

# CAVES

The Journal of the Australian Speleological Federation

# AUSTRALIA



ASF CONFERENCE  
KIMBERLEY CAVING  
IUS CALL TO ACTION

No. 207 • MARCH 2019

# COMING EVENTS

This list covers events of interest to anyone seriously interested in caves and karst. The list is just that: if you want further information the contact details for each event are included. The relevant websites and details of other international and regional events may be listed on the UIS/IUS website [www.uis-speleo.org/](http://www.uis-speleo.org/) or on the ASF website <http://www.caves.org.au>. For interna-

tional events, the Chair of International Commission (Tim Moulds) [timothy.moulds@yahoo.com.au](mailto:timothy.moulds@yahoo.com.au) may have extra information. A similar calendar is published in *ESpeleo*. This calendar is for known events in 2019. This calendar comes to us courtesy of George Veni, President of the IUS.

## March–August 2019

### 30 March

**Karst Waters Institute Awards Dinner Honouring Wil Orndorff**, Blacksburg, Virginia, USA <https://karstwaters.org/save-the-date-kwi-awards-dinner-march-30-2019-in-blacksburg-va/>

### 20-25 May

**Hypogea 2019: The International Congress of Speleology in Artificial Cavities**, Dobrich, Bulgaria, <http://www.hypogea2019.org/>

### 24-26 May

**2019 National Speleological Society Cave Diving Section International Cave Diving Conference**, Lake City, Florida, USA, <https://nsscds.org/evetns/2019-nss-cds-international-cave-diving-conference/>

### 2 June-3 August

**Karst Field Studies 2019**: Five courses offered, 2019 Florida and Kentucky, USA, [www.karstfieldstudies.com](http://www.karstfieldstudies.com)

### 7-10 June

**48th French National Speleo Congress**, La Ciotat, Marseille, France, <https://www.facebook.com/FFSpeleologie/>

### 15-18 June

**International Association of Hydrogeologists Karst Commission Geo Trip**: Carpathian Karst, Romania and Serbia, [www.karst.edu.rs](http://www.karst.edu.rs)

### 17-21 June

**27th International Karstological School "Classical karst": Karst Hydrogeology — Research Trends and Applications**, Postojna, Slovenia, <http://iks.zrc-sazu.si/en/>

### 17-21 June

**National Speleological Society Convention**, Cookeville, Tennessee, USA, <http://nss2019.subworks.com/>

### 19-22 June

**35th Brazilian Speleological Congress and 50th Anniversary of the Brazilian Speleological Society**, Bonito, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil, <http://www.cavernas.org.br/35cbe/>

### 24-26 June

**Man and Karst Conference**, Ragusa, Sicily, Italy, <http://www.cirs-ragusa.org>

### 1-5 July

**Symposium on Caves, Karst, and Subterranean Environments**: Cuba, Havana, Cuba, <http://www.cubambiente.com/>

### 1-5 July

**Symposium: Challenges for Subterranean Landscape Conservation in the World's Karst Regions, 10th World Congress of the International Association of Landscape Ecologists**, Milan, Italy, <http://www.iale2019.unimib.it>

### 9-12 August

**National Speleological Congress of Switzerland**, Interlaken, Switzerland, <https://sinterlaken.ch/en/>

### 11-17 August

**4th Summer School on Speleothem Science**, Cluj-Napoca, Romania, <https://www.speleothemschool.com/>

### 15-18 August

**German Annual Speleo Meeting**, Nesselwang, Bavaria, Germany, [www.vdhk.de](http://www.vdhk.de)

*A very useful international calendar is posted on the Speleogenesis Network website at [www.speleogenesis.info/directory/calendar/](http://www.speleogenesis.info/directory/calendar/). Many of the meetings listed above are on it but new ones are posted regularly.*



*ASF Conference photographic competition: Dreamed — Surreal and Fantasy category First-time Winner — Kaveleidoscope by Gabiriel Kinzler*



## CAVES AUSTRALIA

*Caves Australia* is the Journal of the Australian Speleological Federation and is published quarterly.

This work is © copyright 2019, Australian Speleological Federation Inc, although copyright in articles, photographs and illustrations remains with the authors. Aside from any fair dealings for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Australian Copyright Act 1974, no part may be reproduced without the written consent of the author and/or publisher and the inclusion and acknowledgement of the source.

The views expressed in *Caves Australia* are not necessarily those of the Editor or Publisher (the Australian Speleological Federation Inc) or its Executive, Commissions or Committees.

### Editor:

Alan Jackson  
Email: alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

### Production and Advertising Manager:

Alan Jackson  
Email: alan.jackson@lmrs.com.au

### Proofreading:

Susan White  
Greg Middleton  
Ian Curtis

ASF: asf.caves.info@gmail.com

For all ASF publications:

asf.caves.sales@gmail.com

Editorial contributions are welcome!

For contributor guidelines, contact the Production Manager.

### Advertising

Contact the Production Manager for commercial, caving community and classified rates. Rates range from \$5 to \$400 for full page mono back cover. Discounts apply for placements of 4 adverts and an up-front payment.

### Issue Dates

March, June, September and December

### Magazine Subscription

*Caves Australia* is included within ASF membership fees. Subscription to the magazine is also available to non-ASF members at \$40.00 including postage within Australia for one year (four quarterly issues).

### Change of address

Notify us immediately of any address changes to ensure delivery of your *Caves Australia*.

# Caves Australia

No. 207 March 2019

Australian Speleological Federation

PO Box 388 • Broadway • NSW 2007 • www.caves.org.au

ABN 15 169 919 964

ISSN 1449-2601 • Registered Publication NBQ0005116



ASF

## Contents

Coming Events.....	2
Editorial.....	4
President's Report.....	4
Kimberley Caving.....	5
<i>Dave Wools-Cobb</i>	
ASF Awards 2019.....	8
<i>Miles Pierce</i>	
Speleo Sports winners — and losers.....	10
Devonport Conference Reflections.....	11
<i>Ann-Marie Meredith</i>	
31st Australian Speleological Federation Conference.....	13
The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania	
<i>Dave Wools-Cobb</i>	
The Darkness Beneath is Revealed.....	17
Conference Photo Competition Results	
<i>Brian Evans</i>	
A Strategic Approach to Improve Cave Access and Conservation.....	22
<i>Steve Milner, Stefan Eberhard and Nicholas White</i>	
Balancing Access and Conservation Through Collaborative Relationships.....	24
<i>Stefan Eberhard and Bronwen Prazak</i>	
Australian Cave Animal of the Year.....	27
<i>Cathie Plowman</i>	
ASF Conference Prusik Challenge.....	27
Getting Media Coverage of your Cave Story.....	28
<i>Cathie Plowman</i>	
Congratulations Harry Burkitt .....	29
Australia's Young Environmentalist of the Year	
and winner of the NCC Marie Byles Award	
<i>Garry K Smith</i>	
International Union of Speleology Call to Action.....	31
International Year of Caves and Karst	
<i>Dr George Veni</i>	
Review: TFM Engineering Rope Washer.....	35
<i>Dave Wools-Cobb</i>	

Cover: Jess and Fyn Bayles get into the spirit of 'Bedrock City' at the Cavers' Dinner.  
Photo by Dave Wools-Cobb.

## ASF Executive

President	John Cugley
Senior Vice-President	Graham Pilkington
Vice-President	Roderick Smith
Vice-President	Janine McKinnon
Vice-President	Grace Matts
General Secretary	Sarah Gilbert
Executive Secretary	Philip Maynard
Membership Secretary	Colin Tyrrell
Treasurer	Robert Kershaw

Layout and Production by  
FB Design, Hobart, Tasmania

# EDITORIAL

**I**T SHOULD come as no surprise that this issue is dominated by conference-related material, unless you're used to slack people taking twelve months to getting around to writing articles.

No such problems this time around. Thanks very much to contributors who produced their articles in such a short time.

The conference was a great success and I add my name to the long list of those congratulating the organising committee on a job well done.

The individuals involved can now relax, safe in the knowledge that it'll be about 12 years before Tasmania has to host again and 24 years before it's likely to be in their neck of the woods (northern Tasmania).

The South Australians, however, can be forgiven for an onset of grey hairs as they prepare for the Easter 2021 conference. Good luck.

Your mission for 2019 is to go caving, find something interesting and write an article about it for *Caves Australia*.

I have a budget to spend and I can't do it (morally) without words and pictures from you. — Alan Jackson

## President's Report

**A**USTRALIAN speleology has had a great start to the year with an excellent conference at Devonport, Tasmania.

A big thank you to Jess Bayles and her committee for a job well done and all the cavers from around Australia who took time out from their schedules to attend and provide input into the future directions of the ASF.

One of the outcomes from the conference was the endorsement of the ASF Strategic Plan by the Council.

The Executive and Commissioners have already started to work towards implementing action items.

Everyone will be asked to participate in various online surveys over the next few years.

The Executive looks forward to your input, ideas and ways to move forward on issues.

At the Council meeting during the conference an election was held for membership of the Executive.

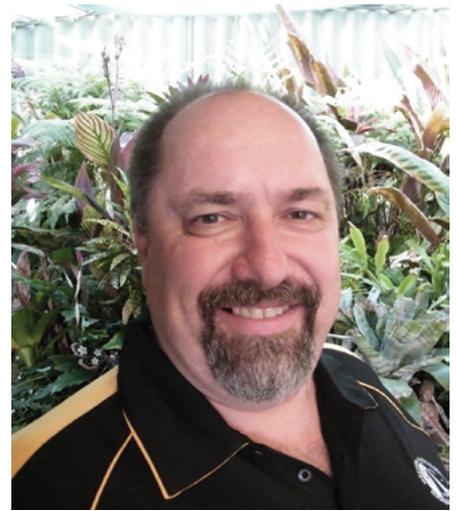
This has not happened in several years, as positions were usually filled with the minimum nominations required to fill those positions.

It is great to see more members interested in the direction of the ASF and I encourage people to keep applying when opportunities arise.

I would like to thank Deb Hunter and Jim Crockett, who announced their retirement from the Executive at the Council meeting.

Both have spent numerous years on the Executive working hard to achieve ASF's objectives.

I would like to welcome new members to the Executive: Janine McKinnon and Roderrick Smith, who join Graham Pilkington,



Bob Kershaw, Grace Matts, Phil Maynard, Colin Tyrrell, Sarah Gilbert and myself.

An additional notable outcome of the Council meeting was the bestowing on Julia James of a Fellowship of the ASF – congratulations and well deserved.

One of the pleasures in attending the conference as President is presenting ASF awards. Congratulations to all the awardees and please read the report from our Awards Commissioner, Miles Pierce.

I would also like to take a minute to congratulate Richard Harris and Craig Challen on being named joint Australians of the Year.

The next two years will be my last term as President. I look forward to the challenges of implementing the Strategic Plan and the great future of the ASF.

Don't forget to send in stories of your caving trips to *Caves Australia*.

I love reading about the adventures of members and look forward to being out and about on a few of my own in the coming year.

— John Cugley

**WANTED**  
ARTICLES FOR CAVES AUSTRALIA!

Whether caving, cave diving or generally just caving, *Caves Australia* readers are interested in YOUR story. It is only with YOUR contribution that we can produce a quality magazine for all to enjoy. For writing and style guidelines, contact the Editor or Production Manager.

# Kimberley Caving

**Dave Wools-Cobb**

NC, SRCC



*Kimberley karst*

**THIS YEAR'S** expedition to the Ning Bing range in the Kimberley got off to a poor start with one car suffering a dingle and not being repaired in time, one car requiring some work and not being completed in time and one member of the group damaging his shoulder as he was packing his vehicle for the trip.

Added to that, one member had a 24-hour delay in her flight. Notwithstanding all that, five people met in Kununurra on July 21.

Gaining access to this Devonian limestone reef that commences about one hour's drive north-west of Kununurra (and continues almost to the coast) can be quite challenging.

