

sag rag

33:4 July-Aug 2014



Chris Kennedy emerges from a crawlway, into the largest known room in Paul Gibson Cave 6-28-14

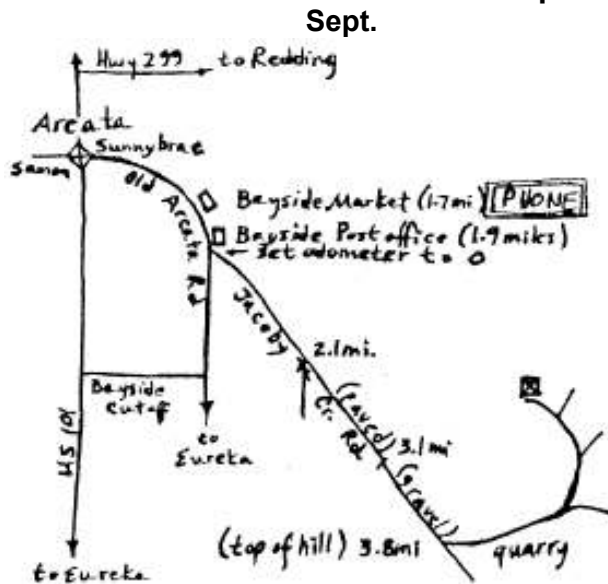
INSIDE - Paul Gibson, Balconies, and “The Comets”

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>>.

CAVER CALENDAR 2014

- Sep 26 SAG meeting at Fritzke's in Arcata 707-822-8566.
- Oct 17 SAG meeting at Melanie's in Yreka 530-842-9714.
[Changed: it will be at Steve's in McCloud - SAG Ed.]
Plan for SAR cave rescue training the following days.
- Dec 5 SAG meeting at Broeckels' in Yreka 530-842-3917.

Maps to Meetings



SAG RAG SUMMARY

By Bighorn Broeckel

There's not much caving to report from our end. With all these fires going off all over the place, we have just been hunkered down at our various posts. This Boles Fire in Weed was the worst so far, with communities going up in flames, with effects on SAG members. Hey, I saw Susan Hobson on television, going through burned down houses with her search dogs!

In August it was good to see Ray Miller speak on bats at the annual night-life nature walk at Barnum Cave. There was a crowd of 30-40 people again this year, another good turn-out for a great public educational event on behalf of caves, bats, preservation, conservation, etc. True value is gained in a ground swell of local support for management goals at gated caves such as Barnum.

This SAG RAG contains some spelean reports from earlier this summer caving season. Consider a run to the cool and smoke-free coast at the September meeting at Fritzke's. Also, we are looking forward to a great practice rescue scenario at Freudian Complex in October.

BB

SHASTA AREA GROTTO MEETING SATURDAY AUGUST 23, 2014

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 pm at Steve and Susan Hobson's home in McCloud.

Attendance: Sam Baxter, Mike & Barbara Stufflebeam, Bill & Judy Broeckel, Steve & Susan Hobson, Melanie Jackson, and Emmy Hall.

Minutes: accepted as is. Not read to the group.

Treasurer's Report: Balance \$1110.00 including Sam Baxter's dues for two years rec'd today.

Website: All is the same and is working well.

SAG RAG: The next issue will be out soon and will have the Paul Gibson Cave Report. As always articles and cave reports are appreciated.

SAG Calendar:

- September 26-28 is a coastal meeting at Mark Fritzke's.
- October 17 Steve's in McCloud.
- October 18-19 SAG/SAR Cave Rescue training. Note this is over two day period. SAG will provide dinner on Saturday night and breakfast on Sunday morning. We need all the people we can get to help with this scenario. Adults and kids. Plan to be there.
- November no meeting due to Thanksgiving Holiday.
- December 5, at Broeckels' in Yreka Rescue training critique and officer nominations.

Old Business: Steve Hobson is looking for a new insurance person (his retired) to get us information about insuring a Trimble scanner for cave survey. October 18 – 19 will have a two day SAG/SAR cave rescue training scenario. We are allowing approximately a half day for SAR to mobilize and reach the search area. It will be in the Freudian Complex which encompasses 18,000 feet of cave passage. There will be hasty searches and thorough searching with multiple subjects. In and out maybe relatively easy, but searching will be tough to find the missing people. Patient management will also be important. We will search until 5:30 or 6 pm. The grotto approved money for food for dinner which will probably be Chili, cornbread, and maybe bread bowls. Breakfast will be bacon, eggs in burritos. We hope to finish by noon on Sunday.

