



Pluto's Cave Trailhead

Dave Smith 2021

**INSIDE: Feb and Mar minutes, plus a little Pluto history
And Part 1 of the Hawaiian Trip Report!**

The SAG RAG is published by the Shasta Area Grotto of the National Speleological Society. Grotto meetings are held at various sites or homes on the fourth Saturday of most months at 7:30 p.m. Meeting locations are announced in the SAG RAG, subject to changes by email. Membership dues are \$5 per year, due at the first of the year, and include SAG RAG subscription. Send dues to treasurer Melanie Jackson at 708 Yama St., Yreka CA 96097. Original material submitted for the SAG RAG, unless otherwise noted, is copyright to the SAG RAG. Within the caving community, such may be copied with credit given to the author and the SAG RAG. For use outside the cave community, please seek the permission of the author or editor first. Send material for publication, always welcomed for consideration, to Dave Smith, 321 Mesa Verde Ct., Chico, CA 95973 or <theotherdavesmith@gmail.com>.

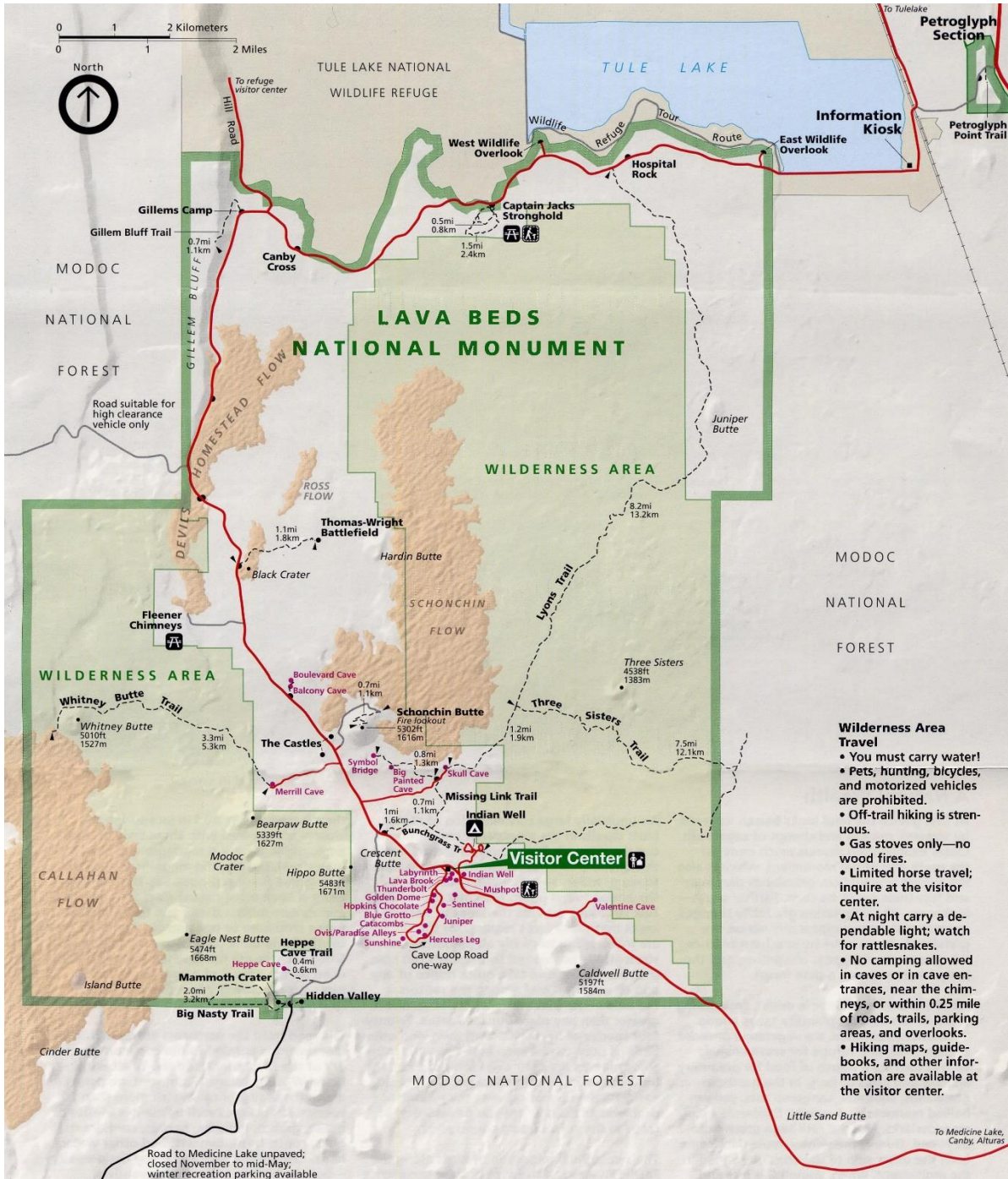
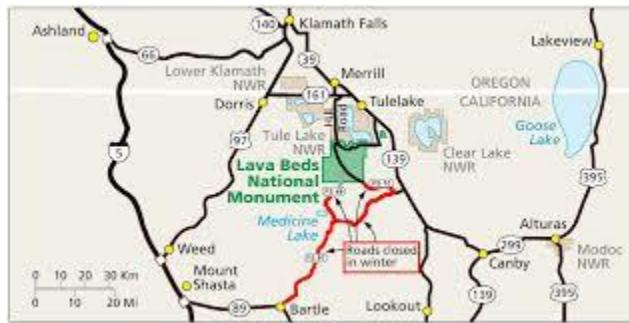
Upcoming SAG Meetings

