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January — February 2011

The Massachusetts Caver

Newsletter of the Boston Grotto Chapter of the National Speleological Society



In This Issue: **January & February '11 Meeting Minutes. Caving in Needham & Wellesley, MA**

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Submissions of original material for the Massachusetts Caver are welcomed. Please submit articles, photos, or artwork digitally, as email attachment ([ctaylor\[at\]gis.net](mailto:ctaylor[at]gis.net)) or on disk; or on paper, either hand-delivered at the Grotto meeting, or mailed to: *Chris Taylor, 64 Meeting House Path, Ashland, MA 01721.*

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Membership in the Boston Grotto costs \$15 per calendar year and includes one year of newsletter issues.

Meetings are held the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 p.m., in MIT's Building 32, Room 124, or a nearby room if 124 is not available.



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Rich Lester at the old Baker Estate artificial (man-made) cave.
Photo by Gary Lau.

The Massachusetts Caver

Subscriptions are in digital PDF format free to club members. To join the club and automatically subscribe to the digital version contact the Treasurer.

Come to the meetings at MIT's beautiful downtown Cambridge MA campus, held the first Wednesday of every month at 7:30 PM! We discuss recent trips, watch some interesting presentations on caving and related subjects, and plan & organize cave exploration trips.

At the Janaury & February '11 Meetings

Kevin Harris

4-Jan-2011, Stata Center, Room 124. Attendance: 14. Presiding, John Evans

Recent Trips:

On December 11, , Rich Lester, Bo Han, Dave Crusoe, Tom Kinsky, Bob Dion, Mike T visited the Lanesboro (MA) karst and participated in a dig in Skeleton Cave, named for the animal bones once brought in to use as room markers. The digging, in clay will eventually allow access to suspected lower levels. The group used safe microshaving techniques used, and no eyeballs were lost from flying debris or screwdrivers. Bob Dion and Mike T handled most of the dragging and disposal of rocks and dirt.

On December 19, 2010, Pat Connors, Tom Kinsky, Paul Kinsky and Sean Kinsky explored the abandoned buildings located on land that is part of Wompatuck State Park. The group also explored some access tunnels. Of 12 buildings the group checked out, most had had the roofs removed. Most were covered with paintball residue and graffiti, just like some caves.

Upcoming Trips:

January 9, 2011. More digging in the Lanesboro Karst. Contact Tom Kinsky.

January 17, 2011, MLK Holiday Trip. Auburn Aqueduct, rappelling. Contact Hubert Shen or Keluo Yao.

Business:

Hank Walther recommends "VLC" for playing digital media. According to hank, this allows you to put more songs on your portable player to enjoy on the way to caves.

Hank Walther knows about an old bunker system on Kauai Island (Hawaii) that can be explored, and also a limestone cave, the only one in Hawaii, to the best of his knowledge. No definitive plans were made for a Grotto trip, but if you plan to visit Kauai, contact Hank.

Presentation:

The club watched *The World's Biggest Cave* from National Geographic, which concerned an expedition to explore Son Doong, a river cave in central Vietnam. This cave is covered in an article in the January 2011 issue of National Geographic magazine as well.

9-Feb-2011, Stata Center, Room 124. Attendance: 12. Presiding: John Evans. Meeting was postponed one week due to a snowstorm.

Recent Trips:

On January 17, 2011, Hubert Shen and Keluo Yao visited the Auburn Aqueduct. The entrance was covered with lots of snow, which made rigging very interesting and precluded the usual freefall rappel. Keluo and Hubert saw ice climbers at the downstream end of the tunnel, which had overhanging iceflows 30 to 40 feet high. Water in the tunnel was not frozen.

On January 23, 2011, Rich Lester, Gary & Sheilarae Lau and their two children visited the remnants of the Baker Estate in Needham MA by crossing a frozen Lake. Lynne Jesaites and Dan Brooks also participated. The group explored a tower embedded with colored glass, and about 150 feet of man-made tunnel. See story in this issue.

Upcoming Trips:

February 2, 2011. Boston Rock Gym. Reblay practice. Dave Crusoe.

