



Australian Speleological Federation Inc.

ABN: 15 169 918 964



'Pillar of Hercules' in Orient Cave at Jenolan

2009 Annual Report

December 2009
(Adopted 2nd January 2010)

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Executive Members

President	Stan Flavel
Senior Vice President	Nicholas White
Vice President	Chris Bradley
Vice President	Joe Sydney
Vice President	Winfried Weiss
Treasurer	Grace Matts
Executive Secretary	Deb Hunter
General Secretary	Bob Kershaw
Membership Secretary	Jodie Rutledge
Non-executive Vice President	John Dunkley

President's Report

President: Stan Flavel

2009 began with our memorable Kastaway Conference in Sale, Victoria and has been an exciting and busy year of assorted achievements and controversies at many levels. Some events have taken place at a steady metered pace whilst others have needed to be addressed with a sense of urgency. The culmination of these accomplishments is found in this Annual Report and as you read the detailed accounts of each of these in individual reports you will appreciate just what has gone into making 2009 the year that it has been. As members of the Australian Speleological Federation we can look back with pride on successful attainments and learn from the things that perhaps did not always quite go according to plan or result in the desirable outcome.

Some of the significant happenings of 2009 are listed below but the detail is contained in the individual Commission and Officer Reports as tabled prior and along with this, grants have enabled construction of a secure gate on Dogleg cave at Wee Jasper; covering some expenses of the Timor Caves appeal; cleaning of Bouverie Cave at Wombeyan NSW.

It is hoped that Ministerial approval will be received to change the name of the Gift Fund to a more apt title of "Karst Conservation Fund" which encapsulates what it is really all about

We will continue to benefit and learn from the successes and failures of the past year. It is unfortunate that the name of ASF has been used in negative ways resulting in some less than desirable publicity for the Federation and a perceived lack of its credibility amongst some landowners. This has highlighted the imperative need to uphold ASF with highest integrity and continual relevance.

On the positive side, the amendment to the NSW Act of Parliament regarding the offence to enter National Parks with caving gear and resultant fine for intent-came about due to the intervention of dedicated cavers who lobbied and sought legal representation.

I would like to acknowledge the work done by the various Speleological Councils, Commissions and Committees, Special Interest Groups and Clubs.

My sincere thanks to my fellow executive members for their time and commitment to ASF this year in particular our new Executives, Bob Kershaw and Deb Hunter.

A special thank you and recognition of the efforts of Jodie Rutledge and the dedicated team fighting for Timor Caves, which has been nothing short of Inspirational to cavers around the country.

As we enter 2010 we can expect to see more inspiring developments in Australian Speleology. The updating of a number of Operational Caving Codes is in place and these will be finalized and released in 2010. Further updates are to be seen in our publications and our website with prospective functional changes to both hardware and software components. It is of satisfaction that speleologists across the globe access and adopt a number of our Codes of Practices with minimal change in their own groups. Our combined store of Australian Karst knowledge is being updated and streamlined to meet the challenge and needs of an evolving group of users and developing technology will continue to play a significant role in providing information to clients.

Likewise the expansion and updating and portability of the Karst database is being enhanced. Criticisms on the age and incompleteness of the KID database are being addressed and we should see in the near future a portable system for data entry and retrieval linking in to external Geographical Information Systems.

None of the above achievements would have been possible without what represents thousands of hours of voluntary time. Many members are busy people but because of the passion for caving and the belief that caves and Karst regions are worth fighting for, they still find time to invest in obtaining best possible outcomes for the conservation of and continued enjoyment and exploration of those wondrous subterranean caverns that we all love.

Yours in Speleology
Stan Flavel

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer: Grace Matts

This report was presented and accepted at the Council meeting.

The Australian Speleological Federation Gift Fund

Fund Management Commission

Report by: John Dunkley

This has been a very active and successful year for the Gift Fund, which is at last reaching its potential. In the year to June 30, donations totalling \$23,963.72 were received, including \$12,500 from Cement Australia, about \$2,200 from the former Caving Club of Victoria, and over \$3,000 raised from an auction at the Sale Conference.



During the year a grant to the NSW Speleo Council, coordinated by Dirk Stoffels for Canberra Speleological Society for construction of a secure gate on Dogleg Cave at Wee Jasper was acquitted well under budget at a cost of \$580.79. Members of about 6 clubs assisted in the final installation in May. The project will be kept open for 12 months in case the landowner wishes to take further steps to secure the cave or to erect information signs.

**Dirk Stoffels in Dogleg during the gating activity.
Photo by Brian Evans**

In September the Fund resolved to support the Timor Caves Appeal with a grant of up to \$5,000 to ASF itself to assist in expert witness and other expenses relating to the legal action brought by Newcastle & Hunter Valley Speleological Society against a limestone mine adjacent to Timor Caves. The Directors also agreed to support an open appeal, with donors being invited to request that their donations be directed towards this action. Over \$8,000 has since been received, a most heartening response from individuals and clubs alike, but we are only about one-third of the way towards the total required of \$25,000 and more is needed.

In October a grant of \$120 was made towards materials for the cleaning of Bouverie Cave at Wombeyan, NSW, with on-site assistance from local guides. Although only 4 or 5 cavers were needed to carry out the cleaning work, a total of 72 attended the weekend's activities and about another \$3,000 was raised towards the Timor appeal. Highland Caving Group organised the event superbly and we are very grateful to local management for their strong support for this event.

The Management Committee is liaising with the proponents of preliminary enquiries received for several projects during the year. One of these from Western Australia has proceeded to a formal application and was being considered by the Fund Directors at the time of writing.

Following a resolution from the Council, a formal application to change the name of the Gift Fund to the Karst Conservation Fund was submitted to the Department of Environment, Heritage and Water. This requires Ministerial approval and at the time of writing has not been completed.

Peter Berrill, John Dunkley, Grace Matts, Nick White
Management Committee

John Dunkley for the Directors

Conservation Commission Reports

National

Convener: Nicholas White
Timor Karst, NSW and ASF Gift Fund

Without question the Timor Karst mine appeal has been the most important conservation campaign this year. We have built on the frameworks already in place. Elsewhere in this report the ASF Gift Fund activities are described. Behind the scene is the Management Committee which has needed to place emphasis on providing the capacity to protect and restore the karst of Australia. Procedures for the operation of the Gift Fund are now in place and available on the ASF website. The NHVSS legal challenge to the establishment of a mine on the Timor karst was the impetus to establish publicity and fundraising as part of the campaign to protect this karst.

Even before the results of the NSW Land and Environment Court appeal are available it is apparent that we need to better understand the fauna and flora of caves and subterranean waters. It is not sufficient to have invertebrate specimens lodged in museums; they need to be described. Some of the Timor Karst Appeal budget provided funds to describe cave fauna and stygofauna from the karst springs. This is probably the way of the future if you have cave fauna which is not identified or described then it can be part of ASF's charge to assist with the descriptions necessary to understand our karst ecosystems. Knowledge of karst ecosystems is and will be important to the protection of Australia's caves and karst.

There has just been an Independent Review of the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act. This is currently before the Minister and Parliament (Dec 2009). Listed ecosystems under this Act as well as the NSW relevant legislation provided some of the material on which the NHVSS Timor mine challenge was based.

Caves Australia

The editor of Caves Australia suggested I initiate a column on "Conversation on Conservation". This has been an excellent forum for me to air problems and bring cave conservation matters to the attention of members. I would welcome other contributors. The topics covered have been:

- Research into Australian rainfall records based on cave deposits
- Sustainability and karst, Mole Creek, Tasmania
- Catastrophes and Caves

The next issue of Caves Australia will have the topic titled:

- Cave Conservancies

This examines the place cavers can or could play through collectively acquiring karst properties to manage ourselves. Should this be part of our future objectives?

