

The Journal of the Australian Speleological Federation Inc.

# CAVES

AUSTRALIA

NO. 232 MAY 2025

RESPONSIBLE  
CAVING PHOTO  
CONTEST

BUILDING RESCUE  
READINESS

FINDING  
HAIRYGOAT  
HOLE



# CAVES

## AUSTRALIA

### CAVES AUSTRALIA

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COVER: CRYSTAL CAVE'S CHRISTMAS STAR EXTENSION - MARCOS SILVERIO



Rain or shine its always a good time to practice SRT skills  
isn't it Liz? - Photo by Nadine Muresan

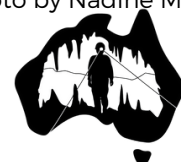
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Sand formation - Photo by Dave Wools-Cobb



Strong Woman - Photo by Janice March

# Table of Contents

<b>Editor's Note</b> <i>Nadine Muresan</i>	04
<b>President's Report</b> <i>Andrew Stempel</i>	05
<b>ASF Conference Updates 2027!</b>	06
<b>Caving in the Moonlight Conference Review</b> <i>Jack Richardson, Lauren Jolliffe &amp; Alice Kelly</i>	07
<b>Australian Cave Animal of the Year</b> <i>Cathie Plowman</i>	10
<b>Tunnel Cave and Castle Hill, South Island of New Zealand</b> <i>Garry K. Smith</i>	12
<b>2025 Responsible Caving Photo Contest</b> <i>Marcos Silverio</i>	16
<b>Building Rescue Readiness in Chillagoe</b> <i>Allison Irvin</i>	19
<b>Name it to save it</b> <i>Perry Beasley-Hall</i>	21
<b>Caves Conservation Australia</b> <i>Clare Buswell</i>	23
<b>Finding Hairygoat Hole</b> <i>Stephen Fordyce</i>	25



# Editor's Note



Selfie - Happy little camper

This year has already seen a number of significant events, with many more on the horizon. From my corner of the world, we recently travelled to Chillagoe—and let me just say, if you haven't had the opportunity to visit yet, it is truly remarkable. The caving community there is super enthusiastic, and I am very much looking forward to seeing what they have planned for the upcoming conference. It promises to be an event worth attending.

There also appears to be a strong focus on rescue preparedness across various clubs. Chillagoe has been exploring new techniques, the Southern Tasmanian Caverneers have been honing their skills, and Cave Rescue Victoria is actively running training events. It is encouraging to see so many organisations investing in these critical capabilities. Ideally, they will never need to be used in real-world scenarios, but should the need arise, we will be ready.

Regarding *Caves Australia*, I would love to receive more articles highlighting the activities and developments of caving clubs across the country. Please feel free to submit any type of article that reflects your club's experiences. Additionally, I'm always on the lookout for any captivating imagery from within the caves—whether detailed shots, portraits, or any visually striking photos. If you have images to share, I would greatly appreciate receiving them.

I'm excited to see what the remainder of the year brings. Until next time—let's go caving!

**Nadine Muresan**



# President's Report

There is a smiley (and possibly tired and sore ;) ) caver writing this report after an exciting multi-agency expedition to the Nullarbor.

In April, cavers from WASG, CCC, SUSS, OSS, FUSSI and CEGSA were joined by scientists from the Western Australian Museum, the University of Adelaide and the University of Bologna on Mundrabilla Station. I'll leave the juicy details to be shared by the scientists and cartographers once the lab work and the maps are complete. But, in brief, there were some furry friends collected by the mammal/marsupial team from the Museum, multiple new species of invertebrates waiting to be described by the crew from University of Adelaide and a few kilometers of new passage surveyed.

The April holidays were also busy for the ASF Nullarbor Liaison Officer, Ann-Marie Meredith. Despite some silly weather altering her plans, she was able to get out to the Nullarbor for the first time in this capacity to meet with landowners, lease-holders and other stakeholders to promote the ASF and increase communication with the appropriate contacts.

The ASF has also been approached to provide feedback to various agencies in regards to the Nullarbor. This has included input on a Weebubbie Management Plan and a team is also working on providing documentation on landform values of the Nullarbor karst. These are just a few examples of the many ongoing ASF projects, and I would like to thank all of the volunteers who have put sincere thought, time and energy into these various activities.

In other excitement, I returned from the Nullarbor to the breaking news that the age-old Tasmanian past-time of "Master Cave or Bust" has swung (YET AGAIN) in the favor of the cavers. The monumental Valentines Day discovery was briefly mentioned in the last *Caves Australia* and the dice have continued the roll in favor of the caver. I can't wait to hear about the March and April discoveries. Well done to all who put in the hard yards over the many years. Well deserved!



Nullarbor - Photo by Steve Milner

As I reflect upon my recent multi-club and agency trip, I can't emphasize enough the fun and enjoyment of catching up with ASF cavers from other clubs on inter-state and inter-club trips. The internet has ruined a few things, but the connection and ability for our caving community to get together and do what we love is amazing. I'd encourage everyone to try to attend another club's general meeting (lots of Zoom options these days) or reach out to a club in a place you haven't caved before and ask to join a trip. You never know where you might end up!

Many will know that I have a tendency to get (a little) project focused, so it was good for me to return from a productive expedition and then jump straight into helping run a beginners trip for Year 9 students at a local cave. It was great to see the excitement on the kids' faces as they experienced something new and exciting. A gentle reminder that we are very lucky to have caves in our lives.

All the best and happy caving.

**Andrew Stempel**



# ANNOUNCING THE 34TH ASF CONFERENCE

Chillagoe, Queensland, June 2027



With great excitement, we announce that the 34th ASF Conference will be held in Chillagoe, Queensland from 20-26 June 2027! There will also be opportunities for pre- and post-conference caving on either side of the main event.

Chillagoe is a historic outback town known for its dramatic karst landscape, fascinating limestone caves, and warm winter sunshine. Nestled on the edge of the Gulf Savannah, Chillagoe offers a unique blend of natural beauty, geological wonder, and caving adventure — with hundreds of caves to explore, from tight sporting crawls to grand decorated chambers.

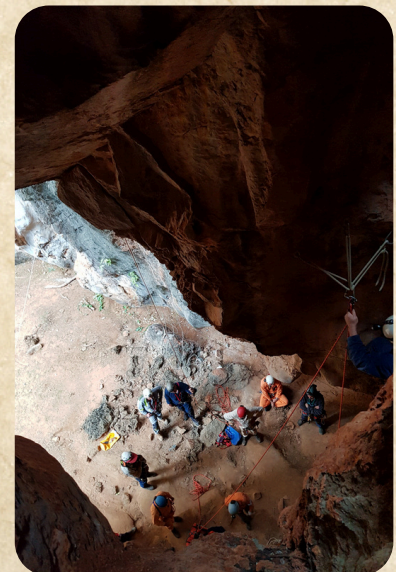
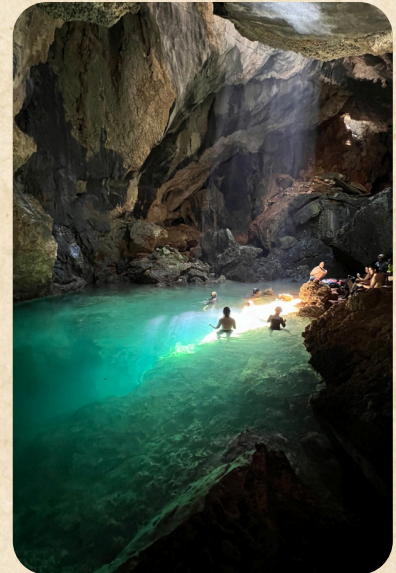
We're looking forward to welcoming cavers from across Australia and beyond for a week of discovery, discussion, and camaraderie. The conference will include talks, workshops, caving trips, and plenty of time to catch up around the campfire.

Early bird tickets will go on sale 20 June 2026 — mark your calendars!

More details will be released soon — including registration info, accommodation options, and the exciting program we're putting together. Keep an eye on [www.asfconference2027.com.au](http://www.asfconference2027.com.au) for updates as they come.

For enquiries, feel free to contact us at:  
[asfconference2027@chillagoecavingclub.org.au](mailto:asfconference2027@chillagoecavingclub.org.au).

We can't wait to host you in Chillagoe in 2027 for a memorable week of speleological fun!







## Conference Review

Jack Richardson, Lauren Jolliffe & Alice Kelly

Several of our NUCC members were given the opportunity to attend the 33<sup>rd</sup> ASF Conference in Buchan as under 27s. As well as enjoying some great caving, the week brought us many interesting talks and a chance to try out new skills:

Wednesday 15th January - Jack Richardson

Our first full day at the conference began with a 'practical' cave diving demonstration. The pool water, fresh from the underground, was an effective wake-up method, even if we only dipped our feet in. Steve Fordyce (soon to be our good friend) donned his cave diving gear and demonstrated the techniques and practicalities of cave diving while Ann-Marie gave an... interesting, perhaps mis-informed, running commentary of the behaviours and actions of the 'endangered' cave diver.

