

# Newsletter of the Blue Grass Grotto

# The Kentucky Caver

Winter 2009



Cave gear hung up to dry, at Karst-O-Rama 2008.  
Sign up to help make KOR '09 the best ever!

## Greetings from the BGG President!

**Deb Bledsoe**

Hello BGG cavers! It is exciting to see *The Kentucky Caver* being published again, and I hope you will cave softly, take lots of pictures, keep track of your trips, and write up a little something in the way of reports for the rest of us.

### **I welcome all our new members and old members to a new year of caving projects.**

There is plenty of exploration and surveying going on in Pulaski and Wayne County (Bill Walden), a re-survey in Fayette County (Jim Currens), and biological inventory work going on in Rockcastle County as soon as bat hibernation season is over (Deb Bledsoe). We have a historical documentation project to do at Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve (Deb Bledsoe), and always chores and good times at GSP (Pat Hutson, Jamie Dixon, and Shawn Pollack.)

**Karst-o-Rama is coming up June 25-28 at Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve, and the planning meetings have started.** If you are interested in volunteering a few hours this year to make KOR a great event, let me know and we'll get you signed up.

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## **Clean Cave Gear: Protect Bats from Possible WNS Contamination**

**Bill Walden**

I have been an advocate of avoiding cross contamination of caves by washing cave gear before visiting caves outside the immediate area in which I cave. Now because of the danger of spreading White-Nose Syndrome (WNS) it is more important than ever. Biologists don't yet know the mechanism that is spreading WNS. Let us eliminate cavers as a possible mechanism of spreading WNS. Clean and sanitize all cave gear and cave clothing between trips. The US Fish and Wildlife Service has

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*Bledsoe, from p.1.*

It is a good way to meet folks if you are new. We need someone to coordinate the BGG fundraiser which runs the kitchen at KOR, so if you're interested, step up and we'll follow your lead.

**Want to learn something new about caving?**

Let us know if you have an interesting or educational idea for a meeting program. Reece Walter is in charge of this, and can use all of your suggestions and contributions.

**Come out for a new member trip with**

**Jerry Dixon.** Old members are welcome too. Heard of a cool cave you've wanted to visit? Let Jerry know. He is always willing to set something up if there is interest.

So we'll see you at the meetings: bring your photos, and your friends. Let's make 2009 a year to remember for BGG! ■

*Walden, from p.1.*

guidelines on their website. Please visit that site: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html>

If you plan to go on one of my trips, be sure all your gear is clean - no dirty packs, boots, ropes, coveralls, etc. If you arrive with gear that has not been washed or sanitized, you are not going on one of my trips. I suggest this policy be adopted by the Central Ohio Grotto and all cavers while the threat of WNS exists or until the mechanism of the spreading of WNS is understood and it does not involve cavers.

**Related 1/09 post on GCG, BGG listservs:**

**Dr. Hazel Barton:** "...My recommendation is that folks start tracking where they're caving, and where the folks they're caving with have been. If anyone has caved in an effected cave/area, I would recommend that they DO NOT USE THAT GEAR IN A CAVE AGAIN. The absolute number one way to prevent such pathogens is to prevent their spread. It's likely that bats are the main source, going from one cave to another. Nonetheless, careless cavers are also potential vehicles for its spread. This has the potential to get out of hand and very serious soon - if we can police ourselves, we won't have the specter of someone feeling the need to do it for us." ■

## The Kentucky Caver Winter 2009

Quarterly (we hope) newsletter of the Blue Grass Grotto, the Central Kentucky Chapter of the National Speleological Society.

BGG meetings are held every third Tuesday in room 102, Mines & Minerals Bldg. on Rose St., U of Kentucky Campus, Lexington KY.

In August and December a picnic and holiday party replace the regular meetings. The public is encouraged to attend.

