

sag rag

30:2 Mar-Apr 2011



Lots of graffiti on the welded boulders at the end of the walking passage in Pluto's Cave. Photo by Robert Nixon 2-27-11

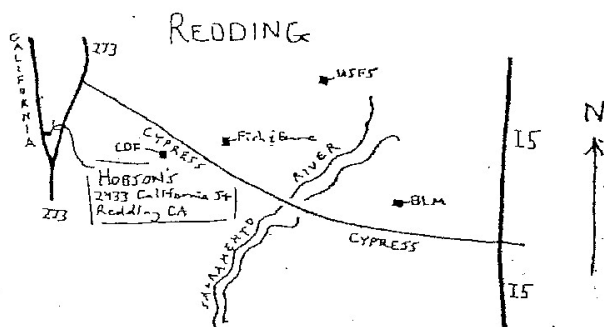
INSIDE – REGULAR GROTTTO STUFF

The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Grotto meetings are held at different locations on 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 or <caverbill@live.com>. For more on SAG, check the web site at <<http://www.caves.org/grotto/sag>>.

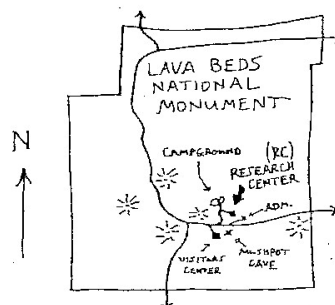
CAVERS CALENDAR 2011

- May 20 SAG meeting at 7:30 at Hobson's in Redding.
 May 21 Boating/bushwacking call Steve 530-242-8707.
 June 24- SAG meeting 7:30 at Lava Beds, help plan SAR training.
 Contact Liz Wolff 530-964-3123 re: June/July.
 July 8 SAG meeting 7:30 at Lava Beds, multi-agency SAR training.
 July 18-22 2011 NSS Convention in Glenwood Springs, Colorado.
 Aug 26 SAG meeting 7:30 at Wolff's in McCloud 530-964-3123.
 Sept 2-5 Speleocamp pack train, contact Melanie 530-842-9714.

MAPS TO MEETINGS



MAY 20



JUNE 24 and JULY 8

SAG RAG SUMMARY By Bighorn Broeckel

"We have some good local grotto material ready about cleanup trips and lava tubing ... " That's what was said last time, and with the KMCTF Report all done, there is no holding it back now. We have Pluto's Cave clean-up reports and a copy of the certificate Klamath National Forest awarded us for our work over the years to help keep that big, old tube looking better. Rudi Hendricks fills us in on some more Pluto's lore, pushing at the end of the terminal crawlway. More grotto trips to other lava caves are added as well, including a report on a new-to-us cavern we mapped just a few days ago – Big Waitangi. That pretty much wraps up the official SAG field activity throughout the cold weather season. There were plenty of snowstorms this time around, but that doesn't stop this grotto, still crazy after all these years. Watch for more limestone caves featured in the next SAG RAG, and show up at the May meeting at Steve Hobson's in Redding if you want to be involved with these caves.

BB

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING

March 25, 2011

The meeting was called to order at 8:12 pm in the home of Dave Smith in Chico, CA. Present: Jim and Liz Wolff, Bill Broeckel, Steve Hobson, Dave Smith, and Melanie Jackson.

Secretary's Report: accepted as read.

Treasurer's Report: Balance \$2,203.72

Website & E-SAG RAG: Eleven people have asked to get the SAG RAG in the electronic form. It was suggested that the e-version could be expanded and have more content and pictures available than the mailed version. Robert Nixon wants to be done with SAG Website duties. Dave Smith will continue as web master.

SAG RAG: Next Rag will have a report on the Pluto's Cave Cleanup with pictures of the cleanup and certificate given to the grotto.

The expanded SAG RAG would be the version sent to the NSS Library.

Correspondence: KNF sent posters (with black & white pictures) to us about WNS that they would like to have placed at Pluto's Cave. They are very basic about what to do if you see bats.

We have received a DVD on WNS from the Western Region. It hasn't been viewed by any grotto members at this time. There have been discussions on the NSS West and KMTCF site about how WNS should or should not be handled.

