



RKC

NEWS

A Quarterly Publication of the
Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.
www.rkci.org



Volume III, Issue IV

Fall 2007

The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to the conservation and preservation of caves and karst in Rockcastle County, Kentucky.

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Photo Credits:

Front Cover: Great Saltpetre Cave Entrance at Halloween. Photo © by Mike Wuerth.

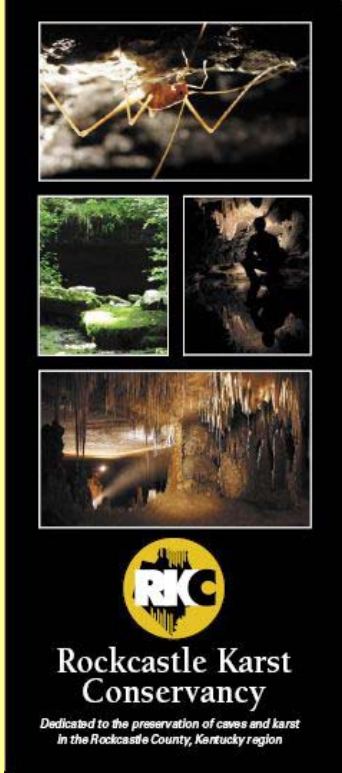
Back Cover: Museum Section of Great Saltpetre Cave. Photo © by Nathan Williams.

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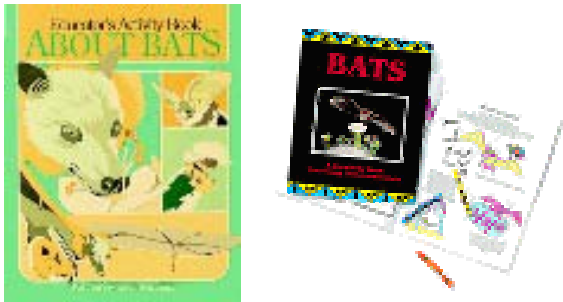
For more information about the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, please visit our website at www.rkci.org. Membership is open to anyone interested in protecting the caves and karst of Rockcastle County, Kentucky. See page 11 of this issue for a membership application and the different membership levels and dues.

The *RKC News* is published quarterly for members and other interested parties. The purpose of this publication is to keep members aware of RKC activities. Articles published in the *RKC News* do not necessarily represent the opinions or policies of the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy or its represented members.

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Tell people about the RKC!
Give them a brochure!
 GET YOUR BROCHURES AT:
www.rkci.org/brochure.htm



RKC has educational material for lending.
 See the website:
<http://rkci.org/library/index.htm>
 or contact Tammy Otten:
tammyotten@yahoo.com



The RKC News is published during January, April, July and October. Deadline for submissions is the 10th of March, June, September, and December. Send submissions to: mhcover (at) aol (dot) com.

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RKC Quick News:

- RKC members Robert Coomer, Jennifer Pinkley, and Roy Vanhoozer were named Fellows of the National Speleological Society at the NSS Convention in Marengo, Indiana. Congratulations, Robert, Jennifer and Roy!
- The NSS Board of Governors passed a motion at the NSS Convention to make the RKC an NSS conservancy.
- The RKC booth at Karst-O-Rama raised over \$1100 from raffle sales, t-shirt sales and memberships! In addition, the tip jar at the Saturday night party raised another \$285 for the Karst Acquisition Fund.
- Annual dues will be due soon (January). Please send your dues to 1515 Cordell Drive, Dayton, OH 45439. Make checks payable to the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy.
- Alan Leach is the new Membership Committee Chairman.



EIGHT RIVERS SAFE DEVELOPMENT APPLIES FOR NSS LITIGATION FUNDS

By Roger Brucker, RKC 99

Secretary, 8 Rivers Safe Development, Inc.

www.8riverssafedevelopment.com

When county officials tried to rush through a West Virginia project to build a regional sewage treatment plant on a karst floodplain, cavers acted promptly to stop it. Insensitive officials wanted to place the plant and its raw sewage line on top of Sharps Cave, one of WV's top ten caves. Within 30 days, cavers set up a WV nonprofit corporation (501-(c)-(3) status applied for). They appealed to various grottoes for funds and received generous contributions, for which Eight Rivers is grateful.

