



# The TAGLine

PO Box 11506 Chattanooga, TN 37401-2506  
<http://www.caves.org/grotto/chattanooga>

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Chattanooga Grotto of the NSS

June 2006

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## Meeting Notice

This month's regularly scheduled grotto meeting will be held at Nickajack Cave Wildlife Refuge where we'll enjoy the sundown emergence of some 60,000-100,000 gray bats from the cave and a naturalists presentation on bat ecology. There are two ways to watch the show, which can last about 45 minutes: from the water or from the observation deck. If you would like to paddle around the lake and watch from there, you can bring your own watercraft or use a canoe, kayak, or raft that we will provide. We will launch our watercraft at 7:00 pm, normal meeting time, giving plenty of time to paddle around, fish (bring your TN fishing licenses!), eat a sack dinner, or just visit and enjoy the mosquitoes before the bats come out at sundown. If you don't want to paddle, you can take a short walk to the observation deck to watch (be advised that the trail is a bit washed out and you might want a flashlight for after dark). No supper will be served at this outing, though we will provide refreshing ice cream sandwiches. Of course, you're welcome to bring a sack of Krystals or whatever, and those who choose to watch from the observation deck may want to bring a lawn chair. Come enjoy the show! Note: The EC meeting will meet at 6:00 pm at the picnic shelter.

Directions to Nickajack and other details later in the newsletter.



(The following information is copied from Sherpaguides.com and explains a little more about the event)

Nickajack Cave is adjacent to Maple View Recreation Area, which is operated by the City of New Hope. The cave is managed jointly by the Tennessee Valley Authority and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, and there are strict penalties for harassing the bats.

"This cave is not as much of an attraction as the creatures who roost here. Visitors will want to come to this site on an evening between late April and early September. That's when more than 100,000 federally endangered gray bats leave the cave and take to the sky. The bats emerge from their maternity roost nightly like a black veil unfurling, a show that lasts approximately 45 minutes.

Pregnant female bats arrive each spring and find just the right conditions for giving birth in Nickajack Cave. Warm air is trapped in pockets in the cave ceiling, creating an incubator-like temperature. Each night, gray bats feed on mosquitoes, moths, and beetles, with this colony consuming 274,000 pounds of insects annually. The cliff swallows visitors will see flying around in front of the cave feed on the same insects during the day. These birds build their jug-like mud nests in the twilight zone (the zone where light from the outside still penetrates the cave darkness), sharing the bats' habitat and food source but on a different schedule. The young gray bats are very vulnerable to human disturbance, so the Tennessee Valley Authority has fenced in the cave. Visitors stand on a viewing platform a safe distance away. This site is so biologically important, it became Tennessee's first nongame wildlife refuge in 1992, and today it is managed solely for the protection of the bats..

## **Directions and other Stuff for Nickajack:**

\* **Directions:** From Chattanooga, take I-24 west to the Halesboro/New Hope Exit #161 and turn left onto Route 156 south. Travel 5 miles and turn left into Maple View Recreation Area. A 0.2-mile trail leads from the parking area to the cave entrance.

\* **Activities:** Seasonal viewing of bats. At the recreation area, boating, swimming, fishing, and picnicking.

\* **Facilities:** Viewing platform at Nickajack Cave. At the recreation area, there is a boat ramp, swimming beach, restroom, and picnic areas.

\* **Dates:** Bats can be seen each evening between late Apr. and early Sept.

\* **Fees:** There is a \$2 charge for parking.

\* For more information: Tennessee Valley Authority, Chickamauga/Nickajack Land Management Office, 4833 Highway 58, Chattanooga, TN 37416. Phone (423) 954-3811. Or, Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency, Region III, 216 Penfield Street, Crossville, TN 38555. Phone (800) 262-6704.

## **K-O-R: A Testimonial**

By Jerry Wallace

I've only been to two Karst-O-Ramas now, but it has rapidly become one of my favorite caving events, and I don't intend to miss another one if I can help it. In time, it may even surpass the TAG Fall Cave-In as my favorite.

So what's so great about it? First of all it's held on what has to be the near-perfect site for a caving event. The Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve is 300 acres of land leased and managed by the Greater Cincinnati Grotto. There are seven or so caves on the Preserve, the showpiece of which is the Great Saltpetre Cave. As its name would imply, the cave was mined for saltpetre, and many of its workings and mining relics are still intact. It also had a short life as a commercial cave in the 1960's and 70's. The commercial lighting is still in place, and is left on during the event. K-O-R attendees are free to wander in any time, and no caving gear is required unless you go into the undeveloped part of the cave. The main room is HUGE. One can hardly

throw a Frisbee the length of it, and believe me, some of us tried!

The part of the preserve where the event is held is a park-like setting with a nice stream running through it, replete with swimming hole. The camping spots are mostly flat, and the area is large enough that you don't feel crowded. There's an excellent permanent sauna area too, and I understand that a new heater has been acquired so the hot tub may actually be HOT this year.

Aside from that, there are the usual activities you'd expect at a caving event: vendors, a banquet, door prizes, a keg or two, a margarita bar and a band on Saturday night.

