




# UIS BULLETIN

Union Internationale de Spéléologie

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- 
- A photograph of a cave diver in a dark, cavernous environment. The diver is wearing a full diving suit, a mask, and a scuba tank. They are positioned in the lower right quadrant of the frame, swimming towards the left. The cave walls are rugged and rocky, with some stalactites visible. A bright light source from above creates a dramatic effect, with numerous rays of light (Tyndall effect) filtering through the water, illuminating the scene and highlighting the textures of the rock. The overall atmosphere is mysterious and adventurous.
- Events and expeditions supported by the UIS
  - The third International Cave Animal of the Year
  - 19<sup>th</sup> ICS: Register by January 31<sup>st</sup> to enjoy the maximum discount
  - Casa Italia: A new way to participate in the UIS congresses
  - Minutes of UIS Bureau meetings in August and October 2024
  - Alert: Cave bats in Australia and rare gypsum karst in Germany in danger  
*and much more ...*



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de Spéléologie

Founded in Postojna, Slovenia, 1965

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**Before submitting articles for the UIS Bulletin, please**

**CLICK HERE!**

**Deadline for submissions for the next issue (N° 67-1): June 10, 2025**

#### COVER PHOTO:

##### CAVE DIVER IN MEXICAN CENOTE

Author: Simone Villotti

Photo awarded second place by the audience of the Siphonia 2024 event

([see report on page 32](#))

#### ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDITOR FOR THIS ISSUE:

Ged CAMPION (UK, UIS Adjunct Secretary)

George VENI (USA, UIS Past President 2017-2022)



**REMEMBER: SAVE A TREE; DO NOT PRINT IF UNNECESSARY**

## Editorial

# DEDICATION AND COMMITMENT ARE THE KEYS TO COLLECTIVE SUCCESS

By Nivaldo Colzato (Brazil)

UIS Vice-President of Operations / UIS Bulletin Editor

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**D**ear speleologists, cavers, and cave lovers around the world, here we are with one more issue of the UIS Bulletin to bring you some of the main news from the UIS, its member countries and global speleology.

The beginning of the year is a good time to evaluate the year that is ended, remember achievements, challenges overcome, and lessons learned. Many people use this period to make a personal and professional assessment with the aim of setting new goals and improvements for the new year.

It is no different with the UIS. As we take a quick tour of the events of 2024, we will have good reasons to celebrate, as there were so many achievements and advances made by the Union.

At the beginning of May, for example, the UIS was officially appointed as a Category 1 member of the International Science Council (ISC), a prestigious appointment that grants the UIS the same rights as the other 45 international scientific unions. Following this successful trajectory, we saw the inclusion of UIS in the [ISC Geounions network](#) and the [International Standing Committee for Gender Equality in Science](#). Details of these achievements and their significance were reported in [issue 66-1](#) of the UIS Bulletin.

Whereas in the cases cited above, the UIS sought and achieved its own recognition by global bodies, its most relevant current efforts are not for itself, but rather in favor of caves, karst, and speleology as a whole. This is its initiative with UNESCO to declare September 13<sup>th</sup> as the “International Day of Caves and Karst.” In her column on the next page, UIS President Nadja Zupan Hajna presents more details of this project, its current status and the significant support it has received.

In the field of events and expeditions supported by the UIS, there is also reasons to celebrate. In 2024, the trend continued of increasing the number requests for UIS support, highlighting the name of the UIS as a collaborative union for the development of global speleology. Examples of this type of support, whether financial or institutional, are on pages [22](#), [27](#), [32](#), and [37](#) of this issue.

Looking at the positive balance of 2024, expectations are high for an even more promising year in 2025, as projects continue to grow, both within the UIS itself, through its Bureau and its many commissions, and by its member countries, which seek to advance speleology and the protection of caves and karst in their regions.

The third campaign, “International Cave Animal of the Year” ([page 16](#)), is an initiative of the UIS Commission on Biology and will have its major celebration at the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology (ICS), scheduled for July 2025 in Brazil.

Ready to host the UIS congress a second time, Brazil will join the USA as the only two countries that have had the privilege to host two ([page 45](#)).