Initially, permission must be obtained from the adjacent property owners to use their road, then permission from the Traditional Owners via the Western Australian Parks Service.

Fortunately, the access road/track was in

reasonably good condition this year and the drive to our campsite took two hours. The campsite is in an open gorge, this year with a good flowing creek and a very pleasant swimming hole available after each day's caving.

The group consisted of Carrell Hambrick, Fergus McCracken, John Cugley (Illawarra Speleological Society), Veronica Schumann (Canberra Speleological Society) and Dave Wools-Cobb (Northern Caverneers).

Initially, we walked approximately 2 km to KNI79, a known cave that required surveying.

With its impressive entrance, we had high expectations, however this lead to a disappointing 270 m of survey.

We also surveyed a small cave, KNI48, nearby.

A major focus of this year's expedition was to produce a digital survey of KNI51. This is a highly unusual cave that is atypical

of the area, more reminiscent of a Nullarbor-type cave in that it is a low, outflow cave under a very low hill, unfortunately with lots of mud and extremely high humidity. This did not make for the usual pleasant surveying conditions that the Ning Bings mostly involve.

We surveyed all leads until they got too uncomfortable to continue surveying with the drawer struggling to keep sweat and mud off the paper, but the leads still go. A team of young, thin, enthusiastic cavers could add many metres to this cave.

Wishing to show those in the group who were new to Kimberley caving how nice conditions can be, we decided to visit KNI80, a very extensive cave our group surveyed last trip.

Two of our group took the easy walk around to the Cathedral entrance, while the three others went for an overland walk to come in from the north-east.

We did manage to GPS about eight pos-

DAVE WOOLS-COBB

*Fergus McCracken in KNI80*

sible vertical entrances. However, we were not equipped to check them out at that stage.

After one week our numbers were reduced to three, so we decided to concentrate on the hill to the north of our campsite, being closer.

John Cugley took us to a few known caves, explaining which ones still needed surveying.

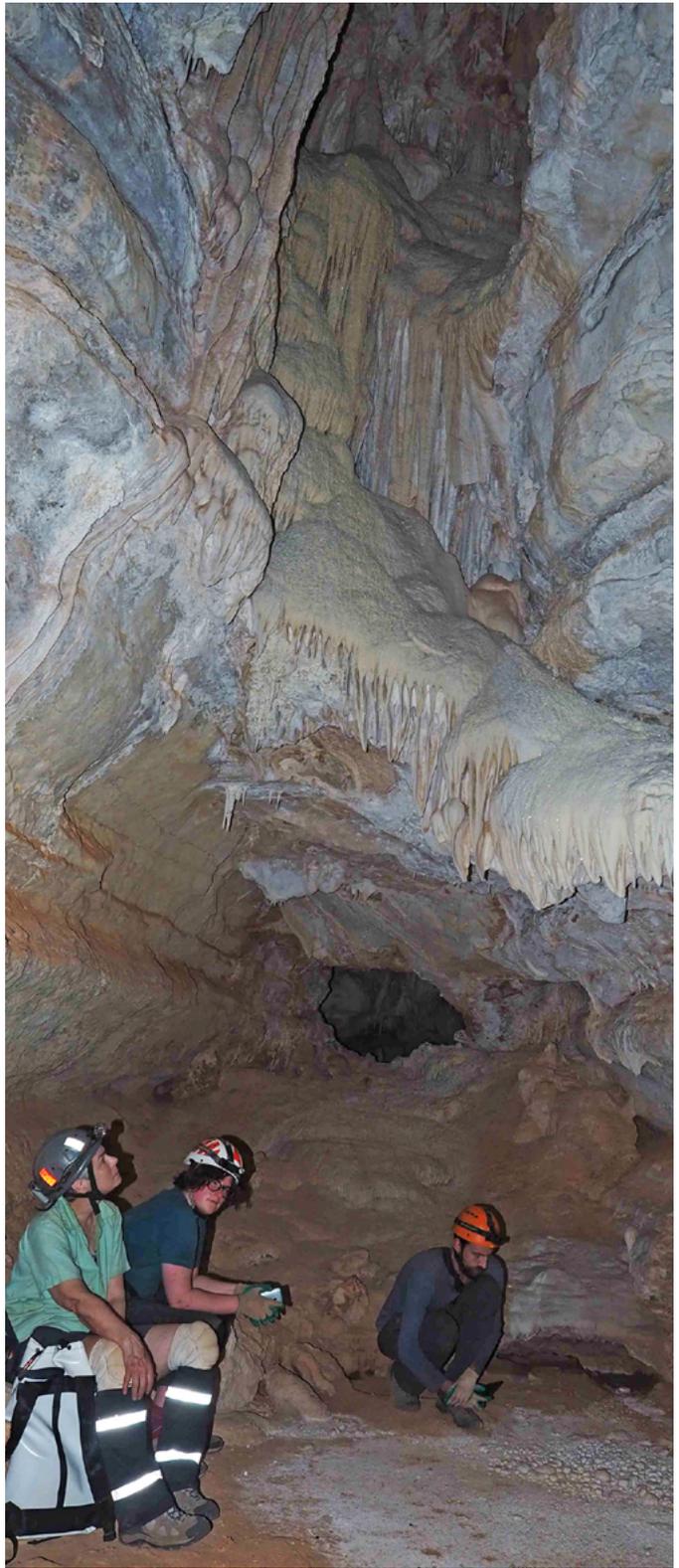
During this walk we found two good

prospective vertical entrances and one entrance that led into a huge chamber, plus John noted a depression that he was keen to check out later.

Whilst heading back to John's find we relocated a cave that had been previously entered into our GPS database wrongly and which still needs surveying.

John's new find proved superb and our initial survey gave us 150 m with several going leads.

DAVE WOOLS-COBB



*Oolite inspection in KNI80*

For one day of our expedition we were visited by an American scientist, his family and two students, who came out with local Kununurra cavers, Donna and Steve. His study is on rainfall events and how they affect the cave environment, with sites also near Windjana Gorge and Exmouth. While the group were in KNI51, Veronica and I checked out a prospective hole Fergus had noted a few days earlier.

Alas, it took longer to rig the hole than





Cathedral Entrance, KNI80



DVD Cave

it took to determine that the lead was too tight to consider.

John headed back to Kununurra with the visitors to continue with them in their work in Windjana, leaving just Veronica and me.

We again decided to keep close to camp and continue looking on the adjacent hill, this time finding another good cave, Play-Station, giving 164.5 m. This was followed by a photographic trip into our major find,

DVD Cave (Dave and Veronica's Delight). On our final day we commenced surveying DVD, starting with a side passage that Dave had earlier stated 'might get 20 or so metres out of it'

120 m later we surveyed into a lead that had been left unsurveyed in Johns Cave, making it one big system, still with several leads.

For the afternoon we finally got the main part of DVD surveyed, making the whole

system 448 m, again with five leads still to push.

Total surveyed passage for expedition: 1812 metres.

Possible vertical entrances to investigate: 16 (we're sure to get a few caves resulting from those).

And heaps of leads left and several known caves to survey.

Yes — we're keen to get back to the Ning Bings.



# ASF Awards 2019

**Miles Pierce**

*Awards Commission Convener*

**D**URING the Cavers Dinner event at the 31st ASF Biennial Conference in Devonport, January 2019, the president, John Cugley, announced the following awards and presented them to the awardees or their representatives.

## FELLOWSHIP OF THE ASF

Julia James was made a Fellow of ASF by resolution of the Council meeting held in conjunction with the 31st Conference.



STEVE MILNER

*John Cugley presenting Life Membership of the ASF to Julia James*

Julia has had a long and ongoing, distinguished life as a caver and cave scientist of world renown. Born in England, she arrived in Australia in the 1960s with a PhD and an avid love of caving. In her caving club she kept an enthusiastic group of younger members going caving every weekend, doing worthwhile work. When that club left the ASF she was disappointed but became an individual ASF member.

Since being in Australia she has stamped her mark on the caving scene in a quiet but dedicated way by becoming a cave trip leader for more technical caves and urging Australian cavers to explore overseas caves. Her consuming interest over this time has been the mapping of Jenolan Caves which is still ongoing, due to her zeal for accuracy.

Despite working full time, she still managed to achieve the following: supervising some 35 doctorate and masters students, about half of which were on caves and karst subjects; editing *Helictite*; carrying out many consultancies in Australia and overseas on karst and related matters; authoring some 200 published papers and book chapters; editing books; writing consultancy reports; and advising karst managers on their areas.

Julia was Senior Vice president of UIS (1989-97); President of UIS (1997-2001) and an Honorary Life President of UIS since then.



STEVE MILNER

*John Cugley presenting Fellowship of the ASF to Denis Marsh*

Denis Marsh, who was made a Fellow of ASF at the January 2018 Council meeting, was also formally presented with his award at the Devonport Conference dinner.

Denis was chair of the UIS 17th International Congress of Speleology organising committee from October 2013 through to the successful staging of the Congress in mid-2017. This event conferred international credit on the ASF as the host organisation.

From 2007 to 2013 Denis was also president of NSW Speleological Council and from 2013 to present, Secretary of NSW Speleological Council.

In addition, Denis was heavily involved with Save Cliefden Caves campaign as OSS and ASF representative and a representative on the Community Reference Group of the Lachlan Valley Water Security Project.

## EDIE SMITH AWARD – KEN BOLAND



STEVE MILNER

*John Cugley presents the Edie Smith Award to Ken Boland*

The Edie Smith Award went to Ken Boland for his sustained involvement in expanding the knowledge of the Nullarbor caves and karst and his innovative approach to systematic exploration of large areas using an ultra-light aircraft in conjunction with GPS that has resulted in the discovery of over 3000 new features, some of which have been the subject of further significant speleological advances in knowledge of karst processes, cave fauna, indigenous use sites and palaeontological discoveries.

**AWARD OF DISTINCTION FOR SPELEOLOGICAL PUBLICATION – ROSS ELLIS**

For his outstanding role in the publication of speleological material, including as editor of the Journal of the Sydney Speleological Society from 1965 to the present time, as well as editing or co-editing a number of other magazines, monographs and books pertaining to speleology and personally contributing numerous articles and other content.

**AWARDS OF DISTINCTION FOR TECHNICAL DIVE**



BRANDAUTHORITY.COM

**INNOVATION, CAVE EXPLORATION AND CAVE RESCUE**

**Dr Richard Harris** (left in photo) for technical diving innovation involving mixed gases and exploration to new depths in challenging caves in Australia, Song Hong Cave, Thailand, Daxing Spring, China and the Pearse Resurgence in New Zealand where dive depths are reaching physiological limits at -229 metres.

Innovation has been coupled with significant leadership in sump rescue training and recovery dives in Tank Cave, South Australia. In particular, his contribution to the international cave rescue operation conducted in the Tham Luang Cave in Northern Thailand in 2018 has been recognised globally. The actual rescue relied on his medical, leadership and exceptional diving skills.

**Dr Craig Challen** (right in photo): this award is in recognition of Craig's involvement in the cave diving community over a long period. An early adopter of mixed gas diving allowed significantly deeper depths to be tackled in exploration of open water wrecks as well as in caves such as Kija Blue, Western Australia. In particular, he led trips extending the length of Cocklebidy Cave, Nullarbor, WA and participated in the Pearse Resurgence, New Zealand expeditions.

His contribution to the international cave rescue operation conducted in the Tham Luang Cave in Northern Thailand in 2018 relied on his prior experience and exceptional diving leadership skills.

He also acted as spokesperson for the Australian participants providing public insight into the rescue detail.

**CERTIFICATE OF MERIT – VSA NULLARBOR EXPEDITIONS SUPPORT GROUP**

For long-term participation in the VSA Nullarbor expeditions that has resulted in the discovery and subsequent documentation of over 3000 new features.