We then travelled to the SR-Tree set up at Caver's House to practice a variety of rescue-techniques, including pick-offs. This was a good opportunity to get close and familiar with some of the cavers we had yet to meet. One thing we do know for sure is that NUCC is making its name as 'the club with the loooooong cowstails'. A quick comparison saw our short cowstails were longer than most peoples long! We collectively blamed our former equipment officer (an abnormally tall man) for setting the lengths.

The afternoon promised some interesting talks inside. Soon however, the forecast gave a frightening warning and rain threatened. We had some waterproofing to do. It was a good thing too, because for a span of about 30 minutes, the campsite was pelted with some very heavy rain. Thus was born: Fort NUCC. A set of tarps and poles covering a picnic table, which provided suitable enough shelter for about five people. Until the rains stopped some half hour later.



SRTree - Photo by Marcos Silverio



Team NUCC - Photo by Nadine Muresan

Thursday 16th January - Jack Richardson

Caving and diving are two sports that, to those who have never tried them, seem like dangerous, terrifying ways to risk your life. The same thing that scares some, is what thrills us. Being somewhere humans were never meant to be. Seeing natural formations, jaw dropping depths and the intentionality of every action is what brings us back to the dark and back in the water. But combining the two, for many, is a step too far. We began the day by gaining an insight into the adventure that is cave diving. Keir Vaughan-Taylor, a prominent cave diver presented a recount of some of his recent expeditions. Including a Mt Fairy project trip with NUCC, diving a sump we otherwise couldn't get to. I was enthralled by it. Beginning with a rejection of the idea from fear of diving on a strict time limit, through narrow, dark holes with often zero visibility.





Buchanan in the evening - Photo by Jack Richardson



Group photo

However, by the end, Kier had me considering the idea of getting back in the water, re-learning my scuba skills, and working up to the point of venturing into a deep dark hole where no other human has ever been before. Despite the long hauls of cave-pack after cave-pack of gear, the thrill of exploration entices. Although some may have other ideas about the sport, in which I will point to a text from my family after I sent photos of the sort of stuff I get up to on the weekends, "Jack, I'm glad you only tell me about this after you've returned alive."

Another aspect of the conference I enjoyed was the scientific discourse, which mostly came about via updates from current conservation, ecology and geology research and projects. Nayeli Luis Varagas gave a very interesting talk on her current research on the microbiology of Mexican lava tubes, and other talks of the day involved the hydrology of underground rivers and the ecology of Jenolan caves.

Following the talks some of the NUCC members went back to the tree to practice more pick-offs, not that we would ever need to rescue anyone from a cave! I opted to go for a walk up to the top of Moon Hill and enjoy the scenery and views. I even spotted the others in a tree off in the distance.

As evening came, our little group of NUCCers and NUCC adjacent cavers went for a picnic along the bank of the river (I was on the look-out for platypus). Our meal of pesto and cheeses was very pleasant and the whole outing was lovely. We were one of the first to light a fire back at camp, and we attracted fellow cavers like moths to a flame. Plenty of lively conversations and new meetings.

Friday 17th January - Lauren Jolliffe

Over the past couple days we'd learnt about a diverse range of topics, and Friday was no different. In the morning we were tantalised with Stephen Fordyce's tales of wet, horrible, and unforgiving Junee-Florentine, and dreamed of one day being in such a miserable cave ourselves. The afternoon had me longing for home, with Bob Kershaw's talk on the Nullarbor Caves, and some of the fascinating research they've been helping with.

The cave rescue exercise after lunch was a personal favourite from the conference. It was fantastic to work with cavers from different states and clubs, and to see how everyone did things. And, while it seemed a disorganised chaos at the outset, the activity eventually resolved into something resembling a rescue. Our patient survived several "dry runs" doing doughies around the Team 1 Chamber, and then was unceremoniously hoisted through the first few stations. Unfortunately we ran out of time to complete the mission, but hopefully we'll have more opportunities to revisit some of the new skills we've learnt in the future.

It was a mad rush to the Quiz Night, where we sat, still filthy from the cave rescue exercise. Our scavenged bottom-of-the-eski snacks paled in comparison to some of the other tables, and we had little to no clue on any of the answers. But an entertaining night it was nonetheless! One thing that has really surprised me about attending the ASF conference is the peek into the strange little complex biome that is caving in Australia. Many of the clubs seem to know one another, and have decades long projects, politics, and more. Almost anything can be achieved by speaking to someone who knows someone else who knows a particular karst area or project. As a younger person standing on the outside of what can seem like a dauntingly older and far more experienced demographic, the club's continued collaboration and communication with each other through events like the ASF conference gives me hope to continue caving in the future and develop my own skills to one day eventually contribute back to our convoluted, hydra-like community.



Team NUCC - Photo by Nadine Muresan





We also found time for the odd spot of caving - Photos by L Jolliffe

#### Saturday 18th January - Alice Kelly

Saturday heralded the last official day of the conference and brought with it the promise of classic caver shenanigans. The morning was unassuming, with many interpreting the “stop-by-whenever” nature of the day's events as a perfect opportunity for a sleep-in. And we would need it too, given the big ticket item of the day was Speleo-sports.

Needless to say the NUCC gang had decided (perhaps overconfidently) that this was our day to go all in, and it's safe to say we gave it a good crack. We kicked off with the speed ascent, apparently choosing to expend as much energy as possible in the shortest amount of time at the very start of the day. A confident Alek was chuffed to beat out Steve's time so we counted this a win for the whole group and rolled over to the SRT course.

The course, it turned out, looked rather intimidating. Despite our confidence, our range of rope skills lacked and to many of us “tyrolean” was a completely new word that spelled certain doom. But after being bullied about the length of our cows tails (“Wait which one is meant to be the short? Your short cowstails are the same length as my long one!”) and watching the pros take a turn (“What do you mean Bo did it in six minutes?!”) we were feeling a bit bolder about our chances. So off we set and, catastrophic tangles aside, all made it to the other side with times we were really quite proud of. The course proved to be great fun and we've been giddily rigging tyroleans at campsites since.



Team NUCC - Photo by Nadine Muresan

Next up was the relay, which was honestly a huge highlight. The atmosphere was electric, with each team stepping up to the course's four challenges to the enthusiastic cheering of onlookers. There was the dexterity-defying one handed carabiner opening, the mind-melting upside down Stop rigging (terror to rack-users everywhere), the adrenaline pumping ladder ascent and finally the breath snatching squeeze. It was a heck of a lot of fun. We even left with our shoulders intact and everything (which proved to be quite the accomplishment).

The NUCCers retired with a Roadhouse lunch and hearts set on a swim. We adopted Elly from the Victorians and headed down to the Buchan River where we settled in to cool off, get swept around by the strong river currents and, to our great delight, swim with a platypus. Presentations from earlier in the week had us speculating about if they might use the caves in Buchan, but perhaps that's an investigation for next time. We had bigger fish to fry. That fish being an 80s themed dinner party.

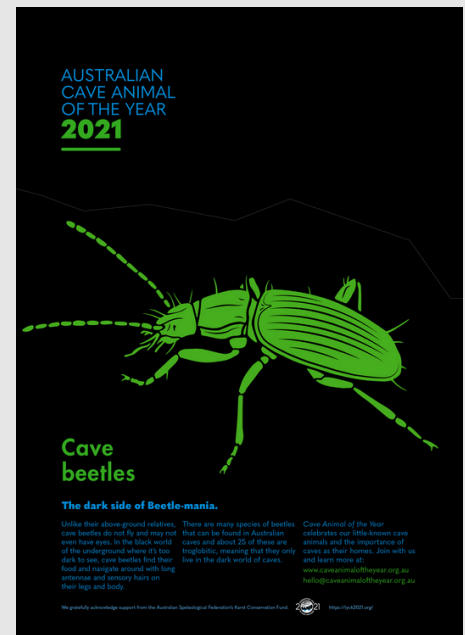
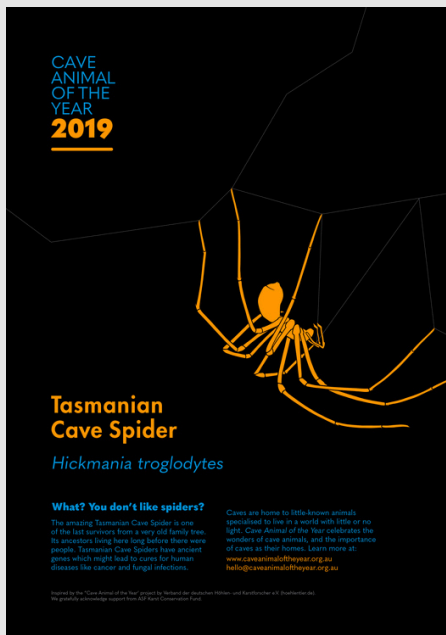
Glitz, glam, obnoxiously neon bathers worn over equally obnoxiously neon lycra. It was a sight to behold. With the 80s being over a decade prior to any of our gang being born we could only wonder at what a terrifying time this must have been. That said, the food was incredible and the outfits really did grow on us after a time, even if some people appeared to have received the wrong memo (Brian, your *Nargun* outfit will always be famous).

