

# Sag Rag

SHASTA AREA GROTTOS NEWSLETTER    NATIONAL SPELEOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
MAY-JUNE 1998    VOLUME 17 NUMBER 3



KLAMATH FAWN LILY  
Erythronium klamathense

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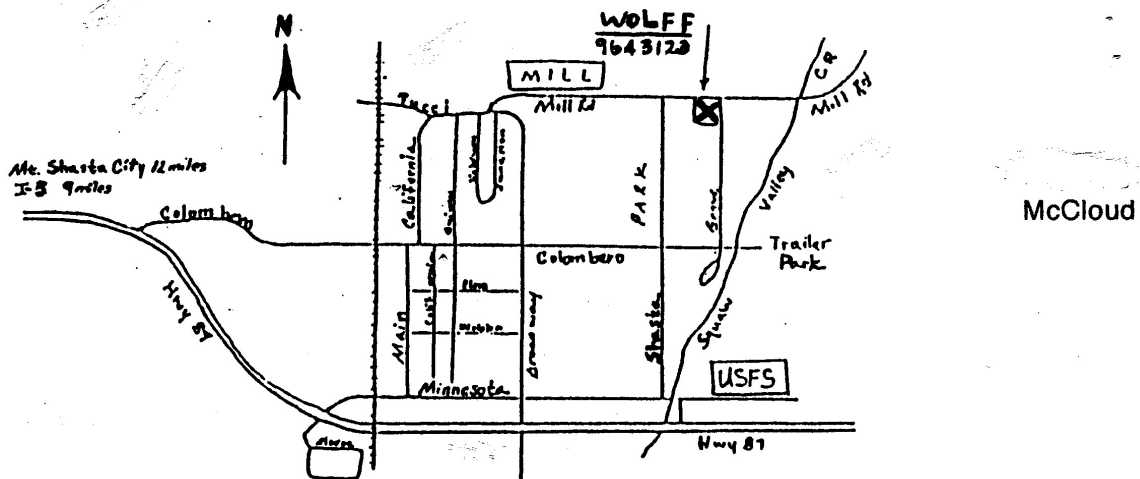
**EDITORIAL:** The COVER shows a Fawn Lily because these are the first flowers to come up in Marble Valley as the snow melts. In this issue look for a little information on KMCTF activity in the Marble Mountains.

The featured item is Christmas Tree Cave, with articles, pictures, and a new map by Liz Wolff. The finishing touches were applied to the survey at the June Cave Camp, after Liz Wolff finished teaching a field class in cave survey for the grotto. Look for an article about the cave camp in a later issue.

There will be no formal SAG meeting in July. We want everyone to go out caving, and then come back to the August meeting with lots of good trip reports. Be safe, easy on the caves, and have fun in there. **BB**

### CAVE CALENDAR – 1998

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| July 3-5   | KMCTF Marble Mountains Speleo Snow Camp.   |
| July 17-19 | Marble Mountains cave management field trip with KMCTF, cave specialists, and Klamath National Forest. |
| July 17-19 | Scorpion Cave photo monitoring trip, may be full. Contact Ron Osbourne for information.                |
| August 14  | 7:30 PM SAG meeting at Wolff's home in McCloud.<br>Weekend cave trip to be announced at the meeting.   |



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**SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING****June 6, 1998**

The meeting was held around the campfire at the Hat Creek Campout. Present were Russ Yoder, Bill & Judy Broeckel, Benj, Benyam, and Becky Broeckel, Chuck Frank III, Chuck Frank IV, Jim & Liz Wolff, and guests Scott Frank and Ian Canaday. Chairman Jim Wolff called the meeting to order at 9:24 PM. There were no minutes or treasurers report. The next SAG RAG will be out at the end of June featuring Hat Creek articles and a membership list. For now, SOG LOG articles will be printed in the RAG as available.

