



Lakelevel speleothems – Jim Wolff plays in the mud – photo by Melanie Jackson

## INSIDE

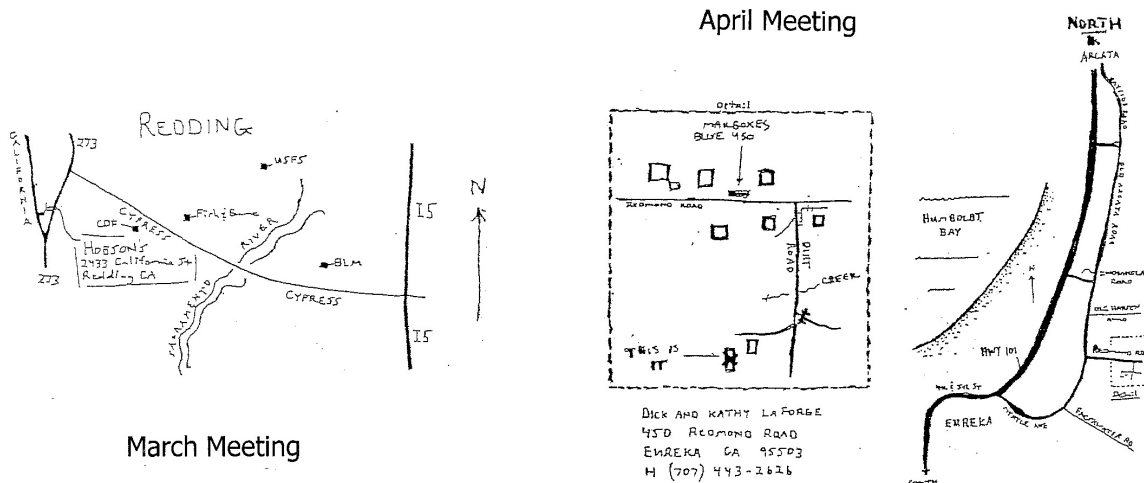
**TALES OF TWO TUBES  
LAKELEVEL UP OR DOWN  
FEBRUARY CAVE CLEAN-UP**

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 or <caverbill@live.com>. For more on SAG, check the web site at <<http://www.caves.org/grotto/sag>>.

## CAVERS CALENDAR 2010

March 26	SAG meeting at Hobson's in Redding 7:30 pm 530-242-8707
March 27	Grotto survey trip to Ancient Palace Cave big room – leader Steve Hobson
April 10	SAR/SAG rescue training at Pluto's Cave area 8:30 am, call Wolffs at 530-964-3123
April 24	SAG meeting (Sat) at LaForge's in Eureka, time TBA 707-443-2626
May 22-23	SAG weekend at Lava Beds, call Wolffs 530-964-3123
July 2	Marbles trip, call Melanie Jackson to reserve a pack animal 530-842-2558 (w)
Aug 2-6	2010 NSS Convention in Vermont, contact Ken Moore
Oct 8-10	SAG hosts Lava Beds Western Regional, call Wolffs 530-964-3123

## MAPS TO MEETINGS



## SUMMARY By Bill Broeckel

Two more lava caves have been mapped, one from Shasta County and one from Siskiyou County. They are both about the same length (~134'), and articles with maps have made their way into this issue. More timely is Jim Wolff's report on this winter's return trip to Lakelevel Cave, illustrated by some nice photos by Melanie Jackson. Also, the Grotto is back in action, kicking off another warm season of caving with that good old February tradition, the conservation weekend cave clean-up trip. We rounded up the usual suspect caves for this effort, the local Siskiyou County lava tubes that are heavily visited, and quick and easy to reach, even in February most of the time. This year a visit into Sand Cave was included. Four of us took the opportunity, the second time this cave has been opened this year. In caving, sometimes we have second chances. It happens. If you have not subscribed or re-subscribed to this newsletter, now is the time. In the next issue we have an article or two coming out on Ancient Palace Cave, and you won't want to miss this debut. Spring is in the air, and air is in the spring. Happy days and cool caves to all my fellow cavers out there.