Codes

The development of codes of conduct has been a very important part of ASF using policy structures to improve landowner relations and to minimise our impact on caves. It must be emphasized that cavers visiting caves do have an impact. Adherence to codes of conduct reduces the amount of damage and change from our activities. The Minimum Impact Caving Code is currently being reviewed. A new Minimum Impact Code for Scientific Investigation in Caves and Karst is proposed.

This year has seen a Review of the Minimum Impact Caving Code. It is important that Codes remain relevant and up to date. This and other Codes are referred to in many Management Plans and are used or embraced in caving practices overseas.

A new Code was developed for consideration this by Council this year. This is the “Minimum Impact Code for Scientific Investigation in Caves and Karst”. It was thought appropriate to develop such a



Code to provide for responsible scientific investigation and sampling in caves and karst. Speleothems are irreplaceable and sampling should be done in a minimal manner consistent with the aim of obtaining a valid and maximum scientific outcome. The same care refers to biological sampling where the populations of some species present in a cave may be quite small and undue sampling might affect the species survival. It is hoped this Code gains acceptance and is used by scientists, owners and managers as a guide to responsible minimal impact scientific investigation. It is a Code and does not provide prescriptive recipes for research permit applications.

Jay Anderson searching for cave life as part of a research trip in Calgardup Cave. Photo by Ross Anderson

Western Australia

Christmas Island which has a lot of karst and caves is under further development pressure from the Immigration Detention Centre but there is also an application with the Federal Environment Minister to extend phosphate mining to new areas.

Tasmania

In Tasmania, it appears that the proposal to develop a tourist road through the Tarkine forest has been stopped due to threats to endangered species by the Federal Minister for the Environment using powers under the EPBC Act. This is a good outcome but ASF did not play a part despite threats to karst.

Summary

The Timor mine objection by NHVSS has been the single most important karst conservation campaign in Australia this year.

Western Australian and Victorian cave conservation material is detailed separately below. In South Australia there is now a concerted effort to determine the numbers of Southern bent wing bats and their roosting sites so that better management strategies can be adopted to protect the species. Other South Australian karst conservation problems have not been brought to my attention which is also the case for the Northern Territory and Queensland

Queensland

Convener: Peter Berrill

Mt. Etna Land

At the time of writing this report I am unaware if the Mt Etna land has been handed over to the “Queensland Trust for Nature”, the public trust sponsored by the Queensland Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), as per the arrangement with Cement Australia (CA) and the EPA.

In late October I received a phone call from Parks Manager Peter Moore inquiring if we were happy with the arrangements. Confused, I asked what arrangements and he explained that the EPA had not yet signed off on the land and that CA had a little more work to attend to. The arrangements are as

per discussions and negotiations between CA and ASF's Karst Conservation Fund. It appears ASF did all the ground work for the EPA. I have sighted the agreement document between CA and EPA. (A copy turned up in my letter box) and it is as per our discussions and includes a donation to the trust of \$150,000. This money is held in trust to be spent on the maintenance of the rehabilitation of that area of Mt. Etna and any member of the public or an organization can make a submission to the Queensland Trust for Nature regarding the maintenance.
In the New Year I will contact manager Peter Moore and report back.

Mt. Etna Records

Securing all of the Mt. Etna records has for some time been a concern of mine, so in the past few months I have been locating and negotiating for all of the records to be located at a single National or State archival repository. While discussing the land deal with CA manager Chris White, we made mention of the records and he has made them available to us to be archived. They are substantial and well catalogued.

The Cement Plant at Parkhurst was closed on the 1st December 2009 and is now in moth balls. Just prior to the closure I spoke with Chris White regarding the records and he informed me that they are in the vault at Parkhurst Plant and available to us.

Location and quantity of the records are as follows;

CQ University archive C Q Collection	30 Boxes
Cement Australia	6 Boxes
Capricorn Conservation Council	4 boxes
Stephen Comino, solicitor	6 boxes
Peter Berrill	4 boxes? Plus

I also have a number of blockade banners, signs, display boards, photos and slides.

There are still a number of others who hold some records that I have not approached for various reasons.

There would be fifty to sixty archive boxes of records.

During 2009, Craig Hardy and I have managed to locate all video footage of the blockade and have had it copied to DVD. I intend to copy a single DVD of the campaign and offer it for sale with all proceeds going to the KCF.

CQ University has informed me that they don't have any room for more of our records.

In late November while in Brisbane, Craig Hardy and I met with the John Oxley Library, The State Library of Queensland and they said they are prepared to take all of the records provided that they are all sorted, catalogued and indexed, so they don't have to do any work. They will make them available for research as is.

CQSS discussed the records and have decided that the best scenario is to have all of the records archived at the one place and have them digitized and placed on-line so as to have available for research by all.

We are aware that there is a cost involved with this and the John Oxley library said they could not fund this project.

CQSS is still an organization and controls the access to the records at the CQ University.

We have not decided where the records are to be held but we do want them digitized for research and to have a second copy.

As we already have deposited some records at the CQ University I will have discussions with their person in-charge of archives regarding funding of the digitizing process.

Perhaps we could have a joint funding arrangement for the digitizing between a University, ASF and the Karst Conservation Fund.

I ask that this Council meeting discuss the issue of the Mt. Etna records, especially the costs of digitizing them. CQSS has some funds it could make available.

Victoria

Convener: Nicholas White

Victorian cavers have had some important cave discoveries in the last year. These are from systematic exploration but also from a compact with Parks Victoria to use an excavation protocol for approved sites. We are also hopeful of new additions to the publicly owned cave estate as offsets for development proposals. VSA has been working with the Department of Sustainability and Environment on the assessment of caves and future management on some recently acquired property with caves at Yambuk, Western Victoria.

Daryl Carr and Peter Robertson of VSA and Friends of Buchan Caves were recognised with Lifetime Achievement awards in a ceremony conducted by Parks Victoria. The Friends of Buchan Caves have had many recent achievements. Amongst them have been information signs at Wilsons Cave Reserve at East Buchan and the Potholes Reserve at Murrindal. The other major achievement has been the relighting and opening of Federal Cave at Buchan with LED lights powered entirely by a solar powered battery system.

Other cave conservation progress is listed below:

Southern bent wing bat

The Southern bent wing bat (*Miniopterus orianae bassanii*) is listed as critically endangered under the Federal Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (EPBC Act) and as Endangered under the Fauna and Flora Guarantee Act 1988, Victoria (FFG Act). The total population of this species is dependent on the maternity sites at Starlight Cave on private land at Allansford in Western Victoria and Bat Cave, Naracoorte National Park, South Australia although they disperse to other caves outside the maternity season. Starlight Cave is now reasonably safe as the owner has been advised of the penalties for inappropriate developments in proximity to the cave.

The population numbers based at Naracoorte are well down on numbers observed in the 1960's. This is also true of the Warrnambool population but there is no current estimate of the population size. It has not been established whether the population decline is from human interference either to caves, or to changes to food supply due to changes in agricultural and forestry practices or simply due to the effects of the prolonged drought. The South Australian Department of Environment and Heritage has instituted a program of monitoring over-wintering caves to count the bat numbers. This is a start to establishing the current population size but the two populations overlap in range in Western Victoria and similar assessments are also planned to be undertaken in Victoria.

Last year VSA commented on a Draft Action Plan prepared by Department of Sustainability and Environment for the bat. This Action Statement is a requirement of the listing under the FFG Act and should have been prepared years ago. It is now imperative it be issued so that deliberate steps can be taken to protect the bats and their habitat. There is a need the population status to be assessed throughout its range in Victoria. VSA has made a start with the Bat Census forms but there is place for a full project to assess all the known bat caves in Western Victoria to try to establish the population numbers across bats range.

The situation described above has now changed with the recent appointment of a Project Officer to work through the issues of protecting the maternity site and assessment of caves on public and private land to establish bat usage. VSA is involved in this project and looks forward to assisting with the data needed.

