



Heather Veerkamp poised to explore the depths of her recent find – January Cave.  
Photo by Dick LaForge.

**INSIDE: JANUARY CAVE** Special edition SAG RAG Newsletter account of newly discovered Northern California cave lavishly illustrated with photos by Dick LaForge and Heather Veerkamp.





Great to see Mark Fritzke back in action on trek to January Cave. Photo by Dick LaForge.



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Joel Despain at the January Cave entrance. Photo by Dick LaForge.

## SAG RAG Summary

By Bill Broeckel

SAG RAG has been sagging quite badly due to lazy editor. We might as well call this dinosaur publication Grand-dad's Kneepads or the Sloth Cloth. Anyway, what better way to start the new year of caving than with the celebration of a new cave. Plus, introducing our very own Shasta County cave snail (*Monadenia troglodytes* ssp. *wintu*), or "Wintu Sideband". May we always stay ready to share the love, the adventure, and the joy that is caving.

**BB**

## NEWS ITEM JANUARY CAVE

From Joel Despain's Report 1-25-23

### Novel Shasta County limestone cave brought to light

On 1-17-23, Heather Veerkamp and Joel Despain were looking for caves in Shasta County when they located a vertical cave entrance. As Joel reported, "We were out ridgewalking" some 1,000-ft above a road. "In a random open grassy slope, Heather noticed grass moving in front of a crack about three feet tall and four to six inches wide. I had walked right by it. We could see in looking down that it was much larger and we could go through and down."

Sometime later, "We returned with Mandy and James", reinforcements to help drop, explore, and enjoy the new-found pit. "Once down, we found a nice room 20 feet in diameter with multiple pits and side passages."

Then on 1-24-23, "We went back with Dick and Mark and James. Heather led the way down the main pit (about 70 feet) and Dick dropped a second pit. They go to the same place, the bottom of a tall rift passage." Mark and Heather then found a way into "a very nice lower level." The passage was "roomy" but it ended "after about 150 feet."

Joel continues the report, "We still have two pits to drop, and they seem to go to other places." A couple horizontal leads blowing air were also noted. "I would guess that the cave maybe has 200 feet mapped now, and we will easily double that." The cave has been named January Cave. Congratulations to Heather and Joel, strong work with tangible results, in the finding and exploring of January Cave. Photos included here were from a great selection shared by Dick LaForge, except for the picture OF La Forge, taken by Heather Veerkamp. **BB**



Dick LaForge deep in January Cave. Photo by Heather Veerkamp.



OK, back to a drop in January Cave, following Heather to the unknown. Photo by Dick LaForge.





Wow, the cave is getting more serious down here. Photo by Dick LaForge.





Joel Despain on survey in January Cave. Photo by Dick LaForge.



Mark Fritzke on survey in January Cave. Photo by Dick LaForge.



## Quick January Cave Update

### Joel Despain

Since the initial discovery of January Cave we have made a few return trips. On the first trips we tracked some mud around. So, right *off* the bat we got that cleaned up with James Newell doing most of that work. From the complex entrance room there are two horizontal passages and four pits that continue. One pit is the largest and goes down 65 feet to the cave's first lower level. One pit is blind but has good air through breakdown and one more lead to check in a parallel rift. Another pit is blind and unpleasantly tight. One horizontal passage leads to a collapsed entrance back out to the surface. The other horizontal passage leads to the fourth pit that Dick LaForge dropped that also goes to the first lower level.

From the largest pit and the first lower level several passages takeoff. Mid-way down the pit and requiring some tricky rope work and climbing, Heather Veerkamp and Becca Rogers mapped a side passage that ended and checked another lead that reconnects. Down at the bottom, Heather pushed a lead down through breakdown with air. The breakdown ends and one gets back into bedrock, but the air is emerging from a tight, narrow rift.

A tight breakdown crawl from the first lower level leads to a spacious, but short passage/room about 150 feet long and generally 10 to 20 feet wide and 10 to four feet tall. It slopes downward and ends in a muddy choke and a loop. The elongated room is well decorated with lots of flowstone, stalactites and stalagmites. The floor is super delicate in many locations with large, complex and fragile popcorn growing on odd very fine grained clay deposits. We flagged a short trail here. From this passage the airflow emerges from a very tight crack under a ledge on the wall. When you stick your head over the crack, a blast of air hits you in the face and you can see that the crack immediately drops into a short pit and enlarges. Heather and Becca worked very hard to get through the tight spot with lots of hammering and drilling in an awkward location. Soon, as they tried to get through the hole, the sounds turned to groans, moans and profanity. I happily sketched away and worked on the map a few feet away in the bottom of the room. Finally Becca made it through. Heather's legs are just too long. Becca rappelled to the bottom to report a small room and a very narrow continuing passage. Heather plans to soon convene a women's SCAT, Small Caver Assault Team, to tackle the tight rift leads with strong air in the cave.

The cave is currently mapped at 756 feet and 100.4 feet deep, still with multiple leads. Heather is drafting the map and has drafted about half of the current survey so far. And we need some names for the cave so that it is easier to describe it.

For his MS thesis at Western Kentucky University with Pat Kambesis, Niles Lathrop is studying the sediments found in the caves of the McCloud Limestone. Joel and Heather collected a sample from January for Niles' project, and it is currently being analyzed in Kentucky.

**JD**



Happy Heather Veerkamp pushing leads in January Cave. Photo by Dick LaForge.



## CalPhotos Photo Database

### *Monadenia troglodytes ssp. wintu*; Wintu Sideband

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Photographer: Len Lindstrand III

ID: 0000 0000 0911 1937 (2011-09-20)

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*Monadenia troglodytes ssp.*  
*wintu*  
Wintu Sideband

#### INFORMATION PROVIDED WITH THE PHOTO

- **date of photo** Apr 25, 2011
- **location** South Gray Rocks (Hosselkuss) (Shasta County, California, US)
- **habitat** Limestone outcrops in hardwood-conifer forest.
- **photo category:** Animal - Invertebrate-Other

#### MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THIS ANIMAL

- **common names** Wintu Sideband (photographer)
- [View all photos in CalPhotos of \*Monadenia troglodytes ssp. wintu\*](#)
- [Check Google Images](#) for *Monadenia troglodytes ssp. wintu*

The photographer's identification *Monadenia troglodytes ssp. wintu* has not been reviewed. [Click here](#) to review or comment on the identification.

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LL III



End of the trail for (?) Wintu Sideband (land snail) shells in January Cave. Photo by Dick LaForge.

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**STAMP**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Pages 1-12	January Cave J. Despain, H. Veerkamp, D. LaForge
Page 3	Summary – Bill Broeckel
Page 11	Monadenia – L Lindstrand III

**TO:**