



T.A.G. CAVER  
Volume 7 Issue 3

## TAG Caver ~ Volume 7 Issue 3

### **Fall 2016: Cave Fest Issue**

TAG Caver is the official newsletter of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto & is published on a quarterly basis. Sewanee Mountain Grotto is a non-profit internal organization of the National Speleological Society dedicated to the exploration, mapping and conservation of caves. If you are interested in joining the Sewanee Mountain Grotto we invite you to attend one of our monthly grotto meetings. Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month at various locations in the heart of TAG. A typical meeting starts with a potluck dinner at 6pm CST, followed by the meeting at 7pm. On occasion we also have special presentations following our meetings. Annual dues are \$10 per person and are due in January. Please email [sewaneemountaingrotto@caves.org](mailto:sewaneemountaingrotto@caves.org) or one of our editors for more information on the location of our next meeting. You may also visit our website at:

<http://www.caves.org/grotto/sewaneemountaingrotto/>

### **2016 Sewanee Mtn Grotto Officers:**

Chairperson: Maureen Handler

Vice Chair & Programs: Kyle Lassiter

Treasurer: Blaine Grindle

Secretary: Hali Steinman

Member at Large: Dutch Sanders

Conservation Chair: MaureenHandler

Survey Chair: Jason Hardy

Webmaster: Tina O'Hailey

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Kelly Smallwood

[Rowland7840@bellsouth.net](mailto:Rowland7840@bellsouth.net)

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Email articles and photos for submissions to one of our editors. Content may include articles and/or photos from non members as well as other caving regions. Statements and opinions expressed in the TAG Caver do not necessarily reflect the policies or beliefs of the Sewanee Mountain Grotto or the NSS.



WELCOME TO  
CAVE FEST

Calendar of Events  
The TAG Scoop  
Schedule of Events  
Caves in the "Coon"

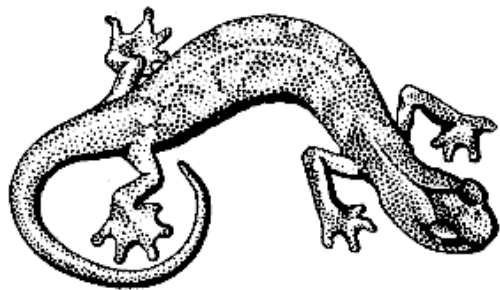
### **Front & Back Covers**

Front Cover: 2016 Cave Fest Design by Jason Hardy

Back Cover: Thank you to all of our DONORS!

# Calendar of Upcoming Events

\*All times are CENTRAL\*



**September 10, 2016 – Sewanee Mountain Grotto Meeting.** Potluck dinner starts at 6pm cst, followed by the business at 7pm.

**September 17 & 18, 2016 – TAG Fall Cave In Work Weekend.** Ever wonder how they build the fire? Interested in helping? Join the Dogwood City Grotto for a weekend of getting the site ready for the Annual TAG Fall Cave In. Breakfast, lunch & dinner is provided to volunteers along with a free T-Shirt! Feel free to camp as well.

**September 24, 2016 – Bats, Beer & Bluegrass!** Come out and celebrate the SCCi's 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Tickets must be purchased to attend. For more information visit [www.scci.org](http://www.scci.org).

**October 1, 2016 – Tennessee Cave Survey Fall Business Meeting.** Same place as years past, Tennessee Tech University. Doors open at 9am. Meet in the auditorium on the first floor of Johnson Hall. Join the TCS, pickup the new data, and stay around for some presentations!

**October 6-9, 2016 – TAG FALL CAVE IN...!** Pre registration is already open. Visit [www.tagfallcavein.org](http://www.tagfallcavein.org) for more info and to register online.

**October 28-30, 2016 – Fall NSS Board of Governors Meeting,** Hosted by the Sewanee Mountain Grotto. On Saturday evening following the BOG meeting, the SMG is having a Halloween Themed Party at Cavers Paradise. Visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/fall-2016-national-speleological-society-board-of-governors-meeting-hosted-by-the-sewanee-mountain-tickets-21637838357> for more information.

## Connect with the Grotto



If you're new to the Grotto, here are a few ways you can get to know other members:



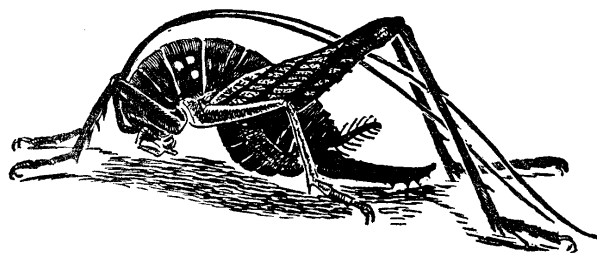
Join us on a Grotto Trip, Survey Trip or a Cleanup.



Facebook – Join our official unofficial Facebook Page to meet other area cavers and plan trips. Search for Sewanee Mountain Grotto under groups.



Grotto Merchandise: The Grotto has HATS again, cost is \$15. We also have plenty of KOOZIES for \$1 and grotto patches for \$5. Please contact Kelly Smallwood at [rowland7840@bellsouth.net](mailto:rowland7840@bellsouth.net).







# THE TAG SCOOP

**\*\*You can download an updated membership list from the Yahoo group. Membership dues are \$10. You can pay Blaine at a meeting or send them via snail mail. Send check payable to Sewanee Mountain Grotto, 669 Old Sewanee Road, Sewanee, TN 37375.**

We also now have a paypal option; From paypal, send \$10 to [sewanecmountaingrotto@yahoo.com](mailto:sewanecmountaingrotto@yahoo.com). Make sure to use the pay friends/family option. When paying dues, make sure to include your contact information (name, address, phone #, email address, & NSS #).



## CAVE FEST 2016 – SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

\*All times are Central\*

### Friday 09/02/16

All Day – Caving!  
All Day – Ropes Course  
5:30 – Bat Flight to Nickajack Cave  
Dark 30 – Popcorn & Movie:  
Journey Into Amazing Caves

### Sunday 09/04/16

All Day – More Caving!  
All Day – Ropes Course  
5:30 – Bat Flight to Nickajack Cave  
9pm–11pm – Mountain Cove Bluegrass Band!

### Saturday 09/03/16

All Day – Led Cave Trips! See Registration for sign-up sheets.  
All Day – Ropes Course  
5:00pm – Potluck Dinner  
7:00pm – AUCTION!! & Beer



### IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER

- Sign up & meet for Cave Trips and Float trips at Registration (Only sign up for Float Trips if you need a boat)
- The Ropes Course is located in the Party Zone near the Hot Tub & Sauna
- Beer served to those who purchase a CUP and are over 21
- Do not SPEED. Please be mindful when you are driving around the campground as there are kids and dogs at play
- Keep your campsite free of trash and make sure all food is secure from animals
- Recycle all glass, plastic (no caps), and aluminum in the bins provided
- Watch for snakes and spiders around wood piles.