Fri-Sun May 17-19 Lava Beds (campout). Meeting Sat 4:00 pm. The Park campground (Indian Wells, point **A**) and Research Center are within ½ mile of the Visitor Center (Map, next page). You will need to stop at the Visitor Center for cave permits, as WNS restrictions are in place. For cave access all of your cave gear needs to be clean. .

Fri-Sat June 28-29 Hat Creek Campground. Meeting 7:30 pm Sat.
(Campground is located on Hwys 44 and 89, 1 mile west of the town of Old Station, and 12 miles east of the NW entrance to Lassen Volcanic National Park.)

SAG RAG Summary By Dave Smith and Dave Mundt

We're staying on track with minutes thanks to CJM's excellent notes and presentation, but still need reports on cave work and activities, and photos with GPS locations and clear landmarks omitted / scratched out. Back in the old days we just had to drop notes like "1/2 mile west of where the Pierce's house used to be."



- Wilderness Area Travel**
- You must carry water!
 - Pets, hunting, bicycles, and motorized vehicles are prohibited.
 - Off-trail hiking is strenuous.
 - Gas stoves only—no wood fires.
 - Limited horse travel; inquire at the visitor center.
 - At night carry a dependable light; watch for rattlesnakes.
 - No camping allowed in caves or in cave entrances, near the chimneys, or within 0.25 mile of roads, trails, parking areas, and overlooks.
 - Hiking maps, guidebooks, and other information are available at the visitor center.

February 24, 2024 Shasta Area Grotto Meeting

Present: CJ and Kit McKinley, Liz and Jim Wolff, Melanie Jackson, Steve Hobson, Dave Smith, Logan Hellein, Daniel Hewitt

Meeting was called to order at 18:45 by Steve Hobson, Chairman at the Wolff's house in McCloud.

Minutes of the January Meeting were accepted as read.

Treasurer's report shows a bank balance of \$485.48 and petty cash of \$116 for a total of \$601.48.

Steve discussed having business cards available at the Shasta Caverns so that interested people can contact the grotto for additional caving opportunities. He has given a stack of cards to Dave Mundt for display, but the cards need to include our NSS web page and our Facebook page. CJM has agreed to make stickers with the information on them so that they can be put onto the back of the cards. She will get those to Dave at the next meeting.

CJM wanted to post dates for some of the grotto trips this year to the Facebook page in hopes of getting more people to come if they are given dates for planning. This was approved by the group with the exception of the Marbles trip in August. Steve requested that this post remain on top of the page so that people can repeatedly see it.

Correspondence: The website had one email inquiry and both Steve and CJM responded to the person and invited them to join. No response since.

SAG RAG Dave S is still waiting for Bill Broeckel's last RAG so that he can put it on the server and mail copies to those wanting them. It was clarified that all new RAG material goes to Dave M. CJM promised to get the Hawaii cave trip report to Dave for the next issue.

Database Liz states that it is currently up and running well. The membership list is updated, and Dave requested a copy sent to him.

