

sag rag

Jan – July 45(1)



**Ice Caves are cold,
Our smiles are real,
Our hearts are warm,
Our toes.....we can't feel.**

Pallet and Deep Ice Cave Trip 04/24. From left to right: Suzanne, Michael, Samuel, Elizabeth, Jason, Melanie, CJ, Kit, Hannah, Andrew, Dave Todd, Dave Mundt. Not pictured: Kim Luper

The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Grotto meetings are held at various sites or homes on the fourth Saturday of most months at 7:00 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, subject to changes by email. Membership dues are \$5 per year, due at the first of the year, and include SAG RAG subscription. Send dues to treasurer Melanie Jackson at 708 Yama St., Yreka CA 96097. Original material submitted for the SAG RAG, unless otherwise noted, is copyright to the SAG RAG. Within the caving community, such may be copied with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG. For use outside the cave community, please seek the permission of the author or editor first. Send material for publication, always welcome for consideration, to Dave Mundt, 1969 Bechelli Lane, Redding CA 96002, or by email at mundt.dave@gmail.com.

SAG RAG SUMMARY

Dave Mundt

Our Summer Sag Rag Special Edition is here! It's special because this is the first edition of 2026, and it's still summer. Sag is growing! We've welcomed many new members this year. This issue contains scheduled meetings through the remainder of 2026, and our trip reports as always leave you breathless – including an update from Mark Fritzke on Sinking Stream and Sisyphus (if my math is correct, he's been caving the Marbles almost 40 years!). We have meeting minutes from March, April, and May. And if you've ever been underground and heard the flapping sky puppies chirping and squeaking – they may be arguing with each other! Find out why.

DM

Cave Calendar through 2026

Meetings begin at 7:00 pm on Saturdays unless otherwise noted. The dates for October and December meetings will be sent in advance via the SAG Grotto email list.

Sept	Campfire Meeting at MickKinley's.
Oct	Melanie's in Yreka.
Nov	Happy Thanksgiving! No meeting.
Dec	Annual Christmas Party at Steve's.

Jan	Happy New Year 2027 at Mel's!
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September Meeting

The September meeting will be a campfire meeting at CJ & Kit McKinley's in McCloud on the 26th at 7 pm. The address is: [6056 Snowline Circle, McCloud](#)

Directions:

- I5 to Highway 89 East/
- Go past McCloud, left on Pilgrim Creek Rd (Road 13)
- Pilgrim Creek Road to the intersection of Esperanza (on the right, a dirt road), and on the left is Winton Way. Turn left onto Winton Way.
- Follow Winton Way to Hotlum, right onto Hotlum.
- Hotlum to Widow Springs, left onto Snowline. Kit and CJ's is on the right-hand side.

SAG Meeting Minutes March 27, 2026

- Meeting called to order at 1900
- Present: Liz and Jim Wolff, Steve Hobson, Melanie Jackson, CJ and Kit McKinley, Tessa Richards
- Since ice caves are the trip in April, meeting will be moved to Steve's house.
- Treasurers report: \$807.48 in the bank, \$116 in petty cash: \$923.48 in total

2027 Regional:

- HooHoo park is in the calendar from the city, Legion is set for the dinner
- CJ and Liz will come up with a power point to send with Steve to the regional to present our plans
- Melanie took the old guidebook to the Yreka printer and a price of \$38 a book if 100 is ordered, Michael Stark might know a cheaper place in Redding

Other:

- Marble's trip – Steve called Dewayne about mules, has not received an answer
- Correspondence – BLM Lakeview District contacted us regarding staying on the notification list – voted to remain on list
- Zoom meetings – discussed with group about allowing SAG grotto members to attend meetings via Zoom – Voted to allow – Tessa will work with CJ to get this up and running for meetings where we have internet

Meeting adjourned at 1930

SAG Meeting Minutes April 25, 2026

- Meeting called to order at 1905
- Present: Michael Stark, Melanie Jackson, Anna Chincilli, CJ and Kit McKinley, Liz and Jim Wolff, Steve Hobson, Joel Despain, Dave Mundt
- Treasurers report: \$807.48 in bank, + \$5, \$116 in petty cash: \$928.48 in total

2027 Regional:

- Official date for the regional is Sept 24-26, 2027, HooHoo park for camping, Legion for dinner
- Cave trips from the park
- Gather a presentation for Steve to take to this year's regional: CJ, Liz and Michael
- APC can do some trips, James on board, need to figure out how many trips he can do and how to be fair about who gets to go. Steve will discuss Samwell with him
- Guidebook – Joel has agreed to edit, Liz and CJ to organize
- Shasta Caverns – Dave looking at making one tour a day up to 60 people in the evening, charge per person

Other:

- Michael Stark is making a documentary about Caving in Northern California that will premier at the 2026 regional
- Next month's meeting will be during the trip to Lava Beds June 15-17.