# Alabama Wildlife Management Areas

Alabama has thousands of acres of public land set aside for recreational and conservation purposes. These lands include state parks, national wildlife refuges, and national forests. Another category of public land is the wildlife management area (WMA). Such tracts are managed primarily for hunting but are also open to the public for fishing and other outdoor activities such as hiking, photography and caving. The WMA designation was established by statute by the Alabama legislature in 1975 to provide additional hunting and recreational opportunities for Alabama citizens. Alabama now contains 36 wildlife management areas encompassing more than 768,000 acres open for hunting and recreation. These WMAs cover all areas of the state and range in size from the 6,700-acre Autauga Community Hunting area to the huge Black Warrior WMA that is more than 98,000 acres. The Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Wildlife Resources Division manages these WMAs, overseeing programs to enhance wildlife populations and the hunting experience and enforcing usage regulations. Funding for the staffing and management of WMAs comes primarily from revenues generated by the purchase of special WMA hunting licenses.

Although some acreage in the WMAs is publicly owned, much of the land is made available to the public through partnerships with private and corporate landowners. These entities have signed agreements with the state of Alabama to provide Alabama hunters with access to hundreds of thousands of acres. Additionally, government agencies such as the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), and U.S. Corps of Engineers own and allow access to a significant portion of the lands in the WMAs. Land purchases for additional acreage are supported by funds received from the Forever Wild Land Trust.

Each of the WMAs offer large areas where hunters can pursue small game such as squirrels, rabbits, doves, wild turkey, and quail and large game such as white-tail deer, coyote, bobcat, and fox. The diversity of habitats contained within the boundaries of the WMAs offers a wide variety of hunting experiences. The Crow Creek, Seven Mile Island, and Raccoon Creek WMAs, which are located on Alabama waterways or encompass large lakes and wetlands, provide fertile hunting areas for waterfowl, whereas WMAs in the state's upland and mid-state regions are popular for deer and turkey hunting. Additionally, 17 of the WMAs now have increasing resident populations of feral hogs; they have become a nuisance in some areas because they are very destructive to habitat. Hunting of feral hogs is allowed on many WMAs, although seasons and regulations may vary by individual WMA.

Organizations such as Ducks Unlimited, the Alabama Chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation, and other non-profit conservation organizations have partnered with the state to provide additional funding for habitat enhancement, land purchases, and other projects as well as providing expertise and additional staffing to assist with land purchases and with projects on WMAs. The WMAs are open to the public for general recreation use year round. Hunting seasons are set by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources and vary by WMA and by type of game being hunted.

One of the best things for cavers about Alabama WMAs is they are open to the public for general recreation which includes CAVING. The next few pages will feature some of the more well known caves in the Big & Little Coon Valley areas which are a part of the James D. Martin Skyline Wildlife Management Area. There are literally hundreds of caves in these two coves that are open year round for our exploration and recreation. However if you do visit during the hunting seasons, make sure to wear your orange!

Established in 1959, **Skyline Wildlife Management Area** was originally comprised of small parcels of leased lands from private landowners. On August 7, 1998, the area was formally dedicated as the James D. Martin-Skyline Wildlife Management Area (JDM-Skyline WMA). Today, through land acquisitions carried out by the Alabama Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries, the Forever Wild Land Trust, the State Lands Division, assistance from The Nature Conservancy, and a lease agreement with Alabama Power Company, JDM-Skyline WMA now consists of approximately 60,000 acres. The Division of Wildlife and Freshwater Fisheries and the Forever Wild Land Trust own and operate about 75 percent of the total WMA acreage.



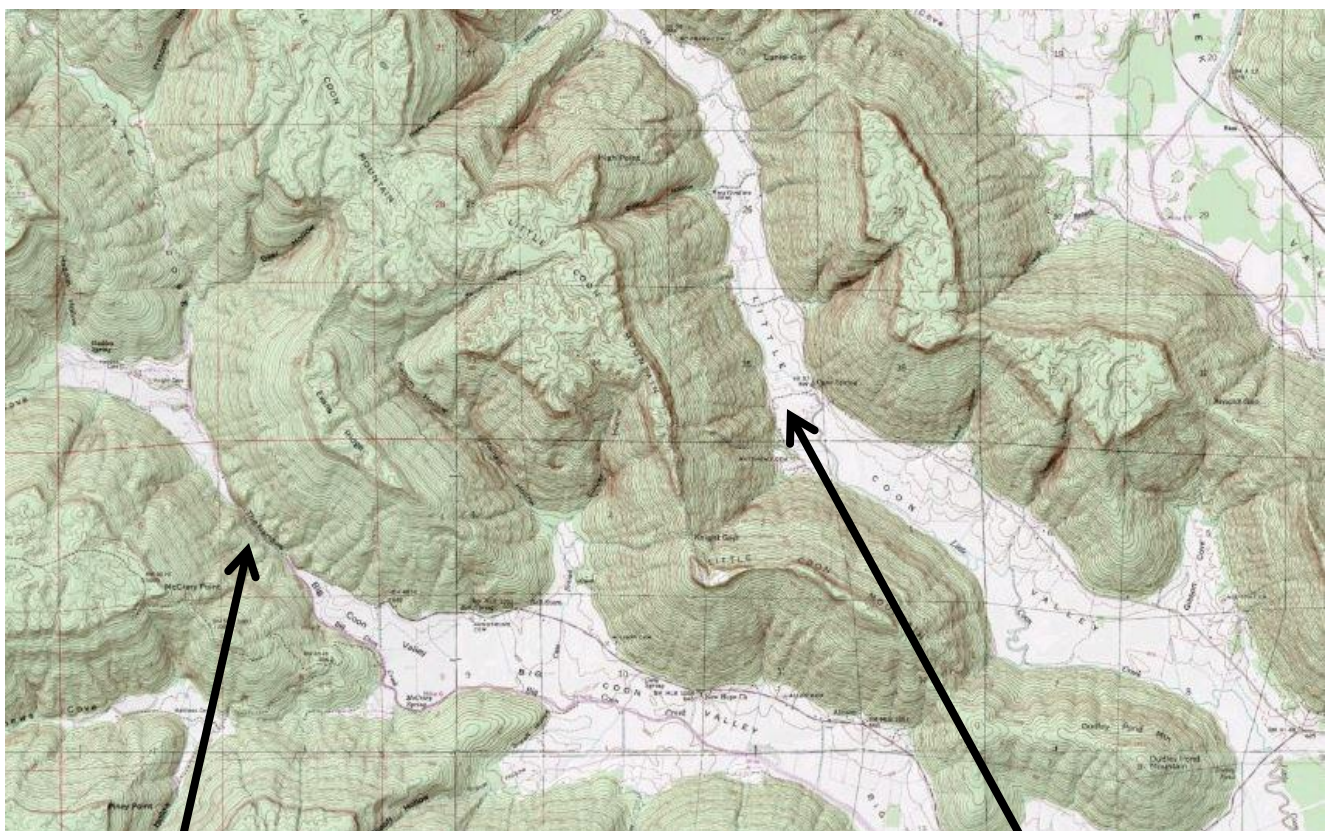
The Big and Little Coon Valleys, referred to as the “Coon”, are a hot spot for TAG cavers. Stretching loosely from Low Gap in the south to the Tennessee state line, and from the plateau west of State Road 117 above Stevenson to the Walls of Jericho in the Hurricane Creek Valley in the west, a large chunk of The Coon consists of the James D Martin Skyline Wildlife management area, which is wide open to caving and ridge walking.