Limestone Creek Caves and Alpine National Park Management Plan Revision

Sheehans Cave (LC5) at Limestone Creek in the Alpine National Park has too much recent graffiti which may be due to its location being put on tourist map of the region. Some sensitive anti-graffiti signage is needed for the cave and then a program of cleaning the cave would be rewarding. This has been discussed with local managers but follow up is needed. VSA intends to comment on the revision of the Management Plan in the near future.

Labertouche Cave

VSA and the Cave and Karst Advisory Committee, of Parks Victoria have been consulted about management questions related to access to the cave. These revolve about what to do with the access track which is on a poor alignment and would require a lot of money to upkeep. The Advisory Committee for the moment is comfortable that the track be converted to a walking track for the last 3-4 kilometres. More direct access would be available for rescues which would be via the old road on Melbourne Water's road network.

The Bunyip State Park including the area around Labertouche Cave was severely burnt in the January-February 2009 bushfires. The Advisory Committee did an inspection of the cave. It appears that it is unlikely that a mass sediment slug during intense rainfall would block the cave although some sediment would enter the cave as it always has. The glow worms in the cave were still present in significant numbers at the upstream entrance to the cave. There was still a plentiful supply of midges present which the glow worms depend on for food. This refugial population in the cave will probably provide the source of glow worms to repopulate the rain forest gullies of the Park as the vegetation recovers from almost complete burning

Western Australia

Conveners: Jay Anderson and Rob Susac

The Summary of Cave and Karst Conservation and Management Issues in WA.

This year has been a busy one, however a number of outstanding issues have had little progress. The full report and "summary" from 2008 is still accurate and rather than repeating the issues for each region again, we refer the reader to the 2008 report for further information.

Of significant note, Western Australian speleologists hosted the ACKMA Conference (Margaret River region May 2009) and a number of papers on WA karst management issues were presented. In particular, there was a workshop on "Planning and Urbanization in Karst Lands" which was well attended by local planners and Government agency staff. Several post conference field trips were arranged, which allowed participants and ACKMA members to visit karst areas and consider conservation and management issues.

There has been communication with the Cape Conservation Group on involving their group in groundwater monitoring. There is concern about the growth around Exmouth & the allocated allowances for water abstraction. The project was inspired as part of the Conservation Council's launching of their Citizen Science initiative. The monitoring program could be an important local grass roots strategy to raise the issue of water sensitivities on the range & involve the local schools in monitoring the groundwater & the associated communities.

In June, a karst 'ground-truthing' of Nowergup Lot 1, 2350 Wanneroo Road was undertaken at a site proposed for limestone extraction, batching & block cutting. A submission was forwarded from both WASG & the ASF Conservation Commission, as part of the public comment phase objecting to the proposal as it stood. The proposal also received significant local objection & council has now recommended to the DPI that the application be rejected.

A private cave at Guilderton has been opened up for ease of access, after the cave was found through a borehole intersection. The cave (Rosewood Cave) has been track marked & surveyed. The remedial work recommended by speleologists, in the cave has been undertaken by the landowner at their own expense. This included walling up the cave to help preserve the atmosphere & the installation of a door. Rehabilitation of the exterior is expected to follow with revegetation including perennial tree species for slope stabilisation. The landowner supports this preservation and has been working with speleologists.

Also of note conservation wise, are the efforts of WASG Trip Leaders in cave rehabilitation works in Blackboy Hollow Cave and speleothem repairs at Yanchep (Crystal Cave). The speleothem repairs at Yanchep, were from the vandalism that occurred a few years back now. In the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park, Blackboy Hollow Cave (MR2) was used as a show cave in the first half of last century and had several timber walkways and staircases, some of which had been "upgraded" with galvanised

handrails. The timber was rotting and handrails corroding – to the extent that they were unsafe to use even for cavers. Works in previous years had involved the removal of about half the timber walkways.

Works this year involved the removal of the balance of the timber stairs and a bridge section. This work was instigated and overseen by Greg Thomas. Cleaning and rehabilitation works were then carried out to establish a new pathway through the cave along the same route as the old timber walkways, in order to minimise impact to the cave. Route and track marking has also been improved in areas where it was already and added in areas previously delineated by the timber pathway. Old timbers were hauled out by placing in a stretcher and lifting out of the vertical entrance with a pulley system. There remains one timber bridge to be removed. This will be replaced with a stainless steel beam and recycled plastic bridge to be provided by DEC and installed by cavers early next year. Three full-day work trips were carried out in 2009 and there will probably be two more to complete rehabilitation works.



Jay Anderson considers where to place trackmarking in Blackboy Hollow Cave. Photo by Ross Anderson

The Crystal Cave speleothem repairs were addressing the additional significant damages incurred from a vandalism transgression that occurred a few years back now. This work was instigated and overseen by Ian Collette. This involved several trips to the cave and gluing and pinning of speleothems; mostly stalactites but including a stalagmite and a shawl which was in 10 pieces. In addition to this restoration work, permission has been granted by management in the Leeuwin Naturaliste National Park to remove the broken fragments of a large shawl for a repair assessment from Golgotha Cave. At this stage the shawl (which is in over 200 pieces) seems 'beyond repair' as several significantly large pieces are missing. It is understood that if it is unable to be restored, the bits of speleothem will be returned to the cave.

In December 2008, a submission was made to the City of Wanneroo on the local biodiversity strategy and the draft local environmental plan (2009-1014). In April 2009, public comment was sought in relation to the planned mining expansion of land near a mining site. In June 2009, contact was made by the Shire of Augusta Margaret River regarding a proposed timber plantation at Cowaramup – no issues were raised and no further action was required. We continue to receive a number of informal requests for consultation and advice and will continue to provide support as requested.

Karst Conservancies

Karstcare

Co-ordinator: David Wools-Cobb (edited Nicholas White)

Karstcare works through and under the Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Service to protect and enhance karst in on Parks in Northern Tasmania. It is coordinated by David Wools-Cobb. During the year projects included:

- Elderberry Hole area weed eradication.
- Tailender Cave has had several trips of cave cleaning, protective matting installation and installation of new boot washing stations.
- Kubla Khan Cave more systematic cleaning of areas near Forbidden City, the Silk Shop and also below Pitch 3, two trips have been undertaken.



Jessica and David Wools- Cobb during a cleaning trip in August. Photo by Jay Anderson

- Gunns Plain Cave Lampenflora Project is a consequence of re-lighting the cave is focused on rehabilitating recorded sites with lampenflora as a result of the old lighting. The sites have been identified, measured, photographed and sampled and are now being treated experimentally with various bleach treatments. The project is being undertaken by Cathie Plowman (Karstcare) with the assistance of Rolan Eberhard and the samples have been identified By Prof Gustaaf Hallegraef, University of Tasmania. This project is still in progress

Speleological Council Reports

NSW Speleological Council

President: Denis Marsh

The current NSWSC Executive elected in May 2009 is Colin Tyrell, Kevin Moore, Jodie Rutledge and Cathy Brown, with Denis Marsh as President. The NSWSC met twice during the past year and the executive have consulted separately by email. The Speleo Council Executive has been disseminating communications with NSW and ACT club contacts by email using the caves.org.au web site. Minutes of meetings and reports can be viewed on the Yahoo ASF Members web site. I would like to brief this Federal Council on matters which the NSW state liaison Council has been actively involved with over the past twelve months.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Regulations 2009

The NSW NPW Regulations underwent a review in early 2009 and a number of new provisions relating to caving were included in the draft Regulations. Chris Norton on behalf of ASF and NSWSC put together a detailed submission on the draft Regulations and a number of individual clubs also submitted separate comments. The double regulation concerning caving without permission that existed under the old Regulations was removed however a new clause (cl. 24(3)) was added making it unlawful, without consent, to possess certain items which could also be used for caving or cave diving, such as a torch, waterproof watch, nylon rope, helmet, knife or scissors, anywhere in a karst conservation reserve, or karst environment of a national park. Of note, there is no defence available based on lack of intent. This was despite a strong recommendation by the National Parks and Wildlife's, Karst Management Advisory Committee. This was felt to be excessive by cavers in NSW and following consultation with the ASF Executive, Chris lobbied politicians from the Upper House of the NSW Parliament and a disallowance motion was moved in the Legislative Assembly. At the time of writing this report I am awaiting the result of the debate on this motion. Update: the clause was disallowed – a move for commonsense!

