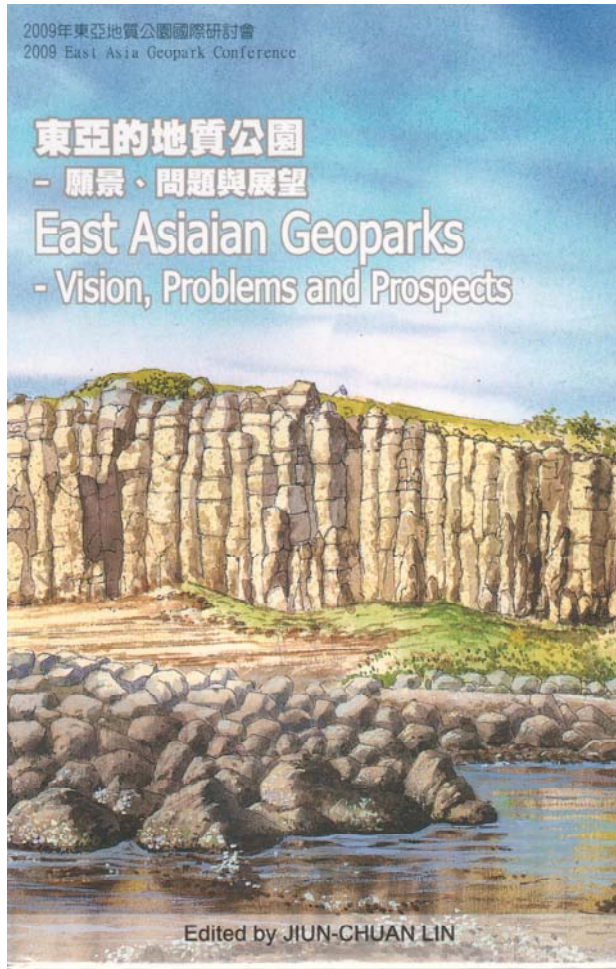


BOOK REVIEWS

East Asian Geoparks – Vision, Problems and Prospects. Jiun-Chuan Lin (Ed). Proceedings of the East Asian Geoparks Conference, Taipei, Taiwan – 27 April to 4 May, 2009. 340 pages, handcover, with colour cover. **Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



This book, pre-published for the Conference (in English), contains the abstracts, and in most cases the full papers, of the event – 28 in total. While many of the papers are not specifically karst-related, a number are. Two are specifically Australian.

The first is **Geotourism in some Small Rural Communities in Australia** by Andy Spate (who attended the Conference) and Steve Bourne. The abstract is as follows:

Australia is one of the largest countries in the world and is the only one to occupy an entire continent. There are a large number of protected areas but the Commonwealth/State arrangements and the constitution make for a large range of management approaches. Increasingly there is emphasis on conservation and better interpretation of biodiversity and geodiversity values on private lands as well as on the protected areas.

This paper looks at four different approaches to geodiversity management and

interpretation where there is a strong community involvement linking the geotourism opportunities on both public and private lands. The paper points to the need to involve the community effectively where private lands are to be managed and used in association with government projects.

The second is **The Development of an Australian Geoparks Network** by Joanne McKnight and Angus Robinson. The abstract is as follows:

The Australian Geopark Network now includes one Global Geopark and National Geopark Projects in the states of New South Wales, South Australia and Victoria. This growing network allows for exchange of ideas and networking in a country of immense area (about the same size as the USA) and a small population (similar in total to that of Taiwan) and very small funding available for initiatives such as Geoparks. A Network Committee held its first meeting in June 2007 and regular meetings are planned across the country.

The Kanawinka Geopark, Australia's First Global Geopark listed in June 2009, applied for UNESCO Global status in December 2006 and now forms the keystone for further development of a National Network of Geoparks. The volcanic region of the Kanawinka Geopark covers some 26,910 square kilometres, extending as a continuous belt across the two southern states of Victoria and South Australia. It is this region that is Australia's first UNESCO Global Geopark.

Kanawinka Geopark has been a prime study venue for high school and university field trips in geology, geomorphology and geography for at least 70 years as have the aspiring regions for national Geopark status. Geoparks provide an expanded range of opportunities for education and interpretation that are consistent with the enjoyment and protection of the natural environment, especially with an emphasis on earth sciences.

The Penshurst Volcanoes Discovery Centre situated within the Kanawinka Geopark area displays geological history and the nature of volcanoes in the region; it operates with many volunteers. This centre has an extensive education program for schools. The important aspects of Australian national geoparks are the links between the geology and the people, their stories, culture and history that build into a sustainable source of geotourism, bring jobs to rural and indigenous people and in turn help protect sites of significance and promote geoheritage.

