

Elery Hamilton-Smith, AM
Chair
Task Force on Caves and Karst

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The World Conservation Union

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The Permanent Secretary
Ministry of the Environment
30 Parliament St
Hamilton HM12
Bermuda.

Dear Secretary

I am shocked to hear that your government is considering allowing the Wilkinson Quarry Group to destroy the recently discovered cave at their quarry site.

This is clearly a cave of exceptional value on as number of grounds:

- Despite the wilful vandalism which has occurred in the entry area, much of the cave is of exceptional beauty. It is sad indeed that you would even consider allowing the destruction of such a place. Once destroyed it can never be replaced.
- More importantly, some of the greatest beauty lies below sea-level. In a report which I am presenting at a World Heritage conference in China within in the next week, I have identified these highly decorated submarine caves as a top priority for protection. They are of significant in contributing to our understanding of eustatic change and this is clearly one of the best examples discovered to date.
- Then, most importantly, four of the crustacean species living in the cave are recognised by IUCN as critically endangered and hence a very high priority for protection. Such a rating is not granted lightly and is only made on the basis of very sound evidence. I would present to you the view that this decision should be honoured by your government and no actions taken which would further endanger these species. A multitude of such species has been accorded proper recognition and protection by many of the world's governments; Bermuda should not become an exception. I also draw attention to the future strategy document prepared by the Cement Industry and the extent to which that industry has acted with powerful commitment to an environmental ethic and to absolute professionalism in quarrying practice; it is indeed regrettable that your own local company ignores such principles.

- Finally, I note that it might be argued that merely damaging or destroying one is relatively unimportant when the same species occur in other caves. This represents a total lack of understanding of cave systems. In the limestone of Bermuda, single caves are not isolated and self-contained phenomena; they are all linked into a wide-ranging network, sharing the same groundwater. Damage to any one cave will inevitably have an impact upon others.

I do hope that wisdom and a sense of ethical responsibility will prevail and that destruction of the cave will not occur. I am aware that several people have been engaged by the proponents to support destruction of the cave, but with all respects to my esteemed colleague Arrigo Cigna, none have experience or expertise in the specific environmental characteristics of the Bermuda limestone systems.

Sincerely

(Prof.) Elery Hamilton-Smith, AM

Chair
IUCN / WCPA Task Force on Caves and Karst Protection