking the Gadsden Grotto to this cave. Oar is a beautiful cave with short enough drops to do some difficult rope work training.



Marvin Dawson



Lois Dawson



SERA 2012
May 3rd - May 6th



The 61st annual SERA Cave Carnival was proudly hosted by the Birmingham Grotto on May 3rd through May 6th. It was located at the Paint Rock Valley Lodge and Retreat. The lodge featured a wild west town, ample camping, power and water hook-ups and many more amenities.

The Birmingham Grotto had live music both Friday and Saturday nights as well as complimentary refreshments for everyone's enjoyment. Western themed entertainment was planned throughout the event. The event was complete with western shootout and a sheriff. The Birmingham Grotto made everyone feel welcome and taken care of. The guide book was filled with some great caves and beautiful cave photographs. There were guided trips to Doodlebug Hole, Green's Well, Jess Elliott Cave and Norseman's Well.

The vendors row supplied everyone a chance to lose



their money on caving equipment. It was a great chance for our members to compare equipment and costs. Many of our new members took advantage of having some old timers there to advice them in equipment purchases.

The Gadsden Grotto had one of our strongest turnouts in many years for a regional event. About 17 of our group attended. David arrived on Thursday to "stake-out" an area for the rest to arrive. A few arrived Thursday evening and the rest arrived Friday all through the day. No one is sure when the Wooten's snuck in. But they eventually found us and we all had a great time.

Shanon and Charles purchased some new climbing equipment and several old timers helped them "gear-up". They both decided to hang around camp during the day and watch the climbing contest. Somehow, they were talked into entering the climbing contest. Our very own Shanon Richey (photo on next page) won second place in ladies climbing category! A true TAG hardcore caver. At the evening door prize and awards we had five members of our

(Continued on page 9)

Pictured left to right: M. Ray, Charles Neiswenter, Deborah Stewart, Selena Morton, Shanon Richey (kneeling), Anthony Cline, Mark Medlen, Kristine Medlen, and David Teal.

(Not pictured but in attendance were Richard, Becky and Tommy Wooten)



Trip Reports continued....

grotto win prizes!

A cave trip was put together by Mark and Kristine to Henshaw Spring Cave. The hike to the cave seemed to take forever. We took the route through the open fields to the cave which made for a hot hike. When we found the cave it was located at the bottom of the



Shanon Richey winning 2nd Place in the climbing contest.

hillside. Our group sat at the entrance for a while enjoying the cool air coming from the entrance. While we re-energized, Kristine made herself useful. She found some clothing left at the entrance by a friend who was in the cave and decided to keep them from blowing away with some rocks in the pockets. What a thoughtful friend. The cave is listed as 6000 feet in horizontal length. Most of the cave is a duck walk in some cold water. At the end, there is a climb up into a beautifully decorated and fragile room.



Left to right: Luke, Tommy Wooten, Jerry Reeves (just along for the hike), Becky Wooten, Richard Wooten, Mark Medlen, and Kristine Medlen. Taking photo...M. Ray.



2012 2013 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Elections were held at the Regular Meeting of the Gadsden Grotto on May 8th, 2012. The following officers were elected as the 2012-2013 Executive Committee.

Chairman

Gene Reeves

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