

Chouteau Grotto Minutes from October 5, 2005

Present:

(President: Marck Schneider, absent)

Vice-President: Eugene Vale

Treasurer: Kevin Feltz

Secretary: Kathryn Devany DiFoxfire

Other Members: 6

CALL TO ORDER: Meeting called to order at 7:09 p.m.

REPORTS:

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Kat had typed the Sept. minutes and attempted unsuccessfully several times to post on Coolist, so they were passed around the room and reviewed. No changes were noted.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Account Balance: 1216.13 which represents a \$35 increase from the previous month. The increase represents new memberships. Eugene still has 11 decals checked out; Kirsten has 15.

Membership Dues Reminder: Membership dues are to be scheduled to be renewed at the end of the year.

Membership List: A current membership list was passed around for review and corrections. Two corrections were made. The list contained all the current officers (as well as Foresight Editor and Quartermaster) and 13 paid members (as of Sept. 2, 2005). Of the 13 listed, some rarely show up at meetings. Other names that have been on the list in the past are either behind on their dues or no longer with us.

MSS LIAISON REPORT:

Rita Worden, MSS Liaison, was not present at beginning of meeting, but came in later for her report. She reported that Kirsten Alvey is planning the 50th Anniversary celebration of the Missouri Speleological Society (MSS). It is currently scheduled for June 23, 24, 25 at Meramec State Park. Some of our members wondered why it would not be at Carroll Cave where MSS began.

MSS news: MSS currently has 151 members. Jo Schaper resigned as Education Chair. Eugene had a copy of her report for anyone who was interested in viewing it. It was not read during the MSS meeting. Leonard Butts resigned as editor of MO Speleology, though he offered to stay on for a while to train a successor. The *MSS Liaison* newsletter submission deadline had been extended to Oct. 10. Scott House has cave maps on CDs available for purchase.

Carroll Cave mapping news: Lower Thunder is tying into Jerry Cairn this week.

MCKC news: Banker Cave in Shannon County is being gated. Joe Walsh is leading the gating project.

MMV is celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2007.

Chouteau Grotto is also about 50 years old. **Anyone know which year we started?** It should be the late 50's or very early '60s.

FORESIGHT REPORT:

Kirsten Alvey, Foresight editor, not present. The latest issue of Foresight had been sent out by e-mail in August (Kirsten had said her computer was sending while she was attending the August meeting) but no one seems to have received a copy.

Reminder: Please continue to send trip reports to Kirsten or Steve..

QUARTERMASTER'S REPORT:

Mike Morgan, quartermaster, mentioned that the clinometer and compass are still checked out (by Kirsten Alvey).

OLD BUSINESS

Grotto Picnic

The Chouteau Grotto Fall Picnic and Campout, scheduled for the weekend of Sept. 16-18, was poorly attended. Patty Williams, a former grotto member who drive in from out-of-state, was disappointed at the attendance. Only 3 people camped that evening: Patty, Eugene Vale and Jo Schaper. It brought up the need for better communication (see below)

Fall MVOR: Was Sept 30-Oct. 2 southwest of Springfield, MO near the James River.

It was a hot weekend. Bob and Amber had started mapping a cave two years ago and went searching for it during MVOR. Due to the amount of brush and poison ivy, they were unable to locate it. Slightly more than 300 people attended the event.

Jon (Beard?) did some work in Breakdown Cave and Fitzpatrick Cave, both in Christian County. Rather than use glue to fix cave formations, he's been using pins to place them back together. This technique allows the formation to grow back and seal over and it's difficult to tell that the break is not a natural crack.

Winter Campout: Mike Morgan again suggested that a good site for the winter campout be in Shannon County near Powder Mill Cave and Little Bear (Blair?, Briar?) Creek Valley in the L.A.D. Foundation/Pioneer Forest area. The area is difficult to find, especially in the dark, and the campground area quite remote. Many of the nearby caves are gated and controlled. We would need to do some research on what caving opportunities are available in that area. Mike will look up the names of the caves and will ask for help in determining their open/closed status. Suggested dates for the winter campout were the Jan. 21-22 (third weekend in January).

