

# 19TH INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM OF SUBTERRANEAN BIOLOGY

Fremantle, Western Australia. 21—26 September 2008



Macrobrachium – Christmas Island  
Image – Ross Anderson

Interested in cave fauna? Have you observed cave habitats in the caves you visit, and are keen to find out more? Maybe you have participated in research on subterranean fauna and want to hear some more research on a particular topic. Do you work in the biological field? Perhaps you wish to present a paper on work you've undertaken? Then plan to head to Western Australia in September 2008.

These biennial Symposia are held under the auspices of the *International Society for Subterranean Biology*, the principle global forum for connecting researchers working on both the terrestrial and aquatic components of subterranean biology.

Australia's subterranean fauna is amongst the most diverse globally, a far cry from little more than a decade ago when it was considered impoverished. In Australia, subterranean biodiversity is particularly high in the rangelands and the arid zone, a distribution that coincides with major resource projects for which subterranean fauna has become a significant environmental issue. As subterranean fauna issues affect many resource areas it has spawned novel issues for environmental managers, consultants and regulators. Australia-wide environmental agreements recognise both, that subterranean fauna form a significant component of Australia's biodiversity, and that they are in need of specific protection.

The *Western Australian Museum* is the host institution for the conference. An organising committee have been meeting for the past year and the Symposium is being developed in collaboration with a national and global network of scientists. Attendee's will involve people from a broad range of backgrounds, from government agencies (land management and museums), universities, speleologists and environmental consultancies throughout the Nation.

The *International Society of Subterranean Biology* was founded in 1979 in France as the *Société de Biospéologie*, to focus research on the subterranean biology of karst, caves and groundwater. Through 1980 to 2000 the society rapidly progressed to

become a European and then the *International Biospeleological Society*. In 2004, to better represent all subterranean habitats, especially alluvial aquifers, the name was changed to the *International Society of Subterranean Biology*.

Delegates typically are the leading researchers in the field of subterranean biology and representatives are expected from more than 30 countries, predominantly from Europe, but with strong representation from the Americas and Indo-Pacific. Papers from the symposia are typically published in the Society's peer reviewed international journal *Subterranean Biology*, and in other learned journals. Subterranean faunas comprise species that are typically restricted to small areas and commonly represent ancient relictual populations or comprise groups of animals not present in other habitats. It has been recognised, belatedly, that subterranean faunas represent a significant component of biodiversity globally. Their functional role in maintaining void space in aquifers and their influence on water quality is being actively investigated.

While subterranean faunas reach their greatest diversity in karst, typically limestone areas to a depth of one kilometre, they occur widely in other habitats such as alluvial aquifers, pisolites and groundwater calcretes, and may be expected wherever interconnected voids occur in the regolith. In the last decade subterranean faunas have been singled out for special protection and consideration both internationally (Council of Europe, European Commission, World Bank, Ramsar Convention, ANZECC and ARMCANZ, Switzerland) and in Australia (Council of Australian Governments Water Reform Agenda ANZECC and ARMCANZ).

Subterranean fauna are increasingly appearing in lists of threatened species under both Commonwealth and State legislation and as such more frequently appear in environmental review and management documents. For more information on this event, contact ASF representative Jay Anderson on <rossjay@iinet.net.au> or visit the website at <<http://www.issb2008.org.au>>



Troglobitic Scorpion – Christmas Island.  
Image – Ross Anderson

