



WVCC

The Open Cave

Newsletter of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy
June 2012

WEST VIRGINIA CAVE CONSERVANCY

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“Preserving the cave and karst resources of West Virginia for future generations”

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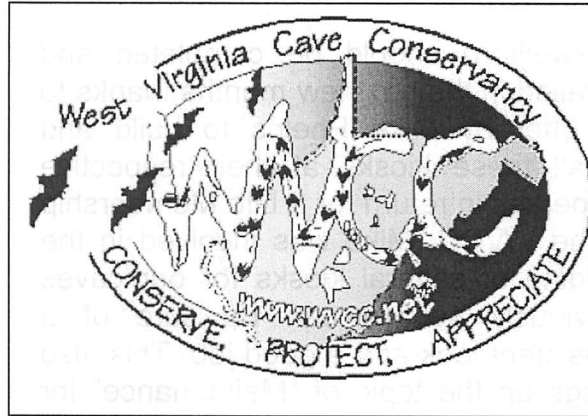
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Cover: Haynes Cave by C. Bassett

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From the President

By Carroll Bassett

It is with great pleasure that I can officially announce that Fred Grady (longtime WVCC Director and Paleo Dude) has, at our last board meeting, agreed to donate his cave, Haynes, to the WVCC. In case you are not aware, this is the same cave that the official WV State Fossil was found in, *Megalonyx jefferersonii* or Giant Ground Sloth which was originally identified by Thomas Jefferson. Fred has written up a short description of the cave later in this issue and more background can be found at: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Megalonyx_jeffersonii. This will bring the number of caves either owned or managed by WVCC to nine. With the upcoming convention just around the corner I hope that a number of you will have a chance to take a trip in our newest cave.

On another topic, Bone Cave has a new owner. The property consisting of 24.44 acres was purchased at auction for \$237,000 on May 12, 2012. It was unfortunate that we were unable to get the owners to sell the land as 2 lots since it is divided by the Greenbrier River Trail,

the northern section being the quarry with the three caves and the southern section having substantial river frontage on the Greenbrier River. Frontage here brings big dollars which explains the high price of the land. Immediately after the auction I spoke to the new owners and explained to them our interest in the caves and made them aware of the fact that people had been caving on what was now their land for many decades and that we would be available to help them manage access. I have to admit I was a bit concerned with their initial responses but having had 3 phone conversations with them since think they will be friendly to our community. So at this point there doesn't seem much reason for concern for access since for the time being the cave remains open and we are in a friendly dialogue with the new owners on how to work together for our mutual benefit.

Kiosks for the "Richard J. Bantel Cave Preserve" (Wild Cat entrance to Culversons) and "Maxwelton Cave Preserve" (Scott Entrance to

Maxwellton) should be completed and installed in the next few months thanks to an offer by Mike Phelps to build and install these kiosks at their respective properties in return for a Life Membership in the WVCC. Mike was involved in the building of several kiosks for our caves previously so we can be sure of a consistent look and a good job. This also brings up the topic of "Maintenance" for which we need volunteer help for jobs like: cutting brush, clearing fallen trees from right-of-ways, ditch and culvert work. If you are willing to give us a hand with these projects let us know and we will do our best to co-ordinate tasks with you. Some of these projects will require several to many participants i.e. culvert on Vago Rd. Does your Grotto take on cave projects? Over the next few months our managers will be putting together a list of needs so that volunteers will have a varied list of jobs to choose from. Thanks in advance for any help you might give!!!!

In my last column I mentioned that I was to speak to the local realtors association who had contacted me previously over two properties with "cave issues", one of which has resolved itself, the other is still pending the decision of the developer. The talk went well, I took them on an imaginary cave trip to give them an armchair view of our sport and then went on to discuss some of the environmental issues with karst and cave management. Shortly after this I was asked to give the same talk to the Lewisburg Chapter of the Ruritans at their monthly meeting.

Again the talk was received well and afterwards I was approached by one of their members with a sink hole on his property wondering if there might be a cave there.