Elections: Three offices will be open; the grotto is currently accepting nominations for President, Vice President and Secretary. Current nominations include Eugene Vale for President, Marck Schneider for VP, Kevin Feltz for Treasurer, Vince deMarco for Secretary and Rita Worden for MSS Liaison. The grotto will continue to accept nominations until elections.

Two items arose that appear to be in conflict with the constitution: During the September meeting, Mike Morgan mentioned that there were two-year term limits for offices. It was also noted at the meeting that elections would be in November. Kat did some checking and the copy of the Constitution and By-laws on the web do not indicate any term limits and also say that elections will be in December. If either change was made in the past, the Constitution was either not modified or there may be a more recent copy floating around somewhere. **Does anyone**

have any ideas on when such a change would have been made, and have a copy of the minutes that pertain to this issue?

Cave Cleanup/Stream Team/New Memberships: Bonne Femme Watershed Project members Scott Schulte (former superintendent at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park) and Terry Freuh (Urban Water Conservationist) expressed a desire for the grotto to assist with cave cleanups. No specific caves or sinkholes were mentioned and more information is needed.

In conjunction with the topic, the issue was brought up that the Grotto should investigate re-starting a stream team. Amber Spohn, alsgw7@mizzou.edu, 874-8881 (evenings only) was leading that and has all the water quality monitoring information.

Amber volunteered to assist.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Grotto Organization / Communication / Membership / Events

The primary topic of the evening was, in essence, improving grotto operations by taking a hard look at our organization with focus on both communication and membership.

Some of the symptoms that prompted this topic included the following (with more details below):

- 1) Problems with Coollist contributing to poor communication;
- 2) Minutes not being sent to other grotto members;
- 3) Poor attendance at the grotto picnic;
- 4) Zero participation in the St. Louis Clean Water conference;
- 5) Few planned stream team activities and very poor attendance at those activities;
- 6) Caving trips being organized by grotto members but little or no notice giving so other cannot participate;
- 7) Reduction in membership numbers and in meeting attendance
- 8) Our lack of organization and communication presents a negative public image
- 9) Probably a few other things I forgot

Discussion: What follows is a detailed discussion of the above topics and some of the remedies suggested.

Coollist: Other than the monthly meetings, Chouteau Grotto has used Coollist for years as a primary way of communication, including discussion and planning of activities. In recent years, this system has been less than ideal. Some members, for one reason or another, cannot post and/or receive messages to and from this list. The list itself has been experiencing some technical difficulties so that people who have had no problems in the past are currently experiencing problems.

Mike Morgan moved that we do some research and set up a Yahoo.Groups list. Vince deMarco seconded it. Motion passed unanimously. Eugene will pursue this and contact Matt Nevels, our webmaster to help implement it by the November 2 meeting. Dustin Stark volunteered to monitor the list. This list would be set up so it could be accessed from Chouteau Grotto website. Unlike Coollist, to which anyone can subscribe, it would be a "Members Only" list and password protected. Access would be by "invitation only" to paid members. Therefore personal information such as phone

numbers and e-mails would be protected, and would also allow for discussions of cave locations and other sensitive topics that would not be appropriate for dissemination to the general public.

YahooGroups also has several options: you can receive all emails, receive a daily digest of emails (receive that day's e-mails in one message), or just look at the e-mails when you choose. Since it doesn't allow attachments, one can upload attachments and pictures rather than have them attached to the e-mail and possibly overload/slowdown your personal system. One does need a Yahoo Account to access Yahoo Groups, but it is a free account which you can set up so that it forwards e-mails to another account if you desire.

There are some former members who still read Coollist who will need to be informed of the change.