Eight Rivers paid attorney William Turner a \$5000 retainer fee in October 2006. He reported that this retainer is nearly exhausted. He has filed the complaint - a "writ of mandamus action" - on 21 December 2006 against the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection for failing to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the project as required by West Virginia State Code CS-47-31. In the complaint the cavers demand that the Finding of No Significant Impact be retracted and a complete EIS be prepared which takes into consideration potential impacts to local caves, springs and groundwater. George Phillips, president of 8 Rivers, said, "Our attorney has provided continual legal advice and participation in our public education campaign and meeting with government and other project officials. Under his direction we have filed several open records FOIA requests as a part of our discovery in anticipation of the trial in state court. No trial date has been set.

"Our attorney believes that we have a very strong case, that the WVDEP clearly violated the law and all procedural rules. We believe our case may set a precedent for future karst defense cases where authorities fail to obey the law and seek to rush a conclusion without public input."

Future funds will be used for attorney fees. It is not possible to guess the amount, but the cavers believe it will be \$15,000 in 2007 for their current planned action and possibly up to \$40,000 long term if an

appeal is required. The complaint asks that the WVDEP pay the cavers' legal costs, and the probability of this happening is impossible to guess.

The organization is appealing to the NSS Board of Governors for money from the Society's Litigation Fund. Eight Rivers will refund any of the unspent legal fund grant or monies repaid by the court - if successful - to the NSS.

Cavers from Eight Rivers have an extensive history of giving educational talks, seeking negotiations, and preparing and presenting factual information in electronic (Web site) form, printed brochures, bumper stickers ("Save Cave Rivers") and personally-delivered PowerPoint presentations. They have continued a public awareness campaign which has included distributing copies of "Living on Karst" in the local community, libraries and businesses. According to George Phillips, "We also want to work with the NSS to help create a rapid response capability when caves are threatened anywhere in the country."

Eight Rivers Safe Development has presented its case for not building on a karst floodplain to WV State Legislators, Pocahontas County Commissioners, the Pocahontas Public Service District, Thrasher Engineering, and the WV Department of Environmental Protection. They have issued news releases, and based on a most recently favorable editorial, have caused a 180-degree shift in editorial opinion from initial hostility to actual support. A second major ally is the Snowshoe Property Owners Council, who may be organizing their own legal challenge.

Eight Rivers has built a coalition of several conservation and recreation groups including the Sierra Club, West Virginia Highlands Conservancy, Izaak Walton League, West Virginia Outdoor Sportsmens Association, Elk Headwaters Watershed Association and the Snowshoe Property Owners Council. The outcome of this challenge is uncertain but the cavers believe momentum has shifted in the public arena.

Editor's note: The 8 Rivers Safe Development did receive a \$5000 grant from the NSS Board of Governors.

Greetings Cavers,

Just a reminder that gates on Waterfall Cave and the right side of Goochland Cave are now locked. The caves are on Daniel Boone National Forest property and are located in Rockcastle County, KY. The gates will be re-opened on or around April 30. The caves are gated to protect hibernating bats. The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy is responsible for locking and unlocking the gates each year under an arrangement with the Daniel Boone National Forest. If you notice any vandalism to the gates or to any DBNF caves please report it promptly.

Thank you,

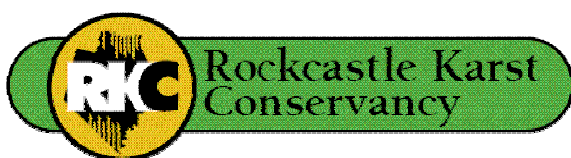
Andy Niekamp
RKC Chairman



GREATER CINCINNATI GROTTTO DONATES TO LAND ACQUISITION FUND

The RKC received a \$500 donation from the Greater Cincinnati Grotto for the RKC's Cave Acquisition Fund. An additional \$200 is being donated to the Great Saltpetre Preserve Committee.

Thanks GCG!