And with that the 33rd ASF Conference drew to a close. The event was a brilliant insight into the wonderful little world of caving in Australia (and around the world). As someone who'd not had the opportunity to attend before, it was brilliant to pick the minds of many accomplished cavers from across the country. Massive kudos to the organisers who made sure everyone was fed, entertained, in the right place at the right time and put so much time and effort into pulling everything together for a brilliant week.

Hope to see you all at Chillagoe in a couple of years time!



# LIMITED EDITION REPRINT!

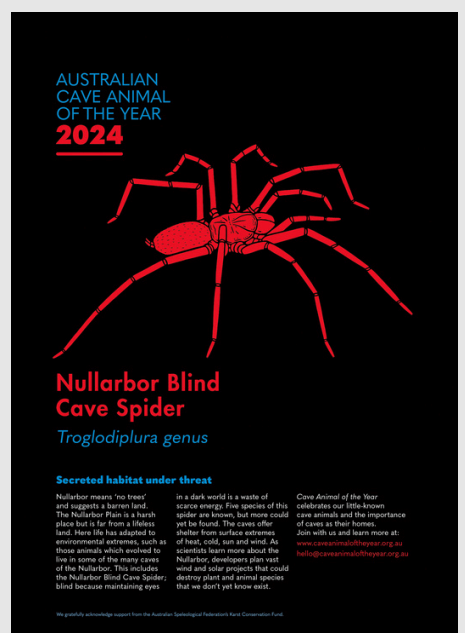
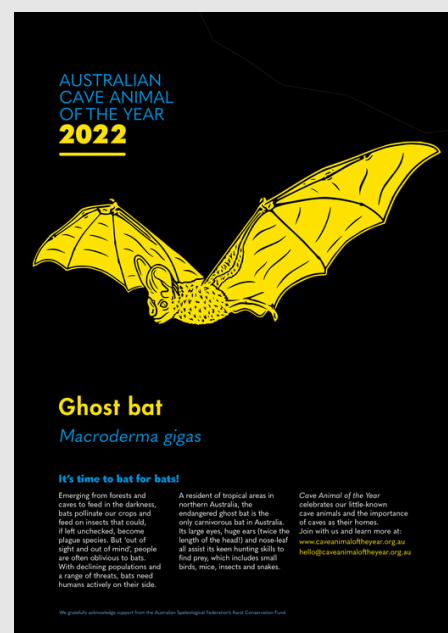


At the request of the cavers attending the Buchan conference, Cathie has agreed to produce a limited edition reprint, available exclusively in a set of only 25 copies.

The set comprises six exquisite posters, which are visually stunning when printed. **\$160** includes all six posters, packing and post. Delivered to your door. \$100 from each order donated to the Karst Conservation Fund and a tax-deductible receipt will be provided.

Those interested in this exclusive offering are kindly invited to contact Nadine Muresan via email at [asf.cavesaustralia@gmail.com](mailto:asf.cavesaustralia@gmail.com).

This is a unique opportunity to acquire a collection of remarkable artworks, and we encourage you not to miss out.





# Australian Cave Animal of the Year—A change of Direction

Cathie Plowman

A new Australian Cave Animal promotional campaign was launched at the recent ASF conference at Buchan.

We're no longer going to have a Cave Animal of the Year with new products every year and then these not being available when the 'year' is over. We've changed course and will have an ongoing promotional effort for Australian Cave Animals. This is aimed at giving longevity to the program, covering costs and trying to increase the range and distribution of the products.

The products will be sold just above or at cost price. We want to get these products 'out and about'.

Our new and colourful poster, featuring illustrations of seven Australian cave animals, is now available for **\$2.00 each** plus the cost of pack and post.

You can support the effort by buying the posters, displaying them, and giving them to friends and colleagues. They'll make delightful presents for the young people in your life and inspire them to learn more about caves and cave animals.

Perhaps you could encourage a retail outlet to sell the posters and help grow the love for cave animals.

The Cave Animal of the Year website will soon be altered to a new Cave Animals website.

Thanks to everyone who has supported the previous Cave Animal of the Year effort, and I hope that you will enjoy and help grow the new efforts. Our email address will be changing soon, but for now you can be in touch and order posters at: [hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au](mailto:hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au)

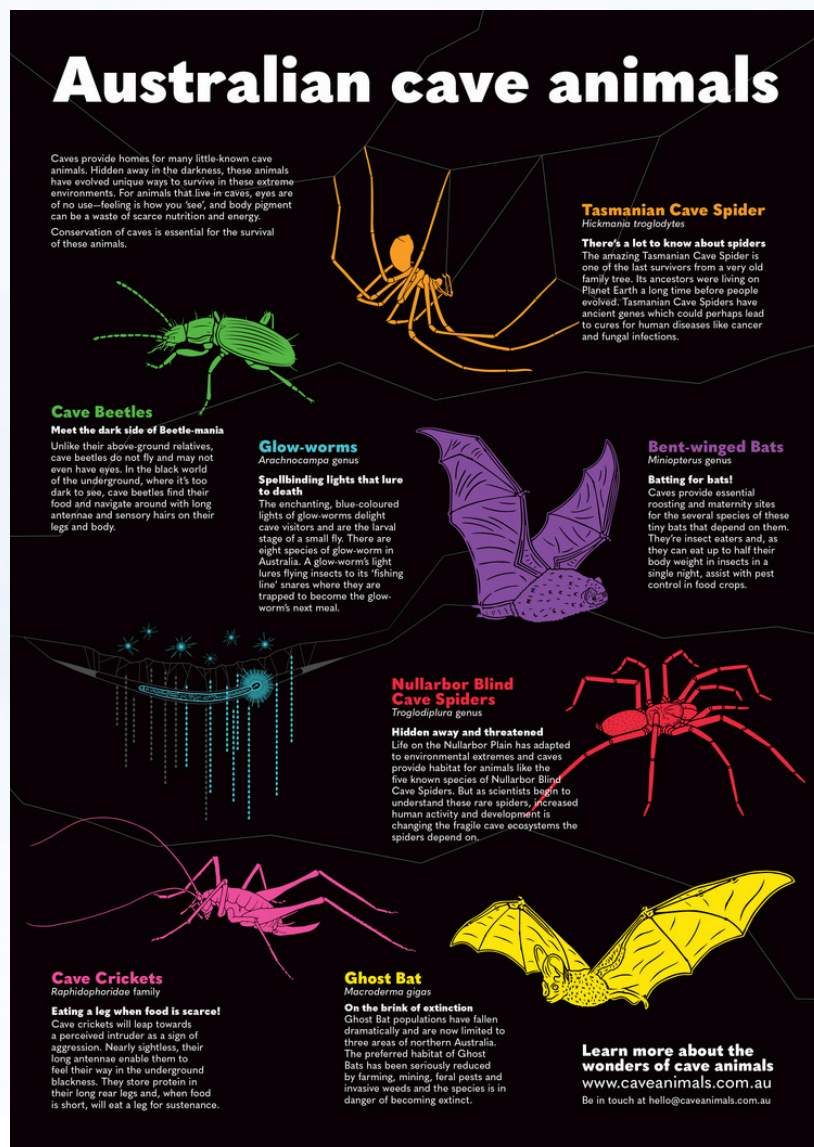






Fig 1. Amazing scenery along the walking track to Tunnel Cave

## Tunnel Cave and Castle Hill, South Island of New Zealand

Text and photos by Garry K. Smith,

Prior to a recent trip to the South Island of New Zealand, I searched the internet to see what limestone caves could be visited within a couple of hours travelling distance of Christchurch. I was pleasantly surprised to find an easily accessible cave that was open to the general public and didn't require a permit or tour fee. One could just rock up and explore this cave with the appropriate lighting and clothing to suit the cave conditions.

Known as Tunnel Cave, this 594 metre long active streamway cave is described on the Department of Conservation (DOC) website as one of the most outstanding natural features in the Canterbury region. The cave photos on the internet certainly sparked my interest, so I packed the appropriate caving gear before departing for New Zealand.

The day arrived, weather was perfect and an internet check showed that the stream level running through the cave was suitable for the underground trip, so I set off on the day adventure.

The cave is located on a reserve about 95 km by road (1 hour 20 minutes drive) from Christchurch. Much of the drive was through spectacular scenic mountain country.

From the reserve carpark there is a 10 minute walk along a well-formed track (Fig.1) that leads down into the Broken River Valley, then a 150 m upstream walk to the cave entrance at the base of a small cliff (Fig 2). The recommended route is for visitors to enter the outflow entrance and progress through the cave in the upstream direction. The cave is a through trip that takes about an hour at a leisurely pace to traverse 560-m of the river passage. No vertical gear is required.

The entrance passage is relatively straight for about 40 metres, and has a distinctly uniform oval cross-section (Fig 3). It is definitely worthy of a few photographs, and conveniently one can stay out of the water for this part of the cave. After that, the cave passage turns sharply at right angles, and one must wade in crystal clear water up to waist deep, quite cool at about 11 degrees in February. Wading through water depths ranging from knee to waist is the norm for the rest of this cave.