DECCW (NSW) Cave Access Policy

A new Cave Access Policy is being developed by DECCW NSW's Karst and Geodiversity Unit (KGU) to replace the interim Policy Directive which was adopted by the DECCW last year. Chris Norton and I, on behalf of ASF, were given an informal briefing on an early draft by the KGU in May at which time we suggested a number of changes. A draft for comment has been approved by the NPWS Director and was forwarded to ASF for comment in early November 2009. The NSWSC is seeking clarification on some provisions before making our formal response. Several clauses are of concern and may need further negotiation. The KGU have indicated that where possible and appropriate, the KGU is open to amending text within the draft Policy (and related documents) following negotiation between the two parties.

New Timor Limestone Mine

The legal challenge of the approval of the new limestone mine at Timor, lodged in the Land and Environment court by NHVSS with the support of ASF, is due to be heard commencing on 30 November 2009. This item is listed separately in the Council agenda and no doubt an update will be provided at that time.



**A Young ISS member, Caitlyn Scobie, at Timor Caves
Photo by Alison Scobie**

Kosciuszko Speleological Reference Group (KSRG)

In accordance with the Kosciuszko National Park, Plan of Management, a karst management committee is to be established. I have been working with the Regional Manager, South West Slopes Region of Parks and Wildlife and the KGU to finalise the Terms of Reference for the operation of this committee and NSWSC has recently called for expressions of interest from cavers to nominate for the three speleological representative positions on the committee. Currently it is planned to have this committee set up in early 2010.

Annual NSW Caver's Dinner

The annual NSW caver's dinner was held at Wombeyan Caves Reserve in October in conjunction with the NSWSC meeting and was a huge success. Some 73 cavers from 10 NSW and ACT clubs attended the occasion. Wombeyan Caves Reserve management was very supportive on the weekend and a number of cavers were involved with staff on several small projects on the Saturday, while others enjoyed a spot of caving.

Dogleg Cave, Wee Jasper

With funding from the ASF Environment Fund, the Dogleg cave gating project at the Wee Jasper Caves Reserve, championed by CSS and supported in kind by members from other NSW clubs, seen the gate fitted in the **Sand Trap** in May 2009, thus enabling ongoing protection of the relatively pristine well decorated rear section of this cave.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for Data Sharing with DECCW (NSW)

A new draft version of a MoU for data sharing between ASF and DECCW NSW is currently being reviewed by NSWSC before circulation to clubs in NSW and ACT for consideration. Other matters and workload are currently delaying action on this by me at the present time but I am hoping to progress this matter shortly.

SA Speleological Council

Has not operated for sometime.

Tasmanian Speleological Liaison Council

Presented by Deb Hunter at the Council Meeting.

The TSLC has been meeting for 5 years and 3 times per year. We include the members from the Savage River Caving Club and include a Karst care activity with these meetings.

At Mole Creek we have been lobbying for 5 years regarding the new Kubla Khan leadership initiative and is now with Parks and Wildlife Service for their ratification. This has a provision for training new leaders for trips into Kubla. Although PWS staff have entered Kubla against the provisions in the plan and letters have been sent to members of Parliament. The TSLC has representation on the Mole Creek development committee.

There is a new map being produced regrading the extent of the Mole Creek/ Western Tiers National Park boundaries and Karst Care will be involved in mapping the area in Mole Creek for future management and access to caves in the area.

Other Commission Reports

Administration

Convener: Chris Dunne

No report received to date

Australian Cave Rescue Commission

Convener: Ross Anderson

The commission which was formed in 2000 was named the National Cave Rescue Commission. In 2009 this was changed to the Australian Cave Rescue Commission, and it is charged with the following objectives:

- facilitate the **provision of cave rescue training** to cavers
- facilitate the **exchange of information and training** related to cave rescue
- facilitate the provision of **skills and equipment for cave rescues** Australia wide
- provide a national **communications framework** for cave rescue organisations
- encourage an **ethos of minimal impact** for cave rescue training and rescues
- facilitate the **establishment of cave rescue organisations** in states where such organisations do not exist
- organise national **cave rescue workshops** at the Biennial ASF Conferences
- spread the **self-rescue** ethos amongst other caving groups
- enhance the **first aid skills** of cavers and other caving groups
- establish relations with **overseas** cave rescue organisations
- in nearby countries where cave rescue organisations don't exist, **establish relations** with relevant organisations to enable the delivery of assistance
- **Education** of government bodies and management authorities about cave rescue.

As you can see by the objectives, the ACRC aims to assist in the training and provision of a communications network for cavers in Australia. It is not charged with becoming a cave rescue organisation.

Training

Horizontal Cave Rescue. In 2007 WA cavers implemented the Cave Rescue Orientation Program (CROP) that introduces cavers to basic concepts and techniques in horizontal cave rescue. The CROP is not burdened with difficult concepts or extreme practical exercises designed for superman. The program is designed to be presented in approximately 14 hours by experienced cavers whom have broad previous experience and preferably cave rescue training experience.

Although no presentations of the CROP were made during 2009, information was sent to state representatives for review. As a result, Richard Harris in SA has expressed a desire to hold a CROP in the near future and WA will hold a CROP in 2010.

Single Rope Techniques training. At the ASF council meeting in January 2009, the ACRC meeting endorsed the use of Al Warild's book "Vertical" and Dr Dave Merchants book "Life on a Line" (LOAL) as principle training resources for SRT and vertical rescue.

Since this decision, a group of 12 WA cavers have attended four training days that introduce SRT techniques to novice vertical cavers. The four day training program is simply a set of study/ training guide notes that reference sections of Vertical and LOAL in a structured manner that enables novice SRT cavers to become familiar with: equipment characteristics and care, knots, rigging, rope protection, ascending and descending techniques, basic rescues.

These notes are available to all and will be available for download in the future.

For clubs to implement the SRT training program, please email me for a copy of the notes and obtain legitimate copies of Vertical and LOAL (if you don't buy them, don't expect the authors to update them!).

Vertical Rescue training

At the July 2009 International Congress of Speleology in Texas, Australia and Canada obtained permission from the NSS NCRC to utilise their training materials for cave rescue training in Australia. In 2010 I will be asking state representatives and volunteers (maybe you!!) to review the materials and offer suggestions on how we can implement training. This will result in Australian cavers having access to three stages of training; Horizontal rescue, roping skills and vertical/ advanced rescue (with a number of different skill levels defined in the vertical training).

Communications

So far we have developed a list of individuals whom would like to represent their state on a national communications list, or are willing to assist in a rescue if called upon by the local statutory authority.

The current state representatives list is as follows:

NSW: Joe Sydney (Eastern states co-ordinator), Caroline Forest
ACT: Ian McCullough, Brendan McCullough
VIC: Ian Thomas
TAS: Damien Bidgood
SA: Richard Harris
WA: Tracey Robins, Ross Anderson (Chair), Ian Collette (Vice-chair)
"Top End" (WA/NT): John Cugley
QLD: Unrepresented.

If you would like to be on the list email me!

Additionally, there is now established two email lists for the ACRC

List 1: acrc-executive@yahoogroups.com

List 2: acrc-members@yahoogroup.com

The objective is to streamline communications for the ACRC, so if you are interested please email Joe Sydney to join.