New Business: None.

Trip Reports: July 26 Lake Level Cave trip. Steve H., Mike and Barbara S., Emmy H. Mike got to a lower level with a large room and tacky mud floor. The Stufflebeam Room he named it only to find that Melanie had scooped it some years before. While no survey was done, some significant changes in the cave were noted. Need a return trip this fall to do additional survey.

Wayne C. and Melanie J. took the Shasta Caverns tour in the middle of July. The blue school buses have been replaced with large air conditioned white buses. The tour has been changed and the area to the decorated room with the ladder leading up into the ceiling to the level of the original entrance has been taken out of the tour. The lake is so low that you have to walk another quarter of a mile to get to the boat that takes you across the lake. The parking area to the concession where you buy your tickets has been greatly expanded and improved.

Paul Gibson Cave Trip: Bill B. and Mike S. joined Joel D. and Mark F., Chris K. Saturday morning they hiked and set up camp. They went in the Sand Entrance and started re-surveying. Some exploring and digs were worked on. Sat. pm dinner and more survey. They talked about cave safety and conservation. Sunday all except Joel (who had to leave early) did a through trip. There is much to do in this cave and it would require another trip, but for multiple days. Perhaps in the Fall.

Jim & Liz W., & Steve H. took a through trip out and back to Freudian Complex and Double Barrel Cave in June.

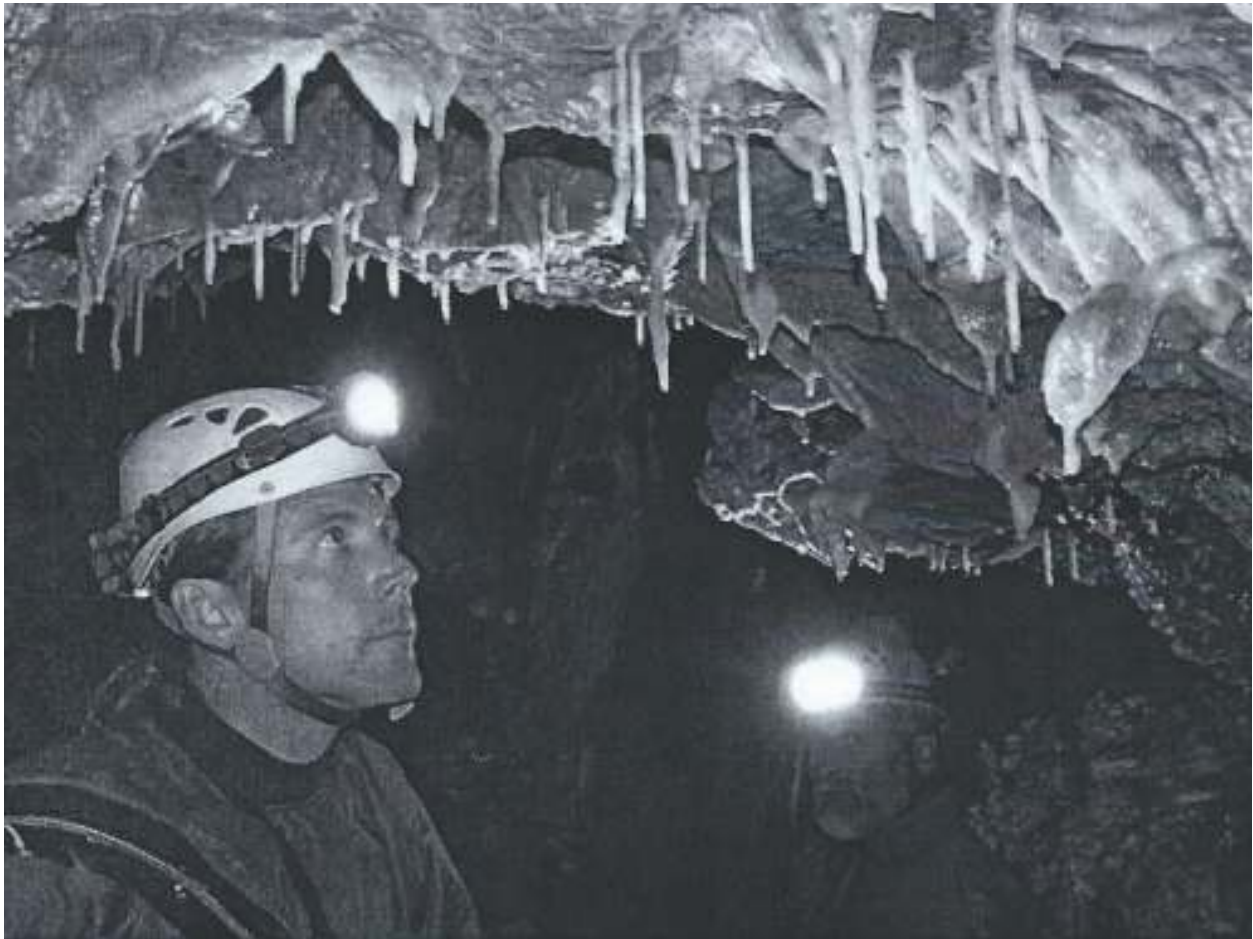
Mike and Barbara S. while on a back pack trip in Lassen Park came across large crack in the ground. It was very long and maybe 20+ ft. deep, but they had no gear to try and get into it to explore.