Steve reports that he is attending a meeting on 2/27/24 in Redding with Joel Despain, Brad Rust, James Newell on Tuesday requested by Brad of the forest service to discuss APC work and other sites in the north state for 2024. This discussion will include replacing or repairing the new gates in APC. He is providing a copy of all the known caves and maps, if available, to Brad. CJM requested that James be encouraged to use the SAG list server to announce clean up trips so that SAG members can also participate in clean ups.

Lava Beds Ice Survey – an email from Emma of Lava Beds was sent to all members. She is hoping to get some help with surveying Crystal Ice Cave on March 18-21 and on March 25th. Anyone interested contact Emma directly from the email. Housing is provided.

Lava Beds Cave Loop Survey – Liz is attempting to get some help with some surface tube surveys in Lava Beds at the end of March or early April, please contact her if you are available.

Continued

Sand and Barnum Caves – Liz has not contacted Sam Cuenca of the Klamath National Forest about repairing the gates to these caves.

Received email from retiring Tom Rickman of the Lassen National Forest providing the grotto with entire cave database including trip reports, maps and biological data including those that have archeological sites.

The Western Cave Conservancy and Mother Lode Grotto are doing a cave clean up and graffiti removal April 22-24 at Natural Bridges and could use help. Contact them if available.

Upcoming Trips: Marbles Aug 5-11. We will camp at the spring on the upper karst to visit some of the less visited caves on Black Mountain. Contact Steve to reserve half a mule (75 lbs) for \$225, riding horses are \$200. He will be contacting the outfitter soon to reserve the mules. There is a four-mule minimum, so far Mike, Steve, Dave S, Jim, Melanie, CJM, Kit and Tessa are committed. Contact Steve if you are interested. The early dates are to try and go before the fire season.

Calendar:

- May 18 – meeting at Lava Beds project camp out – contact Liz to be included.
- June 28-29 – meeting at Hat Creek – camp out and cave trips.
- July 1-5 – NSS convention in Tennessee – CJM, Kit and Tessa are going, Steve and Melanie interested – please let CJ or Steve know if you are interested as plans are being put in place.
- July 26-28 – Dry Camp, with meeting on the 27th. Medicine Lake Highlands – lots of caving, possible Yellowjacket Ice Cave survey.
- Aug 5-11 – Marble's trip.
- Aug 24 – Meeting in Lewiston at the Stufflebeams. Cave trip to be announced.
- Sept 19-22 – Western Regional in Cougar WA – Tessa, Kit, CJM and Steve are planning on going – contact them if interested in coordinating your schedules.
- Sept 28 – Meeting and cave trip at the McKinley's in McCloud
- Oct 21-26 – Weeklong caving around Shasta Lake and camping at the McCloud Bridge campground, with meeting Oct. 26. Schedule is not final.

Cave Trips – Kit, CJM and Katrina Smith went to Hawaii for a caving week.

Meeting adjourned at 20:21.

CJM McKinley, Secretary

CJM

Pluto's Cave - Introduction

Steve had planned another of our near-annual cleanups of Pluto's Cave for January but ran into snow and had to call it. Here's a bit more about the cave, going back roughly 30,000 years. Some of the graffiti could also be pretty old, possibly proto-English, or my high school years. **DS**

Pluto's Cave history in a Nutshell: by Liz Wolff

This is a lava tube, a conduit for lava during an eruption. Its basalt was erupted from Deer Mountain and is believed to be about 30,000 years old. Pluto's Cave was used by natives for shelter and to butcher animals for food. It was visited by John Muir in the late 1800's, when many big-horn sheep skulls were found in the cave. Pluto's Cave was named by early Shasta Valley settlers for the god of the underworld in mythology. The cave was used by a group of local ranchers as a meeting place for the Improved Order of the Red Man; a fraternal organization begun in 1834 that still exists. The cave moved out of private hands and into the Klamath National Forest in 1997. It has been used and abused by many thoughtless people over the years. Several local groups have cleaned the cave of trash yearly.



Pluto's Cave, 2nd pit entrance looking N, Melanie Jackson

D Smith 2021

March 23, 2024 Shasta Area Grotto Meeting

Meeting called to order at 1930.

Present were Liz and Jim Wolff, Logan Wheeler (grandson), Steve Hobson, Luke Vroegop, CJM and Kit McKinley, Melanie Jackson, Logan Hellein, Dave Smith, Mike Speiss.

Minutes from the February meeting were read and approved.

Treasury Report: Beginning Balance \$485.48, Expenses – donation to the Western Cave Conservancy in the amount of \$100 to honor the memory of Peri Frantz – Ending balance of \$385.48 and petty cash of \$116 for a total of \$501.48.