Rescue communications. Joe Sydney, Ian Collette and Steve West have been working on the Michie phones for underground communications and have made some good progress with them. Western Australia now has four functional units, and Steve is in the process of writing up new improved instructions so everybody can make their own.

Rescue Management and Exercises

Joe Sydney attended a rescue management seminar in NZ during the year and was able to further the relationships built over the last few years. He has produced a PowerPoint presentation detailing the outcomes of the weekend. If anyone is interested, then please contact Joe for further information.

In February 2010, a number of Australians will be heading to NZ to participate in their Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX). Held outside of Nelson in the South Island, this will give invaluable experience in deep cave rescue and enable the further development of relationships and contacts with NZ cavers.

Awards

Convener: Lloyd Robinson



For the 2011 conference, requests calling for award nominations will be dispatched in February 2010, with a closing date of the following 30th June 2010. The earlier request is to allow time for both the selection panel to hand down its decisions and the preparation of award items that are to be presented to prospective awardees attending the conference dinner.

There have been discussions in the past and present, as to informing awardees of their impending award prior to the conference. A number of awardees have stated they would have attended the conference had they had prior knowledge. However, I feel that such a move away from our tradition would kill the surprise element!

The recent streamlining of our award system will avoid past problems which caused a certain amount of angst and frustrations.

Bibliography

Convener: Greg Middleton (25 November 2009) PO Box 269, Sandy Bay, Tas. 7006
Phone: 03 6223 1400 <ozspeleo@iinet.net.au>

The Bibliography Commission has continued with its function of preparing abstracts of information published on Australian caves/karst and cave/karst science. These are contributed to the IUS Commission on Bibliography for incorporation in the Union's *Speleological Abstracts*, published in Switzerland.

The 2007 abstracts have been prepared and were forwarded to Switzerland (Feb. 2009). The numbers are down on previous years (348 from Australia; 48 from elsewhere), at least partly reflecting a drop in the number of contributors. Those contributing to the 2007 issue were Ross Ellis, Ken Grimes, Jill Rowling, Dave Smith (NZ) and the Convener. Dave Smith and Ken Grimes have indicated their intention of ceasing, hopefully after they find replacements.

The combined 2006-07 issue of *Speleological Abstracts* has not yet been published.

Few abstracts have yet been prepared for 2008 or 2009, in the absence of advice of a deadline from the IUS Commission.

I attended a meeting of the IUS Commission on Bibliography at the Kerville, USA International Congress of Speleology, chaired by the Commission's Chair, Patrick Deriaz (Switzerland). This was mainly concerned with problems of printing and the possibility of putting the abstracts on the web. It was made clear that those operating the Karst Information Portal are very keen to have the abstracts available through their site. This would free the Commission of printing costs and would allow for much more timely availability of abstracts. (There seems to be some reluctance on the part of the Swiss to put the abstracts on the web unless they can charge for access to them. This is entirely contrary to the free access policy of the KIP.) There are to be further discussions between the Commission Chair and representatives of the KIP. A paper summarising the history of *Speleological Abstracts* was presented at the Congress by Deriaz and Bernasconi (*2009 ICS Proceedings*, Vol. 3, pp. 1970-1973).

Once again I express my appreciation for the continuing efforts of our small but dedicated band of abstractors; efforts to find more abstractors, especially local abstractors for WA and Queensland continue to be unsuccessful.

The Commission operates without a budget and without members claiming any costs.

I am prepared to continue to act as Convener of the Commission.

Cave Diving

Conveners: Tim Payne and Peter Kraehenbuehl

It has been a relatively quiet year for the commission. A number of new applicants for the ASF-CDG have been processed and one new training provider has been assessed against the ASF Cave diving competencies. Relations with the CDAA continue to improve and are expected to improve further in the following year. As depicted in the ASF-CDG report which is presented separately ASF cave divers have been extremely busy.

Tim Payne
ASF Cave Diving Commission Convener



'Pool of Reflection' in River Cave at Jenolan

Cave & Karst Numbering

Convener: Peter Dykes

This year has been a particularly busy one for members of the Commission. In NSW I have spent considerable time completing the first volume of the NSW Karst Atlas and hopefully it will be published in 2010. Graham Pilkington has been hard work in SA modifying CEGSA KIDSA into a new national off-line database. In November both he and I spent a week in Adelaide developing and refining a new off-line GIS based database as per the Commission report to the ASF Sale Conference. The new database is to be known as OzKarst and will incorporate all aspects of KIDSA, additional data fields for areas and outcrops along with GIS platform.

The Commission has made a formal presentation to ASF regarding funding for database updating and documentation.

The selection of state Cave and Karst Numbering Coordinators has been difficult and some states will require more time and diplomacy to sort out.

Codes and Guidelines

The convener position for this position is currently vacant.

Helictite

Convener: Sue White

The Helictite Commission is run in tandem with Publications Commission. This is because when ASF received Helictite from the Speleological Research Council (SRC) we agreed to form a separate commission to enhance the chances of continuation of the journal. The Commission consists of Susan White (Chair and joint editor), Ken Grimes (Editor), Stefan Eberhard (Editor), Grace Matts (ASF Treasurer), Glenn Baddeley (Business Manager) and John Dunkley. The ASF President is an ex officio member.

For a variety of reasons volume 40(2) has still not been produced. We have received a few submissions but only one is close to complete for publication. One has been returned to author for major revision and 2 papers are being reviewed by an editor. Both of these will require substantial reworking before publication. Several people have promised material but this has yet to materialize. This is a problem of suitable material and even if material submitted is suitable in topic, the need for revision appears to be an ongoing "road block". We are trying to resolve this problem and hope to have the issue published as soon as possible in 2010.

Volume 42 is earmarked as a Gregory Karst issue with invited papers. This will be a double issue and work will begin on organizing this in February 2010 for publication in 2011.

The Business Manager has updated the Helictite web site to state that hard-copy sets and back issues are no longer available, and this service will be replaced by PDFs on the web site or PDFs mailed by disk. PDFs of the main articles from Volume 36 onwards are downloadable from the website. There are no complete sets of hard copies to sell although limited numbers of back copies are available. We have written off all hard copies prior to Volume 36 in the stocktake. Limited numbers of back issues for the past few volumes are available from Glenn or from John Dunkley.

I have been in discussion with Todd Chavez who manages the Karst Information Portal, an international system for digital dissemination of karst material. This is a free service and is managed by the Library of the University of South Florida. The karst research community and its knowledge base are fragmented, globally distributed, and highly interdisciplinary. As karst issues move to the forefront of attempts to develop solutions in response to significant human environmental degradation, information integration and linkages promoting collaboration and connectivity among researchers is essential. For Helictite to be involved in this would be of value, but working through some of the issues is taking time. There is a similar system organized by RMIT and I need to spend time sorting this all

through. Glenn Baddeley has scanned some of the earlier material but if we can organize for high quality scans, especially if they are OCR standard, done for free by someone else it saves our time and energy.

Associated with this we have been thinking through issues related to digital publishing of Helictite. Ken Grimes is developing a discussion paper on the matter for dissemination through Caves Australia and to other interested people in early 2010.

Some of the problems relating to Helictite are associated with the time that the editors have had for Helictite matters. However not all of it is and the dearth of suitable articles coming continues to be the main issue.

Regarding the issue of karst portal access I discussed this at the UIS with the person in charge at University of South Florida Library and I have also had brief discussion with RMIT in Melbourne about the same issues. This required Glenn and I to sit down and discuss through the issues and how to move forward, and this has been limited by available time.

The problems of Helictite relate to time available to do this as both Ken and I as editors and Glenn as Business Manager have had extremely limited time to work on Helictite matters for over 12 months. I need to think how we can resolve these issues and move forward.

I would like to thank those who have put time into Helictite in the past year, especially Glenn Baddeley and John Dunkley.

