

GADSDEN GROTTTO

Newletter

SUMMER 2013



Gadsden Grotto

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David Teal
- 2nd Vice Chairman of Public
Relations: Selena Morton
- Secretary/Treasurer:
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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.

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Submit materials for publication to:

Michael Ray
4634 County Road 7
Leesburg, AL 35983
frogray@tds.net



Web Page

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

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CAVE BIOLOGY



Gray Bat (*Myotis grisescens*)

Federally listed as Endangered

Description: The Gray Bat is a small bat with grayish-brown fur and a slightly woolly appearance. Its body is approximately five inches in length and its wingspan is 11 to 13 inches. Gray Bats feed on a variety of small, night-flying insects.

Habitat: The Gray Bat lives in colonies within limestone caves. When foraging for their insect food, Gray Bats hunt over forested habitats and wetlands. In one night, a gray bat may travel up to fourteen kilometers to find food.

Reasons for Decline: Nationwide, the Gray Bat population numbers approximately one million animals, but the species is listed as endangered because 90% of the population is concentrated in only eight caves during the hibernation period. Additionally, the Gray Bat has experienced population declines over the past century as a result of habitat loss (the clearing of forests along streams and lakes), past pesticide use, and human disturbance of their breeding and hibernating caves. Their behavior of congregating in only a few caves further makes them vulnerable to these factors.

Front Cover Photograph: Harbin Pit. Mark Medlin at the bottom of the pit.
Photo by Jim Loftin



MINUTES

Of the Gadsden Grotto
Regular Meetings

The following are summaries of the minutes. For full details of the minutes, see the grotto secretary/treasurer

Regular Meeting of April 9, 2013

Prepared by Sharon Brewer, Secretary/Treasurer. Ten in attendance.

Treasurer Report: General Fund is \$105. Rope Fund of \$175. Total funds of \$528.02.

Old Business: Rope fund was decided we need \$300 for an Ellison's Rope. J. Loftin reported resistance to placing the grotto sign at Weaver Cave. D. Teal said that he will work on the other sign in Big Wissanet Cave. Stephen Brewer restated the upcoming ACS meeting on April 13th. Several discussed the reunion at Moses Tomb.

New Business: Secretary was assigned to make a card to thank Charlie and Shanon for their rope fund donation. Sharon Brewer discussed a presentation to do at Lincoln Public Library.

Cave Trips: J. Loftin reported a Neversink trip and stated that the waterfall was very nice. Gene Reeves and M. Ray discussed Alabama-Georgia cave and almost stepping on a rattlesnake and camping at Moses Tomb. Steve Brewer talked about Thorn Well. **Program:** Short videos.

Regular Meeting of May 14, 2013

Prepared by Sharon Brewer, Secretary/Treasurer. Thirteen in attendance.

Treasury Report: Expenses: none. Income: 2 regular memberships - \$20.00. General Fund: \$373.02. Rope Fund: \$175.00. Treasury Balance: \$548.02

Old Business: J. Loftin got permission from land owner (Mack Crook) to place sign in Weaver Cave, Weaver Alabama. Card was signed thanking Shanon and Charles Neiswenter for their generous donation to the Gadsden Grotto of \$100.

New Business: Brewer and Ray discussed NSS Elections. The Grotto Reunion was discussed and gave printed directions. Events were announced: SERA 2013, HCRU Training. Newsletter Expenses \$11.77. Dues of \$30 were deposited. M. Ray handed out new membership contact list.

Trip Reports: Steward Springs Cave trip was discussed by J. Loftin, Ken Lofgren, Michael Elston and M. Ray. A video of the trip was posted on FaceBook by M. Elston.

Elections for 2013-2014:

Chairman: -Stephen Brewer.

1st Vice Chair of Programs: -David Teal.

2nd Vice Chair Public Relations: -Selena Morton

Secretary/Treasurer: -Michael Ray

Program: No program was given due to lack of time.

Regular Meeting of June 11, 2013

Prepared by Michael Ray, Secretary/Treasurer. Eleven in attendance.

Treasury Report: General Fund: \$441.25. Rope Fund: \$175.00. Treasury Balance: \$616.25

Old Business: The Weaver Cave sign was tabled until next meeting. Too much trash was left at the camp site of the Grotto Reunion. Others had cleaned the camp site.