Meeting adjourned 2015

SAG Meeting Minutes May 16, 2026

Present: Steve Hobson Melanie Jackson, Jim & Liz Wolff, Kit McKinley, David Todd, Jason Palmer; and guests Anna Mayzenberg and Emerson Erickson.

Chairman Steve called the meeting to order at 7:05 pm. Introductions followed. The April minutes were not read.

The treasurer's report began with \$807.48, dues of \$35 were deposited, and petty cash remains at \$116 for a balance of \$958.48.

Steve reviewed what has been done so far for the September 24-26, 2027 Western regional:

- the McCloud city park has been reserved for camping and activities; the Legion Hall has been reserved for the WCC dinner; the guidebook content is

going forward; price quotes are being sought for guidebook printing, t-shirts and mugs.

Next meetings:

- June 19-21, 2026 is the campout at Hat Creek
- July 24-26, 2026 is at Dry Camp
- August 26- Sept 2, 2026 will be the Marbles trip with mules. Steve has spoken with the packer.

Trip Reports:

- Friday: Kit, Mel, Steve, Jim, Liz went to Cheetah Cave.
- Saturday AM: Liz took Anna & Emerson to Mushpot Cave for an introduction to lava tubes, while Steve, Kit, Jason, Jim, and Mel went to Golden Dome to see if they could find the gnarly crawl hole that had been done before into the bottom of Maze Cave. No luck. Liz, Anna & Emerson hiked up to Golden Dome to meet the other group. All returned to camp for lunch after a Golden Dome tour.
- Sat PM: Steve, Liz, Jason, Kit, Anna, & Emerson set out to find Peekaboo Hole and finally found it very
- near the road. A tight squeeze that couldn't be passed before was done by the really skinny Jason & Emerson to find it doesn't go; it's just a room. Jason tried to pass the formation-blocked passage without breaking any formations, nor any luck. After Peekaboo the group set out to find Gail Cave, Stealth Bridge and Ovis Annex.
- Saturday evening: while dinner was being prepared, Kit, Jason, Mel, Anna & Emerson went out to Cox Ice Cave to find several inches of dirty water on the ice. An estimated 12 feet of ice sealed the back wall of the cave. Jason left camp after the meeting to visit Catacombs Cave, solo.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 pm.

Trip Reports

SAG Lava Beds trip - May 15-17, 2026

What a weekend it was! Caves, sun, wind, cloudy, windy, snow. Snow?? It was May 15-17, 2026 at Lava beds National Monument.

SAG members braving the wild weather were Steve Hobson, Melanie Jackson, Kit McKinley, Jason Palmer, Jim & Liz Wolff, with a cameo appearance for the meeting by Dave 3 (Todd). Guests were Anna (Texas) & Emer (Michigan) who currently work at Oregon Caves.

Friday was mostly cloudy with strong winds. Steve, Mel, Kit, Jim & Liz set up camp then went to find and explore Cheetah Cave. This cave is mostly walking to stoop walking in height with a less than one foot squeeze to get to the very end. No one did the squeeze. Then back to camp for dinner after looking briefly into Thunderbolt entrance to Labyrinth Cave. After dinner Liz, Mel and Kit hiked out to Cox Ice Cave since the weather had moderated a lot, getting back at sunset.

Saturday morning we were greeted by one of the NPS guys who took the cave rescue course in 2023. The day had dawned sunny with strong winds. We were joined by Jason, Anna and Emmer to see if Kit could find a connection he thought he & CJ had found from Hopkins Chocolate Cave to Maze Cave. Jason is game to squeeze through anything so the two poked into every tiny lead they could find in Golden Dome Cave to try to get into Maze. No luck there. They did go look at the spot in Maze that “should” connect but couldn’t get through that way either. So they headed south to the Garden Bridges.

Meanwhile, Liz had taken Anna & Emer into Mushpot Cave as an introduction to lava tubes. The two new-to-lava cavers poked into side passages and crawled the a’a at the end, looping around the breakdown before finding their way back to the tourist path. The three hiked up to Golden Dome to meet up with the rest of the party & had time to tour the cave before lunch.

After lunch all, except Jim, headed out to locate Peek-a-boo Hole, and Kit eventually found it much closer to the road than Liz remembered it being. Jason and Emer braved the squeeze past the large welded boulder (that had stopped surveyors several years ago) making it into a good-sized chamber, but no going passage. Jason tried to >>carefully<< squeeze over another boulder and under a hanging forest of formations into what looks like going passage, but backed out without breaking anything. Then all went up to Gail Cave where Jason, Kit, Anna & Emer shimmed up through breakdown to exit in the eastern Natural Bridge sink. Then Kit crawled into a small un-named alcove cave that is breakdown blocked but has tantalizing dark holes into a larger, lower passage. This alcove marks the spot on the Loop that the Hercules Leg/Juniper Cave branch diverges from the main trench system of caves. Then it was on to Stealth Bridge. Some hiked on down to Ovis Annex and Ovis Bridge to tour those too. After dinner, the SAG meeting was quickly disposed of and a group headed out to Cox Ice again, this time with ice creepers or crampons. There was water on top of the ice. This was an intro to ice caves for Anna and Emer; while Jason headed out to Catacombs Cave for a solo trip.

Sunday we woke to frigid grey skies and blowing snow. Quickly packing up camps those of us going over Medicine Lake got on the road before it might be snowed shut again. And the rest hit the roads home too. It was a good weekend with many caves and good company.

Marbles Trip Report July 3-7, 2026, by Mark Fritzke

This July, we had 3 cavers, Kip and Kai Bauman and I, a small group... so we “got small”. (Last July we had 30 cavers.) We worked on two projects, Pennyroyal Pit entrance to Sinking Stream Cave and Sisyphus.



By late 1987, after years of hammering the walls of a slot while wearing only thermals, I opened it just enough to push through a 15-foot-long squeeze. My partner couldn't fit, but he fed me coveralls, rope and vertical gear to drop a pit.

I was excited to explore a new cave, but at the bottom I discovered footprints and realized I was at the upper end of Sinking Stream Cave. In 2015, I revisited the squeeze, but 28 years of climbing and raft-guiding added muscle to my chest and shoulders, so I was nearly pinned when Elben pulled my arm very hard to mash my shoulder thru;

it was sore and injured for months.

Our goal this year was enlarging the slot until I could get thru wearing thermals, and Kip and Kai kept working on various pinch points until I got thru on July 5. They fed my coveralls and vertical gear thru and we descended a 20', 30' and 80' pits to a stream passage near the upstream terminus of the cave. At a side passage, we found a bi-metal Shasta soda can dating from the 1960's or early 1970's; I don't know of an open upper entrance to the cave, so it's a mystery how the can floated there. Another mystery; the lower exit blasts a strong airflow, so why does the airflow vacillate at our “upper” entrance?



On July 6 we worked on Sisyphus, and dug out the gravel deposited near the entrance annually when the cave is a spring, and dumped over 25 buckets on the dry stream bed outside. I was surprised to find the cave dry enough we could access the dig at the end, where sound of the nearby stream taunts us onward. I hope we can make significant progress on this 40+ year old dig this year, explore the stream and make connections with Drystream and Upstream caves nearby.

Notes: We saw snowshoe hares lurking around the campfire ashes; I've never seen them before. Lurking deer were competing to eat our pee spots and Kai saw an *aplodontia rufa* investigating under his pack. We met [2 Pacific Crest Trail](#) hikers; very early season this year. Wildflowers were at a peak we normally see in late July, due to the abnormally dry winter. Due to the exceptionally dry conditions, USFS posted "No Campfires", but I missed the sign, and we enjoyed a nice little fire.

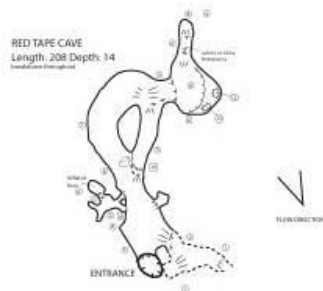
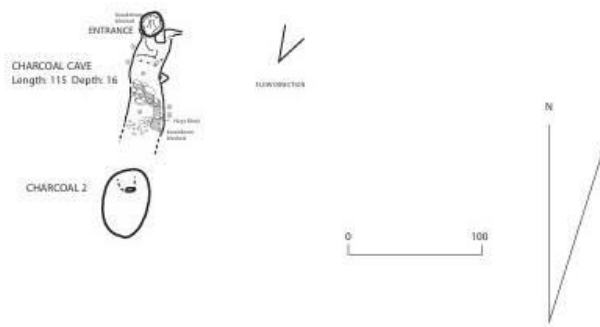
SAG Tript Report: Aug 15, 2026

Participants: Daniel Hewitt, Steve Hobson, Arley Kisling, Sunshine Malby, Kit & CJ McKinley, Jim & Liz Wolff.

The objectives: relocate, visit & re-GPS the caves

On a somewhat cooler day than usual for mid-August, we all met at a road junction to head out to Rediscovery, Bear Necessity, Red Tape, Charcoal, a new-to-us entrance dubbed Not Red Tape, and the recently named "Talus How Ya Feel" a nearly blind sink near Red Tape. These had all been GPS'd without knowing which caves they were, so this trip was to sort out the now known.

The first objective was Rediscovery Cave. This 208' long and 38' deep deeply buried lava tube has been elusive over the years. Jim Kottinger originally discovered it in the 1970's, lost it, took Jim Wolff out for a bush-whack to it in the 1980's, when it was originally GPS'ed as Rediscovery Cave and surveyed. It was resurveyed in 2019. Lost again, found again by Daniel while he was on a work project in early August. He took Steve, Kit & CJ to it to investigate it as he wasn't prepared to enter the cave while at work. So, the expedition on the 15th invited all the "locals" to go out to play. This trip had 2 birthday boys, Arley & Steve, who were treating themselves to the cave trip.



Parking near Charcoal we proceeded to that deep entrance. No one entered the cave, but we found another sink just a bit to the south with an entrance in breakdown. It led into a breakdown chamber which plotted out to be near the breakdown choked end of Charcoal, a probable extension to that cave. From there we headed to Red Tape Caves' small entrance sink, also long lost and un-re-located until a brush reduction project was put on Daniel's desk and expert advice was

sought. Red Tape was visited by most everyone. This is an interesting cave with some calcite or possibly silica formations in the lower reaches of the cave.

While everyone was in Red Tape, CJ & Liz headed out over a blow down forest of jack-straw logs (think pick up sticks) to Not Red Tape Cave entrance. This one had been pointed out to Jim & Liz in 1987 by an archaeologist when Jim, Liz and Ray Miller went to survey Red Tape. We had surveyed a line to it at that time. It is a small and deep sink very near a plantation boundary; how was it missed during logging and tree planting? In 1987 at the time, we looked into the cave and made a rough sketch but no notations about the interior. This one is ripe for a survey. When everyone regrouped it was late and we decided to pass up Green Tape Cave, a 17' long low, wet room/cave with a couple of small blowing leads that Steve and Liz found and surveyed during a trip out to Red Tape Cave in 2019. Then we all hiked back to Charcoal Cave and the trucks to 'head to the barn.'

Did you know? Bats argue with each other!

In a Smithsonian Magazine article by Jason Daley, Researchers 'Translate' Bat Talk. Turns Out, They Argue—a Lot." A machine learning algorithm helped decode the squeaks Egyptian fruit bats make in their roost, revealing that they "speak" to one another as individuals.

Plenty of animals communicate with one another, at least in a general way—wolves howl to each other, birds sing and dance to attract mates and big cats mark their territory with urine. But researchers at Tel Aviv University recently discovered that when at least one species communicates, it gets very specific. Egyptian fruit bats, it turns out, aren't just making high pitched squeals when they gather together in their roosts. They're communicating specific problems, reports Bob Yirka at Phys.org. According to Ramin Skibba at Nature, neuroecologist Yossi Yovel and his colleagues recorded a group of 22 Egyptian fruit bats, for 75 days.

Using a modified machine learning algorithm originally designed for recognizing human voices, they fed 15,000 calls into the software. They then analyzed the corresponding video to see if they could match the calls to certain activities. They found that the bat noises are not just random, as previously thought, reports Skibba. They were able to classify 60 percent of the calls into four categories. One of the call types indicates the bats are arguing about food. Another indicates a dispute about their positions within the sleeping cluster. A third call is reserved for males making unwanted mating advances and the fourth happens when a bat argues with another bat sitting too close. In fact, bats make slightly different versions of the calls when speaking to different individuals within the group, similar to a human using a different tone of voice when talking to different people. Skibba

points out that besides humans, only dolphins and a handful of other species are known to address individuals rather than making broad communication sounds.

The research appears in the journal Scientific Reports. “We have shown that a big bulk of bat vocalizations that previously were thought to all mean the same thing, something like ‘get out of here!’ actually contain a lot of information,” Yovel tells Nicola Davis at [The Guardian](#). By looking even more carefully at stresses and patterns, Yovel says, researchers may be able to tease out even more subtleties in the bat calls. This isn't the end of the research, Yirka reports. Yovel and his team want to investigate whether bats are born knowing this “language” or if they learn it over time while living in their colonies. They also want to know if the bats use similar communication outside the roost. To understand that they will attach microphones to some bats and release them into the wild.

Kate Jones, professor of ecology and biodiversity at University College, London, tells Davis that the research is very interesting. “It is like a Rosetta stone to getting into [the bats’] social behaviors. I really like the fact that they have managed to decode some of this vocalization and there is much more information in these signals than we thought,” she says. She says that it might even be possible to use similar techniques to begin understanding nuanced communications in other species as well.

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