Bill & Judy B. surveyed some small caves in the Chimney Crater area just past the Comet Cave. They named them Kohoutek Cave and Hale Bopp Cave. When they were in San Luis Obispo at Pinnacles Nat'l Park on the west side through the Balconies Caves for fun they saw beautiful cliffs, but no condors.

Today Steve H., Emmy H., Mike & Barbara S., Sam B., & Melanie J., came together at Steve's home in McCloud at 10 am to practice self and small group rescue techniques. They covered medical stuff like duct tape steri-strips, plastic bag water irrigation and stabilizing injured joints etc. Next they covered rappelling on a munter hitch, getting out of a cave with only one prussic, and counter balances and 3:1 haul systems. Then they all went out to Adam's Homestead Cave to practice these things in a cave environment. While in the cave people took five minute cave explorations between turns. The five minutes turned into an hour. We all practiced getting Sam out to an exit and up a ladder without equipment. Sam supposedly had a broken ankle and we got him out and up the ladder with just people power. We also did some minor cave clean up (lots of beer cans) and Mike found a Geo Cache in the middle of one passage.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:10 pm.

MJ



Classic caver shot with Chris and Mark.

Chris Kennedy in Paul Gibson Cave – June 2014. Photo from Chris Kennedy.

Remote but with leads: A June 2014 return to Paul Gibson Cave

Joel Despain with help from Mark Fritzke

As Dick LaForge stretched the lead tape, he peered into a hole. "I am going to climb in and take a look." "Okay," said sketcher Bill Broeckel. Bill was doing the plan while I was drafting profiles and cross sections in a re-survey of known sections of Paul Gibson Cave. Mike Stufflebeam held the tape while Dick headed into the hole. Dick reported a rubble choke blocked a passage headed our direction and sure enough Bill and I could see his light emerging from rubble at our feet. In the small space Dick slowly turned around to have a better look. "Whoa! There is a pit behind me. It looks like it opens up." Bill and I quickly grabbed our copy of the old map. Sure enough, no pit or cave passage was shown in this area. Cool! Dick tried several ways to maneuver himself into the small hole to look down the drop, but to no avail. "I don't think it is climbable, but it is really hard to see."

It was time for a lunch break and we were soon joined by Chris Kennedy and Mark Fritzke returning from an unsuccessful effort to access the northern section of the cave, the 1976 Extension. Both Mark and Chris are excellent climbers and are shorter than Dick. Perhaps they could fit into the hole, see down the pit or maybe even climb it. After lunch we continued the upper level survey while Chris and Mark headed down the hole. Within minutes we heard excitement below as they had slid down the hole and found some unseen hand and footholds making for a surprisingly easy climb. At the bottom, a maze of streams, white stalactites and going passages! Once we had completed the upper level survey we joined Chris and Mark below. We had found a beautiful area, certainly not virgin, but very rarely visited and not on the map. This new mazy lower level has deep lakes, at least two streams, lots of stream polished white marble and quite a few speleothems including nice displays of white and nearly transparent soda straws. We were very pleased.

