

EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

- Andy Spate

Again, not terribly much to report. However, ACKMA is being noticed overseas and we are attempting to build stronger links with a number of karst and cave management-oriented groups off-shore. The Autumn, 1996, issue of *Caves and Caving* says about issue 19 of our Journal:

] The main article is about the Rehabilitation of the Lune River Quarry...

However, there is an excellent presentation of the 'Minimal Impact Caving Code of the Australian Speleological Federation Inc.' which we could all do with looking at. I do like their slogan "CAVE SOFTLY"!

A feather in the cap for ASF and for Rauleigh Webb if British caving can be helped to develop a real conservation ethic.

A new Caves Manager has been appointed to Yarrangobilly. Michael Carr started on 4 November just in time to contend with a visit from 35 rangers and park managers and planners from ANCA, ACT, NSW and Victoria. He sensibly stayed out of the line of fire. Welcome to the world of caves and karst, Michael. Let's hope with see you soon in ACKMA circles - perhaps a brief biographical note and/or some first impressions for the next issue of the Journal - over to you, Kent! (I shall act forthwith - any recalcitrance will be met with the perils of "The Sicilian" descending - Ed!)

I have had no feedback on the minutes of the Taralga meeting circulated with the last Journal. Therefore they must be correct and we can now get our affairs fully in order before the next meeting in New Zealand next year. (Dennis - we need to get something circulated in the next issue regarding meeting times so we can amend the constitution then.)

The Bungonia State Recreation Area Plan of Management is steaming toward Ministerial adoption. Perhaps the most useful change from the draft plan is the formal recognition of the Bungonia advisory group now legally known as the Bungonia Recreational Advisory Group (formerly the informal Bungonia Caver's Consultative Committee). There are a number of ACKMA Inc members in the Group but they are wearing other hats.

A very recent series of happenings may be of interest and concern. If I heard the introduction correctly, the ABC's "AM" program introduced the recent discovery of a lyssavirus in five (5) flying foxes and the assumed associated illness of a Rockhampton wildlife carer with a statement about "mosquito-eating flying foxes". The Augusteyn family at Olsens Caves have had some contact with the carer and her bat and the local reaction has not been positive. The confusion of mega- and micro-bats will certainly not help in the public's perception of the need for cave bat conservation. From my perspective the issue is being well beatup by the media. Clearly one needs to be careful in handling wildlife (and domestic pets for that matter) as there are various associated risks. We, and our friends who worry about flying foxes, have unfortunately not heard the last of this matter.

Flying foxes have been blamed as hosting Ross River Fever, equine morbillivirus and now this rabies-related lyssavirus through 1996. On the basis of five positives (from an unstated larger sample from Townsville to Ballina) one ABC interviewee said that the lyssavirus (which is said to be new) would be spread throughout the entire population. It is early days for that sort of statement. However, as the ABC's Dr Norman Swan said this morning "we live in an era of emergent diseases."