

Minutes of the Kansas City Area Grotto
January 2021 Business Meeting
Tuesday, January 19th, 2020 – 6:30 to 8:10 P.M.
Meeting Held Remotely Via Zoom

The meeting was called to order by president Seth Colston. The following members and guests were present: Seth Colston, Jim Cooley, Julie Cottrell, Ginny Friedrich, Bill Gee, Jennifer Gleason, Kristen Godfrey, Matthew Hernandez, Rick Hines, Kay Hines, Gary Johnson, Jay Kennedy, Nick Kennedy, Jeff Page, Nathan Taylor, Sam Taylor, George Tengel

Presentation: No presentation occurred at this meeting.

Officer Reports:

President: No additional KCAG members requested to run for any positions in the officer election, so the officers will be unchanged through 2021.

Treasurer:

December beginning balance = \$2758.87 (Commerce Bank)

Deposit = \$15.00

Checks = \$0.00

Debit card = \$0.00

Bank fee = \$5.00

End balance = \$2768.87

Income:

Dues - \$15.00

Apparel = \$

Expenses:

Bank fee = \$5.00

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December beginning balance = \$1049.90 (Paypal)

Merchandise purchase = \$30.00

Dues = \$105.00

Fees = \$5.08

End balance = \$1179.82

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November beginning balance = \$67.00 (petty cash)

End balance = \$67.00

Vice President: No updates.

Secretary: Nothing to report. The September meeting minutes were accepted.

Quartermaster: The apparel list is available on the website, and Seth intends to create a similar list for the quartermaster gear. The helmets have been popular, reserved two at a time for small trips, and potential replacement of the lights was discussed.

Novice Trip Coordinator: No updates.

Fundraising: No updates. Contact Seth Colston (swcy92@gmail.com) or Bill Gee (bgee@campercaver.net) for more information.

Presentations: No updates.

Carroll Cave Conservancy: Vona Kuczynska contacted Rick Hines to inquire about replacing the non-bat-friendly current gate at the main entrance of Carroll Cave with a bat-friendly chute gate. Rick suggests not re-gating the cave, since in his experience, there is very little bat flight occurring out of the natural entrance. He suggests either leaving the current gate in place or removing it altogether and installing monitoring equipment to detect unauthorized visitors.

Vona also explained that the acoustic monitor currently in place in the Mountain Room gives a more accurate report on the species of bats present than on the number of bats. She has access to some additional monitoring equipment that the CCC may be able to use in the future.

Bill noted that the rain gauge at the silo doesn't give incredibly accurate data, since it only measures rainfall at one location, and different regions of the cave may experience localized flooding. He would ideally like to add a second gauge, but this would require contacting another landowner about placement. After some discussion, it was determined that there are no USGS stream gauges in the area, but Seth noted that it may be possible to use weather data, since this data is now very accurate due to the new dual-polarization (horizontal as well as vertical) radar rainfall measurements.

In mid-March, Bill will lead a trip into the cave to exchange the memory card and replace the batteries of the sonic bat detector.

Missouri Speleological Survey (MSS) and Missouri Caves and Karst Conservancy (MCKC): The MSS January meeting has been cancelled, and the MSS is deciding whether to change the meeting frequency and format; one possibility is a yearly survey trip in the summer. No updates on the MCKC.

International Year of Caves and Karst (2021): Contact Seth Colston if you have ideas presentations or want to lead a trip in 2021.

NSS update: The 2021 NSS convention in Weed, California is currently still planned to occur in-person, but this may change.

MVOR: Bill received an email from Chuck Breite, the current MVOR president, saying that plans are in process for a spring MVOR, but there is not yet any concrete news.

Novice and Scout Trips: No formal novice trips have occurred recently. Seth was contacted by the Belton Boy Scouts, who want to do a trip in May. Anyone interested in leading this trip can contact Seth.

Hickory County: No updates. Gary Johnson is still lying low due to the pandemic.

Cloud 9 Ranch: Lee Krout will be leading the annual bat census trip one later than usual, beginning on February 18. This trip will involve a limited number of people because of COVID, including Kirsten Alvey-Mudd and a few additional cavers she is bringing. Jim and Julie will be doing map QC and supported Kirsten as needed. This year, no additional people are needed for this trip.

Stark Caverns Survey Project: Stark Caverns is “strictly encouraging” masks for all visitors. Bill has not lead any recent trips and doesn’t intend to return to Stark Caverns until the pandemic is under control. Once the situation has improved, he plans to lead a trip every one to two months. The easy part of the survey has been completed, so future trips will require small cavers.

Geronimo Springs Cave: Seth has begun the cartography from the November trip. The landowners want to do construction on their house, so they want to know whether the cave passes directly below their house. Based on the data from the first survey trip, one passage of the cave is in fact located below the house, with additional passage located below the driveway and parking area.

Seth intends to lead additional trips soon in order to set stations throughout the whole cave and push some leads. The hard part, the entrance crawl through water, is finished. The cave is mostly walking passage from there. Ideally, Seth would like to lead one trip every one to two months.

Devil’s Icebox: Seth received an email from Roxie about trips this year: One trip will occur in April, and Roxie hopes that normal trips will be possible in September. Jeff Page reports that he will not be attending any more trips, since while he learned much from his time caving in Devil’s Icebox, he wants to give others a chance to go on the limited-personnel trips.

White Nose Syndrome: See <https://caves.org/WNS/> for the most current map of the spread of WNS.

MeetUp: Contact Seth (swcy92@gmail.com) to add trips to the MeetUp schedule.