Cavers frequent The Coon because of this openness, the opportunity to go there anytime to cave or ridge walk, a situation fondly reminiscent of the way most of north Alabama was in the 1960s and 70s, a halcyon time for cavers. But of course the main reason cavers like The Coon is because of its karst. The mountainsides and ridges here are not only gorgeous, they're hollow! A look at a map of the area will reveal many familiar names: Elmo's Canyon, Odyssey and Iliad, Iron Hoop, Thunder hole, Holiday Hole, Mandy's and 67 Dollar Pit trio and the list goes on. Whether your preference is horizontal or vertical, wet or dry, challenging or easy, there is something for every caver here.

While The Coon is indeed one of the last fully open caving areas in TAG; access any time, no permission needed for most caves and areas, there are a few rules that visitors should keep in mind. Vehicle access to roads in the area is restricted, the main roads are gated. When the gates are open (October 1 - May 1) you can drive in most anywhere there is not an orange *No Vehicles Beyond This Point* sign. Be sure to read the fine print on those orange signs, as foot travel is invited. This is also the rule when the main gates are closed, you can still enter the area, you just have a longer walk. Camping in the wma is permitted only in designated camping areas and it is a good idea to know where the boundaries are and to carry a map with you while in the area.

In 2012, the state of Alabama added an additional 11,364 acres to the Skyline Tract which included the Jacobs Mountain area. This property was part of the WMA in the 1970s and 1980s, but had been under private control since 1988.

When visiting the Skyline areas, please keep in mind that cavers are not the only ones in the woods. During hunting seasons it is wise that you wear your orange.



The Narrows in Big Coon Valley

The Little Coon

## **Caves in the Little Coon Valley**



**Blunder Hole AJK3333:** The entrance is an obscure hole below a low rock ledge on the contact bench. Downslope and through a narrow vertical spot is a small sit-up room, just beyond is a 107-foot pit. (This is a surface rig.) There are two small sharp ledges that need pads. It is a mostly free drop with a ledge about 30 feet from the floor. There is a formation pocket on this ledge. Water pours into the pit on the opposite wall, but the pit is dry (but can be wet during times of high water). At the bottom is a short section of walking passage to a flowstone blockage known as the SCUBA SQUEEZE!. All the water and air goes under this very low spot (a body length), then the canyon opens to a mostly hands and knees crawl to a 4-foot climb-down followed by a 7-foot climb-down to the top of a 34-foot pit. There are two bolts on the right wall. This drop is wet and lands in a nice-sized dome complex. Left upstream leads to a 40- to 50-foot high waterfall

dome. Downstream is a stoop canyon which grades to a smaller passage with a natural bridge and some quicksand, this is followed by a 12-foot pit. Rig to a large block on the left before the pit. A stoop passage leads past several nice formations to a 7-foot sluiceway climb-down. At the bottom is a deep pool and a narrow meandering walking canyon. The passage gets narrow with some cascades and it lowers at a flowstone blockage. There is a breakdown block on the right before a hole and a crawl under the flowstone. There are several small cascades in a hands and knees tube to a large pool. On the left, up high, is a dry bypass with a V-bend in the middle. At pool level, there is a body-length crawl to a hands and knees to walking passage, then a lower passage up and over a low natural bridge. This continues under formations and flowstone in a tube, which gets larger with cascades.

The passage becomes a down-cutting, walking canyon with formations to a 14-foot pit. Rig to a large column on the left wall. This is followed by the Willies. The first is a 41-foot wet pit (one bolt on left wall over drop); at the bottom, a short hands and knees tube leads to a 24-foot wet pit (one bolt on left wall). This pit drops into a large hall with some very nice formations to the left. Down a short cascade is a wet 13-foot climb-down split by a partition. A narrow walking canyon continues to a 5-foot sluiceway climb-down with a natural bridge and pool. At the bottom, a walking canyon continues around a large vertical partition then up and over a narrow spot. This canyon ends at a flowstone infeasider. On the left, down low, is a 20-foot long wet stream crawl (very low in places), it opens to a narrow walking canyon, which gets wider. The water disappears under a ledge along the right wall and a dry walking canyon continues but lowers just before a dry 26-foot pit. Rig to a formation breakdown block in the passage. (This is the main route to the bottom of the cave.) By crossing over the top of this pit, a narrow canyon with some hands and knees crawls leads to 7-foot climb-down with a chert bridge at the top and pool at the bottom. The narrow canyon continues with several small climb-downs to the top of a 13-foot pit. At the bottom of the pit, a canyon continues to a 12-foot climb-down that is offset twice with very nice formations below. The walking canyon leads to a long narrow deep bathtub (waist-deep in places). This ends at an 8-foot flowstone climb up with nice formations. On the other side, a 12-foot climb-down on flowstone leads to a T-junction with a stream passage. Left (upstream) leads to several hundred feet of passage. Right (downstream) is a short crawl to a walking passage with lots of formations. There is an 8-foot flowstone climb-up on the right that leads to a very nice formation area. The stream that had disappeared enters again in a sizeable room with breakdown which is mostly cemented sandstone. The passage drops 4 feet and under a ledge on the left into a hands and knees crawl. It continues past a couple of dry cascades to a 9-foot pit with a large pool at the bottom. The rig is a marginal flake on the right wall.

A stoop canyon continues and water forms a 2.5-foot waterfall from a small tube on the right. A lower passage begins to meander as a lower water crawl leading to a low airspace. It gets a little bigger as a meandering canyon. Just beyond is a sit-up spot. There is a very tight spot beyond, which is 100 feet of low crawl with a thin film of water over flowstone. This is followed by a second, very tight spot, and the end of this route. Back at the bottom of the 26-foot pit (having a huge water-filled pothole halfway down), a very narrow scalloped passage continues to a V-bend on the left. There is a small tube connection on the left to a point under the 7-foot climb-down, Another V-bend to the right, in a very narrow scalloped



canyon, leads to a V-bend to the left. The very narrow canyon goes to a narrow 7-foot climb-down. At the bottom is a narrow spot for 15 feet to a 4-foot climb-down and very low dig. The dig is 8-feet long and low. A narrow muddy canyon continues on the other side to a low wet hog-waller. Past that, the passage becomes a slightly larger canyon. The stream re-enters the passage and the next 1,000 feet is a downgradient stream passage with a slick floor. At the point where it finally begins to get larger, beautiful formations are numerous. There is a side passage on the right with 3- to 4-foot long white soda straws and columns. This passage continues for about 200 feet to a point where digging is necessary. The main stream passage continues to improve and there are nice formations. It ends at a 25-foot pit. The pit is narrow at the top and the rig point is a formation on the right. There is a sizeable dome room at the bottom. The water enters a too-tight crawl but there is a gravel crawl to the left that leads to a Y-junction with a small in-feeder on the left. The in-feeder on the left has been pushed for 200 feet and continues. To the right, at the Y and down a flowstone crawl, the passage intercepts the water and a low chert crawl continues for 25 feet to a 17-foot pit. The pit has a very tight entrance and the rig point is a massive chert ledge. The pit drops directly into the sump pool, which is 4-feet deep at its deepest point.

PITS: 107, 34, 12, 14, 41, 2, 26, 25, 17 - ROPES: 150, 60, 25, 200, 60, 30, 70

**Lacy Pot AJK1811:** An elusive 197 foot pit! The entrance is in a shallow sink with a mud slope on one wall. The first pit is beyond the mud slope. The cave collapsed around 1983 near the entrance. It might be possible to re-open however in the recent years cavers have been unsuccessful. See cave map on following pages.

