

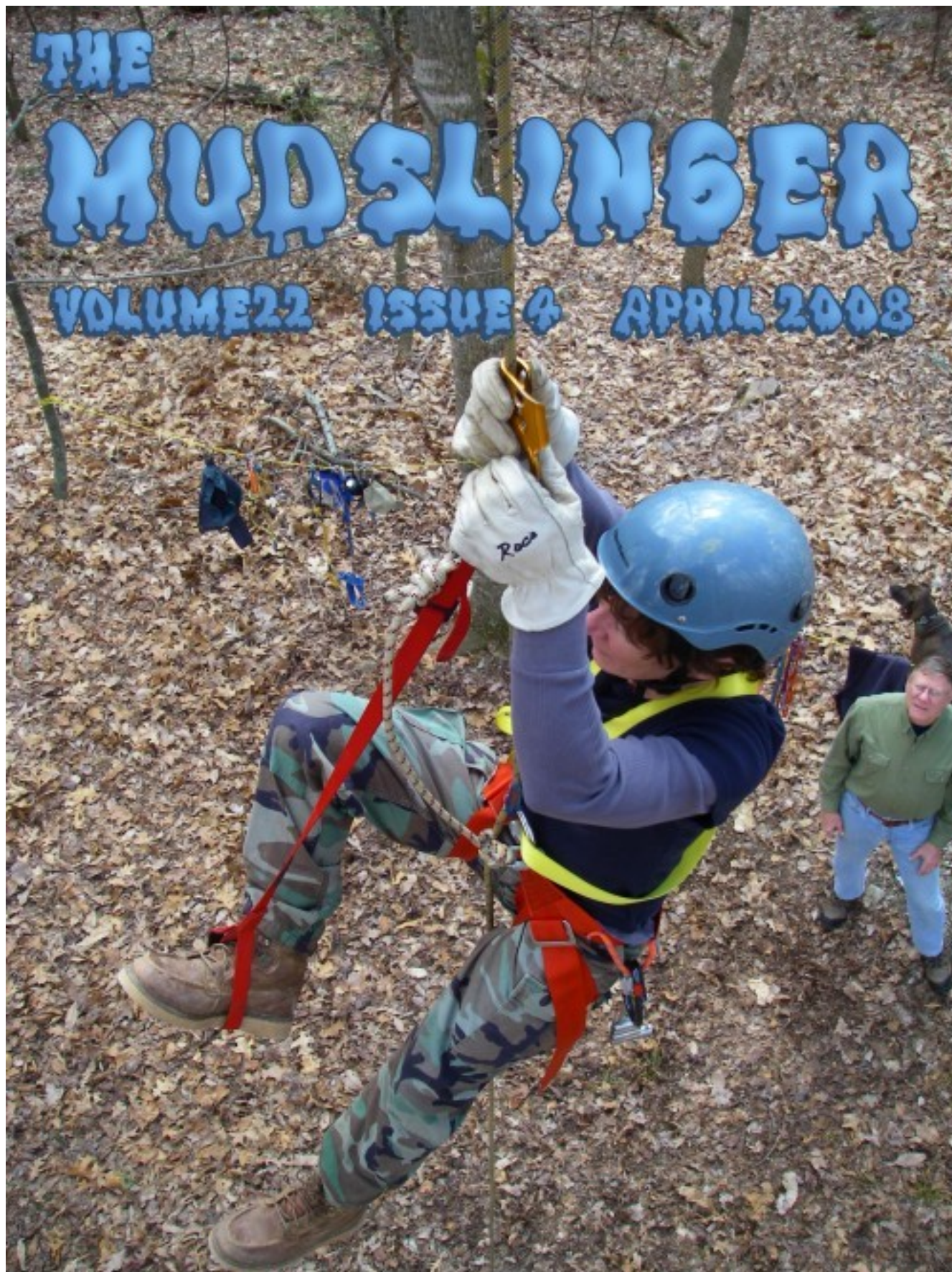
THE

MUDSLINGER

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DISCLAIMER & GENERAL INFORMATION

The New River Valley Grotto of the NSS meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month at the Radford City Library at 7 PM. Membership is open to all who support the goals of the NSS and the NRVG. Dues are \$ 10.00 per year; \$ 5.00 for immediate family members. Membership runs from September to August. *The Mudslinger* is the newsletter of the New River Valley Grotto and is distributed at each meeting. Any correspondence should be directed to the editor by the first Tuesday of the month. Material may be reprinted by internal organization of the NSS giving credit to the NRVG. Articles for publication will be edited for grammar, punctuation and appropriateness. Opinions expressed in articles may not be those of the editor or grotto. The Mudslinger may be viewed on the internet at: www.themudslinger.org

NEW RIVER VALLEY GROTTTO P. O. Box 3056 Radford, VA 24143

MINUTES OF THE MARCH MEETING

March 11, 2008

In Attendance: Debbie Norris, Don Anderson, Doug Dalrymple, Bill Pond, Rickey Shortt, John Fox, Mike Hutchison, Leanne Barley

Called to order at 7:22pm. Minutes approved as published

Treasurers Report: 183.32 in checking, and \$738.38 in savings, \$0.00 of which are Cave Bucks. \$100.00 was donated to the JSS.