There was a Region 2 Colorado order to close caves, but some may be open during the NSS Convention.

Old Business: The grotto may be able to have a trip to the Weller Preserve (Rippled Cave) the second or third Saturday in June. We are waiting to hear from Marianne Russo. It depends on what date there will be a rescue training there. Sam Baxter was not present so there is no news about business cards for the grotto at this time.

Charmaine Legge submitted an address for a place that does cards. It is a website that will be shared with Sam.

The grotto's checking account has been changed to Scott Valley Bank and Steve has collected necessary information from the grotto officers that will be authorized signatories on the account: Steve Hobson, Elizabeth Wolff, and Melanie Jackson.

New Business: Liz had a meeting March 18, 2011 with KNF geologists Juan de la Fuente and Angie Bell in Yreka. We reviewed her notes from the meeting and she said it was very productive. Topics included Sand Cave gates, Significant Caves list, WNS, Cooperation opportunities for 2011, and cave management.

Trip Reports: Wayne and Melanie did a surface survey from the entrance of Pluto's Cave (using the original map). They followed a compass heading a specified distance and came to within a 100 feet or less of the sink hole that was investigated on a previous grotto trip surface survey. It was suggested that it would be good to have cavers inside Pluto's at the tight spot that air blows on the crawl with FRS radios and whistles or an air horn to see if cavers at the sink could hear them on the radios or with loud noise that the horn would make. This may or may not be a connection.

Steve Hobson looked into Melvin Cave on a rainy day and also ridge walked looking for the Crack of Doom Cave. He did not find the Crack

It was moved that the meeting be adjourned at 9:27 pm.

Melanie Jackson
Secretary, Shasta Area Grotto

MJ

PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP

Shasta Area Grotto: February 26, 2011

Notes by Juan de la Fuente

Participants

SAG members included Liz Wolff (Chairperson), Bill Broeckel, Steve Hobson, Rudi Hendricks, Sam Baxter, Amber Kellar, Arley Kisling, Dave Smith, Robert Nixon, and Jed Medin, and Juan de la Fuente from the Forest Service. (One of the SAG members was a retired Forest Service Helitack person from the Shasta Trinity),

Actions

I presented the Shasta Area Grotto with a Certificate of Appreciation for their cleanup of Pluto's Cave in 2010 (long overdue) from KNF Forest Supervisor, Patty Grantham. The Grotto was very appreciative and looks forward to cooperating with KNF in 2011.

The group carried buckets (Photos 2, 3,8) into the cave and retrieved trash, which included aluminum beer and soda cans, cigarette butts, broken glass, pieces of plastic, beer bottles, plastic wrappers, and firewood people had taken in to build bonfires in the cave. There were several stone-lined fire hearths which appeared to be new (less than a year old), and these were dismantled. One large garbage can full of trash was taken out of the cave (less than in previous years), and 3 fire pits were dismantled under the second to last skylight.