**Thunderhole AJK1435:** Thunder Hole is a wetsuit multi-drop cave. There is a tight squeeze before the third drop that will keep some stout cavers out. There are 5 pits: 80 feet, 22 feet, 46 feet, 95 feet, and 66 feet to the bottom. Rig the far side of the entrance pit to get the maximum effect from the waterfall. Alternatively, one can rig to the close, sloping side of the pit and place the rope through an obvious keyhole about halfway down, effectively avoiding the waterfall. From the bottom, follow the water to the second drop. From the bottom of this drop, don't follow the water. Instead, exit the room crawling and join the water after a few turns. Follow the water 50 feet and turn left. Go through the Exhalation Squeeze, and follow the water down three more drops to the bottom.

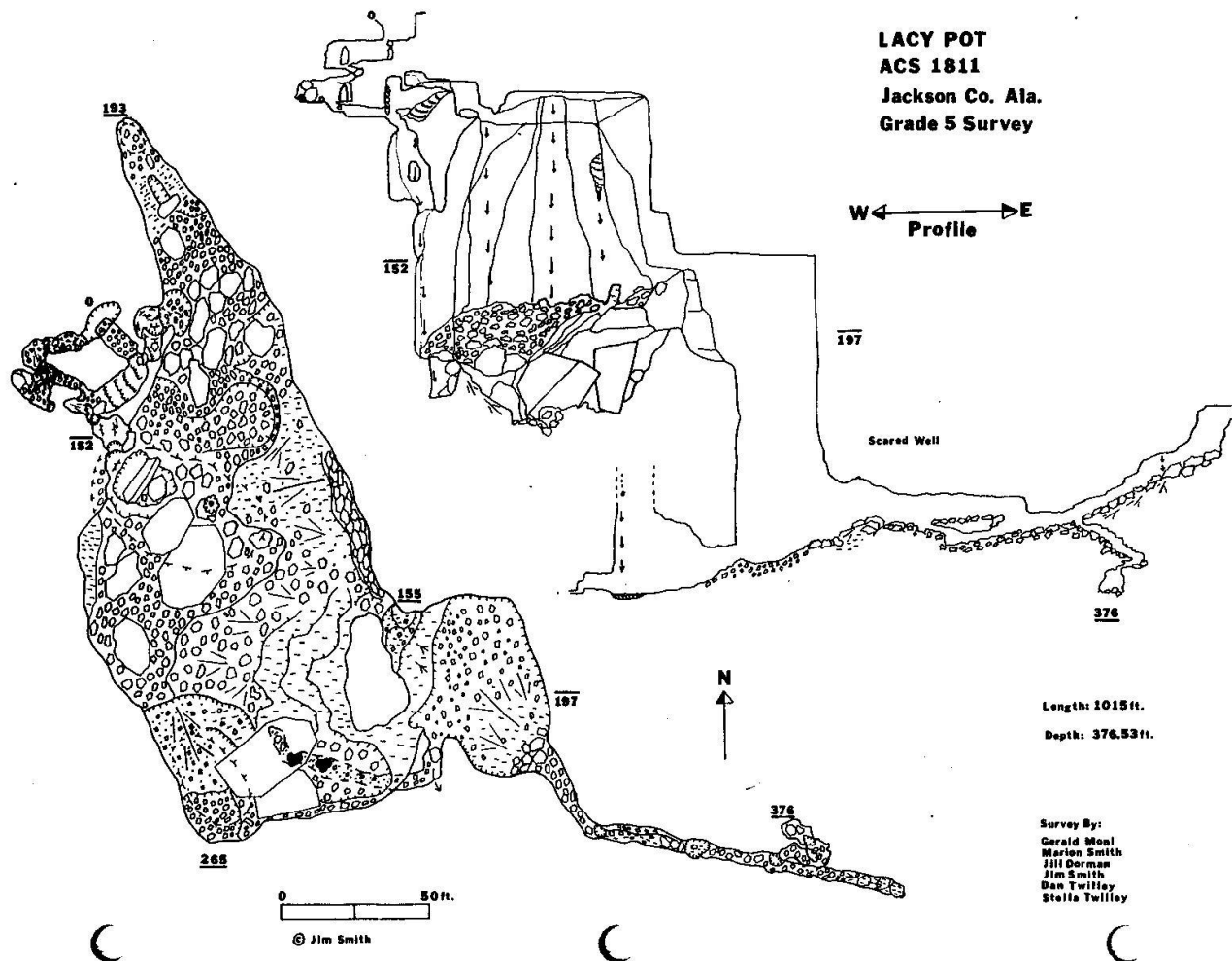
Make sure you park as discreetly as possible and remember that even though the cave is on State land, you are extremely close to private landowners who will not appreciate hordes of cars or lots of noise at night.



**Teddy Bear Cave AJK1572:** Named after Tommy "Teddy Bear" Thurman, who helped find the cave. It has a 107 foot entrance pit and 2,698 feet of cave however it appears the 40' pit leading to Tenth Street Junction has collapsed.



**LACY POT  
ACS 1811  
Jackson Co. Ala.  
Grade 5 Survey**



**MOTHER'S FINEST CAVE (MFC) ACS 4155  
&  
MOTHER'S WORST CAVE (MWC) ACS 4154  
LITTLE COON VALLEY  
JACKSON COUNTY, ALABAMA**

MFC- Length of Surveyed Distance (LSD): 6,688.5 Feet.  
Depth 366.44 Feet  
MWC- LSD: 571.5 Feet. Depth 103.27 Feet  
Overland Survey between MWC and MWF: LSD 417.6 Feet and  
Vertical Relief 61.25 Feet

**Mother's Finest Cave Surveyors  
and Explorers**

Steve Collins 01/04/02  
David Cox 07/11/03  
Lesley Colton 05/23/03  
Chuck Costabile 04/20/03  
Mark Lassiter 05/03/03  
Paul Long 08/14/03  
Jenny Linder 06/21/03  
Ryan Moran  
Mike Rodgers  
Jim Smith  
Jack Thomson  
Andy Zahner

**Mother's Worst Cave Surveyors  
and Explorers**

Ray Craig 01/25/03  
Mike Rodgers 09/01/03  
Jack Thomson  
Jim Smith  
John Lillenton

**MFC Explorers**

Jeff Barrett Tim Webb 2002 (2-4/03)  
Ken Brown Christine Vandy 11/09/02  
Carla Jones  
R.D. Jones  
Chuck Smith  
Josh Smith  
Jeff Sorenson