New Business: Events announced: SERA 2013 June 13-17th. HCRU Tyrolean Traverse on Saturday, July 13th, 2013. HCRU Training class in August 22 - 25. The Memorial Day Weekend Ellison Cave rescue was discussed. S. Morton proposed consideration of the NSS Fund Raiser Team 404. It was decided this level of commitment was beyond the grotto's financial ability. S. Morton made a motion for the "Buy-A-Brick" donation of \$100. The vote carried. The NSS will laser engrave a two line message. 1st line will read Gadsden Grotto. 2nd line reads Established 1980. M. Ray, Secretary/Treasurer was voted in charge of purchasing the brick. The June issue of the NSS was presented with Sharon Brewer's photo of Frick's Cave.

Trip Reports: Report of Stewards Spring Cave trip on Memorial Weekend Grotto Reunion with six people (Stephen Brewer, Benjamin von Cramen, Michael Ray, Gene Reeves, Mark and Kristen Medlen). Some trouble finding the way to the water fall, but they found the falls with an eight hour cave trip. Moses Tomb Trips at Reunion reported with Jim Loftin, Stephen Brewer, and Steven Argo with several hiking up with the group. Ticks were heavy and the poison ivy abundant but the trail in good shape. A group hiked above the Grotto camp to drop several short pits. There were too many trees down from the tornado of years ago and the pits were not found. G. Reeves, Charles Neiswenter and Steven and Whitney Argo later went to Russel White. Mystery Falls cave trip report with S. Brewer, M. Elston and S. Argo. Elston reminded us of cold waiting at the bottom for others to climb out.

Program: Fern Cave's Surprise Pit video from the NSS

Regular Meeting of July 9, 2013

Prepared by Michael Ray, Secretary/Treasurer. Nine in attendance

Treasury Report: General Fund: \$341.25. Rope Fund: \$175.00. Treasury Balance: \$516.25. NSS Internet IO Web hosting fee for one year of \$12 was paid as a donation by M. Ray. \$100 was paid from the Grotto Funds for a donation to the "Buy A Brick" project for the NSS.

Old Business: J. Loftin reported waiting to find a good location for Weaver Cave sign. A letter from the NSS and certificate acknowledging our donation to the Buy-a-Brick fund was presented which reads "National Speleological Society. This is to certify that Gadsden Grotto has donated brick #140 on 07/03/2013 of the NSS Headquarters and Conference Center. Signed by Wm Shrewsbury, President.

New Business: Sharon Brewer did a presentation at the Lincoln Library in June for 3-4 year olds dressing in cave gear as she talked. She also gave a presentation at the

Minutes continued....

Anniston Library to teenagers. Stephen Brewer discussed HCRU Tyrolean Traverse on Saturday, July 13th. A Rusty's Cave trip was planned after the event. Discussed were the HCRU training class of August 22 – 25, the Sewanee Mountain Cave Fest and the TAG Fall Cave of Oct. 10-13, and the NSS Convention of Aug. 5-9 at Shippensburg Univ., PA. Several discussed the great programs and workshops presented at the conventions and stressed the importance of the grotto attending. Ken Lofgren mentioned a church group that might be interested in a cave trip. The Grotto Release Forms and the Grotto request for a donation to the gear fund from groups borrowing equipment was discussed. G. Reeves leg operation was discussed and all wished him well.

Program: Jim Loftin presented 35mm slides.

Regular Meeting of August 13, 2013

Prepared by Michael Ray, Secretary/Treasurer. Eleven in attendance

Treasury Report: General Fund: \$341.25. Rope Fund: \$175.00. Treasury Balance: \$516.25.

Old Business: The Weaver Cave sign was hung by J. Loftin. City of Anniston may purchase Weaver Cave. Discussed problems if the SCCi purchased the cave. Concern is the bats. David said that he took Merlin Tuttle to Weaver in 1979 or 1980 and there were Grey and Indian Bats.