BB

## MINUTES FROM SAG MEETING – January 22, 2010

**NOVEMBER SAG MEETING** 1-22-10 at Broeckels' in Yreka. Present: Steve Hobson, Jim & Liz Wolff, Dave Smith, Melanie Jackson, Arley Kisling, and Bill & Judy Broeckel.

Meeting called to order by Chairman Jim Wolff at 8:04pm. Treasurer reports total of \$387.22 after dues in and SAG RAG expenses out.

Committee Reports: Website: Dave adding later SAG photos to website. SAG RAG: Volume 28 in duplicate sent to both NSS Library and Cave Files.

Correspondence E-mails exchanged with WCC. Cave conservation is a focus. General meeting is Saturday in Redding. Field trip to follow on Sunday. WCC owns and manages Rippled Cave. Hobson points out that Shasta Caverns is for sale. It was moved and seconded to send the SAG mailing list to Marianne (WCC). The motion passed. Some other messages came in about the tragic death in Nutty Putty Cave (Utah), including the Nutty Putty manager's report.

Old Business: Western Regional 2010 Lava Beds, SAG to arrange Sunday morning breakfast. Linda and Virginia set to take charge of food and cooking. Saturday plans to include WCC dinner and fundraising, Schnapps tasting, and regional auction. Regional business meeting earlier on Saturday. Date is Columbus Day weekend, Oct. 8-10. Registration needed Friday and Saturday a.m. More discussion with Lava Beds needed for reserving a campground loop for Friday and Saturday nights, about Monument entry fee, and doing a half-day project for Lava Beds, probably Saturday. Arley Kisling and Liz Wolff are in charge of the project. Cave trips needed Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Bill Broeckel might coordinate cave trips.

New Business: SAG election results: Chair – Liz Wolff; Vice – Dave Smith, Sec – Hans Stein, Treas – Steve Hobson, Conservation – Jim Wolff, and Editor – Bill Broeckel.

Trip reports: Dave Smith went to beach caves in Marin County, involving sea lions and sharks. Steve Hobson has been active in Ancient Palace Cave, restoring original air flow patterns and bringing the big room back to life. Broeckel checked the Barnum gate and found the entrance littered with strange gourds.

Upcoming Meetings: Next meeting fourth Friday, 7:30 February 26, 2010 at Jim and Liz Wolff's in McCloud. Clean-up trip to follow at Pluto's Cave on Saturday, February 27. March meeting at Hobson's in Redding. April meeting at Melanie Jackson's house in Yreka (also an offer on the table for a coast meeting in April). May cave rescue training at Lava Beds. June campout in Lassen County. Early July with KMCTF, late July meeting in Chico maybe the third weekend.

Meeting adjourned: 9:32 pm. Respectfully submitted by Judy Broeckel.

**JB**



Lakelevel Cave panorama – photo by Melanie Jackson.

## PLUTO'S-SAND-BARNUM WORK DAY

by Bighorn Broeckel

This has become a regular February outing for SAG. This cave area remains accessible in the winter, and the caves seem to need the attention. This year the Grotto made another good showing. The Wolffs devised a number of objectives, and we had enough people to divide into several teams. I was on the Pluto's skylights team, along with Virginia Bobrow, and Vern & Linda Clift. We patrolled the first 1,000 feet of cave, pretty much the part with all the entrances and skylights. We picked up every bit of trash we could find. We busted up an illegal firepit, and hounded out a hidden stash of firewood. We moved all 25 pieces of prime-cut juniper out by the trail, and by the end of the day it was all gone from the cave. Everybody took a piece or two, even some people who were not part of our group. Some longer, thin kindling branches were randomly distributed around in the wild cherry grove in one of the sinks, as that appeared to be the original source of the fuel.

There were two Pluto's deep teams. Jim Wolff, Ed Bobrow, and Sam Baxter were the walking deep team. They performed trash patrol and pick-up in the distal dark 1,000 feet of the cave. They reported about the usual population of hibernating bats in the usual locations, still amazing in how well they seem to tolerate the extremely frequent human visitation we see at this developed cave. Wayne Cedidla and Melanie Jackson made up the other team. They were the crawling deep team, and they took on the 200 foot terminal scoot, removing garbage and checking for changes. This was not an easy task, as it is enough trouble just getting yourself by the corners and through the tight spots, and Wayne and Melanie deserve credit for accomplishing this work.