**Survey Dates:**

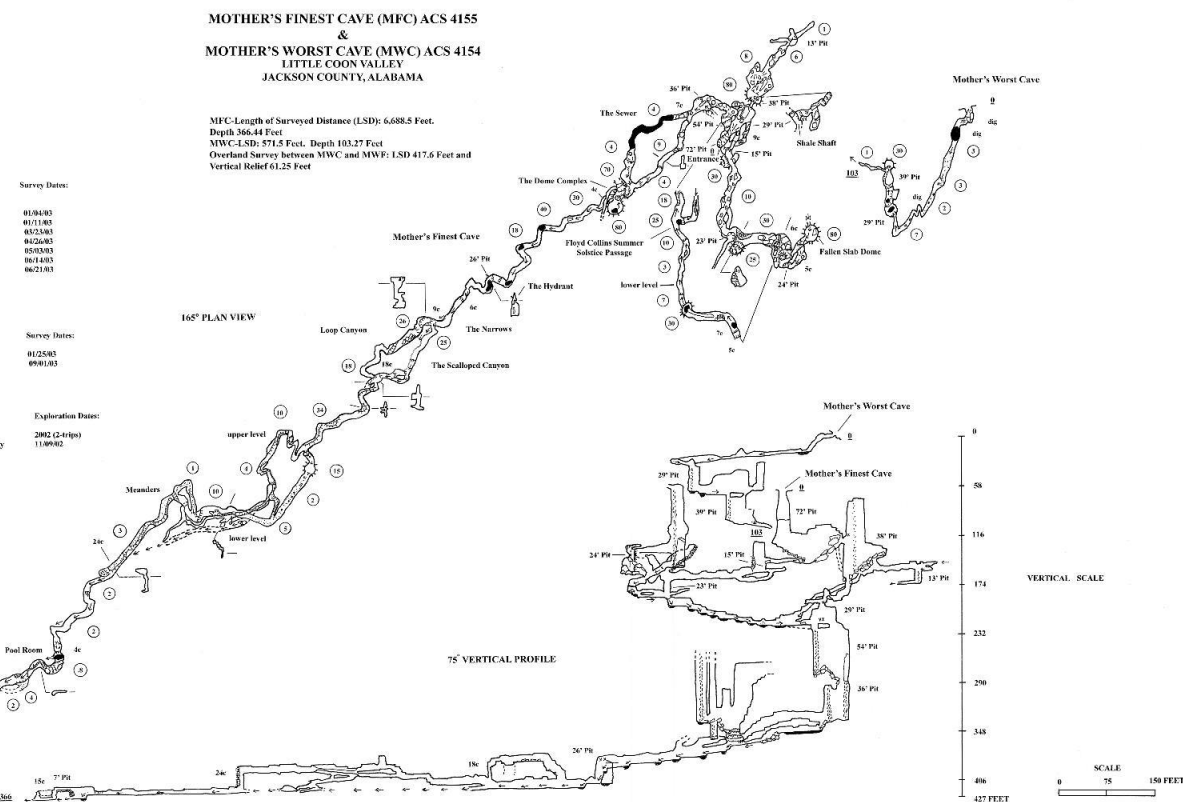
01/04/02  
07/11/03  
05/23/03  
04/20/03  
05/03/03  
08/14/03  
06/21/03

**Survey Dates:**

01/25/03  
09/01/03

**Exploration Dates:**

2002 (2-4/03)  
11/09/02



# LITTLE COON NEVER HOLE AL666

TAPE & COMPASS SURVEY  
BY THE HUNTSVILLE GROTTO, NSS  
19 MARCH 1988  
BILL TORODE  
ALAN CRESSLER

**AL3162**

⊙ 50' PIT  
100' ROPE

3' SINK



FORMATION

**ENTRANCE**  
143' TO LEDGE

20'

(25)

(15)

(1)

EXPLORED  
FOR 400'

**ENTRANCE**



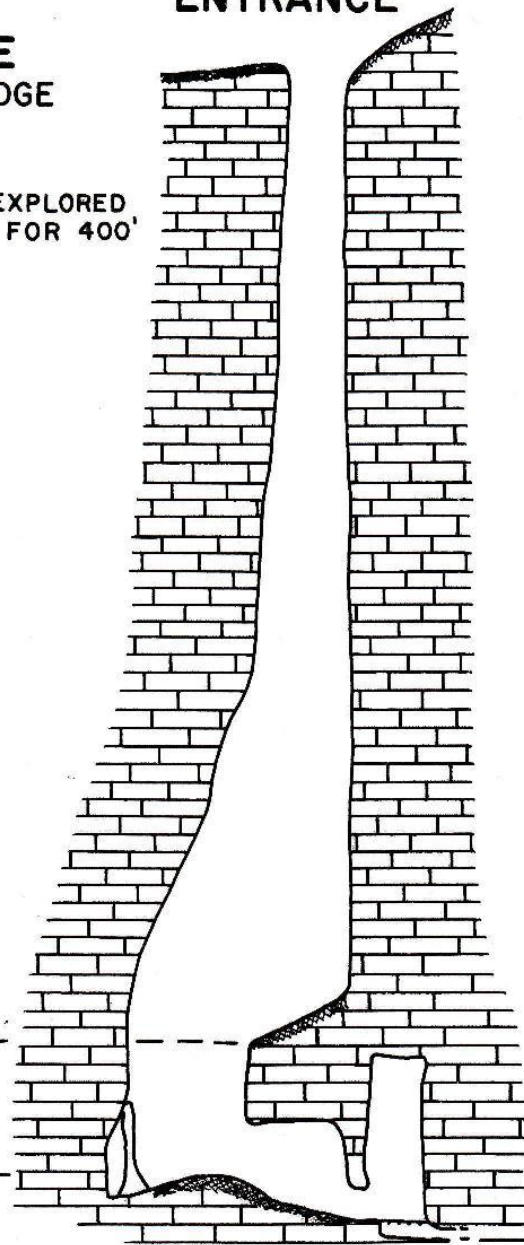
LENGTH 48'

0 50  
SCALE IN FEET

143'

163'

170'