Ken Boland, Daryl Carr, Ian Curtis, Margaret James, Greg Leeder, Denis Marsh, Henry Shannon, John Taylor, Nicholas White, Susan White.



STEVE MILNER

John Cugley presenting VSA Nullarbor Expeditions support group certificate of merit to Ken Boland, Susan White, Greg Leeder, Henry Shannon, Denis Marsh, Nicholas White, John Taylor (absent: Daryl Carr, Margaret James, Ian Curtis)

**CERTIFICATE OF MERIT – ASF COMMITTEE FOR STAGING THE SEVENTEENTH ICS**

For outstanding service as members of the ASF committee responsible for the successful staging of the 17th International Congress of Speleology in Australia in 2017.

Nicholas White, Jim Crockett, David Butler, Cathie Plowman, Catherine Hemley, Janice March, Jill Rowling, Mike Lake, Ann-Marie Meredith, Kevin Moore, Justin Wilkinson, Susan White.



STEVE MILNER

ASF committee for staging the Seventeenth ICS – Nicholas White, Cath Hemley, Susan White, Janice March, Ann-Marie Meredith, David Butler, Cathie Plowman (absent: Jim Crockett, Jill Rowling, Mike Lake, Kevin Moore, Justin Wilkinson)

# Speleo Sports winners – and losers



STEVE MILNER

Melissa Hadley, Daniel Burt, Garry K. Smith, (absent: Andrew Baker)  
 Overall winners of Speleo Sports (including penalty points)



STEVE MILNER

Bob Kershaw, Brian Evans, Ian Collette, Denis Marsh receiving award for winning the booby prize for the great teamwork displayed during Speleo Sports



STEVE MILNER

Janeen Grimes, Sandra Chrystall, Lex Brown, Henry Shannon, Allison Irvine, Doug Irvine, John Taylor – Quiz Night winners



STEVE MILNER

Stephen Kennedy, Brett Wiltshire, Gary Whitby (absent: Ben Lovett) receiving the award for 'breaking the record' (setting the fastest time at the Speleo Sports, pre penalty point application)



STEVE MILNER

Jahmal Gillen-Lee, Julia James, Grace Matts, Joan Crabbe receive the Speleo Sports Wooden Spoon award



STEFAN EBERHARD

Winner of the Speleo Sports 30-metre prusik challenge – Alan Jackson

# Devonport Conference Reflections

**Ann-Marie Meredith**  
 WASG

**H**AVING WORKED alongside several of the organising committee of the Devonport Conference while putting together the 2017 UIS Congress in Sydney, I knew the calibre of what they were capable of achieving.

I was expecting a high quality, well-organised conference but even I was blown away with what this small ASF club managed to pull off.

As a veteran of many ASF conferences, I had a lot to compare to and can honestly say that this conference was beyond a doubt amongst the best.

The Sunday Registration and Welcome BBQ set the scene for what was to come. Registration was efficiently organised so registrants could quickly gather their conference bags and head to the bar to grab a drink and catch up with other cavers.

Many registrants were camping on the school oval, which added to the highly social aspect of the conference. The post-conference field trip briefing later that evening saw a large number of registrants rush to the boards to sign up for the wide ranging trips on offer. Organisers had ensured everyone interested in going underground was catered for, regardless of age, ability or general inclination.

Monday morning saw the conference officially opened and keynote speakers David Merritt (Bioluminescence in Glowworms) and Liz Reed (Naracoorte caves: faunal extinctions and past climates) were highly engaging.

Alan Jackson got us enthused with exploration in the Junee-Florentine region and Fraser Johnson presented an exceptional short film on push diving in Southern Tasmania.

Yvonne Ingeme updated us with developments on the White-Nose Syndrome in bats and how to keep it from entering Australia, and I presented a brief history of human interaction with caves in the Mid-West of Western Australia.

With ASF Council delegates bunkering down after lunch for the first of the ASF



DAVE WOOLLS-CORB

*The Conference camp site*

Council meetings, the majority of other registrants took advantage of the wide range of activities on offer during this time; including mountain bike riding, kayaking and a visit to the Maritime Museum.

It being New Year's Eve, many registrants later headed into town for dinner and then on to the foreshore for a community event complete with fireworks. Some headed home after the children's fireworks, but sufficient money has since changed hands for those concerned not to be named.

Those who chose not to overdo celebrations the previous evening were up bright and early Tuesday for a mountain bike ride prior to sessions recommencing.

Chris Sharples talked about Wilderness Wild Karst, while Andreas Klocker kept us intrigued with his forays into deep caves in Huautla, Mexico.

Alan Jackson put us all to shame with his persistent doggedness which resulted in the 'new and improved' map of Kubla Khan. Steve Milner walked us through the new ASF Strategic Plan he has been working on with the ASF Executive, which promises to enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of the organisation as a whole.

After lunch was primarily devoted to discussions on rescue techniques, training and reflections on recent cave rescues.

While a handful slipped away to visit nearby Home Hill, the majority of registrants sauntered off to either participate in or watch the Speleo Sports. Fun and frivolity reigned supreme and teams did themselves proud or not in one way or another.

After a quick clean-up, it was time for the most challenging cave-related quiz night in history. With Eleanor March as our tyrannical quizmaster, scores were low and groans of dismay were loud. Despite this, a great time was had.

Wednesday was the traditional field trip day away from the venue; however, organisers did things a little differently. A wide range of activities comprising caving, canyoning, bushwalking, mountain bike riding, touring and even a children's program were available for registrants to choose from.

Everyone left in the morning for their selected activity and were bussed out to Wings Wildlife Park later that afternoon to meet up for a discounted tour of the park and a gourmet BBQ dinner. We then headed out to Gunns Plains Cave where we were taken on a tour of the cave and were treated to a very special concert by a string quartet in one of the large chambers.

Those up early enough Thursday morning went kayaking whilst the rest of us



## DEVONPORT CONFERENCE REFLECTIONS

continued our slumber. A cave access, conservation and management forum tied together what was happening across the country in this regard and led to a general discussion of a positive way forward for the ASF in general.

Then it was on to Alan Jackson and Adam Spillane sharing their experience of cave exploration in Vietnam. Steve Bourne also shared his experience of attending a commercial caving trip to Vietnam's famous Hang Son Doong.

Another interesting new session trialled at this conference was the adoption of Lightning Talks based on an NSS model. Speakers register with the program convener beforehand and have just 4 minutes to talk on a topic related to caves and karst. Short, sharp and to the point. Alan Jackson and Serena Benjamin adapted this philosophy to the later Prusik Challenge to smash records and become the new King and Queen of the Rope. Later that evening, the film *Sixteen Legs* was shown and Cathie Plowman announced the Tasmanian Cave Spider, *Hickmania troglodytes*, was the inaugural Australian Cave Animal of the Year.

More kayaking Friday morning and the last day of presentations.

Bob Kershaw shared his experiences with Ozkarst and GIS on the Nullarbor and Norm Poulter talked about elements of Weebubbie Cave.

Steve Milner updated us on his latest Bunda Cliff expedition and we were spellbound by Stefan Eberhard's short film on cave diving on the Nullarbor. The rest of the presentations were an eclectic mix of science with Garry Smith talking about calthemite straw stalactites, Henry Shannon discussing field techniques for measuring streamflow, Susan White looking at unusual and isolated caves in Victoria, Silvana Iannello outlining discovered fauna of Britannia Creek Cave and Yvonne Ingeme debating the future of juvenile Southern Bent-wing Bats.

The final ASF Council meeting was held and everyone scarpered to get ready for the Caving Event of the Decade: The Conference Dinner; this year themed Bedrock City — Home of the Flintstones. With most attendees getting into the swing of it by way of costume and the school gymnasium fully decked out, including massive Jurassic rainforest backdrops and a full-sized



*Lots of fun for children was a feature of the Conference*

Wools-Cobb engineered Flintstone pedal car, the night was bound to be a huge success. And it was. ASF awardees and Conference prize winners were acknowledged during the formal part of the evening, then it was time to party!

Saturday morning loomed and it was time to pack up camp and head out to Mole Creek for the post-conference caving. Tasmania's reputation for having some of the best caves in Australia ensured a good turnout from conference participants.

Organisers had arranged for cavers to camp in the grounds of the Mole Creek Hotel with full use of the hotel bathrooms and laundry. A mini tent city emerged

during the day and 'tall' caving tales were bantered around in the pub every evening after a great day underground. Conference organisers ensured the classic Mole Creek caves were on the agenda and there was plenty on offer for everyone.

For those cavers who are yet to attend an ASF Conference, do yourself a favour and check out the next one in South Australia in 2021. Conferences are a great way to learn about caves and their environs, be inspired by projects and expeditions, and to network with fellow cavers. And of course, don't forget the pre- and post-conference caving where organisers vie to show off the very best their region has to offer.



*From left: Brian Evans, Steve Bourne and Garry K Smith take the 'footmobile' for a ride*

DAVE WOOLS-COBB

DAVE WOOLS-COBB



# 31st Australian Speleological Federation Conference

## The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania

**Dave Wools-Cobb**  
NC, SRCC



*Mount Cripps caving*

BRETT WILTSHIRE

**T**HE RECENT ASF conference was held in Devonport from December 30 2018 to Jan 4 2019, hosted by a committee of Northern Caverneers Inc. members, with assistance from Savage River Caving Club and a few from other caving clubs. We had a total of 139 registrants.

Two days of pre-conference caving involved 39 cavers in the Mole Creek area coordinated by David Wools-Cobb, and numerous trips in southern Tasmania coordinated by Alan Jackson (STC).

To facilitate many trips into Kubla Khan, a Karstcare project was negotiated with

Parks & Wildlife Service to ensure all trips were classed as management trips; this involved re-cleaning a rockfall route using a siphon, carting tube matting for a future job and replacing all climbing tapes throughout the cave.

Most conference attendees camped on the oval at the venue and we kicked off with the welcome barbecue on Sunday evening. This was a great time to catch up with old friends and meet lots of new ones.

Presentations began on the Monday morning with keynote speakers David Merritt (on Bioluminescence in Glowworms)

and Liz Reed (Naracoorte caves: faunal extinctions and past climates). Throughout the week an extremely engaging program of speakers was on offer on various themes including cave exploration, filming, white-nose syndrome, mapping, cave diving, ASF strategic plan, rescue preparedness, the Tasmanian cave spider and other fauna. A variety of posters were also on display including work by Karstcare, Bat Maternity Caves, Nullarbor Caves, Bell Holes and the recently completed Kubla Khan map.

Many off-site activities were on offer during the week, with mountain biking and



GARRY K SMITH

*The concert in the Gunns Plains show cave*



DAVE WOOLLS-COBB

*Bat skeleton, Lynds Cave*



GABRIEL KINZLER

*Jessica Bayles running commentary for Speleo Sports*

kayaking being very popular; one group even managed to find platypus.

After the council meeting on the Monday afternoon many headed for the Devonport foreshore for New Year's Eve celebrations, with others visiting the nearby historic house, Home Hill.

Speleo Sports was very popular with a challenging course designed to reflect some of the features and difficulties cavers encounter in Mole Creek caves.

Needless to say, all participants ended up wet and muddy, but with big smiles. This event was followed with a trivia event

which was a bit too challenging for most.

Mid-week involved a break from presentations with most heading to a variety of activities for the day including a tourist loop, mountain biking, kids day out, two bushwalks, Leven Canyon walk, two caving trips, and canyoning. Everybody then met late-afternoon at Wings Wildlife Park in Gunns Plains which enabled some to view our iconic Tasmanian devils and many other animals, and enjoy a barbecue meal.

This was followed by a visit to Gunns Plains Show Cave where groups were given a tour and entertained by a group of four

musicians during a short concert.

On Thursday it was back into presentations, dominated by a forum on Cave Access, Conservation and Management, followed by training in Self-Rescue and the Prusik Challenge.

