

The Open Cave

The Newsletter of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy

Number 7 Winter, 2003

Conservation Plan Map

WV Cave Conservancy

Greenbrier Valley Conservation District

5 Acres

Date: 05/22/2003

Lewisburg Service Center

Natural Resources Conservation Service

M Householder

304-645-6172 ext: 108



Legend

-  Food Plot/ Forage Planting
-  Live
-  Approximate Cave Entrance Location
-  Tree and Snail Sightings
-  Stream
-  Parking Area
-  Primitive Camping Area
-  Boundaries



200 0 200 400 Feet



WEST VIRGINIA CAVE CONSERVANCY

**"Preserving the cave and karst resources of West Virginia for future generations"
Number 7 Winter, 2003**

The West Virginia Cave Conservancy is a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. All contributions to the Conservancy are tax-deductible. Please send all contributions and dues to: WVCC, Inc., PO Box 243, Frankford, WV, 24938. For more information on membership, visit our website at www.wvcc.net. Please send all contributions to the newsletter to the newsletter editor. Any internal organization of the N.S.S. has permission to reprint materials in this newsletter with proper recognition given to the author and *The Open Cave*.

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Note to Members: Annual memberships expire on anniversary date of initial membership. Be sure to check your address label for anniversary date. To renew, use membership application at back of newsletter.

This month's cover is the Persinger Entrance Conservation Map, produced in cooperation with the USDA. See inside on how you can help this plan take shape!

Donaldson Cave Gate Installed

Bob Hoke

Photos by Meredith Hall Johnson

Donaldson Cave is a small (700-foot) cave in Berkeley County, West Virginia. Since it is only a two-hour drive from the DC area, it has been a popular beginner cave, especially for kid trips. The cave owner died a couple years ago and the cave has been closed since then. Several months ago the property was sold and it is being subdivided for high-end houses on large lots. The developer was planning to fill the cave with concrete, but through the efforts of Dave West and another local cave owner, the cave entrance and a tiny parcel of land around it have been donated to the West Virginia Cave Conservancy. The deal required that the cave entrance be gated.



Craig Hindman of Baltimore Grotto has designed and built several cave gates using the proven design from Bat Conservation International. The good news is that this design is very difficult to breach and allows free access to bats. The bad news is that it requires a LOT of steel and considerable skill to design and fabricate. Craig, possibly in a moment of weakness, agreed to build a gate for Donaldson Cave.

The cave entrance is fairly small, but it is all rotten rock unsuitable for a gate. The gate had to be several feet inside the cave and ended up being about 24 feet long and up to 5 feet high, and it required over 5,000 pounds of steel. Craig spent over 40 hours prefabricating the components and a team of volunteers met at the cave on Saturday, September 6, to do the actual installation. In addition to doing all the off-site metal work, Craig managed to borrow a large generator and welding unit, a cutting torch with tanks, and a trailer to haul all the stuff to the cave.



Fortunately, there was little manual hauling involved

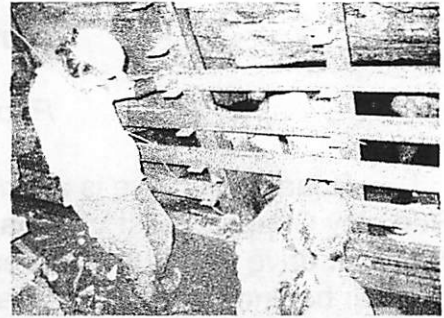
since the trailer could be parked directly in front of the entrance.



Construction was pretty straight-forward, but it still took about 10 hours to construct the gate. There was quite a bit of digging needed to prepare the foundation and area around the gate; Dave West brought a hammer drill that made quick work of drilling

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the ½" holes needed to anchor the gate to the rock; and Craig used many pounds of welding rod to weld all the pieces together. As daylight faded we became quite concerned about running out of gas in the generator. However, just as the last weld on the lock assembly was finished the generator sputtered to a halt. Although we had to do the final cleanup using cave lights instead of halogen floodlights, the timing was really perfect.



The cave will soon be reopened to visitors. I'm not sure exactly what the procedure will be for getting the combination to the lock, but I think that access will be controlled by Tri-State Grotto.

Donaldson is a great starter cave, but it won't challenge anyone who has caved before. Its main attribute is its proximity to the DC/Baltimore area.