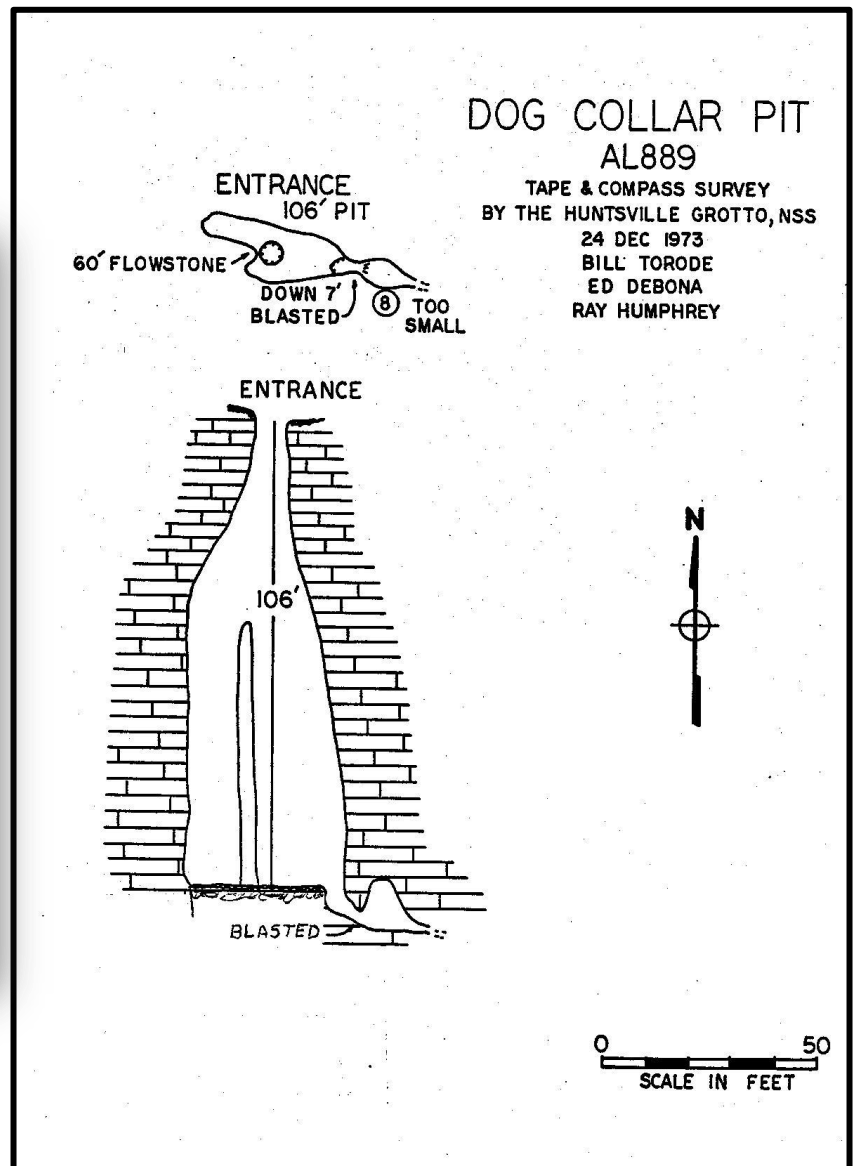
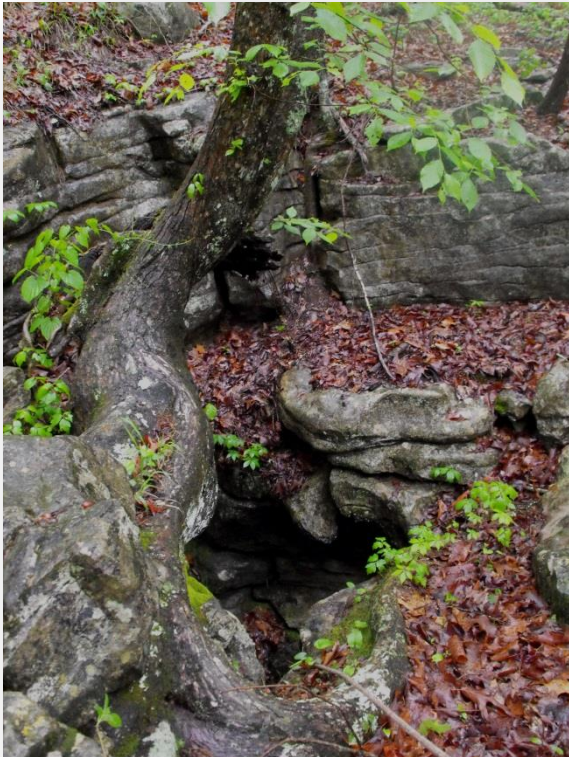
## Caves in the Big Coon Valley

**Elmo's Canyon AJK1735:** E.T. Davis helped discover and explore this cave. We used to joke about what the initials in his name stood for and someone suggested, "Elmo." (John Stapelton) The entrance is located on the far side of a large impressive (50' diameter) sink approximately 0.2 mi west from Geode Pit along an old logging road that runs sideways on the bench. The sink has vertical walls (40' max) but the floor slopes up to the rim at the far left corner. The entrance is approximately 3-4 feet wide and the cave is listed as 4,910 feet long. There are 5 pits (151, 12, 105, 40, 130) and the deepest pit is the entrance pit at 151 feet. The cave is 512' deep.



## **Dog Collar Pit AJK889**

A decorated 106' blind pit. Jason Hardy proposed to Kelly Smallwood in the bottom in 2013!





## A TRIO of Pits that are commonly visited on the same trip:

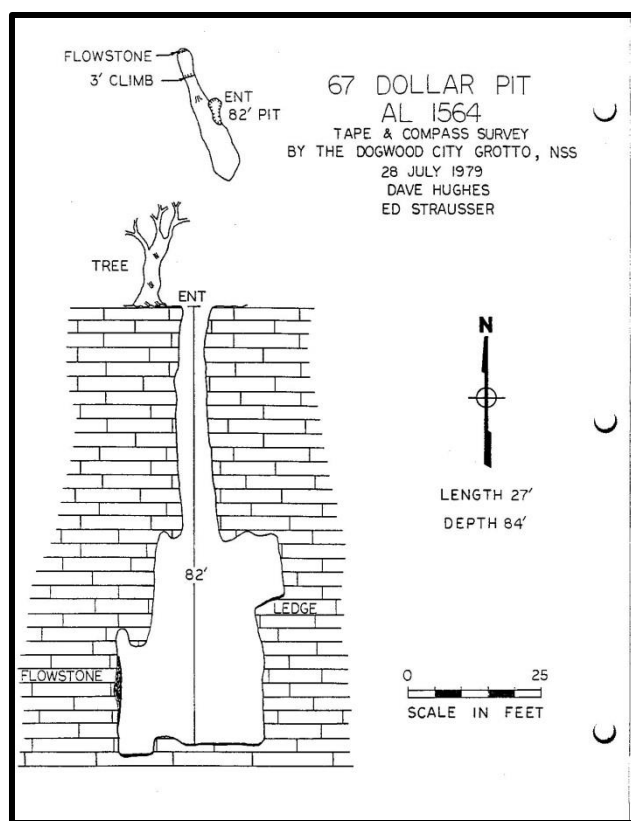
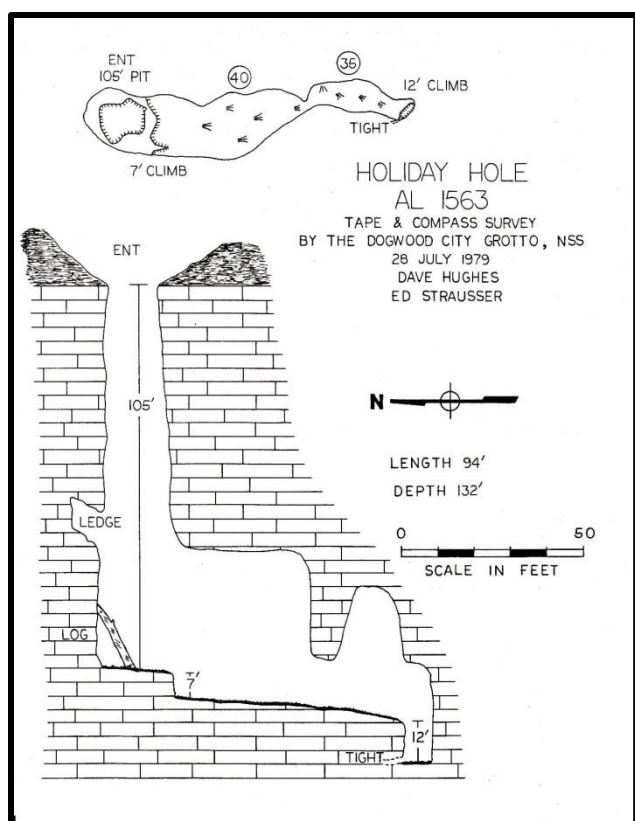


**Holiday Hole AJK1563:** All 3 pits are located along a 4 wheeler road in close proximity. The entrance is a 20' diameter sinkhole that allows a free 106 foot rappel and climb. The entrance sinkhole has an abundance of wildflowers in the spring, thus it can be very scenic. At the bottom of the entrance drop is a seven foot climb down on the right side of the wall that leads to the remainder of the cave.