The concrete team stayed on the surface. First, they reinforced and built on last year's work at the Sand Cave barriers, working to prevent the road run-off from pouring into the cave. Also, they did trash patrol in the entrance areas, and came over to Pluto's and did more surface clean-up around the skylights. There is actually a short trail that allows hikers to view skylights from above. Liz Wolff, Dave Smith, Steve Hobson, and Arley Kisling made up the concrete team. Total participation for the event was 13 people, with some material support from the Forest Service and personally from Steve Hobson.

After luncheon at the Pluto's picnic table, we went over to Sand Cave, and the pit was rigged with a cable ladder. The gates were opened, and we formed a fifth extra-credit team and made a clean sweep of the cave. Bill Broeckel, Wayne Cedidla, Melanie Jackson, and Dave Smith all took advantage of another chance to see this closed cave, and also managed to find some more litter, cans, and broken glass for removal. At the upper end, Wayne spotted a lurking skunk ducking into a cleft in the rocks. The skunk probably has his own little entrance up in there. No bats were seen in this warm cave. However, some spring and summer use has been noted, and the cave is kept closed on behalf of the bats and to prevent further vandalism.

**BB**





Dick LaForge scores a discarded can on last year's Pluto Cave clean-up.



Double-score! It had some dregs. Just kidding. Photos by B. Broeckel 2-21-09.

## LAKELEVEL UP OR DOWN?

by Jim Wolff

After a last minute change of plans for meeting time, four hearty (and elderly – me!) SAG cavers met at the marina Saturday the 13th of February, and set sail for Lakelevel Cave. Our plans were to check the water level in the cave, and a few other things I might mention later... On the way over to the cave, Steve Hobson and his faithful dog Roscoe, plus other real cavers Melanie Jackson, Wayne Cedidla and Jim Wolff, all kept their eyes out for floating debris. Often the stuff was arranged in rafts, so that it was easy to spot and avoid. But several times sudden changes in course were needed as things came into view all too soon!

Once at the cave, Steve quickly rigged the ladder and the belay rope, and we started down the grimy slot of the Keyhole, which is easy to do with gravity helping and on belay. So after a couple climb-downs and tight spots, we were in a pretty big room where passages and ledges went everywhere with the occasional deep pools of water. We later figured that the cave was flooded below this level, since we hadn't reached some easy to spot areas of the cave, and we weren't seeing it. I had been in this cave at least three previous times, so I speak with some experience. According to Steve, the lake outside the cave was rising about a foot a day, plus the steady rainy period affected the cave's water level, very likely!

Anyway, once in this largish room, we quite naturally headed in all directions, all at once. I, for one, wanted to locate a certain speleothem. I remembered seeing it when the cave was at a much lower water level, where there are at least two much bigger rooms below the water. I've seen them myself. And although we didn't see too much more on this trip, there will be more recon trips to do, as well as surveying this mess! Profiles, cross-sections will be needed galore! Whatta maze!



Wolff and Hobson somewhere in Lakelevel – photo by Melanie Jackson.

One more sinkhole was found on the surface over the 20+ years that we have known of this cave. In the upper areas that rarely get flooded, we noted several spots where breakdown blocks have fresh rock scars, where (we think) earthquakes have moved them enough to fall or grind on neighbors. Dripstone tells the same story, where soda straws grew in numbers at an angle, then things shifted around, and PRESTO, all the straws started growing at another angle. We need a geologist-type to confirm this.

Photo-monitoring was one way to spend the FS cave management money for 2010. Remember, after all, "they" are (still) wanting to raise the water by 20' in the lake so that will wipe everything out in most of the cave. Changes in Lakelevel can happen each year with the raising and lowering of the lake outside and I believe we (I have) seen enough to be very wary moving around in the lower reaches. As I remember years ago, the floor of a 12-15 ft diam. room settled suddenly on us. We gotta respect places where each year water supported the roofs of these rooms! There will be even much more to do in the cave in the future. Then there's those two big leads in the entrance complex and the surface survey to all the sinkholes that lie over the cave.