Fig 2. Outflow entrance of Tunnel Cave



Fig 3. Looking back to outflow entrance





Fig 4. Active stream passage with sculptured walls

The sculptured passage along the streamway is extremely interesting, and if one has time would make far better pictures than the couple of very basic photos which I took during my traverse of this cave. I did manage a couple of time delay selfies as well as a few quick phone photos of other people as they passed me in the stream passage (Fig 4). On a good day in summer, it is very likely that other people will also be traversing the cave, however the loud sound of running water and twisting cave passage, means that you don't see many people underground. There were very few speleothems within the cave, however the sculptured passage shapes and roar of the water certainly makes the trip interesting. At one point, a small waterfall from a side stream poured into the main passage from high above (Fig 5).

There are approximately five small waterfalls, up to 1.5 m high, to traverse, and then a three metres ladder followed by a crawl along a narrow ledge with a fixed metal chain above the waterfall at the exit. The three metres ladder is actually a set of steel bar treads anchored solidly into the rock face, so very easy to climb (Fig 6).

Eels live in the above ground rivers as well as in the underground stream, even well within the dark zone. During my visit, I spotted a large one (approx. 0.6 m long) about 50 metres into the cave. Other biota on the reserve include an abundance of invertebrates, so keep a lookout for these creatures above and below ground. The DOC information brochure says there is a rare species of harvestman (Opiliones) that lives in the cave's dark zone, however no species name is provided.

This amazing cave is worthy of a visit if one has the time in the South Island. However, be sure to travel to NZ with your caving lights and other appropriate gear suitable for this cave: thankfully I was prepared. The DOC website says that people have died in the cave, and that drowning and hypothermia are real risks. Recent flooding has made the trip more difficult than it used to be, according to internet literature available prior to my visit in, February 2025. Can't say that there was any part of the cave which I would consider to be difficult. The DOC website specifically says that people intending to undertake the cave trip should only go during good weather and river conditions, as well as have suitable clothing/gear and have the skills and good fitness required.

If you're not intending to go underground there is a family-friendly walking track that loops around Cave Stream Reserve, with lookouts over the cave entrances and limestone landscape features. The walk takes about 35 minutes and there are excellent valley and mountain views along the way.

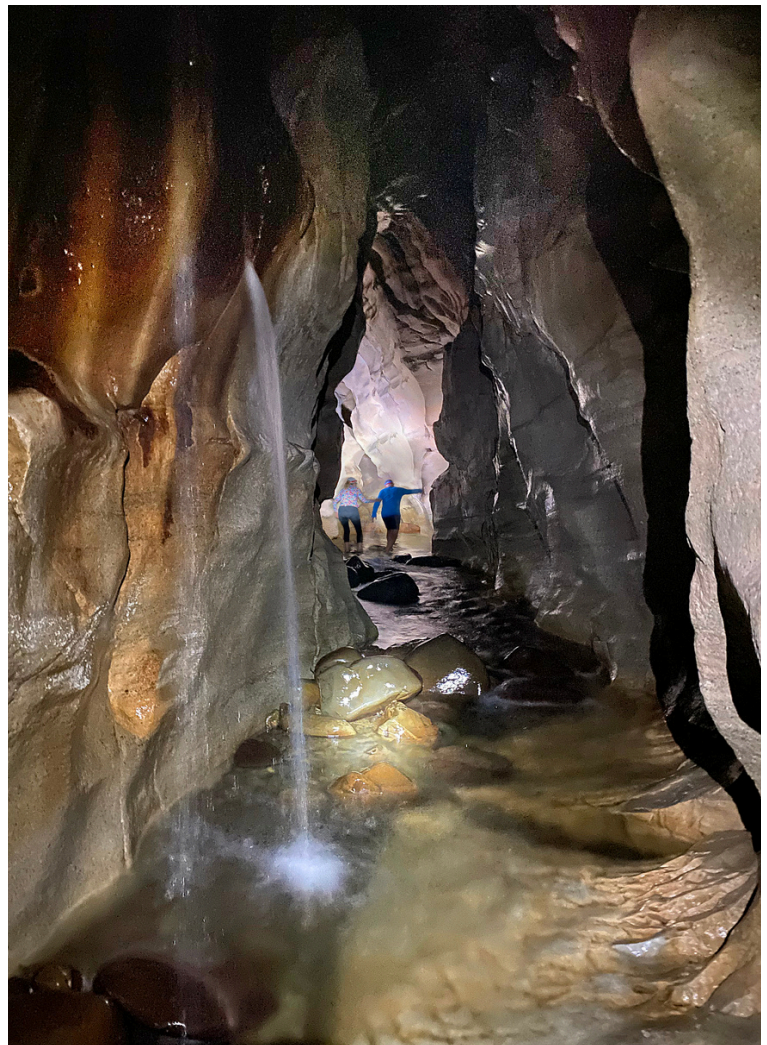


Fig 5. A side stream pours in through a hole above the main passage





Fig 6. The 3 metre fixed ladder near the inflow entrance of Tunnel Cave

### Cave Location

Tunnel Cave is located on Cave Stream Scenic Reserve managed by the Department of Conservation. It is on the Great Alpine Highway (SH 73), between the Broken River Road bridge and Craigieburn Forest Park entrance. The small township of Castle Hill is just 3 kilometres by road south of the reserve.

A brochure about the cave and the reserve can be found on the internet at <https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/canterbury/waimakariri/cave-stream-brochure.pdf>

As well as the online brochure there is a location map (Fig 7) and several interpretive signs, at the carpark. NO camping, NO fires and NO pets, are allowed at the reserve. There is a well maintained pit toilet block at the carpark.

### Castle Hill, Kura Tawhiti Reserve, Canterbury

Another extremely interesting geological feature is located on the Castle Hill Reserve just 6 kilometres by road south of Tunnel Cave or 3.2 kilometres by road, south of Castle Hill township. The Castle Hill Reserve (Kura Tawhiti Conservation Area) was designated in 1998. It contains an outcrop of large sculptured towering limestone blocks. The high country tussock and open space scenery is a famous spot for photographers and bushwalkers. It is a must-do if you're in the Canterbury region of New Zealand's South Island.



Fig 7. Map of Cave Stream Scenic Reserve, on a sign at reserve, courtesy DOC

The carpark is just 50 metres off the Great Alpine Highway (SH 73). A six hundred metre, well graded walk leads across open grass country to the foot of several small hills covered in a scattered array of twisted and gnarly limestone rocks up to 30 metres high (Fig 8 - 9). One sheer rock face with a vantage point at the top is approximately 45 metres high. A number of walking tracks weave in and out of the rocks and one can climb to vantage points on top of many, if you don't mind standing on lookouts with no guard rails. The standard walk which most people do is about 2.8 kilometres return (Fig 10).

The sight is truly spectacular and certainly worth the effort to climb to the top of at least some of the high vantage points.

The limestone rock formations are the water eroded remnants of limestone formed during the Oligocene age 30-40 million years ago when much of present day New Zealand was covered by a shallow sea. Extensive uplift, folding and faulting was caused by immense pressure and movement of the Earth's crust. Subsequent erosion by water has sculptured the magnificent rocks we see exposed today.

The area is of special cultural, spiritual and historical significance to Ngāi Tahu who named it Kura Tawhiti (treasure from afar). Ngāi Tahu, or Kāi Tahu, is the principal Māori iwi (tribe) of the South Island. Hidden amongst the limestone outcrops of Castle Hill are traces of 500-year old charcoal drawings traditionally said to have been left by the Waitaha, the first people to travel through this area.





Fig 8. Walking track to Castle Hill Reserve

Lying between the Torlesse and Craigieburn Mountain ranges the 6 hectares Castle Hill's - Lance McCaskill Nature Reserve, was created specifically to protect the rare 'Castle Hill buttercup' that only grows in this area amongst the limestone outcrop. Established in the 1950s, it was in the first plant reserve created in New Zealand. There are also other rare species within the reserve, including: Castle Hill forget-me-not, limestone wheatgrass, and a small sedge. A section to the right, known as Lance McCaskill Nature Reserve cannot be accessed without a permit.

### Facilities

Castle Hill Reserve is administered by the Department of Conservation. The carpark is quite spacious with room for many cars. There are some covered picnic benches, as well as a pit toilet block beside the carpark. Several interpretive signs are located at the start of the walking track and others are a little further on. As with the Cave Stream Scenic Reserve, the Castle Hill Reserve has signs stating NO camping and NO fires or pets.

Allow at least an hour or two to walk around the tracks to view the limestone outcrop. Stick to the designated tracks to protect the fragile native vegetation. Also take some water and protection from the sun, particularly in summer time. I could image the exposed area would become very unpleasant in high wind and during rain or snow falls.

