

EDITORIAL

Steve Bourne

Between Journal 108 and this Journal 109, I advised President Dale Calnin that I would be stepping down as Publication Officer at the AGM to be held in Margaret River in May. The time required to produce a quality journal and the time I seem to have available now no longer match. It is time for someone else to take the role on and build on the tradition of ACKMA journals. I doubt it is very common for an organisation with the longevity of ACKMA to have only ever had 2 people publish their journal; Kent Henderson produced an amazing 82 and my tally will stop at 28.

In Journal 108, I reproduced Scott Hocknull's article from the Australian Age of Dinosaurs magazine, maintaining their format as requested. This seemed to work quite well so I have used the same methodology for Mary Traye's article; her Field Guide used for the post UIS Congress excursion. Mary has quite a deal of experiencing in producing newsletters and field guides and it seemed a pity to pull it a part just for the sake of a different format. And it's much quicker to do as well!

John Brush alerted me to a couple of nice articles on Thailand and Xe Bang Fei Cave in Laos when he visited Naracoorte last August. He put me in contact with the author Terry Bolger and the Xe Bang Fei Cave article is printed in this journal. The Thailand Caves article will appear in the next journal. I had not heard of Xe Bang Fei Cave prior to seeing this article but it's strange how things work out. One of the participants in the post IUS congress excursion Liz Reed and I hosted, Augusto Auler, said he was arranging a trip to Vietnam and Laos in 2018. Plans have fallen into place very nicely and I am joining Augusto and his friends for a 3 week caving trip into Vietnam and Laos which includes Xe Bang Fei and Son Doong Caves. It is a fair chance there will be an article for the new Publication Officer from this trip!

John Brush and Marjorie Coggan have been travelling again and John has kindly provided two articles. One is on a visit to Höllgrotten, Switzerland and, as usual, John has given a nice overview of the tour and the management of the site. For anyone who travels and writes up a cave visit for the ACKMA Journal, take a look at how John does it.

John is chairman of the IUS Commission on Volcanic Caves and has written a piece promoting the Vulcanospeleology Symposium to be held this year in Northern California. One day I would love to attend one of these events but unfortunately it won't be this year.

A group of ACKMA members; David Gillieson, Andy Spate, Ann Augusteyn, Jodie Anderson and Scott Melton, have produced a guide survey. The purpose is to identify the level of training provided to cave guides and opportunities for this to be improved, possibly with ACKMA playing a role in this. All guides and managers are encouraged to complete this survey. As an incentive, ACKMA is offering registration fees for the Margaret River ACKMA conference. You will need to prioritise this as entries close 28 February.

Nicholas White brought my attention to a cave-monitoring website; www.cave-monitoring.org. The website was developed following the 2nd International Workshop of Cave Monitoring in Innsbruck, Austria. It is a web-based database of sites where cave monitoring has taken place for at least one year, and is intended as a platform to improve and coordinate research activities in the fields of cave meteorology, karst and speleothem science, and subterranean ecology. If you would like to add your site to the map, you will find a template that is quick and easy to complete under the Submit tab. The authors

of the site report, "*we are not intending to have a data repository on the website, but merely provide some basic information and contact details should you wish to have access to the data.*" Already there are quite a few entries for Australian cave sites.

Andy Spate put out a call for ACKMA members to review the draft Management Plan for the Nullarbor Parks. A few members provided some comments and submissions were made on behalf of ACKMA and other caving groups that I am aware of. For me, the plan was far less than what constitutes a good management plan. It lacked consultation in preparation of the draft, omitted many important values in the description of the Nullarbor and had a series of objectives under four themes, without priorities and critically, who was actually taking responsibility for the actions. Then there is the small point that the plan stops at the border. Maybe one day two state governments can work together for the better management of this great landscape.

New Karst Ranger at Mole Creek

We have a new posting in Tasmania – Chris McMonagle is the new Karst Ranger at Mole Creek. He comes to Mole Creek with 16 years' experience in conservation estate management, having worked as a park ranger at Iron Range and Lawn Hill National Parks in North Queensland. He also spent 9 months as a wildlife ranger in Mt Isa which involved flying fox mitigation and managing crocodiles in the Gulf of Carpentaria. He has been the Senior Ranger in the Shark Bay World Heritage Area in Western Australia for the past 11 years and moved to Tasmania in September with his family.

Chris is looking forward to the new challenges involved with managing karst and its associated stakeholders. His responsibilities do not include the operation of the show caves but instead focus on the management of the regions 'wild caves', as well as places like Devils Gullet, Central Plateau Conservation Area and the Walls of Jerusalem National Park.

Whilst he does not have a great karst background, other than the Hamelin Pool stromatolites, he has always had a keen interest in karst - having visited most of Australia's show caves at some stage in his life, not to mention assisting in the management of the Riversleigh WHA and its associated karst landscapes for several years. He is being eased into his new position by such people as Rolan Eberhard, Cathy Plowman, Deb Hunter and myself. And doubtless others.

He has recently joined ACKMA as a member and is planning to attend the next conference in Margaret River in 2018.

I was hoping to have some news on Deborah Carden's replacement at Naracoorte and Tantanoola. I know a few that applied who have been advised the vacancy was being withdrawn and will be "redesigned to better fit our needs". I was surprised when I read the original role description as it didn't include any requirement for cave and karst knowledge. I hope this will be addressed with the new role.

The Margaret River team is busy preparing for the May conference. They need your registrations and abstract submissions. Without people and papers there can't be a conference!