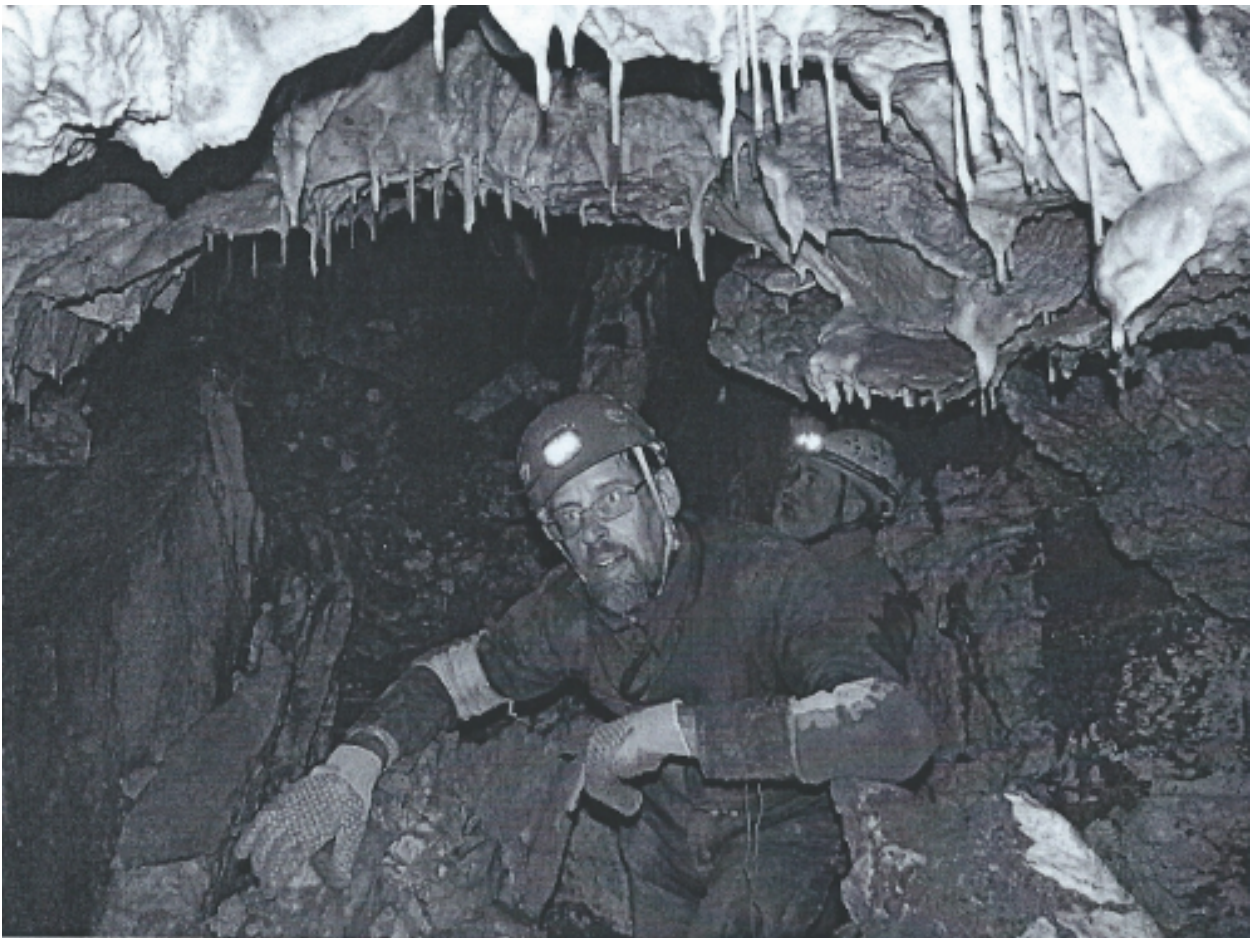
We had been planning this caving and backpacking trip for over a year. Chris and I had visited the cave in June 2013 with Guy and Geo Graening on a biological reconnaissance. We were intrigued by this very nice cave with a scenic entrance, prominent rooms, nice formations and beautiful streams. The old map of the cave was very well done, but there were leads on the map and some leads not on the map. It seemed there was work to do. But a significant forest fire ended our plans for later in the summer of 2013. The trailhead and entire area was closed to public access for months.

