SOME RECENT READINGS

- Elery Hamilton-Smith.

Elliott, William R., 1996, The Evolution of Cave Gating, American Caves, 9(2) : 9-15.

There are probably two main areas of concern about cave gating. One is the ethical question of whether or not anybody should ever gate any cave ; but the overwhelming evidence is that in many situations we must either gate a cave or face continuing damage and ultimate destruction.

The other is about the effectiveness and impacts of gating. Elliott provides a delightful account of the ways in which U.S. experience has grappled with these issues. Routes for bats and other animals are kept open, except for the would-be vandals who are increasingly being frustrated. In particular, the 'weak-link' idea (build in a weak link so that repairs will be easier) is now rejected in favour of building gates to survive any onslaught. Heavy angle steel beams are reinforced with two further angle strips being welded inside the main angle and these are laid horizontally, apex pointed upwards, and secured with a series of vertical members, also from heavyweight angle steel. Various ingenious forms of hinge and lock protection are used and heavy sheet steel skirts are buried under the gate to prevent tunnelling underneath the gate.
Well worth reading - let me know if you want a photocopy.

Ruthrof, Katinka, 1996, Improving the Success of Limestone Quarry Re-vegetation, B.Sc. (Hons) Thesis, Murdoch University, W.A., xiv + 191 pp.

The title clearly conveys the content of this thesis, while at the same time making clear what is excluded. It does discuss surface preparation for planting, but not deal with issues of larger scale earth and rock shaping to establish an appropriate profile, nor with impacts upon any subterranean or groundwater fauna.

However, within these constraints, it is an excellent study using both laboratory and field experiments to establish the appropriate re-vegetation regimes for use at the Cockburn quarries, Western Australia. Naturally, the details (e.g., choice of species) are specific to that area, but the general principles and methodology provide a model which might profitably be used in planning and implementing virtually any re-vegetation project. In some sites, other variables which were not significant at Cockburn may have to be considered. Thus, at Ida Bay, the cavernicolous and groundwater fauna provided a very important further consideration (ACKMA Journal, 19).

Flood, Josephine, 1997, Rock Art of the Dreamtime, Sydney : Angus & Robertson, xii + 372 pp.

This is an outstanding book. It is comprehensive in its coverage, critical in its approach to research and understanding, remarkably up-to-date, and beautifully presented with excellent diagrams and photographs to enhance our appreciation of Australian rock art.

The first chapter provides a context for understanding rock art in Australia. The book then opens the story with the Koonalda cave site - the first place where truly early art was first given proper recognition. Finger markings in caves across the Southern coastal region and the engravings of the Mt Gambier region then follow. Flood then turns to the deserts and to the evidence of interaction with extinct mega-fauna which also provides a key component of the recent art of the far North.

Anyone interested in the past of the Australian landscape and its shaping of the people who lived upon it will find this an informative and gripping story. It is easy to read and understand, yet conveys a remarkable depth of knowledge. Knowing the extent to which visitors ask cave guides about Aboriginal habitation, it would be extremely valuable reading for anyone concerned with cave management.