Conservation:

- Don presented some interesting articles by Will Orndorff published in "Cave Owners Newsletters", and one by Bill Balfour, "Carbonates and Karst of South West Virginia", written for an intro booklet for the upcoming Karst Symposium.

Safety and Techniques:

- Vertical practice at Don's cabin on Sunday, March 16th. All levels welcome.

Trip Reports:

- Mike Hutchison surveyed Einstein's Cave with Will and Zenah Orndorff. His report is in the March newsletter. Mike suggests that anyone visiting Einstein's bring trash bags and take some of the garbage out with you. A spring cleanup was suggested.
- Rick, Leanne, and Cole Frantz went into James Cave. Beautiful as ever, and hardly any crawling! As an added bonus, they saw first hand how to milk stalactites.

New Business:

- Don informed the membership that Donna Post is having complications from surgery. The membership decided to send her a get well card.
- Doug pointed out that the club has a good sum in Savings. He initiated a discussion concerning the merits of spending it vs. keeping it as a buffer against large expenses. The point was made that it is handy to have on hand for a big project such as sinkhole cleanup and fencing, etc. The membership agreed to think about a big spring project for the club.

Announcements:

- Mike Hutchison is getting married! No date yet. Or is he just not telling us? Who wants a bunch of dirty cavers crashing the wedding!

Upcoming Cave Trips:

- April 12th, Saturday: Clover Hollow?
- Don plans to set up a trip into Colliers later in the spring. Colliers has very limited access, so don't miss the trip!

Minutes submitted by Leanne Arethusa Barley, NRVG Secretary

From the Chair

Well Spring has sprung and the sap is rising. I guess that's why we all have more things planned than we'll get done this summer. The NRVG suggested agenda looks like this: caving trips to Colliers, Cross Roads, Clover Hollow, Pig Hole, and several more caves Rickey might have in his cave pack. We talked about a big sinkhole clean up near Skilpot cave and of course a spring road clean up by James Cave. More vertical practice for those who want to go down-n-up. And finally - mapping!

On Saturday March 29th, 2008 I attended the Virginia Speleological Survey scheduled meeting at the home of Phil and Charlotte Lucas in Burnsville, Va. I'll give a summary report at the April meeting.

Please mark your calendars and make plans to attend the Spring VAR/SERA meeting June 6-8. It will be held at the Bristol Campground near the raceway 15 minutes from I-81. Lots of caving and VENDORS!

-Don Anderson NSS 3767

Got Vertical?

Sunday March 16th, 2008

Thanks to Rickey and Leanne the vertical session was a great success albeit not everyone was there. Attending were Debbie Norris, Leanne Barley, Rickey Shortt, Bill Pond, Karen Kastning, John Fox & family including his brother and sister-n-law.

Rickey rigged the lines for climbing and rappelling then gave Debbie a thorough intro to ups-n-downs with changeovers. Bill Pond got to try a frog system. Later the crew enjoyed food, drink, and conversation in the log cabin. Karen Kastning led a most interesting discussion on the white nose syndrome affecting bats.

-Don Anderson

More Gravel - Debbie

On March 22nd, 2008, Debbie Norris and I attended the always fun VAR sponsored annual Grand Caverns Restoration Camp in Grottoes, Va. Debbie hauled "tons" of walkway gravel-in-buckets - way back into the cave. After lunch Debbie helped repair broken formations in nearby Fountain Cave.

Andy Reeder (with lots of help from Lyle Teft), hosted lunch Saturday and his regionally renowned dinner that evening. To generate these bountiful and welcome meals requires a lot of behind the scene work. An NRVG hearty thank you to Andy, Anne, and Lyle.

Sunday morning held another pleasant surprise. A delicious and plentiful breakfast buffet. The morning "banquet" was held in the town of Grottoes in a converted garage sponsored by a local caver friendly contractor's wife.

In spite of all the eating, a lot of work was done in and around the cave and campground.

-Don Anderson

Animated Knots

The following link was sent out on the VAR listserv by Walt Pirie: <http://www.animatedknots.com/> This is a very interesting website for anyone wanting to learn how to tie proper knots for caving.

