

The Cave Animal of the Year

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At the International Congress of Speleology held at Brno in 2013, we attended a session presented by Ms Barbel Vogel from the German Speleological Federation on the Cave Animal of the Year program in Germany. This is linked to the German 'Nature of the Year' program which includes over 40 different species and habitat including: Tree of the Year, Poisonous Plant of the Year, Dragonfly of the Year, Rock of the Year etc.

Cave Animal of the Year has a home page which is linked to Nature of the Year pages. As a result, cave animals are included in childrens magazines, school calendars and a variety of print media from garden club journals to daily newspapers. In her presentation, Ms Vogel reported that with a small budget the Cave Animal of the Year is an easy way to reach cavers and the public.

Cave Animal of the Year (Germany) has included the genus *Niphargus* (2009), the Herald Moth *Scoliopteryx libatrix* (2010), *Myotis myotis* (2011, the International Year of Bats), the Large Cave Spider *Meta menardi* (2012) and the fungus gnat *Speolepta leptogaster* (2013).

In 2011, the first European Cave Animal of the Year was declared and Ms Vogel's presentation in Brno raised the suggestion of a world-wide initiative with speleological federations from countries and continents coming together and choosing an order or family.

The presenters of this session wish to discuss the idea of Cave Animal of the Year Australia or Australasia and are raising it via sessions at the 2015 ACKMA and ASF conferences. The 2017 International Congress of Speleology in Sydney gives us an opportunity to perhaps launch an Australasian Cave Animal of the Year.