The Prusik Challenge was won by two STC members (Alan Jackson and Serena Benjamin), which demonstrates that getting lots of big vertical shaft experience really does pay off.

Attendees were entertained on Thursday evening with a presentation from Niall Doran on the challenges of making the



DAVE WOOLSCOBBS

Clare Buswell NOT handling the duck-under



DAVE WOOLSCOBBS

Self rescue: Brian Evans and Garry K Smith



DAVE WOOLSCOBBS

Speleo Sports kids' team



DAVE WOOLSCOBBS

Tassie caves are wet — the Speleo Sports obstacle course

*Sixteen Legs* film, followed by a screening, and then we had the launch of the Cave Animal of the year: the Tasmanian Cave Spider (*Hickmania troglodytes*).

Friday involved a few more presentations, followed by the final ASF Council meeting and then our Cavers Dinner, with the theme: 'Bedrock City, Home of the Flintstones.'

Many rose to the challenge, dressing in theme with plenty of photos taken on and around the Flintstone car with an appropriate backdrop. Several ASF awards were presented during the dinner, which are

published elsewhere. Entries in the photographic competition were displayed, and the winners announced (with best photo by first time entry and attendee, Gabriel Kinzler).

The following morning saw people packing up campsites and dispersing for post-conference activities. These involved caving in Southern Tasmania (with bushfires causing a few changed plans), a three-day excursion to the Mt Cripps karst area on the Tasmanian west coast, hosted by Savage River Caving Club and forty cavers heading to Mole Creek where forty-four

trips/excursions were offered. These included a vertical rescue training day hosted by ACRC, a free after-hours tour of Marakoopa Show Cave, a karst interpretation walk, many vertical trips and some easy to challenging horizontal trips.

I know that many conference attendees then used the opportunity to tour various parts of Tasmania and enjoy what proved to be fantastic summer conditions (perhaps more pleasant than some parts of the northern island!).

We did manage to get very good media coverage, and hopefully greater public ex-

DAVE WOOL-COBB



ASF awardees. Front, L-R – Greg Leeder, Denis Marsh, Ken Boland. Behind, L-R – John Taylor, Julia James, Henry Shannon, Susan White, Nicholas White, Janice March, Cathie Plowman, David Butler, Cath Hemley, Ann-Marie Meredith

DAVE WOOL-COBB



Jess Bayles opening the conference

DAVE WOOL-COBB



John Taylor negotiating Lynds Cave

posure for caves and caving in Tasmania. Our club even picked up a new member!

Many thanks must go to our conference sponsors; without their help it would have been impossible to offer such a good value program. These included Wilderness Wear, Aspiring Safety, Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service, Weidmuller Lighting, Aspire Adventure Equipment (Launceston), Climbing Anchors, Pennicott Wilderness Journeys, Petzl, Smitten Merino, TFM engineering, Engadine Cottages (Mole Creek). Outside our NC/SRCC committee we had fantastic help from Brian Evans

(photo comp and self-rescue training), Alan Jackson (IT and caving in Southern Tas), Marilyn Scott (Website), Ruth Evans and Jean Van Nynanten (Kitchen), Ian Collette (Prusik Challenge), Trish, Ben & Geoff Deer (Gunns Plains Cave), Gabriel Kinzler (IT help) Kim Skogvold and the many conference attendees who pitched in with the myriad jobs needed to be done to keep the conference running smoothly.

A special thanks goes to our in-cave concert providers: Emily Sheppard, Yyan Ng, Eric and Eleanor March.

Also, we are extremely grateful to all

those cavers who led the total of 51 trips on offer in the Mole Creek area: from NC, SRCC, STC, MCC, ISS, NHVSS and the STC members who facilitated trips in Southern Tasmania.

The committee plans to publish all papers submitted on-line. Conference registrants will be notified when this is available.

Feedback from the 31st ASF conference; The Darkness Beneath: Caving Tasmania has been overwhelmingly positive. We sincerely hope that all attendees had a great time and look forward to the next event in two years' time in South Australia.

# The Darkness Beneath is Revealed

## Conference Photo Competition Results

**Brian Evans**  
ISS

**T**HE PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION at the 31st ASF Conference attracted more than 101 entries from 10 first-timers and seven old-timers, with approximately 50 voting responses. A full list of all competition categories and winning and highly commended entries is on page 21. Other winning photographs are on pages 2 and 34.



*First-timer Winner Best in Show and Cavers in Action categories: Cavers Care by Gabriel Kinzler*

**T**HE ASF conference photo competition brought in some excellent photos and stimulated much conversation about where and how photos had been taken and what people had been doing.

There were many interesting photos that did not win prizes and it was good to hear about the trips the photographer had been doing.

I think there's evidence of fewer lighting effects and more uncontrived action shots.

Whether this is a trend because of the

better lighting and camera sensitivity that we now have, or a reflection of a new generation of photographers, is not yet clear. I look forward to the next competition for the new images, the new stories and to see if my observation is correct.

Many of the first time entrants were awarded prizes in the open categories and Best in Show recipient, Gabriel Kinzler, became somewhat embarrassed with the number of times he was called out.

Not that he should have been — he

submitted many excellent pictures and they reflected caves and cavers as cavers see them and a public vote will most likely reward such photos.

Garry K Smith, always ready to share his images for cave promotion, also won several prizes with his usual high quality collection of entries.

Bring on the next competition, and, in the meantime, take your camera out caving and try for some images that really show caving.

— Brian Evans



## THE DARKNESS BENEATH IS REVEALED: CONFERENCE PHOTO COMPETITION RESULTS



*Best in Show and Caves categories — First-timer Highly Commended: Aragonite in Genghis Khan by Ben Lovett*



*Best in Show and Cavers in Action categories — First-timer Highly Commended: Descent over water by Steve Milner*



*Caves category: Highly commended — A Long Way to the Top, Keller Cellar, Mount Anne by Alan Jackson*



THE DARKNESS BENEATH IS REVEALED: CONFERENCE PHOTO COMPETITION RESULTS



Caves category — Winner: Pool wonders, Tailender Cave by Garry K Smith



Fun and Humour category: First-timer winner —  
Tangled Tango by Gabriel Knizler



Cavers in Action category: Highly commended —  
Gunns Plains Wallow by David Wools-Cobb



Dreamed — Surreal and Fantasy category: Winner —  
Nah, ya won't get through that hole! by Garry K Smith



Entrances and Karst category: First-timer highly commended —  
Well, that didn't exceed expectations! by Janine MicKinnon

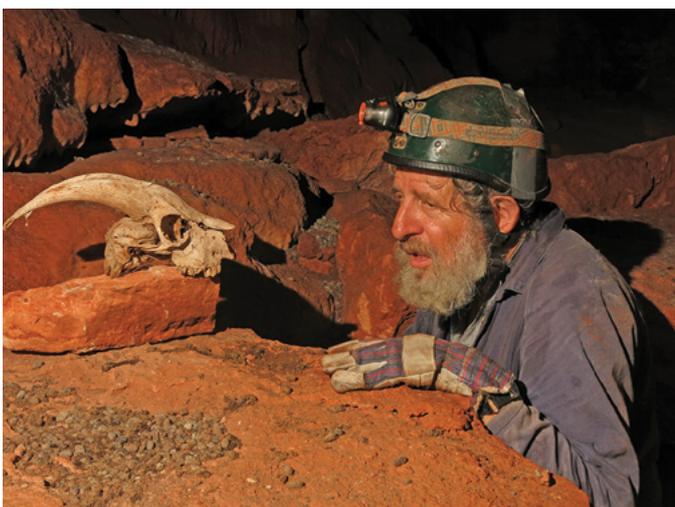




Bugs, Beasts and Biology category: Highly commended —  
Tasmanian Cave Spider by Andrew Baker



Bugs, Beasts and Biology category: First-timer winner —  
Cute and Cuddly by Cath Helmsley



Fun and Humour category: Highly commended —  
Oh dear, this is not a good sign! by David Wools-Cobb



Entrances and Karst category: First-timer winner —  
Remarkable Cave, Tasmania by Janice March



Bugs, Beasts and Biology category: winner —  
Cave Spider egg sac hangs by a thread by Garry K Smith





*Dreamed — Surreal and Fantasy category: Highly Commended: We have found Paradise! by Garry K Smith*

**CAVERS IN ACTION**

*First-Timer Highly Commended*

Descent over water

*Steve Milner*

*First-Timer Winner*

Cavers care

*Gabriel Kinzler*

**BUGS, BEASTS AND BIOLOGY**

*First-Timer Winner*

Cute and Cuddly

*Cath Hemley*

**CAVES**

*First-Timer Highly Commended*

Aragonite in Genghis Khan

*Ben Lovett*

*First-Timer Winner*

A long way to the top — Keller Cellar,

Mount Anne

*Alan Jackson*

**DREAMED – SURREAL AND FANTASY**

**FANTASY**

*First-Timer Winner*

Kaveleidoscope

*Gabriel Kinzler*

**ENTRANCES AND KARST**

*First-Timer Highly Commended*

Well, that didn't exceed expectations!

*Janine McKinnon*

*First-Timer Winner*

Remarkable Cave, Tasmania

*Janice March*

**FUN AND HUMOUR**

*First-Timer Winner*

Tangled Tango

*Gabriel Kinzler*

**BEST IN SHOW**

*First-Timer Highly Commended*

Descent over water

*Steve Milner*

*First-Timer Highly Commended*

Aragonite in Genghis Khan

*Ben Lovett*

*First-Timer Winner*

Cavers care

*Gabriel Kinzler*

And now for those with experience (open)

**CAVERS IN ACTION**

*Highly Commended*

Jump!

*Dirk Stoffels*

*Highly Commended*

Gunns Plain Wallow

David Wools-Cobb

*Winner*

Cavers care

*Gabriel Kinzler*

**BUGS, BEASTS AND BIOLOGY**

*Highly Commended*

Crab guards its territory deep in

Nurau Cave — Atiu Is

*Garry K. Smith*

*Highly Commended*

Tasmanian cave spider

*Andrew Baker*

*Winner*

Cave spider egg sac hangs by a thread

*Garry K. Smith*

**CAVES**

*Highly Commended*

Weebubbie

*Dirk Stoffels*

*Highly Commended*

A long way to the top — Keller Cellar,

Mount Anne

*Alan Jackson*

*Winner*

Pool wonders – Tailender Cave

*Garry K. Smith*

**DREAMED – SURREAL AND FANTASY**

**FANTASY**

*Highly Commended*

We Have Found Paradise!

*Garry K. Smith*

*Winner*

Nah, ya won't get through that hole!

*Garry K. Smith*

**ENTRANCES AND KARST**

*Highly Commended*

Well, that didn't exceed expectations!

*Janine McKinnon*

*Winner*

Remarkable Cave, Tasmania

*Janice March*

**FUN AND HUMOUR**

*Highly Commended*

Oh dear, this is not a good sign!

*David Wools-Cobb*

*Winner*

Tangled Tango

*Gabriel Kinzler*

**BEST IN SHOW**

*Highly Commended*

Pool Wonders — Tailender Cave

*Garry K. Smith*

*Winner*

Cavers care

*Gabriel Kinzler*

# A Strategic Approach to Improve Cave Access and Conservation

Steve Milner, Stefan Eberhard and Nicholas White

**T**HE 31st ASF Conference held in Devonport, Tasmania hosted a forum and panel discussion to raise awareness of recent developments in various States and Territories that impact access to caves for speleologists, including cave zoning and onerous permit systems.

It also sought to foster engagement, discussion and collaboration between speleologists and cave managers on matters of concern to ASF members.

To establish context, speakers representing cave managers, speleologists and researchers spoke about different karst areas and management systems from around Australia; they then formed the panel to discuss aspects relating to four key threads:

1. Common issues and challenges with existing cave conservation, management and access systems at state, territory and national levels;
2. Different perspectives and approaches on cave conservation and access management;
3. Opportunities for speleologists and cave managers to improve cave conservation practices; and
4. Strategic priorities.