CREDITS

Contributors: Cole Frantz, Carolyn McCain, Don Anderson, Rickey Shortt, Leanne Barley

Cover: Debbie Norris practices frogging at the recent NRVG Vertical Session. Photo by Rickey Shortt

Back Cover: The "White Volcano" in Buchanan Saltpeter Cave. Photo by Carolyn McCain

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Marble Cave and Buchanan Saltpeter Cave

On Sunday February 17, 2008 Robin Brickey took some New River Valley Grotto members and friends to Marble Cave and Buchanan Saltpeter Cave in Smyth County, Virginia. Participants were Robin Brickey, Bill Pond, Joe Miller, and myself. We planned to go into Marble Cave first since it was on the way from where we parked.

Marble Cave is located in a sinkhole in a section of Smyth County known as Rich Valley. There are numerous dairy farms in this rural limestone valley. The walk to Marble Cave was through open pastures and a planting of maturing white pines. The straight rows of pines provided an unusual perspective when contrasted with the rolling pastures and otherwise unaltered woodlands. The entrance to Marble Cave is near the top of a hill.

Once inside the entrance, we noted the pyrite flakes that gilded many of the surfaces. Although Marble Cave is not a large cave, the formations were impressive. Many of the formations were “marbled” with mineral veins. There were several niches formed by curtains; one of my favorites was a rim pool that was hidden by stalagmites and curtains of stalactites. After our photo expedition into Marble Cave, Robin led us to Buchanan Saltpeter Cave.

Buchanan Saltpeter Cave's entrance IS the sinkhole! The entrance is a gaping hole with three passages leading off into the side of the mountain. The enormity of the entrance was evident when I realized that the extension ladder that Robin had hoped would be present was secured by a rope and only encompassed about a third of the descent into the entrance pit. I had difficulty capturing the entire entrance pit in photographs due to its immensity. Because of its depth and potential danger, the farmer who owns the property has constructed a sturdy gated fence around the sinkhole pit.

The descent into the pit was neither difficult nor dangerous because adequate ropes and a ladder have been left there to assist spelunkers.

Just inside the entrance were four bird nests. Robin took us on a circular trip from one entrance tunnel and back out to the entrance pit through another tunnel. We were all impressed with the huge rooms, passages, and canyons throughout Buchanan Saltpeter. I did not see the remnants of the prior saltpeter mining inside the cave, but at least one book refers to artifacts left behind by the miners. My favorite speleothems were the rim pools. Some were still filled with water, and others have dried up. Notable also were the black stalactites throughout the cave. In one place we saw a “waterfall” made up of dark and light flowstone. Helictites, some of which were pure white and delicate, decorated the cave throughout. Cauliflower formations were also abundant in Buchanan Saltpeter Cave. I really liked a speleothem wall that was made up of curtains, stalactites, stalagmites, and columns; it formed a small separate room on the other side. We all admired two of the “volcanic cone” formations—one was black, the other nearly white.

We were not able to visit every passage and room in Buchanan Saltpeter due to the weather forecast for possible freezing rain. We all vowed to come back later for more photographs and to visit the other sections of the cave. Climbing out of the entrance pit was not as difficult as I had imagined it would be. Just as we were leaving the cave, the cold rain began.

We had fun.

-By Carolyn McCain



Chandelier and rimstone pools in Buchanan Saltpeter Cave. Photo by Carolyn McCain.

James Cave

On March 8, Rickey Shortt escorted Leanne Barley and me into James Cave. It was a balmy spring morning when we entered the cave. But upon our return to the surface six hours later, we found a horizontal snow storm and a wall of curious beef cattle. On the trip we found the cave well decorated and in good condition. There was one surprise.

It always seems strange to stumble on man made items in a cave. Imagine our surprise when we found a stalactite milking machine – a tangle of tubes and wires and plastic tent supported by PVC. The contraption appeared to be a test apparatus for measuring water flow into the cave. There were no clues to its ownership.

The rest of the trip was filled with the usual caving fun. Rickey boosted us up climbs and endured a lot of girl –talk. He was a good sport, but he might think twice before taking two girls caving again!

-Cole Frantz



Above: Cole Frantz traversing a canyon in James Cave. Photo by Rickey Shortt.

Below: Rickey Shortt and Leanne Barley at the end of a good cave trip. Photo by Cole Frantz.



The “Stalactite Milking Machine” Photo by Rickey Shortt



Black Bear Plunge & A-1 Cave

March 30, 2008

Leanne Barley, Doug Feller, Aaron Moses,
Rickey Shortt

Back in January of this year Leanne and I helped to re-open a cave in Monroe County, West Virginia that had been artificially sealed off some time in the past. One name the owner is considering for this cave is Black Bear Plunge - which is the name I will refer to it as in this report. There was an article written about this exploration in the February 2008 issue of The Mudslinger, and as described then, only Bob Kirk and I descended to the bottom of the pit we discovered inside. It was a nice pit and I vowed then to return with Leanne and a couple other friends to do it again, as well as the 100 foot drop in nearby A-1 Cave.

