

Over the years, Mike supervised a number of Honours, Masters, and PhD students and was an Honorary Associate in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Agriculture Food and Natural Resources at Sydney University from around 2000 until 2006. He was also mentor to Graham ‘Wishy’ Wishart, a retired pharmacist who took an interest in the Trapdoor spiders and other wandering mygalomorphs that fell in his swimming pool. With Mike’s encouragement and guidance, Wishy published several papers on the trapdoor spider fauna of New South Wales.

Mike retired in 2009 and finally found time in 2010, as a Retired Fellow, to publish his PhD thesis findings – his revision of the Australian Funnel-web spiders. He continued to work on marronoids and, to a lesser extent, filistatids, for several years until a move to the Blue Mountains made the trip to the city a less attractive proposition. Mike’s final publication was as a co-author in 2022.

Mike leaves behind him a substantial legacy of work across many unique southern taxa and was a pioneer of cave spider research in Australia. Through his unpublished notes and through the training, mentorship and encouragement of others, his contributions to Australian arachnology will continue for many years.



Links to the Wider World

This section aims to provide links to articles and items related to caves and karst that may lie outside the normal ACKMA sphere of influence but may still be of interest. They are intended to spark your interest and maybe prompt you into doing more research - they are not necessarily meant to be definitive sources of information. All links are functional at the time of publishing but may not open if viewing at a later date.

Scottish Caves of Legend: 17 beautiful caves in Scotland with fascinating stories By Thomas Mackay, The Scotsman, June 1, 2023

<https://www.scotsman.com/heritage-and-retro/heritage/scottish-caves-of-legend-17-beautiful-caves-in-scotland-with-fascinating-stories-4165748>



If you’re a nature enthusiast - or interested in Scottish mythology - you’ll enjoy Scotland’s many diverse and breathtaking caves that are scattered from the lowlands to the highest peaks of the Scottish Highlands.

So, let’s crack into these seventeen Scottish caves, caverns and coves and explore their rich heritage while doing so.

Figure: Smoo Cave, Durness, photo via WikiCommons



Taking the First Steps into a Newly Formed Volcanic Underworld

By Maya Wei-Haas, Atlas Obscura, July 19, 2023

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/la-palma-canary-islands-lava-tubes>

More than a year after a devastating eruption in the Canary Islands, a team is exploring a braided network of still-hot lava tubes. The island's new underworld has finally cooled enough for Fernández Lorenzo and a team of scientists to take their first steps into the system's primary branches. The team hopes to create detailed maps and collect samples from these caves to better understand this new landscape and its potential microbial inhabitants. Studying these pioneers is another rare opportunity—a peek into evolution in extreme environments, one that could even provide clues to what life might look like on other worlds.



Figure: Scientist explore the lava tube they have dubbed the “Red Cave” for its rusty hues, photograph by Arturo Rodriguez



14 of the deepest sinkholes on Earth

By Lydia Smith, Live Science, August 4, 2023

<https://www.livescience.com/planet-earth/geology/14-of-the-deepest-sinkholes-on-earth>

Sinkholes form when the rock beneath the surface, such as limestone, can naturally be dissolved by the groundwater within it. As the rock dissolves, caverns develop. When these caverns get so big that the land above can no longer support them, the surface collapses. Some sinkholes have been found to contain their own ecosystems — and may even harbor undiscovered plant and animal species.

From China's Heavenly Pit, which stretches down 2,172 feet, to the Devil's Sinkhole in Texas that is home to three million bats — here are some of the world's deepest known sinkholes.

Figure: Xiaozhai Tiankeng - or Heavenly Pit - the largest known sinkhole on Earth. (Image credit: Brookqi, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons)



Bailong Elevator, Zhangjiajie, China

By Tony Dunnell, Atlas Obscura, January 10, 2019

https://www.atlasobscura.com/places/bailong-elevator?mc_cid=72a8d36b57&mc_eid=40adb6cd62



The world's tallest outdoor lift stretches along the stone pillars that inspired the floating mountains in the movie "Avatar." China has had its fair share of controversies, but it's an undeniably impressive feat of engineering and, at 1,070 feet tall, it holds the record for the world's tallest outdoor lift.

Figure 1: The Bailong Elevator, photo by Nyx Ning, CC BY-SA 3.0

More information can be found at <https://www.chinatravel.com/zhangjiajie/attraction/zhangjiajie-bailong-elevator>



Figure 2: The Bailong Elevator, photo by China Travel



Your journal needs YOU!

While it is easy to fill up pages with pretty pictures, the heart and soul of the ACKMA Journal is stories from members!

Particularly as most of us have been restricted in our movements over the last couple of years, we depend on others to help us live vicariously – and this is where you come in. While you may not have been jet setting recently, I am sure there are lots of you that have stories and photos from previous caving trips, expeditions and holidays. And if you have been jet-setting – we want to hear about all the wonderful karstic things you have visited!

Now is the perfect time to share them with other ACKMA members by writing a short (or long!) article for us, and as they say, "a picture is worth a thousand words", so any pictures you have (clear and in focus) to accompany the words will only embellish your efforts!

You can write them in any font and format you like, and I can edit them when you send them to me. If anyone has any questions about the suitability of subject matter, then please drop me an email and I will be happy to explore the possibilities with you. I am also happy to help with minor technical or formatting issues if needed – so don't be shy.

I look forward to being deluged with articles for upcoming issues!

