

**Spring, 2012
Newsletter**



Rockcastle Karst Conservancy

Protecting Kentucky's Interior

Current Officers

Term Expires in March 2013

Chair	Mary Gratsch	milgra2@fuse.net
Vice Chair	Pete Stow	stowpj680@yahoo.com
Treasurer	Werner Jud	orion@one.net
Secretary	Gary Bush	caver07@wgbush.com

Committees - Positions

Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve	Neena Jud	harmony@one.net
Misty Cave Preserve	Pete Stow	stowpj680@yahoo.com
Cornhole Cave Preserve	Mary Gratsch	milgra2@fuse.net
Karst Monitoring Coordinator	Deb Bledsoe	debcaves@yahoo.com
Fund Raising	Mary Gratsch	milgra2@fuse.net
Publicity	Tammy Otten	tammyotten@yahoo.com
Community Liaison	Deb Bledsoe	debcaves@yahoo.com
Membership	Pete Stow	stowpj680@yahoo.com

Board of Directors (with current terms)

Pete Stow	(2010 - 2013)	stowpj680@yahoo.com
Werner Jud	(2011 - 2014)	orion@one.net
Gary Bush	(2011 - 2014)	caver07@wgbush.com
Mary Gratsch	(2012 - 2015)	milgra2@fuse.net
Tammy Otten	(2012 - 2015)	tammyotten@yahoo.com



The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the unique geological, hydrological, biological, and recreational resources associated with caves and karst.

RKC's Mission:

Protecting Kentucky's Karst environments and supporting responsible access to caves in the Rockcastle County Region.

Left: The current RKC Board of Directors

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A few words from the outgoing Chairman:

I have been on the board 4 years - since 2008. I have been the Chair for the last 3.

We, as a board, have seen some stunning successes in those years

- We have solidified the board through a strategic planning session and thus defined what the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) should be.
- We have bought Misty Cave
- We have paid off Misty Cave
- We have leased Cornhole Cave
- We have applied for and won Grants from the National Speleological Foundation (NSF)
- We have broadened our visibility in the NSS and the caving community
- We have reworked the evolving relationships with our member grottos and committees
- we have clarified memberships and added the sustaining membership
- we have added Music In the Mountain (MIM) as an RKC fundraiser

But not all is well:

- Our membership is in decline
- Our fundraising is at best only slightly higher
- we have not seriously looked at new properties

in 3 years

- participation by members is at a low
- there is wrestling for declining resources among the various caving groups concerned

I have found my passion for being on the board and pushing forward RKC has waned over the last few months. Additionally, my new job has claimed more and more of my time. When the passion leaves it is time to step aside and let someone else take over. This is why I have stepped aside at the end of my turn.

Because Passion is what it takes - passion for the job in each and every one of the board members, and committee members. Holding a position in an organization of this size is not enough - you need to have the passion to push every minute for RKC. Just holding a position is not enough. I ask you to think on this.

While I step off the board, I am not turning my back on RKC. I intend to take places on committees, and continue the push for building RKC into one of the most admired conservancies in the US.

Sincerely,
Howard Kalnitz



From the Board:

The Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) and its members have been busy over the past few years with many activities, fundraising events and property management and improvements. We hope that you will take a few minutes to read through the newsletter to see what is new and exciting and what our members have been doing to support RKC.

As a member of this organization we hope that you will find a way, whether large or small, to get involved and actively support our mission, *Protecting Kentucky's karst environments and supporting responsible access to caves in the Rockcastle County Region*. For more information on how to get involved, access our website or contact any of the members of the Board of Directors.

Thank you for your support, we hope to continue growing with you.



New Signs at RKC Preserves

You will notice this year something new at all Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) preserves. New property signs have been placed at RKC preserves and educational signs have been installed in Great Saltpetre Cave.

The new signs are the result of two years of work funded by a \$500 grant from the **National Speleological Foundation (NSF)**. The National Speleological Foundation, a separate entity from the National Speleological Society (NSS), is an investment organization that handles investments for NSS assets as well as for other cave organizations and provides funding for cave related projects. Each year they award successful applicants up to a total of \$10,000 through the Vehslage Grant Program.