Less than seven months before the event opens, the Organizing Committee (OC) continues to work hard, this moment on the layout and distribution of the facilities in the nearly 23,000 m<sup>2</sup> available at the Minascentro Convention Center, the event venue. The assembly is complex and involves professionals from engineering, decoration, painting, logistics, security, IT, communications, health, food, and other areas.

The 19<sup>th</sup> ICS website is being updated regularly. The rules, notices, and manuals are available with all requirements, deadlines, and detailed guidelines for participating in competitions, submitting papers, and other event activities. [Click here](#) to access these important documents.

Those who intend to present one or more papers, remember that the deadline for submission is **January 20**. Also, the deadline for registrations with a 75% discount is **January 31**. So register soon! Details on pricing and benefits are on [page 48](#) of this issue. Also, visit the congress website [www.speleo2025.org](http://www.speleo2025.org).

Everything is being prepared with great care and dedication to provide the participants the best facilities and organization as possible.

Whether organizing an ICS or any other event or speleological expedition, we must always value the people who are at the forefront of these initiatives. Because these are the type of people speleology needs: people who are dedicated to working, with enthusiasm, for the collective good; who place the good of the institution above building their personal reputation; who carry out this voluntary work with dedication and commitment, aware that they are there to give their best; who are willing to join speleological bodies to work, not just to enjoy the prerogative or status of the position they hold.

May speleology and the entities that represent it gain more people with this profile and these qualities in 2025. We will have even more reasons to celebrate another successful year.



## The President's Column

# TOGETHER FOR TOMORROW: ADVANCING CAVES AND KARST

By Nadja Zupan Hajna (Slovenia)

UIS President

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Looking ahead to 2025, I would like to highlight two significant events for the speleological community: the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology (19<sup>th</sup> ICS) in Brazil and the UIS proposal to UNESCO to establish an International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK). Both initiatives represent the essence of the UIS mission: to unite speleologists in the protection and promotion of our shared speleological heritage in an ever-evolving world. With collective effort, we can amplify our message for caves and karst and work toward a sustainable future for these irreplaceable landscapes.

If your country, organization, institution, or society has not yet endorsed the IDCK initiative (see below), please send me a letter of support as soon as possible. Furthermore, if you can encourage your National UNESCO Commission to support or be informed of the upcoming 2025 vote on the UIS proposal, your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

## 19<sup>th</sup> ICS

The 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology (ICS) is organized by the Brazilian Speleological Society (SBE) in collaboration with the National Center for Research and Conservation of Caves (ICMBio/CECAV). This congress gathers speleologists from around the world to present the latest research findings in cave and karst exploration and studies and to foster collaboration. We will also celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UIS, uniting our international community to share knowledge, make new connections, and strengthen both professional relationships and friendships.

Your participation in Brazil will enhance our shared commitment to speleology. Attending the congress is vital for reconnecting and maintaining personal connections among speleologists worldwide. It provides an invaluable opportunity to meet people from diverse regions and backgrounds, each bringing unique experiences and perspectives. I warmly invite everyone to participate if they can!



**August 2024:** Part of the UIS Bureau in front of the Clearwater Cave entrance, Gunung Mulu National Park, Malaysia.

**STANDING, LEFT TO RIGHT:** Mario PARISE, Nadja ZUPAN HAJNA, Mladen GARAŠIĆ, Zdeněk MOTYČKA, and José Ayrton Labegalini.

**LOWERED:** Isabella Serena Liso. PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE N. ZUPAN HAJNA

## INTERNATIONAL DAY OF CAVES AND KARST (IDCK)

As you may know, the International Union of Speleology (UIS), a member of the International Science Council (ISC), is working alongside the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO to prepare a proposal for establishing the International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK) on September 13. This proposal will be submitted to UNESCO in 2025.

The choice of September 13 carries deep symbolic meaning for UIS. On this day in 2021, caves and karst were officially presented for the first time at UNESCO headquarters in Paris—a historic moment in which UNESCO formally recognized the global significance of caves and karst landscapes.