Correspondence: Liz received a cave postcard from France. NSS new-members manual is now available. E-mail from Steve Knutson with a KMCTF newsletter. A response to the Klamath National Forest plans for a "high visibility" project in management of the Hwy A-12 caves.

Old Business: Discussion on the management plans for the A-12 caves. Chuck Frank III: the cave areas should be managed on a province-wide basis. Other USFS regions already do this. Bill Broeckel: we need to encourage the KNF in their efforts in the Marbles and for their lava cave management plans. Jim Wolff: Bill Kenney has already gotten \$500 worth of steel for the gate for Barnum and/or Sand Cave. With the NEPA process still to go through, it will most likely be Sand Cave gated next fall.

New Business: Next meetings: July 10 – no meeting, go caving! Aug. 14 – at Wolffs in McCloud.

Trip Reports: Russ Yoder, Bill Kenney & Ernie Coffman went to Barnum & Sand Caves to look for specifics to gate the caves. Russ Yoder did a solo trip to Adam's Homestead, Sugar Pine Butte Ice, Sunbeam Pit (he didn't enter), Worthless, and Catwalk. Russ Yoder and Bill Kenney went to Cracker Cave to dig in the terminal breakdown. Also to Lava Top Butte in Central Oregon with the Oregon Grotto. Chuck Frank IV and Ian Canaday went to Porcupine Cave in Yreka. They also climbed on the cliffs. Bill & Judy Broeckel mapped two caves in lava for the Rogue River National Forest.

The meeting adjourned at 10:16 pm. These minutes were respectfully submitted by Liz Wolff. **LW**

**COLUMBUS DAY MARBLE MOUNTAIN SPELEOCAMP – 1997**

My daughter and I hiked up for the tail-end of speleocamp on Friday, October 17. This was Becky's first time. She has a bum leg, and it took us about four hours to get into camp. It would have taken me about that long anyway, and I was glad for the company.

An early storm had left a snow field between the two cabins. But the slopes and the camp sites under the trees still showed bare ground. Best of all, we enjoyed an interval of fair weather. Jim Hildebrand, Mark Harder, Rich Sundquist, Cynthia Ream, Steve Knutson, Bill Kenney, Mark Fritzke, and Dick Everest were still in camp. Others had been up earlier in the week, including Russ Yoder.

Trips were made into Half Dollar Hole, Flush Cave, Maple Leaf Cave, and Bigfoot Cave. I got in on the Maple Leaf trip with Mark Fritzke. This was a digging trip. We were just going to spend a few minutes on this hopeless dig before we worked on the main objective at the end of nearby Bladerunner Cave.

Of course, unexpectedly, the hopeless dig opened up. A late falling maple leaf showed us the way to an actual cave passage. We got ready to go caving. We never got around to Bladerunner that day.

The new cave passage went about fifty feet and seemed to end. But little pebbles would bounce around the rocks in the floor and echo out of some big space below us. An unlikely crawl at an oblique angle was the only possibility. At the end of this crawl, Fritzke was able to curl into a crevice and slide down to an opening in the ceiling of an elongated room. There was no way down to the floor.

Fritzke had to run back to camp for vertical gear. The drop was about 15 feet. The room was 50 feet long and 15 feet wide. We found two leads from the room. One was a low crawl to the side, and the other, a mud dig with air movement. The total surveyed cave length was 157 feet.

We got back to camp after dark. Becky was glad to see me, and there was a nice campfire. When I went to bed, Sundquist and Ream were still not back from a push trip in Bigfoot. They got into camp the next day after nearly 24 hours in the cave. They had some big news to tell us. A lead in the Illusion opened up into a complex maze. Taking the straightest possible route on just one of the levels, they surveyed 790 feet in the direction of Meat-grinder. They passed by many leads in a very remote area of Bigfoot Cave.