Gate construction workers included Craig

Hindman, Carol Tideman, Dave West, Karen Willmes, Bob Hoke, Pauline Apling, John Pearson, Allison Hazen, Art Hanson, Jay Blackmon, Kim Fleischmann, Fred Grady, Meredith Hall Johnson, and Kelsea Johnson

(Pizza driver!). *Editor's Note: A management plan for Donaldson's Cave is in the works. In the meantime, for access or information on Donaldson's Cave, please contact the Donaldson's Cave committee chair: Bob Bennett at 304.229.2185 or via email at: gimpycaver@wmconnect.com and watch for more information on our website.*

Digging for Caves

William K. Jones and David C. Culver

Discussion by William K. Jones-

Cave entrances provide access to the cave for animals and people that are not full time residents and points of energy and air exchange with the surface. Most cave entrances occur through natural "accidents" rather than as an intricate part of the formation of the cave itself. Does a dug or artificial entrance make that much difference to the cave environment? And, are all the changes caused by a new entrance harmful to the cave?

If the goal of a cave management program is to preserve the cave environment in as natural a state as possible, then the opening of new entrances or the enlarging of passages is probably not acceptable. This is the reason for the general "no digging" policy on National Park lands. However, the opening of new caves or cave passages on lands not managed as wilderness or wild areas may have some benefits.

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1. To protect caves in urbanized or industrial settings, the location of the passages and the surface input points of water to the cave must be defined. Detailed maps and surveys of the caves are needed – we cannot protect a resource we don't know about.
2. Monitoring of changes in the cave due to surface activities is best accomplished by measurements taken in the cave, and this obviously requires access to the cave.
3. Having and maintaining a protected entrance, rather natural or artificial, will probably produce benefits that outweigh the potential damages to a cave in an urbanized or industrial setting.

Dave Culver raised an interesting point at the WVCC banquet about the possible consequences of the rather formidable "dig" now going on at Maxwellton Sink Cave and his comments follow:

Discussion by David C. Culver –

The news about the dig for a new entrance to Maxwellton Sink Cave presented at the annual banquet of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy is very exciting from the point of view of cavers. It is a big system that we have not been able to get into for more than twenty years. It is also very interesting and exciting that the location of where to dig was determined by the microgravity measurements that Jeff Bray and his colleagues did. Personally, I can't wait to get into the cave.

Having said that, I think the dig raises some serious environmental questions. There are two potential negative impacts to the dig. The first is that of creating a new entrance. Entrances are more than just the way we get into caves. They are also the way that food gets brought into caves. Bat guano is the most obvious example but there are many other kinds of food, such as the dead bodies of animals that wander in. Entrances are also conduits for other environmental impacts of the surface into the cave. A new entrance can create a drying out of the immediate area, and result in new air currents throughout the cave. This may impact mineral growth and the cave fauna. The second potential negative impact is on the surface zone around the cave. We all know that caves are not isolated from the surface. The current dig at Maxwellton Cave may be creating a rather open drain that will change the hydrology of the cave as well as increase erosion on the surface.

For the reasons I list above, cave entrances are particularly vulnerable spots for cave ecosystems. Whatever we do to them should be carefully considered in terms of costs and benefits. By the way, this is true not only for entrance digs, it is also true for gates. Gates have an unknown effect on the movement of crickets, of cave rats, etc. in and out of the caves. All of these activities need better assessment and monitoring.

In the case of Maxwellton Sink Cave I am heartened to learn that the entrance will not be left open to the elements but will be sealed in some manner. Likewise I was glad to learn that there will be some restoration of the surface topography. We can't protect caves unless we know where they are and that they exist. We need to be sure we don't degrade them in the process of protecting them.

ANOTHER CHANCE TO DOUBLE YOUR MONEY!

Cliff Lindsay

The Cave Conservancy of the Virginias has generously approved a matching grant for the West Virginia Cave Conservancy to help purchase the Persinger Entrance to the Benedict Cave System. All donations to WVCC for the purchase of the Persinger Entrance received between May 15th and December 31st of 2003 will be matched dollar-for-dollar by CCV, up to a limit of \$8000.00. Just prior to the publication of this newsletter, WVCC had received almost \$7000.00 of donations to the Persinger Entrance Fund that would qualify for matching with this grant. If we can reach the limit of this matching grant by the end of the year, we will have received enough funds to pay off more than a third of the purchase price of the Persinger Entrance. With other significant cave entrances almost certain to come on the market in the next few years, paying off our last purchase as soon as possible is obviously important. If you have already contributed for the Persinger Entrance, thank you! If you can contribute anything toward Persinger's before the end of the year, please consider doing so to help us complete this grant. Your donation will go twice as far!