Arriving at their farm we realized that we were very close to the now very closed Bell Entrance to Ludingtons Cave and that the potential for gaining a "friendly" entrance to that end of this major cave would allow the completion of the exploration and mapping of the cave (the only existing entrance is a 7 to 8 hour trip to get to this part of Ludingtons). The dig went well over several weekends mostly with WVCC members and directors and has netted over 500 feet of mostly crawling passage which we have confirmed is directly above several large passages in Ludingtons, now if only we can find our way down to them. I should also mention that the owner's two sons, who had not caved before were very helpful with the dig and call me now almost every weekend looking for cave trips or digs and wondering when we will be back to make the connection.

I have mentioned this because I have become convinced that as cavers we need to work more actively in our communities to enroll public opinion in our cause and that in doing so have very positive results. The more we educate non-cavers to what we are so passionate about, the more they will come to appreciate these natural wonders and hopefully think of us as a management resource if needed in the future.

Haynes Cave

By Fred Grady

Haynes Cave is in Monroe County and is of modest size, a little over 4000 feet in length. There are 3 levels. The upper two levels are almost all walking passage and suitable for beginners. The 3rd level – the lower level - is a narrow crawlway below a 50 foot drop. There is a wooden winch at the 50 foot drop left over from saltpeter mining days. There are other artifacts in the front of the cave too.

The cave was probably first mined in the 1790's when bones were found that were sent to Thomas Jefferson. He initially thought they were of a large cat, but as he finished his paper he put in a post-script suggesting they might be a sloth, which turned out to be correct.

In more recent years I have dug in Haynes and recovered many more bones, including a few more pieces of sloth. Unfortunately, where I am digging appears to be spoil piles from the salt peter miners and thus I can't get any good stratigraphic columns.

Geologically, Haynes is dry. There is one major speleothem near the entrance. Further in, there are abundant gypsum formations - many unfortunately vandalized.

Haynes is open to all - just be careful you don't block a gate when you park.

WVCC is in the Black

By Bob Hoke, WVCC Treasurer

For the first time in at least six years, the Conservancy owes no money.

The Conservancy's Endowment Fund consists of the money paid by Life Members plus some donations that have been made to the Fund over the years. As of the end of 2011 the Endowment Fund had a balance of \$32,600. The money in the Fund is permanent, but the Conservancy's Board of Directors can borrow from it to help finance cave purchases with the stipulation that the money eventually be repaid.

Back in 2001 and 2003 "loans" from the Endowment Fund helped finance the purchase of the Persinger Entrance to Benedicts Cave and the Lightners Entrance to McClungs Cave. These "loans" were in the process of being repaid when the opportunity to purchase the entrance to Maxwellton Sink Cave came up in 2008. At that time money was again borrowed from the Endowment Fund to help with that purchase.

Over the last three years the Conservancy has received some very significant donations from individual members and many caving organizations. These donations, along with membership dues and money raised at the Old Timers Reunion each year, allowed all loans from the Endowment Fund to be repaid by the end of 2011.

(cont.)

The Endowment Fund is now fully funded and the Conservancy owes no money at all.

Dues income is being used to pay for routine Conservancy operations (administration, newsletter, property maintenance, etc.) and any unrestricted donations received are being placed in the Cave Acquisition Fund. This Fund, as the name implies, will be tapped the next time a cave property is being purchased. The Cave Acquisition Fund had a balance of about \$2,500 at the end of 2011. Of course, any future purchase is also likely to require another loan from the Endowment Fund.

In any case, as of the end of 2011, the Conservancy is in very sound financial shape and has no internal or external debts.