NEW RKC MEMBERS

**As of this Publication
(RKC Membership Number in Parenthesis)**

Dan Dimiduk (139), Huber Heights, OH (Individual)
Bryan Johnson (140), Lexington, KY (Individual)
Darrin Baird (141), LaFollette, TN (Individual)
Paul Donis (142), Fairfax, VA (Individual)
Tammie Heazlit (143), Clarkston, MI (Individual)
Ryan Muddiman (144), Reading, OH (Individual)
Tony Anders (145), Keavy, KY (Individual)
Jon Gardner (146), Columbus, OH (Individual)
Mike D (Switchback Design)(147), Asheville, NC (Individual)
Mark Schumacher (148), New Knoxville, OH (Individual)
James Jones (149), South Lyon, MI (Individual)
Kyle Joiner (150), Columbus, OH (Individual)
Gary Casady (151), Durand, MI (Individual)
David Hazen (152), North Canton, OH (Individual)
David Anders (153), Williamsburg, KY (Individual)
Gregory Martin (154), Batavia, OH (Individual)
Alan Leach (155), Norwood, OH (Individual)
Andrew Daugherty (156), Brodhead, KY (Individual)
Keith Wheeland (157), State College, PA (Individual)
Jefferson Roberts (158), Newark, OH (Sustaining)

**The RKC now has
129 Individual Members
And
6 Organization Members**

Welcome!

FROM THE GSP COMMITTEE CHAIR:

Great Saltpetre Preserve has seen quite a bit of activity this summer! KOR was a big success! We had a larger number of cavers arriving early in the week which helped add revenue to the GSP Maintenance Account. With chairperson Tammy Otten's guidance the event went off without any major problems. Tammy even got the weather to co-operate bringing in nice cool evenings.

Several members have sponsored their church groups or brought friends together for camping and caving. The Rockcastle Elementary School visits to GSP have been changed to October 18 and 19. Deb Bledsoe would very much appreciate ALL the help she can get for these 2 days.

A big THANK YOU! to all who have braved the extremely hot dry conditions this summer to help with Youth trips. Stacy Doose has put in many long hours, for more years than he cares to admit, organizing these trips and begging for help from cavers. Volunteering to help with these groups is a great way to really learn the caves,

meet a variety of cavers and have lots and lots of fun! Try it, you'll like it!

Although Mother Nature has done her part to keep the grass from growing, several members and Bill Carr (the GSP Caretaker) have had to perform some occasional touch up to the fields.

Neena Jud and Deb Bledsoe continue to search out designs and regulations related to building a few new outhouses.

Caver Appreciation weekend is September 14-16. All GCG, DUG and BGG members are invited to attend! On Saturday evening a short program will honor some of the outstanding volunteers for these 3 organizations, RKC and GSP. Deb Bledsoe will give a presentation after the awards program.

The GSP Committee is planning to post the monthly GSP Committee Meeting Minutes to the GSP web page and just send out a notice to grotto members when new minutes have been posted. The GSP meetings are usually held the second Monday of the month but we try to move the location so vary the drive time since we have folks driving from Paris, KY in the south to Dayton, OH in the north. All interested parties are urged to attend! GSP is totally indebted to all the volunteers and caretaker, Bill Carr, who help with maintenance, finances, legal matters, organization, youth groups, KOR, Open House, etc.

I'm looking forward to an enjoyable fall season at one of Kentucky's best kept secrets, Great Saltpetre Preserve!

Mary Gratsch
GSP Chairperson

RKC MEETING:

October 24, 2007 at 7pm

North Central Branch of
Cincinnati Public Library

<http://www.cincinnati.org/branches/>



SWAYGO DONATION PROGRAM

Each year, SWAYGO donates a percentage of annual pack sales to an organization that is dedicated to the conservation of cave and karst resources. SWAYGO believes that this is necessary to continue with the positive impacts that the current organizations have had with the protection and conservation of karst. Cave and karst resources provide each of us an abundance of joy, excitement, wonder and exploration, and it's always a good time to give back so that future generations can receive the same unforgettable experience.

THE ROCKCASTLE KARST CONSERVANCY IS THE 2007 PROGRAM RECIPIENT!

Previous program recipients:

2005 -- West Virginia Cave Conservancy

2006 -- Southeastern Cave Conservancy

www.swaygogear.com

BOARD PASSES NEW RKC ACT

This Act Of The Board was voted on and approved by the RKC Board of Directions on July 10, 2007.

The RKC treasurer shall have signing authority on all bank and other financial accounts belonging to RKC and all financial accounts managed by the committees.

The committees of the RKC shall provide to the Treasurer of the RKC, on a quarterly basis, in either paper or electronic format, the unprocessed records documenting their financial accounts and activities.