New Informational Kiosk at Island Ford Cave

Photos and Text by Alex Sproul



I'm pleased to report that the WVCC kiosk at Island Ford Cave is up and operational. In addition to the VA Cave Law sign provided by Bill Balfour, the display includes a welcome letter, a complete copy of the law, a bright sign announcing



do's and don'ts, a list of the grottos and contacts of the VAR, the description from Douglas' Caves of Virginia, the 1968 map by Dave Newsome (from Holsinger), and a list of informative websites. There is also a literature holder containing supplies of the two NEW NSS brochures -- Fragile Underground and

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Bats, and the VAR's Caving Safely brochure. Hanging beneath the bulletin board is a register book with waterproof cover. All display items are laminated and weatherproof.

I have just received from Phil Lucas of the VSS a much better map done in 1986 by Charlie Lucas, as well as more historical information about the cave, and will be posting these shortly.

Ironically (or perhaps not), the kiosk got its first visitors while I was still putting things up. Two teenage girls and their dad came to see the cave; they were doing a school paper on commercial caves vs. wild caves. They were delighted to have the NSS brochures, and were prepared with hardhats and headlamps for a tour of the cave.

The kiosk is located about 20 feet inside the mouth of the cave, at the right side of the large passage, and easily visible from the road yet protected from the weather.

I did a general trash cleanup, but noted some new orange spraypaint decorations on the left wall which will require some effort to remove. It will be interesting to see how long the new materials survive.

President's Column

Jeff Bray

It's been a busy year, and everything you've read about in the newsletter is just the tip of the iceberg as to what we've been working on. It's been exciting, and promises to continue to be exciting next year.

Of course I always have to put my plea in for volunteers. We could not have done it without all our volunteers this year, or any year. I want to thank especially all those that worked at Donaldson's Cave with the gating and acquisition, as well as the others for all their work this past year in various projects. Your contributions definitely do not go un-noticed. Thanks to Pauline Appling, Mike "Tiny" Manke, Carroll Bassett, Dave Scott, The Monroe County Cave Survey, Charlie Williams, Leecee Molina, Bob Hoke, Bob Bennett, Dave West, Craig Hindman, the not-so-bearded John Pearson, Tim Brown and his kiosk building and delivering crew, Blue Ridge Grotto, DC Grotto, PSC, and the many others that have come through and helped us out—if I'm forgetting anyone, I'm not forgetting you on purpose of course. I hope that we'll get even more volunteer help this coming year. Please, if you can, let us know how you can help. Just like a grotto, business, or other club, there are many needs the WVCC has that we may not be able to fulfill very easily. But if you have a certain skill that you can offer as help, please let us know!

I would like to encourage anyone interested in conservation to attend the first-ever Cave Conservancies Forum, hosted by the WVCC and the Northeastern Cave Conservancy. It will be held the third weekend of April, 2004 in Lewisburg, WV. More information about this event is below. It is geared toward anyone with an interest in cave conservation and land grant organizations. We hope it will be well attended with representatives from all over the country. If you're able to attend, please fill out the form contained in the newsletter, or see our website for more information.

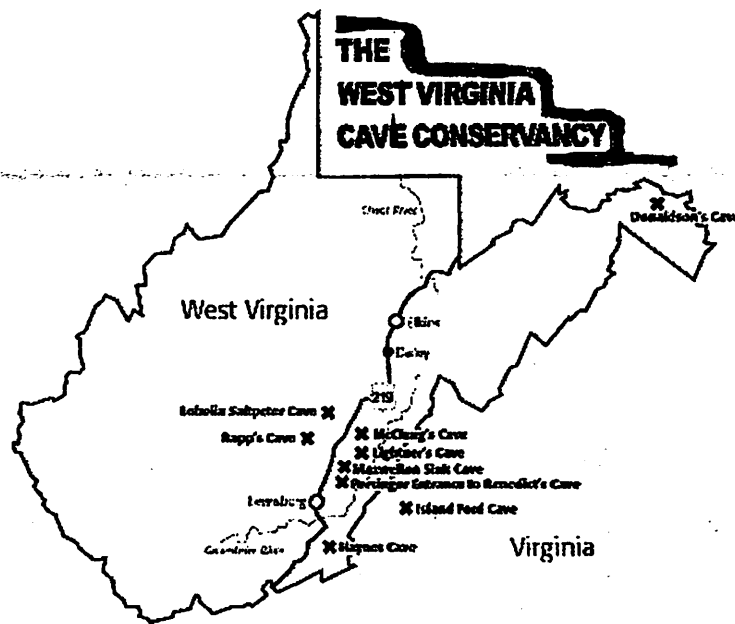
As many of you know, we've also been working hard on regaining access to