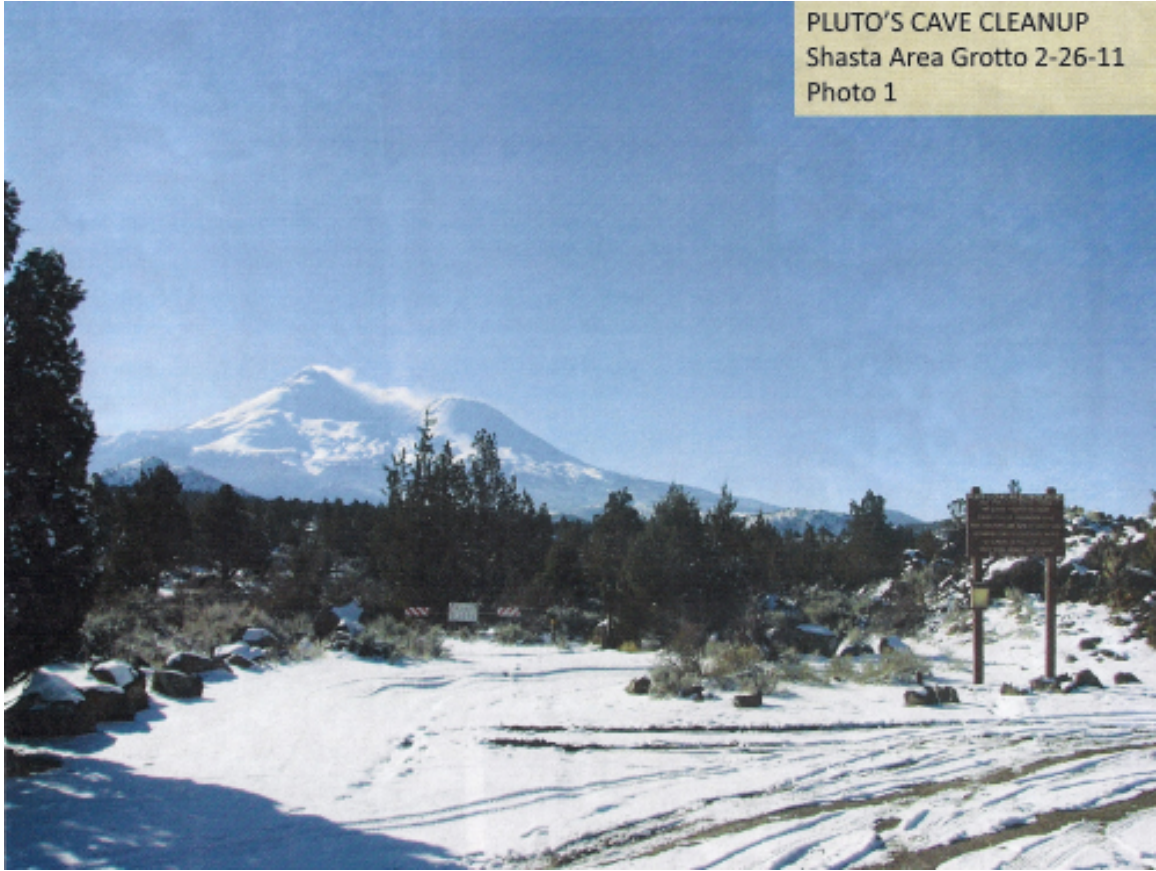
Bill Broeckel gave me photos of the damaged gates at Sand Cave, and two new cave maps from Marble Valley. Bill will be submitting formal nomination forms for these caves in March (Significant Cave Nominations).

Observations

The cave appeared had less trash than I'd seen in previous years, and our sweep was able to pick up all visible trash, including beer cans tossed under boulders. There was a green steel post in one of the skylights to the cave which had been tossed in from above (Photo 8). It appeared to be one of the posts which supported signs at each of the skylights. It was really nice on the walk back out of the cave to see **no trash at all**. Unfortunately, there appeared to be some new graffiti in the segment of the cave which has the skylights. It was in fluorescent pink/orange (Photo 7). The Forest needs to take a new photographic inventory to check against that done by John Hitchcock about 10 years ago (District Archaeology files?), and get a sense for the amount added during that time.

At the trailhead, the signs were in good order, there were handouts in the ROG dispenser (Photo 2), there was no trash, and the picnic table was clean. Very good.