New Business: Stephen Brewer reminded the grotto of: HCRU Training class on August 22 – 25, the Sewanee Mountain Cave Fest and the TAG Fall Cave on Oct. 10th-13th. Jim stated he might go early to hold a grotto spot. D. Teal made a motion to lower the price of the grotto patches and decals. He stated that he found other grottos are charging less. Motion passed. The new prices: Decals \$3.00 and

Patches \$5.00. Anthony Cline suggested putting the items for sale on Ebay and opening a Paypal account. Constitution discussion: changes are being made and we need to have a way to get copies of the changes to each member. Some will get information by email and some will need direct mail. Stephen Brewer encouraged everyone to join the NSS. J. Loftin encouraged each caver to join the SCCi and discussed the great work they did.

Cave Trip Plans: Stephen Brewer is planning a trip to Cemetery Pit. J. Loftin discussed Mutt Canyon parking problems.

Cave Trip Reports: David Teal discussed the dig on a Colvin Mountain cave stating there was a possible 20 foot drop with some air blowing. He has permission to park by Vulcan Materials. He also stated that the company makes regular patrols for cars parked. Sharon Brewer discussed a photo shoot in Weaver Cave with M. Elston. She suggested that be another trip to photograph the bats. Stephen Brewer talked about Rusty's Cave trip with Tyler and Kristen Horton. M. Elston reported about their trip to Mystery Falls and that he posted a video on YouTube.

PROGRAM: Mystery Falls video by Michael Elston.



Above
Entrance of Weaver Cave. Left to Right: Sharon Brewer, Jonathan Brewer, Houston Mann, Stephen Brewer and Kyle Mann
Photo by Michael Elston



Left
Inside Rusty's Cave. Left to Right: Kristen and Tyler Horton, Stephen Brewer, Michael Elston
Photo by Michael Elston



TRIP REPORTS

Mystery Falls Tennessee Trip Report

By Stephen Brewer

On Saturday, June 8, 2013, several grotto members went to Mystery Falls, Tennessee. Michael Elston and Steven Argo met up with me that morning, and we car-pooled to Chattanooga together. I had been to the cave on four previous occasions, and was very comfortable doing the 270' pit. My two fellow cavers were not as confident, however, and I was fairly sure one or both would need a bit of encouragement to actually do the pit. Michael's deepest pit experience so far was Neversink, which is 162' deep. So Mystery was going to be a big step up (or down) for him. Steven Argo had done 235' deep Moses Tomb a few weeks prior and thus seemed a little more confident.

When we arrived at the parking area, both of my friends seemed pleasantly surprised at how short the hike to the entrance was. When we went into the short tunnel leading to the pit, I noticed a little more water in the floor than what I expected to see, and had a brief flashback to another trip to Mystery, one in which we ended up having to swim out of the cave. But this day was much different: there was no rain in the forecast, and it hadn't been raining much in the week preceding our trip. So I knew we should be OK. When we reached the stream, the water level was about normal. This meant we would have a fairly dry rappel, and that the climb back up would be dry as well.

We had some difficulty getting the 320' rope to feed off the coil and down the pit. We ended up with, as Michael called it, "a mass of spaghetti." After a lot of struggle and teamwork, we finally got it all down the pit. Then Michael volunteered to go down first, and after making sure the pads were in place, he descended with hardly a second thought. "That was easy enough", I thought, since I expected him to need a little prodding. About a minute later we heard "Off Rope." Then it was Steven Argo's turn. After a couple of comments about the "pucker factor," he took off down the rope as well. "Way to go, Argo," I thought. When he reached the bottom, I blocked the water flow so they could enjoy the spectacle below when I released it. If you have never experienced this at Mystery Falls, it is quite a thrill. After about fifteen minutes, the water level was approaching the top of the dam, and I hollered down to warn them to stand clear. Then a minute later I pulled the plywood out from in front of the pipe, and the deluge began. It lasted for about ten minutes, and then I got on rope and went down myself. By this time Michael and Steven were getting a little chilled, partly because they had been there a while, and partly because of the maelstrom of wind and water they had just experienced. Steven Argo said he was OK to

wait a while longer, so Michael began climbing, and I got on rope shortly afterwards. This was Michael's first time climbing tandem, and he soon figured out how to work with the rhythm of his partner. He also got over the lip quite easily, even with the extra weight below. Next Steven climbed, and seemed to make the climb easily and rapidly. It wasn't until later that I learned that, for some reason, his back was hurting him the whole time. Then both Michael and Steven announced that "once was enough." I, of course, wanted to do it again. Heck, I wanted to get my money's worth, having driven all the way to Chattanooga! So I did it one more time, and then we coiled the rope, gathered our gear, and left the cave.

