Hamilton Branch Cave

Photos from left to right: right inside of the cave, Hamilton Branch sign, looking at cave from Hamilton Branch, and rock inside of the cave. Photos taken by Margaret Diehl

**History:** Before there was a Lake Almanor, the Maidu Indians called it “oy-ding-kovo” or Big Meadows— the lush bountiful land at the foot of the volcano where evil spirits dwelled.

**Description:** Hamilton Branch is a small creek that flows into Lake Almanor. This cave is only two miles from the lake and the housing community called Hamilton Branch. These caves are located in the Plumas National Forest, and are right near the county line dividing Lassen county and Plumas county.

**Directions:** Leaving Quincy you want to get on 70 west/ 89 north. When you reach the Greenville Y, you want to take a right on 89 north and head towards Lake Almanor. Passing through Greenville you want to continue through Canyon Dam and take a right on 147 towards Westwood/Susanville. While following the lake make sure that you pay attention to the beautiful Mt. Lassen in the west. Continue until you reach the Hamilton Branch bridge, which is 2 miles from the turn off that will take you to Chester. When you reach the bridge you have reached your destination.

**Name:** Spelunking

**Time Needed:** 20 minutes

**Sun Exposure:** Slim to none

**Elevation:** 4500

**Rating:** Easy

**Gear Needed:** Hiking shoes, headlamp, sweatshirt, and water.

**Directions:** Park in the turn out left just before the bridge. There is a trail you will follow to the bottom of the bridge. The trail follows the creek on the left side and the cave is only about 30 yards from the bridge. There are huge boulders and rocks so it won't be hard to find.

**Description:** When you reach the cave you want to go down in from the left side. You will see a huge drop on the right, so make sure you avoid that. The rest is easy caving, and no rope is needed. There are two levels of the cave. The first level you will be able to see the sunlight, and the second level leads you down to an underground creak. Depending on the time of year and the creek flows, you can explore the second level more in depth.

**Risks:** Rolled ankles, poison oak, blackberry bushes, snakes, and you could bump your head.