Another paper of direct interest (all are of general interest!) is **The Global Network of National Geoparks** by Patrick McKeever and Nickolas Zouros, which focuses in part on the Marble Arch Caves in Northern Ireland, viz:

At the opposite end of Europe, in the far north-west corner of Ireland are the Marble Arch Caves. The caves are located in County Fermanagh which covers an area of 1,692km² and is home to 57,000 people, most of whom live in the county town of Enniskillen.

The economy of Fermanagh is based on agriculture, mostly on beef, dairy, sheep, pigs and some poultry products. Tourism too is important with the county often referred to as Ireland's lake district.

However tourism is much less developed here than in, for example, the south-west of the country in counties Cork and Kerry and much of the tourism potential of Fermanagh is yet to be realised.

The economy of Fermanagh, like the rest of the region, was until recently blighted by political violence and instability. As a so-called border county, many of the small roads that led into the Republic of Ireland were blocked leading to a huge distortion of the natural economic hinterland of the region with consequential damage to the regional economy.

This, coupled with on-going political violence at the time, was a huge deterrent to potential investors. At the height of the unrest the local authority, Fermanagh District Council, made the strategic decision to develop the caves at Marble Arch into a tourist attraction.

Recognising the need for the caves to offer something special in order to attract visitors into the area, a policy of conservation and sustainable development was employed from the start.

Opening in 1985, the caves have now received over 1,000,000 visitors with the annual average number of visitors running at around 60,000. The council have also taken ownership of a vast swath of Cuilcagh Mountain immediately south of the caves and have instigated an award-winning conservation scheme on the large area of blanket bog here. But again, it is not a sterile type of conservation, education groups of all ages are encouraged to visit and new walking routes have opened up the area to a new generation of visitors.

Today, the Marble Arch Caves Global Geopark is the main tourism hub in this part of Ireland. It employs over 50 local people during the tourism season (April — September) with a staff of 14 retained throughout the year. During a survey of the public in 2006, the geopark was voted as the region's top tourist attraction. The indirect

benefit of the geopark is also large with new accommodation providers opening for business and new restaurants opening in the nearby villages of Blacklion and Belcoo. Currently the benefits of the geopark are spreading following a careful two-stage expansion of the geopark.

In 2007, the geopark expanded northwards across other areas of Fermanagh and in 2008, the geopark expanded southwards into the neighbouring county of Cavan which is in the Republic of Ireland.

This expansion followed the agreement and signing of a new joint management system between the two county authorities (in two different national jurisdictions) and has meant that the geopark now operates seamlessly across roads that were once blocked but which now allow the movement of the benefits of geoparks across this once hostile border.

Furthermore this expansion only went ahead following detailed consultation with local communities through a programme of information activities aimed at securing their active support and participation.

A further paper focusing on a location known to many ACKMA members is *Natural Heritages and the First Potential Geopark in Korea* by Professor Kyung Sik Woo et al. The paper's introduction is as follows:

On 27 June 2007, 'Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes' was inscribed as a World Natural Heritage by UNESCO. Also, Korean government submitted the proposal 'Korean Cretaceous Dinosaur Coast' for the inscription as a World Natural Heritage by UNESCO, and this will be decided in June 2009. These had made Korean people to appreciate the significant values of geoheritages in Korea.

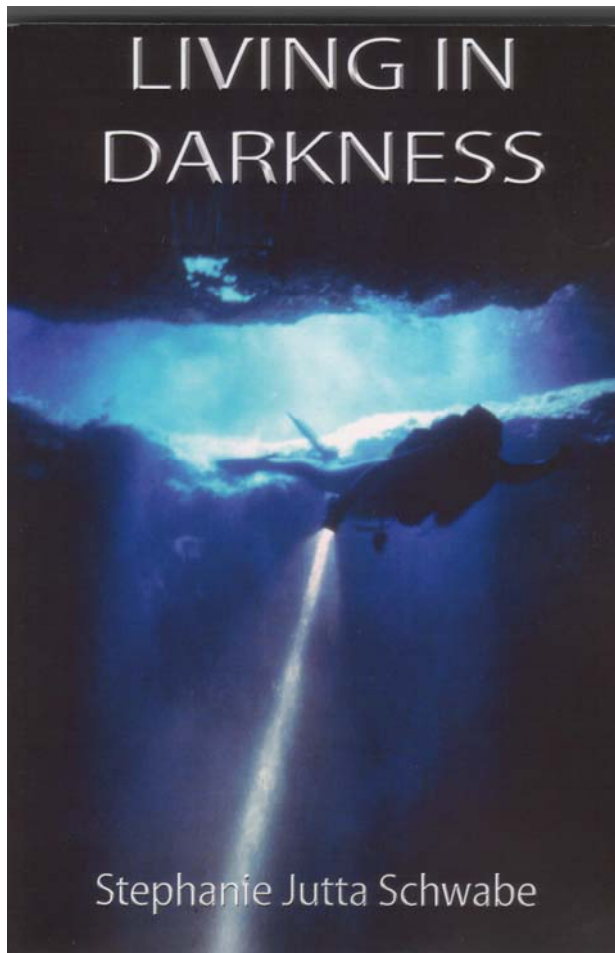
As a result of these events, the Geological Society of Korea recently determined to establish the Department of Geoheritages and build the Korean Geopark Network in the near future. This will invoke many geologists to participate their research in the field of geoconservation, geoeducation, and geotourism which are not familiar to most geologists (or geographers) yet.