February 12 to March 2 2011, Caving in Andalusia, Spain. Dave Crusoe, Chris Taylor, Tom Kinsky.

February 20, 2011,VCA annual trip to the Freedleyville, VT quarry for **underground ice skating.**

February 21, 2001, Banff Mountain Film Festival, Arlington MA. Adventure films. Call Rich Lester to reserve seats.

April 16 to 23 April 2011, National Cave Rescue Seminar, Northwest Puerto Rico, See John Evans.

Business:

Steve Garrison came by to request a caving training for a Venture Scout Group advised by and associated with AM-VETS, in the Haverhill, MA area. The cavers will consist of four girls, aged ~ 13, four boys, aged 15-17. Chris Taylor volunteered to conduct the training and lead the trip.

Presentation:

The club watched "Sounds of Silence" a video about caves in Cuba. The video suffered from poor quality transfer from film to DVD, but we could make out that the video covered a commercial cave with an entrance in a building, a coastal cave, and a tower karst cave with large rooms. The video was accompanied by atmospheric music such as Yanni's "Deliverance" and Vangelis. The DVD suffered from poor lighting of formations and too much zooming instead of panning, but the topic was interesting.



Caving in Needham & Wellesley Massachusetts!

Rich Lester



Yes, there are caves in the Boston metropolitan area . . . Well, sort of!

Seven Boston Grotto cavers enjoyed a last minute local caving trip to the Baker Estate on the Needham/Wellesley line on a cold, sunny Sunday afternoon in January. The cold weather was, however, essential, as the only approach to the "cave" without crossing private property requires crossing Sabrina Lake, which can only be done on ice or with a boat!

The old Baker Estate was a 19th century amusement park that included an artificial cave, complete with artificial stalagmites and (according to a Boston Globe article from last year) "grotesqueries designed to scare and delight." Though a portion of the cave has been filled in, part of it remains, and the remnants can be entered from the shores of Sabrina Lake.

Gary & Sheilarae Lau, the two Lau kids,

Lynne Jesaitis, Dan Brooks, and I showed up at the parking area for Guernsey Sanctuary in Wellesley around 1:00

p.m. Technically, some of the others showed up at noon, the planned meeting time. My car wouldn't start, however, and by the time I was able to make alternate plans to get to Wellesley, it was 1:00 p.m. Lynne and Dan went to the town center for coffee while they waited, until I showed up, rather embarrassed at the delay, at 1:00 p.m.

We were a bit concerned about the short hike to the cave, as the recent storms had left two and a half feet of snow on the ground, and not everyone had snow shoes. We found, however, that cross country skiers had packed down the trail sufficiently to allow reasonable passage without sinking into waist-deep snow. If you left the trail, however, the snow was quite deep! Wind had sufficiently scoured the surface of Lake Sabrina itself, leaving only about 6 inches of snow on the lake ice.

We quickly found the entrance to the



Crossing Sabrina lake to the Baker Estate cave. Photos by Rich Lester & Gary Lau..



cave and explored the approximately 100 feet of passage. The first part of the cave consists of stone wall lined walking passage that leads to the bottom of a round stone tower, about 20 feet high and open to the sky, letting light into the central part of the cave. The tower is decorated with fragments of blue, red, and green colored glass. The back part of the cave is completely dark, and has been partially filled with dirt. Getting into the back most room involves a belly crawl through a twelve inch slit, making the cave similar, in at least one respect, to other tight New England caves.



After about half an hour to 45 minutes in the cave, we exited and walked up to the tower from the outside. Since the tower, however, appeared to be in someone's back yard, we didn't stay long and returned to the lake where we entertained ourselves by making snow angels and writing very large words in the snow of Sabrina Lake. (It would be amusing if Google Earth updated their photo-imagery at that time, but they probably don't do that in winter.) We completed the short circuit trail around Guernsey Sanctuary and made our way back to the cars, stopping to admire a bat box on a tall post along the way. We didn't see any bats, but you would hope that the bats are otherwise occupied in mid-winter anyways!



Overall, it was an enjoyable trip, and between the "cave" and the bat box, it probably comes about as close to real caving as you can get within 10 miles (or maybe even 100 miles) of Boston!



First Class Mail

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