Sunday in the Grain Shed, consolidation of gear was in progress. Everything was either tucked away, locked in the bin, or packed out. The bin was secured with new hinges and bolts. We hauled out lots of old food, batteries, and miscellaneous junk. I had some ideas



Sundquist after the long Bigfoot trip.

about taking Becky to see Skunk Hollow or the first part of Trail Junction. She was not interested, so we hiked out in four hours through the beautiful October trees. Another season of Marble Mountain caving had come to an end.

**BB**

## **MARBLE MOUNTAINS OUTLOOK FOR 1998**

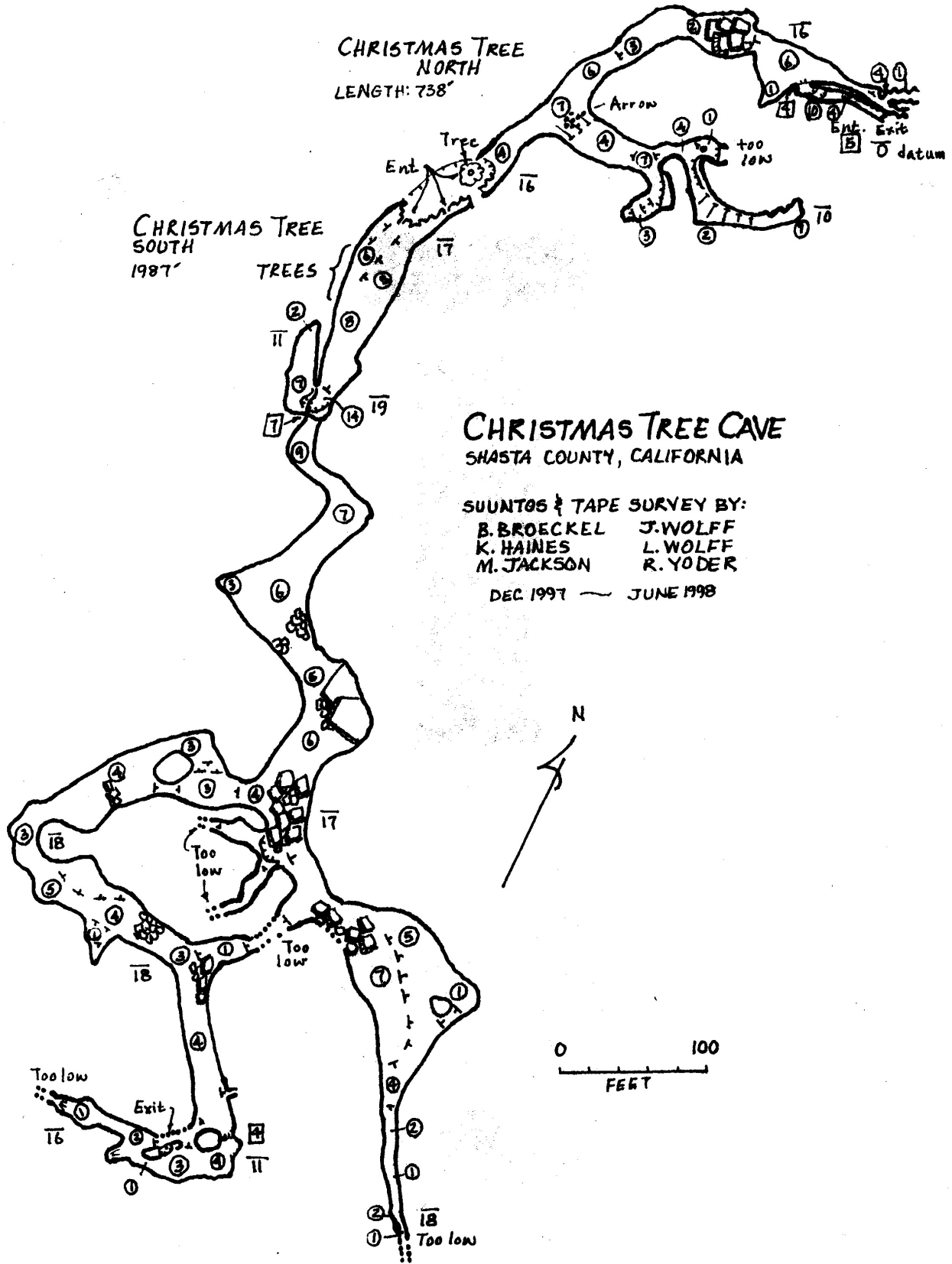
This year the snow pack is late and deep. The first speleocamp will be over the July 4th weekend, but the snow and even the weather may be problematic. If you are interested, please contact Jim Wolff or Bill Kenney (see membership list) for last minute details on the particulars, such as, are we really going to go?