**Mandy's Pit AJK:** A tight 25' climbdown leads to a nice, 161'-deep pit. At the bottom is 800 feet of passage, including an 18' pit. At the bottom of the 18-footer, a tight crack takes the water, but it's too small for cavers. There are a couple

of trees adjacent to the entrance climbdown and either one is good for rigging a rope sufficiently long to reach the main ledge adjacent to the pit inside the cave. The rigging point is adjacent to a flat and clean rock-ledge at the bottom of the climbdown. This ledge is large enough to accommodate about 2-3 people. There are 3 bolts in the ceiling fissure above the pit; a relatively new one on the left side of the fissure and two older, rusty bolts/hangers on the right side. Of the two on the right side, one of them is out over the pit, requiring a pretty good stretch to reach it. We opted to use a double figure-8 (bunny-ears) knot secured to the left-side bolt and near right-side bolt. This places the rope right at the edge of the lip with a slight rub and a secondary rub about 2-3 ft down. A long flat pad works well here. The drop is mostly free to slightly against the wall into a very spacious chamber. The gravel floor is flat with small shallow pools.

**Sixty Seven Dollar Pit AJK1564:** Doug Strait and ET Davis and I were pulled over and since it was a dry county and ET had brought along a case of beer, they soon found themselves at the jailhouse/ police station, which at that time was above the five and dime store in Stevenson. It seemed that \$67.75 was necessary to rectify the situation, which turned out to be \$2 and change less than the total money between them. The entrance is a small slot which opens slightly to allow a free 82 foot rappel. At the bottom of the drop is a nicely decorated flowstone wall.



**Jess Elliot / Iron Hoop Cave AJK323:** The length of the two caves combined is listed as 23,064 feet. There is extreme flood potential in the lower connecting crawls. The depth is 147', but the vertical extent is 285'. The two caves were connected on 1/28/89, Z survey to K survey, Station K6. The length of 23064' does not include all explored passage. A second interim map was included in the '89 update. The Iron Hoop entrance is small, less than 2 feet in diameter. Another small hole leads into a larger room with passage going off. Don't go the way that looks most obvious, it's eventually a dead end. From the first room past the second tight place, go left through an obscure breakdown crawl; after a couple of body lengths this crawl will put you in walking/stooping stream passage. Follow this until it rather abruptly emerges into BIG passage. You can go either way. Hollow Mountain, a gigantic flowstone formation is to the right, which is also the way to Iron Hoop's connection with Jess Elliot. The connectin is long, complicated, and full of low air passage that is extremely flood prone. Do not attempt this connection if there is even a remote possibility of rain! The Jess Elliot entrance is quite large and impressive. If you want to see both caves it is best to visit them individually.



*Left: Jason Hardy at the entrance to Jess Elliot.*

*Right: John Attaway holding the old Iron Hoop for which the*



**Iliad / Odyssey AJK1568:** Rope lengths for the Odyssey entrance route: 120, 40, 25, 70, 70, 60 (pad this drop), 80, 40. Rope lengths for the Iliad entrance route: 50 (pad this drop), 80, 70 (pad this drop), 25, 70, 70, 60 (pad this drop), 80, 40.

The entrance to the Odyssey route is a steep-walled, 40-foot-diameter sinkhole. Descend down a loose slope for about 50 vertical feet to a 20-foot pit. Rigging is scarce. Just around a corner is the next drop of 15 feet. Both pits could probably be rigged with a single 120-foot rope. Less than a hundred feet away and down a series of climbs is a third drop of 12 feet, needs a 40-foot rope. Beyond is a few hundred feet of fairly nice walking passage, then the cave drops down into a long, low stream crawl for several hundred feet. After that is a series of breakdown rooms and nozzle-like features, just keep following the water where you can, and traverse up and over a few breakdown piles where you can't. After 1500 feet or so, this route intersects the Iliad route in the complex area just below the third drop.

The Iliad entrance is located in a large ravine, and has a small natural bridge over the top of it. If water is flowing in this entrance, entering the cave would be ill-advised. Climb-down and commence crawling for about 200 feet of awkward, wet passage. The first pit you come to is about 25 feet and needs a 50-foot rope. You can use natural rigging at this drop. Continue through a narrow canyon for a few hundred feet to a 65-foot pit, with a few old rusty bolts at the top. Past drop two, follow the water around a few bends until it disappears into a leaf-filled crawl. Look to your right and climb up a mud hump into a ceiling channel. Crawl for 20 feet, and then walk another 50 feet or so to a 15-foot pit. Rig a 50-foot rope to the breakdown. Looking away from the rope, turn left and climb-down over some breakdown. Not IN the breakdown, but over the top. You will come to a parallel, muddy passage. The passage to the right leads back to the Odyssey entrance. Turn left and go 50 feet until you come to a 12-foot deep canyon in the floor, with a flowing stream at the bottom. If you traverse out across the canyon for 20-30 feet, you will find a place where you can climb down. Follow the water around a few bends until it all flows underneath a flowstone drapery. This is the Nozzle. You might want to take off your vertical gear before going through. It pops into a standing spot, and then goes through another nozzle; this one has a 5-foot drop on the other side. Hard to get back up if the water is really pounding. Go head first through the first one, then feet first through the second one. At the bottom, continue 100 feet or so to a



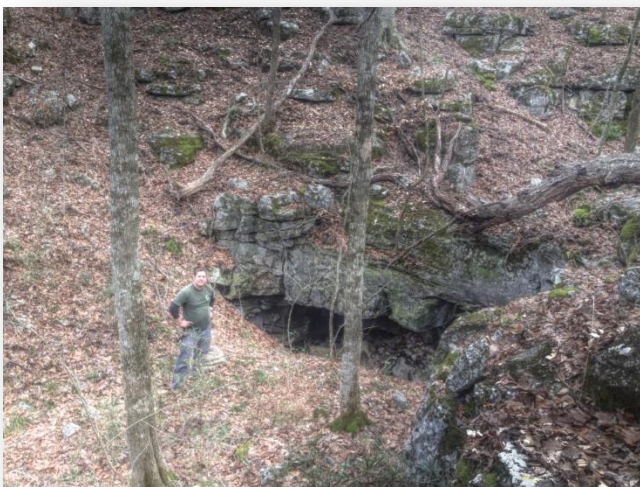
7-foot pit, which needs a 25-foot rope. Past that, you will come to a spectacular white formation area and the top of a 35-foot pit. Carefully rig around a flowstone mound, but watch for the ceiling as it is very delicate!

At the bottom the water goes down a canyon; Stay high and traverse across the canyon to a dry 50-foot pit with natural rigging and a single bolt (only accepts quick links/mallions) for a rebelay.

At the bottom, the water goes down a hole. Look for a drier 25-foot drop just to the left, and rig around a large boulder back in an alcove with at least a 60-foot rope. Then follow a nice canyon passage for a few hundred feet until the water goes down a 15-foot pit. Continue high here, traversing out over the canyon. You will come to a large ledge where an 80-foot rope can be rigged to a flowstone mound for about a 40-foot rappel to the floor. From here you can follow the water to one more pit past this, but it sucks getting to it and rigging is really scary. A 40-foot rope will rig it if you are determined. Its 300 feet down the crawl in front of you.