Membership Report

By Pauline Apling

As of June, 2012, there are 197 active WVCC members:

73 Regular members
15 Family members
7 Institutional members
5 Sustaining members
89 Life members
8 Life Institutional members

The following WVCC members have joined since May, 2011:

Jeremy Browning Coalton, WV
Joseph Colman Burke, VA
Eric Combs Camp Creek, WV
John & Regina Dowdy Maxwelton, WV
John Fox Radford, VA
Vik Garg Montoursville, PA
Nancy Hicks Jamestown, NY
John Hosier Dorothy, NJ
Steve Kite Morgantown, WV
Sherri Lukehart Springfield, OH
Brian Masney Danville, PA
Tom McIntyre Mechanicsville, VA
Robert S. Oehler Patriot, OH
Dave Ruth Butler, PA
Michael Schirato Nanty Glo, PA
Steven Sells Lancaster, OH
Jeff Stutler Elkins, WV
John & Diane Watson Conneaut, OH

Thank you! – and Welcome!

WVCC Donors
by Bob Hoke, WVCC Treasurer

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy would not be able to accomplish its mission of preserving and protecting West Virginia's caves and karst lands without the generous support of its members and friends. The lists below show donations made by organizations and individuals from January 1, 2011 through March 31, 2012. The list does not include membership dues paid by the Conservancy's Regular and Institutional members.

Organizations

Alpharma LLC
Baltimore Grotto
Bassett Foundation
Battlefield Area Troglodyte Society
Ridge Blue Grotto
Central Connecticut Grotto
District of Columbia Grotto
DME Alliance, Inc.
Estate of Robert Handley
Franklin County Grotto
Greater Cincinnati Grotto of the NSS
Northern New Jersey Grotto of the NSS
South Carolina Interstate Grotto
Tri-State Grotto of the NSS
Virginia Karstlands, Inc.

Individuals

Frank Abbato
Pauline Apling
Robert Ashbrook
Avery Atkins
William Balfour
Barbara Bentzin
David Berman
Patricia Bingham
Jeff Burk
Wayne Campagna
Gordon Cole
Joseph Colman
Don Davis
Delbert and June Dawson
John Dowdy

Individuals (cont.)

Marshall Fausold
Eleonora Florance
John Fox
Frederick Grady
Robert Gulden
David Hughes
William Jones
Dr. Mark Kilcollin
Edward LaRock
Jeff MacDonald
C. W. Maus
Charles Maus
Douglas McCarty
Roy Merin
Randy Michael
Amos Mincin
Patrick Minnick
Ben Mirable
Timothy Mootz
William Murray
George Palmos
John Pearson
Carl Pierce
Mr. and Mrs. William Rudderow
Charles Savel
Larry Smith
Miles Drake and Joanne Smith
Alex Sproul
John Taylor
Robert Thrun
Carol Tideman
Michael Trout
Daryl Trusty
Alfred and Rhonda Way
Thomas Williams

Update on the Wild Cat Entrance to Culverson Creek

By Bill Balfour

The Wild Cat entrance to the Culverson Creek System continues to be one of the most heavily visited cave preserves that belong to the WVCC. Groups from Canada to Connecticut as well as Girl Scouts from Tidewater are frequent visitors. In addition, lots of cavers from West Virginia and Virginia are discovering the pleasures of the cave. During the recent VAR meet just over the hill at Poorfarm the cave was visited by numerous attendees even though the water was up. Dave Riggs led a bolt climb on Saturday of VAR that succeeded in reaching a high waterfall lead. A subsequent trip a couple of weeks later has yielded tight virgin canyon going upstream to another waterfall that will have to be climbed, There is also another high lead that will need to be bolted up to in the McLaughlin Trunk just upstream of the one we are now in.

The Wild Cat entrance actually consists of two entrances side by side. The original Wild Cat entrance is a natural opening on the right side of the headwall and almost immediately opens into large walking passage. This section of the cave is call McLaughlin-Unus and through trips of around two miles are possible with exits at the Woodson entrance or the McLaughlin entrance. There is approximately 4 miles of cave in this section. The Pipe entrance on the left leads down into a small room where