I know Steve led some Forest Service employees into the cave the day before we went in, where they used just a rope to get in and out. I guess some of the visitors had fun getting up and out the Keyhole, at the end of their trip. This time of year the cave is real slippery, slimy, WET, and cold!! I was glad to be using my PVC suit as I stayed pretty dry and warm. I'm going to have to patch the butt of the suit, however. A new hole has appeared! Faithful ol' Roscoe was waiting at the entrance, watching over the rope and ladder, and wanting the first muddy caver topside to play fetch with his new water-toy! Everyone got out alive, shucked off our muddy gear, and made it back to the marina just before dark. Thanks Steve, it was a great trip!!

**JW**



Wayne and Roscoe near Lakelevel – photo by Melanie Jackson.



## AIRY ICE CAVE by Bighorn Broeckel

On Sep. 15, 2009, I met up with the Wolffs and we zoomed out to lava land. Time was limited, so we picked out a convenient cave that has somehow escaped survey all these years. It was actually noted decades ago by the illustrious Peter Bosted. Recent brush-thinning activity revealed the cave once again. I, for one, was happy for the chance to be part of the survey team on a “Bosted cave”. That doesn’t happen every day.

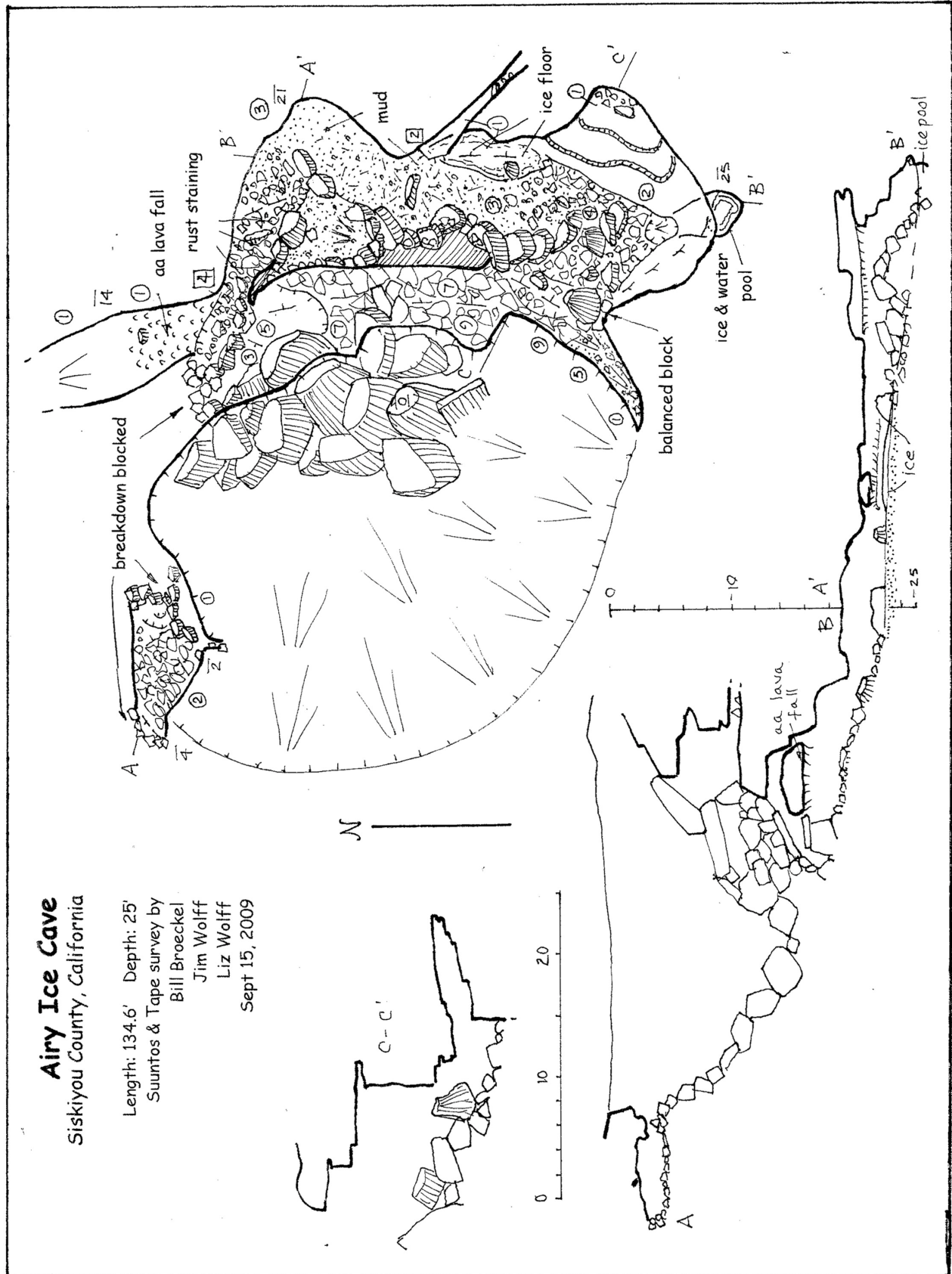
The cave is a modest one. The entrance looks like a great sinkhole into a big lava tube, and even emits cold air. The “big lava tube” never transpires, but there is some passage around some breakdown blocks. A few very small lava tubes radiate off of ledges, but were too tiny to pursue. An ice floor was traversed. Most significantly, a pool of ice and water was observed within the reach of daylight. Chipmunks and birds took turns having drinks of water even as we completed a grand survey loop around the cave. With no surface water available for miles around, a spot like this provides water for wildlife at exactly the time when it is needed the most. Bats probably visit at night, and I bet the place really comes alive at dawn and dusk.