The Castle Hill township livestream webcam provides information about the temperature wind and rainfall, which will assist in planning your trip to both the Tunnel Cave and Castle Rocks. The website is <https://www.castlehill.nz/webcam-livestream/>



Fig 10. Amazing scenery encountered along Castle Hill walking track



Fig 9. Some of the many naturally sculptured limestone rocks at Castle Hill Reserve



# 2025 Responsible Caving Photo Contest

Marcos Silverio



Equal second place - Photo by Marcos Silverio

The UIS—Union Internationale de Spéléologie—announced the 2025 Responsible Caving photo contest winners at the end of March. Taraneh Khaleghi, from The Arts and Letters Commission, organised the contest with fourteen participants from 12 countries.

Thirty-four photos were presented, representing sustainable and responsible caving practices, and I was lucky to be awarded, sharing the 2nd place with my good old friend Daniel Menin from Brazil. Kay Vilchis from Mexico received first place and the third for Rainer Straub from Germany. I believe my award is shared with all Western Australian and Australian caving communities that have been working hard to protect our cave and karst environments.

I submitted three photos from Crystal Cave's Christmas Star Extension, showcasing the outcomes of our conservation efforts. At such a fragile place, I didn't want to wander around, keeping my already slow movements to a minimum. Although flashes make lighting easier and more controlled, they demand a bit of back and forth to position them and adjust their direction. So I took just a small kit: camera and tripod. I decided to use everyone's light and my headlamp to "paint" the space instead.

The downside of this technique is that the light usually comes from behind the camera, which is not the best light as it turns the photo flat. The side or backlight is usually better for contrast and shadows, so I tried to move a bit sideways from the camera when I could. It is a trial-and-error approach to get a good light everywhere when going side to side and balancing with people's lights.

In these photos, I kept my camera on a tripod for 2 to 16 seconds and "painted" the chamber. Most of the light comes from Brett's lamp, which makes a more interesting image. My light was just filling the scene, giving some context and not making the plastic on the pathway too evident. I have an approach to not add or delete anything from the image, just using alternatives to hide or make things less visible. Mel lights the further back, and Sil sits closer to the camera, all creating a sense of perspective.







Photo by Marcos Silverio

### About the cave

The first reference to Crystal Cave (WI-62) is a survey by W. A. Saw in 1884. Appeared for the first time on maps in 1895: "A running stream which flows over the bed of Crystal Cave". The cave was first visited by WASG in 1959. Further exploration in December 1968, led to the discovery by Peter Bridge and Murray Thomas of the Christmas Star Extension following a Lex Bastian draft (Bywater, 1968; Bridge *et al.*, 1970). The Extension is a spectacularly decorated section consisting of white flowstone, stalagmites and stalactites, almost transparent straws, helictites and a variety of other speleothems.

Shortly after the discovery, a gate was installed. By 1972, considerable sand-staining damage had occurred to the flowstone floor and dry crystal pool. In 1973 and 1974, SRGWA undertook a restoration project in the Extension, cleaning the flowstone floor, laying new plastic pathways, and constructing retaining walls and stabilisation works. Later, in 1975, a second gate was installed over the entrance of the Extension. (Shoosmith, 1975; Poulter, 1982)

Access to the Christmas Star Extension requires a permit, allowing only four trips each year with a maximum of four cavers per trip. It is located in the Witchcliffe area among the Kerry trees and features an entrance through a steep collapsed doline, with a passage length of 610 metres.

The first gate is at the back of the large entrance chamber. A short crawl leads to the dry stream walking passage with its moon milk formations. After the second gate and beyond the coat-hanger size squeeze, the first pretty decorations appear, which are noticeable for their fragility.

The second squeeze is a slight crawling bend to the de-trog area and the beginning of the most impressive section. From there on, clean clothes, reef boots and no helmets, the path runs on a plastic sheet about 600 mm wide over the flowstone. Although the chamber is large, we keep ourselves mostly on our knees because the formations hang lower and closer. The pace is gentle, and every movement is like a slow-motion dance. Every caving trip has an impact. However, these measures seem to be effective in balancing its protection with the visiting of more experienced cavers.

"The UIS Cave Photo Contest – Responsible Caving aimed to highlight the beauty of the caves while promoting safe and responsible exploration. We were excited by the amazing participation from cavers around the world, and the stunning photos submitted showed not only excellent photography but also deep respect for fragile cave environments.

We hope that through initiatives like this, help to raise more awareness of the need to care for the wonders hidden beneath us." Taraneh Khaleghi - President, Arts and Letters Committee, The "Union Internationale de Spéléologie" (UIS)

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- Australian Speleological Federation Inc., 2021. *Minimal Impact Caving Code*





First Place - Kay Vilchis



Equal second place - Daniel Menin



Third place - Rainer Straub



# Building Rescue Readiness in Chillagoe

Allison Irvin



Learning basic SRT skills - Photo by Nadine Muresan



Learning how to do pick offs - Photo by Nadine Muresan

From 3rd to 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2025, the Chillagoe Caving Club hosted a four-day cave rescue training event in Far North Queensland, supported by the Australian Cave Rescue Commission (ACRC). With 36 participants, including instructors and visiting experts, the training aimed to build rescue capability in the region and ensure cavers are prepared to respond effectively in the event of an emergency.

Chillagoe is a remote karst environment where access to conventional emergency services is often delayed, and where first responders may lack specific cave rescue experience. In the event of an incident, the most immediate and effective response is likely to come from the caving group itself—making training, coordination, and preparedness essential.

This event focused on developing the self-reliance of local and visiting cavers—equipping them with practical skills, sound judgment, and the ability to work as a team during an underground emergency. Thanks to the generous support of the ACRC, the training was led by Bo Muresan from Cave Rescue Victoria and his partner Nadine Muresan, with expert contributions from Brian Evans and Rod Burton (ACRC), as well as Oz and Debs Patterson from New Zealand CaveSAR.

The first day of training saw Bo and others rig a series of vertical circuits in Castle Cave—part of an upcoming speleosports course planned for the 2027 ASF Conference. With its dramatic 30-metre cliffs around a large daylight hole, Castle Cave provided an ideal training ground. Participants began with SRT refreshers, including changeovers. There was great discussion throughout the training about the pros and cons of using a Stop versus a Rack, with many appreciating the opportunity to try both in a structured setting.



Birds eye view - Photo by Stefan Grey



Rescue exercise - Photo by Rod Burton



Pick offs - Photo by Nadine Muresan



Day 2 began with a morning rigging workshop at the Clubhouse for more experienced participants. Back in the field, Bo demonstrated advanced SRT techniques such as knot bypasses, rebelay, and traverses—skills that were enthusiastically practiced by all. That afternoon, Bo introduced the croll-to-croll pick-off method, an efficient technique for rescuing someone stranded on rope.

Day 3 focused on rescue systems: building anchors, mechanical advantage hauling systems, counterbalances, and casualty lowers. Participants worked in teams to practice these techniques in realistic rescue setups.

On Day 4, the training culminated in full rescue simulations, with participants moving a casualty between stations using the systems they had learned. Hauls, lowers, zip lines, and coordinated teamwork all came together in a challenging and immensely rewarding exercise that was as fun as it was instructional.

Despite the wide range of experience among participants—from first-time vertical cavers to seasoned riggers—Bo and Nadine Muresan did an outstanding job of ensuring everyone was included, supported, and able to work at their own level. While the club still has a way to go before being fully rescue-ready, this training laid a strong foundation, and we now have the skills to continue practicing and refining our capabilities.

Special thanks go to:

- Bo and Nadine Muresan, for delivering such a high-quality and inclusive training course.
- Brian Evans and Rod Burton from the ACRC, for sharing their expertise and mentoring teams throughout the week.
- Oz and Debs Patterson from NZ CaveSAR and the Nelson Speleo Group, for their insightful presentations on New Zealand cave rescue operations.
- And to the Australian Cave Rescue Commission, for their financial support and continued leadership in strengthening national rescue capacity.

The Chillagoe Caving Club is proud to work with our national and international rescue community to enhance safety and preparedness in this remote part of the country. We look forward to continuing the momentum through more vertical training on future club weekends—and to welcoming cavers back to Chillagoe for the 34th ASF Conference in 2027!