Greater Cincinnati Grotto CAVE CLEANUP!

GCG is sponsoring a clean up of Sinks of The Roundstone cave on October 27. More info can be found at:

<http://www.rkci.org/>



Renfro Valley Bugle
Volume 21 – Number 10

July 1968

Underground Entertainment

Sunday, June 29th the entertainers on the Saturday Barn Dance and the Sunday Morning Gatherin' gathered in the vast auditorium in Great Salt-petre Cave to put on their first full scale show from the stage there. There had been other occasions since the auditorium was opened when small groups or individuals used musical instruments to test the very remarkable acoustics of the big underground room but this was the first appearance there of almost the entire roster of Renfro Valley entertainers.

The purpose, however, was not entertainment, although, almost the entire Sunday morning

audience for the Gatherin' was there at the invitation of Mr. Lair. The coming together of the group was for the purpose of obtaining color shots to be used in the advertising brochure which will be prepared for next year's advertising campaign to promote the Cave and its surrounding acres as a huge camping complex for trailers and campers.

Many points of interest in Cave were photographed both in black and white and in color. Some of these will no doubt be suitable for reproduction in the coming issues of The Renfro Valley Bugle but the color brochure will probably not be released before late fall of 1968 or spring of 1969. When more of the things we plan for the park will be completed.

Article Courtesy of Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

Scanning and OCR work done by Andy Niekamp.



Renfro Valley Bugle
Volume 20 – Number 12

September 1967

Cave Road Completed

The Cantrell Construction Company, contractors for the blacktopping of the Highway connecting I-75 and the Great Saltpetre Cave, are putting the finishing touches on the job and should have everything completed by the time you read this. Due to certain miscalculations in preparing the prospectus to submit for bids the last mile of the road was not included. It is still an excellent gravel road but will not be blacktopped until next. Spring or Summer.

Folks who live along this stretch of road are certainly pleased to find themselves now living on a well paved highway and farm values have made a corresponding advance. They entertain a very friendly feeling toward the Great Saltpetre Cave project which they feel was largely instrumental in calling the attention of the highway department to this first step towards creating a new and worthwhile tourist area in this historical section of the Hill Country.

As Great Saltpetre Cave and the mountain park which Mr. Lair expects to develop makes further progress, some of the other attractions in this area, hitherto overlooked, are likely to be offered to the touring public as better roads are built back into the more remote sections.

Article Courtesy of Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

Scanning and OCR work done by Andy Niekamp.

Renfro Valley Bugle
Volume 21 – Number 8

May 1968

Cave Opens June First

Great Saltpetre Cave will be open to the public June first. This will not be the formal opening. Prolonged and unusual wet weather has delayed work on the grounds and it now appears certain that we will not have the water system installed and electric lines in at the camping and picnic area. The mill sawing out heavy oak lumber for the picnic tables and benches had to temporarily suspend operations before they got our job finished. A certain number of picnics tables, however, will be available. There will be ample camping space for travelers with self-contained units but full camping facilities cannot be installed in such limited time.

The cave itself will be open, with guides available to take parties through. The grounds will be free to picnickers and you are welcome to bring the family and spend the day whether you visit the cave or not.

Article Courtesy of Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

Scanning and OCR work done by Andy Niekamp.





Renfro Valley Bugle
Volume 24 – Number 7

April 1971

Great Saltpetre Cave To Feature Museum

Along with the many other things being done in and around Great Saltpetre Cave in preparation for the coming season, additions are being made to the Cave Museum, in the chamber adjoining echo Auditorium. The exhibit consists largely of the remains of old vats and wooden water pipes in use more than 170 years ago. In addition to these, a new log vat has been built exactly like the old ones, enabling visitors to see and understand the entire process of extracting saltpetre from the nitrous earth in the floor of the cave.