This grant funded two projects. The first was to create four property signs for each of the RKC preserves. The signs mark RKC property boundaries, describe the sensitivity of the karst land, and encourage visitors to "Take nothing but pictures, Leave nothing but footprints, Kill nothing but time" as well as contact information for the RKC.

The second project was to create 12 educational signs for inside the Great Saltpetre Cave. The signs, placed at topical locations throughout the cave tell the story of the Great Saltpetre Cave through the geological history, discovery, saltpetre mining and the War of 1812, as well as links to local history such as the musical and commercial efforts of John Lair. Other important events, people, organizations, as well as facts on cave life were incorporated into the signs.

We would like you to take time and enjoy the new additions to the preserves and cave and hope our efforts have a positive influence for all who visit.

We would like to thank the National Speleological Foundation, the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy, Neena and Werner Jud, Amber Yuellig, Jeff Renner, Howard Kalnitz, Ron Hager, Bob Dobbs and all that helped bring this project to its success.

Robert C. Yuellig



From the Treasurer

The newsletter editor asked me to give a brief report on our beans.

The thing about that is that a financial report is not usually in an essay format. It's mostly an official looking array of categories and numbers laid out in columns and rows; and often quite boring to those who are not really involved with the inner workings. But they remain important snapshots of the health of the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC), which is doing fine considering the times. These reports are submitted at each meeting for the Board and other members to review.

RKC receives their income from membership dues and donations. All funds are carefully tracked and typically go in one of two primary classifications: Either general operating fund or Land Acquisition Fund (LA). All donations, unless specifically earmarked for something by the donor, goes to the LA fund since that is the reason RKC exists. As a consequence we are gradually replenishing this fund since our successful purchase of Misty Cave. Buying land usually deals with pretty hefty sums of money. Thank you to all who have helped us achieve this goal.

Large and small donations are random and unpredictable and always greatly appreciated. Membership dues however, are the closest thing RKC has to an income stream. We need your support as a member to meet our random business expenses such as advertising, insurance for our properties, and other internal operating expenses. Your dues are very important and if you haven't renewed for 2012, please consider doing so. We need your support.

Last year RKC instated a new membership level known as Sustaining Membership by automatic monthly payment. This works very easily by instructing Paypal to deduct a monthly amount, e.g. \$5, \$10, or whatever you choose, automatically from your credit card and paid to RKC. Consider this option if you can afford it. Some members have signed up and it goes a long way to prevent the stream from running dry. Check the RKC website.

The Great Saltpetre Preserve, RKC's initial and primary real estate, falls under the official umbrella of RKC finances. However these funds are never mingled. It is worth reminding everyone that funds given to RKC stay within and are strictly for RKC causes. The same rule goes for GSP. GSP is entirely self-sustaining, having been so for over 20 years. Only at tax time does everything get looked at for a total assessment. As a nonprofit organization our annual federal tax returns are viewable by the public.

Thank you for supporting Rockcastle Karst Conservancy.

Werner G. Jud
RKC Treasurer
March 2012



From Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve Management Committee

Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve has been a busy place these last sixteen months or so. Many cavers have been camping at the Preserve or met fellow cavers there to go on cave trips. At the end of March, the Greater Cincinnati Grotto hosted an National Cave Rescue Commission (NCRC) Orientation to Cave Rescue Training weekend at the Preserve. Fifty four people attended the two day session which ended with a mock rescue at Climax Cave. A number of people asked about advanced training and will attend the week-long sessions as they are able. This level of interest speaks well of the cavers in our area.

Camping and caving by Scout-type groups rose despite our modest increase in requested donations. It is not quite up to pre-White Nose Syndrome (WNS) levels, but signs point to 2012 being a record year. It is important to introduce them to responsible caving practices and they really seem to understand the need to decontaminate their gear. We will be constructing a new shelter for them in Scout Camp funded by the extra \$2.00 that we receive from each Scout.