Continued on page 6



PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 1



PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 2



PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 3



PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 4

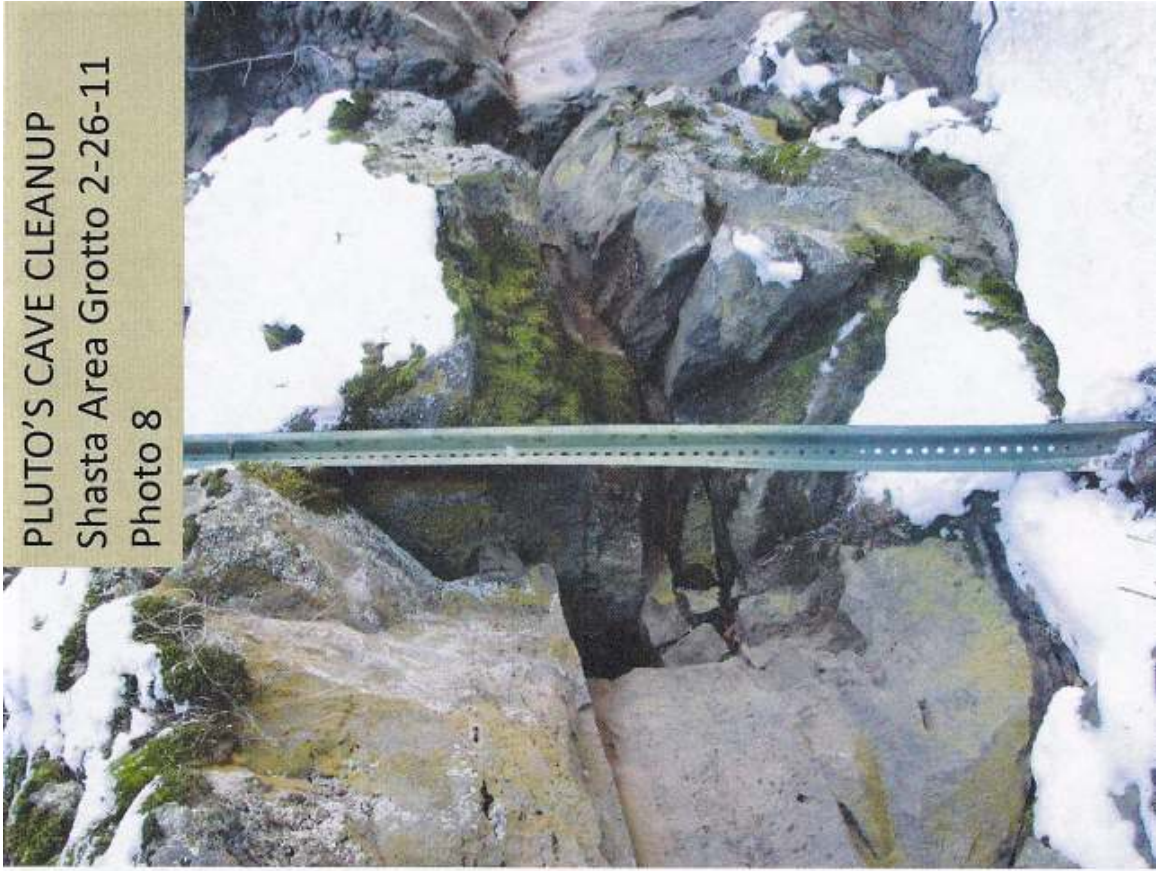


PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 5



PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 6





PLUTO'S CAVE CLEANUP
Shasta Area Grotto 2-26-11
Photo 8



Miscellaneous

There was about 3 inches of snow on the ground (Photo 1), bright sunshine, and cold.

Two other groups of visitors entered the cave this morning, two young men and a young woman went in just before we did, and another young man and woman went in about 11:30 am. There were tracks in the snow, indicating that other visitors had been there in the past few days.

We discussed the White Nose Syndrome affecting bats, and that Pluto's cave serves as a hibernaculum for some species of bats.

Liz Wolff is eager to meet with Angie Bell and Jim Stout, and me, in the near future to discuss opportunities for cooperation in 2011. I told her that I'd talk to Angie and Jim, see about dates to meet at Yreka, MacDoel, or at Pluto's Cave and discuss this. **JDLF**



United States
Department of Agriculture

Certificate of Appreciation

Awarded to

Shasta Area Grotto

In recognition of your clean-up of Pluto's Cave,
Klamath National Forest, on February 27, 2010.
Thank you for your stewardship.

Date **March 22, 2010**

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Patricia A. Grantham".

PATRICIA A. GRANTHAM
Forest Supervisor

Pluto's Cave Trip Report by Rudi

Sunday January 30th

On Sunday, after the trip with the grotto to look for a possible rear entrance to Pluto's Cave, some of us reconvened on A 12 for a quick trip through Sand cave, and a first time trip to Pluto's for Jed Medin, Chris Kennedy, and their compadre Ryan.