Airy Ice looks like a dome fountain to me, and that ice and water could be perched, with a big lava tube down underneath somewhere. Certainly it can be added to a list of cave-related wildlife water sources for the area. Survey length was 135 feet. The through circle trip features white and rusty minerals, ice deposits, and ropey ceilings. Liz Wolff did the book and the map. Jim Wolff removed a rusted can and a rectangular hydraulic brake fluid container. This was a fun trip on a hot, sunny day, and the ice cave just felt good. **BB**



Entrance to Airy Ice Cave. Photo by B. Broeckel 9-15-09.





**Airy Ice Cave**  
 Siskiyou County, California

Length: 134.6' Depth: 25'  
 Suuntos & Tape survey by  
 Bill Broeckel  
 Jim Wolff  
 Liz Wolff  
 Sept 15, 2009

Map: Airy Ice Cave

## DROP BOX CAVE by Bighorn Broeckel

Here is another cave from my backlog bag, not too far back. The survey was completed on a nice day one year ago January. Judy Broeckel and Gladys Ramaekers joined me on a Shasta County lava tube push trip. We started off by eating box lunches on a stone picnic table in the sunshine, surrounded by patches of snow. The seats were so cold, additional insulation was required.

After luncheon, we set off tiptoeing around, trying to avoid the deepest snow. We ballet-danced right up into the volcanic dell that contained the cave. Once upon a time, I was up there with Liz Wolff, mindlessly rambling on about how there was probably some awesome, huge lava tube down under the valley. "More likely up on that rise," said Liz. Well, later on I went up there to take a look, and that's how Drop Box Cave was found. Not really awesome or huge, it is still a pretty cool cave. A pine tree grows up through a skylight near the main entrance. The upper level was surveyed in Jan. 2006. For three years the cave was left as a hanging survey. The area is rather brushy, and the cave contains a small pit. A short step ladder is suggested here, a typical Shasta County lava cave vertical technique, itself a rare occurrence.