SAG yearly dues are currently being accepted. Melanie identified which present members have not paid and collected dues from them.

Stickers for the cards available at Shasta Caverns were ready for Dave Mundt, but as he was sick and not present they will be given to him at the next meeting.

The Facebook page was discussed, and everyone seems satisfied with results. CJM informed the group that the SAG page is **not** private, so names and locations of caves are not allowed to be posted. (Just belonging to the Facebook pages does not mean that you belong to the grotto.) CJM has posted the SAG cave trip itinerary for the year so that people can plan to attend. It reposts each Wednesday. Other groups such as the Klamath Cave Research page, Joel Despain's page, are private and only members can see postings, so cave names and locations may be posted. The SAG membership email list remains the best way for people to send private information to grotto members.

Marbles Trip – Steve is considering opening the trip to the KMCTF to see if additional people would like to also come. He received a lot of pushback and complaints from people after announcing last year's trip. He will assess interest and let the group know.

The trip this year will be August 5-11th, and the cost will be \$225 per ½ mule with a 75 lb. limit. The cost covers the trip in and out and a tip for the mule driver. If you are interested in riding a horse into camp, the cost is \$200. The plan remains to camp at the upper spring, to be closer to lesser visited caves. Participants so far are Steve, Mike, Barbara, Kit, CJM, Tessa, Katrina, Bill B. Thorne, Sharon, Melanie, Dave Smith, Jim Wolff.

Website – Mike has updated the site with all the cave trip dates. Please email him if you need to add anything.

Flying Blue Tuba Cave – Dave Mundt has the cave trip description ready, and Liz has the map, so all that is needed is the picture updates from Michael Stark. Liz will follow-up and is hoping to have the final copy out by the middle of April. The project has a \$100 budget.

Forest Service Meeting – On Thursday March 21, Steve, Liz, Jim, and Melanie met with the new members of the local forest service overseeing the area. They discussed the gates at Sand and Barnum caves. A plan was also put into place to repair the gates at Sand, which was done on Sunday the 24th. Forest service equipment was provided and was very helpful. The grotto also received keys to both caves. Liz will add the new forest service personnel to the members list with their names and email addresses.

SAG RAG – The latest issue was sent out last week. Information and trip reports are needed for the next issue. CJM has promised to provide the Hawaii cave week report, which is almost complete. Kit will write up the Sunday gate repair and clean up report.

Correspondence – CJM continues to personally contact each new person who shows interest on the Facebook page, to assess and encourage their joining the grotto. The NSS page has gotten one email and CJM has followed up with that person. Liz has written to Ariana from Italy, who was visiting Spencer Haggard but in contact with the grotto. She has given her thoughts for visiting Lava Beds.

Steve gave the group an update on the meeting between Joel Despain, Brad Rust, James Newell and himself last month. Protecting north state caves remains a complicated issue. There is a budget of \$4000, some of which has been used for updating ropes and cleaning in APC. There is talk of gating Manzanita Ridge and James will follow up with a trip once the road opens. Steve states that the road was almost impassable last year and may not even be passable this year and wonders about the need for a gate if no one can get up there. Deanna Lynne Cave was also discussed, and a gate would probably not be feasible due to the debris at the top. A possible cover plate and camouflage idea was presented. The Paul Gibson cave does not see much traffic and has water running through it, so a gate was deemed unnecessary. Joel is trying to establish a California Cave Map Database and was given a list of the caves the grotto has. Brad Rust will be leaving his position, and Daniel Hewitt as put forth as a possible replacement.

Windler – Steve asked Mike about an update for CJM to be a trustee for Windler cave. It needs to be brought up at the next WCC meeting.

Search and Rescue – no training will be provided this year due to lack of communication from SAR.

2027 Western Regional – The Regional will be here in SAG country, and CJM brought up concern about the lack of easy to access caves for trips during the convention. Steve and Liz stated that there are enough. The most important concern is to obtain a site for the conference and camping in Lakehead. CJM will examine the site with help from Stephanie. There was discussion about involving the Klamath Cave Research Foundation. Dates are planned for the middle or end of September, for approximately 150 people.