The forum was very well attended and generated open and constructive discussions about key issues and challenges with existing cave conservation, management and access systems across most Australian states and territories. The panel responded to questions from the forum and from this public discussion, six key themes emerged.

## DEVELOP SHARED VALUES AND UNDERSTANDING WITH LAND MANAGERS AND OWNERS

There is no doubt that there are shared values between speleologists and land managers, yet these have generally been poorly acknowledged and promoted. Hence there is a need to commence dialogue in order to achieve alignment on values of caves, landforms, and the stakeholder groups who value them (i.e. general public, land owners, managers, researchers, speleolo-



Facilitator Steve Milner, with the panel (L-R): Stefan Eberhard, Greg Thomas, Andrew Baker, Susan White, Clare Buswell and Nick White (Steve Bourne is out of view)

gists, traditional owners, etc.), because each group has different perspectives and priorities. The panel recognised that the issue is further complicated as different parts of a cave and/or its environment may have different conservation values.

It was agreed that while the initial approach should be to develop and document common values, the question was raised who should this be with, as there is no single voice to deal with? A good start which was recognised was to develop a memorandum of understanding with the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association (ACKMA)<sup>1</sup> and then follow this up with other organisations with similar values. A parallel approach should be to engage with land managers and owners on high priority conservation matters.

The forum acknowledged that there is a long way to go and the ASF has a responsibility to lead the conversation, including engaging with indigenous communities.

## BUILD LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS AND TRUST

One of the challenges identified was that speleologists develop a long-term relationship. This approach was ratified by the ASF Council on 3 January 2019.

ship with karst and caves, typically spanning decades per individual; however, over the same time periods, land managers in government departments typically change much more frequently.

The frequency of change results in a loss of corporate knowledge and trust in relationships (which is generally retained by an individual). This cyclical loss requires speleologists to rebuild relationships with new managers from scratch time and time again.

The panel considered that by raising the profile of the ASF and promoting the ASF's inherent knowledge and skills of its members, this would reinforce the status of members in the eyes of the land managers. It was thought that when supported by proactive communication, and a consistent approach from the caving community, relationships and trust could strengthen because it becomes more about the relationship between the organisations, as well as the relationship between the individuals.

To support this, the ASF has a role to ensure that its members are consistent in approach; techniques to do this include peer review of capability and the promotion of ASF Codes and Guidelines to guide its members.

**PROACTIVE, CONSISTENT CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT**

Across Australia there are layers of permits and a huge variability of access requirements; some regions have strong and lasting relationships, but others have *ad hoc* processes. Another problem is that there are conservative managers who choose to limit access (there are many reasons for this including lack of resources, or simply not knowing how best to manage their natural resources).

The panel discussed that on one hand, limiting access is a conservative conservation action but this limits legitimate exploration and science. On the other hand, unregulated access has the potential to damage the cave environment. Therefore, a balance needs to be achieved by the managers whose duty is to care for the land and the speleologists who access the land, and also care for it. The panel conversation then moved to the work health and safety needs (employees vs. speleologists), insurance and the management of conservation.

It was also recognised that the quality and accessibility of access information is important, as usually one has to be a local speleologist to know access conditions in state-controlled parks and reserves. While this is a local or regional matter, each management authority has a duty to ensure that caves can be reasonably accessed without overly obscure, complicated or bureaucratic processes. In a practical sense, the sharing of values and building relationships and trust by the ASF, combined with consistent and user-friendly permit application processes put in place by land management authorities will benefit access and cave conservation.

**STATE OF CAVES, MONITORING, AND REGIONAL LIAISON**

It was recognised that understanding of the overall 'state of cave environments' in Australia is inadequate. There are some local / regional patches of strong knowledge, but from a nationwide perspective there is no consistent approach, nor an examination of risk and threats to cave and karst environments at local levels.

The panel discussed that for the ASF to have one voice is difficult, but this may be addressed by State- or Territory-based cave access or advisory committees. In Western Australia for example, speleologists are well represented on the Cave Management & Access Committee (CMAC). In other states and regions however, speleologists are poorly represented or excluded. The panel postulated that an ideal outcome would be to have ASF representatives whose role it is to; (i) safeguard and protect their re-



Bronwen Prazak recording panel discussion points

**ASF Values**

The ASF's values are:

- We are dedicated to safeguard and protect the cave and karst environment;
- We strive to bring together and represent those interested in caves and karst in Australia;
- We share knowledge; and
- We foster speleology in all its aspects.

gion; (ii) have a standing role on land and conservation management; (iii) be able to influence policy effectively. The ASF has a long way to go to achieve this.

The requirement to monitor the condition of caves was considered essential in managing conservation values of caves, to assess whether or not management actions are effective, or indeed whether or not the ASF's Codes and Guidelines are achieving intended outcomes e.g. Minimal Impact Caving Code.

The approach to assess, monitor and respond to environmental changes and threats requires coordination at the national level and commitment and energy by the ASF to deliver strong conservation outcomes.

**SPELEOLOGISTS ARE CITIZEN SCIENTISTS**

There is a distinction between recreational caving in the sense of a leisure activity, and (generally) what ASF members do, that is to explore, survey, research and document caves and their values. ASF members are speleologists who are almost always self-funded, they explore, map, record their findings and contribute to scientific knowledge. The panel reinforced that, by their actions, speleologists are citizen scientists and contribute thousands of hours every year to building knowledge about the cave environments, which ulti-

mately assists professional scientists, land managers and conservation.

The value of speleologists as citizen scientists is under-played; the ASF has a role to communicate this valuable inherent capability of its members as speleologists first and foremost, and, the ASF as a federation of speleologists versus leisure-seeking cavers. The ASF has a further role to bring awareness of the Federation's scientific capabilities to professional scientific disciplines and encourage scientists to engage more with ASF members.

**PRESERVING KNOWLEDGE AND MENTORING**

ASF members collectively have a deep resource of knowledge, yet this is currently inaccessible to many. The panel discussed that while existing knowledge is in the process of being preserved, it needs to become more accessible if it is to be useful for improving the conservation and management of caves.

Strategies to make speleological knowledge more accessible include digitisation and cataloguing; but this needs to be promoted to all stakeholders to ensure that the information is readily available when needed. This is particularly important as the aging demographic of speleologists passes its knowledge on to new generations of speleologists. At the same time, respecting and acknowledging intellectual property and protecting sensitive information (e.g. some cave locations) are big challenges both now and in the future.

The ASF has a role to improve leadership in this area, to have succession planning and mentor the next generation of speleologists.

**THE FUTURE – STRATEGIC MEASURABLE OUTCOMES**

How does one measure success? The panel identified that the priority goal is for the ASF to be front of mind when land managers and other stakeholders consider

## The Panel

The panel included:

- **Steve Bourne** (former Manager, Naracoorte Caves World Heritage Conservation Park, former President, Australasian Cave & Karst Management Association);
  - **Clare Buswell, PhD** (Flinders University Speleological Society Inc.);
  - **Nicholas White** (Chair: ASF Conservation Commission, Victorian Speleological Association);
  - **Susan White, PhD, OAM** (Victorian Speleological Association, Environmental Geoscience Latrobe University);
  - **Andrew Baker** (Project Officer, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service);
  - **Greg Thomas** (Western Australian Speleological Group);
  - **Stefan Eberhard, PhD** (Director, Subterranean Ecology Pty Ltd, Tasmanian Speleological Liaison Council).
- The panel discussion was led by **Steve Milner, PhD** (Cave Exploration Group of SA).
- Panel discussion points were recorded by **Bronwen Prazak** (Southern Tasmanian Caverneers).



CATHIE PLOWMAN

The cave access, conservation and management forum at the 31st ASF Conference

aspects of cave access, conservation and management. The measurable **outcome**, therefore, is for ASF representatives to be invited to the table as part of the process before change occurs.

The ASF Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024, which was approved by the ASF Council on 3 January 2019, has identified a range of pertinent actions to address cave access, conservation, and management. These include: access to knowledge and information (Actions #3 to #7 inclusive); integration of speleological research (Action #8); and the requirement for proactive advocacy (Actions #11 to #15 inclusive).

<http://tinyurl.com/y2rn7jcn>

As evidenced by the forum, there is a long way to go for the ASF to achieve mea-

asurable outcomes in the area of cave access, conservation and management; this will require a significant commitment of energy and resources, and leadership on all the points above, if we are to be successful.

We hope this article will stimulate further constructive discussion about cave access, conservation and management, including articles in *Caves Australia*, from the panellists and other contributors.

For further information, contact the authors:

**Steve Milner** [steve.milner@adelaide.on.net](mailto:steve.milner@adelaide.on.net)

**Stefan Eberhard** [stefan@subterraneanecology.com.au](mailto:stefan@subterraneanecology.com.au)

**Nicholas White** [nicholaswhite@netspace.net.au](mailto:nicholaswhite@netspace.net.au)

# Balancing Access and Conservation Through Collaborative Relationships

Stefan Eberhard and Bronwen Prazak

*“... cavers find, explore and map caves. Their efforts make research possible for the scientists. The scientific results prove that caves have value and need to be managed properly ...”*

Dr George Veni, President International Union of Speleology (*Caves Australia* 206, December 2018)

**T**HIS ARTICLE follows on from the preceding article and provides additional context and personal perspectives, and tables the key points recorded during the forum discussion on cave access, conservation and management, held at the 31st ASF Conference in Devonport, Tasmania, January 2019.

It then addresses the questions: What did the forum achieve? and ‘Where to from here?’

Across Australia, a tension exists between speleologists and land managers. This is because land managers have the challenging task of protecting caves and

cave values, while speleologists, by their calling, visit caves. People visiting caves may cause impacts which lead to irreversible degradation of cave values. Land managers typically respond to this potential threat by imposing limitations on access. This involves permit systems, which are sometimes onerous, and which discourage and even prohibit speleologists.

Speleologists appreciate caves. They explore, map, photograph, document and celebrate caves. Like land managers, speleologists want to protect caves. Speleologists use various methods to regulate their activities and impacts in caves, including codes of

practice such as the ASF Minimum Impact Caving Code, and lightweight “infrastructure” such as string-lines, route markers, small signs and boot-wash stations.

Speleologists are the first and primary source of knowledge and expertise about caves, for both scientists and land managers. Speleologists provide scientists and land managers with maps of caves, and they identify sensitive values, such as speleothems, fauna and bones that need study or protection.

Ironically, the maps and knowledge that speleologists provide to land managers may ultimately result in onerous access

## BALANCING ACCESS AND CONSERVATION THROUGH COLLABORATIVE RELATIONSHIPS

restrictions being imposed on speleologists. This results in tensions in the relationships between speleologists and land managers, however both parties have the shared goal of protecting cave values (Figure 1).

While acknowledging that access restrictions may be part and parcel of protecting cave values, across Australia in recent years there is a disquieting trend by land management authorities towards ever tighter and onerous controls on recreational caving and speleological activities (Figure 2). This reactionary shift in the policy climate rides on a two-pronged fork; one prong touts environmental protection, the other prong touts public safety, duty of care, risk management and litigious fear. Occasionally these two policies appear to be confused and misapplied, with putative safety concerns used as a rationale to prohibit access while indirectly protecting environmental or cultural values. These developments are unsettling because they are disproportionate, occasionally misguided, and they impact legitimate recreational and speleological activities.

The growing regulatory threats to access are spotlighted in the ASF's Strategic Plan 2019-2024 which was released in December 2018 and approved in January 2019. The development of the Strategic Plan included a contextual analysis to capture the factors that influence the organisation, both from an internal perspective and from an external perspective.