Seven elementary school groups took field trips to the Preserve last year and this spring. A few college groups have visited the Cave. There have been Geology and Archaeology Graduate Students as well as university classes with an environmental focus.

I am glad to say that our Green Latrine is fully operational. This dry toilet facility uses a composting unit to process human waste into plant food so that we can give back to the land as it has nurtured our spirits. It is also nice that the toilet rooms are bright and clean, and one side is handicapped accessible! Although we increased the project budget (twice) during the two year construction period to \$20,000, we have raised all the funds for the construction of this facility through grants and donations. A number of good lessons were learned which will be valuable as we plan other projects at the Preserve – maybe even more green latrines.

As of this writing, the Saltpetre Festival at Open House is still ahead of us. The weekend of May 19 & 20, 2012 we will be doing some special things to commemorate the role Great Saltpetre Cave played in the War of 1812. Plans include a living history encampment to show what life was like in the Wilderness between 1800-1815, the period of most active mining. Next to this will be a demonstration saltpetre vat for those who have always wondered how the miners processed the petre dirt to get saltpetre. Roland Mullins will be in our "Book Nook" autographing copies of his new book entitled The Laurel Spur. It is about the Mullins family history and the Crooked Creek Valley. There will be local musicians playing at the Shelter various times throughout the weekend. In the Cave, many of the tour guides will be in historical costumes and as visitors approach the Museum Section they will be treated as new mining recruits and introduced to the process.

Our long term mission is to preserve and protect the natural resources of the Great Saltpetre Preserve, maintain and restore those buildings and structures that are important and/or historically significant to the campground area, and in so doing, continue to provide a pleasant and convenient haven for cavers while protecting a vital part of Kentucky history and landscape. In summary, Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve is a place both for education and relaxation. Join us some weekend!

Neena Jud, Chair
Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve Management Committee



Fun Products Create Revenue for RKC

Over the past couple years a group of Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) members have been working together to put some *fun* in fundraising for the organization. These efforts started not long after the draft of the Strategic Plan where we became aware that our organization needed to reach beyond the caver community for members and support. Merchandise items and Home Glass Fusing Parties have created a new revenue stream for the RKC Land Acquisitions Fund.

The first items offered in the category of fundraising merchandise for RKC were handcrafted pottery mugs, steins, and banks created by Pam Duncan. These items carried our message of cave conservation as well as our name. The banks were created with a 3-D cave scene and the RKC logo with the message “save a dollar, save a cave”. The pottery items have been available at Great Saltpetre Preserve (GSP) Open House, Karst-O-Rama, and the NSS Conventions since 2009.



The first Glass Fusing Party was held in October of 2010 at the Brazee School of Glass in Cincinnati. Over twenty enthusiastic cave supporters attended this fun evening exploring the creation of fused glass cabochons which were



later completed into jewelry items. After the initial party the learning sessions were moved

into the studio of Pam Duncan. Over the next couple of years Pam facilitated many fusing events. These sessions have been in Pam’s studio as well as traveling parties hosted throughout the region. These efforts have produced significant donations to the Land Acquisitions Fund as well as many beautiful glass creations.



Another fundraising effort has been through the “Stitch-n-Bitches” sewing group. This group has been repurposing thrift store fleece vests into the best caving attire in the south east. Introduced as “survey” vests, they are designed to carry all a caver’s survey implements in custom designed pockets. We now see very fashionable people sporting these versatile vests around the fire on cool camping weekends. 100% of the sales go to RKC’s Land Acquisitions Fund.



The summer of 2011 saw the introduction of Batty Glass Jewelry by Pam Duncan. The jewelry designs created of fused glass with copper inclusions in the shape of bats proved to be the hottest item at the 2011 NSS Convention in Colorado. RKC was the first non-profit conservancy to offer specialty merchandise for sale as a way to raise funds for Land Acquisitions. There are new production items ready to hit the market in the summer of 2012.

