



Delegates to the 2018 ACKMA Conference at Margaret River, Western Australia (Dirk Stoffels)

The 2018 ACKMA Conference summary

By Kirsty Dixon

The standard and breadth of topics presented at the recent ACKMA conference in Margaret River was outstanding and there truly was something for everyone. From in-depth scientific studies to Scotty Melton's unforgettable exposé on Enid Blyton!

If I had to choose something that was highlighted in every single presentation, I believe that it would be the power of storytelling (perhaps this would be an appropriate theme for the next conference???) and the many forms that this can take. Much discussion was generated by the Guides' survey results and how we can best address the presentation of cave related material in a variety of situations.

To rise to the challenge of filling Steve Bourne's shoes in providing a conference summary, I also decided to rise to the challenge of telling these stories in a new and perhaps unexpected format.

Paper descriptions are in the order they were presented.



Kirsty Dixon (Ann Augusteyn)

I mean no disrespect to any of the presenters, nor do I wish to diminish the time and efforts in formulating these excellent items – I merely wish to stimulate further discussion on the benefits (or otherwise!) of novel ways of information presentation.

So for the first time in the history of ACKMA I present for your perusal:



Carolina Paice and Kirsty Dixon (Ann Augusteyn)

A Summary of the 22nd ACKMA Conference in Rhyming Verse

Margaret River – famed for surf and wine,
 Beauties of the eye and wonders of the vine,
 And yet there still remains hidden secrets to behold
 For the adventurous at heart, both young and old.
 Caverns dark and deep, yet sparkling fair,
 Beckoning to the caving tribe – those who are aware.
 And so from many lands we come and meet,
 Renewing friendships old and new and memories so sweet.
 Joining together in a quest to share
 Knowledge and insights precious and rare;
 Science, interps, caving and guiding,
 New ways and old ways, the best ways deciding.
 Until at last our time of gathering and revelry ends
 And for a while we part, but remain forever friends.

Conference Proceedings – Day 2:

Poor Stefan's lovely streams devolved into nothing more than dreams
 With nary a drop of moisture to be found.
 Continued importunities on root mat communities
 Has caused them to cease to abound;
 Potentially due to gums that are blue
 Sucking too much from the ground.

One of Pauline's things is counting tree growth rings
 To determine past cycles of drought.
 An atlas she's making, but this vast undertaking
 In south-west WA won't work out.
 So new species she's seeking, with rings worth the reading
 To fill the big picture throughout.

Adventure and exploration led to Mulu's World Heritage declaration,
 And cave discovery and recording continues apace.
 Using Centre, shop and cafeteria to promote World Heritage criteria
 Helps empower local people to share their special space.
 Sharing knowledge and abilities through partnerships and facilities
 Enables best practice management of tourism and place.

Julia says Jenolan is drying, but there is yet no risk of people crying,
 As areas still remain that are considerably wet.
 Waters of reflection provide pictures of perfection,
 But debate on coloured lights will be ongoing yet.
 Animals in streams and interpreting indigenous dreams
 Set a perfect demonstration for the ecotourism set.



(Mark Delane)

Conference Proceedings – Day 3:

Many eyebrows were raised at the site of Nick's Cave,
Mostly beneath the bulk of the town,
Yet Devonian sediment was to archaeology no impediment
With records of sea level and climate laid down.
Excavations revealed three species of hominids concealed
In the Geopark's layers with yet more to be found.

The study of karst springs over 10 years of Tim's life brings
A better understanding of Vancouver Island's flow.
Domestic use is tapping, but bacteria needs zapping
And turbidity needs reducing to levels that are low.
New methods of recording will allow more data hoarding
And allow good forest management and education to go.

The drawcard of show caves is now in need of being saved
As Peter found sites highly impacted by lint.
Familiarity creates blindness and they must return to loving kindness
And focus on conservation and control for a stint.
Building conservation teams and using this in education streams
Is demonstrating how this management holds a hopeful glint.

John told of volcanic terrain and of the efforts for protection to gain,
For a landscape losing connection with its formative past.
Human activity is impacting by rock quarrying and extracting,
Disrupting surface features and diminishing values fast.
A significant landscape overlay needs implementing without delay
To provide permanent protection for this valuable pseudokarst.

Lao's tourist potential is huge, but their facilities are crude,
So Greg and John were invited to lend a helping hand.
Overcoming a history very rugged and infrastructure that is bugged
Provides significant challenges in interpreting their land.
Yet sites they have that sing, and potential World Heritage will bring
And hopes of creating something meaningful and grand.

Caring for the karst in Camooweal has been far less than ideal
With high impacts of grazing, and Ghost bat numbers in decline.
Wild fires caused destruction and cows vegetation reduction
Results in no recovery and of a management plan, no sign.
To help save this special place we need greater understanding of this space
And management protection implemented by design.



Mark Delane (right) waiting for Peter Bell (left) to demonstrate his innovative management projects in Mammoth Cave (Ann Augusteyn)



Above—Teagan Symons from Yarrangobilly in the Borungup Forest (Ann Augusteyn)



Left—Preparing to go underground (Mark Delane)



Rauleigh and Samantha Webb
(Ann Augusteyn)

Conference Proceedings – Day 4:

Katie's interest is in fire, both moderate and dire
And the impact it has on the karst system below.
With geochemistry and hydrology, can we determine the chronology
Of paleo fires recorded in stalagmites long ago?
Some promising trace markers will do fine for starters,
And then maybe moving on to aerosols is the way to go.