The contextual analyses identified two key threats facing the ASF, namely 'Access to karst' and 'Regulations' (Table 1). We suggest that these two threats (= old story) may also be taken as opportunities to effect change, namely:

- (1) Engage with land managers; and
- (2) Influence policy (= new story), and recommend they be integrated into ASF's Strategic Plan.

Separately from the Strategic Plan, concerns in the speleological community about the growing trend in regulatory threats to access catalysed organisation of the forum and panel discussion on cave access, conservation and management, which was hosted at the 31st ASF Conference held in Devonport, Tasmania in early January 2019. The conference was attended by more than 120 speleologists from around Australia, and the forum generated open and constructive discussions about key issues and challenges across most Australian states and territories (except Queensland and Northern Territory).

Different perspectives and regional approaches to cave conservation and access management were described and discussed. Perspectives were primarily from

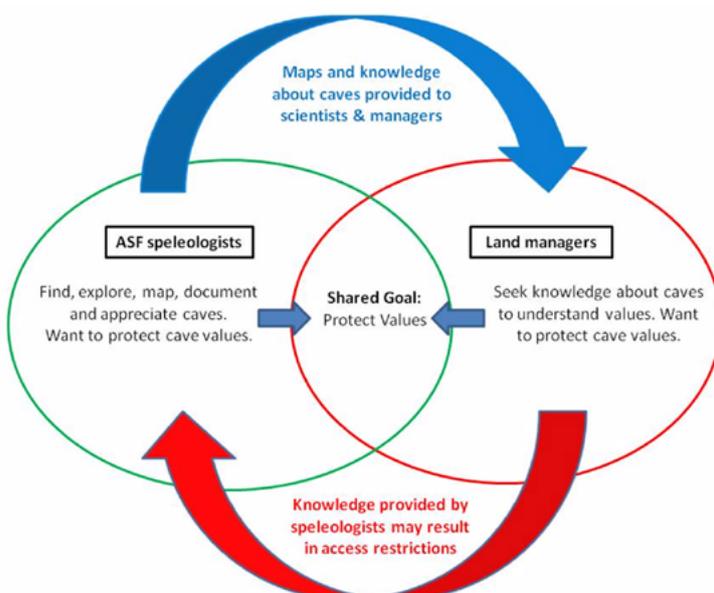


Figure 1. The maps and knowledge that speleologists provide to land managers may result in onerous access restrictions being imposed on speleologists, which results in tensions in the relationships between speleologists and land managers, however both parties have the shared goal of protecting cave values.



Figure 2. Examples of the trend in access and interpretation policy is reflected in sign "culture" which has shifted from being informative and inviting curiosity while taking due care, towards a litigious and fearful focus on the hazards and dangers that discourages curiosity and appreciation. Left (top and bottom): Junee Cave, Tasmania signs installed 1990s; Right (top) Junee Cave walking track installed > 2015; (bottom) Tommy Grahams Cave, Nullarbor, installed ca. 2018.

<p><b>Strengths</b>                  Leadership                  Knowledge                  Advocacy                  Codes and Guidelines                  Dedication and Purpose</p> <p><b>Weaknesses</b>                  Aging Demographic                  Fragmented Activities                  Engaging with Members                  Reduced Exploration</p>	<p><b>Threats</b>                  Access to Karst                  Regulations</p> <p><b>Opportunities</b>                  Use Technology                  Engage with Managers                  Influence Policy</p>
---	---

Table 1. SWOT analysis reproduced from ASF's Strategic Plan 2019 – 2024 (Appendix VI, pp. 23-24). Recommended additional opportunities in italics.

those of speleologists although numerous ASF members at the forum including the speakers (named in preceding article) have worked as, or closely with, scientists and land managers.

Indigenous perspectives were under-represented at the forum but are noted here as important to bring on board as we move forward.

**WHAT DID THE FORUM ACHIEVE AND WHERE TO FROM HERE?**

Table 2 summarises the key points recorded during the forum open discussion, structured using Dr David Drake’s Narrative Coaching framework and BEAM tool for individual and organisational change. Narrative coaching is a mindful, holistic and experiential approach that helps people shift their stories about themselves, others, and life itself to create new possibilities and new results <https://www.narrativecoaching.com/what-is-narrative-coaching.html>

The BEAM tool is useful for clarifying the current situation (=old story), and the shifts in mindset, behaviour and the environment that are needed if there is to be a new aspiration (= new story).

*Old story: problems with access, knowledge gaps, breakdown or lack of relationships, mistrust, limited collaboration, lack of recognition for what speleologists are contributing.*

*New story: collaboration, continued access, corporate memory maintained, knowledge, data and resources shared, speleological expertise recognised, utilised and appreciated, mutual respect.*

What would it be like if in all of our speleological endeavours (on the ground, in the caves, in our interactions with other cavers and with the land managers) we were intentionally operating from this new story?

The overarching aspiration that came out of the forum may be stated as: **‘Balancing access and conservation through collaborative relationships’.**

How could we use a common overarching aspiration such as ‘Balancing access and conservation through collaborative relationships’ as our individual and collective mantra to step up in whatever arena we are in and proactively be sharing, trusting, collaborating and respectful? The forum showcased some great examples of collab-

**MINDSET**

*What is the current situation?*

- Speleologists provide maps and knowledge to land managers
- Maps and knowledge may be used to justify restricting access to caves
- Access restrictions may be disproportionate or misguided
- Access policies may be applied inconsistently
- Permit systems may be onerous
- State of cave environments is poorly documented or monitored
- ASF expertise is under-recognised
- Alternative in-cave protective measures such as route marking are under-utilised
- Land managers move on and knowledge is lost
- Trust and relationships between managers and speleologists is inconsistent, often difficult

**ASPIRATION**

*What is the aspiration?*

- Balancing access and conservation through collaborative relationships
- Cave values are protected
- Access for speleologists is facilitated
- ASF expertise is recognised and sought by land managers and policy makers
- Improved leadership and mentoring within ASF
- Alternative protective measures utilised
- State of cave environments documented and monitored
- Access regulations are proportionate and relevant
- Access policies are applied consistently
- Collaborative relationships between managers and speleologists
- Trust

**BEHAVIOUR**

*What matters?*

- Speleologists proactively initiate ‘soft infrastructure’ protective measures in caves
- Speleologists report on state of cave environments and monitoring priorities
- ASF clubs nourish relations with local land management authorities
- Speleologists consulted at start of access policy and planning processes
- Issues addressed through local standing management advisory committees
- Supportive leadership and mentoring within ASF clubs
- Speleology, in all its aspects, fostered by ASF clubs

**ENVIRONMENT**

*What works?*

- Relationships and trust between speleologists and land managers
- Consistent national policy on cave conservation and management
- Cave access permit systems less onerous
- Land management policy and processes are transparent and accountable
- Methods for monitoring and assessing state of cave environments; measureable outcomes
- ASF leadership, mentoring, peer guidance, ethics, minimal impact, best practices
- ASF recognised first and foremost as a speleological organisation versus recreational caving
- ASF, together with ACKMA, recognised as leading national bodies of expertise in caves and karst

*Table 2 is a summary of key points recorded during the forum open panel discussion, structured using Dr David Drake’s Narrative Coaching framework and BEAM tool for individual and organisational change. Prepared by Bronwen Prazak.*

orative and trusting working relationships. to commit to doing? Has this become an active movement for sustainable change and not just something we discussed or criticised in a forum and wrote up as an article?



# Australian Cave Animal of the Year

**Cathie Plowman**  
NC

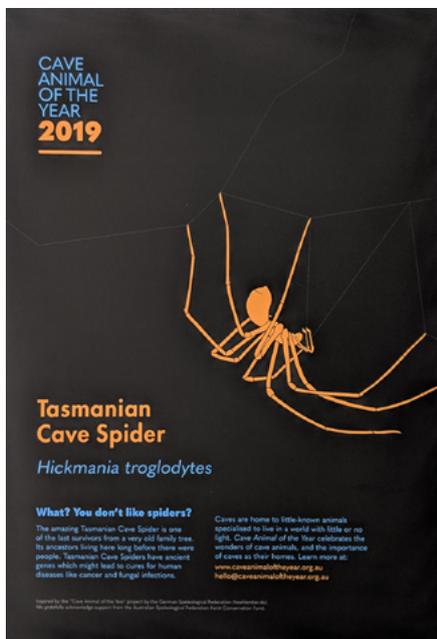
The Tasmanian cave spider *Hickmania troglodytes* is the inaugural Australian Cave Animal of the Year, a program announced during the recent ASF conference.

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.

Some beautiful Cave Animal of the Year promotional products have been produced: Bookmarks and stickers are read-

ily 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](mailto: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 bush-walking clubs etc.: [www.caveanimaloftheyear.org.au](http://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.

## ASF Conference Prusik Challenge Reece High School Thursday 3rd January 2019

Rope Height 30 metres

Name	Time (min, secs, 100/secs)	Club	Name	Time (min, secs, 100/secs)	Club
Alan Jackson	1.39.39	STC	Tom Porritt (Rope walker)	3.25.83	STC/VSA
Serena Benjamin	2.01.25	STC	Anna Ossig-Bonanno	3.35.67	MSS
Janine McKinnon	2.23.28	STC	Janice March	3.54.47	NC
Gregoriy Tsaplin	2.41.35	WASG	Steve Milner	4.01.44	CEGSA
Laure-Anne Thierrin	2.49.79	WASG	Ola Löfquist	4.02.86	International/STC
Greg Thomas	2.53.59	WASG	Eric March	4.04.37	NC
Gabriel Kinzler	2.54.84	STC	Alan Caton	4.05.94	RSS
Brett Wiltshire	3.03.83	WASG	Alison Irvine	4.07.66	CCC
Sarah Gilbert	3.18.71	FUSSI/STC	Deb Hunter	4.27.51	MCCC
Andrew Thomas	3.18.88	WASG	Silvana Iannello	7.13.34	VSA
Eleanor March	3.24.21	NC	Abhijeet Anand	5.15 (DNF)	VSA

# Getting Media Coverage of your Cave Story

Cathie Plowman  
 NC

**T**HE 31st ASF conference is over and, thankfully, most of the work that went with it. Having said that, I've no regrets about my contribution to it. The conference was obviously a success and enjoyed by the 140 or so people who attended.

One of the conference roles I took on was to write and distribute a media release each day of the conference. Why do this? My thinking was that with all the effort to host the conference, it was a wasted opportunity not to put a little extra effort in and try to link the conference with the broader community and raise the profile of the ASF, caves and speleology.

I'm pleased to write that my efforts worked. We had media coverage in newspapers and on television and radio news both in Tasmania and on the mainland. I had a media enquiry from London in response to one of my media releases.

Some people complimented me on my efforts (thanks for that) and others commented how they can never get media interest in their events.

You don't get media coverage by chance or good-luck. It takes effort, but it's not onerous.

■ **Getting started.** You need to write a media release and distribute it. The media won't write a story or send a journalist and camera out based on a phone message. Write a brief story and distribute it to the media.

■ **Your story needs to be something that the media believe that the wider community will want to read.**

This might mean that you change the angle of your story to get the media interested. Here's an example from the recent conference.

On the first day of presentations my media release did not focus on the invited keynote speakers.

I chose to focus on the threats to Australian bats, and issues for agriculture, should White Nose Syndrome be introduced into Australia and linked this to Yvonne Ingame's talk on the need for cavers to be proactive with their gear hygiene. The result was the ABC doing an interview which was broadcast on the news and in rural reports both in Tasmania and on the mainland.

■ **Distribute your story.** Get your story to a news desk.

Don't worry about contacting a particular person as they might be off duty or busy on something else. Get the email contacts for your local newspaper, television and radio contacts and distribute your story to these in a single email, using bcc.

Getting the relevant email addresses for the news-desks prior to the conference took me some time as these addresses were generally not obvious from the internet.

I phoned most of the media services or called into their Launceston offices to get the correct emails.

Getting through to media on the phone also took patience; but getting the right email contacts was worth the effort.