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Maxwelton Sink Cave. You can expect an update on our progress soon, as we are hoping to complete this dig project very soon. We will have a need to raise some additional funds to help pay for the dig, so any monetary aid you can send will be greatly appreciated.

You can still help us with our Persinger Loan (Persinger Entrance to Benedict's Cave) by sponsoring a tree. The Conservation Plan, which was made by Misty Householder of the USDA and Ed Swepston was on our cover of this issue. It only costs \$10 to sponsor a tree, and will help in turning our Persinger Cave Preserve into a more natural area. We are planning on having a tree-planting open-house the first weekend of April and all are encouraged to attend. Watch our website and many of the region's newsletters for more information on this event.

Finally, I look forward to an exciting year coming up. We just held our elections, and we will have the results of the elections announced soon on our website (ballots are being counted as we go to print). We also are going to continue our work toward acquiring caves, and if you have any suggestions or know of a cave that is in need of attention, please let us know. Happy Holidays and have a happy new year!



SUSTAINING CONTRIBUTOR

PS— you can get a t-shirt with the above design with a sustaining contributor donation (monthly deduction from a credit card) made through our website or at any event we attend. Hurry though, supplies are limited!!

2004 National Cave Conservancies Forum
Sponsored by The National Cave And Karst Management Symposium
Organized and Sponsored by The West Virginia Cave Conservancy and The
Northeastern Cave Conservancy

April 15 through 17, 2004 in Lewisburg, West Virginia

The National Cave Conservancies Forum is a national meeting scheduled to promote education and interaction among cave and karst based conservancies in the United States. Any board member, committee member or involved general member of these organizations should be able to benefit from and contribute to this forum.

The purpose of this forum is to improve and maintain institutional knowledge among all cave and karst conservancies; to make sure good ideas and sound methods stay in circulation.

Preregistration only \$45.00 until March 15, 2004

*Planned sessions include special presentations on Management Plans, Access Regulations, Conservancy Organization and Land Trust Resources, Conservation Easements, Insurance, and Financial Issues.

*Conservancies will make an introductory presentation on the status of their organization.

*Papers are invited for selection. A session of talks is scheduled. An abstract of the proposed paper should be submitted no later than Jan 9, 2004. If accepted, a full version of the paper or an extended abstract should be provided to the Special Publications editor by Jan 31, 2004. Contact Mike Warner (mike@Speleobooks.com 518 295 7978) as soon as possible if you wish to submit a talk. If you have a poster, please contact Mike Warner to help us determine if a poster session should be organized.

*A meeting of the National Speleological Society Cave Conservancies Committee is scheduled.

*A special publication, which will include outlines with related material from each of the sessions as well as articles on cave conservancies and cave conservation efforts in the U.S., will be published in advance of the forum and included with the price of registration. Jeff Bray (304-645-5359 or wvhodag@earthlink.net) is the editor.

*Registration will open Thursday afternoon, April 15. Registration includes hosted hospitality each evening and break foods between the sessions.

*Special field trips will be arranged including caving in some of the regions protected caves. Further information and contact details provided upon preregistration.

*Transportation from regional airports, such as Roanoke, has been arranged and will be organized upon your registration. Lewisburg does have a large airport reached by regional shuttles.

*There will be led discussions on Friday and Saturday evening on subjects of interest to the attendees.

Sessions will be run all day Friday and Saturday, April 18 & 19. All primary sessions will run consecutively to allow attendees to participate in each. A block of rooms has been reserved for the Cave Conservancies Forum. Please make your reservation at the time of preregistration.

The Brier Inn Motel & Convention Center (On highway 219 just south of I-64)
540 N. Jefferson St.

Lewisburg, WV
304-645-7722

Room charges are single 58.86 per night, double 64.31 per night.

