

THE ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON KARST ECOSYSTEMS AND WORLD HERITAGE

The Asia Pacific Forum on Karst Ecosystems and World Heritage will be held at the Gunung Mulu National Park in Sarawak, Malaysia (26 – 29 May 2001). A number of Australians are attending, including several ACKMA members: Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith, Brian Clark, Greg Middleton, Mia Thurgate, and Andrew Fletcher.

The program commences on Saturday evening, 26 May with a welcome reception and celebration of the official inauguration of Gunung Mulu National Park as a World Heritage Area. On the Sunday morning, a representative of Government of Sarawak will deliver a welcoming address, followed by a key note address by Professor Elery Hamilton-Smith. Group discussions about issues and principles in World Heritage nomination and assessment will follow, with particular attention to karst sites and biodiversity.

On the Sunday afternoon, there will be a plenary review of the group discussions and preparation of guidelines for forthcoming nominations. This will include guidelines for the nomination of future sites for World Heritage Inscription, and in particular, a first draft guideline for regional comparative assessments necessary to justify the uniqueness of an area chosen for nomination as World Heritage. This will be followed later in the afternoon by delegates will visit either Deer Cave to watch the evening bat flight or Clearwater Cave and Wind Cave, coupled with a presentation on management issues by the Forest Department of Sarawak.

The Monday morning will feature group discussions about possible areas that could be nominated as future karst World Heritage Areas, followed by a plenary review of findings and the preparation of a draft list of future karst sites that could be nominated as World Heritage Areas. The afternoon will feature a discussion about actions to be taken to establish a network of karst managers in Asia, including a presentation from *Environment Australia* about the Asia Pacific World Heritage network. The

late afternoon includes a field trip by delegates will visit either Deer Cave to watch the evening bat flight or Clearwater Cave and Wind Cave, coupled with a presentation on management issues by the Forest Department of Sarawak.

On the Tuesday morning a seminar will be conducted examining the lessons learned from existing karst World Heritage Areas at Puerto Princesa (Philippines); Halong Bay (Vietnam); Thung Yai – Huai Kha Khaeng (Thailand); and our own Naracoorte Caves, Australia. Brian Clark will be giving the Naracoorte presentation. This session will be followed by a plenary review of key points from the case studies and the preparation of a potential issue checklist for karst managers. During the afternoon there will be a group discussions about an outline for a Technical Assistance proposal, followed by a plenary review of discussion and a first draft outline proposal.

For the forum, four main background papers have been prepared, which are:

- *Karst, Biodiversity and World Heritage - a view from the Asian-Pacific Region*: Background and issues, by Elery Hamilton-Smith
- *World Heritage Karst Sites*, prepared by Elery Hamilton-Smith and Rolf Hogan
- *Atlas of Karst: and Karst Conservation Vol. 1 - Asian-Pacific Region*, edited by Peter Ackroyd and Elery Hamilton-Smith with input from a great number of people.
- *Priorities in Nomination and Protection* - a collation of opinions from many experts.

The Forum certainly has an exciting program, and will have significant input from ACKMA members. It will have passed by the time members receive this Journal edition, but a report on the Forum and its outcomes will appear in the September issue.