Rescue exercise - Photo  
by Brian Evans



Rescue exercise - Photo  
by Brian Evans



Rescue exercise - Photo  
by Tim Kolln



Teaching techniques - Photo  
by Bethany Morgan



Teacher Bo - Photo by Nadine Muresan



Rescue exercise 2 - Photo by Rod Burton



# Name it to save it: conserving Australia's at-risk cave cricket species

Perry Beasley-Hall

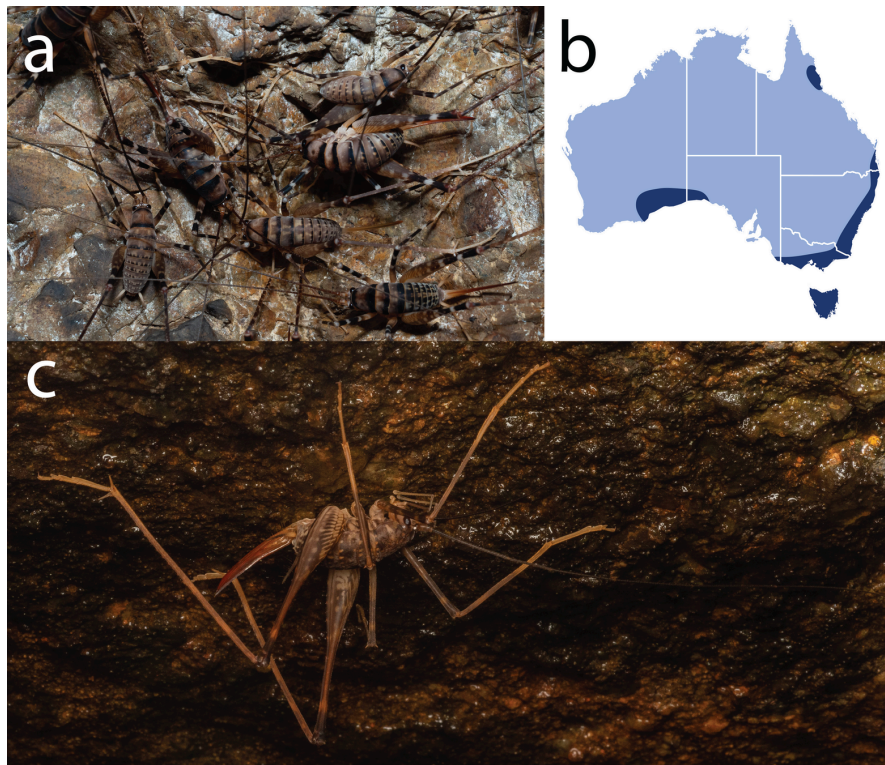


Figure 1. a) A “tangle” of crickets on a cave wall in New Zealand. b) Distribution of cave crickets in Australia. c) Unidentified species from New South Wales showing typical elongated legs and antennae. © Philip Griffin, Luca Nikkel via iNaturalist (CC BY-NC)

Have you ever come across large, spindly, and spider-like invertebrates while caving and wondered exactly what you were looking at? These animals are a common sight in many Australia’s most popular caving destinations and often startle visitors at cave entrances. Despite their appearance, these bizarre animals aren’t spiders, nor are they dangerous: they’re placid insects commonly called cave crickets (Fig. 1), a group closely related to katydids and the chirping crickets in your backyard.

## Cave crickets in Australia

Australia supports 24 species belonging to nine genera (Iannello & Beasley-Hall, 2024), an arguably unexceptional number for an insect group. However, many more species of cave cricket remain undescribed and without a formal scientific name, meaning they can’t be adequately conserved under environmental legislation. Why does this matter? The conservation status of cave crickets is a considerable problem for two reasons: they play an important ecological role in Australia’s cave systems, contributing to the health of caves and other species therein, and their populations are at considerable risk of decline, if not extinction, nationwide.

Cave crickets are often considered “keystone” species in that they disproportionately contribute to the health of their ecosystems relative to others in the same habitat.

Colonies migrate above-ground to forage for food each night and in doing so, re-inject external energy into an otherwise starved food web. These activity rhythms, paired with the sheer biomass of their often-dense aggregations in caves, make their bodies, eggs, and waste a perfect energy source for a range of species that can’t leave the subterranean realm. At Ida Bay in Tasmania, cave crickets are the main prey of the iconic cave spider *Hickmania troglodytes* and their eggs are fed on by beetles (Richards & Ollier, 1976; Driessen, 2009).

Unfortunately, the ecological significance of cave crickets in Australia is in stark contrast to the current state of their conservation and understandings of their biodiversity. Cave crickets are dependent on regions of high humidity, meaning populations are essentially stuck on “islands”—including caves, abandoned mine adits, and relictual pockets of wet forest—and cannot easily adapt or migrate in the face of threats such as climate change, forest logging, urbanisation, or direct disturbances via ecotourism. Indeed, several species are known only from a single cave, such as *Eburnocauda saxatilis* in Victoria’s Britannia Creek Cave (Fig. 2; Iannello & Beasley-Hall, 2024).





Figure 2. *Eburnocauda saxatilis*, described in 2024, was the first new species of cave cricket discovered in Australia in 50 years. The species is known only from a single cave in Victoria. The system is open to school and tourist groups year-round and crickets are frequently trampled by visitors - Photo by Silvana Iannello

These exceptionally narrow distributions have already landed five Australian species on endangered species lists, but realistically, all our cave cricket species are at risk of decline and deserve formal protection. Dr Aola Richards (1927–2021), one of the founding editors of *Helictite* and a world expert on cave crickets, described the Australian fauna as “struggling for survival” almost four decades ago (Richards, 1987). So, why has more not been done?

### Can DNA save the day?

The main roadblock to conserving cave crickets stems from a biodiversity knowledge gap: we can't protect what we don't know exists. Historically, the naming and categorisation of insects often depended on differentiating species by complex, minute traits only visible under a microscope. New species were categorised slowly (and sometimes inaccurately) as external morphological traits don't necessarily imply relatedness.

Our team at The University of Adelaide is seeking to change this using DNA data, which has the potential to greatly accelerate the pace of cave cricket species discovery. By comparing the genetic composition of the same genes among different populations, we can reconstruct their family tree backwards in time. This information not only allows us to accurately pinpoint which populations belong to new species—and therefore in potential need of tailored conservation efforts—but also offers a window into the group's biogeographic history.

Reconstructing the global family tree of cave crickets has suggested they originated on the supercontinent Pangaea around 150 million years ago, placing them in the Late Jurassic (Kim *et al.*, 2024; Beasley-Hall *et al.*, 2025).



Figure 3. Cave Crickets - Photo by Reiner Richter.

Perhaps the most exciting result of this research was discovering a striking amount of hidden cave cricket diversity concentrated in Australia. We found the Australian fauna consists of multiple, unrelated evolutionary lineages that each gave rise to species in South Africa, South America, and New Zealand before the break-up of Gondwana. These lineages, which we can think of as different “branches” in the evolutionary tree, contain at least five new genera and 15 new species—this increases Australia's biodiversity by over 50%. These numbers likely only represent the tip of the “biodiversity iceberg” for these animals, with many more known to exist in remote wet forest that haven't been sampled by biologists.

The next stage of our work on these valuable cave insects will focus on naming as many new species as possible and applying for their formal conservation listing. A more robust taxonomy of these animals will give us the best chance to protect them, and the cave ecosystems they support, long into the future.

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# Caves Conservation Australia

Clare Buswell

## Weebubbie Reserve. Western Australia

Back in April of 2025, I ran a national Zoom session to gather input from ASF members into the management of the Weebubbie Reserve on the Nullarbor. The ASF had been asked by the Mirning Traditional Lands Aboriginal Corporation (MTLAC), for our ideas on how it could be managed, what type of access to the cave and surrounding area would be sought by our members etc. The session was very productive with lots of solid management ideas discussed. I included those ideas in a submission to MTLAC for its Board to consider. It was wonderful to have the input from ASF members, and I thank those who contributed to this discussion.

## Kentbruck Windfarm. Victoria

This windfarm is attracting a great deal of public interest, with 25 days of public hearings set down from mid-May to mid-July. There will also be a site visit. The map below shows the extent of the development. The windfarm is set in a pine forest and on karst. Again, the ASF finds itself in the situation of providing information on the implications of building such infrastructure on limestone that does not necessarily provide safe anchorage, as well as addressing issues of habitat impacts on subterranean fauna, and that of the critically endangered Southern Bent-wing Bat.

What is of particular interest with this development is the level of public engagement that is both sought and encouraged by the Victorian Dept. of Transport and Planning. The company, Neoen Energy, is for obvious reasons, actively involved with this engagement.

However, contrast this with the situation in WA, where the public gets about three weeks to raise issues and the WGEH has provided little in the way of impact assessments documentation.

