

Caver's body removed from Clarksville cavern

CLARKSVILLE — Wednesday night, two days after friends of Robert Svensson reported that he was missing in a local cave, his body was recovered and taken to Albany Medical Center for an autopsy.

friends gathered near the cave, crews first checked other cave exits before locating his body Tuesday.

The last person to die in an Albany County cave died in 1975. "There were several

'The cooperation has been phenomenal.'

Svensson, 23, from Sherborn, Mass., was a graduate student at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. He and three fellow RPI students had gone 1,000 feet into the Wards-Gregory Cave, north of Route 443 in Clarksville.

The popular venue is a system of two caves connected in 1970. Svensson had brought diving equipment, including a wetsuit and air bottle with air for between 10 and 15 minutes of non-panicked breathing, according to rescuers.

He and his companions went to a lake in the cave, a favorite destination for cavers and even local high school students. Then Svensson dived in, trying to explore a sump, or narrow passage, that opens at the bottom of the lake into a passage reportedly explored only once, said rescuers.

"He went down in the peat to clear an obstruction," said Jeff Mudge, public information officer for the Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Company. "He became entangled and drowned," Mudge told *The Enterprise*.

On Monday night, Svensson's companions reported he was missing. As his family and

SUNY Albany students who went to the Knox Cave after a major thaw," said Nicholas Viscio, a local caver. A woman was killed by an ice fall at the cave entrance.

No one can recall a prior death at the Wards-Gregory Cave.

Removing Svensson's body was difficult.

As the winter sun set Wednesday evening, Mudge described how the tunnel had been pumped out with a sump pump and rescuers expected to extricate Svensson's body soon.

"We're running out of plans," said Mudge.

The rescuers were exhausted, he said. After completing the rescue, it will take two days to sort the equipment, he said.

The Albany County Sheriff's Department, and the Selkirk and Slingerlands fire companies were assisting teams of cave divers.

"The cooperation has been phenomenal," said Mudge. "Everybody has contributed and shared."

— Lynn Rothenberg, Bryce Butler, William Marley Leight, and Melissa Hale-Spencer contributed to this story



The Enterprise — Bryce Butler

A Sheriff's Patrol dive team rode toward the Wards-Gregory Cave in Clarksville in a first attempt to recover the body of Robert Svensson, a 23-year-old student at RPI who died in the cave Monday night when he tried to explore a watery passage beneath a lake in the popular cave, near the former June's Restaurant on Route 443. The vehicle in front carried a volunteer cave rescue team. The man to the right is a volunteer from the Onesquethaw Volunteer Fire Co., which responded to the call Monday night.

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Wetlands, why?

GUILDERLAND — Dr. Gary Kleppel will speak and give a computer presentation on the importance of wetlands, from 7 to 9 p.m. on March 2 at the Guilderland Public Library on Western Avenue. The public is invited.

Kleppel is associate professor and director of the Biodiversity, Conservation and Policy Program, Department of Biological Sciences, at the University at Albany.

After the one-hour talk, the public is invited to participate in an open roundtable discussion on new changes to wetlands laws.

Invited guests are high school students studying water quality, town and agency officials, scientists, builders and developers, landowners, community and environmental groups, and lawyers and students studying environmental law.

Refreshments will be served. If your group would like to introduce itself, or for more information, call Liesse Chable Mohr at 456-1008.

Haught graduates from Siena College



Steven C. Haught

GUILDERLAND — Steven C. Haught, son of Barbara and William Haught of Guilderland, a 1996 graduate of Guilderland High School, graduated from Siena College in December with a bachelor of science degree in computer science and a minor in business administration. Haught is employed at General Electric Corporate Research and Development in Niskayuna as a systems analyst.

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