



# Editorial Ramblings

The 18th ACKMA Conference is upon us! Several reports are elsewhere in this Journal, so I will not dilate here. SEE YOU THERE!

Let's start with good news. Firstly, ACKMA member Graham Parkes received the Fire Service Medal in the Australia Day Awards (Order of Australia) on 26 January. Of course, Graham is a former Manager of Buchan Caves, and has for some years now been Ranger-in-Charge of the Grampians National Park in Western Victoria.

Secondly, ACKMA member Ken Grimes received the Edie Smith Award at the Australian Speleological Federation (ASF) Conference in Sale, Victoria, in January. I understand the Conference was a great success! Warmest congratulations to both Graham and Ken!

More great news! The following was reported in the November 2008 edition of the *Australasian Bat Society Newsletter*:

*'Australia has a new bat species Mormopterus eleryi, named after Elery Hamilton-Smith in recognition of his substantial contribution to the study of Australian bats and nothing to do with the bats bristled face or its bizarre genitalia that has adorned the front cover of this newsletter when it was informally known as species 6. It is great to finally put a 'real name' to this species. Hats off to Terry Reardon and Norm McKenzie for undertaking the painstaking work involved to formally describe a new species'.*

I understand its common name will be the Hairy-nosed Freetail Bat. I am certain Elery is delighted to have this new species named after him – a most just recognition of his efforts in bat conservation over a many years. Congratulations Elery!

More news from ACKMA Fellow, Arthur Clarke. Late last year he attended the 14th Chinese National Speleological Congress in the Wulong (Huoping) World Heritage karst of Chongqing, where I was one of six foreign international guests (including Derek Ford, Stephen Worthington and Prof. Kyung Sik Woo from Korea).

While in Guiyang at the end of a caving expedition in north-eastern Guizhou, he spent some time with Shizhen (whom many will recall from her attendance two years ago at the Buchan ACKMA Conference). He visited her at the South China Karst Institute at Guizhou Normal University where she has her office, performing a dual role as secretariat head and the person responsible for World Heritage Area nominations.

## Garrett rejects move to save endangered bat

by Peter Ker



Australia is almost certain to lose a mammal to extinction for the first time in 53 years, Environment Minister Peter Garrett says. Mr Garrett said the rare Christmas Island pipistrelle bat's tiny population was a reason not to embark on a captive breeding program.

The decision prompted concerns from bat experts that the Federal Government was giving up on the species too easily, with warnings that the species could be extinct within four months. Mr Garrett responded pessimistically to a committee of threatened species experts.

'The committee has confirmed what we feared; the pipistrelle is in severe decline and extinction in the wild is almost inevitable,' he said.

There are believed to be up to 20 of the pipistrelles remaining in the wild. There were 'unacceptably high risks involved in embarking on an immediate captive breeding program', Mr Garrett said. 'The bats are also very hard to catch and no one knows how to keep them alive for breeding.'

He has instead set up a captive breeding program for a closely related bat in the Northern Territory. If this is successful, the program could be recreated on Christmas Island for the pipistrelle.

Some experts believe that could be too late. Bat expert Dr Greg Richards said that given the grim forecasts for the pipistrelle population, an immediate captive breeding program would have been worth the risk.

'There are examples of microbats being kept in captivity and breeding successfully, so I think the committee has probably needed to do some extensive research,' he said.

If it becomes extinct, the pipistrelle will be the first mammal lost in Australia since a strain of wallaby died out in 1956.

*The Melbourne Age – 16 February 2009*

Some great news from Capricorn Caves! At the Central Queensland Tourism Awards in November 2008, the following were the results:

- Tourist Attraction Winner – Capricorn Caves
- Eco Tourism Winner – Capricorn Caves
- Individual Achiever award – Amanda Jennings

Subsequently, at Queensland Tourism Awards November 2008, the following were the results:

- Steve Irwin Eco Tourism Award Winner – Capricorn Caves
- Tourist Attraction Finalist – Capricorn Caves

Speaking of awards, Jenolan has also recently 'scored'.