a body sized hole (Blackball Climb) drops about 12 feet into the connector passage. This is a wet overflow tube that is mostly walking for about 800 feet until it intersects the main Overflow Tube. There is a tricky downclimb at the Balcony Room into the big passage at this point. To the right (upstream) the passage goes several hundred feet to the intersection of the main Culverson Creek. From that point it is not quite a mile out to the main entrance of Culverson and is pretty easy walking passage, just follow the water upstream. There is a lake that you will have to swim just before the main entrance so be prepared to get very wet. Going left and downstream from the Balcony Room you will stroll down large borehole until you come to the Hairy Place. There is about a 10 drop into a deep pool at this point. Stay to the right up on the ledge where a handline is rigged and walk out to a point where the handline is of no further use and climb down the wall onto the logs below. Once at the bottom you will immediately begin the climb up the 100 foot high Mudderhorn. Debris on the ceiling at the top of this immense mud mountain attests to caves ability to flood. Beyond this there are many ways to go, all of which are large. If you take the left most passage you will eventually get to the Logjam, mile or so in.. This is the way to the rest of the cave and contains another 14 miles of passage and several other entrances that need to be prerigged in order to do a through trip. It is anticipated that Wild Cat will be a very popular cave during the NSS Convention. If the water is down, miles of cave will be available for the

convention attendees. The finished map of the cave will be on display at the convention also. If you would like to see more here is a link to a short video clip that Aaron Bird did a couple of years ago:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mnN_I1rr660&feature=player_embedded

“Spelunking” Added to West Virginia’s Recreational Liability Law

By John Pearson

West Virginia law provides liability protection for landowners who open their property to non-commercial recreational use. After several years of work, both houses of the West Virginia legislature have approved an amendment to the law to add “spelunking” to the list of recreational activities mentioned in the law. The Governor is expected to approve the bill containing the change because it also contains some wording changes needed to obtain Federal Homeland Security funds. Spelunking is the term added to the law because it is defined in the dictionary, but “caving” isn’t.

The change has a long history that has involved a number of cavers and politicians. Here’s a brief summary of the key players and their role.

I initiated the idea several years ago and it was supported by letters from Bob Handley on behalf of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy (WVCC). A key supporter was Chuck Frostick, the West

Virginia Association for Cave Studies (WVACS) Treasurer, who works the capital beat for the Public Broadcasting System in Charleston and who sees the legislators on a daily basis. Chuck knew when the bill would be reintroduced each year because he got all the committee agendas and he kept me in the loop.

The first year it died in house committee because it was submitted too late for consideration. I wrote letters as a Manager of Bubble Cave LLC to Delegates Thomas W Campbell (Greenbrier County), Ray Canterbury (Greenbrier County) and John Blair Hunter (Mineral County) and Senators Robert A Schadler (Mineral County), Dave Sypolt (Mineral County), Don Caruth (Greenbrier County) and Jesse O. Guills (Greenbrier County). I also prepared letters for Bob Handley’s signature and WVCC for the aforementioned Greenbrier delegates and senators as well as Delegate Craig P. Blair (Berkeley County) and Senators John R. Unger II and John Yoder (both Berkeley County).

I personally received responses from Delegates Tom Campbell and Ray Canterbury and Senators John Hunter, Don Caruth and Jesse Guills. By 2009 Hunter and Guills were no longer senators so my calls went only to Senator Caruth, who passed away in office in 2011.

In 2010, I was attending the Ecology Day thing with Dave Cowan on behalf of WVACS and WVCC (we had a table in the lower rotunda area with the other ecological companies and entities) and I got to meet some of the players in the

legislature. That year, it passed the House by 95-5 and was sent to committee in the Senate but not with enough time in the session to be acted upon.

Last year it also passed the House, but then died in a Senate committee.

I think it is only fitting that Bob Handley's role in getting this thing started be noted as a final testimony to his caving legacy. Both he and Senator Caruth passed away before the final action on this bill.

Here's a summary of the law as amended. Many irrelevant parts have been omitted and the new "spelunking" is in bold:

WEST VIRGINIA CODE
CHAPTER 19. AGRICULTURE.
ARTICLE 25. LIMITING LIABILITY OF LANDOWNERS.