At the Sand / Barnum caves parking area, I met up with Liz and Jim Wolf, Bill Broeckel, and the crew from Weaverville, Chris, Jed, and Ryan. I brought Ben Homer with me on the trip, who had scouted for Pluto's back entrance with us the day before. Instead of rappelling into 10-15 foot pit, we used a rigid ladder for easier access, and quick entry and exit. This was nice because we had a lot of caving to do in the day. After we were in the pit entrance, we proceeded to inspect damage to the cave gates, and determined that both sides of the Sand cave gates had been breached, and were currently accessible. Then we used the key to access the West side of the cave.

I immediately noticed that this lava tube was taller than it was wide, and had quite a bit of breakdown in it. The ground was covered in uneven rocks of all sizes and shapes, and is not exactly the easiest cave to walk around in. You must be watching your foot steps the whole time, and pause to look around, or you could easily stumble and injure yourself. As we proceeded down the cave, it began to drop. It does this I think 3 times, all of which are not steep or dangerous drops, just sudden gradual drops in the cave. At these intervals, it seems the whole cave drops, not just the floor or ceiling. At the back of the cave, the floor was a very fine sand. Here, Bill showed me the oldest marks in the cave, he said were possibly by one of the road builders who discovered the cave, when the ceiling broke open, and equipment fell in. There is a very short crawl in the very back of the cave.

After we returned to the entrance pit, we decided to go check out the East side of the cave, which is considerably shorter. Instead of opening the gate with the key, we slid in through the breached gate, since it was fairly easy. The floor here was very clear and the cave ended around a few bends, filled with sand.

At this time Liz, Jim and Bill headed back to town. While Chris, Jed and Ryan went for a quick tour through Windy Cave, Ben and I went looking again for Waitangi cave, but didn't have any luck. We met back up, and headed over to Pluto's cave. After a brief lunch and we gathered our supplies and hiked to the entrance.

We quickly passed through the first few sections of the cave, with a brief stop at the skylight, and then to the final entrance to the main part of the cave. From here the cave floor becomes a bit more treacherous, with large breakdown blocks pretty much everywhere. We carefully walked through the large passage, heading to our destination, the belly crawl. On the way, we stopped and looked in several breakdown holes, and took the under passage at the large breakdown pile, most of the way to the end of the large tunnel portion of the cave.

When we reached the end of the large passage and the beginning of the belly crawl, we all stopped to put on our dust masks, knee pads and elbow pads if you had them. We also organized our bags so only to take the equipment that was necessary for this part of the cave. Chris Kennedy led the way into the crawl, followed by Ryan, then Jed, and Ben Homer. I swept. Instead of all stopping in the first room we call the recliner, we met up at the larger second room. From here I took the lead through Yoga hall, and all the way into rat poop village. Three trips earlier, this was as far as I had gone in the crawl.

We reconvened here and had sips of water, adjusted our pads and masks, and talked about the tight areas to come, and about not making any excess dust. We also decided to have Jed, our largest member, in between the rest of us, in case he needed help into, or getting pulled back out of the two tight spots to come. I have to say I was a bit surprised to see him make it though the first tight spot, we call the door and window, but after he did, I knew most any other determined caver probably could do it now, as he plowed the hole open considerably. Thanks Jed!!!

Not far at all after the first squeeze is the second one, we call the "down-up". In order to get through here you have to go over two boulders, down to the tight spot (which I had dug out in the last trip while upside-down in the hole) and back up the rocky hill on the other side Not easy. Chris found that if you go on your back, head first, it's a bit easier to get through. Jed, the 3rd traveler though the down-up got stuck. I jumped down into the spot from the far side, and used our digging tool (plastic 2 liter pitcher) to try to make the spot big enough for him. After about 30 scoops, and 10 minutes of Jed waiting patiently head first, he made it though the enlarged hole. WHOOO HOOO!!!! From here we all made it to the back double domes easily.