This paper deals with the geoheritage values of 'Jeju Volcanic Island and Lava Tubes' and 'Korean Cretaceous Dinosaur Coast' as well as first potential geopark, 'Jeju Geopark'.

There are a number of other papers which are karst-related, including *The Potential of Geopark Development in Vietnam* by Nguyen Xuan Khien which focuses, in part, on Ha Long Bay.

Overall, the book is a very interesting read, and would make a most useful addition to any manager's library. Enquiries concerning obtaining a copy can be usefully directed to Andy Spate: <andyspate@aliencamel.com>.

Living in Darkness. Stephanie Jutta Schwabe. The National Speleological Society (USA), April 2009. ISBN: 978-1-879961-32-6. Paperback, 184 pages. \$US19.50. NSS Bookstore: <<http://nssbookstore.org>>. **Reviewed by Kent Henderson.**



ACKMA Member Tom Rea recently sent me a copy of this book, suggesting a review in the ACKMA Journal. The full title of the book is *Living in Darkness – A women’s scientific and exploratory adventures into the underwater caves of the Bahamas*. Stephanie mostly wrote the book, I understand, while she was living in Australia. The book contains many excellent photos and maps. The opening paragraph of her Preface to the book is illuminating:

Although the world is being exploited, there are still those who venture into the unknown recesses of this amazing planet, to places where no humans have ever visited, to see life forms that no book will ever show, and to truly feel the soul of this planet. I feel lucky to share my adventures with you, both from surface life to the life below the surface. Underwater caves are dangerous places for humans, and this alone should be enough to keep out the cautious. Caves do not kill the foolish; the foolish kill the foolish.

Just so... Stephanie’s book is somewhat like a (very long) trip report – but very well written, almost like a good novel. Her conclusions, at the end of this most entertaining and somewhat engrossing book, are not very happy:

So what can be done to stop the destruction of these sites? Unfortunately, the answer to that question is ‘not much’. In most countries, pressure can be put on governments by other countries to clean up their act, but this is usually possible only when the polluting country is a signatory, along with other countries, to environmental polices or conventions. In this case, I am glad to say that the Bahamas is and they have ratified, in other words made into law, these conventions and treaties. Therefore, it is possible to bring pressure onto the Bahamian government to change things but you have to ask yourself, what country can take a position of being an example of the way things should be. Personally, I cannot think of a single country that can set the example for all countries because they are all guilty of exactly the same tactics used by the Bahamian government.....

.....So the future of caves in the Bahamas, especially those on islands where development is a priority, looks grim indeed. Diving by Blue Holes Foundation on Grand Bahama had to stop in 1999 for safety reasons. At the beginning of 1999, a significant collapse occurred within Lucayan Caverns. The most likely cause was an increase in heavy vehicle traffic, the shock waves resulting from blasting of limestone for mining purposes, and the use of dynamite for enlarging and deepening of the container port.

Diving on the outer, less densely populated islands, is also a concern. Hydrologically connected cave systems are threatened by dispersion of sewage to various caves. For the most part however, isolated caves away from local townships are probably safe from direct source input. Trying to protect caves is very difficult, primarily because the majority of the population of the world does not dive. They do not understand the importance of these enclaves of ancient biology for science nor can they fathom what irreplaceable treasures are needlessly destroyed. Would one bulldoze a museum because most people do not visit it very often? Or the pyramids: would they make a place for a shopping center because they are only the playgrounds for anthropologists? The caves rank with these monuments, would they not be worthy of protection for our use and all that come after us? Unfortunately, until that happens, the job of trying to protect these wonderful places is left in the hands of the few who have fallen under the spell of the magical and mystical underworld of the Bahamas.

Clearly, the Bahamas has grave cave and karst management issues in common with many other areas. Sigh....

This book is a rollicking good read, and I certainly warmly recommend it.