

FROM FIRES TO AWARDS

Jayne Hatcher

What an eventful few months it has been in Margaret River; from the devastating Prevelly and Gnarabup bush fires, to the Jewel Cave Preservation and Redevelopment Centre winning Gold in the Western Australian Tourism Award for Tourism Attraction, to the Jewel Cave open day and then the launch of our very own attractions book "Wonders of the Margaret River Region" it has been an eventful and exciting few months for our team at CaveWorks.

Margaret River Bushfires. - As many of you would have heard on the news, a blaze in the Prevelly and Gnarabup areas of Margaret River, (believed to be a prescribed burn by the Department of Environment and Conservation) got out of control, destroying 32 homes and nine chalets. The fire devastated the seaside community of Prevelly, however the town has rallied around this community holding many local fund raising and charity initiatives to support those affected as they get back on their feet.

The local caves on the Leeuwin Naturaliste Ridge were not affected, thanks to the amazing efforts of the fire brigade. The bush fire was headed toward Mammoth

and Lake Caves and as a precaution we were evacuated for 4 days. It was great to see our fire management plans in action and see that they were successful, but the effects of the fire were felt throughout the town and community, with many of my staff directly impacted by the fires. The effects of the fire have been felt in so many ways; from loss of homes, water damage, smoke damage, loss of utilities (electricity, phones and sewerage), loss of business for local operators (accommodation, restaurants etc.) and a down turn in tourism due to the perception that Margaret River has been burnt. We will have a hard year ahead and the best thing I can say to anyone travelling this way is please come and support the town. If you would like to support the people of the Margaret River bush fires, donations can be made through the Lord Mayor's fund - <http://www.amrshire.wa.gov.au/>

Western Australian Tourism Awards - On the 26 November 2011, the Western Australian Tourism Awards were held at the Burswood Hotel in Perth. The Jewel Cave Preservation Centre took out the Gold Award for Tourist Attraction and Silver for Ecotourism and has been nominated for The National Tourism Awards to be



A view of the newly relit Jewel Cave. Photo: Lindsay Hatcher

held in Cairns in March. It was such an exciting evening, a time to celebrate; with the unique building and cave lighting being delivered on time and budget, it was an exceptional project that we are so proud of. We must give great thanks to the team that helped and assisted throughout the project, they all worked tirelessly; giving up many of their own hours to ensure the project was delivered to a high standard. At the National Awards we will have some stiff competition with Jenolan Caves competing in the same category. I think this would be the first time 2 cave sites have competed at the awards. Any ACKMA members in WA are encouraged to visit and see our new building and cave lighting; it is world-leading and a totally new experience that we would love to share.

Jewel Cave Open Day – To celebrate the building and lighting being completed at Jewel Cave and the recent Gold Award for Tourism Attraction, we held an open day for the local community. Free tours, balloons and lolly bags were offered, and the open day was a huge success with over 800 locals attending, some who had not visited

for over 20 years. We were able to showcase the new building and lighting with visitors blown away by the improvements at the site and the environmental initiatives that had been adopted. It was extremely encouraging and very positive and showed how the project has delivered on its objectives.

New Cave and Lighthouse Book – “Wonders of the Margaret River Region” The production of this book is very exciting as the Margaret River Caves have not had a dedicated souvenir book for over 10 years. We developed the stunning new book and launched to our visitors just in time for Christmas. The book is A5, contains 40 pages with spectacular new images and is selling for \$9.95. We offer all ACKMA members 20% off (cost of \$8.00). If you would like purchase one please contact me by email – jaymehatcher@margaretriver.com and we can arrange payment.

Editor’s note: This booklet is reviewed by Andy Spate on the following page.

THYLACINE

The Thylacine, more commonly known as the Tasmanian Tiger, was an exceptional Australian marsupial that superficially resembled a dog or wolf, hence its name *Thylacinus* (pouched dog) *cynocephalus* (wolf head). With its characteristic gaping mouth, rear-facing pouch, long tapered tail used for balance and an ability to walk on its heels; this was a truly remarkable creature.

The last Thylacine died in captivity in a Tasmanian zoo on September 7th, 1936. National Threatened Species Day is now observed on this anniversary, with the plight of the Thylacine highlighting the need to protect other Australian fauna in danger of extinction.

Thylacine fossils have been discovered from Jewel Cave in the past and a Thylacine skeleton is now on display in the Lake Chamber of Jewel Cave. These photographs are of the Tasmanian Tiger footprints found in a protected area of Jewel Cave. They are an incredibly rare record of the existence of these unique animals that were tragically driven to extinction through the ignorance of man.

LEFT Thylacine footprints in mud. OPPOSITE Thylacine skeleton on display in Jewel Cave. OVERLEAF Lake Cave Doline (Collapsed Cavern)

Wonders of the Margaret River Region



A page on Thylacines from the new Cave and Lighthouse book