Later in July, Jim Nieland and Jerry Trout will be helping on a field trip involving Klamath National Forest and KMCTF discussing future cave management in the Marble Mountains. The field trip will be centered on the weekend of July 17-19. This is the same weekend as the Scorpion Cave trip. However, I feel it is important for at least some of the cavers to make a showing at this event, to show our interest and support. It is also an excellent chance to express our views, provide some sensible input, and become friends with those administratively responsible for future management of the Marble Mountains cave resources.

Many of the serious cave trips this year will focus on expanding the map of Bigfoot Cave, including the new area opened last October. Other trips are sure to transpire. Remember to keep a low profile camp, avoiding the flats between the cabins. Cavers have been camping regularly in the valley for a quarter century, and it is still a place of enduring beauty.



Snow in the valley.



Map: Christmas Tree Cave

**0 CHRISTMAS TREE, 0 CHRISTMAS TREE**

By Jim & Liz Wolff

'Twas three weeks before Christmas and out on the lavas  
Snow blankets the rocks, we're not homebound, we're cavers.  
The Hat Creek Four\* each packed up their gear  
With visions of new cave dancing around 'tween their ears.

Racing to Hat Creek, they sprang from vehicles  
To prepare for darkness, crawls, and lavacicles.  
Mel and Jim went to uncover Carbide Cans' \*\* seven foot hole  
While Bill and Liz dropped into another, connection their goal.

Blackness did beckon, a ledge dropped to the right  
We're not deep enough, and a drop's a good sight.  
Climb down, look around, breakdown both ways  
It just doesn't pay to go caving some days.

All over the floor lava 'mites stand unbroken  
they're everywhere, not just a few as token.  
Ooze over the breakdown, and now we must crawl  
Lava danglies festoon the ceiling and wall.

Daylight faintly seen, is it what we seek for?  
The connection to Carbide Can, or just a back door?  
Round the bend is an entrance, the way is not narrow  
Blackness beckons left, o'er some rocks in an arrow.

But passage divides, low crawlways do dominate  
No hoped for connection, lava seals each way terminate.  
Despite passage of size small in scope  
For connection to Carbide Can we still dared to hope.  
After surveying out to the original entrance  
we still hoped to combine the caves, are we dense?

Out the exit, it's lunch time, and back at the cars  
Hot tea is a treat and M&M's with peanuts, my stars.  
It's holiday (almost), take in calories without raving  
Lunch over, we must go back to caving.





Into Carbide Cans' uncovered hole Bill descends,  
With 2" high crawls all 'round, that plan dead-ends.  
Back to lava people's exit and on up the flow  
Is another entrance we'll check even though  
Daylight is failing, and obligations remain  
It's early enough, we won't skip new cave again.

We find Christmas Tree Cave, with part of the floor  
Knee deep in Christmas Tree skeletons, what's more.  
We met one objective, Christmas Tree Cave to locate  
Now we must survey, ascertain if the old map is accurate,  
For the crawlways more numerous and the cave more complex  
Than remembered by each of us from our scrutiny  
Of the map published by geologists in nineteen sixty three. #

**J&LW**

\* The Hat Creek Four: Melanie Jackson, Bill Broeckel, Jim & Liz Wolff. This poem describes the Dec. 13, 1997 survey of Christmas Tree North.