The local offices will often send the story 'up-line' if they think it has national relevance.

They are looking for stories that appeal to their readers, viewers and listeners, not what you want to tell them. So, write your story to appeal to their audience.

■ **A picture 'tells a thousand words'** so have photos on file that you can email out with your media release. Don't send photos where the photographer insists on being credited. 'Photo supplied' is often a usual caption when the photos are not taken by in-house staff.

■ **Contacts.** You need to provide the contact details of a reliable person who will be able to take phone calls and do a media interview on the subject.

Someone who knows a lot about the subject but who doesn't want to be interviewed, or interviews poorly, is not the best person. The same goes for someone who will miss the phone calls because they are out caving.

In summary, it takes an effort, but it's not rocket science. I was lucky enough to work on the Franklin River campaign and learnt media skills from Bob Brown and Geoff Law as well as the many journalists who covered that campaign. The technology has changed since those days, but the basics of getting your story covered have not.

I'd certainly recommend that future ASF conference and event organisers put an effort into media coverage. It's one way of linking what's important to us about caves to the wider community.

■ *Contact the author if you wish to view her conference media releases or seek further information on how to be an effective media tart - Ed.*



# Congratulations Harry Burkitt

## Australia's Young Environmentalist of the Year and winner of the NCC Marie Byles Award

Compiled by Garry K Smith

**M**UCH OF the following text comes from *Colong Bulletin*, No. 268, September 2017, located on the internet at <http://tinyurl.com/y3e62hz5> and the *Cowra Guardian* newspaper report 30th October 2018, <http://tinyurl.com/y4n-rn6yd>

*Background to Harry's activities leading to the two awards received during October 2018.*

Harry's background is strongly associated with speleology, having been a member of Hills Speleological Society, Sydney University Speleological Society (SUSS) and from 2012 to the present, a member of Newcastle and Hunter Valley Speleological Society (NHVSS).

He began caving at the age of 13 and his first caving trip was to Cliefden Caves in Central West NSW. He has always had a deep passion for the natural environment, especially karst areas in and around the Blue Mountains.

His involvement in the speleological world led him to become the inaugural secretary of the Save Cliefden Caves Association (SCCA) in 2014 at the age of 17. This group was formed in Sydney to run the public advocacy campaign to protect the internationally significant Cliefden Caves and fossils.

The SCCA was formed shortly after the local campaign was kicked off by the Orange Speleological Society, supported by the NSW Speleological Liaison Council and ASF.

Both groups worked towards a common goal to save the caves and fossil sites from the threat of the proposed Needles Gap dam.

An important win during the campaign was the announcement by the State Government to list the caves and fossil sites on the NSW State Heritage Register. On 30th October 2018 the NSW Water Minister, Niall Blair, announced that the NSW Government would no longer pursue building



*Harry Burkitt receiving the Australia's Young Environmentalist of the Year Award from Bob Brown*

a dam on the Belubula River, saying a dam at Cranky Rock would get tied up in too much green and red tape.

Niall Blair announced that the dam wall at Wyangala would be raised 10 metres in preference to constructing a new dam at Cranky Rock near Canowindra, and confirmed the Cranky Rock dam was not preferred.

This confirmed that the proposal to build any new dam on the Belubula River was off the table and there would no longer be a threat to the Cliefden Caves and fossil sites.

Harry studies a double degree in Political Theory and Geology at the University of Sydney, while also holding the full-time position of Campaigner Manager with the Colong Foundation for Wilderness, directing the campaign to save the wild rivers of the southern Blue Mountains from the raising of Warragamba Dam wall by 14 metres.

The NSW government's proposal to

raise the dam wall is to limit flooding in the Nepean Valley for new floodplain housing developments, by instead flooding and permanently damaging extensive areas of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park.

There are ongoing issues with this proposal, many of which are complex in nature.

Harry's continued dedication to these environmental causes has led to these two awards during October 2018.

### AUSTRALIA'S YOUNG ENVIRONMENTALIST OF THE YEAR AWARD

*Extract from Bob Brown Foundation media release, 29th October, 2018:*

'The Bob Brown Foundation presented its 7th annual Environment Awards in Hobart today, honouring environmentalists from across the world and around Australia.

'The awards were established in 2012 to acknowledge environmentalists campaign-



Harry Burkitt receives the Nature Conservation Council Marie Byles Award for most inspiring community action initiative

ing to protect the natural world, with a particular focus on activism and a preparedness to confront environmental destruction head on.

‘The Young Environmentalist of the Year, with a \$2000 prize, goes to 21-year-old Harry Burkitt from NSW.

‘Harry is the Colong Foundation for Wilderness campaign manager, campaigning against the proposed raising of the Warragamba Dam wall, which would flood and permanently destroy extensive areas of the World Heritage listed Blue Mountains National Park.

**NATURE CONSERVATION COUNCIL (NCC) MARIE BYLES AWARD FOR MOST INSPIRING COMMUNITY ACTION INITIATIVE**

The 2018 award was presented by

author and architecture critic Elizabeth Farrelly, NCC Chairman Professor Don White and Ms Smolski on Saturday 20th October 2018.

The citation reads:

‘The Colong Foundation for Wilderness launched its Wild Rivers Campaign in the Blue Mountains in March this year to save 65 kilometres of World Heritage listed wild rivers from the proposed raising of Warragamba Dam wall.

‘They challenged the Berejiklian government’s move to change the National Parks and Wildlife Act to allow the flooding of the Blue Mountains National Park.

‘The group has garnered high-profile support, including from former federal Greens leader Bob Brown and former NSW Environment Minister Bob Debus.

‘Representatives of the campaign have

met with World Heritage Committee delegates in Bahrain and written a joint letter to the NSW Premier with signatories including former Australian Environment Minister Peter Garrett, UNSW ecologist Professor Richard Kingsford, businessman and environmentalist Geoff Cousins and Mr Debus.

‘Raising Warragamba Dam wall would push several Australian threatened species towards extinction.

‘The World Heritage listed river valleys under threat protect 50 per cent of the habitat for the most threatened woodland fauna species of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area.

‘There are 65 kilometres of wilderness streams within the world heritage area that would be drowned by the raised dam, and Colong is working tirelessly to fight this.’



# International Union of Speleology

## Call to Action

### International Year of Caves and Karst

**Dr George Veni**  
UIS President

**T**HIS REPORT is part of an annual series from the International Union of Speleology (UIS) to the newsletters of its member countries. The purpose of these reports is to reach all cavers in the member countries with important news from the Union. For more information about the UIS, visit [www.uis-speleo.org](http://www.uis-speleo.org) which includes the *UIS Bulletin* with much more news and details. This report focuses on what could be the most important speleological event ever!

#### WHAT IS AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR?

International Years are typically organised under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) or the United Nations Education, Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). Their primary purpose is to educate the public and celebrate important aspects of life, such as Indigenous Languages (2019) and Planet Earth (2008).

As the name implies, International Years are a series of events that are held around the world by international teams that include partners from non-governmental organisations, government agencies, businesses and interested individuals. There is always at least one major event, plus many other activities that are held throughout the year in multiple countries.

One other typical thing about International Years occurs when the year is over: there is a great increase in appreciation for the year's topic. This often appears as increases in funding, better regulations, protection of peoples and important areas, and new business opportunities, depending on the topic of the year.

#### WHY AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CAVES AND KARST?

On 16 June 2015, Dr. Kyung Sik Woo, then President of the International Union



DR. GEORGE VENI

*UIS Past President Dr. Kyung Sik Woo in Yongcheon Cave, part of Jeju Volcanic Island World Heritage Site, Republic of Korea. This cave has extensive displays of calcite speleothems, which are rarely found in lava tubes*

of Speleology (UIS), made a declaration proposing 2021 as the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) to be recognised by the UN and UNESCO. This declaration was supported strongly by a vote of UIS member countries.

The UIS, its member countries, organisational partners, and individual cave explorers, scientists, managers, and educators have done tremendous work over many decades to improve the world's understanding and appreciation of caves and karst.

However, despite all of our combined accomplishments, caves continue to be destroyed.

Trash is still dumped underground. Karst aquifers are polluted.

Many rare cave ecosystems are now endangered. Precious archaeological and paleontological materials in caves are still commonly lost and looted. And sadly, many

government officials, educators, and even scientists and environmental managers do not understand caves and karst enough to prevent these tragedies, or even recognise that they are tragedies.

An IYCK is the next step to raise the level of understanding and respect for caves and karst as globally important physical, ecological, and cultural systems. A successful IYCK will lead to new caves opened for exploration, and more funds and other support for that exploration, as well as for research, management and protection, at levels we've never seen before.

#### WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATUS?

Since Dr. Woo's declaration, the UIS has gathered the support of most of its member countries, as well as the support of four countries, nine international organisations and 21 national organisations in 13 coun-

tries. I thank them for their joining this vital effort.

While it is clear we have broad support for the IYCK, it is also clear that we need more time. The UIS has always known that getting UN or UNESCO recognition would be difficult.

It requires one of their member countries to submit the proposal created by UIS—outside organisations like UIS cannot make proposals to UN or UNESCO. Also, for an IYCK in 2021, the proposal must be made and approved in 2019 and

that does not seem likely. Therefore, UIS will continue to pursue support for 2021 but we are changing our strategy to assure success and are continuing ahead in three ways.

**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CAVES AND KARST FOR 2021**

The UIS has decided to conduct this important project on its own together with its partners in 2021, with or without UN or UNESCO recognition. Each UIS member country that voted to support the International Year agreed to organise events and programs in 2021 in their countries with the resources they have available. The UIS Bureau is asking everyone to begin to plan for that.

If the UN or UNESCO are not able to support us in 2021, nothing really changes for the member countries and our other partners. We can still celebrate the Year and hold our activities.

In fact, in visiting with UN representatives a few months ago, they told me that if we can organise a successful International Year on our own, that would greatly increase our ability to get UN or UNESCO support in a future year (more on that below).

So, in principle, nothing changes for UIS and its partners. We will hold the International Year and conduct the same events and activities.

**INTERNATIONAL DAY**

The UIS is collaborating with the International Show Caves Association to get UN or UNESCO recognition for an International Day. The exact name of the day is being determined but it would support the same goals as the IYCK, only recognised on one day that will likely be in early June.

While international years are more difficult to achieve, Spain plans to propose an International Day to UNESCO.

The advantages are that the International Day will be celebrated each year on the selected day in perpetuity.

Additionally, it will make it easier for the

UN or UNESCO to recognise an International Year, if not in 2021, then in another year—perhaps in 2025.

**INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF CAVES AND KARST FOR 2025**

The UIS is talking to other countries about proposing 2025 or another year to the UN or UNESCO as the International Year of Caves and Karst. We are looking for our member countries and partners' support too if this proposal is made and accepted.

If you think your country may be willing to propose the International Year, and if you are willing to contact your government for UIS to get their support, please let me know.

Some of you may wonder how this affects you, and hopefully how you can help. When the UIS member countries voted on the IYCK, it was with the understanding that those countries voting to support the IYCK would also conduct IYCK activities. If you are interested in working on the IYCK, ask your UIS delegates listed on [www.uis-speleo-org](http://www.uis-speleo-org) on their status in organising activities in your country.

If your country did not vote to support the IYCK in 2015, check with the leaders of your national organisations. Some countries did not vote, others were not members three years ago, and maybe others that were not ready to support the IYCK in 2015 may be ready now.

If not, you can still organise activities with your local clubs and regional organisations, our other partners or with new partners you find.

As I write this report in the final days of 2018, the UIS IYCK Committee just met. We approved a structure to build the IYCK website and other social media. We are nearly finished creating an IYCK logo, and we are beginning to write materials and collect photos for the website, circulars, and other materials.