Before the start of the water crawl to the last pit a large flowstone slope and ledge can be seen on the left. Step up to the ledge and climb several flowstone slopes to a large mud/breakdown pile. Go right from the top of the flowstone up the slope into a large formation room. Be careful of the floor in the area as it is delicate. Skirting around the left edge of the room and behind the large flowstone mound, one can climb/walk up the large flowstone wall on the left to the top of the room. From the top of the flowstone wall, at least 1000 feet of large borehole walking passage can be explored before ending in a breakdown pile. You can continue past the breakdown pile by climbing straight up the center of the mountain into the ceiling and turning left and climbing up near the white formations. This leads into another several hundred foot section of walking borehole before ending in a large breakdown pile. (Andy Zellner, NSS 35937 & Kyle Gochenour, NSS 58846, November 2010).

The Odyssey entrance to the system is in a very large diameter sink approximately 0.2 mi west at the same elevation from the big sink near Elmo's Canyon. The sink has vertical walls on the uphill side and a long, steeply sloping ramp running down from the east side. In Fall of 2011, there was a large tree that had fallen across the pit, spectacularly bridging it. The sloping ramp extends down 100' from the rim before a 30' pit is encountered. The slope is covered in extremely unstable rocks that will slide/roll over the edge and fall. From the bottom of the 30' pit there is another ramp that goes around a corner to the left and then an 8' drop to the floor of a large room is encountered. The room is maybe 25' wide, 60' long and 80-100' tall. It narrows to a canyon at the far end. Chimney/climb up about 10' at the far end, and that seemed to be where the route into the cave continued. We were able to use a 177' rope rigged to a tree inside the sink and just barely get down the second little drop to the big room

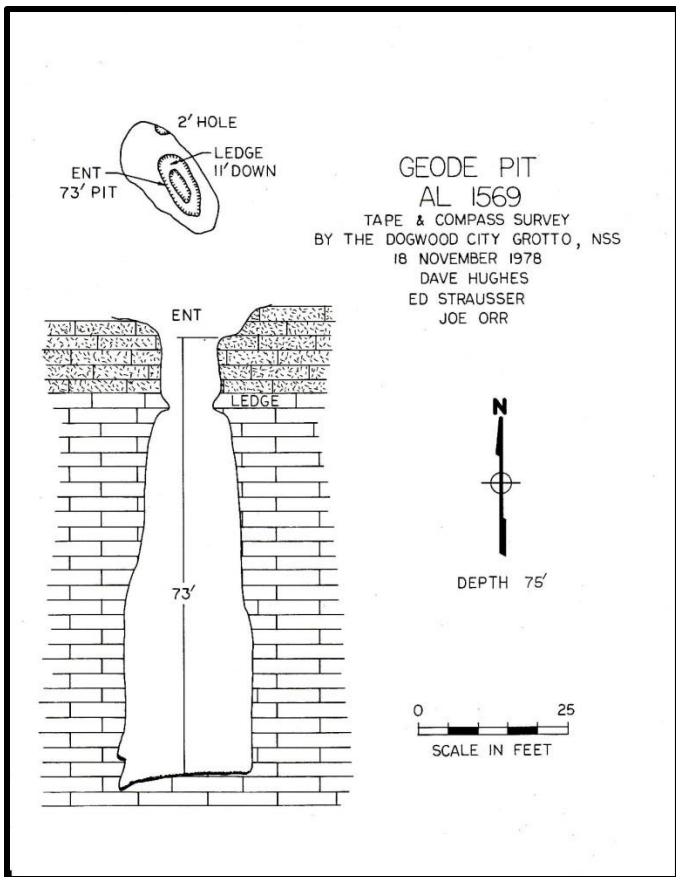


*Left: Jason Hardy at the entrance to Illiad.*



*Right: The entrance to Odyssey*

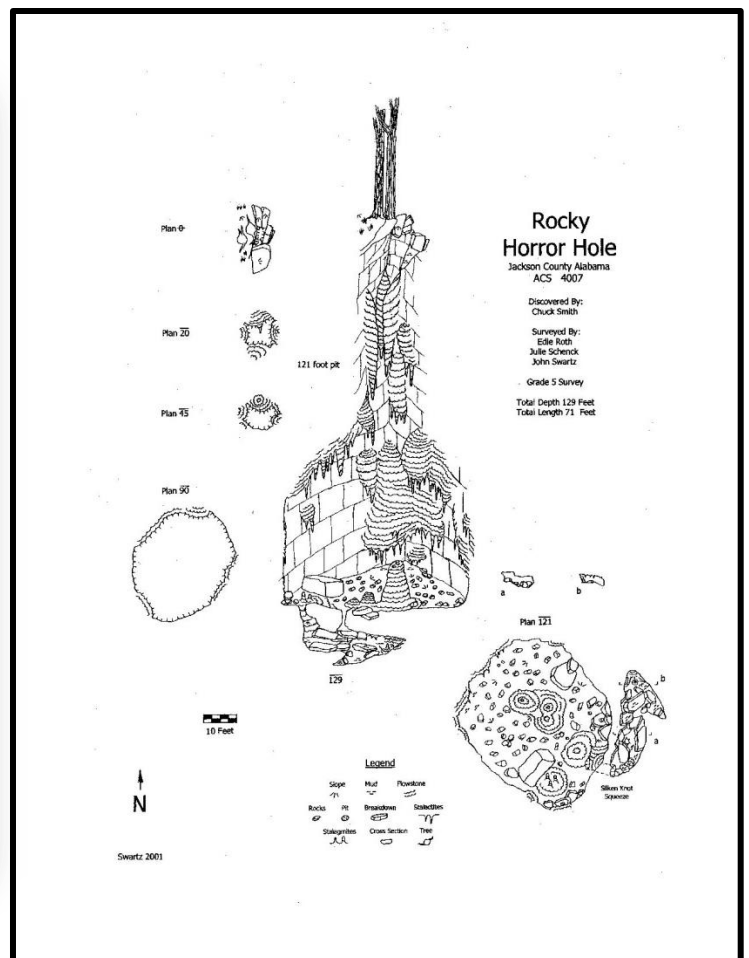




Entrance to Geode Pit



Entrance to Rocky Horror Hole





Big Coon Blue Hole is a large spring that is basically the head of Big Coon Creek. It is green in this image because of recent heavy rain. The depth of the pool is around 25 feet. In dry times the spring does not flow and is reduced to a small clear pool under a limestone ledge. The Jess Elliot-Iron Hoop Cave System drains out this spring.



Cave Springs Baptist Church, which sits at the corner of CR 54 and CR566 in the Little Coon.

If you own or have access to an ATV: You are allowed to ride in the Skyline area while the gates are OPEN. Please stay on established trails.





This map is your permit to hunt all game in accordance with the seasons, rules, and regulations listed hereon. This map permit will be valid for the entire season. This permit must be signed and in your possession to be valid.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

A separate trapping permit can be obtained from the area biologist.

# JAMES D. MARTIN - SKYLINE WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF WILDLIFE AND FRESHWATER FISHERIES FOREVER WILD LAND TRUST AND ALABAMA POWER

**LEGEND**

**WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA BOUNDARY**

**ZONE A** **ZONE B**

HEAVY TRAIL

PRIMITIVE ROAD

UNIMPROVED ROAD

RAVEL, ZONE OF SEAL ROAD

STAGED ROAD

STAGED ROAD

SAFETY ZONE

SHOOTING ZONE

SHOOTING ZONE (RESERVED)

TARGET RANGE (FEDERAL)