\*\* See "How the Grinch Stole Christmas", SAG RAG, vol 16 no 3, 1997.

# Mineral Information Service, California Division of Mines and Geology, vol 16 no 3, March 1963, pp 6-7.

(see also SAG RAG. vol 11 no 6, 1992, for reprint of old map.)



"Little people" in Christmas Tree North

**CHRISTMAS TREE CAVE**

By Jim &amp; Liz Wolff

January 11, 1998 found Melanie Jackson, Bighorn Broeckel, Kyle Haines, and Jim & Liz Wolff returning to Hat Creek to survey in Christmas Tree Cave. It was snowy out there, with about 8" on the ground. In 4x4 vehicles we came to within a half mile of the cave, and put on cross country (XC) skis to get to the cave.



Christmas tree skeletons

The small entrance opens into a spacious chamber containing the skeletons of Christmas Trees the cave is named for. There is very little breakdown associated with the entrance, an uncommon occurrence in lava tubes. The cave was very dry also, which is uncommon for this time of year. Proceeding upflow, a short upper level is encountered. An easy 7' climb gets to the ledge. Bighorn found a leather wallet (he's good at that – see the Lost Swallet article in a recent RAG) with rotted dollar bills, and \$1.46 in change. It contained no ID and the newest coin was from 1996.

Back in the main passage, we came to a breakdown chamber with what looked like a side passage to the left. It turned out to be only a crawl-around underneath the breakdown that rejoined the main passage. Then a previously noted crawlway exited on the right and the passage immediately split again with a very low, wide crawl to the right around a pillar. There was a little people column in the middle of the lowest point in that crawl. To the left was a roomier crawl that led to stoop walking-sized passage, and a way around the pillar on the right.

Then the passage took a sharp left turn and seemed to double back on itself. It stayed stoop walking-sized with occasional places to stand up straight. A low crawl went to the left, and as it mapped out, nearly connects back into the main passage. To the right we noticed air movement and it got colder. We thought we were approaching an entrance, even though we couldn't see any daylight. A 4' lava fall led into a crawl way with strong airflow, and the sight of an entrance too small to be negotiated by anything larger than, perhaps, a house cat, without digging. There were ice columns across the middle of this small room. The passage ended for us that day with a dirt-floored dig with strong air flow. Then it was back out to the main passage and lunch.

We returned to the survey, climbing over more breakdown and entering another room with crawls leading off. One ended almost immediately, but the other still goes. We opted not to break the lava soda straws up to 6" long that block the way. Next in the main passage was a very low lead to the right and another breakdown pile. There is a small chamber on top of the rubble with two exits into the main passage.

The cave continues into a spacious room 80 by 100 feet, 8' high in places. From there a crawl goes another 120' to a 2" high continuation. Another two inch high crawl led off to the right near the end of the crawl. You have to love those 2" high passages; these Hat Creek caves seem to have a lot of them. All in all, this is a very friendly and complex cave with a dig into more cave to come.

On January 23 Bighorn and Liz returned to locate the tiny entrance on the surface and dig it open. Of course, we had to quit looking for it before we found it. Following an azimuth to the area the entrance should be in, we spent about two hours searching every rocky hummock, shallow sink, and crack in the rocks before giving up to go do something productive in the cave. And then we found it in a shallow sink with cave leading off the north side as well as our entrance on the south side. It is near the main road, and will take some major digging implements to open to passable size. The other entrance gives promise to join with the cave as well. (Ed. The other entrance was connected to Christmas Tree Cave on June 6, 1998.)

**J&LW**



Mark Fritzke has a house cat



Wolff knocking on the door –



back entrance to Christmas Tree Cave.

Melanie Jackson and Kyle Haines –



looking for the Mistletoe Room.



Christmas Tree Cave decorations.



Jim Wolff fishing for more passage.

**SAG RAG**  
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**STAMP**

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**TO:**

NEXT ISSUE: More Hat Creek

Remove Staple For Inspection