Access to the cave requires about a 5 mile walk on-trail and a steep, off-trail, mile and a half down 1500 feet to the cave. In 2013, the hike had been nasty due to very thick brush and vast numbers of downed logs. A 1998 fire had completely incinerated the area. With limited recreational dollars, Shasta-Trinity National Forest had not had the funds to maintain this remote trail, allowing brush to grow up around the dead conifers and many dead trees to fall. Heather Veerkamp and I had worked on the trail in July 2013 and made some progress, but still, the trail was not in good shape. But the new fire in late 2013 changed the picture entirely, almost completely burning away the brush and logs left behind by the previous burn. What a pleasant hike in 2014 compared to 2013!

We had camped along the trail in 2013 and then hiked to the cave with smaller packs for a day trip. But our 2014 trip organizer (me) was darn late. The rest of the crew gave up on me and toured the maze of Forest Service roads trying to find the trailhead. We finally all met up on the road to the trail, but it was late. Thus we camped at the trailhead and hit the trail early Saturday morning, hiking all the way to the cave with full packs by early afternoon. We were pleased to find enough good flat spots for sleeping along the stream near the cave entrance.

After the hot hike it was a relief to enter the cave and begin surveying. Soon we made the surprising discovery described above. Mark and Chris, besides gaining access into the new area, also found a way to crawl over and through a maze of logs to connect the insurgence entrance into the main part of the cave. This connection and entrance is also not on the original map and so provides us with more survey to complete.

On Sunday, I had to hit the road. Back home, we were in the middle of moving, so I was lucky to have made it at all this weekend. The rest of the crew toured the lower cave, most of which they had still not seen, and then they also began the long hike out. There is still a great deal to do in the cave and we look forward to a return in the fall of 2014. **JD&MF**



Dick LaForge in Paul Gibson Cave – June 2014. Photo by Chris Kennedy.



Dick LaForge works on close-ups in Paul Gibson Cave – June 2014.



Dick LaForge shoots downstream passage in Paul Gibson Cave.



Straws near boy scout patch job in Paul Gibson – June 2014.



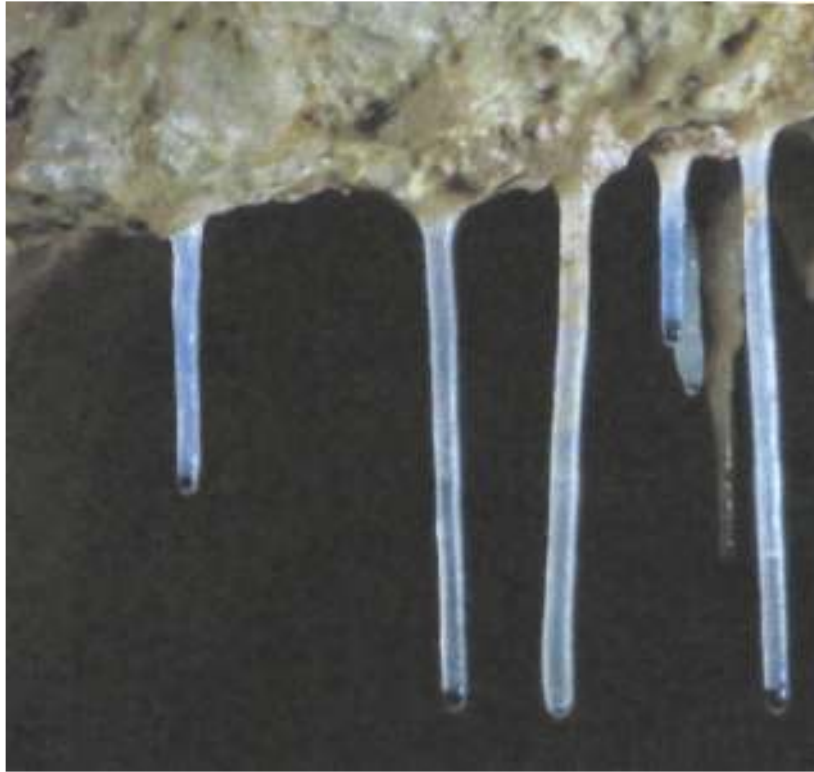
Downstream ceiling in Paul Gibson, prone to flooding – June 2014.



Paul Gibson entrance, note burnt trees – 6-28-14.



Dick LaForge can whisper butterflies – June 2014. Photo by Dick LaForge.



Paul Gibson straws – June 2014. Photo by Dick LaForge.



Sphinx Room icons in Paul Gibson Cave – June 2014.