Through merchandise sales and home crafting parties we have steadily been building a significant land acquisitions fund. We look forward to continued support from people like you. If you are interested in hosting a home class crafting party, or Batty Glass Jewelry contact Pam Duncan pjduncan@fuse.net. To purchase a Stitch-n-Bitches fleece vest, contact Tammy Otten tammyotten@yahoo.com.

Misty Cave update:

Misty Cave is now officially open for the season. If you are interested in visiting Misty please contact myself, Pete Stow, at stowpj680@yahoo.com or call/text 513-317-7767 for more details. I am hoping to get a led trip together for Karst-o-Rama (KOR) to Misty so that those that have never been can have the opportunity.

A few updates on Misty:

On February 11, 2012, RKC members Pete Stow, Tammy Otten, and Ron Hager, as well as Brooke Hines, Kentucky Fish and Wildlife Bat Biologist, made a trip to The Misty Cave Preserve. The purpose of the trip was to conduct a bat count in the front portion of the cave. We were also able to place the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) sign at the entrance of Misty cave in a location so as not to be flooded out.

After placing the sign and walking the property for a little while, we spent time conducting a bat count in Misty Cave. I was the official temperature taker while Ron and Tammy were good at finding the bats. Brooke made short work of counting the clusters of bats and teaching us how to identify the various species. Brooke

indicated that she would be happy to send us the "full report" from this year's trip and previous trips into Misty Cave, but asked that we give her some time to do so as she was spending more time in the field at this time of year doing bat counts and WNS checks.

As of February 2012 we know the following:

- All bats in Misty appeared to be healthy; none showed any visual signs of WNS infection.
- Species indentified included, pipistrelle (Tri-colored), Little Brown, Big Brown, Virginia Big Eared, Little Footed, and Indiana bats.
- Two species are on the endangered list: Indiana bats and Virginia Big Eared.

The cave and property appeared fine, free of any signs of vandalism and no real evidence of recent visits. This year I hope to be able to clean up around the barn area and possibly post a sign in the barn. We also need to have a more clearly marked trail on the property to keep those visiting from making multiple trails down to the cave.



Left: Misty Entrance

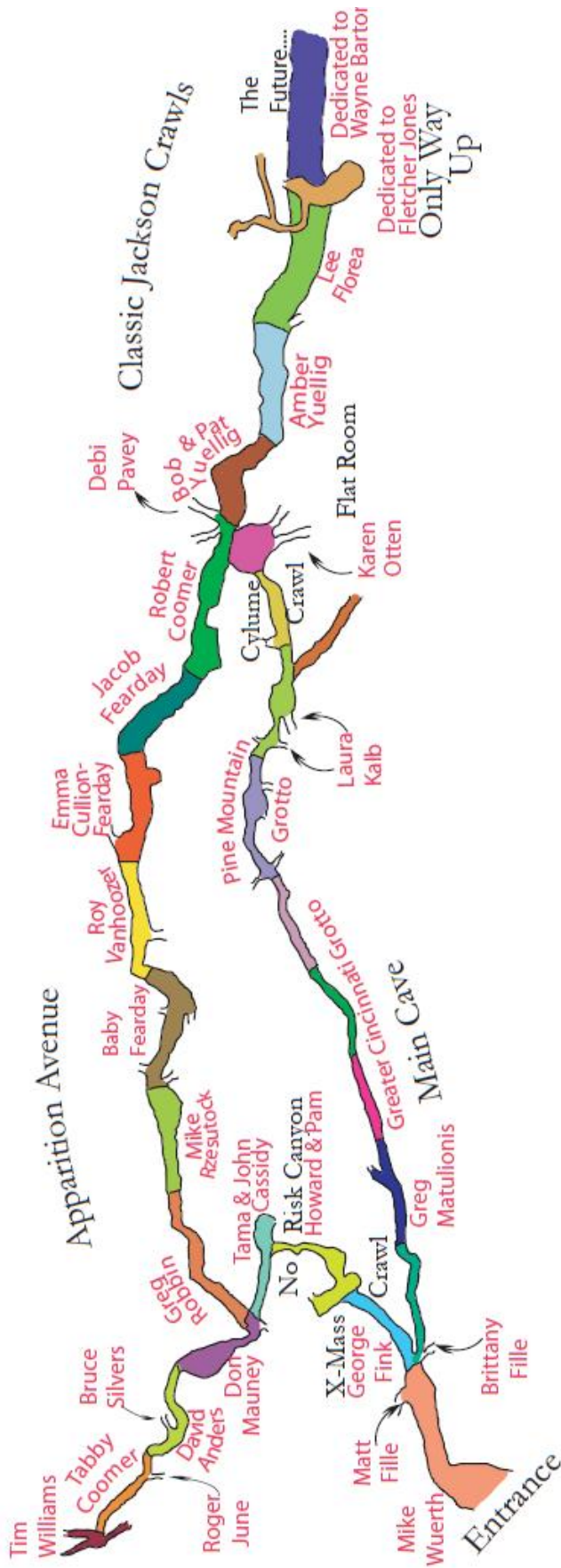
Top: The Barn on the Misty Cave Property