New Membership Nominations: George Tengel was voted into membership.

Trip Reports and Other News:

Seth and Gary Johnson visited the cave that Gary recently discovered, named by him as Blue River Cave, along the Blue River in southern Kansas City. This feature is “loosely” considered a cave, since it is formed by two limestone slabs that collapsed onto each other, creating a crack of empty space. This cave consists of a passage with a natural skylight. Seth and Gary finished the data collection and sketching, and Seth will complete the cartography in the future. Blue River Cave is the ninth known cave in Jackson County.

Seth, Jim, Ginny, Vona Kuszczynska, Tyler Skaggs, and Florian Weller, a postdoc from Germany and one of Vona’s coworkers, visited Joe Cave after Christmas. We finished the sketching on the 26th and 27th and departed on Monday the 28th. Joe Cave is located on Carroll Cave Road, about three miles from Carroll Cave, and is distinguished by its large entrance and especially positive landowner relations. The upper passage was unexpectedly discovered by KCAG on a recreational trip in 2008.

Over Thanksgiving, Jim led a trip consisting of Nathan Taylor, Sam Taylor, Ginny, Hou Zhong, and Becky Nelson to the Irish Wilderness. Jim arrived the day before Thanksgiving to cut firewood, and the Taylors showed up the following day to monitor three caves on the near side of the river (in the Mark Twain National Forest). The following day, Hou, Becky, and I arrived, and three additional caves in the national forest were monitored. On Saturday and Sunday, the group began the real goal of the trip:

mapping Amphitheatre Cave. This cave is very highly decorated and was discovered by Jim in 2008. Jim suspects that this cave was damaged by the earthquake in 1812, since large broken stalactites, too large to have been broken by humans, have been replaced by around two hundred years' worth of new growth.

On December 9-12, Jim, Bill, Jay and Nick Kennedy, and Matthew Hernandez visited some privately owned caves in Shannon County for a big survey project being led by Jim Cooley and Ken Grush. On the first day, the landowner led Jim and Matthew to a small crawl cave he'd found. On the second day, Bill arrived, and the group went ridge walking and found a new 200-foot cave. The following day, they pushed the survey in a cave where they have half a mile of passage already, breaking into an extensive new upper level that propagates in multiple directions. The next day, they had planned to go start a survey of a 2,000-foot gray bat colony, but the landowner wanted to see his new small cave discovered in the ridgewalking. Showing this cave to him took up most of the day. The day after that, the cavers had intended to set bolts in the high part of another large cave they are surveying, but a snowy weather forecast forced them to leave a day early. This proved to be a good decision, as three hours after everyone left, two to three inches of snow fell in the area.

The Wednesday prior to the meeting, Jim met with the Partners Biologist from the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), Byron Mitchell, at Toby Cave, near Climax Springs. Jim has secured \$27,500 from USFWS and MDC to build a flyover gate at this cave, since it is a frequently vandalized cave with a lot of trespassing, but contains a Tier One gray bat maternity colony (i.e., about 115,000 momma bats every summer). This gating project will take two trips, one in March or April to set a gate in a cattle fence, and one for the actual cave gating work, which should occur in October, once all the participants are (hopefully) vaccinated and more or less immune to COVID. The landowner of Toby Cave, Dean Mauss, a long-time friend of KCAG, died just last December, but his two sons are taking over the property and remain caver-friendly. Jim put everyone on notice that a bunch of volunteer labor will be required to build this LARGE project.

Nathan Taylor took his wife and both of his sons (Sam and Ben) to Cleveland Cave. They spent two hours in the cave, camped for one night, and had a very good time. Jim reminded the Grotto that Cleveland Cave is available, with a permit, for recreational trips on the third weekend of each month.

New Business: Jennifer Gleason mentioned that some development-related signs in Platte County, MO mention a cave. According to Jim, the Missouri cave database lists only one known cave in the county, the McCormick Distillery Cave, which is located along the bluffs of the Missouri River, is owned by the distillery. The caves files report, by Jerry Vineyard, states that it may be an excavated mine rather than a cave. Jennifer requests advice on investigating the potential Platte County cave.

Note: I (the secretary) will be moving out of town midway through this year, necessitating a mid-year officer change. Anyone who may be interested in the exciting and highly-coveted position of secretary is encouraged to contact Seth.

Unfinished Business: Seth Colston confirmed that there was no unfinished business, and the meeting participants chatted briefly and congratulated Julie on her upcoming retirement, prior to logging off.

Upcoming Trips and Events

COVID-19 update: Check with the trip leader before you set out to attend any of these events. Many of the “stay at home” restrictions have been lifted. Restrictions or not, please make your own decision regarding your health. The caves are not going anywhere.

February 16, 2021 - KCAG grotto meeting

Zoom URL: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/268089722>

March 16, 2021 – KCAG grotto meeting

Zoom URL: <https://us04web.zoom.us/j/268089722>

2021 June 28 to July 2 – NSS National Convention

Weed, California

<http://nss2021.caves.org/>

2021 Spring MVOR – To be determined

Chuck Breite, MVOR president, says they are working on plans but have nothing to announce right now.

2021 Fall MVOR – To be determined.

October, 2021, date TBA: Gating Toby Cave, Camden County, for MDC and USFWS. Many volunteers are needed!

2022 – NSS National Convention

Black Hills of South Dakota

June or July

2023 – NSS National Convention

Elkton, West Virginia

This is a retry from the canceled/online 2020 event. Dates are not yet determined.