Amanda Jennings also won the *Simon Warner Memorial Award for a Young Achiever* at the Caravan Parks Association Awards in November 2008. Warmest congratulations to Ann Augusteyn and her team, particularly Amanda. Those who attended the ACKMA AGM weekend at Capricorn Caves last year will recall Amanda's wonderful organization for the event. Her awards are justly merited! An article on Capricorn Caves is herein.



The Jenolan crew – looking particularly elegant – at the recent Awards Ceremony.

Speaking of awards, Jenolan has also done well recently. Below (in part) is a *Press Release* from Peter Austen (27/11/08). Warmest congratulations to all!

*Jenolan Caves measured up against 250 tourism competitors and won 2 prestigious accolades: bronze in 'Adventure Tourism' and runner-up in the 'Sunday Telegraph Peoples' Choice Award', cementing its place as a tourism icon, at the recent 2008 NSW Tourism Awards.*

*For the first time, the awards included the Sunday Telegraph People's Choice Award. Jenolan Caves was runner up, following two tourism giants that tied for the gold award. Bridgeclimb has won 48 awards since 1998, including gold in this year's NSW Tourism Awards. Also the Royal Easter Show, with around 900,000 yearly visitors, won gold.*

*Therefore, the team from Jenolan Caves was jubilant to be the runner-up, taking it as a strong endorsement that their changes and improvements are being well received.*

*Ecstatic Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust Administrator, Alan Griffin, congratulated the staff, saying that the great result could only have been achieved with the efforts of all. He said, 'It's a terrific example of a complete team effort. This award came from the hearts of the most important stakeholders of all – our visitors.'*

*Jenolan Caves is also savouring their bronze award in the Adventure Tourism category. As consumers increasingly seek excitement, Adventure Tourism has become very competitive. Jenolan's adrenalin-pumping adventure programs offer underground activities for beginners to veterans. Wearing headlamps and guided by professionals, experience-seekers explore, abseil, crawl, climb, squeeze, face their fears and conquer them, deep in the heart of a mountain.*

*Many Blue Mountains businesses were award finalists, four winning silver and two winning gold (Greater Blue Mountains Drive and Boutique Tours Aust). Jenolan Caves also reached the finals in the 'Attractions' category and intends to win gold next year.*

*In August, Jenolan was judged the region's top attraction in the Blue Mountains Tourism Awards for Excellence 2008.*

The following photo was taken by our Conference Convenor, Anne Wood, when she and her husband Peter visited Peak Cavern in England last year. Oh dear. I assume (hope...) visitors are required to carry 'doggy bags'... Sigh...