Right: View on the Misty Cave Property



Misty Cave Preserve - Donor Map

Rockcastle Karst Conservancy



Celebrate the purchase of RKC's newest Preserve, and help pay off the note!
 Misty is a classic Jackson County cave, with a lot of challenging areas, and is one of the only caves in the area with a complete loop.

Contributors get:

- A copy of this map with their name added
- A certificate of Ownership
- Our Gratitude

Areas Still available for 'owning'

Cylume Crawl	400\$
Flat Room	400\$
Leads (Many!)	25\$

Other Donors:

Chris Clark	Mike Deitmaring
Gary Bush	Mark Swelsted
Sheila Gallogly	
Louisville Grotto	
Friends Of Bill Simpson	





It isn't every day you get to see a concert in a cave! Last year Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) partnered with Renfro Valley for their first Music in the Mountain fundraising concert in Great Saltpeetre Cave featuring Renfro's "Front Porch Pick'n" show.

The show, an overwhelming success, raised over \$2,100 for RKC and was a huge learning experience. The event took months of pre-planning, then; 450 chairs had to be rented, hauled into the cave and set up, port-o-lets had to be installed, the preserve had to be mowed and trimmed, plus numerous other details. None of this could have happened without the many dedicated cavers who volunteered their time, and the hundreds of guests who came out to enjoy the entertainment and to support RKC.

This year we are planning our second annual Music in the Mountain for Saturday, August 18! To take full advantage of the chairs and port-o-lets, which we must rent, we are going to have two great shows: a 1:00 PM show and a 6:00 PM show. For more information, go to <musicinthemountain.com>

To volunteer for this fun and exciting event, please contact Bob Dobbs cavepig124@fuse.net.



**COMING SOON TO A CAVE NEAR YOU:
MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAIN 2012!!**

MUSIC IN THE MOUNTAIN

Benefit Concert for Rockcastle Karst Conservancy

Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve, Mt. Vernon, Kentucky

Saturday, August 18, 2012

Tradition continues with the second annual "Music in the Mountain Concert". Choose from two great shows or enjoy both at a discounted price. Using the stage created by John Lair in the 1940's, the shows will be performed in Echo Auditorium within **Great Saltpetre Cave**.

Southern Strings



**Rockcastle County's Finest
at 6:00-8:00 PM**

A variety of local artists including The Southern Strings with Buddy Mullins, Level Green, & more. Advance tickets \$10, or \$12 at the gate.



Level Green



Woody Pines

Woody Pines at 1:00-3:00 PM

This charismatic Asheville, N.C. band has something for all ages playing a variety of bluegrass, ragtime, country blues, and old-time mountain music. www.woodypines.com. Advance tickets \$20, or \$22 at the gate.