COMET GROUP By B. Broeckel

Comet Cave is one of the better caves of those Judy and I surveyed last winter. That was the winter when it hardly snowed at all, except for the night of the December grotto meeting. Comet Cave cruises along at 5 – 6 thousand feet elevation, so in February it held a snowbank in the entrance and many icicles in the front half. By summer this had melted away, leaving a dry lava tube with very little breakdown.

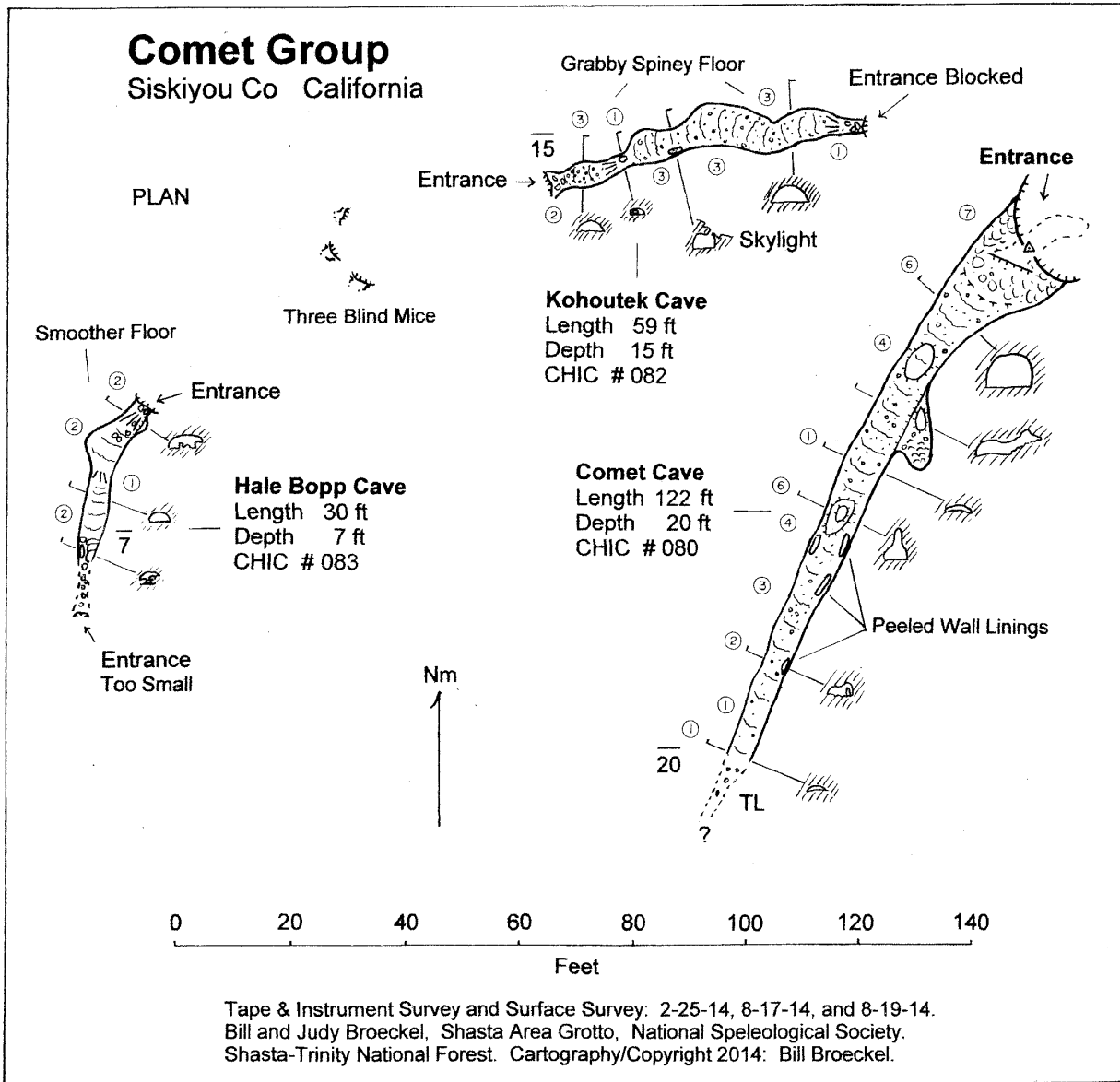
It starts as a walking passage, with a short lower level underneath the entrance. Downflow, the cave curves gradually to the left, and gets lower and lower, until finally it is too low. Some small domes and peeled wall linings add some interest. Total passage length is 122 feet. The cave was named for its comet-like shape.