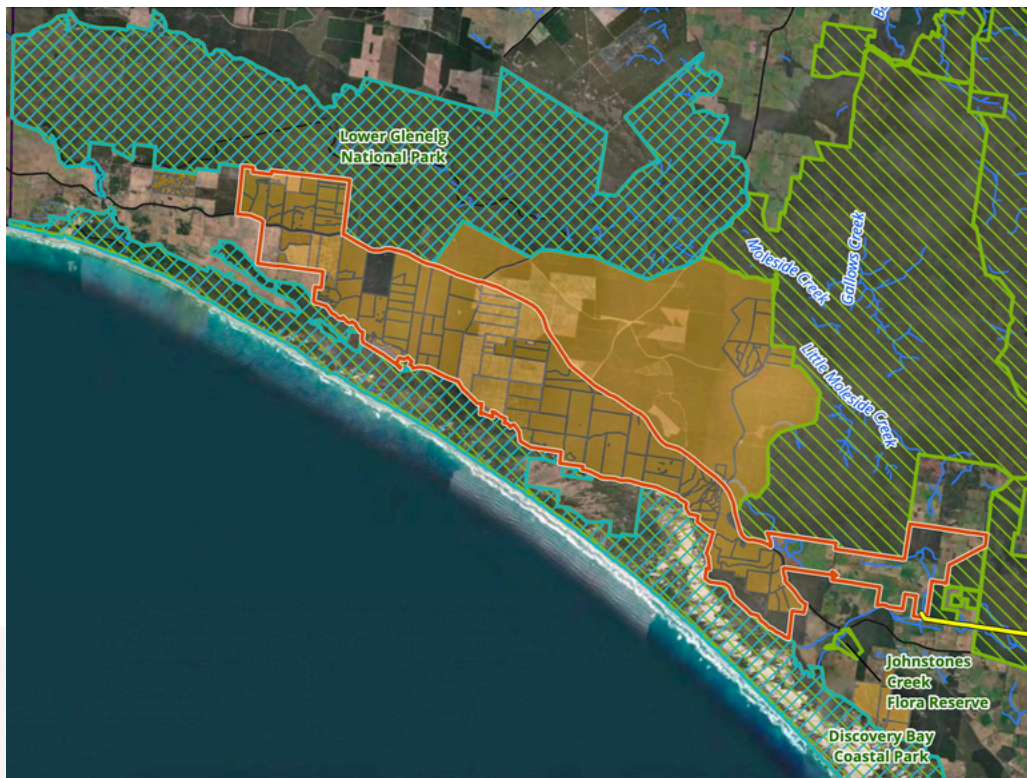
## Rawlinna Station. Nullarbor

Rawlinna is Australia's largest sheep farm, stocking somewhere between 30,000 to 70,000 sheep, over 1 million hectares. For the last three years or so, Rawlinna Station has been in the news as extensive flooding inundated much of the property, the owners Jumbuck Pastoral, sought a new owner and Twiggy Forrest bid for a stake in the property so as to extend his interest in renewables.

However, in March this year, 2025, the property was sold to Consolidated Pastoral Company, (CPC), a UK outfit owned by the Hands family. According to the *Weekly Times*,<sup>1</sup> CPC owns 4.2 million hectares of agricultural land in Australia, farming beef, and fodder crops in Queensland and the Northern Territory, and has interests in feedlots in Indonesia. It is rumoured that the purchase price of Rawlinna Station was around \$20 million, although this has not been publicly disclosed.<sup>2</sup> According to the CPC website, it has strong interests in environmental and social governance practices. It would do well for the ASF to contact the new owners.

[1] *Weekly Times*. AgJournal. April 2025. p. 19.

[2] <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-03-04/rawlinna-sheep-station-on-nullarbor-sold-to-uk-buyer-cpc/105008032>



The windfarm is sited within the area bounded by the red lines. Source: Environment Effects Bat Management Plan, 2025. Neoen Energy. p.11



### **Western Green Energy Hub**

This is now before the WA EPA for assessment. As the Chair of the Conservation Commission, I was asked to provide information concerning the landscape component of the development. The input from the ASF was welcomed by the WA EPA, as it recognised that it did not have any internal expertise in the area of karst to be able to adequately assess this project. We now wait until the WGEH people have replied to the WA EPA's assessments. This could take many months. I thank those who worked on this presentation to the WA EPA.

### **Arrowsmith Wind Farm, Western Australia**

It appears from numerous press releases that the Arrowsmith wind farm proponents, Infinite Green Energy (IGE), are in financial strife, with Administrators now assessing the situation. What impact this will have on the Arrowsmith development remains to be seen as the financial washup may well involve the sale of the Arrowsmith property. Whatever the case, the fact remains that not enough attention has been paid to the landscape values, nor has there been an assessment for the presence of unknown caves on the property. No LIDAR has been flown for example. Given the small size of this property and the large financial outlays involved, the cost of flying LIDAR over it is negligible by comparison.

### **ASF's National Heritage Listing of the Nullarbor**

Work on the ASF's application to nominate the whole of the Nullarbor for National Heritage listing has commenced. Ann McConnell has been appointed to write the application, and Sue White has been appointed as the ASF's Project coordinator to oversee the process. It is expected that the application will be completed by the end of this year.

I thank members for your generous donations as these have helped to get this process underway. However, the work involved to continue to explore, research and protect the Nullarbor requires considerable financial support. Again, I ask you all to donate to the Karst Conservation Fund which is supporting this project.

### **Koonalda Cave, South Australia**

The SA Department of the Environment and Water (DEW) has spent the time since March 2023 consulting with traditional owners, native title holders and the Dept. of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation (AAR), in relation to a \$400,000 Heritage Commission Grant. The grant was for research and security measures to be undertaken at Koonalda in the light of the serious damage done to the Aboriginal artwork in the cave.

The consultation undertaken by DEW was necessary, but it appears that AAR wants ministerial approval for any research that will impact, destroy, or disturb any Aboriginal heritage. For researchers like me, who wanted to take a number of water samples from the lakes of Koonalda, three of which are outside the heritage declared area of the cave, approval from the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Reconciliation is required. DEW failed to get these approvals, and unspent funds have now been returned to Canberra. It now is extremely doubtful if research will ever return to this site.

In the meantime, a Koonalda Cave management plan has been developed which is not available to the public and seems to have no relationship to the Nullarbor Parks Management Plan or its review. I have placed a copy of this management plan in the ASF library, and I can also supply a digital copy upon request.

I noted that in April this year, the South Australian Minister for the Environment, Dr Susan Close, recognised the importance of the Nullarbor as a landscape that needs national and world heritage status, not just the coastline of the Bunda cliffs<sup>3</sup>. The context for this statement was the announcement that security cameras have been placed around the doline of Koonalda Cave. This is almost three years after the damage to the artwork occurred.

### **Cave Conservation Australia Webinars**

The Webinars that I have run over the past 18 months are available on the Commission's website: <https://caveconservationaustralia.org/>.

The webinars include the ASF film on the values of the Nullarbor, *Nullarbor on the Line*, Professor John Webb's talk on the hydrology of the Nullarbor, "Water in an Arid Land", and a copy of the Power Point presentation by Nick White on the Twenty Years of VSA Exploration of the Nullarbor. Soon to be added will be Keir Vaughan-Taylor's webinar on the fight to save Yessabah Caves: "Winning in an Unfair System."

[3] [https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-03/koonalda-cave-security-upgrades-after-vandalism-sa/105126974?utm\\_source=abc\\_news\\_app&utm\\_medium=content\\_shared&utm\\_campaign=abc\\_news\\_app&utm\\_content=other](https://www.abc.net.au/news/2025-04-03/koonalda-cave-security-upgrades-after-vandalism-sa/105126974?utm_source=abc_news_app&utm_medium=content_shared&utm_campaign=abc_news_app&utm_content=other)



# Finding Hairygoat Hole

Stephen Fordyce

## Introduction

The legend of JF-15 Hairygoat Hole (a.k.a. HGH) is a longstanding part of Southern Tasmanian Caverneers (STC) folklore – a high prospect draughting cave in an interesting area, discovered over 50 years ago but then lost for nearly as long. The draughting slot at the bottom was less exciting than finding the next Khazad Dum (it was the heyday of early JF exploration) so the cave was abandoned. Successive generations tried hard to find it without success, but added large or small contributions to the knowledge pool from their trip reports and data.



Some of the area is thick forest – finger is pointing at a caver's light in a new discovery

Hairygoat Hole is right over the 4 km master cave gap between Niggly Cave and the resurgence at June Cave (and the puzzle was a worthy adversary), so in early 2024 I picked up the torch. It's a complicated area - there are about 50 tagged caves from different eras in a 150 m radius with a variety of terrain. A stupid amount of time went into reviewing old trip reports, plotting data from previous searches in QGIS and theorising. This was the first serious search effort taking advantage of 1 m resolution LIDAR imagery, which was also used to generate one metre contour lines.

It seemed appropriate that the best way to find Hairygoat Hole was to adopt the original technique that found it in the first place. The instruction manual for "Hairygoating" can be found in *Speleo Spiel* 51, and I would encourage would-be Hairygoaters to read it – among other things, it explains how hairy legs with shorts are necessary for detecting draughts. We consulted the manual and added a protocol that once Hairygoating commences, if you found a prospective cave, you must make an enthusiastic hairygoat noise.



Hairygoats across the ages (left: original 1970 illustration from *Speleo Spiel* 51, right: Henry at Hairygoat Hole)

The tradition of applying goat-related names to new finds that weren't Hairygoat Hole was continued, with "Hircine Hole", "Not This Goat", and "Just Kidding", joining the likes of "Bald Pig" (Bunty proclaimed at the time it clearly wasn't a hairy goat) and the less imaginative "Not HGH".



Some of the new finds were quite obvious



Hugh wore his adventuring hat, Liz opted for a scarf



## The Hairygoating

Through 2024 there were three trips, although two were on winter Sundays after epics the day before, so intelligence was not necessarily applied. We tried a few theories and combed systematically. We checked every entrance against Peter Shaw's photo (a key clue – he had found it in 2012 while scanning of slides, and it was of a cave close to Hairygoat Hole) and agreed there was only one reasonable match. A thorough search by five people along the ridge did not yield HGH, but we kept discovering new caves with tiny entrances, so a glimmer of hope remained.