**Combination Tickets
Only \$25.00 in Advance!**

MusicInTheMountain.com



**Rockcastle Karst
Conservancy**

www.RKCi.org

Cornhole Cave Preserve

Cornhole Cave Preserve consists of 50+ acres leased and managed by the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC). The property is beautifully forested hillsides and overgrown fields at the headwaters of Crooked Creek. The cave entrance is reached by either a ¾ mile hike through the woods or by driving a washed out dirt road. The entrance itself is well hidden at the edge of the woods. Care must be taken when descending into the sink as it has become somewhat unstable.

Cornhole is one of 3 known entrances into the Goochland System, the longest system in Rockcastle with over 9 miles mapped. Unlike the spacious halls of the main Left Cave, the passages in the Cornhole section are mostly tight crawls, fissures and short climbs.

The current management plan for the Preserve allows for trips into the cave for survey and recreational trips as long as the leader is familiar with the cave and it's technically difficult passages. There are very few bats in this part of the system, however, WNS decontamination procedures MUST be followed. Anyone interested in information on this preserve can contact the preserve manager, Mary Gratsch, at milgra2@fuse.net.



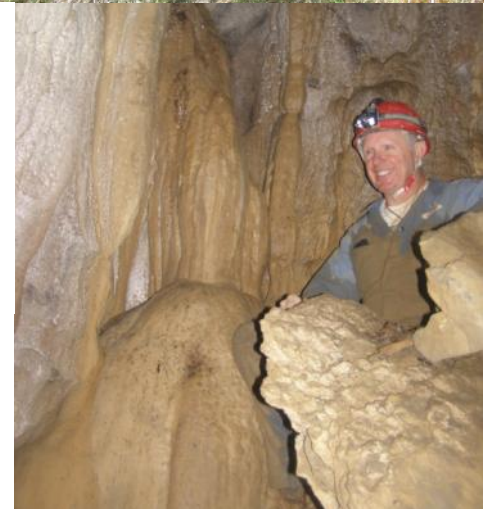
Left: Neena Jud in Cornhole

Upper Left: Cornhole Entrance

Above: Cornhole Survey

Upper Right: Work on the Property

Right: Gary Bush in Cornhole



Earth Day at Sawyer Point in Cincinnati

For the second year in a row, the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) has sponsored a booth at the Earth Day Celebration in Cincinnati, Ohio. As a cave conservancy, our goals and missions fit well with the Earth Day slogan "One Earth, One Chance".

RKC members were able to talk to many attendees of the event about our missions and goals. We shared information about caves and caving with people who were there already because they are conservation minded and concerned. In addition we were able to share information about the upcoming Great Saltpetre Preserve Open House and Music in the Mountain events by handing out many informational flyers. We hope that by attending events like this more people will become aware of the need to protect our caves and support organizations such as RKC.

Thanks to the numerous RKC members who showed up to help share our mission and love of caves with others.

Right: The Earth Day Booth

Bottom Right: Howard Kalnitz and Matt Keller welcome the public to the booth

Below: Gary Bush manning the booth



RKC and GSP Host School Field Trips to Great Saltpetre Preserve

During the Great Saltpetre Preserve open house in May, 2003, Linda Clontz, a teacher from Mount Vernon Elementary school, asked me about doing a field trip in the fall for her second grade class. The first field trip, of about 30, including adults, consisted of Michelle Hayes and I showing a bat video on a TV under the shelter and then giving the kids a tour of the cave.

Anyway, Mrs. Clontz told some of her teacher friends about the field trip, and then they told some of their teacher friends at other schools and so it began. The next year it was two classes, and now it has grown to include second through fourth grade classes from several schools in Rockcastle and Laurel Counties.

We do field trips in the spring and fall and coordinate with the teachers to present an educational program that includes subjects and vocabulary words they have talked about in class. Tarps are hung up around the end of the shelter to block the light (and wind sometimes) so we can project videos on the big screen. In other words, it has grown from a two person project to a ten person project. Since we are all volunteers, and most of us live out of town, we try to schedule the field trips on Thursday and Friday to save on fuel and driving time. Some of our volunteers take time off work or take vacation days to help with the kids.