Andy says Australian a-tents are unusual and require more study and perusal
As they are the only ones from a non-glaciated limestone source.
Coolman Plains has the greatest number, but due to environmental slumber,
These precious, rare karst features are under threat from the horse.
With their crushing and scraping, a significant feature they are erasing,
But heated debate is ongoing about a remedial course.

Cathie is seeking a way to rave and inspire about habitats of the cave,
And decided on Australian cave animal of the year.
With the aim of spotlighting protection and engendering affection
For creatures and locations that most people fear.
With greater elaboration and invitations for collaboration
The way forward together is clear.

Shayne inspires the next generation through outside-the-classroom education
And linked curriculum needs in development of ed packs.
Using multiple sites, from the depths to the heights
And providing teaching resources with no lack.
There are now 10 tours across 6 sites and the students' delights
Ensure that they keep coming back.

Scott Melton and friends wanted to examine the trends
In the training and perceptions of guides,
So they instituted a survey with the aim to purvey
The requirements that would these results provide.
Managers want interpretation skills, guides want more content fill,
But for accredited training both were on-side.

Cathie let everyone know that for bookings not to be slow
For the 31st ASF conference in December.
A raft of activities to suit all proclivities
Will ensure an event to remember.
The venue is right and with camping on-site,
Early bird rego is open 'til September.

**Below—Libby Chandler with Anita
and Ian Eddison (Ann Augusteyn)**



Dale Calnin and Katie Coleborn- Ken
Grimes award winner (Ann Augusteyn)



John Brush and Hein Gerstner
(Ann Augusteyn)



Conference Proceedings – Day 5 – Part 1:

Threatened Ecological Communities have very little climatic immunity
And subterranean wetlands have a vital role to play.
Very susceptible to disturbance, with current environmental perturbation
There is doubt that wet cave communities will be able to stay.
There is hope biospeleology can reveal unique species ecology
That will allow recolonization when favourable conditions are the way.

Guides shape visitor perceptions but one of the enduring questions
Is how to get them to retain the information you provide?
Make your tour meaningful and engaging, but authentic in your staging
They are there to see the cave, not the performance of the guide.
Integrating information into an evolving storytelling presentation,
Will create a special memory and have them always on your side.

Andy found a website showing (with effusive language overflowing)
Some distance learning adventures in caving and karst.
The question proposed, from which vigorous discussion arose,
Was whether ACKMA should do something so vast?
Support with some reservations and questions of funding allocations
Indicate further consultation needed before the idea can be passed.

Part of Naracoorte's evolution is moving toward a regional tourism solution,
With connection to wider visitor activities and stays,
By upgrading visitor facilities to promote access for those with disabilities
And adding surface interpretation of the below ground displays.
Involving the community and highlighting business opportunity
Through collaboration and special themed activity days.

Police, cavers and the Parks Service were all getting very nervous
About the prospect of cave rescue and who was best to do the deed.
After some previous distrust it became apparent that they must
Collaborate to provide a strong response in need.
Developing a draft set of questions to determine the best resource directions
Helps responders assess the need for manpower and speed.



***Barry Richard and Julia James
(Ann Augusteyn)***



***Marjorie Coggan giving Judy
Christensen a helping hand
(Ann Augusteyn)***

Conference Proceedings – Day 5 – Part 2:

The Association of British and Irish Show caves is a vehicle for pathways to pave
For collaboration of all attractions underground.
Shared cross-promotion of sites gives them opportunities to highlight
The wonders that in the UK abound.
Changing views on conservation abilities has allowed some of these tourist facilities
To participate in Geopark status and explore new avenues profound.

Erie wanted to know the levels of bacteria, high and low
That could only be present with humans around.
Looking at cave visitation gave her a good indication
Of whether an impact on sites could be found.
Using lab techniques on water samples, gave her multiple examples
Showing levels of bacteria reflect when visitors abound.

The methods of cave survey and the amount of information they purvey
Is now growing in both complexity and breadth,
Yet this highlights the requirement, before archiving to retirement,
Correct and accurate descriptions of survey points in depth.
New techniques of 3D mapping can still benefit from overlapping
With historical cave sections and the detail they possess.

Dave is undertaking a revision, for a wonderful new edition
Of the book he wrote on caves almost 20 years ago.
Each chapter will have samples and investigate with examples,
The topic of discussion, with links and PowerPoint download.
Several new insertions will provide interesting diversions
On such things as historical use e.g. sacred shrines aglow.

Well, whoever would have guessed Enid Blyton was obsessed
With the idea of caves as refuge and as places of escape?
While her descriptions and illustrations were an excellent foundation,
Some of her other inclusions left most of us agape;
Glow worms got a range extension and the chickens and abundant food retention
Left us full of joyful laughter with tears running down our face.

The use of the voice for cave guides is no choice,
And its care and upkeep is most vital.
A voice care manual is provided, to the ACKMA website be guided,
That provides exercises to help with recital.
If issues of strain and misuse arise through vocal abuse,
Then discuss with your manager concerning revival.

Originally used as a caving base, the Rimstone Cooperative now must face
The challenges of cave upkeep and access.
Rehabilitation and remediation and upgrades to automation
Raise many questions that require more experts to assess.
Their stated intention to responsibly manage all intervention
To best practice requires implementing plans to address.

**Nick Powe, Tony Culberg and Rhonwen
Pierce (Ann Augusteyn)**



Dirk Stoffels and Lilly Petrovic (Ann Augusteyn)