September 13 is also unique as it does not overlap with any other international day, allowing full attention to raising awareness of caves and karst without competing

with other international days.

Importantly, this date does not favor any particular nationality or organization, as many countries and organizations already celebrate caves, karst, or notable speleologists on other dates.

In fact, hearing about caves and karst multiple times a year rather than just once is an added benefit, keeping these vital natural features in the global conversation.

I am working intensively, in close collaboration with the Slovenian National Commission for UNESCO, to gain the support of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia for this UIS initiative.

The backing of other National UNESCO Commissions, especially from countries where caves and karst are valued, will be crucial when it comes to voting on the UIS application. Ideally, we hope to secure letters of support from these commissions in advance, strengthening our position.

### DECLARATION

#### of Support for the UIS Initiative to Proclaim an International Day of Caves and Karst

Date: 12. August, 2024

Location: 5th Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

We, the participants at the 5th Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference, express our strong support for the initiative by the International Union of Speleology (UIS) to establish September 13 as the UNESCO International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK).

#### Global Significance of Caves and Karst:

Caves and karst landscapes are critical to the Earth's natural systems. They provide essential resources such as groundwater, sustain unique ecosystems, and preserve invaluable cultural and historical heritage. These environments are found across the globe and are integral to the well-being of over a billion people, including many who live in Asia, who rely on karst water resources and other ecosystem services provided by cave and karst landscape.

#### Support for UIS Initiative:

Proclaiming an International Day of Caves and Karst will elevate global awareness of these specific and vulnerable environments. It will promote their conservation, encourage scientific research, and foster international collaborations to ensure their sustainable management for future generations.

#### Call to Action:

We urge UNESCO to recognize September 13 as the International Day of Caves and Karst. This day would serve as a vital platform for educating the global community, inspiring protective measures, and celebrating the immense significance of caves and karst systems worldwide.



Prof. Dr. Nadja Zupan Hajna

International Union of Speleology (UIS), President



Prof. Dr. Eko Haryono

5<sup>th</sup>ATKC Organizers, UGM

List of participants at 5th Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference, Yogyakarta, Indonesia:

*Declaration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024,  
signed by 71 participants from 18 countries from 5 continents.*

I would like to emphasize once again that the UIS proposal to establish an International Day of Caves and Karst highlights their global importance:

**a)** Caves and karst systems provide essential natural resources, particularly water. They supply drinking water for around 1.2 billion people worldwide and play a crucial role in agriculture. These ecosystems are also invaluable for biodiversity, climate records, and geological history. Declaring an international day would help raise awareness about the fragility of these ecosystems, promoting better conservation practices and sustainable management, aligning with UNESCO's mission to protect natural heritage.

Increased awareness could help mitigate pollution risks and support climate action by protecting karst aquifers, which store vital groundwater.

An International Day of Caves and Karst would further encourage sustainable tourism and responsible practices that support local economies, as well as the preservation of caves as cultural and historical sites.

This day would also stimulate scientific research on speleology, karstology, geology, geomorphology, hydrology, climate and biodiversity, address environmental

challenges, and foster global cooperation among stakeholders dedicated to protecting caves and karst systems. By bringing together diverse interests, it would raise awareness and support for these often-overlooked natural resources, benefiting both the environment and the communities that depend on them.

**b)** For speleologists, an international day would offer a unique platform to share their expertise with a broader audience, emphasizing the scientific, cultural, and environmental value of caves and karst.

This observance would promote education, inspire further research, and strengthen collaboration between scientists worldwide.

It would also support initiatives that enable speleologists to engage in conservation projects aimed at protecting these environments from over-exploitation and degradation.

Important work is currently underway to secure letters of support for the application to UNESCO to proclaim the International Day of Caves and Karst.

The UIS has already received extensive international and national support for its initiative for UNESCO recognition, with 113 letters of endorsement from various organizations and individuals.