Calendar:

- April 27 – meeting at Shasta Caverns, cave trip to be announced.
- May 18 – meeting at Lava Beds project camp out – contact Liz to be included.
- June 28-29 – meeting at Hat Creek Campground – camp out and cave trips, Jim Wolff to be in charge of meeting as many will be in Tennessee.
- July 1-5 – NSS convention in Tennessee – CJ, Kit and Tessa are flying out, Steve and Melanie are driving cross country – please let CJM or Steve know if you are interested as plans are being put in place.
- July 26-28 – Dry Camp 26-28 with meeting on the 27th Medicine Lake Highlands – lots of caving, possible trip to Yellowjacket Ice Cave.
- Aug 5-11 – Marbles trip

- Aug 24 – Meeting in Lewiston at the Stufflebeam’s, cave trip to be announced – this meeting may be moved due to access issues from a road washout. Plans will be posted when closer.
- Sept 19-22 – Western Regional in Cougar WA – Tessa, Kit, CJM and Steve are planning on going. Contact them if you are interested in coordinating travel plans. Kim Luper will post a link on the SAG Facebook page.
- Sept 28 – Meeting and cave trip at the McKinley’s property in McCloud – will get a map out – This is an outdoor meeting, and people should bring a chair and lighting.
- October 20-27, McCloud Bridge campout – October 26th is the meeting – There will be week-long caving around Shasta Lake. Steve might be arriving later; McKinley’s will set up camp and lead trips until others arrive.
- December 7 – Cookie party, White Elephant exchange, and potluck at Steve’s house in McCloud. The time will be 5 pm for the party, 7:30 for the meeting.

Cave Trips

- Steve took his granddaughter to Black Chasm, Mercer and Moaning Caverns in the Mother Lode Grotto area. They also visited the Volcano area. Steve will write a trip report.
- Lava Beds – Mike Spiess and Luke went to help with an ice survey. They visited Crystal Ice, Caldwell, and Cox caves. Luke to write the report.
- Sand and Barnum Caves – gate repair and clean up to occur tomorrow, Kit will write report.

Meeting adjourned at 2130.

CJ McKinley, Secretary

CJM

Hawaii Cave Week Trip January 29-February 2, 2024 Part 1 – Goat Skull Cave, 1/27

CJ McKinley, Katrina Smith and Kit McKinley

Kit and CJ had previously found this cave by use of Geocaching during their last visit in 2021. They were not efficiently equipped during that time to continue exploring. This cave was incredibly interesting due to the fact that there were multiple skeletons of goats in the entrances (breakdown) to the cave, including lots of skulls. So, this cave was named minus any additional information. Other caves throughout this area of the island were noted to have this same phenomenon leading to the assumption that goats went into these entrances to die. Further into the cave revealed lots of passage and some interesting features. This made it a priority to visit during the next trip.

The team decided to visit prior to the official start of cave week since it was not mentioned in the itinerary. The entrance was found with Kit’s GPS coordinates from the last visit. This entrance was not as covered in skeletons as previous and fewer goat droppings were noted as well. It appeared to be less active with the goat community. The single lava tube divided into two passages after about 200 ft. During the last visit, the left hand passage had been explored. The team took the right hand passage. This cave is amazingly intact with solid floors and ceilings and only a few breakdown areas. There were amazing lava-sicles and fragile deposits on the floor (see pictures). Also, many ohia lehua tree roots were evident throughout the cave. These native trees are often the first to grow after a lava flow and the trees

themselves use the root systems in the caves to gather moisture, very common throughout the island.

After 500 ft, this passage is disrupted with breakdown and the team had to climb out to find the next breakdown area. This quickly led to a 3 (almost 4) way confluence of lava flows with the original flow only continuing on 20 ft or so ending in a lava seal and a huge barn owl nest. The perpendicular flow had a much bigger diameter and lots of breakdown with a large lava flow into the area. Downflow, a goat conference was disrupted and a herd of 30 or so goats was flushed out of the area. Navigating this high use goat area was very smelly and the team quickly decided to abandon further exploring. One wonderful discovery was a wild beehive within the cracks of a breakdown opening. (see photo)

Kit had been exploring this area quite a bit with Google Earth and many other breakdown areas were noted with possible leads. The area is covered with grass making surface searching difficult without some guidance. It is unknown if this is public or private land but no fences or signs were present. Further investigation is needed. But all and all a very fun and gorgeous first cave for the Hawaii trip.

Soda straws and droppings make you realize that this cave does not get many visitors.



Our friend the beehive.



CJM and Katrina in a cool shot!

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STAMP

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