In August we returned and added on a couple smaller caves that seem to be part of a meander off Comet Cave. The entrance to Kohoutek is at the downflow end of the tube. The passage looks sketchy, but once the “constriction with rock” is passed, it opens up quite nicely for a total of 59 feet. There is a smaller entrance at the upflow end, blocked with some rocks which could be removed easily if desired. The aa floor was prickly, but the cave had some other redeeming decorative values. The comet name is due to its proximity to Comet Cave. Kohoutek was a spectacular comet I can remember from when we were kids.

We were also able to pick up this little thirty-footer, Hale-Bopp Cave. It has a nice smooth floor. It's like Two Bit Cave. The entrance drops down over some loose rocks to a landing, and then the cave happily continues down a lava cascade to another landing. There the passage is abruptly blocked with a partial lava plug, over which an arm can be extended for a slightly longer survey shot. Light can be seen at a lower entrance a short distance beyond the plug, everything in that direction pretty much too small to pursue. Hale-Bopp is a comet name many of you remember, being relatively recent. **BB**



Judy Broeckel at Comet Cave entrance with snow bank – 2-25-14.



Map: Comet Cave, Hale Bopp Cave, Kohoutek Cave

BALCONIES CAVE – Bill & Judy's Summer Cave Trip By Broeckels

On January 10, 2013, President Obama signed a law establishing Pinnacles National Park. Pinnacles had served for many years as a National Monument, a popular off-season outdoorsy destination. It featured various sizes of monolithic outcrops that glowed orange in the sunsets, and spectacular trails coursing about the rocks and cliffs. The Monument became an enclave for climbers putting up innumerable routes on the sometimes crumbly and treacherous rhyolitic breccia. Where enormous blocks and boulders tumbled into deep chasms, talus caves over streambeds appeared. Trails were developed in two of the larger caves, and remain as popular attractions for Park visitors. Access is now controlled, and Bear Gulch Cave is often closed to protect bats. Balconies Cave, however, was open when we had a chance, so we went there.

The western entrance above Soledad offers the most convenient trailhead for Balconies Cave. This is now a gated day-use only area. Other improvements include a nice visitors' center, a paved surface road all the way to the start of the trail, and a \$10 entrance fee. The approach road climbs out of the Salinas River watershed and crosses a divide. So, once you get walking, the trail is actually going downstream along the West Fork Chalone Creek, tributary to the San Benito River in the next big valley to the east. You can't see this valley, because of the massive rocks just ahead. Balconies Cave occurs where the creek cuts through the Gabilan Range at Pinnacles Rocks. The Balconies Cliffs on the left, and Machete Ridge on the right, are extremely scenic and prominent. These biggest of the local rocks impose a formidable barrier, yet the stream line finds a way down through the cave to continue on its seasonal path.

So Balconies Cave has an upflow threshold on the west, and a downstream entrance on the east. Both entrances are gated, and both were open for guests on the day of our visit. Some signs said that the cave gets closed during hazardous flooding conditions. We had a fun time following the route through the cave. There were several duck-unders, and apparently the floods have washed out big chunks of the trail, with disappearing steps, sloping bare rock, slick footing, missing handrails, and whatnot. A main room down there gets 99% dark, so altogether this approximated a short wild cave experience during which we gladly deployed helmets and lights.

Even in August of a multi-year drought, some standing water persisted in this cave. The cave air was cool and refreshing on a summer's day. Resting in the cave portal at dusk, we saw one or two small bats flitting about. The day use hours here end at 8pm, but a unique gate on the road allows late hikers and climbers (and cavers) to leave the Park after hours. We were so enchanted that we later returned for two more Balconies hikes, to take in more of the play of light on the dramatic rocks. Pinnacles is outside our usual scope of investigations, but we were down south for a niece's wedding. The only other cave note from this trip would be the grottos underneath the summit boulders on Bishop's Peak, encumbered with discarded beverage containers and broad swaths of graffiti. We found the summit of the highest boulder to be inaccessible, though Mark and Chris would find a way. **BB**



Sign at west entrance to new National Park – 2014



Trail to Machete Ridge and Balconies Cave – 2014



Kohoutek Cave entrance. Elevation ~ 5774 – 8-17-14.

SAG RAG
2916 Deer Mdws Rd
Yreka CA 96097

STAMP

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