Here, you can stand up, heck you could have a party. There is plenty of room to stretch and remember what its like to stand up after an hour of not doing so. We took some pictures, and had some water and bars. Then we decided to take a look at the back of the sand crawl, on the floor on the left side of the double domes. One at a time we swam through the sand, making it a little bigger each time. We determined that there is no where to go in the sand crawl, passed the short dome in the rear, unless considerable digging was undertaken.

After we all got a second wind, we proceeded back out of the belly crawl. I led, and the rest followed. It was an easy trip back out, as everyone was in good shape, and good spirits. We took some more video and pics on the way back out. Once we reached the end of the crawl, and were back in the main tube, we removed our pads and hiked out.

I love Pluto's cave, as it is the cave that got me hooked. Also, it's a place you can take just about anyone, you can't really damage, and it provides a varied cave experience. The main cave will impress just about anyone, and the belly crawl will give you an idea on someone's caving abilities, and or fears. It also provides a few great places to challenge yourself. Thanks Pluto!

RH



Low spots near the bitter end of Pluto's. Photos by Chris Kennedy/Jed Medin.



Top: Windy Cave perhaps? Bottom: Room in Pluto's crawlway. Photos by Kennedy/Medin

BIG WAITANGI EXPEDITION By B. Broeckel

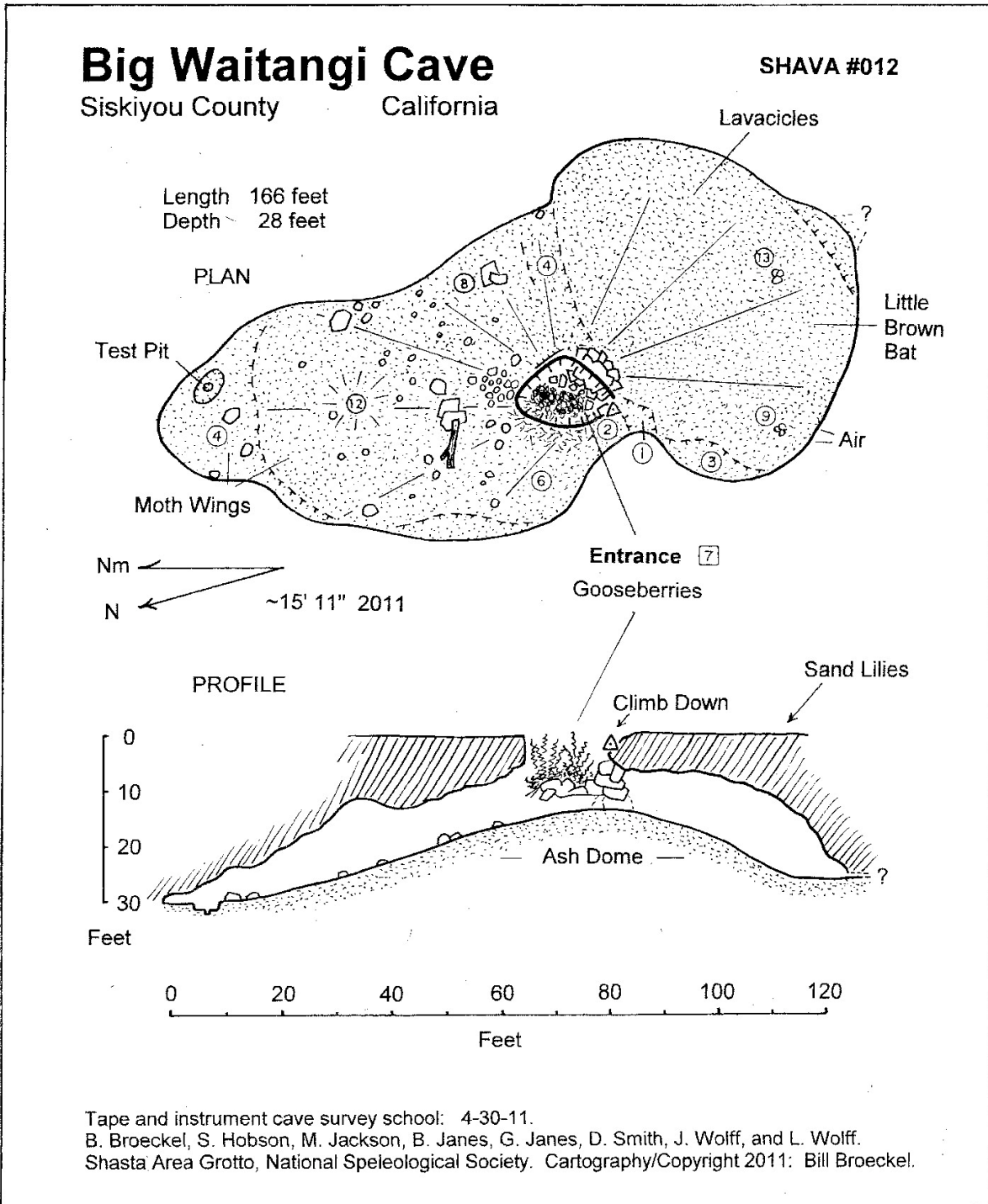
The day after the April grotto meeting at Wolff's, eight cavers met at the pre-arranged location. Robert Nixon happened to be driving by, saw us, and stopped to say "Hi" and make a cameo appearance. He also dropped off some pictures for the newsletter (see Pluto's Cave Cover picture). Next we drove out to the trailhead and started walking. However, there wasn't really any trail. We just kind of spread out and went crashing through the pygmy manzanita, ridgewalking as we went. The main thing was to keep track of Liz Wolff, as she had the GPS guiding us to the entrance we were aiming for. Big Waitangi is a new cave in an area where new caves don't show up very often, maybe once every ten years. Rudi Hendricks brought it to our attention after one of his friends recently discovered it.