For directions, contact leaders listed below or go to [www.bluegrassgrotto.org](http://www.bluegrassgrotto.org)

### BGG Officers

**Deb Bledsoe, President**

*debcaves at yahoo.com*

**James Dixon, Co-President**

*cavemanjim at maysvillekentucky.net*

**Reece Walters, Vice-President**

*thereceshow at yahoo.com*

**Jerry Dixon, Secretary**

**& New Members** *gdixonjr60 at yahoo.com*

**David Lindemuth, Treasurer**

*lindemud at lfd.lfucg.com*

### BGG Directors & Leaders

**Jim Currens, Randy Paylor, Pat Hutson**

*currens at uky.edu, caver at insightbb.com, caver723 at aol.com*

**David Brooks, Grotto Librarian**

*eg2rs1184 at hotmail.com*

**Shawn Pollock, BGG Representative to the Great Saltpetre Preserve Committee**

*pollockh7 at aol.com*

**Jon Hagee, Webmaster**

*jhagee at frontierfolk.net*

**Hilary Lambert, TKC Editor**

*hilary\_lambert at yahoo.com*

Send your cave trip reports, letters and comments, upcoming events, caver photos, gadget and equipment reports to me by March 5 for our Spring 2009 issue.

Trip reports can be short or long. Include date, name of cave, length of trip (time and distance), and participants. Describe what you saw, who did what, and please report any cave critters (large or small).

Make it as funny or serious as the trip deserves.

A conservation emphasis is encouraged.

**With grateful thanks to Arthur Cammers.**

## Echoes

Jean Ray

*Folks, this article is strictly a generalization and is not meant to target any particular individual, but perhaps will provide a little food for thought. The title "Echoes" derives from the necessity to reflect on continuing issues that never seem to have an end.*

Interest in and popularity of caving has expanded considerably over the last few years, but it seems that the responsibilities and unspoken, moral obligations that go hand-in-hand with the studies and recreation have a bit of catching up to do. If questioned, cavers will defend themselves vehemently about their contributions to cave cleanups, fund-raisers, cave preservation, property owner permission and refusal to disclose cave locations to non-cavers. But action does not always match words.

### Trash in caves

Since being in Kentucky I've pulled large amounts of trash out of caves that other cavers have just exited, ignoring the trash even when it blocked their pathway. The folks actually had to step over this material to keep going. I understand that it's difficult to pull a plastic bag with you through a crawlspace and to carry it for any distance when depending upon balance and maneuverability in an extreme environment, but this debris is generally not too far from entrances and exits. Partiers usually don't go into areas that are extremely difficult to reach. But after consuming what they brought with them into the cave, they're not motivated to carry the trash out and dispose of it properly. Cavers also need to pick up what they drop – that helps too.