This is one of the most rewarding and fun programs we do at Great Saltpeter Preserve. On one of the Thursday field trips last year, two little second grade girls ran up and grabbed me by the hands as we were entering the cave. They asked questions and talked to me throughout the cave as if they had known me all their lives. The following day one of the fourth grade teachers came up to me with a bundle of thank you cards and said they were from the second grade class the day before. Somehow they had found the time to make cards overnight and get them back to me. The students are sooo much fun, everything is new to them and they are still cute and innocent. I'm not sure who enjoys the trips more, the children or us.

Bob Dobbs NSS# 34869



Welcome

To
Saltpeterson
Cave



A CUTE LITTLE
BAT



Dear Mr. Dobbs,

Thank you for letting us explore the cave. I loved it and I think everyone else did too. Three things I liked are coming up next.

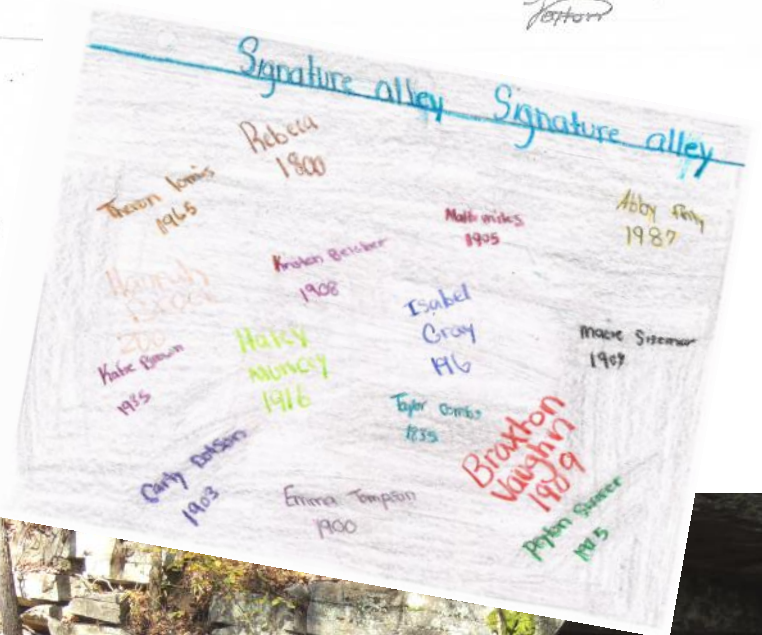
I liked the form of the cave it was amazing it was just stunning.

I also liked the Eco auditorium it was so big, and I can't believe that people performed in it.

I also liked the experience of seeing the bats. I have never been so close to one.

Thanks again for letting us come.

Your Friend,
Jettam



Dear Mr. Dobbs
Came here
Cave was the best and the museum
the auditorium and the best
thing I liked most of all
It was so cool cause I
just about got stuck in
It was cool.
Sincerely
Camron Connor





Tammy Otten,
RKC Publicity
529 Riddle Road
Cincinnati, OH 45220-2718

Rockcastle Karst
Conservancy
Protecting Kentucky's Interior

RKC Hosts 2012 Post-Convention Camp

This year the Rockcastle Karst Conservancy (RKC) is teaming up with the Greater Cincinnati Grotto to offer a Post-National Speleological Society (NSS) Convention Camp at Great Saltpetre Cave Preserve.

The camp will run from June 30th thru July 6th welcoming cavers from all over the United States and Canada. RKC members will be leading trips throughout the week in Rockcastle, Jackson and Pulaski Counties.



The camp will highlight the three properties RKC currently owns or leases while sharing our goals and mission with others. This is a great opportunity to introduce RKC and RKC properties to a wider range of cavers, helping RKC become better known as a conservancy and gaining support from those who already have an interest in caves and caving.

More information can be found at <http://www.nss2012.com/pre-and-post-convention-camps/great-saltpetre-cave-preserve-rockcastle-county-kentucky> or by emailing Tammy Otten at tccaver@yahoo.com.