Imagine a fairly large underground chamber, 100-ft long, 50-ft wide, and 20-ft high. Pop a 10-ft hole through the roof, then partially fill up the space with a freight-load of volcanic ash. That's Big Waitangi. Rudi also brought us the cave name, based on its general proximity to Waitangi Cave, which was named as such because it was surveyed on Waitangi Day, ten years ago. Waitangi Day is a Kiwi holiday commemorating Feb. 6, 1840, the day Captain William Hobson signed a treaty with the Maori Polynesian leaders establishing British sovereignty over New Zealand, and granting the native people the protection of the Queen of England. That is something us Yankees kind of gave up with our little rebellion back in 1776.

Anyway, the "Cave! Cave!" call went out, and all eight expeditioners soon gravitated to the entrance. Just as you might have expected, this one was way out there in the bushes. The skylight sinkhole entrance looked good, and there was a place to climb down into the cave fairly easily. Some gooseberry plants (*Ribes*) were growing in the sinkhole. Also, some white sand lilies (*Leukocrinum montanum*) were blooming not too far away. These plants are recumbent and have long, narrow leaves. But it was now time to stop botanizing in the warm spring sun, and to hop into the cave where survey school was just getting underway.

We had three people on book, including Steve Hobson and Brian Janes. Liz Wolff and Melanie Jackson did instruments and could take disto shots as well. Dave Smith and Gwen Janes ran tape, while Jim Wolff functioned as a rover and archeology consultant. As such he noted some surface scatter and a possible test pit dug in the ash floor near the north end of the cave. The survey dropped in to the east wall, then went clockwise around the cave, closing a loop within a foot or two. We found some holes in the wall blowing air, and a possible lead filled to the gills in ash. One solitary little brown bat (*Myotis lucifugus*) was day-roosting in the darker south end of the cave, where the ceiling was quite high. He stayed put even though we were doing survey school in the cave for hours.

Back outside, we ate a late lunch before heading back to the trailhead, and going home. I'm not sure if Big Waitangi is a lava tube or not, but it is definitely a lava cave, and just the right size and caliber for a survey school, with say, about eight cavers participating. Special thanks go to Rudi for letting us in on this cool cave. **BB**



Map: Big Waitangi Cave



Shasta Area Grotto field season 2011. Photo: B. Broeckel.

SAG RAG
2916 Deer Mdws. Rd.
Yreka CA 96097:

STAMP

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Note: Missing Pluto's clean-up photos on e-version only, pages 4a, 5a-5c.