



The River City Caver

Newsletter of the *River City
Grotto* – Jacksonville, FL
An [NSS](#) Affiliated Grotto

July, 2019

www.rivercitygrotto.com/

Updates from the latest Grotto Meeting and Events –
NEXT MEETING: **WEDNESDAY** August 21st 2019, at R.E.I. in the St. John's Town Center

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fishweir Brewing Meetup: We are having a meetup at Fishweir Brewing on 7/24/19 at 6:00pm. Please join us for a great time with great friends. The address is 1183 Edgewood Ave S, Jacksonville, FL 32205

Bat Cave: We are trying to plan a trip to Bat Cave, possibly for 8/3/19. Please check your email and the RCG Facebook page for updates on this trip.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

Membership dues are due. Our website is back up; you can pay online [here](#).

FINANCIAL UPDATE

We are solid financially.

CAVING IN THE NEWS

Centuries-Old Alabama Cave on the Trail of Tears May Contain Secrets of Cherokee Tribe: Archaeologists and Cherokee scholars have transcribed the writings the Cherokee tribe left behind in Manitou Cave almost 200 years ago, uncovering secrets and a rich history. Manitou Cave is located near Fort Payne in the base of Lookout mountain and it's full of Syllabary, the Cherokee alphabet. Sequoyah, who created the Cherokee alphabet, lived in the area and his writings are displayed in the cave. [\(article\)](#)

Skull Fragment from Greek Cave Suggests Modern Humans Were in Europe More than 200,000 Years Ago: In the late 1970s, anthropologists exploring a cave on the southern coast of Greece found two mysterious hominin skull fossils, but they were difficult to date due to the jumbled stratigraphy of the cave. Now, a state-of-the-art analysis of their shape together with new dates suggest one skull might represent our own species, living in Greece more than 200,000 years ago. This would make it the oldest known *Homo sapiens* fossil found in Europe, by at least 150,000 years. [\(article\)](#)

NSS CORNER

The History and Exploration of Wonder Cave Presented by Kelly Smallwood: Wonder Cave is located in the Pelham Valley in Grundy County, Tennessee and is one of the oldest commercial caves in the state. It was discovered in 1897 by three Vanderbilt Students, and a few years later was commercialized by Robert M. Payne. Members of the Payne family continued to manage the cave until the 1980's when Robert's great grandson passed away. After this, the cave was sold to a local Chattanooga businessman, who operated the cave until 2000. At this point, the cave was closed to the public and to cavers. Even though Wonder Cave operated as a commercial cave for nearly 100 years, a complete and accurate map of the cave was never completed. In 2014, Jason Hardy and Kelly Smallwood began the survey of Wonder Cave and have surveyed nearly 3 miles of cave passage. Please join us for a journey through the history of Tennessee's Wonder Cave. You can view the webinar [here](#).

Support the NSS: A generous member has challenged NSS to raise funds through July 31, 2019. All gifts/donations up to \$25,000 will be matched! If you would like to donate, you can do so [here](#).

SCCi CORNER

Stephens Gap Temporary Closure: After a recent fatality at the Stephens Gap Preserve involving Philip Whitehead of Kentucky and Florida, SCCi has decided to temporarily close visitation to the preserve up to but no later than September 20. This is out of respect to the family and friends of Philip Whitehead, and to evaluate and discuss current visitation guidelines and/or develop new ones. The Board must also evaluate reports from the Jackson County Sheriff's Office and the Jackson County Coroner, as this death remains under investigation. The Board did not make this decision in haste or without much discussion and counsel. Should you have questions, please contact Ray Knott, Executive Director at 423-771-9671. [\(article\)](#)