We expect to have the website ready sometime in early 2019. We will announce

**Current Supporters of the International Year of Caves and Karst**

**Supporting Countries:**  
 Belgium  
 Croatia  
 Hungary  
 Slovenia

**International Organisational Partners:**  
 Bat Conservation International  
 European Cave Protection Commission  
 European Speleological Federation  
 Fauna and Flora International  
 International Association of Hydrogeologists, Karst Commission  
 International Council for Science  
 International Show Caves Association  
 International Union of Geological Societies  
 World Heritage Program of International Union for the Conservation of Nature

**National Organisational Partners:**  
 Belgium (Belgium Union of Speleology, Flemish Belgium Speleological Federation, Walloon Commission for the Study and Protection of Underground Sites)  
 Brazil (Brazilian Speleological Society, National Council of the Atlantic Forest Biosphere Reserve)  
 Bulgaria (Bulgarian Federation of Speleology)  
 China (International Research Center on Karst)  
 France (French Federation of Speleology, Geoparks Group of France)  
 Germany (German Speleological Federation)  
 Italy (Italian Speleological Society)  
 Japan (Speleological Society of Japan)  
 Kyrgyzstan (Foundation for the Protection and Exploration of Caves)  
 Myanmar (Myanmar Cave Documentation Project)  
 Slovenia (Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU, Slovenian Speleological Association)  
 Ukraine (Institute of Geological Sciences of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, Ukrainian Speleological Association)  
 USA (American Geosciences Institute, National Cave and Karst Research Institute, National Caves Association, National Speleological Society)

**UIS Countries Currently Supporting the International Year of Caves and Karst**

Australia	Honduras	Puerto Rico
Austria	Hungary	Romania
Belgium	Iran	Serbia
Brazil	Israel	Slovenia
Bulgaria	Italy	South Africa
China	Japan	Switzerland
Costa Rica	Korea	The Netherlands
Croatia	Kyrgyzstan	Ukraine
Czech Republic	Lebanon	United Kingdom
France	Lithuania	United States
Germany	Mexico	



it widely through the UIS Facebook page, messages to our delegates, commissions, and partners, and by messages they send.

**A UIS CALL TO ACTION**

The UIS is the International Union of Speleology. What does that mean?

*International*—everyone in the world!

*Union*—working together, and for what?

*Speleology*.

For the IYCK to succeed, I ask everyone who enjoys and cares for caves to join the UIS in creating IYCK events for your town, region and country.

The UIS will not make your participation difficult or beyond your abilities. We recognise you represent diverse cultures, skills and resources.

Therefore, as you read the following guidance, please remember that we ask you to do what will be most successful for your culture, appropriate to your skills and within the limits of your resources. No single group can do everything, but together we will reach people across the world.

The IYCK will have three major themes:

- Sharing Cave and Karst Knowledge: International Scientific Conferences and Public Exhibitions
- Promoting the Value of World Heritage Caves and Karst
- Sharing Cave and Karst Knowledge: Show Caves — Karst Tourism

Start thinking about the best way that your organisations can participate. Here are some examples for each theme of what your organisation might be able to do.

**SHARING CAVE AND KARST KNOWLEDGE: INTERNATIONAL SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES AND PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS**

The UIS' 18th International Congress of Speleology will be held in Lyon, France, in 2021 <http://uis2021.speleos.fr/> It will be the major event for the IYCK, but any cave or karst conference can potentially be an official IYCK event too. This includes your annual conferences, sessions at other conferences and symposia.

Slovenia's annual International Karstological School 'Classical Karst' is already scheduled as an IYCK event. What about your annual workshops and courses? You can also organise special events of all types, demonstrating cave science and caving techniques, public lectures, visits to classrooms, showing cave videos and giving interviews about the IYCK to newspapers, magazines, television and other media. You are limited only by your imagination.

Remember, the main purpose of the IYCK is to educate the public so make sure to invite the public, non-caver scientists,



*Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia, is one of 93 World Heritage Sites that UIS has identified as based entirely or in part on caves and karst. UIS has also identified 64 similarly-established UNESCO Global Geoparks*

DR GEORGE VENI

land managers, politicians and others who normally do not attend cave and karst events but would benefit from attending. And do not just invite them—give them special attention and support. Make it easy for them to attend, and also to participate in fun and interesting ways. The IYCK should educate, impress and engage them.

**PROMOTING THE VALUE OF WORLD HERITAGE CAVES AND KARST**

Do you work with or are you located near a UNESCO World Heritage Site or Global Geopark that was established at least in part because of caves and karst? If so, let us know.

We would love your help to tell those sites and parks about the IYCK. The UIS needs them to participate. We will reach out to them directly, but many times your personal connections may be better.

Also, maybe you don't know what to do for the IYCK and they don't know either, but together you can find many things to do.

Maybe once a month throughout the year some people could enter World Heritage sites and Geoparks for free. Focus on the special cave and karst features there with education programs for adults and kids. Create public participation projects. For example, maybe some research would benefit from extra public help. The same may be true of management work from repairing a trail to cleaning trash from a cave or repairing speleothems. Remind the public that these World Heritage and Geopark sites have such high recognition because they are special, and how caves and karst add to that specialness.

**SHARING CAVE AND KARST KNOWLEDGE: SHOW CAVES – KARST TOURISM.**

The International Show Caves Association and national show cave organisations will encourage their member show caves to do some special things for the IYCK. Like with the World Heritage sites and Geoparks, this can include free entry and many special programs.

It is estimated that about 150 million tourists visit show caves each year. Show caves and cave and karst parks have the ability to reach the greatest numbers of people. We encourage them to do all that they can and for you, our members and other partners, to assist them wherever possible.

As you think about activities for the IYCK, think about partners to assist you with programs, advertising, costs and raising funds to cover any costs.

Partnership is also important in getting more people involved, educated and interested in caves and karst. If you have ideas and support for how the UIS can better promote and conduct the IYCK, we welcome partnering more closely with you. If your country or national or international organisation is not listed as supporting the IYCK and wants to join us, please let me know.

We ask you to watch for the IYCK website and social media, which will be the primary locations for information on the IYCK and how to participate and show its importance to the world. We will post news at these locations and encourage you to share your news and activities.

We are also in a delicate period. With this message we are asking that you begin thinking about what you can do to support

## INTERNATIONAL UNION OF SPELEOLOGY CALL TO ACTION

the IYCK and begin some basic plans, but we ask you to not reach out to the public at this time.

Because our message will reach across the world, our message and its appearance with the logo needs to be clear and consistent.

Once the website is posted, you will have access to the logo and information to reach people in your communities and countries in a way where we send a unified message to the world.

**IN SUMMARY:**

- Get involved! This is a once-in-a-lifetime chance to greatly improve understanding and appreciation of caves worldwide.
- Begin thinking about activities you can do in your community, region and country to support the IYCK.
- Begin reaching out to potential partners for assistance. They do not need to be from the caving community!
- Wait until the IYCK website is posted for access to the logo and other information

before reaching out to the public.

- Begin planning now! It will be 2021 faster than you think.

Please contact me: [gveni@nckri.org](mailto:gveni@nckri.org) or other members of the UIS Bureau at any time if you need assistance or have questions.

With your help, together we will educate the world through the International Year and International Day about our precious caves and karst areas. Together, we can save the world's caves and karst for the future.



ASF Conference photographic competition: Caves category — Highly commended: Weebubbie by Dirk Stoffels



Bugs, Beasts and Biology category: Highly commended  
Crab guards its territory in Nurau Cave, Atiu Island by Garry K Smith



Cavers in Action category: Highly commended  
Jump! by Dirk Stoffels



# TFM Engineering Rope Washer

Dave Wools-Cobb  
NC

**I**N MY OPINION the worst aspect of caving is washing ropes, particularly after a multi-rope weekend in muddy wet caves.

Some years ago, I was asked by a mainland visiting caver 'Do you bother washing your ropes?' I can only assume that he was very new to caving, came from a mudless state and had never shelled out his own money for caving ropes.

It is universally accepted that grit working its way into a caving rope dramatically shortens its life. A poorly treated rope will also stiffen up quickly, making it more difficult to cram into your caving pack and use for abseiling. Conversely, a stiff rope is much easier to prusik.

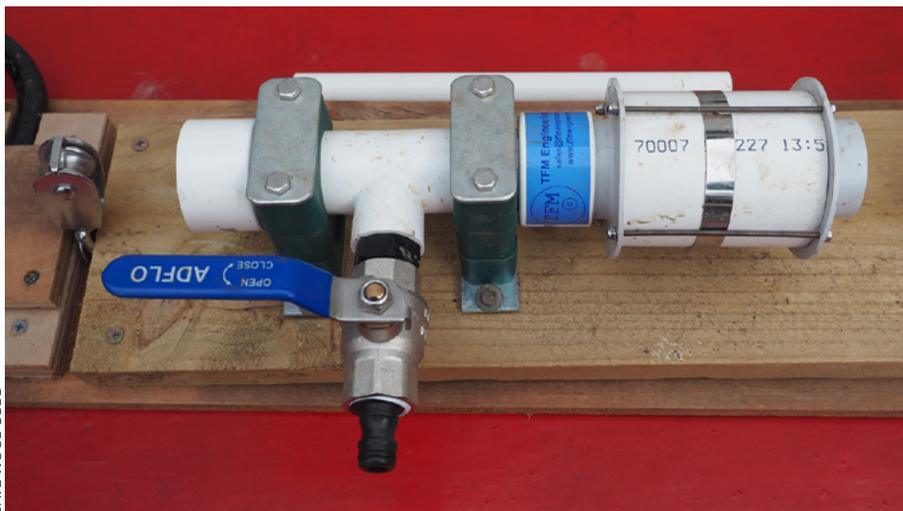
TFM Engineering have come up with a rope washer and I was fortunate to pick one up at the UIS Congress auction for a bit less than what it retails for. Fully assembled it costs \$155, but if you are prepared to drill, cut and glue yourself you can purchase the kit for \$105.

Basically, it is a brush mounted in a tube, with a hose connection attached. This connection has a shut-off valve. The assembly comes with a stainless steel pulley, but a second one would be advised with my set-up. The kit also comes with a 19 mm bore plastic tube, necessary to feed your rope into the bristles; any sized caving rope can be accommodated.

Overall robustness of the unit is good, with two mounting blocks for the user to determine just how this would be set up.

I have added two plastic hose reels (Bunnings for \$12 each), mounted on each side of the rope washer.

Once your dirty rope has been inserted through the unit, the end can be fed into one hose reel and you can turn the handle to pull your rope through the system, then once almost all the rope has been through the washer, you can attach the other end to the other hose reel and commence winding through again.



*A robust unit*



*Two plastic hose reels make an easy-to-use rope washer*

How dirty the rope is will determine how many passes through the system are needed.

I have found this so much easier than dragging through by hand, using my old Dobi rope washer, which I have tolerated for many years.

The best set-up I have found is to use a waist-high table (one that won't be damaged by water), have the inlet on the far side

from you, and wind your rope somewhat slowly. It's certainly not an inexpensive item, but with a few more dollars you can have an easy-to-use set-up. If you are the sucker who often has the job of washing ropes after a trip, you'll soon be convinced that it is worthwhile.

And one last tip — the best way to dry a rope is to loop it over a stepladder and leave it to dry, away from direct sunlight.



# ASPIRING

Quality caving gear since 1981

## Now Available

The best caving lights on the planet. Used on expeditions in the deepest and longest caves in the world.

### El Speleo Lunatic 2400 Lumens

### \$799.00

\*special introductory price

- ★ Fully Waterproof
- ★ CREE XP-L LED's
- ★ 10500mAh Battery



### El Speleo Terra 1600 Lumens

### \$599.00

\*special introductory price

- ★ Fully Waterproof
- ★ CREE XP-G3 LED's
- ★ 7000mAh Battery



Free shipping on all  
orders over \$100

[WWW.ASPIRINGSAFETY.COM.AU](http://WWW.ASPIRINGSAFETY.COM.AU)