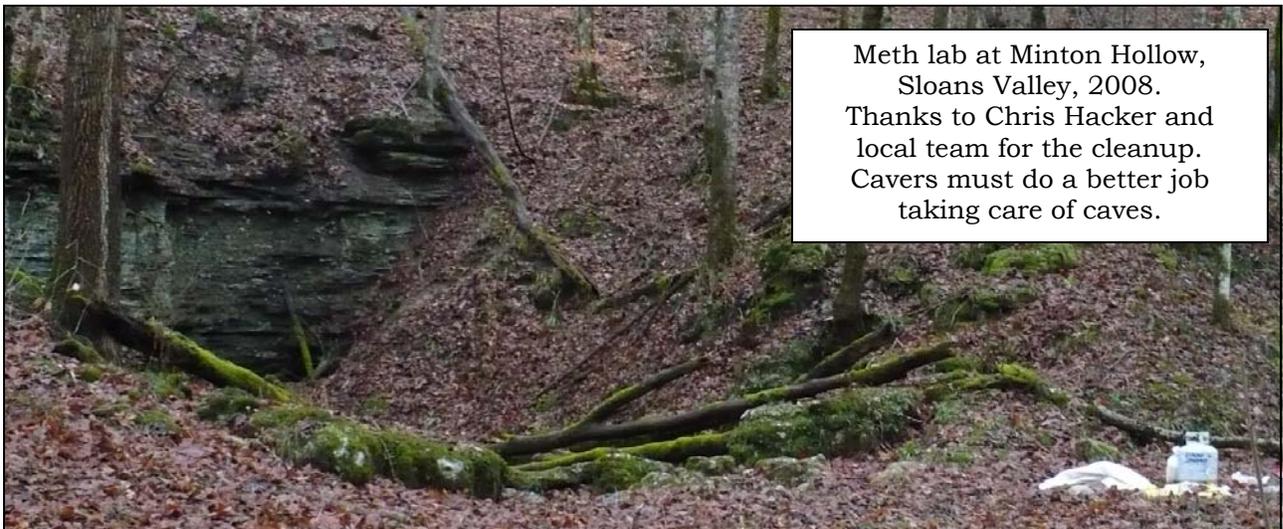
### More help is needed

Fundraising events have a specific purpose, to raise money for the organizations that sponsor them, to help with efforts in the interests of those organizations. Those who manage and own the Great Salpetre Preserve (GSP) make up a particularly fine group with unquestionable concerns and interests. The long-time members have contributed their hearts, personal finances and work hours needed, above and beyond their day-to-day lives.

Those who contribute to the necessary upkeep and management of the GSP property donate time and labor to specific, ongoing projects. However, considering all the caving groups and large numbers of people listed as members, the efforts are lacking a bit, due to the small number of members who actually help. The members-to-participants ratio of those who do the work is a little skewed.

These same long-term members have also worked hard to develop and keep good relations within the surrounding communities in order to access other caves in the general vicinity of GSP. Unfortunately these good relations have been put to the test recently due to cavers not requesting information about access, carrying out malicious property damage, trespassing even after being informed of limited or no access, and giving belligerent responses when confronted by property owners. As a result, stereotyping of cavers as undesirable by residents could make future access to these wonderful subterranean environments very difficult to obtain.

*Continued p. 4*



Meth lab at Minton Hollow,  
Sloans Valley, 2008.  
Thanks to Chris Hacker and  
local team for the cleanup.  
Cavers must do a better job  
taking care of caves.

Ray, from p.3

### **Ethics**

I'm certainly aware that not all cavers have an interest in conservation nor do all cavers enjoy group interaction, but there is still that ol' word, Ethics. First, ethics refers to "well- based standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues." Secondly, ethics refers to "the study and development of one's own ethical standards. It is necessary to constantly examine one's standards to ensure that they are reasonable and well-founded. Ethics also means, then, the continuous effort of studying our own moral beliefs and our moral conduct, and striving to ensure that we, and the institutions we help to shape, live up to standards that are reasonable and solidly-based." (*Ethics IIE V1 N1* (Fall 1987). This is a basic, definitive explanation of ethics that I offer for cavers to consider.

### **Consequences**

Cavers who cave alone take a chance of falling victim to a mishap without the benefit of a helping hand when most needed, but more than likely we've all been there and done that at some point. Cavers who take their non-caver acquaintances and friends to remote locations "to check out all these neat caves," take the chance of creating a vicious circle of repeat visits by unqualified people. This can lead to cave damage and loss of life. For example, a young man decided to take his girlfriend caving, and of course some of her friends tagged along and they had a great time that weekend. Two months later, a couple of those friends remembered that cool cave and decided to go exploring. They didn't tell anyone and they didn't have the proper gear because they had only been caving once but hey, the young man no fear. They reached the site, knocked back a few brews and did the cave thing. They went in unprepared, got lost and both died from hypothermia. At the end, in that cold, dark passage they didn't even have the comfort of light.

### **Let's do better in 2009**

The year 2009 has come to us at last and with it a great many changes in our leadership and our economy. If we don't think about one, we certainly dwell on the other. We have the opportunity to reflect on the past, to appreciate accomplishments and regret questionable decisions. The chance for change is before us, we have the means and the incentive to be more aware and conscientious. A philosopher once said that a country that forgets its history, is bound to repeat it. A country is the people that it contains. Let's see what things we can accomplish this year folks, how much better and more exciting we can make it. ▪ rptyd\_cv at yahoo.com



**Caver Barbie**  
Jim and Teresa  
Currens' 2008  
Christmas Tree.



**Auctioneer Currens**  
takes bids on  
Olson's Tin Ware.

### **"When the Bat Bites, With Its Teeth, Dear..."**

#### **Tim Williams**

During a cave trip on MLK weekend I accidentally leaned on a bat which bit me. We were in a constricted space and could not be sure if I had knocked the poor wee critter off its hibernation perch or if it was already lying on the ground (in which case it was probably already sick with something). The first thing I noticed was a sharp pain in my arm like being jabbed with a needle and then I heard the bat squeak as I crawled over it. My first reaction was not one of worry about me. I felt bad for hurting one of our furry flying friends. When I reached the surface I looked for a bite wound but could not see anything. I've since learned that bat bites are difficult to detect. However, by the next day my arm was sore and a small wound at the bite site was starting to go septic so I went to my doctor.