Insurance

Convener: David Chitty
No report received to date

International Relations

Convener: Nicholas White

The Commission's role is to assist where one can with travel planning and to provide representation at IUS meetings.

ASF will host the next Vulcanospeleology Conference in August 2010 at Undara, Queensland and with a Pre-Conference Field Trip to the Volcanic Province of Western Victoria. Contact Greg Middleton < ozspeleo@inet.net.au >.

The Fifteenth International Congress of Speleology was held in Kerrville, Texas, USA July 2009. A more detailed report will appear in Caves Australia 179. The Congress was held in conjunction with the National Speleological Society Annual Meeting and some 1500 registrants attended. Field trips before, during and after the Congress were constrained due to the fear of spread of White Nose Syndrome to bats in other parts of the United States. A full decontamination protocol was required for visits to most wild caves in Texas. The Congress had a very full program of social activities and scientific sessions. Most of the papers from the Congress are now available for download from the Karst Information Portal (www.karstportal.org).

Nicholas White and Grace Matts represented ASF at the UIS General Assembly meeting. Grace assisted with auditing the accounts of UIS. There were changes to the UIS monetary affairs with the Euro now being the official currency. Accounts will be kept in Slovenia and the Treasurer is Nadja Zupan Hajna who is from the Karst Research Institute in Postojna. For ASF we now expect to pay annually by bank to bank transfer instead of by cash on a four yearly basis.

The General Assembly adopted provisions for scientific investigation of caves into the UIS Code of Ethics.

The next international congress will be in Brno, Czech Republic, in late July or early August 2013. The UIS flag was passed to Zdenek Motyčka, President of the 16th ICS Organizing Committee. Look to www.speleo2013.com for more information.

There was a lot of pressure and expectation that ASF would bid again for an IUS Congress. ASF raised expectations when Julia James on behalf of ASF bid for the Congress but we lost out to Brazil. A Congress would require a huge effort on the part of Australian cavers and ASF itself. The logistics of hosting a congress for 500 or more visitors is quite daunting. Accommodation needs to be provided from good hotel-motel through to cheaper dormitory and camping options. Meeting facilities need to be for large plenary meetings as well as lecture theatres for multiple sessions. Pre-Congress and Post-Congress field trips would need arranging to a series of karst areas involving show cave visiting and wild caving. New Zealand has promised to assist with this. UIS now has quite specific requirements regarding bids.

Members are reminded of the UIS Code of Conduct for conducting overseas expeditions. Primarily this involves arranging permission and working with the speleological groups of the Country concerned.

Recommendation

The International Relations Commission will conduct a feasibility study for the Executive to consider as to whether ASF should proceed with a Congress bid for 2017. This study should be completed by the Council meeting at Chillicon in 2011. The Commission would co-opt anyone interested in assisting with this study.

Library

Convener: Cathy Brown

In addition to the usual requests for specific cave information, during the year we were able to assist a couple of clubs in obtaining missing copies of their own publications, and to fill a few gaps in our own collection. We now have a copy of probably 95% of all the serial publications ever produced relating to Australian caves and cave management.

Elery Hamilton-Smith donated a valuable collection of articles & papers from the early days of ASF which will supplement that received recently from Dr Brian O'Brien on the foundation of ASF. Thanks also for donations received from Nick & Sue White (Cave Management Conference Proceedings), Julia James (IUS Congress Proceedings), John Dunkley, Peter Dykes and the Caving Club of Victoria.

As well as serials like Caves Australia, the Archives / Library now has a copy of every stand-alone publication and every conservation and management submission or report ever produced in the name of ASF & the former Speleological Research Council Ltd (over 80 different items, would you believe!), while all issues of Caves Australia and its predecessors since 1956 are being scanned (many thanks to STC). We are seeking a volunteer club or individual to assist with scanning the ASF Conference Proceedings as these are scarce but often contain historically valuable papers.

I would like to thank John Dunkley in particular, for his continuing stewardship of the Library collection, the opportunities he has found to improve it, and the space the Dunkleys have made available in their house.

Once again this year, I intend to have an electronic copy of the library's journal holdings available at the council meeting, for anyone who wishes a copy, and hope to make this list available on the ASF website in due course.

I also encourage clubs to keep sending those journals and other publications to us, either in hard copy or electronically. If you are posting your material on a website, please email me to let us know where, and for how long. Thanks for your continuing support. You are contributing to a valuable resource for all ASF cavers.

Membership

Convener: Jodie Rutledge

Membership is steady with currently 758 individual members spanning 27 corporate member clubs, and 1 Provisional member clubs and 9 Individual members outside the club framework.

Membership Highlights

In early 2009, we all farewelled the Caving Club of Victoria who folded formally at the conference in Sale, Victoria.

At the 2009 ASF Council Meeting, the ASF's third Speleological State Council, the Tasmanian Speleological Liaison Council (TSLC) was accepted as an official state council of ASF.



During 2009 an application for membership was received from the Cave Exploration Group of WA (CEGWA), and this application will be considered at the January 2010 Council meeting.

Un-representation by Clubs at Council meetings

In 2009, 3 clubs were not represented (CASM, CQSS & HSC). It is asked that club committee's please arrange representation either in person or by proxy at each meeting.

CQSS Status

There was some concern in 2008 about the membership status of the Central Queensland Speleological Society (CQSS) as the club had been un-financial for 2 years. At the 2009 ASF Council meeting, the matter was left to the ASF Executive to consider. During 2009, the ASF executive considered the membership status of to be valid still while "Fellow" member Peter Berrill remains a member. Members with "Fellow" status are exempt from paying membership fees.

Database and email lists

An email list operating through the membership database is used for all official ASF correspondence. This will continue to work well, as long as those receiving the emails continue to pass on the correspondence to their club committees. Members can be nominated by their club database administrator to receive these emails and it is recommended that more than one person in each club be nominated to receive them.

A separate email list has now been created for use by the NSW Speleological Council for correspondence within NSW and the ACT. If your club has any problems- please let me know and I will endeavour to fix or I'll pass on the problem to David Connard (the real brains behind this operation!).

Publications

Convener: Sue White

The Publications Commission is run in tandem with Helictite but is a much more complex commission as it involves Caves Australia, ESpeleo, the website and a myriad of other publications.

The commission comprises Susan White (Chair), John Dunkley, Grace Matts (ASF Treasurer), Colin Tyrrell (Webmaster), Greg Middleton, Alan Jackson (CA Production), Brook Grant (CA Editor) and Ross Anderson (ESpeleo Editor).

The ASF President is an ex-officio member and other members are co-opted for specific tasks as required. I wish to thank everyone on the commission for their hard work this year as well as their (often nameless) assistants. We have achieved a lot this year and the Publications area of ASF is a major component of our public relations.

Caves Australia (CA)

The problems previously besetting CA have generally been resolved. The layout has been upgraded and we are steadily catching up the back issues. CA 179 is currently at the printer (double issue) and this will bring us up to September 2009. The regular columns are proving a success. The initiatives for colour are successful. We continue to need articles for publishing. Don't complain if you have not written anything!

CA 179 has an article discussing the issue of digital publishing of CA. There are some real issues here and we need to make sure it does not result in lots of extra work. The problems are not simple but the issue needs to be discussed and there may be some significant advantages. Everyone needs to realize that digital publishing is not without costs. Alan's article outlines the issues clearly and succinctly so when you get it in your mail box make sure you read it and comment to him or me directly.

The returns issue has been looked at and we are now having generally a "no returns policy". Can clubs please make sure their members' addresses are kept up to date in the membership database! Returns of CA cost us money!

Brooke Grant, the CA editor has had to resign after this next issue due to family and work commitments. We are therefore looking for an editor again. It is important that the work of editing and production is shared rather than put onto one person. Thanks to Brooke for her work over the past few years.