2004 National Cave Conservancies Forum
Preregistration
April 15 through 17, 2004 in Lewisburg, West Virginia

Name _____ Home Phone _____

email _____ Work Phone _____

Address _____

Organization _____

Position in your organization _____

Will you be arriving by public transportation? If so list the type (Plane to Lewisburg, plane to Roanoke, bus to Lewisburg or Roanoke, other) and the time and date of your arrival. We will contact you with transportation details if desired.

Do you plan to present a paper? _____ If so what is the title? _____

Please contact Michael Warner (mike@speleobooks.com 518 295 7978) for paper submissions

Any Questions? Contact Jeff Bray (304-645-5359 or wvhodag@earthlink.net)
Make Checks for \$45.00 payable to the West Virginia Cave Conservancy and send this completed registration to:

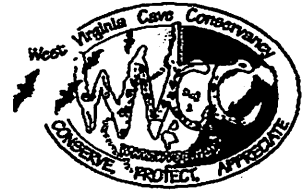
West Virginia Cave Conservancy
Cave Conservancy Forum
P.O. Box 243
Frankford, WV 24938

Or provide Visa or Mastercard # _____ Exp. Date ____ / ____

Signature _____

Registration after March 15, 2004 will be \$50.00
Please Register early as attendance may be limited to first 100.

Online Registration available at <http://www.wvcc.net>



P.O. Box 243
Frankford, WV 24938

Membership Application

- Regular Membership (\$15.00 per year)
- Family Membership (\$25.00 per year)
- Institutional Membership (\$50.00 per year)
- Lifetime Membership (\$250.00 one time fee)
- Benefactor Membership (\$1000 minimum)
- Sustaining Membership (See below**)

****Sustaining Membership is \$65 per year for 5 years. Upon completing this, you will be a Lifetime Member. Authorizing a recurring credit card transaction below can facilitate payment.**

In addition to dues, I would like to make the following donation to support the work of WVCC.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <u>Amount</u> | <u>Frequency</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Single donation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Monthly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100.00 | <input type="checkbox"/> Quarterly |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other Amount \$ _____ | <input type="checkbox"/> Annually |

Method of Payment

- Cash
- Check
- Visa
- MasterCard

Make check payable to **WVCC** and return this form to:
WVCC
PO Box 243
Frankford, WV 24938

Credit Card Authorization

Credit Card Number: _____ Exp Date: _____

Signature: _____
(By signing, you authorize the West Virginia Cave Conservancy to charge you account for the amount, frequency, and duration indicated above.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip Code: _____

Phone No: _____

Email Address: _____

Caving Affiliations: _____

NSS Number if member: _____

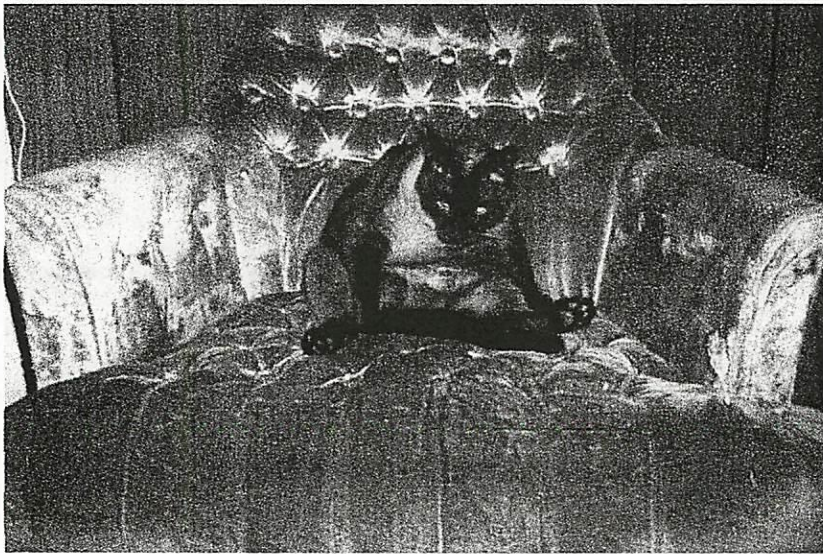
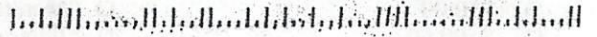
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20147+3410 02



Simon says, "Don't forget to renew your membership!"