**What anyone who is bitten by a bat should do:** If the bat can be captured safely you should take it to the doctor and they will have it checked for rabies. Unfortunately for the bat this means decapitation so that its salivary glands can be examined for the presence of the virus. Without a bat to test, treatment begins within the first 24-48 hours. We could have gone back for the bat but would have been out of the 48-hour window by the time the tests were done... Only four more rabies vaccinations to go. ▪

## Blue Grass Grotto Holiday Party 2008

Thank you to Jim and Teresa  
for hosting our gala event!

Hilary Lambert

About a dozen Blue Grass Grotto members assembled at Jim and Teresa Currens' Paris, KY home on December 12 for our annual holiday party. Several folks came a long distance—Werner and Neena Jud drove in from Cincinnati, Deb Bledsoe came up from the Rockcastle River, and Duke Hopper drove in from Laurel County.

We ate from a groaning board of good food including ham and desserts, and sat back to enjoy Jim Currens' riveting annual performance as Caver Auctioneer. Bidding got especially hot between Teresa and Werner over a vintage Bob & Bob T-shirt. Our small group raised \$86 for Great Saltpetre Preserve, one 25-cent bid at a time. In a surprise move, the BGG awarded a lifetime membership to Hilary Lambert (me). Thanks, folks—I'll be back....! ■



### BGG Holiday Party 2008

Above: Jim Currens (l) gives BGG auction check to Werner Jud (r) for GSP upkeep.

Below: Hilary Lambert (l) receives BGG Life Membership from Deb Bledsoe (r).



## BGG Member Dr. Thomas Barr Receives 2008 Biodiversity Award

Hilary Lambert

Last December, BGG's illustrious long-time member, emeritus UK biology professor and distinguished cave biologist Dr. Thomas Barr received the 2008 Biodiversity Award, annually bestowed on distinguished protectors of Kentucky's natural world by the Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission.



### "Me and mini-me"

aka

Dr. Thomas Barr (r) and T. B'ar (l).

**Following are Dr. Barr's comments about the award, relevant to us all at a time when cave biota — cave critters — are under threat.**

"Such an award is not so much about the recipient as it is about the CAUSE for which it is given. It's about publicizing the CAUSE, in this case protection of threatened or endangered species of animals and plants, to the general public. It's about encouraging others to help protect threatened or endangered species, and perhaps emulating what the recipient has done, or succeeding where he has failed.

No one person can be effective in a vacuum, and any limited success I've had in protecting cave and karst species in KY has also been because of my colleagues and co-workers, among whom I want to mention the late Bob Kuehne, professor of biological sciences at the University of Kentucky and the late Tom Kane, professor of biological sciences at the University of Cincinnati. And many thanks are due my former students. So it's on behalf of all of us – colleagues, students, and myself – that I accept and thank you for this award." ■

## From the BGG New Members Chair

Jerry Dixon

As new member chairperson for the BGG, I try to make as many meetings as possible. I want the opportunity to see new members face-to-face. I suppose I've been a little one sided in my workings with new members. I do not believe I have put enough effort into finding out what new members are looking for in the grotto. Let's face it. **Any relationship that is not mutually beneficial is destined to fail.** I don't feel that I have gone far enough to ensure that new members feel welcome.

I was browsing KY Wilderness.com ([www.kywilderness.com](http://www.kywilderness.com)), a Red River Gorge related website the other day and discovered an old entry by someone who attended a new members orientation and trip that I hosted at GSP a while back. The entry was not complimentary. His remarks made me think about **a few aspects of introducing new members to caving and to the BGG** and some of the mistakes I have made along the way.

