

LAUNCH: Cave Animal of the Year

CATHIE PLOWMAN, Northern Caverneers, and NIALL DORAN

The German Speleological Society has had a Cave Animal of the Year program since 2009. It is linked to that country's Nature of the Year program and has built a wide-coverage on a low budget, with articles on cave animals featuring in a range of publications from school magazines to garden club newsletters.

Inspired by the efforts of our German colleagues and hoping to increase the profile of Australian cave animals and caves as habitat, Cathie has committed to coordinating Cave Animal of the Year in Australia for the next 10 years. Our inaugural Cave Animal will be launched this evening.

Thanks to the Karst Conservation Fund for financial support.

The Tasmanian cave spider *Hickmania troglodytes* is the inaugural Australian Cave Animal of the Year, a program announced during the recent ASF conference.

I have been inspired to develop this program by the German Cave Animal of the Year program, which was launched in 2008 and is now in its twelfth year and I have committed to working on this effort for the next 10 years.

Cave Animal of the Year aims to raise the profile of cave animals in the community and draw attention to the importance of caves as important animal habitat.

There is no popular competition to select the 'winner'. I have been guided by Barbel Vogel from the German Speleological Federation to select a cave animal that can 'piggy-back' on to an existing campaign. The Tasmanian cave spider was selected as our debut cave animal to coincide with the international success of the film *Sixteen Legs*.

This award-winning Tasmanian-made film combines art, fantasy, scientific research, the dedicated photographic efforts of wildlife photographer Joe Shemesh and interviews with international celebrities to tell the story of this, until recently, little-known underground animal.

The intention over time is to have a range of cave animals from around Australia but, based on the advice from the German team, the selected animal will need to be photogenic and have a story to tell. The selected animal will be a 'flagship' for other cave animals.

CAVE
ANIMAL
OF THE
YEAR
2019



**Tasmanian
Cave Spider**

*Hickmania
troglodytes*

Some beautiful Cave Animal of the Year promotional products have been produced:

- Bookmarks and stickers are readily available. The spiders are 'raised' on the bookmarks. You will want to pat them.
- The A3 size posters are so nice that you'll want one for your kitchen or office. But, as they cost \$5.00 each to print and we have limited supplies, they are only available for areas where they will be seen by good numbers of people. Classrooms, libraries, outdoor shops, Scout and Guide halls would all be excellent venues.
- Cups. Great for yourself or a gift for your caving friends. These are \$10.00 each plus something for postage. Why not order a handful to on-sell at your club meeting?

You can help raise the profile of Cave Animals by helping distribute our wares. Please contact: hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au

It would be great if ASF members could also share the Facebook page and promote the website address to your friends in bushwalking clubs etc.: www.caveanimaloftheyear.org.au

Nothing is done without a team and my thanks to the Karst Conservation Fund for financial support, to the German Speleological Federation for their inspiration, to the International Union of Speleology for funding the stickers and to Poco People and Aeski in Hobart for their exciting art and design work.

