

# Australian Cave Animal of the Year

Cathie Plowman

Northern Caverneers

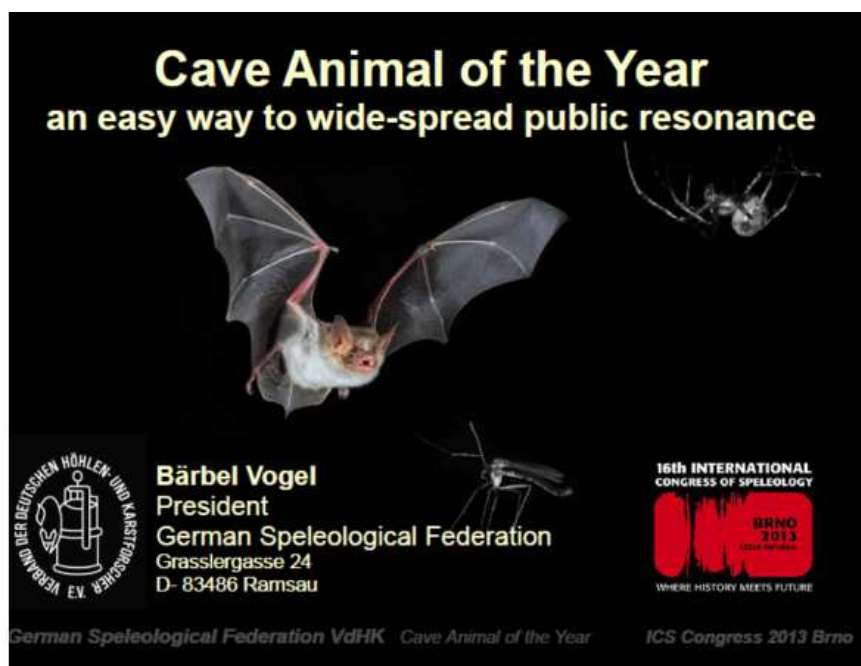
Email: [lueena@bigpond.com](mailto:lueena@bigpond.com)

## Abstract

Cave Animal of the Year is a well-established program in Germany that has been running since 2009. The program raises awareness of cave habitats and cave-dwelling animals. An Australian Cave Animal of the Year program will be launched in early 2019 and an ongoing 10-year program is planned.

## Introduction

At the 16<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology Congress in Brno, Czech Republic in 2013, Barbel Vogel from the German Speleological Federation presented on the German Cave Animal of the Year program. This raised the question: could something similar be done in Australia?



## German Cave Animal of the Year

The German Cave Animal of the Year program is linked to the German Nature of the Year program which is extensive and includes Dragonfly of the Year, Tree of the Year, Bird of the Year, Rock of the Year, Poisonous Plant of the Year. The Nature of the

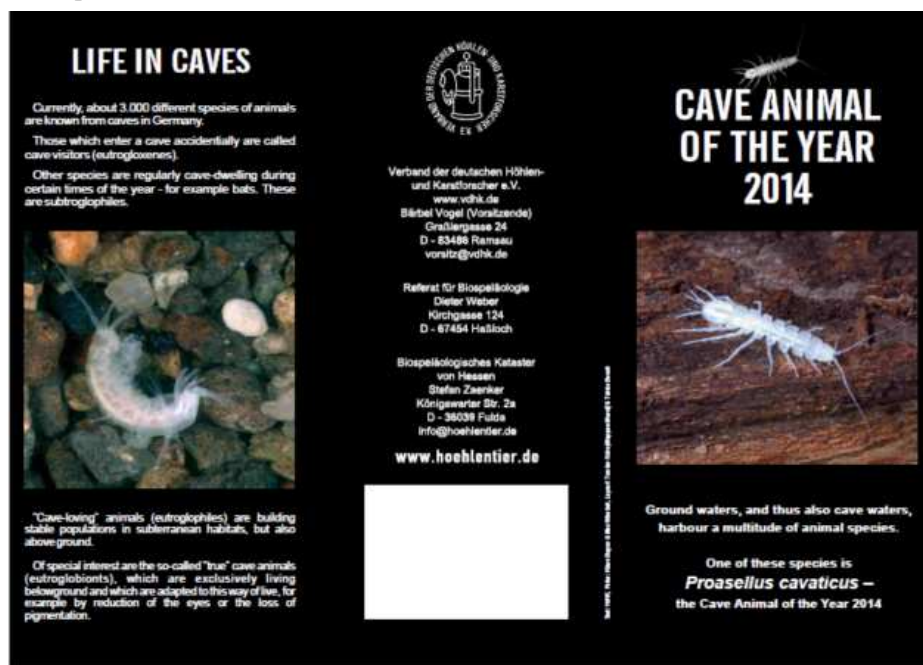
Year program provides a network so that Cave Animal of the Year material can readily be distributed across a wide network of clubs and publications. The result is that Cave Animal of the Year reaches children's magazines, school calendars and a variety of print media from garden club journals to daily newspapers.