Among the relics of the older operation, dating back around 1800, can be found the old millstones used to crush charcoal, as well as parts of a mill used to reduce crystals of saltpetre to the proper size for mixing with charcoal and sulphur in the final processing of gunpowder. Many tools actually used in the original works have been added, including a wooden shovel used in the handling of gunpowder, because, if handled with a metal shovel, there was the danger of a spark igniting and exploding the entire batch. Various tools used in hallowing out the big log troughs are on display, as well as a huge augur for burin out small logs in making (of) water pipes. An old-fashioned tow-man ripsaw is shown, which was used in the slow and laborous process of ripping out boards and planks and the timbers used in making floors for the vats. The tools, with the exception of the saw and an axe, were hand-forged and the axe itself is of an old type similar to those used in the earlier English colonies. An old two-wheeled cart, much like the earlier ones used here is shown but while it has the linchpin axles in use many years ago, it is not one of those used in early saltpetre operations, as its wheels do not carry the broad tires common to

those first in use, tracks of which are still to be found in one section of the cave, made there in 1804. A small, hand-made stone mortar and pestle is displayed, which was found by the early discoverer and is thought by some to have been used by the negro slave, Monk Estill, who produced the first gunpowder made in Kentucky. A very old hominy back in the museum was used for a similar purpose by an early wilderness hunter, or perhaps later in pounding hominy to feed the crew of around 70 men who were working in the cave by 1806. A number of iron kettles once in use in the extraction of saltpetre are also apart of the display. One of these has a most lurid history, which your guide will recount, if you ask him to, when showing you through the cave. An attempt is being made to secure a huge wooden container in which gunpowder was stored during primitive operations. Plans also include the installation of a horse-operated mill for the first grinding, or crushing, of charcoal and saltpetre.

Other items of museum interest are to be seen elsewhere in or around the cave. A complete and genuine old moonshine still once actually in use in the cave, sits in the same spot it occupied years ago along Booger Branch, near the foot of the stone steps leading up to Frozen Cascades and the entrance to The Russian Dome. It is hoped that before the summer is over a pair of stone furnaces, replicas of those once in use here, can be placed so as to make an unusual entrance-way to the park in which the cave is situated, If so, the old kettles once used in connection with them will be removed from the Cave Museum, set in position on top of the furnace walls and converted into huge flower pots to dress up the entrance.

In addition to the museum, other things requiring attention and now on the way to completion, is the enclosure for the peacocks which for so many years furnished entertainment for visitors to Renfro Valley, and a greatly enlarged cage for six raccoons which will be housed near the South entrance of the cave.

A long flight of steps now being constructed will lead from the cave entrance down to the level of Crooked Creek, where the Trout fishing pool is located. The driveway from the parking lot down to the pool is being widened to allow traffic both ways.

The old Wells Fargo stage coach from Mr. Lair's carriage collection has been reupholstered, repainted and put in good running order. It will be taken over to the cave by the first of June, at the latest and will be available for rides on the cave premises, at least on weekends, and later on, if its popularity justifies it, arrangements may be made for the special five mile trip to the old stage tavern--the only one left on the original State Road, over which stages routes were maintained for many years.

One of the most important additions to the cave and park area this year will, of course, be the commercial trout fishing that will be made available to the public. The body of water impounded by the dam which has been built across Crooked Creek for that purpose, will be stocked with rainbow trout between eleven and fourteen inches in length just the right eating size. Fishing license will be furnished free to the individual fisherman and tackle is obtainable, if he doesn't have his own. The fisherman will pay for what he catches on a per-pound, or per-ounce, basis and there will be no limit to his catch.

