

BOOK REVIEW

"Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection", Prepared by the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) group on Cave and Karst Protection, published in 1997 by The IUCN - The World Conservation Union.

Reviewed by Ken Grimes

This 53 page booklet was prepared by a group of Australian cave and karst managers: John Watson, Elery Hamilton-Smith, David Gillieson and Kevin Kiernan, with input from many others. It is intended to provide a brief "aide-memoire" for planners, managers and users of karst areas. Thus it lists all the special issues related to karst, but contains only generalized advice, and one must look elsewhere for more detailed discussions. As a starting point it provides a short list of publications and also a list of contact organizations and people in various countries and a list of internet sites (Appendix 2).

The main sections of the book start with an introduction that sets the context, and emphasizes the need for whole basin management and the distinction between underground drainage divides and surface divides. A section on Karst Environments and Cave Systems then defines the terms, host rocks, processes and the characteristics of karst and caves, with examples of the problems in water supplies, extreme degradation of densely populated karst regions and engineering difficulties. This is followed by a section on the Importance of Caves and Karst; covering this from the point of view of economic, scientific and human uses. A section on Threats ranges across the full continuum from direct and obvious (such as quarrying) to the indirect, imperceptible and gradual (e.g. compaction of floor sediments in caves). Some Options in Protection of Karst are then given, starting with a warning that protection in the past has too often focussed upon caves with inadequate consideration of the total karst area.

A major section deals with Management at the

Regional and Site Level. The principal theme here is the delineation and management of the total catchment. Other themes include soil erosion, water pollution, quarrying and water extraction, fire management and human visitation to caves (including a reprint of the ASF Minimal Impact Caving Code). Finally a section on International Co-operation and Liaison lists organizations that can provide information exchange, technical advice and training and suggests some avenues for joint action and policy development.

There is a single figure which illustrates the karst solutional processes, and a scattering of photos. The latter add little to the book beyond breaking the monotony of the text. To assist in its role as an *aide-memoire* all important concepts are highlighted in boxed text, and there is a final summary of all the numbered Guideline Statements in multiple languages.

The book is recommended to all cave and karst managers as a useful summary of the important concepts and guidelines that have to be kept in mind. You should also give copies to your superiors in "head office", as it provides an excellent "executive summary" for people who are too busy to study the details, but need an overview of the problems and guidelines.

Copies are available from Elery Hamilton-Smith, P. O. Box 36, Carlton South, 3053, for a \$15 (Aust) "donation". Overseas readers can obtain copies from IUCN Publication Services Unit, 181a Huntingdon Road, Cambridge CB3 0DJ, UK.