The **Tasmanian production team is to be congratulated** for its success in decreasing the back-log and for the high quality of the magazine. Thanks to those who do the proof reading as well!

Website

The webmaster, Colin Tyrrell, has been gradually upgrading aspects of the website. Information on ASF activities, which I had been requesting for some time, has been produced and is now on the site, but more information on ASF activities is needed. Material submitted has a very quick up-load and the small "bugs" and link breakages are fixed as soon as they are reported. Please remember that it is not the webmaster's job to produce material.

The site usage statistics show that 3274 visits were made to the site between January and December 2009. This is similar to previous years and is about 1/3 each for direct traffic, referring sites and search engine visits. Most of the visits are from Australia (2326) but the other main sources are USA (301) Brazil (65) UK (55) Canada (44) Ireland (37) France (32) NZ (30) India (24) and Turkey (24).

I would like to remind clubs that material is vetted for potential defamatory material and this includes links to other sites including ASF member clubs.

We hope to increase the information on the site so that it becomes very much an integral part of getting information about speleology in Australia.

There was discussion regarding updating the calendar during the year. Jill Rowling has agreed to collect material for the calendar and send it to the Commission. It can then be collated for both the website and CA. We are currently working on streamlining this process.

ESpeleo

ESpeleo is an excellent method of communication but due to the editor being very busy this year, not as many issues were emailed out. It remains an ad hoc communication to members rather than regular, but I would like it to have 6 issues per year. It proved a very effective way of getting information out on the Timor case to members.

Other publications

ASF has a number of other publications. Some of these are material we received from the SRC and the most successful one at the moment is the Jenolan book. This continues to be a success and has generated interest within the commission to produce other such material. The Wee Jasper book has therefore changed focus from that of the previous edition to a more populist publication. The text is currently being edited to suit this new focus. We hope to produce this in 2010.

The Conservation Book is still collecting material for the case study section. Significant material has been collected and/ submitted in draft form but there are still some major omissions. The collection of the rest of this material is what will occur in 2010.

The Commission has undertaken to publish the NSW atlas project. We currently have the first draft and are working through this and again hope to produce this in 2010. This is an excellent but large project.

It has been raised by the Helictite Commission that we consider offering reprints of the SRC books in PDF. The Commissions will discuss this further in the coming months.

There are several other ideas for publishing projects that have been suggested but they need to wait until we complete those we have currently undertaken.

Conclusion

Overall the Commission has worked hard this year but there is always more to do.

Safety, Leadership and Risk Management

Convener: Caroline Forest

I have read over the Risk Management Document from the Outdoor Recreation Industry Council. Thankyou to Steve Bunton for his suggested alterations to the existing ASF Safety Guidelines. I am at present combining these documents and reviewing the adequacy and legality of the wording in relation to ASF members.

I presented a workshop and lecture to the 27th ASF Conference at Sale introducing the concept of Duty of Care and Risk Assessment. I had requested feed back in relation to any subjects concerning ASF members and safety and leadership. I also requested that the risk assessments require a review process. This is especially true for "near misses". Communication difficulties as to how to contact myself have stalled this process. I have now designated the email address (c.forest@live.com.au) specifically for SLARM business and ASF contact point.

I wish to put forward my concern for complacency towards foul air conditions. I feel that this subject needs to be quantified with scientific assessing rather than only anecdotal evidence. To further this, I wish to call for people's experiences and training as well as any quantifiable evidence concerning foul air. I propose that the term foul air be replaced with the term Toxic air conditions as this is a true reflection of the physiological results of asphyxiates and poisonous gas on cavers. A review of existing toxic gas detectors and confined space training for re-breathers would be of assistance to ASF members.

I have reviewed the existing NSW Ambulance service rescue training notes on the subject of confined spaces and cave and rescue toxic air considerations and detection. I would like to approach the Cave Rescue Squad for further information and consolidation into a user friendly document for ASF members.

There would appear to be a real desire for training outlines for leaders and members.

As an ex-Paramedic and current First Aid Trainer I also have concerns about the inadequate first aid training of the existing courses available in relation to remote caving situation. This topic needs to be put to the members as an area for review and I suggest that the SLAM committee take this on.

Actions Proposed for 2010

1. Consolidate Safety guidelines for distribution
2. Contact details for people to send suggestions and risk assessments to for review
3. Toxic air reviews of existing literature and to summarise information for distribution
4. Permission to approach Caves Rescue to create joint best practice guidelines on Toxic Air and the recreational Caver
5. Reviews of existing toxic gas detector and re-breather and confined space training
6. Training package for leaders created and considered for distribution

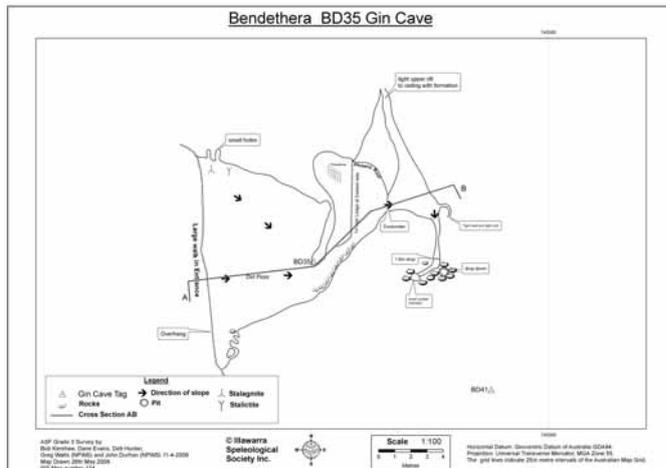
7. Appropriate First Aid Training for leaders
8. Priority and Time line established for the above points

Deb Hunter with the super duper waterholding backpack for speleothem cleaning on a Karstcare trip. Photo by Jay Anderson



Survey and Mapping Standards

Convener: Alan Warild



I took over the role this year and so far have done nothing more than read some GIS information.

Next year I plan to clean up and modernise the mapping symbols and add colour as well as provide them as downloadable symbol files. The ASF survey grades are too complicated anybody who doesn't have a definition on hand would be lost. We should fix them too!

We should also look at putting some of Bob Kershaw's GIS information on the website.

Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group

Liaison person: Paul Hosie

ASF Cave Diving Group (ASF-CDG) Activities Report 2009

In the past 12 months, ASF-CDG members have been involved in a number of cave diving projects across the country as well as New Zealand. The following is a summary of notable events and achievements:

- (A) New Zealand (Mt Arthur) - The Pearse Resurgence. The cave was explored and mapped to a depth of -182m by ASF cave divers, making this the deepest cave diving site in the region. Following the source of the chilly mountain waters, the divers discovered a large horizontal tunnel at the maximum depth which is yet to be explored.
- (B) Nullarbor (WA) - Cocklebiddy Cave. The end of the cave was extended by over 120m in 2008 to a 1,893m penetration from Toad Hall.
- (C) This was verified and further survey work was conducted during a return visit in March 2009. Over 1700m of passages in the second and third sumps, as well as Toad Hall itself were surveyed by Tim Payne & team in late 2008. Only a short section of the second sump remains to be surveyed before a complete and accurate map of the cave can be generated. The survey has been a collaborative effort by a number of different dive teams over several years.
- (D) Junee-Florentine System (TAS). Intrepid ASF cave divers have verified the current limit of this system which offers potential for many kilometres of cave diving exploration in future years. David Apperley repaired line in Junee Cave which enabled the underwater breakdown rockpile at the end of the second sump to be inspected for continuation.