Minutes: Kat acknowledged that she has been lax in getting meeting minutes to the membership. Many of them still need to be typed. Part of the problem is that it takes a long while to transcribe detailed handwritten minutes to typed minutes (minimum one hour for most meetings and up to 4-5 hours for the longer meetings). Former secretary, Joe Hobbs, had the benefit of bringing a laptop to the meetings. Kat does not have that advantage. Lack of minutes being posted has contributed to the impression that Chouteau is not an active grotto, especially to organizations such as MSS, as we have not submitted anything to the MSS Liaison in a while. It also means we'll have some catch-up to do for our end-of-the-year report.

Attendance at Events: Attendance at the grotto picnic, the clean water conference and at other events such as Stream Team has all been poor this year. We had the grotto picnic on our calendar for months, specifically because we wanted it to happen this year. It was unfortunate that MSS scheduled their meeting for the same weekend which probably contributed to some of the reduction in attendance, but could not explain all of it. A few members had other things come up and could not attend. A general lack of interest may also be the reason.

To improve attendance it was suggested that more than one person be responsible for planning an event. If more members have responsibilities then it follows that more people have a vested interest in making the event happen. Marck was the only point of contact for the Clean Water Conference, partly because no one else volunteered. When we finally got what details we needed it was too late to make anything happen. Also, Kisten has been working on the Foresight, but has extreme technical difficulties getting it out to the membership.

We also need to work better at communication between members. That was one reason for passing around the current membership list (as mentioned above). The grotto is active (as judged by our cave reports) but half our own membership doesn't know about the activities beforehand.

Membership: There are several possible explanations for drop in membership and why we cannot seem to attract new members.

- a) University of Missouri geology professor Joe Hobbs used to bring in new students from the university (it was a requirement of his classes to attend some of the grotto meetings). We no longer have a strong presence at the university.
- b) We used to have flyers and brochures about the grotto that could be distributed. We need a new one. Kat volunteered to design some brochures by the Nov. 2 meeting.
- c) A main reason for joining a grotto is the opportunity to go on caving trips (whether they are exploration, research or other purposes). The grotto has not organized many such opportunities this year. If we had such a calendar of regularly scheduled events (about once a month or so), it would be easier to attract new members.
- d) We also used to have programs at each meeting that gave an additional incentive to show up. This has fallen by the wayside.
- e) We have some ready markets to exploit if we concentrated our efforts. There are always new students at the university who inquire about caving opportunities. Also about 250-350 people sign up for Devil's Icebox Wild Cave Tours each year. At least 25 percent of them live in the Columbia/Boone County area. Some of the local Wild Cave Tour leaders are also not grotto members. Currently Kat DiFoxfire, Marck Schneider, and Rita Worden are the only current members who are leading trips. There are at least 9 or 10 other leaders/assistants who live in this area who are not grotto members.

Activities: We should have a trip list at each meeting. We always have an upcoming events list, but it should also include a grotto planned activity one a month, whether it is a cave trip, ridge walking to look for new caves, sinkhole cleanups, etc., (see Moniteau/Cooper County below)

2. Moniteau/Cooper County Projects

Leonard Butts, before he resigned as editor of Mo Speleology, had sent a request on "mocaves" website, which David Webster passed onto Coollist, about the possibility of doing an issue on caves in Moniteau and Cooper Counties. We are the closest grotto, and this is practically in our backyard. It would be a shame if some other grotto scooped us and took on the project instead.

This is also an opportunity that would address some of the issues listed above. It would let us plan some events that we can advertise as a way to attract new members and reclaim some former members who are not as active anymore.

Rita Worden, with the assistance of Amber Spohn and possibly Kirsten Alvey, will look into the possibility of organizing something in those counties (or Boone County) for November. Possible dates include Nov. 12-13 or Nov. 19-20. The event could be a cave trip for exploration, mapping or research; or of cave hunting or cave/sinkhole clean-up.