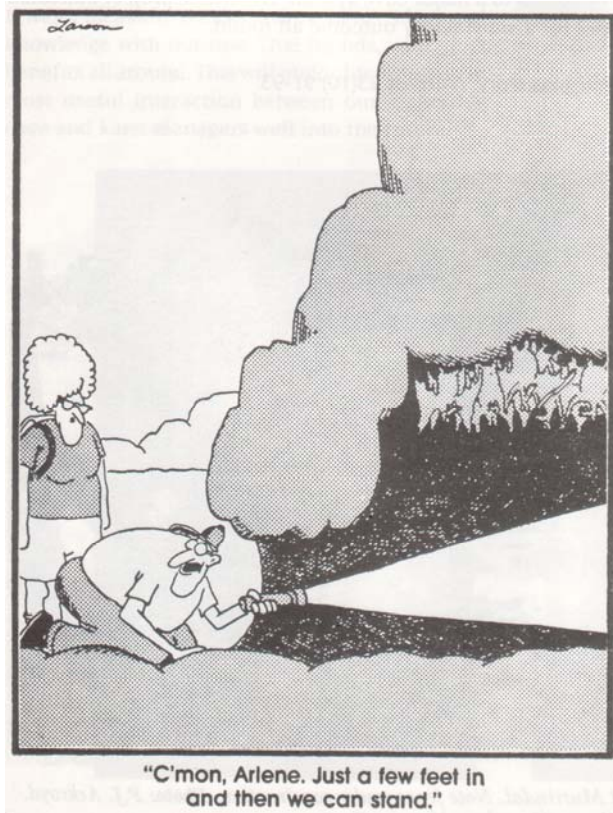


A reminder concerning the ACKMA web pages. ACKMA Journal articles that are online have now been moved to the *Members Only* area. If you have forgotten the User Name and Password, email Rauleigh Webb <webmaster@ackma.org>, and he will assist.

When you select Journal Articles from the Menu you will get all of the Journal articles. In the 'public

area' when you click on Journal articles you will now just get a 'Contents List' of what is in each Journal. This change was requested by the ACKMA Committee as it was thought that some people were not joining ACKMA because the articles from the Journal were readily available online. Hence the movement of the articles into the Members Only area. The member's area also contains lots of other stuff, including the ACKMA Constitution, and various forms, etc.

Oh, and do not forget the ACKMA Email List either. All financial ACKMA members are most welcome to join the ACKMA List. Again, just email Rauleigh and he'll add you. To post to list, list members simply email their message to: <ackma@ackma.org>. Likewise, if you change your email address, do let Rauleigh know, please!



Great news from Naracoorte. Deborah Carden has been appointed Manager of Naracoorte and Tantanoora caves commenced there on 26 January. A superb appointment, which last until September this year.

Want to buy a cave? The following advertisement appeared widely in January from a Naracoorte Real Estate Agent:

#### **OPPORTUNITY OF A LIFETIME**

*Struan-Joanna Rd, Struan via Naracoorte SA 5271. 74.9 hectares (185.08 acres) approx. This is the opportunity of a lifetime to purchase a cave in the World Heritage Listed Limestone Coast area. This unique property comprises of a well fenced & easily managed grazing property with the cave running underneath the property's boundaries.*

*The Cave was originally mapped in the 1960's by Leo Decke & Ian Lewis Geological Surveyor & named 'Sand Cave'. It has many significant fossil deposits collected over many thousands of years & numerous areas of delicate decorations of calcite. Arguably the longest & deepest cave in the World Heritage Listed caves area. The untapped potential of this property is left only to the imagination. Well looked after by current & previous owners. Would suit wildlife or lifestyle lovers as well as a fully functional lifestyle grazing property including shed, bore & cottage. It is also ideally suited to the caving enthusiast or company looking for a unique tourist venture.*

Sand Cave is highly significant, and is located just off the Naracoorte Caves World Heritage Area. Naturally, Steve Bourne wants to it purchased by the government and added to the Park, but the owner reportedly wants considerably more than the property is worth (he thinks the cave is worth a lot of money...). Sigh...

The administrator of the Jenolan Caves Reserve Trust, Alan Griffin, retired on 31 December, and a most successful Retirement Dinner was held on 6 February in Jenolan Caves House. See the report elsewhere in this Journal. I am certain all ACKMA members will join with me in wishing him a most happy retirement.

News of ACKMA Member Dr. Stefan Eberhard. Stefan (the brother of our Vice President Rolan Eberhard) who has, for several years now, operated a Perth-based business called *Subterranean Ecology*. Much of his work involves looking at underground fauna in Western Australian aquifers under contact to various mining companies seeking environment approvals for their operations. One of his staff is ACKMA Fellow Peter Bell, a former manager of the Augusta-Margaret River Caves. See: <<http://www.subterraneanecology.com.au>>

And finally, the following image was sent to me recently by Richard Watson, Manager of Marble Arch Caves in Northern Ireland. It shows workmen installing bollards to stop nurses from parking on the pavement outside the Royal Hospital in Belfast. They are cleaning up at the end of the day. I think they have a problem...