After changing clothes, Michael wanted to see the concrete slab which was over the top of the original manmade entrance. Since it was only a few feet above the road, we strolled up for a look. The fairly large slab is probably about 12' x 20,' but then I spied something I hadn't noticed before. There was a hole about two inches in diameter in the middle of the slab. When I got close to it, I felt the cool air rushing out of the cave. Even though I knew what lay beneath, it always gets my heart rate up when I feel that cold rush of air coming out of the ground! It made me hungry to go ridge walking again, and to go find some virgin cave.

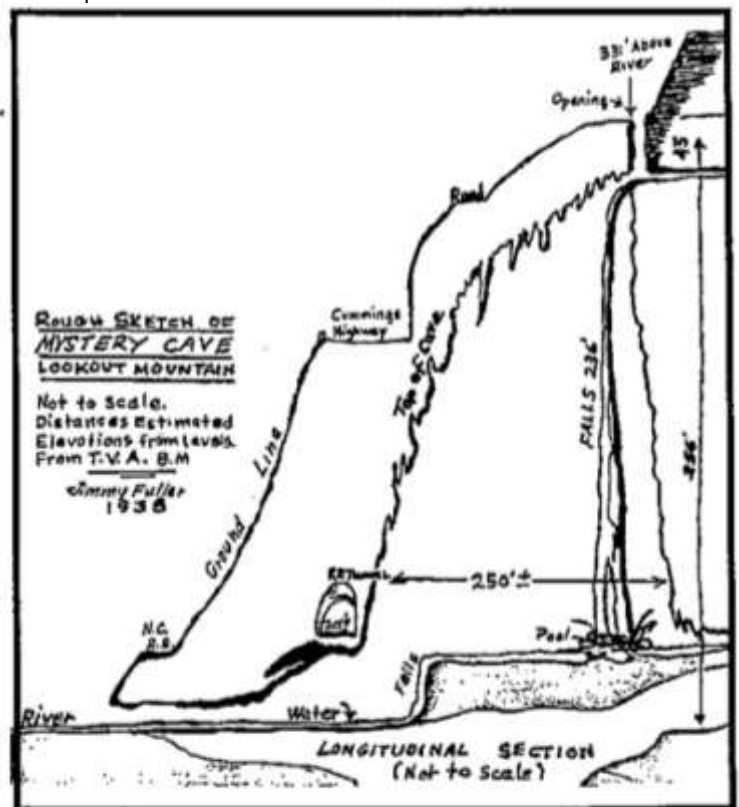


Figure 2.2. Profile of Mystery Falls Cave by Jimmy Fuller, 1938.