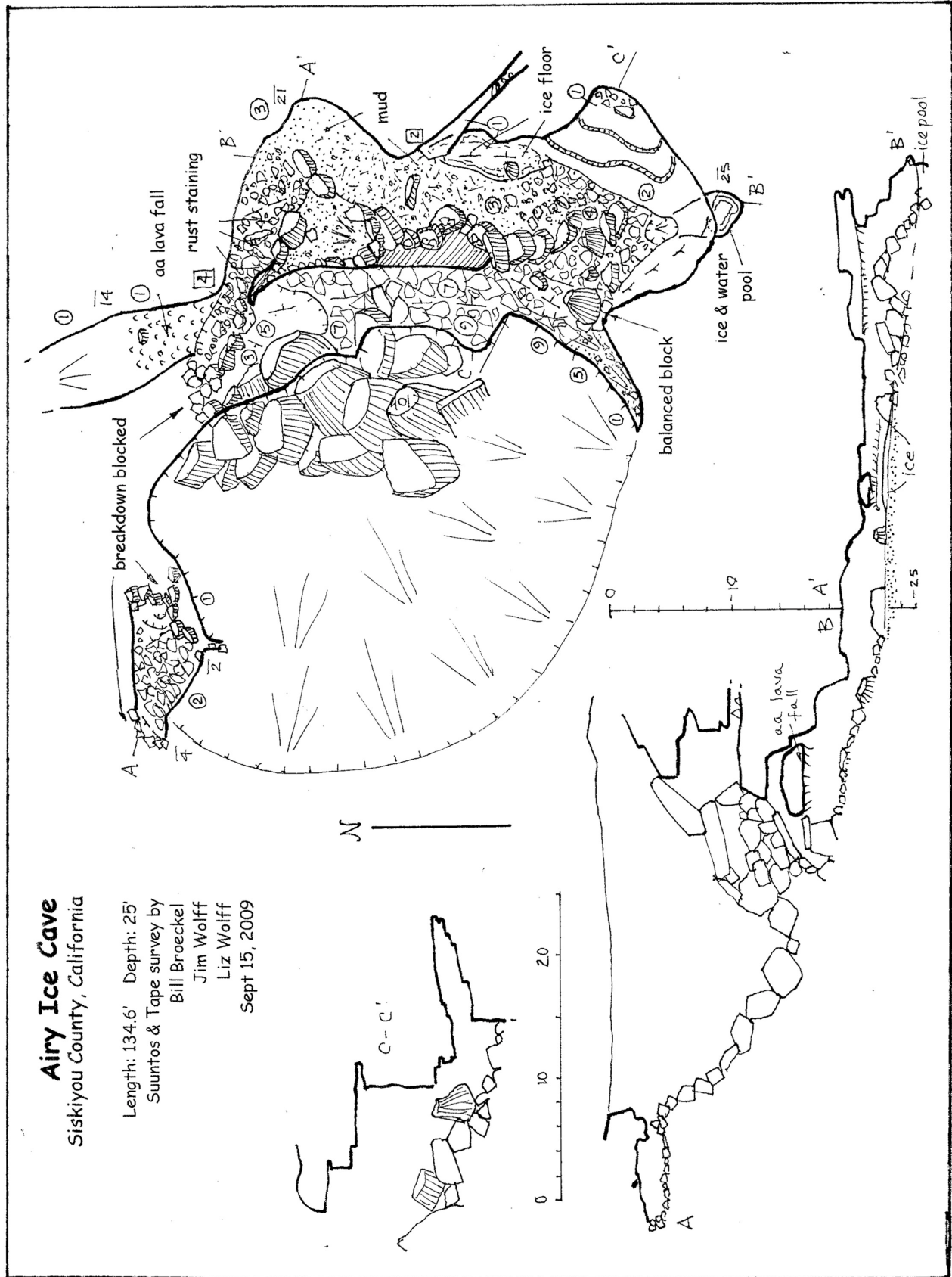
On Jan. 13, 2009, I was the step ladder. We were able to completely explore and survey the lower level, which was almost entirely free of breakdown. The upflow crawlway ended in a lava fill. The easy belly crawl downflow reached a small destination room, which also ended the passage as a lava seal. Total passage length for the whole cave was 138 feet. Enough endearing features were present to qualify for cute cave status. Gladys was a new caver. Lava caving in Shasta County is such that you can take a novice caver on a push trip, and it turns out OK. **BB**



Main Entrance to Drop Box Cave. Note tree in skylight. B. Broeckel 2-5-06.

**Airy Ice Cave**  
 Siskiyou County, California

Length: 134.6' Depth: 25'  
 Suuntos & Tape survey by  
 Bill Broeckel  
 Jim Wolff  
 Liz Wolff  
 Sept 15, 2009



Map: Drop Box Cave



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