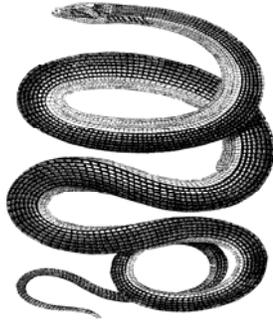


A VISIT TO CUTTA CUTTA

- Chester Shaw



During August whilst on a trip to the Northern Territory, Kay and I had the privilege of paying a visit to the Cutta Cutta caves at Katherine. As usual it was a fairly warm day – in fact too warm for these southerners, however we did not let this deter us from enjoying our visit to the caves.

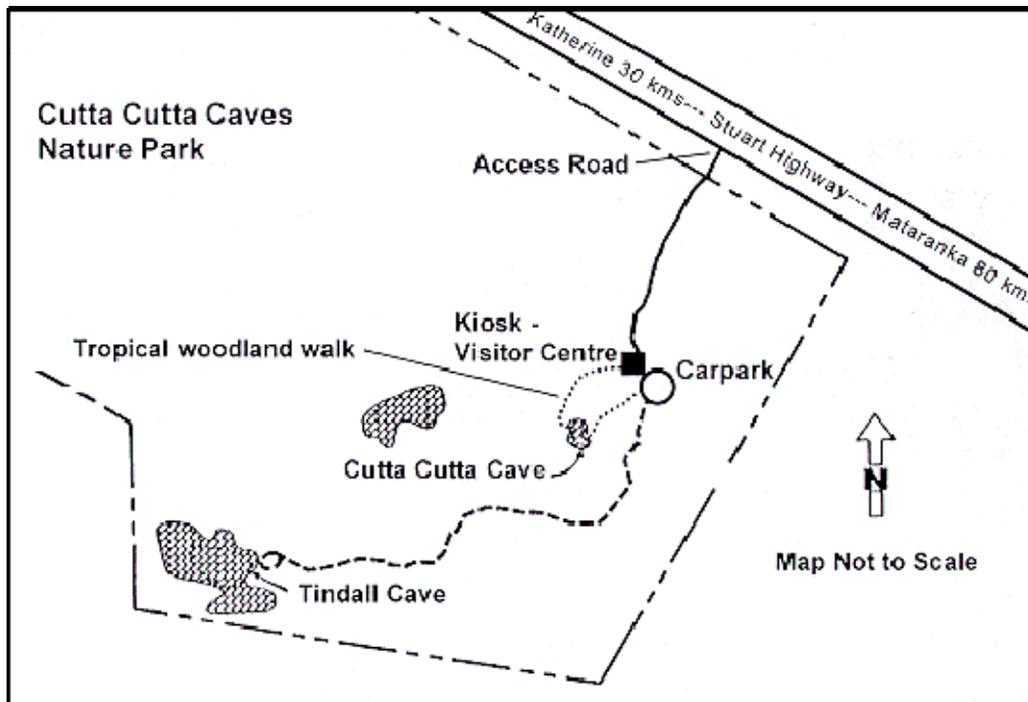
The caves are formed in what is known as the Tindal limestone with most of the surface limestone around the cave being small tower karst. The area around the kiosk and ticket office has a large parking area and also has a very informative interpretation board that includes all of the aspects of the area, including that of cultural importance, as well as the geology, fauna and flora found in the area.

From the ticket office it is about a five minute walk to the cave entrance. I found the walk to be most interesting with a variety of karst features. At some time in the future this trail could be

made into a wonderful karst walk, which would almost certainly enhance the visitor experience to the caves. After the cave tour the return back to your car is via different a route.

The cave is very well decorated (don't like using the word decorated but cannot think of another word) with excellent examples of flowstone and larger columns. During the dry season there are also good displays of the calcite crystals. The fauna of the cave was a little different to what we would see in the Tasmanian caves. It included the brown tree snake, which preys on the bats within the cave. We were informed that beyond the tourist section there are some very interesting cave creatures. The highlight of the tour for me was to see the dramatic rise in temperature within the cave almost at the end of the tourist section. It was like stepping through a door – one moment the temperature was comfortable, then almost in an instant it had risen to almost take ones breath away.

The lighting in the cave is 240 volt and the cave is well lit with no lights glaring in the visitor' eyes. The cave has a raised metal mesh pathway – this being a necessity due to the amount of water that flows into the cave during the Wet season (the Wet being from November to February). During the floods of 1998 the cave was closed for six months. Irrespective of the reason for the raised pathway, my opinion is that this is a good idea – we should be getting away from putting pathways on top of cave formation.



Cutta Caves Nature Park