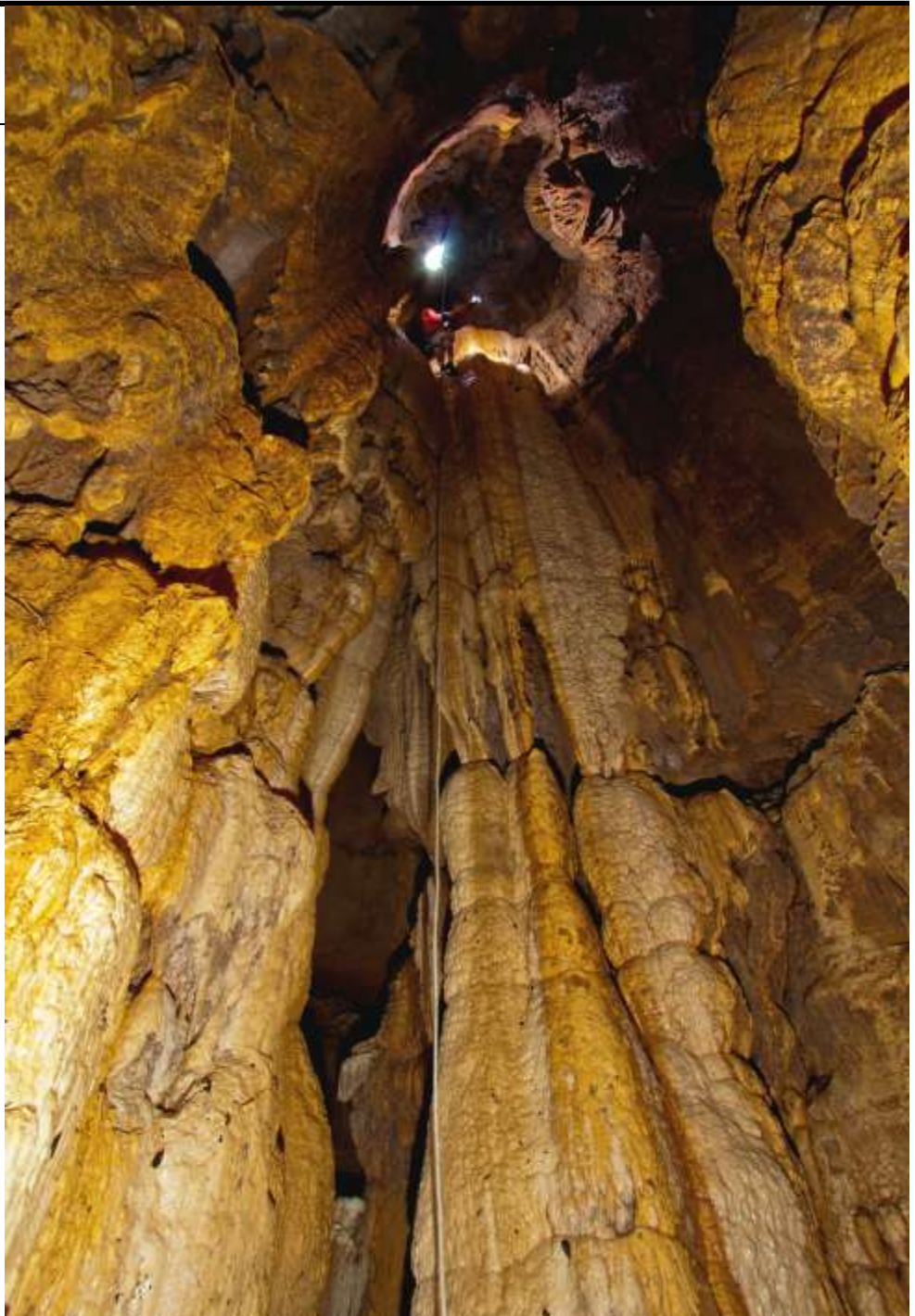
Trip Reports continued....

Harbin Pit

By Jim Loftin
August 31, 2013

Mark Medlen and I, Jim Loftin, were planning on going to Hall's Pit and Harbin Pit. We stopped at Harbin first and never made it to Hall's Pit after the sweat bath we took finding Harbin Pit. I parked on the south side of the straight stretch of the road to the mountain. As we were leaving my car, another car came down the road from the right side of the mountain. It was an Asian guy who said he owned the corn fields on the south side of the road. He let us park on his side of the road. As we're leaving, another car came down the road from the left side of the mountain. The woman and daughter were dumping their garbage and getting their mail, as they lived way down this road. Mrs. Bowers offered us a drop off at the old logging road that goes right to it. On the way there, she told us about the hunting club that had the 1st house on the left on that road. They like to party and four-wheel and shoot guns when hunting season is not going on and they aren't caver friendly. However, the landowner, Greg Hall of Huntsville, has given the cavers permission to go to the pit during non-hunting season only. The daughter was studying zoology at Ala. A & M.

This faint grown up old road they let us out at fizzed out quick so Mark and I went old school and tried to locate it according to the topographic map location. After a lot of walking around and sweating, Mark found the pit. Sure enough the road went almost all the way to it. It had a small sink entrance with a nice shaft with flowstone flowing down most of the 147' pit. The rocks at the bottom were uniformly covered with pretty crusty brown calcite in a fairly large area. When I first visited this pit in 1983, there was a discarded #5 flashbulb all covered with this same calcite. It was so beautiful and part of the cave at that point!



Harbin Pit. Mark Medlin on rope. *Photo by Jim Loftin*

I went back a couple of years later and the bulb was gone! It was not there. So sad!

Upon leaving, we followed that faint road down to a traveled road. This ran into a red steel cattle gate that had a well-traveled road on the other side. A good place to park next time might be around that gate, just not blocking anything. This road came out on the Bower's road on the north side of the mountain a good bit up from where she let us off.