**I suppose the obvious aspect I overlooked was the expectation of the potential member.** I have been so focused on things like cave safety, cave conservation, landowner relations, and the rules of GSP that I forgot to ask the new members what they expected to get out of their relationship with the grotto. Many people do not know what to expect. They take a wild cave tour at Mammoth Cave or Carter Caves and enjoy it. They are told the next step is to check out the NSS. The NSS website directs them to us. They attend a meeting. There are lots of topics and it is a little overwhelming. What next?

Then there is the secrecy! We wouldn't be cavers if we didn't have secrets, would we? **Maybe this new person is someone who already has their expectations set in stone.** The guy comes in, pays his \$10.00 membership dues and expects a free copy of all the maps everyone in the grotto has ever worked on. Very few new members will understand the amount of work and dedication that go into each cave map. They may be even less likely to understand the sense of ownership

and responsibility that the cartographer has for his or her maps.

Stuck-up, aloof, elitist, and arrogant are all adjectives that we have heard used to describe cavers. To the outsider or newcomer, that may be the perception. To the seasoned caver, it's cautious optimism.

**We reserve the right to get to know the new person** before we share something we worked very hard on. We reserve the right to get to know a person before we put our lives in their hands on rope. We reserve the right to nurture relationships with new cavers.



Jerry Dixon (far right) and BGG members at Slacks Cave. Let's go caving!

**So we have an image problem and an expectation problem. My goal for 2009 is to improve both of these.** I will do my best to meet with each potential new member and ask them about expectations. I understand how hard it can be to ask questions in a room full of strangers. No one wants to look silly or ask a question that will embarrass them. Instead of trying to organize cave trips that are one size fits all, I will try to buddy up an experienced caver with new cavers that have similar interest or personalities. With a grotto as small as ours, this is probably a better tactic than scheduling a new member trip every six weeks.

**If anyone has special requests for new members or ideas, please don't be shy.** Give me a call or drop me an e-mail. We'll give these things a shot and see how it goes. ■

## **GSP refreshers and reminders**

**Werner Jud**

The Great Saltpetre Preserve (GSP) Committee wants Grotto members to stay informed on the discussions, business, and decisions that manage the Preserve.

**The secretary keeps minutes at each meeting.** Once completed and proofed, the standard minutes distribution list includes GSP committee people and the GSP caretaker. They are also available to view by grotto members—you just have to ask. If you've attended the meeting, you will receive a copy. Any Grotto member unable to attend a meeting but who wants to know what's going on, should contact a GSP representative and a copy will be provided. If you'd like to get more involved, requesting to be on the distribution list is one way to ramp into it. You'll be informed and better prepared when you come to a meeting.

**Great Saltpetre Preserve is financially independent from the Grotto(s) and sustains itself through donations and camping revenues.** We invest all of those dollars back into GSP. Some costs have not been minor but are within our operating funds. The kitchen has received much attention because it is heavily relied on. Heavy use means diligent care and maintenance.

**Kitchen users need to be aware of the "opening up and closing down" kitchen routines, especially during the winter.**

For example, the water supply for the kitchen sink is protected from freezing by use of heat tape on the pipes and heat lamps, all under the sink. Electric power for these devices is supplied by an outlet under the sink. This outlet has a small light to show that it is on. Do not turn off the breaker at the main panel that feeds this outlet, otherwise we lose freeze protection. When closing down the kitchen make sure the water shut-off valves are closed and the faucet handles are open.

Our propane stove uses pilot lights for the top burners. When turning on the gas, these pilots must be lit. There are three of them. If you are unfamiliar with the procedure, please let someone else do it. GSP will be putting up instruction signs to remind designated, authorized users of the kitchen how to do these chores. More plans are in the works to keep the

kitchen fully functional. Future upgrades include the manner in which waste water is handled and eliminating the wooden floor platforms in the process, to improve hygiene.

**Other projects are in the works.** Bob Dobbs has updated the list. When a new project is suggested, it gets filtered for compliance with both the conservation principles we stand for and the long-term practical benefits as stated in the GSP Management Plan.

**A reminder for those who drop money in the pipe for camping or donations:** Put your first and last name on the payment envelope if you want your contribution logged other than "unidentified"; and write your Grotto affiliation. If you want a receipt, provide an address. Print legibly. There are many donations with no identification written on them at all, and if I can't read it, that's the same as no identification. If you pay by check, make it out to GSP. Please remember to sign the register book.