And if you're inclined to actually go caving, there are some great caves within a short distance of the preserve, not to mention the ones on the property itself. There are guided trips going out every day of the event, and you should be able to find something to fit whatever caving desire you might have.

In short, this is a great event. The folks up there are all super-friendly and prove that southern hospitality doesn't end at the Mason-Dixon line. These Yankees know how to throw a great party!

No I'm not getting paid to plug K-O-R. I just think this is a worthy event and a great opportunity for TAGcentric cavers to see some different karst and meet fellow cavers from other parts of the country. It's usually sparsely attended by TAGgers, probably because of the distance; it's a pretty good haul for folks south and west of Chattanooga, but only about 3 1/2 hours away for most of us in this area.

Marty Abercrombie and I will be going again this year, and it would be nice to have the Chattanooga Grotto make a presence. If anyone else is interested in coming along, let us know and we'll set up a Grotto campsite. Check out the internet links in the previous article for more information. Hope to see y'all there!

## Karst-O-Rama 2006

Join the Greater Cincinnati Grotto at one of the largest caving events held this year in the eastern half of the United States July 14-16, 2006 - Karst-O-Rama.

Held at the Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve in Mount Vernon, Kentucky, just off Interstate 75 at Exit 59. Additional information along with registration forms, on-line registration, maps and much more can be found at [www.karstorama.com](http://www.karstorama.com)

The Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve is 300 acres of mostly wooded area with several acres of camping divided into a "Party Camp" and a "Family Camp". The creation of two "Camps" allows guests to enjoy the peace and quiet of the outdoors or stay up late and check out the night owl activities.

Great Saltpetre Cave was used for saltpetre mining in the early 1800's, and since then for weddings, Masonic meetings, country music radio shows, family outings and even the production of a movie. In 2001, the preserve was the site of the NSS National Convention with 1100 campers in attendance.

Karst-O-Rama weekend actually starts off with Registration opening on Thursday at 6:00 pm. About one third of KOR participants arrive by Thursday night so come early and join the fun. Sign-up sheets for cave trips will be available at the shelter house with trips running all weekend.

The kitchen will be open for dinner Friday evening and for breakfast Saturday and Sunday mornings. Friday night will include a Howdy Party for checking out the crowd and signing up for cave trips on Saturday and Sunday, and the highly popular noodle wrestling event.

Saturday morning, cave trips will begin, both guided and self led. Other activities for the day include a photo contest, hayrides, hiking, and a climbing contest. If the July temperature becomes unbearable while shopping at the vendor section, the Crooked Creek swimming hole awaits complete with rope swing and zip line. The preserve includes several miles of hiking trails both on and off the property. For those that are shopping addicted, the preserve is only a few miles from the city of Berea with its many gift shops and antique malls.

As the evening approaches, there will be a banquet from 5:00 to 7:00 under the shelter followed by a caving program at 8:00. Door prizes will be awarded prior to the program. If you want to stay up till all hours, there will be lots of activity in party camp, with the official KOR party starting at 9:30, featuring a live band.

For those with leftover energy, there will be cave trips Sunday morning.

If you have any questions about this yearly caving event, please contact Rick Peters at [chairman@karstorama.com](mailto:chairman@karstorama.com)

Looking forward to seeing you there!

## Calendar of Events

**July 14-16:** Karst-O-Rama

**October:** Annual Auction!

**October:** TAG Fall Cave-In!

**November 4:** 50th Anniversary Celebration

## Grotto Trips!

### Trip Schedule for This Year:

**June:** Limrock Blowing Cave, led by Monty Keel. Contact Monty for more information. (706) 639-9249

**June:** Gourdneck Cave, led by Wm Shrewsbury. See Wm for more information. 423.238.9334

**July 16:** Karst-O-Rama

**July 29-30:** Summer Splash! (unofficial 50th "blow-out" celebration)

**July:** Whiteside Cave, led by Beth Elliott.

**September:** Cedar Ridge Cave, led by Carolina Shrewsbury

**October:** TAG Fall Cave-In!

**November:** Levi Cave.

**November:** Grotto's 50th Birthday!

**December:** Cumberland Caverns Christmas Party

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This contact list may also be found at the Grotto web site "Contact Us" page, at <http://www.caves.org/grotto/chattanooga/contactus.html>



In order to get the Tagline out earlier we would like articles for all editions of the Tagline to be submitted by the 28<sup>th</sup> of the month before publication. Send in pictures, articles, announcements, or what you want posted. See contact page for info. All drawings are copyright protected and the editor has received special permission from the artist to use in the TAGLine. The gifted Rick Spears provided the drawing on the envelope. Thank you very much! The Chattanooga Grotto TAGLine is the monthly notice of The Chattanooga Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Inc. The editor reserves the right to edit submissions for clarity and space requirements. Exchanges are welcome and encouraged. Please submit trip report and other longer material to the TAGLine PO Box 11506, Chattanooga, TN 37401-2506 or the Grotto TAGLine Editor.

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