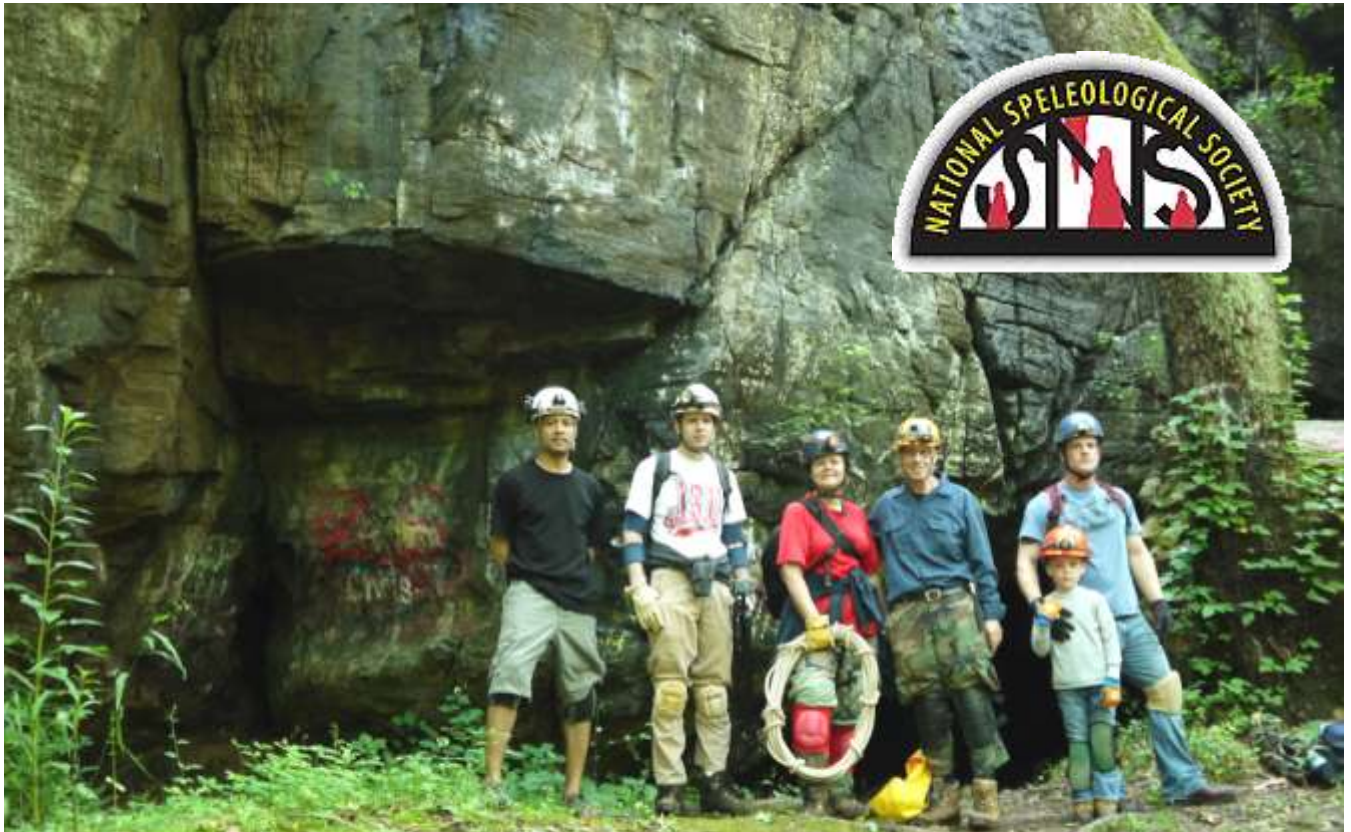
Trip Reports continued....



Harbin Pit. Mark Medlin rigging the pit.
Photo by Jim Loftin



Snake's Well. Clinton Elmore on rope.
Photo by Jim Loftin



Weaver Cave Trip with Michael Elston, Jonathan Brewer, Sharon & Stephen Brewer, Kyle Mann and his son Houston. *Photo by Michael Elston*

GADSDEN GROTTO
P.O. BOX 2092
GADSDEN, AL 35903