The program uses consistent media each year: a brochure and poster that is supplied to show caves and speleological associations, and a web page that is sent to all clubs and societies linked to Nature of the Year programs.

Ms Vogel reported that, for a small budget Cave Animal of the Year is an easy way to reach cavers and the public and raise the profile of cave fauna.

Selecting the German Cave Animal of the Year is based on the species being easy to find, having a story to tell, useful information is available and, most importantly, that the animal is photogenic. The selected cave animal can be linked to other broader programs such as 'Year of the Bat'.



## An Australian Cave Animal of the Year?

Inspired by the German program, I have been considering a sister-program here in Australia and presented on the idea at both the Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association and the Australian Speleological Federation conferences held in 2015.

After initially wondering if the proposed program should be linked to ACKMA or the ASF, and whether, if linked to ACKMA, if the program should be Australasian, I have now set some parameters for the program.

1. Australian Cave Animal of the Year can be linked to any organisation that assists with funding and support.
2. The program will be Australian, rather than Australasian, as getting an Australian program up and running will take effort enough, and the plan is to keep things straight-forward and get the program up and running, rather than have it too complicated.

The aim of the program is to raise the profile of Australian cave fauna, with the selected cave animal being a 'flagship' for cave fauna rather than being the whole focus of the program.

## Media

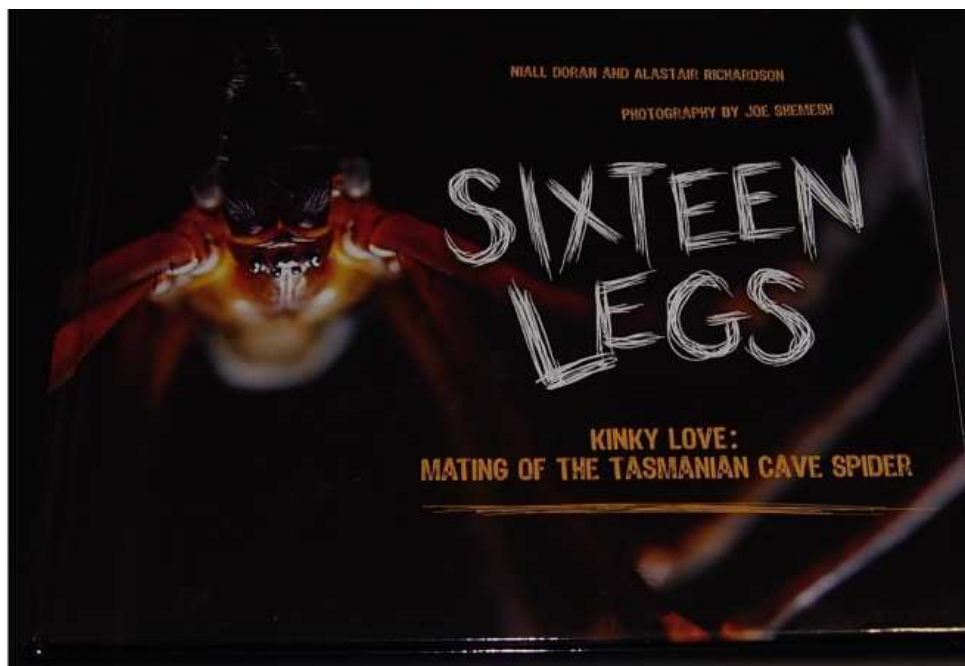
The Australian Cave Animal of the Year will have a collectable illustrated bookmark with a text of approximately 100 words, an A3 size poster and a website. The plan is to 'start small and build' rather than to aim to achieve outstanding success in year 1. Grant money is being applied for to fund the project, which will otherwise depend on private donations.

The webpage will be a medium for collecting stories and photos of cave fauna, not just the annual featured animal. The plan is to have a range of articles that include links to scientific papers, links to relevant media stories, interviews with speleo-biologists, photo contributions from cavers and the wider community. We could build on an initial start with cave fauna crosswords, work search puzzles and more.

## Launching the Australian Cave Animal of the Year

The initial Australian animal will be the Tasmanian cave spider *Hickmania troglodytes*, chosen for being topical and the choice deliberately 'riding of the back' of the publicity generated by the Bookend Trust movie *Sixteen Legs*.

Australian Cave Animal of the Year will be launched at the ASF conference being held in December 2018–January 2019 at Devonport in Tasmania.



### **Show cave involvement**

The program will be hoping that the show caves site will be active in promoting the program with their visitors by displaying the posters and having links to the program from their site's webpage as well as promoting it where relevant in visitor programs.

Posters and bookmarks will be supplied free of charge to show cave sites and speleological societies. Donations to assist with postage and packing will be happily accepted.

### **Conclusion**

Australian Cave Animal of the Year will be launched at Devonport in January 2019. The program will use a

selected species each year to promote cave fauna and caves and important fauna habitat.

I am committed to a 10-year program for Australian Cave Animal of the Year by which time I'll be age 70 and it will be time for fresh energy and new ideas.

### **Acknowledgements**

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