Paul Hosie in Cocklebiddy cave 2007

- (E) Tigers Eye System (TAS). A newly discovered cave diving system is being explored and mapped by ASF cave divers. In 2009, one hundred metres of virgin passage at up to 40m depth were explored and the passages continue. Diving occurs on a seasonal basis.
- (F) Buchan Area (VIC) - Elk River Cave has been radically extended by diving to become The Murrindal Potholes Eastern Master Cave (MPEMC). A number of upstream and downstream sumps have been explored and surveyed to reveal over 1300m of virgin streamway passage. This is arguably the most important cave discovery in eastern Victoria since 1910. Exploration continues.
- (G) Mount Gambier (SA) - Piccaninnie Ponds Spring System. ASF cave divers have continued the exploration and surveying of a new chamber at over 100m depth in the main site, as well as documenting new caves in the surrounding wetlands. A scientific study of the local hydrology has been commenced in close cooperation with local water and land management authorities.
- (H) Mount Gambier (SA) - Fossil Cave Palaeontological Work. In August 2009, ASF cave divers discovered bone fossils from a new area in Fossil Cave. Amongst the fossils were two megafauna jaws belonging to the *Simosthenurus/ Procoptodon occidentalis* (a grazing kangaroo). The bone material is held and being studied by staff at Flinders University.
- (I) Great Barrier Reef (QLD) - Australian Blue Holes Project. October 2009 saw commencement of a national project to document and study oceanic blue holes. A live-aboard trip to the Great Barrier Reef saw three blue holes being dived, two of them in excess of 85m depth. The project includes a number of ASF cave divers.

- (J) Jenolan (NSW) - Imperial Streamway. The downstream sumps and passages are being re-surveyed. Beyond the first upstream sump, some unexplored roof holes are being explored by cave divers using scaling poles. Work continues.
- (K) Jenolan (NSW) - Southern Streamway/River Lethe. Newly produced maps of the Jenolan cave system has identified new possible connections between caves that are being explored by cave divers. A new sump was also discovered which will be explored and surveyed.
- (L) Wellington (NSW) - McCavity Cave. Falling water levels in the cave may soon result in it no longer being a cave dive, but a swimming passage which is good news for cavers, not good news for cave divers!

Several ASF-CDG Members received recognition for their cave diving efforts during the year. Richard Harris and Steve Trewavas received Outstanding Achievement Awards for Cave Exploration at the OzTek'09 Technical Diving Conference. At the same event, Rick Stanton (British Cave Diving Group) presented ASF-CDG member Craig Challen with his award of Australasian Technical Diver of the Year 2009.

With many interesting cave diving projects under way around the country, the objective for the ASF-CDG in 2010 is to bring some co-ordination to these activities and improve communication between all ASF cave divers.

Paul Hosie November 2009

ASF Gregory Karst Research Special Interest Group

Liaison person: Mark Sefton (Chair)

Annual Report to the Australian Speleological Federation – October 2009.

Members of the Gregory Karst Research Special Interest Group of the Australian Speleological Federation Inc. (Gregory SIG) conducted the annual Gregory Karst expedition from the 27th June to the 10th July 2009. Bullita Cave System now has a surveyed length of 120.4 km and is ranked number 14 in the list of the world's longest caves. This year, surveying efforts in this system were aimed at filling in existing gaps in the current survey and initiating a series of carefully mapped and checked traverses throughout the system which will still take several years to complete. These traverses are intended to form a 'backbone' on which the rest of the survey can be built and we expect this process to obviate the need for constant redrawing of multiple sections of the map to accommodate additional data. Up to now, adding new data has resulted in the survey computer program constantly repositioning survey legs throughout large sections of the existing map in order to close all survey loops. The group also conducted exploration and surveying in two other karst areas in the Gregory National Park. At the first of these, an additional 3.7 km of cave was mapped and at the second, at the time of writing, at least 3 km of new cave has been mapped (data from this last area has not yet been completely processed).

Sue White presented a paper on the genesis of the Bullita Cave System at the recent UIS conference in the USA which generated much interest. Papers are now being prepared, by several members of the group, on the caves and karst of the Gregory National Park for publication in *Helictite*.



Lloyd Robinson with his camera for use in the Bullita Cave

The fourth AGM of the Gregory SIG was conducted at Bullita on the 9th July 2009. At the meeting, Mark Sefton and Bob Kershaw were re-elected as Chairman and Mapping Coordinator of the Group, respectively, while Deborah Hunter was elected as Secretary and John Dunkley, John Redpath and Bruce Swain were re-elected to the Committee.

There has been a turnover of senior management in charge of the park during the past 12 months. Nevertheless, the good relationship between the Group and the Park management has continued.

The next expedition by the Group is planned for July 2010.

Committee Reports

Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Cultural Committee

Established January 2008.

Chair: Peter Dykes

No report received.

Conference Committee (Karstaway 2009)

Chair: Margaret James

The "Karstaway Conference" is currently working on the proceedings. There is sufficient money to cover expenses and we hope to complete these Proceedings in 2010.

Documentation

Chair: Nicholas White

No report received to date

Karst Index Database Report

This report is for the online KID at <http://www.caves.org.au/kid>

There have been some database and software changes in 2009 and updates by VSA and SUSS.

Updating in NSW

Very little is happening. Some updates were made by SUSS early in 2009. Hopefully this will pickup after I add the new cave position fields as mentioned later. There is no other club doing any updating in NSW. I will try to arrange some training for updaters of other clubs to encourage them to contribute. Cumulative updates: 260 to SUSS.

Updating in Victoria

The VSA has been working on getting entries added to the KID for all new caves added since the 1985 data. Peter Matthews reported that the following areas have completed: Volcanic Areas (3H), Murrindal (3M), and Drik Drik (3DD). Cumulative updates: 314 to VSA.

Changes to Victorian Karst Area Names

In Victoria there were several areas that had the same "H" area code as in the list below. The Victorian State Coordinator, Peter Matthews, and the Victorian updaters decided to remove all those areas and replace them with one large area called "Western Volcanic Plains". This change has been made and data in the KID appropriately modified.

- Volcanic Areas - Panmure
- Volcanic Areas - Parwan
- Volcanic Areas - Porndon
- Volcanic Areas - Skipton
- Volcanic Areas - Smeaton
- Volcanic Areas - Warrion Hill
- Volcanic Areas - Byaduk
- Volcanic Areas - Gisborne
- Volcanic Areas - Mt. Eccles & The Stones
- Volcanic Areas - Mt. Hamilton
- Volcanic Areas - Mt. Napier

KID Field Changes

During 2009 I liased with Peter Matthews in developing additional fields for the KID that were required for the positioning of caves both on maps and on-the-ground. Peter has added these to the International Union of Speleology, Informatics Commission suggested fields. I will be updating the KID in early 2010 to accommodate these extra fields.

Reference: <http://www.uisic.uis-speleo.org/exchange/catables.html#updates>

GIS Functionality in the KID

The wish to have some form of GIS (Geographic Information System) capability in the KID has been raised by Peter Dykes last year. However "GIS capability" means different things to different people and so far I have not received any detailed request except that the online KID is "textual only" and not "graphical". I have some ideas of my own on what should be attempted, what can be achieved and how this could be implemented.

I intend to integrate Google Maps into the online KID and to use the new positional fields mentioned above to plot cave locations on a Google Map. Initially this will be for all tourist caves in Australia and then for other caves that have positions. The later would be restricted to the updaters for those areas. I am aiming for this to be done in 2010.

Interoperability with Offline KID

The online KID and the offline KID being developed by Graham Pilkington should be able to exchange data. The online KID field specifications are available at: <http://www.caves.org.au/kid/doc/> under ASF KID Specifications. I can provide whatever help is required at the "online end" for this to occur.

Mike Lake January 2010 (MikeL@speleonics.com.au)

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Karst Geodiversity Unit (NSW, DECCW): Level 2, 203-209 Russell St, Bathurst NSW 2795
UNE Mountaineering Club: C/- Sports, The University of New England, Armidale, NSW 2351

Special Interest Groups

ASF Cave Diving Group
ASF Gregory Karst Research Group

Karst Conservancies

KarstWatch (Mole Creek)



“Their future is in our hands”