**August 2024:** Eko Haryono (Indonesia, in the center), Chair of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024, with UIS Bureau Members at the main auditorium of the event. **LEFT TO RIGHT:** Johannes **MATTES** (Secretary General/Austria); José **Ayrton LABEGALINI** (Past President 2001-2005/Brazil); George **VENI** (Past President 2017-2022/USA); Gerard **CAMPION** (Adjunct Secretary/UK); José-María **CALAFORRA** (Adjunct Secretary/Spain); Andy **EAVIS** (Past President 2005-2013/UK); Eko **HARYONO** (Conference organizer/Indonesia); Nadja **ZUPAN HAJNA** (President/Slovenia); Mladen **GARAŠIĆ** (Treasurer/Croatia); Mario **PARISE** (Adjunct Secretary/Italy); Marc **MENTENS** (Adjunct Secretary/Philippines); Zdeněk **MOTYČKA** (Vice-President of Administration/Czech Republic), and Nivaldo **COLZATO** (Vice-President of Operations/Brazil); *PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE N. ZUPAN HAJNA*

The list of supporters for the UIS initiative to proclaim an International Day of Caves and Karst by UNESCO can be categorized into six groups:

**1) UIS member countries:** Letters of support have been received from 31 member countries, listed alphabetically: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Canada, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Libya, Malaysia, Mexico, Morocco, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Vietnam.

**2) International organizations:** Support letters from key international organizations include: 1) IUCN WCPA Geoheritage Specialist Group; 2) IUCN WCPA GSG Caves and Karst Working Group; 3) International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing (ISPRS); 4) International Union for Quaternary Research (INQUA); 5) International Association of Hydrologists (IAH); 6) IAH Karst Commission; 7) International Union of Soil Sciences (IUSS); 8) International Association of Geomorphologists (IAG); 9) International Geographical Union (IGU); 10) International Association for the Conservation of Geological Heritage (ProGEO); 11) International Society for Subterranean Biology (SIBIOS); and 12) CaveMAB Network.

**3) Regional organizations:** Regional support from speleology, geology, and education organizations, including: 1) Asian Union of Speleology; 2) Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association (ACKMA); 3) European Speleological Federation (FSE); 4) European Federation of Geologists (EFG); 5) Association Krasopis (science & art), Dinaric Karst; and 6) European Environmental Bureau (EEB).

**4) National organizations, institutions, societies, faculties:** 74 letters from countries: Austria (1), Brazil (5), Canada (2), China (3), Croatia (7), Czech Republic (2), France (1), Indonesia (1), Iraq (9), Italy (22), Mexico (1), Romania (2), Serbia (1), Slovenia (11), Spain (2), USA (3), Venezuela (1).

**5) Indigenous Peoples:** While we have not received an official letter, we do have the support of the Haida people of Haida Gwaii, BC, Canada, which I personally received in early September as a representative of the IDCK initiative.

**6) Individuals:** Several individual supporters, including: conference declarations (the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024, Indonesia, and the 5<sup>th</sup> International meeting SOS Proteus, Slovenia), university professors from Iraq (3) and Croatia (1), a journal from the UK (1), and a Member of Parliament from Canada (1).

In advancing the IDCK proposal, we as speleologists are also confronting the challenges of a changing world, including climate change, conflicts, and the rise of populism, both globally and locally. Yet, we must continue to act as a united global voice for caves and karst.

## REGULAR WORK

In the second half of 2024, the UIS Bureau met twice. Our first meeting was held in person at the regular annual gathering in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on August 11, and the second via Zoom on October 16. During both meetings, we discussed current topics, details of which are available in the meeting minutes beginning on [page 52](#).

While in Java, we also participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024, delivering invited talks on conference topics and representing UIS. As part of our involvement, we collected signatures from attendees for the Declaration on the UIS IDCK initiative. We also spent valuable time in informal discussions as a Bureau and visited the beautiful karst landscape in Gunung Sewu, Java.

Before arriving in Java, some Bureau members visited the caves in Gunung Mulu National Park in Borneo, Malaysia, guided by Andy Eavis and in collaboration with the park administration. The caves and karst there are truly incredible, and I thoroughly enjoyed exploring them. I also delivered a talk titled “What is Karst?” to park staff, tourists, and other members of the public.

