

EDITOR'S NOTE. This is the first of a series of articles that will appear in successive editions of this Journal in the lead up to the **16th Australasian Conference on Cave and Karst Management** on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island, in May next year. Deb Carden is Caves Project Leader of the Department of Conservation, Buller/Kawatiri Area, on the West Coast, and key member of the Conference Organizing/Steering Committee.

NEWS FROM THE WEST COAST /TE TAI POUTINI, NEW ZEALAND

- Deborah Carden

"KIA ORA"

Kia ora is a Maori word that can be used to reply to hello, to say goodbye and to agree with what someone is saying - pronounced "Ke-a ora". For all the people coming to the ACKMA 2005 conference we look forward to hearing you use this at appropriate times - practice, practice.

ACKMA CONFERENCE 2005

The Steering Committee meets every month and between times members work away on conference preparation matters. As all people who have convened conferences know, as fast as one ticks off one task three more are added...



Sub-fossils in Metro Cave, West Coast, NZ.
Photo: Ian Gill.

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT 2003/04

- In October 2003 the Department of Conservation (DOC) contracted Trevor Worthy (an ACKMA Member) and Richard Holdaway, two of New Zealand's best-known palaeontologists, to provide advice on sub-fossil/fossils on the West Coast. Trevor and Richard were able to give a geo-preservation ranking to most caves recorded in our database. This work resulted in (1) a good understanding of the extent and significance of sub-fossil/fossil sites on the Coast; (2) determining sites that are most vulnerable to impact for humans; (3) a basis for future management priorities and (4) Trevor applying for permission to investigate further. With regard (1) and (2), we have

established a representation of A1-ranked sites in each of the three main cave and karst areas (Kahurangi National Park, the Four Mile at Charleston and Paparua National Park). This led to a re-jigging of this year's operational budget to ensure that one of the most significant sites in New Zealand can be protected to a degree that should ensure its future viability.

- In early November 2003 Greg Martin and Dave Smith, Ian Millar and Deborah Carden, all DOC staff involved with caves and karst to one degree or another (and all ACKMA members), gathered in Waitomo to discuss cave management matters that affect us at our respective locations and collectively - Waikato, Nelson/Marlborough and the West Coast. This was a 'test meeting' to ascertain if it is worthwhile to apply formally to hold annual or biennial workshops. The consensus was that the information sharing and peer advice was extremely valuable and a relevant way of furthering protection and preservation of caves and karst on and off public conservation land.
- The Department will be working over the next few months on developing the voluntary permit system for some high value caves on the Coast. The New Zealand Speleological Society suggested this as a mechanism that they would support.



Ian Millar and Deb Carden in Waitomo for the DOC "Karst Staff" meeting. Photo: Greg Martin.

OTHER WORK OF INTEREST IN KARST

The Westland petrels, a ground burrowing, winter breeding bird endemic to the Coast have had another satisfactory breeding year in Paparoa National Park, and they are all out at sea now, where they should be. A short tailed bat project is being considered in Kahurangi National Park.

They have been recorded there but are proving very hard to find again.

Two of our staff visited Narracorte Caves over summer and came back full of enthusiasm about bats and fossils.



Deb Carden in Metro Cave, West Coast, NZ, during a “sub-fossil visit” in January 2004. Photo: Ian Gill.