There was discussion about Tanyard Cave which is likely the recharge point for some of the sinkhole plain. Kirsten has been talking to the owner of Tanyard who has other issues that need to be resolved prior to acquiring landowner permission for entrance to the cave.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **National Cave Management Symposium** will be in Albany NY, Oct 31-Nov. 4

- **Halloween Weekend Caving Opportunities:** Bridal Cave Haunting will be from 7p.m. to midnight on Friday and Saturday evening that weekend. Grotto members who pre-register will receive a packet of information regarding caving opportunities in the Camdenton area that weekend. The packet includes GPS locations, cave maps and landowner permission for up to 20 caves.

- **Endangered Species Run, October 8, 2005:** David Webster also brought information on the Endangered Species Walk/Run. This is an annual fundraising event is sponsored by the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation (as well as Missouri Department of Natural Resources, Missouri Department of Conservation and others) along the Katy Trail starting at the North Jefferson City Trailhead. The theme this year is Cave Habitats. The event consists of a 10K run, 5K run and a 5K walk. For more information, contact the Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation, Endangered Species walk/Run, P.O. Box 366, Jefferson City, Mo 65102-0366. Flyers and registrations forms are also available at Rock Bridge and Katy Trail State Parks (573-449-7402, www.mostateparks.com). Registration deadline is Sept 21. Race date is October 8, 2005.

- **River Cave Tours at Ha Ha Tonka State Park:** Dec. 3, Jan. 7, Feb. 4 These free, hour-long tours of River Cave will require participants to wade through 40 degree chest-high water and climb up and down slippery terrain. Participants can expect to see a variety of cave deposits, grotto salamanders, hibernating bats and southern cavefish. Reservations are required and can be made after Nov. 1. Kat is planning to go Jan. 7 and would also like to get a few people to come along and check out Island Cave (4-10 people and a permit is required).

- Next Missouri Caves and Karst Meeting: December 10, 2005

- 2007 National Cave Management Symposium will be in Missouri hosted by Powder Valley Conservation Area.

CAVE REPORTS

- **Rita Worden travelled to Montana to Green Fork Falls Cave in the Scapegoat Wilderness area** though she did not go in the cave due to back injuries. Trip participants included Joe and Tina Oliphant, Andy _____, Mike Zuwatta, Red Watson (names likely misspelled). The cave required rappelling down 136 feet, swimming across to the next rope. Lots of sinkholes exist on the surface, lots of exploring left to do. Since it is difficult to travel between the campsite and the cave entrance, they went in afternoon and came out in the morning to take advantage of the daylight. It was a nine day caving trip with access to U.S. Forest Service cabin.

- **Amber Spohn** caved in Stone, Tany, Christian and Boone County since her last report. Due to the latest of the meeting, no details were given. Amber said Boone now has 107 documented caves.

- **Devil's Icebox:** Kat reported that the Devil's Icebox would be finishing Oct. 9. In August there were 6 trips for the public with a total of 49 participants; plus one leader training trip and three other trips that were canceled. September had 13 trips for the public (including three A-levels just to the Boat Landing) for a total of 102 participants; there was also a leader training trip and a research trip to count pink planaria (total of 35 planaria, 25 of which were in one survey plot). October had 4 trips with 39 people and two more scheduled on Oct. 8 (total of 15 people). Grand total: 25 trips for 190 participants.

OTHER BUSINESS

- Grotto Trip to Devil's Icebox Cave: Kat reminded the group that if Chouteau wanted to schedule a grotto trip into DI the deadline for the spring 2006 season is Feb. 25, 2006. Rita Worden said we should do one every year. It would require 4-10 people with the date and destination negotiated in advance with Roxie Campbell, park naturalist at Rock Bridge Memorial State Park. Registration information and fees must also be received by Feb. 25. Fees are \$25 for B-level, \$30 for C-level and \$40 for D-level. Someone asked if the fees could be reduced as a D-level trip costs twice as much as a year's membership to Chouteau. Kat said she would inquire with the park regarding fees.

MEETING ADJOURNED: at approximately 9 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Kathryn Devany DiFoxfire, 10/13/05