It was cold and wet outside on the morning of our chosen day so our little group of four vertical junkies were happy to get inside Black Bear Plunge, a process hastened by the slimy mud on the steep slope of the entrance, and gear up in the relative warmth underground.

After this it was a straightforward process to rig and descend the nuisance drop, and then, one by one, rappel down the main drop. Well, it was mostly straightforward. One small problem was all the loose debris on the first ten feet of the drop. The rope was laying against this wall and made for an intermittent shower of falling dirt and small rocks. Repositioning the rope in a different channel helped but a different rigpoint with new bolts would have been better.

Below the first ten feet the pit bells out into a nice round shaft about fifteen feet in diameter with nicely fluted walls and continues down perhaps another sixty feet to a shallow pool of water. A too-tight vertical crack in the wall blows a lot of air but there is nowhere else to go but back up.

Getting into A-1 required sliding into a narrow opening at the bottom of a steep, funnel-shaped sink without getting sliced open by all the

broken glass littering the ground.

Once inside, a short bellycrawl led to the top of the 100 foot pit. We were unable at first to find the rigging bolts that I knew were there so Aaron tied off the rope to a large boulder and went over the edge. After only about 10 or 15 feet he came back up and said the rockfall from the lip was too bad.

I had been told that this pit was "sweet" but it seemed that we would not be able to find out for ourselves unless we found a different way to rig it. After looking around some more we found two bolts, sans hangers, in the ceiling directly above the drop. We had brought our own hangers but putting them on was interesting to say the least, requiring leaning backwards across a four foot wide gap directly above the pit - clipped in of course!

That task done, we were ready to try again. It really was a sweet drop after all - a spectacular 1/2 scale Triple Wells, free all the way down to the floor. The "junkies" had gotten their vertical fix.

-Rickey Shortt

Rogers/Cook Cave

On March 10, 2008 Kyle Cook and his father, Jeff, took me to see for the first time a cave that is on their property in the Delton area of Pulaski County. The cave owner is Donnie Cook, Kyle's granddad. Jeff took us on a four wheeler ride over the ridge behind their house; then Kyle and I went into the cave.

The entrance is a climb down in a small sink; it is about 6 feet high and 2-3 feet wide. A hand line is not required, but the climb down would be easier with one. The cave itself is roughly 75-100 feet of passage. The passage is about 10-12 feet wide with a ceiling up to 15 feet high. There are some small stalactites, some curtains, and flowstone. There were a few bats! (Pips)

We'll be getting the GPS readings and survey the cave on our next trip. This should be a new cave for the Virginia Cave Survey.

-Robin Brickey

SERA/VAR Pre-Registration Form

Bristol, Tennessee June 5-8, 2008

Sponsored by the Appalachian Cave Conservancy, Hosted by the Mountain Empire Grotto

(please print)

Name of Primary Registrant: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone#: _____ Cell#: _____

Email: _____ Arrival Date: _____

Grotto/organization: _____

	<u>Qty.</u>	<u>Unit Price</u>	<u>Total</u>
Primary Registrant			\$ 28
Organization fee (select one or both) ()VAR \$3, ()SERA \$1.50			\$ _____
Spouse / Signif. Other (no guide book) Name: _____		\$18	\$ _____
Organization fee (select one or both) ()VAR \$3, ()SERA \$1.50			\$ _____
Additional Guide Book	_____	\$10	\$ _____
Extra Night Camping (June 5) \$5 per person 13 yrs and older	_____	\$5	\$ _____
Children (13-18yrs) (names): _____ _____	_____	\$14	\$ _____
Children (0-12yrs) (names): _____ _____	_____	Free	\$ 0
Well-behaved pet (must be on leash)	_____	\$10	\$ _____
Small T-shirt	_____	\$12	\$ _____
Medium T-shirt	_____	\$12	\$ _____
Large T-shirt	_____	\$12	\$ _____
X-Large T-shirt	_____	\$12	\$ _____
XX-Large T-shirt	_____	\$15	\$ _____
		Total Due =	\$ _____

May 21th, 2008 Pre-Registration Deadline

Cost if postmarked after May 21, 2008: Add \$5.00 per person.

Make Check Payable to Mountain Empire Grotto & Mail

Pre-Registration Form To: Mountain Empire Grotto

302 Roy Martin Rd. Gray, TN. 37615

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Wytheville, VA 24382