**When visiting the Preserve, treat it with respect.** Clean up messes and avoid leaving debris under the shelter. If you and your guests are there on a regular weekend, and there are other people in the camping area, be mindful of them. Quiet hours start around 11:00 PM. That doesn't mean go to bed, that just means music volume should be reduced and maniacal screaming and cacophonous laughter should be diminished. Sound travels well in the valley in front of the shelter.

I don't mean to be waving the GSP Committee finger in everyone's face. There have been a variety of different incidents over the last several months that suggested these things needed mentioning again. Remember that Great Saltpetre Preserve provides a wonderful benefit for the Grottos.

New members, guests and visitors are inevitable and if we want to maintain what we have, we need to educate them about our vision and management policies. Thank you for your time and attention. ▀

**Refer to our website:**

[www.caves.org/conservancy/gsp/](http://www.caves.org/conservancy/gsp/)

**for information,  
requirements, and to read  
the management plan.**



**BGG Info Center**  
**Upcoming Events, Ongoing Projects & Links**



**Upcoming Events**

**March 27-29 Mammoth Cave Clean-Up.**  
 Tammy Otten: tammyotten at yahoo.com

**March 3, Roger W. Brucker, "The Mapping of Mammoth Cave."** 6 pm, 102 Mines and Minerals Building, U of KY Lexington (same room as BGG meetings).

**April 4-5, Greater Cincinnati Grotto Rotunda Climb.** Cincinnati Museum Center.  
 Matt Keller: mdkeller at yahoo.com

**June 13-20 NCRC National Weeklong Cave Rescue Training.** Stalker Elementary School, Bedford IN:  
[www.caves.org/ncrc/national/training.html](http://www.caves.org/ncrc/national/training.html)

**June 25-28 Karst-O-Rama.** Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve, Mount Vernon KY. Information and online registration: [www.karstorama.com](http://www.karstorama.com)

**July 19-26 15th International Congress of Speleology /NSS Convention.** Kerrville TX:  
[www.ics2009.us](http://www.ics2009.us), [www.caves.org](http://www.caves.org).

**& Links**

**American Cave Conservation Association:**  
[www.cavern.org](http://www.cavern.org)

**Blue Grass Grotto:** [www.bluegrassgrotto.org](http://www.bluegrassgrotto.org)

**Central Ohio Grotto:** [www.centralohiogrotto.com](http://www.centralohiogrotto.com)

**Closed Caves List:** [gcgcavers.com/index.php/closed-cave-list](http://gcgcavers.com/index.php/closed-cave-list)

**Dayton Underground Grotto:** [www.dugcaves.com](http://www.dugcaves.com)

**Great Saltpetre Preserve:**  
[www.caves.org/conservancy/gsp/](http://www.caves.org/conservancy/gsp/)

**Greater Cincinnati Grotto:** [www.gcgcavers.com](http://www.gcgcavers.com)

**Kentucky Speleological Survey:** [www.ksscaves.org](http://www.ksscaves.org)

**National Speleological Society:** [www.caves.org](http://www.caves.org)

**Rockcastle Karst Conservancy:** [www.rkci.org](http://www.rkci.org)

**Rockcastle Regional Grotto:**  
[www.daytondigger.com/Rockcastle.html](http://www.daytondigger.com/Rockcastle.html)

Please send caver events,  
 projects & links  
 to  
 hilary\_lambert at yahoo.com



**Ongoing Projects**

**KOR 2009:**

**Help Organize & Run KOR 2009**  
 Chris Hacker smgcaver at earthlink.net

**Work With KY Speleological Survey**  
 Bill Walden wdwalden at windstream.net  
[www.ksscaves.org](http://www.ksscaves.org) "To preserve cave and karst data for the Commonwealth of Kentucky"

**Help With Upkeep & Projects at GSP**  
 Shawn Pollock pollockh7 at aol.com

**Help With BGG Survey Projects**  
 Randy Paylor caver at insightbb.com

**Help Bill Walden With Survey Projects**  
 Bill Walden wdwalden at windstream.net

**Help Jason Pugh With GSP Youth Groups**  
 Jason Pugh agent45686 at yahoo.com



Bill Walden above Neelys Creek, winter 2008.