Finally in February 2025 I went out for the 4<sup>th</sup> time (with Hairygoating veterans Henry and Kynan) to find Hairygoat Hole. On the way to our search area, we randomly found it! So we called it a day and went home before lunch. The end.



Kynan and Henry with Hairygoat Hole (at base of tree, tag visible next to Henry's face)

Ok, maybe just a little more. A brute force approach was planned for that fateful trip (and many future trips), with a metal detector so that we could find the tag even if it was buried or incorporated into a tree. And/or Arthur Clarke's crowbar (apparently left leaning against a tree at the entrance). To ensure we covered all ground systematically, we also had 4 kg of flour in a garden sprayer to show the detector coverage that session and kit to mark each tree. It was to be thorough, exhaustive, painstaking, and probably quite boring. It was also destined to be in the wrong place.

Before getting into that, we had a stupid little cave we hadn't bothered tagging on a previous trip. It was sort of on the way, so we made a slight detour and fanned out as usual. As we neared the target, I saw a little black hole at the base of a small tree. I went to have a look and was confused to see a fairly obvious tag – I knew there wasn't any known tagged cave here. The penny didn't drop until a few seconds after I read "15" on it. There was much excited yelling (and hairygoat noises) as we converged, and it became apparent that we'd finally found it. Everyone was very glad they had resisted the temptation to bail that morning!

The cave and tag were surprisingly obvious – easily visible from downhill, but completely obscured by the small tree from uphill, and not very visible from the sides. Kynan, Chris, and I had walked within 3 m of it in June; the July team with Ciara, Henry, Hugh and Liz 30-m south of it; and the January team with Ciara, Henry and Brendan 25 m north of it. We were deliberately taking different paths each time, so perhaps we were still destined to find it eventually by design rather than dumb luck.



The tag, in original state

The tag was only slightly obscured, but one of the fasteners had rusted out. So we replaced that with a new stainless one and some flagging tape, and left the old one. Henry went into the top of the first pitch to verify it was still there (it was) and we remarked that while the draught was significant (shorts and hairy legs without gaiters were used to gauge) it was not of the epic proportions we had perhaps expected.

Despite having left the car about 1 hr earlier, we were all a bit the worse for wear after adventures the previous day, so a unanimous and very fast agreement was made to rest on our laurels and go home early. That was almost as welcome as finding Hairygoat Hole! A return will definitely be made to rig, survey and push the bottom of the cave with modern technology – but ideally not until some other projects are finished.

We only got to bask in the glow of what would have been the biggest STC news of the year for about a week, before the achievement was comprehensively eclipsed by a major breakthrough in Niggly Cave. But that's another story.

### Acknowledgements:

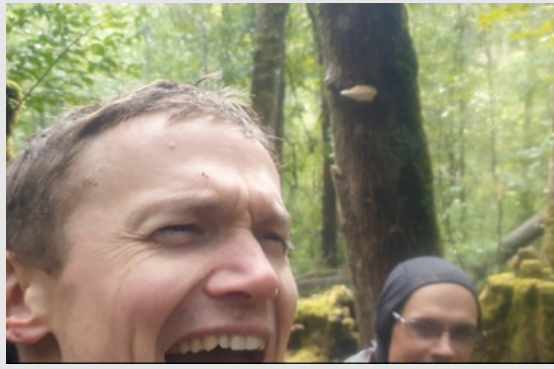
The 2024-25 hairygoaters were:

- Stephen Fordyce
- Henry Garratt
- Kynan Bonnice
- Ciara Smart
- Brendan Moore
- Chris Jewell
- Hugh Fitzgerald
- Liz Fitzgerald

Thanks to original hairygoaters Albert Goede and Peter Shaw who I pestered a lot.

And to hairygoaters across the ages for their efforts, reports and data, particularly Jeff Butt (dec), Dave Rasch and Alan Jackson.





Practising our Hairygoat calls

### A review of clues now the mystery is solved:

Contemporary descriptions “on the next ridge around from *Splash Pot*, in open terrain”

The ridge is a red herring, with Hairygoat Hole being 85-m from the ridge crest and to me it doesn't feel like being on one (perhaps it would feel different approaching via the original way from the side). The ground slope matches the 1970 map by PW Henley, and the “open terrain” descriptions match well.

### Peter Shaw's photo of a nearby cave

We agreed the only candidate for the photo was JF-500, and pretty certain. JF-500 is close to the crest and the bottom of a small but well-defined ridge and Peter remembered Hairygoat Hole being a short walk (approx. 100 m) uphill from there. The distance to Hairygoat Hole is 130 m in easy terrain, and Hairygoat Hole is uphill although also quite a bit of contouring around. This was the main clue that gave us hope and a fixed anchor point for the search, and it served us well.



The best picture I got of JF-500, alongside Peter's pictures (the resemblance is better when you're actually there)

### Arthur's crowbar

Arthur Clarke reported that he had left a short crowbar with orange paint over one third its length, by the entrance. The metal detector was pressed into service and the ground all around the entrance (and all the nearby trees) within a 15 m radius was checked – no crowbar.

### The cairn sandwich

A limestone cairn on a large fallen tree first reported by Dave Rasch, noted by Alan Jackson (another tree had fallen on and sandwiched it) and GPSed by us last July. It's quite high, on the crest of the ridge, and some distance from Hairygoat Hole.

It appears unrelated, I don't think it's very consistent with the yellow track (which more likely crosses the ridge lower down at a blaze tree), I would theorise it's just a remnant of old wanderings.

### The metal detector search area

This was from JF-500 up the ridge to the contact (approx. 170 m) and about 100 m wide centred on the ridge crest. Hairygoat Hole is about 35 m outside this search area. Maybe it would have become part of an extended search area using a radius around JF-500... eventually.



The old track marker tree with blaze (HGH tree in the background)

### Yellow track

References in trip reports indicated the “yellow track” went past Hairygoat Hole and was one of the ways to access it. I recently read further back in *Spiels* and found that in 1969 (SS38, p1) Albert Goede made the yellow track, and then it was subsequently used because it unwittingly led right past Hairygoat Hole. We had previously noted a possible blaze tree on the crest of the nearby ridge (JF-P2961) and I think that's probably part of the yellow track.

### Significant tree

A “significant tree” is mentioned in recollections by Stuart Nicholas (SS225), and a report in SS51 mentions that Hairygoat Hole was found (multiple times) by stepping the wrong side of a track marker tree. Well guess what – there's a weird little tree right next to the Hairygoat one and it has a blaze on the uphill side! Ties up that one very nicely.



### A NEW SPELEOLOGICAL TECHNIQUE.

A number of people from other clubs have expressed their surprise at the apparent ease with which we keep on finding new caves. Dark hints have even been made that this is due to some secret scientific knowledge as a result of the fact that our membership includes several geologists, one geomorphologist, and a hydro engineer.

Rather reluctantly we have therefore decided to make public the powerful technique we have evolved for the location of entrances to new caves. This technique, which involves close teamwork, is known to its initiates as "hairygoating". A promising area of limestone should be selected on the basis of geological and geomorphological characteristics and a large party induced to go there. From amongst their members they should elect a "hairygoat" who should have the following qualifications: a degree in the earth sciences, an unbalanced mind, and a guardian angel (prepared to work overtime). It is also very important for the "hairygoat" to wear shorts. It is equally important to appoint another member of the party who is not affected by mass hysteria to be given a large roll of marking tape and to be appointed as "keeper of the trail".

The "hairygoat" so appointed then casts his eye over the landscape for promising geomorphological signs of holes and starts running about excitedly screaming at intervals at the top of his voice "I've got another one! I've got another one!" This so affects most of the remainder of the party that they follow his example as they gradually reach a state of mass hysteria.

Scientifically controlled tests have shown that large numbers of holes can be discovered in a very short period of time while the "keeper of the trail"

ensures that their location will be safeguarded for future reference. Readers of our journals may be puzzled at this stage by the necessity of having a "hairygoat" with shorts, but this is essential to ensure quick selection of the most promising holes, which indicate their presence by inducing a cold breezy feeling up the legs.

Like all new techniques the method has some disadvantages. The life of an active "hairygoat" tends to be rather short, as fallen logs and unseen holes demand a heavy toll. It would be a good practice to appoint a deputy "hairygoat" who can take over immediately at the untimely incapacitation or disappearance of the principal "hairygoat" and maintain the desired level of mass hysteria necessary for the maintenance of a rapid discovery rate of new holes.

Since it is desirable for a "hairygoat" to have a degree in the earth sciences, and in view of the fact that there is already a critical shortage of trained geologists in Australia, there is a desperate need to step up the rate at which earth scientists are turned out by our universities. Karst morphology should also be given a much more prominent place in undergraduate syllabuses (syllabi?) than is the case at present since the value of a "hairygoat" is much increased by an intimate knowledge of karst terrain.

A(nonymous) H. Goat. B.Sc., F.M.H.S. (F.M.H.S. - foundation member of hairygoat society.)





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