§19-25-1. Purpose.

The purpose of this article is to encourage owners of land to make available to the public land and water areas for military training or recreational or wildlife propagation purposes by limiting their liability for injury to persons entering thereon and for injury to the property of persons entering thereon and limiting their liability to persons who may be injured or otherwise damaged by the acts or omissions of persons entering thereon.

§19-25-2. Limiting duty of landowner generally.

... An owner of land who either directly or indirectly invites or permits without charge as that term is defined in section five of this article, any person to use such property for recreational or wildlife

propagation purposes does not thereby ... assume responsibility for or incur liability for any injury to person or property caused by an act or omission of such persons.

§19-25-5.

Definitions.

Unless the context used clearly requires a different meaning, as used in this article:

(1) "Charge" means:

(A) For purposes of limiting liability for recreational or wildlife propagation purposes set forth in section two of this article, the amount of money asked in return for an invitation to enter or go upon the land, including a one-time fee for a particular event, amusement, occurrence, adventure, incident, experience or occasion which may not exceed fifty dollars a year per recreational participant. ...

(5) "Recreational purposes" includes, but shall not be limited to, any one or any combination of the following noncommercial recreational activities: Hunting, fishing, swimming, boating, camping, picnicking, hiking, pleasure driving, motorcycle or all-terrain vehicle riding, bicycling, horseback riding, spelunking, nature study, water skiing, winter sports and visiting, viewing or enjoying historical, archaeological, scenic or scientific sites or otherwise using land for purposes of the user.

(The statute was obtained from www.legis.state.wv.us/wvcode/Code.cfm?chap=19&art=25#25 on March 13, 2012 and summarized by Bob Hoke. The modification adding "spelunking" to §19-25-5 had not been signed into law, but the pending change is shown in this summary).



TALK BACK TO US!

By Alex Sproul

Your WVCC Board needs to be able to communicate with you, the membership, more frequently than the usual three newsletters a year. Yes, we can do that at any time via the website, but that would require that you remember to go and look there, often finding that nothing has changed.

But much more importantly, the Board needs to hear from YOU! There is presently no way to do that, short of e-mailing each director separately, or collaring someone at the annual banquet. You are our eyes and ears for potential new cave acquisitions and funding sources. You have many ideas that would benefit the Conservancy. You are, in fact, the Conservancy, and you elect the Board to do your bidding. You are the future of the Conservancy; the Board needs to know about your interests, your energies, and your projects. We need for you to guide us, and there is synergy in group discussion and consensus!

To meet all these needs, the Board is establishing a Yahoo Group that is open to all members, on a voluntary basis. (We already have one for the Board to discuss issues.) The Group will allow immediate posting of Board meeting minutes, make available the management plans for our caves, photos, and reports. Much of this, of course, is already on the website. The real value of the Group is in providing an immediate and simple conduit for the

Board to let you know what's going on, and more importantly, for you to communicate with the Board and with each other, much as Cavechat does for the NSS.

The Yahoo Group will work like this. It will have a website, which allows members to view email conversations (including archives back to the very beginning), documents, photos, databases, polls, and a calendar. Emails can be composed and sent from the site, or from the mail program on your own computer, and those emails are distributed to all members of the Group at the e-dress of their choice. Each member can opt to have those emails come directly, or be bundled into a single daily digest. Or, one can opt to receive only important notices from the Group moderator, or no messages at all (using only the website to view traffic).

How to join: Simply send an email to one of the group's moderators, Frank Abbato <fabbato@hotmail.com>, or Alex Sproul <imocaves@comcast.net> saying that you would like to join the WV Cave Conservancy Yahoo Group. You will then be sent an invitation to join, and instructions for how to do it. You will not be spammed with unsolicited blanket invitations; that would be a violation of the Yahoo terms of service, and we want only interested members to join.

But the more our members (and directors) participate in this forum, the more valuable it will be. We hope you'll give it a try! We look forward to hearing from you!

Frank Abbato and Alex Sproul
Moderators