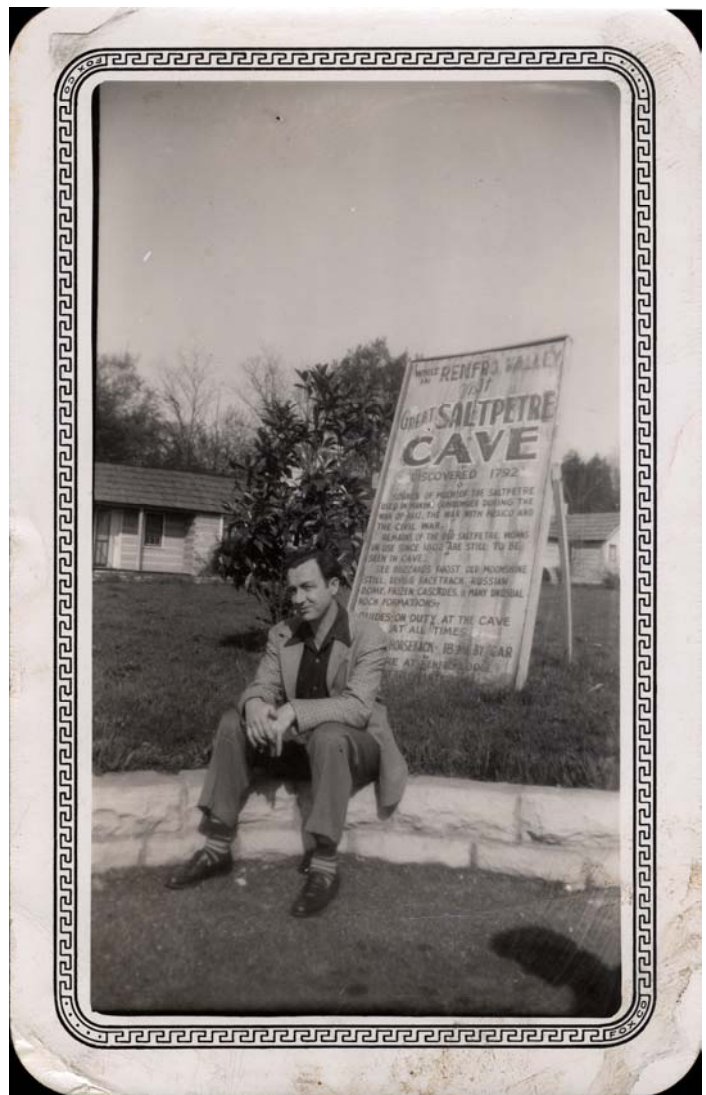
Great Saltpetre Cave and the four hundred acres of mountain land belonging with it may well become a camper's paradise. Being around eight and one half miles from I-75, it is not exactly convenient for just overnight camping and the facilities it presently offers do not measure up to those found in more modern trailer and camper complexes. But if you want to take your family on an extended camping vacation, conditions here are ideal, with wooded hills, green valleys and clear running streams abounding, pollution undreamed of and noise non-existent. In the heart of primitive Boone Country, there are many points of historical interest to see and explore, and you can take hiking trips along the very pathways his feet once trod.

Great Saltpetre Cave, with its many attractions, is actually open the year around. The summer season will begin with the opening of trout fishing by the middle of May. The official Formal Opening will be July 4th, concerning which there will be more to say on a later issue of the Renfro Valley Bugle.

Photo caption: Vat for extraction of Saltpetre from nitreous earth from floor of the cave. Saltpetre was the principal ingredient in Gunpowder.

Article Courtesy of Renfro Valley Entertainment Center.

Scanning and OCR work done by Andy Niekamp.



Tommy Covington at Renfro Valley

Become a Member of RKC!

Join RKC and help preserve caves and cave access in the Rockcastle County, Kentucky region! Your membership dues go directly to efforts to purchase and manage caves.

Date _____

Name - Please print clearly _____

Street _____

City, State & Zip _____

E-mail Address _____

Telephone _____



Dues expire on January 1 of each year. Individual and Supporting Member dues are half the amount after June 30.

Membership Amount \$ _____

Additional Donation \$ _____

Total \$ _____

MEMBERSHIP FOR INDIVIDUALS - VOTING

- _____ Individual Member \$15/year
- _____ Sustaining Member \$75/year (After five consecutive years a sustaining member becomes a Life Member (along with a special T-shirt))
- _____ Life Member \$300/one time

MEMBERSHIPS FOR ORGANIZATIONS OR INDIVIDUALS - NON-VOTING

- _____ Supporting Member - Non-profit, grottos, and youth organizations \$25/year
- _____ Supporting Member - All other organizations \$50/year
- _____ Benefactor Member - \$1,000/one time

Make checks payable to the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy.

Mail completed form and payment to:

Rockcastle Karst Conservancy
1515 Cordell Drive
Dayton, Ohio 45439



RKC T-Shirts!

Price: \$15.00, RKC member price \$10.00
100% Pre-shrunk Heavy Weight Cotton, Navy Blue / Gold
Designed by Robert Coomer
Sizes: M, L, XL, XXL (sorry no S). Quantities are limited.

All proceeds benefit The RKC. Order on line:
<http://www.rkci.org/tshirt.htm>



RKC Life Member T-Shirt

Green with RKC logo
See membership details for more information.



Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Inc.
1515 Cordell Dr
Dayton, Ohio 45439

FIRST CLASS

Deliver To: