

SHASTA AREA GROTTO NEWSLETTER

# The Sag Rag

NOVEMBER-DECEMBER 1994 VOLUME 13 NUMBER 6



Merry Christmas to All

and to all a year of good caving

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The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Grotto meetings are held at different locations the fourth Friday of each month at 7:30 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, Membership dues are \$6 dollars per year and include newsletter subscription. Original material not otherwise noted is copyright to the SAG RAG. Such material may be copied with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG. For use outside of the caving community, please seek the permission of the author or editor first. Send material for publication any time to Bighorn Broeckel, 2916 Deer Meadows Road, Yreka, CA 96097. Material intended for the next newsletter is due by the 10th of the even month.

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**EDITORIAL:** The Broeckels are involved in other projects this month, so they called in the reserves to edit this issue of the SAG RAG. Bill and Judy have set a standard for the newsletter that is hard to maintain. They don't do hardly no misspelled words or typos or bad grammar or the other bad stuff that seems to creep into everything I touch.

It is with sadness we report Dick LaForge's life has been chaos the past two months. His father died of cancer, and shortly thereafter his sons Seth and Evan along with wife Kathy were involved in an auto accident. Kathy was the most seriously injured, but she is reported doing well. Dick also reported the death of Diablo Grotto Chairperson Laura Kalgerou in an auto accident. Condolences of the Shasta Area Grotto go out to the families of those who were taken.

The first nominations of caves to be considered significant under FCRPA were due about the time you read this. We need to think carefully about what should or should not be nominated. The law reads that cave location information is exempt from Freedom of Information Act requests. Will locations really remain confidential, or will the information escape into the public realm? If the highest levels of government cannot keep information confidential, what chance has the local USFS or BLM office? My greatest fear is that an employee will give locations to a friend who will pass the information to a friend who will pass the information to the media and/or the teenage drinking team.

Nature was messing around with cave management long before Federal agencies came along to "help". There are indications this method works quite well unless intervention is needed to police the actions of humans.

Maybe we should hold off on nominating those caves unknown outside the caving community until we can weigh the effectiveness and necessity of this mandated management against the risk of widespread release of locations. Program funding never covers all incurred costs, and with operating funds very limited now, and future cuts likely, the Federal landlords are not eager, and may not be solvent enough, to assume additional responsibilities. Example: Klamath National Forest is studying the feasibility of acquiring Pluto's Cave in a land swap and using part of the cave and the surrounding land as an interpretation area. An item that will have a great impact on their decision is the cost of managing of this cave with their very limited funds.

I would like assurance that the effectiveness of management provided will be worth the risk of having caves currently known only to cavers turn into restrooms, garbage dumps and graffiti exhibitions. For those who have not seen an example of a cave well known to the public but without management I suggest a trip to Pluto's Cave.

The first winter storm pounced on northern California November 4th, and all unplowed roads above 3,000 feet or so have been closed since that time. Sad to say this has drastically reduced caving trips. There are always the demented few who think snow is fun. They even shell out perfectly good money to get towed up a mountain so they can make fools of themselves skiing back down.

*Ray*

**COVER:** Some of you may think the cover is vaguely familiar. You are right, I plagiarized past SAG RAG's to bring you a composite cover with elements from the Christmas issues of 1988 and 1991. Unfortunately in both cases the art work is unsigned, so I cannot give the artists credit.

## PAST MEETINGS

**November 12, 1994.** Thanksgiving dinner and meeting at the Fritzke home. Present were Jim Wolff, Neils Smith, Bill McGahey, John and Lucas Marschner, Mark and Linda Fritzke, Dick LaForge, John Bair, Julie Donovan and Rich Koehler.

Jim W. called the meeting to order at 8:58 PM. The minutes were approved for the September meeting. The October meeting was to be held in the Marbles, but due to adverse weather only 3 people were present, and the meeting was canceled. Our treasurer reports a balance of \$502.69.

Old Business: John Roth reported there are 20 inventory stations remaining to be done in the continuing Oregon Caves project. There is also some necessary restoration work. The information is from the Southern Oregon Grotto. It was suggested work days be scheduled the 2nd and/or 3rd weekends in January.

The due date for the first round of significant cave nominations under the Federal Caves Restoration Plan Act (FCRFA) is December 14.

New Business: Jim W. reported the theft of the visitor register at Jot Dean Ice Cave. The Southern Siskiyou Newspapers ran a positive article on Ray Miller and his work with bats.

**December 9, 1994.** Christmas meeting at the Wolffs' featuring neat crunchy salty stuff with dips. Present were Jim & Liz Wolff, Neils Smith, Melanie Jackson, Bill Broeckel, Bill, Sheryl and Zane Kenney and Ray Miller.

Old business: Nomination of officers for the coming year were held:

- Chairman – Neils Smith or Jim Wolff
- Vice Chairman – Dick La Forge or Jim Kottinger
- Secretary – Melanie Jackson
- Treasurer – Liz Wolff

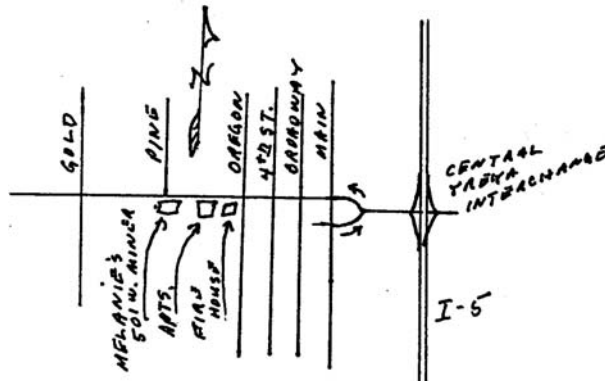
Those eligible to vote will find ballots included in this issue of the SAG RAG.

The meeting ended with field trip reports and the selection of locations for the next 2 meetings.

## FUTURE MEETINGS

January 14, 1995: Work day and meeting at Oregon Caves. Lodging in the employee quarters will be available Friday and Saturday nights. Meals provided Saturday and breakfast on Sunday. Attendance required at meeting Saturday morning for instruction and work assignments prior to entering the cave at 8 AM. SAG meeting Saturday night in lieu in regular Friday meeting. We are asked not to bring non-working guests. Please call the Wolffs (916) 964-3123 at least a week ahead for reservations. If weather seems doubtful please call Friday January 13 to be sure the trip has not been canceled.

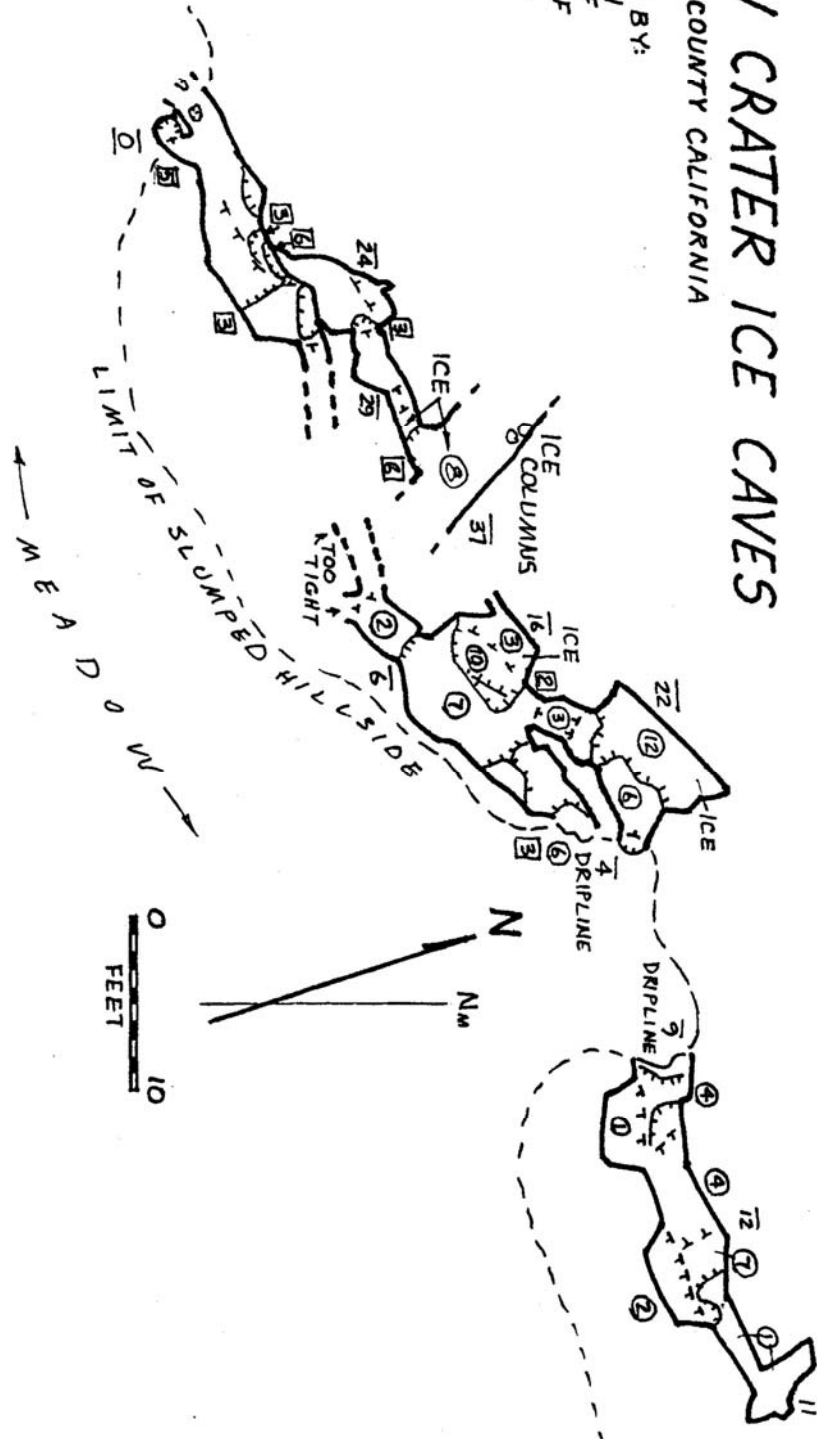
February 10, 1995: Regular SAG meeting at the home of Melanie Jackson, 501 W. Miner St., Yreka, CA.



# TWIN CRATER ICE CAVES

SISKIYOU COUNTY CALIFORNIA

SURVEY BY:  
N SMITH  
J WOLFF  
L WOLFF  
10-29-94



Map: Twin Crater Ice Caves

## CHECKIN' LEADS AND WHAT COMES OF THAT

by Liz Wolff

On October 7 Ray :Miller and Jim & Liz Wolff went out to check on a couple of leads that Jim had dug up at work, one of them on a 1907 timber cruiser's map. Jim is a great one to collect cave leads, but it took 2 leads in the same area to get him to go looking. One had been found while working, but he needed a light to see what he had found; the second lead just whetted his appetite for caves one could drive a truck into (see Sept-Oct 1994 SAG RAG).

It was a beautiful day to be trooping around in the woods, and there were caves just begging to be found. Our first stop was at an archaeological site near Twin Crater Mountain. We hiked out the 200-300 feet from the road to a shallow basin bordered by lava talus. There were caves to get into on both edges of the basin, but nothing seemed extensive or roomy until Jim climbed into one that went down, and down, and down and down to a small lake on an ice floor. Now this was more like it. Ray tried mightily to force his way through the tightest climb down (more like a vertical slither) without success. Liz made it easily, and joined Jim in looking down into the room with the ice and water floor. Jim vowed to return someday, and another cave lead tantalized. But that's another story.

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*Editor's interjection – (the opportunity to defend oneself is the compensation for being editor). Jim and Liz were poking around in the do-nothing holes, and I called them over to help check out this lead I thought would be worthwhile. Liz made it down through the constriction OK, but, fighting gravity on the way out required Jim behind her doing what ever was necessary to stuff her back up through the hole. Liz, meanwhile, was going through a rich repertoire of sound effects.*

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And so it stood until October 29 when Neils Smith and Jim and Liz drove out to the now named Twin Crater Ice Caves to dig, push and map. Again it was sunny but frosty. While Jim suited up to freeze and get wet, Neils and Liz began the survey in the eastern-most cave. When they had gotten most of the second cave done Jim came bouncing down the entrance ledges announcing he had seen a regular lava tube down there with ice columns, stalagmites and lots of water on the ice floor with no rock floor in sight!!

We finished up the last couple of shots and ran a survey line over to the ice cave. We even surveyed into the cave, aggravating Jim's impatience, and down to the vertical slither. Neils doesn't bend in correctly in the places necessary to negotiate the slither, and his clothes seemed to want to stay out, too. But he thinks he can do it ....

Jim had rigged a rope for the drop to the ice, which wasn't used as none of us went down to check it all out. There are indeed ice formations down there, about 4-6 inches of water on an ice floor and big passage. It is not clear if it is a regular lava tube or just a larger void in the talus. It is certainly the largest room in any of the Twin Crater Breakdown Caves, being 5' high, 8'wide and no telling how long, as neither end of the room could be seen. Another trip will have to be taken to find the ends of the cave, and to map the other two caves in the talus.

*All this ice at the end of a long hot summer – wow. Ed.*

## All About Bats

### **HIBERNATION**

By Ray Miller

With the first frost most insects are gone, and when the bugs go there is no longer a food source for the bats. And bats are world class eaters. If we consumed a relative volume of food we would be lining up at McDonald's for about 300 Big Macs every day. It's evident that if our friendly local McDonald's closed for the winter we would suffer a serious dietary deficiency. The bats face the same situation.

Some bat species cope with this problem by leaving the area. Our Mexican Freetails head south about September 20th each year.

With several species we have no idea what the bats do. The population dwindles to zero by late fall, but they have never been located in winter. Come spring they are back in their summer roosts. The mommies-to-be quickly form their nursery colonies while the males hang out with silly grins on their faces. The locally common Yuma bats are in this category.

Hibernation is a viable option for several species. Normally these are the bats not known to travel very far. The cave dwelling Townsend's Long Eared bat (*Plecotus townsendii*) is a hibernating species. They seldom travel more than 3 miles from their roost to forage, and the distance record for these animals was set by one that flew 16 miles to reach a suitable hibernaculum.

The Townsend's Long Eared bat is listed by the California Department of Fish and Game as an animal of special concern. It is also a candidate for listing under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Population studies indicate we have more of these animals than many other areas, so we can conduct in-depth studies on this species in Siskiyou County that would be much more difficult elsewhere.

Very preliminary results seem to indicate the Townsend's Long Eared bats have exacting temperature and humidity requirements. They cannot survive freezing. Their tolerance of human intrusion is advertised as being very poor, but tolerance seems to increase somewhat with continuing exposure if that exposure is benign. These intrusions need to be on a more or less continuing basis such as they would encounter in Pluto's Cave. An exception to this are nursery colonies. The mommies will always become so hysterical they sometimes abort spontaneously or drop their pups.

These bats normally roost on smooth exposed cave walls and ceilings. They hibernate in the same type of areas, but also use vertical or overhanging breakdown. Townsend's Long Eared bats do not necessarily use their summer roosts for hibernacula. For hibernation the configuration of the cave seems to be of little consequence. We have found hibernating Townsend's bats from 18 inches to 40+ feet above the cave floor.

Bats enter hibernation with stored energy in the form of fat that will keep them alive until spring with enough reserve to fuel their first foraging expeditions. If they are disturbed during hibernation some of that fat is burned, lessening their chance of survival. Observations using infrared light and video cameras reveal returning from hibernation is a slow process, and a half hour or more may lapse before any response can be seen.

Cavers can lessen the impact on cave dwelling bats. If you find a clump of bats it is a nursery colony. Back away if you can. Otherwise pass quickly and quietly and try to avoid getting directly under the colony. It is much more difficult to avoid hibernating bats. Just cave softly in the winter. Try not to illuminate the bats in any case. Remember the rasping noise of a whisper is approaching the bats' audio range. They are less aware of a low quiet voice.

The bats may have squatters' rights, but cavers have their place in the dark, too.

## WHAT'S YOUR OWN CAVIN' (cap)ABILITY? – A SELF-STORY by J. Wolff

Caving can be a very demanding sport. Your total mental and physical energy must be focused in order to maintain proper perspective along with the team and the cave. Aside from the mission at hand, you must be totally honest with the team and yourself. What does this all mean? First, let me take you back to 1965.

I lost my right arm during the Vietnam "conflict". After that my caving career was shot, or so I thought. After some re-adjustment I felt that I could do a little bit of caving, but only if it was horizontal caves. Little did I know my friends were really plotting to speleo-rehabilitate me ... !

My first cave back in the States was one that involved a cable ladder descent. I was shaking in my boots, but with a belay this madness seemed justified and safe. Yet, in the process, I found a new love for the caves I've been exploring; now they had a challenge I could meet, but only with limits and help from my friends. "With limits" means that I had limitations, but was able to gain my pleasure caving within those limits, safely. Everyone has their own Limitations, be they physical or mental.

**Physical** could be like me or maybe a caver with diabetes or other physical limitation or handicap. **Mental** could be your phobias, like claustrophobia or acrophobia. Certain fears of being lost, dying or falling are normal and helpful. They are the important and elemental components in personal decision-making within the cave. We all have our individual caving abilities, and they are learned with time and experience.

I found that being part of a caving party or team meant that everyone normally helps each other in need, especially helping team members overcome an obstacle in the cave. The cave trip should be governed by the weakest member of the party. After all, it is only common sense that cavers try to keep the cave trip going, and with the least amount of hassles. So, it was no sweat to ask for help from my friends. Hey, I'm not too proud to ask for help, especially if it means the safety and success of the cave trip. Knowing your limitations is very important, you know.

To sum this all up, you really ought to try to stay within your limitations, yet have fun.

### SHASTA CAVERN CLEANUP

Neils Smith, Jim Wolff, Melanie Jackson and Ray Miller formed a small but dedicated group that joined a large contingent from Shascade Grotto for caving, cleanup and surveying at Shasta Caverns on December 10 and 11. A batch of garbage was removed, mostly fallout from past efforts to make the cave more tourist friendly. Past surveys were done without leaving the established trails, so side passages have not been mapped. We were given the run of the cave. Now we know what it would be like to live in an ant farm. Bodies were emerging from holes all over the place.

Melanie and Ray bailed out Saturday afternoon, however Jim and Neils spent the night at the cave entrance. Sunday morning it was snowing, and the Cavern concessionaire sent a rescue party over early to remove those who had spent the night.

### NSS NATIONAL CONVENTIONS

July 17-21, 1995      Blacksburg, Virginia  
August 3-9, 1996      Salida, Colorado

Jim Wolff now has registration forms available for both conventions for those of us eager to do our planning early.

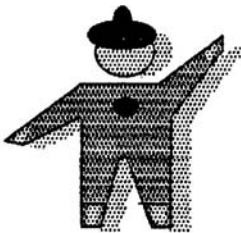
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**STAMP**

**TO:**



**Caving in bunny suits?**