

Local cavers and speleologists setting up the display at Calgardup cave.
Front – Norm Poulter, Anne Wood, Mike Longman, Tracey Robins, and Jay Anderson.
Rear – Michael Bradley, David Watterson, Giulia Perina, and Ida Newton.



WHAT'S GOING ON IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA?

– Jay Anderson

It has been a busy year in Western Australia, here is just a summary of some of 'what's been going on.'

National Science Week

Cavers Leeuwin speleological group, based in the Margaret River region, co-ordinated a local activity during *National Science Week* in August. Local cavers, speleologists, and community members collaborated to organise a local event. A \$1000 grant from the *National Science Week Western Australia Co-ordinating Committee* assisted with resources for the event. This included promotional posters, activity resources and publishing an educational sticker.

A 'caves day' was held at Calgardup and Giants Cave on Saturday 23 August. This involved a partnership of the Department of Environment and Conservation (DEC), The Cape to Cape Catchment Group (CCG) and Cavers Leeuwin.

Local cavers and speleologists set up a display on the 'science of speleology' with some hands-on activities and examples of fossils, rocks and cave fauna. Visitors to the two National Park show caves were able to participate in a cave experience, assisted by local cavers – members of Cavers Leeuwin. Visitors to Calgardup Cave were also able to participate in a surface walk, guided by a CCG volunteer – exploring the flora of the karst system, and looking at surface karst

features. Visitors to Giants Cave were privileged to participate in an interactive discussion on karst hydrology and geology and to view the karst model in action. Later that night, community members attended a community presentation.

Cavers Contributing to Cave Management

In Western Australia, there are two National Parks that have *cave management advisory committee's* – Yanchep National Park and the Leeuwin Naturalist National Park. Local cave volunteers (representatives of the speleological groups and several other groups) are involved in consultation and discussion on management decisions in relation to each Park's caves and karst.

These two groups each meet regularly (usually every couple of months) to discuss karst management issues and also include field trips to sites within the National Park. The advisory committee process has been successful for some time – it is working well and allows for sharing of skills and knowledge and for increased communication between all involved. Members of the ACKMA 2009 Conference Organising Committee are in liaison with both advisory committee's in preparation for the ACKMA 2009 Conference – to arrange field trips and to ensure that ACKMA members can have opportunities to visit karst sites within the National Parks.

Ross Anderson shows how groundwater moves in the limestone landscape – sharing with a group of scouts from Perth at Giant's Cave during National Science Week.



August – The Inaugural Geotourism Conference – Fremantle and Perth, Western Australia

In being a three day conference, it was amazing how many presentations there were. It was one of those occasions where time seemed to stand still, yet so much happened that it felt like it was a week!

From the opening ceremony (introducing flags from all of the countries represented – well, it was held during the Olympics after all...) to the numerous keynote speakers – there was plenty of interesting topics, issues and discussions.

It was a very well run conference, with a range of 'geotourism' sites that were presented and discussed. There were many great opportunities for interaction and meeting others in the field. There were at least twelve ACKMA members in attendance. Certainly there were at least half a dozen papers that involved karst, which was just great!

The presentations that were particularly memorable and interesting for me are as follows:

1. Dr Phillip Playford's (Geological Survey of Western Australia) presentation of key *Geological Icons of Western Australia* outlined the significant geotourism sites in Western Australia, included acknowledgement of two karst areas – the Devonian reefs of the Kimberley with mention of Mimbi Caves and some amazing aerial photos of the reef system. This was followed by some discussion of Rottnest Island and its interesting geology, including photos of a fossil coral reef and limestone platforms.
2. A talk by Greg McNamara of the Geological Society of Australia on *Earthcaching vs Geocaching* – the concept of earthcaching is a wholistic yet challenging way to learn more about geological sites and with the permission of the landowner. Check out <www.earthcache.org>

3. Dan Cove from Jenolan gave an excellent presentation on *Interpretive Guiding* and its essential role in ensuring understanding and conservation of sensitive geo-sites. He reminded attendees of the role of the guide in creating a memorable visitor experience, in 'visitor guidance' and raising environmental awareness. He discussed how the use of a theme as part of the interpretive experience can assist in visitors becoming advocates for the environment – assisting in achieving an emotional response or an emotional connection between the visitor and the site.



Trey McGinty shows his creative cave critters - note the sting in that scorpions tail!

A related workshop by Lorna Charlton (Department of Environment and Conservation) also discussed the importance of interpretive communication. This was a fun and memorable presentation.

It reminded participants of how interpretation is an interactive process and that such an experience can be positive, enriching your understanding, leaving a memorable experience – for me it was the demonstration by Gill Field and his colleague – using food as a chef to explain the geology of the local area. Amazing.

There were just so many great presentations. Those listed above were just a few that stood out for me. Another great presentation was titled 'Managing Landscapes' by the Hon. Damien O'Connor, Minister of Tourism, New Zealand – who gave an excellent presentation on *Guardianship* and management of New Zealand's amazing environment. Of course, all of those talks on caves were fantastic. These included Steve Bourne – *Visiting Show Caves: Australia's Oldest Form of Geotourism*; Ian Lewis – *The Limestone Coast and the mysterious sinkholes of the Western Kanawinka Geopark*; and Brian Clark (on Mulu, of course!) and Christie Mahony (Yanchep National Park) just to name a few.

I can highly recommend the Geotourism Conference. Given that the next one is planned for 2010 at Mulu, and right near the ACKMA AGM in terms of timing. I hope that you'll consider attending!