In 2024, I registered the UIS in the Slovenian Portal for Publishers and set up a new user account. This registration provided UIS with an ISBN for the electronic publication of the Slovenian and Ukrainian translations of the Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection and will also allow UIS to obtain ISBNs for future electronic publications.

Finally, I wish you all a wonderful New Year filled with joy, discoveries, and many memorable moments in caves.



**September 2024:** Searching for caves with locals in Haida Gwaii, Canada. PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE N. ZUPAN HAJNA

# UIS BUREAU MEETING 2024

## Activities in Malaysia and Indonesia

By Marc Mentens (Philippines)

UIS Adjunct Secretary

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As every year, the UIS Bureau held its annual in-person meeting at a different location around the globe. While the Bureau normally meets every three months via Zoom, this annual meeting provides an invaluable opportunity for face-to-face discussions and collaboration. In recent years, these meetings have taken place in Le Bourget-du-Lac, France (2022), during the 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology, and Curitiba, Brazil (2023). This year, the choice fell on Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The decision to hold the meeting in this place was related to Yogyakarta's role as host of the **5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024**, an important conference of the Asian speleological community. The UIS Bureau held its annual meeting at previous editions of this conference, in 2004 at its first edition, held in Hanoi, Vietnam, and the third edition in 2019 in Bohol, Philippines. This also shows the longer support of the UIS.

For 2024, Bureau members traveled from all parts of the world, with some taking a journey of over 30 hours, while others traveled a shorter distance. Prior to the meeting in Yogyakarta, Andy Eavis proposed combining this trip to Asia with a visit to Gunung Mulu National Park in Borneo, Malaysia. Andy, who has led numerous expeditions to and continues working on projects in this region, suggested this side trip to explore the park's extraordinary caves.

The visit to Mulu was an unforgettable experience. The breathtakingly beautiful caves were a highlight and the group stayed for four days in the national park's centrally located accommodation. The program included both short excursions and extended trips into the caves, allowing the group to fully enjoy the stunning karst landscapes of the region.

After the visit to Mulu, the Bureau members traveled on to Yogyakarta via different routes. The Bureau meeting was held on August 11, with participants attending both in person and online to ensure broad participation. Various important topics and projects were discussed and important decisions were made. The minutes of this productive meeting are on [page 52](#) of this bulletin.

Following the meeting, we attended the Transkarst 2024 event as representatives of UIS. The program, organized by our Indonesian colleagues and led by Dr. Eko Haryono, was very appealing and well structured, offering numerous presentations and opportunities for discussion. It provided a platform for the local speleological community to present their projects and raise questions.



Mulu Research Centre, where the UIS team stayed during the four days of visiting some of fantastic caves in the region.  
 PHOTO MARC MENTENS



Carbonate rock massif with the monumental entrance of Deer Cave in the background. The geological and climatic characteristics of the region led to the formation of huge underground voids as well as cave systems hundreds of kilometers long.  
 PHOTO NIVALDO COLZATO



Wooden boat used by Gunung Mulu National Park to transport tourists to access some of local caves. PHOTO NIVALDO COLZATO





UIS Bureau members at the river gallery of the Clearwater Cave. The almost 6 hours traverse begins at the Cave of the Winds and ends at the resurgence of this river. With more than 220 km of development, this cave system is the 8<sup>th</sup> longest in the world. PHOTO MARC MENTENS



As part of the post-congress excursion, the Bureau members visited the fantastic 9<sup>th</sup> century Hindu Trimurti Prambanan complex of temples in Yogyakarta region. PHOTO ARCHIVE NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA

Among other good results of the event, signatures were collected from attendees supporting the Declaration of the UIS International Day of Caves and Karst (IDCK) initiative and had engaged in valuable informal discussions as a Bureau.

As part of the congress excursions, we explored the magnificent karst landscapes of Gunung Sewu on Java, a UNESCO Global Geopark. The combination of scientific exchange, field research and community engagement made this year's meeting and associated activities a great success and an enrichment for all participants.



Participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024 gathered at the entrance of the Faculty of Geography UGM, Yogyakarta, the venue of the event. PHOTO ARCHIVE NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



Prof. Eko Haryono—left, President of the Organizing Committee of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference—and UIS President Nadja Zupan Hajna showing the letter of support signed by the attendees of the event for the Declaration of the UIS International Day of Caves and Karst initiative. PHOTO ARCHIVE NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA





# France H A B E Prize 2024

## *Prix France H A B E 2024*

## THE WINNER

By Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns (Belgium)

President of the UIS Karst and Cave Protection Commission

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**T**his year, although very different, the subjects addressed by the candidates were treated by following a wide range of options such as raising awareness of caving, the protection and conservation of caves and karst environments, the concomitance between exploration results and scientific research, education, and tourism without forgetting to identify ways to perpetuate their objectives.

The members of the jury of the 2024 France H A B E Prize rated each submission using an evaluation grid covering relevance, presentation, interdisciplinarity, photography, scientific content, readability, and originality.

They unanimously decided to award the 2024 France H A B E Prize to the monograph project **“La Magne souterraine - Le système Wuinant-Haminte et autres phenomena karstiques de la vallée de la Magne”** (Belgium), an important team work represented by Paul De Bie.

The winner is rewarded with an amount of €300 and speleological equipment offered by the company RESSEG (\*).



The Jury congratulates the other participants for their dynamism in speleology and their investment in the protection of caves and karst.

The 2024 winner's report begins on the next page.

### ORIGIN OF THE PRIZE

The France H A B E Prize has been awarded since 2013 by the Karst and Cave Protection Commission of the International Union of Speleology (UIS).

The prize is named in memory and honor of Dr. France H A B E (†10/12/1999) of Slovenia (Yugoslavia), who among his other many accomplishments served as President of the UIS Protection Department (1973-1997).

The aim of this prize is to promote the protection of karst and caves for future generations. Their natural heritage is a proven source of increasingly rich information about the history of our planet and humanity, enabling people to act more thoughtfully, effectively and sustainably for the future of our karstic environment.



PHOTO: ARCHIVES KARSTOLOGIA 35

## FRANCE H A B E PRIZE 2025

The Prize will be awarded again in 2025. The Jury will review the applications and forward its decision to the ISU Bureau.

The winner of the 2025 France H A B E Prize will be announced at the UIS Awards Ceremony to be held during the 19<sup>th</sup> International Speleological Congress in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, from 20 to 27 July 2025. All information on the prize rules can be found at:

<https://uis-speleo.org/index.php/karst-and-cave-protection-commission>

## CAVE AND KARST PROTECTION / FRANCE HABE PRIZE 2024: THE WINNER



# THE WUINANT-HAMINTE SYSTEM

## *History, conservation, and management*

By Paul De Bie & Francis Polrot (Belgium)

(Wuinant Collective)

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### A SHORT HISTORY

**D**iscovered in 1955, the Trou Wuinant (Trooz, Belgium) was essentially a 40 m deep shaft. At the foot of the shaft, an underground stream could be followed upstream for a few dozen metres before arriving at a sump.

The upstream sump, 40 m long, was passed in 1984 by a solitary caver, who remained very discreet in his comments. After a second, shorter sump he explored a big and beautiful gallery for a considerable distance, but unfortunately, he died 2 years later before being able to show his beautiful discovery to other divers.

It was in 1987, that a handful of divers felt the desire to follow in his footsteps and continue the exploration of the Wuinant gallery. It must be said that the first sump (40 m long) did not have a good reputation,

it had caused the death of a caver in 1971, and it begins with a few very narrow passages, in water that quickly becomes muddy and foul-smelling due to the ingress of polluted water from the Magne River.

In 1987 and 1988, a small team of experienced cave divers continued the exploration, reaching an end after nearly 1300 m in the most upstream part of the cave.

They surveyed and published their discovery, but the difficult access remained a major obstacle and the large gallery of the Wuinant was therefore not often visited, and this is clearly noticeable.

**ABOVE PHOTO:** *Cleaning muddy handprints with a brush and a pressurized garden sprayer. PHOTO BY PAUL DE BIE*

It is an active streamway, with relatively few calcite deposits on the ground, but an abundance of formations located on the walls or hanging from the ceiling, sufficiently far away from visitors. There is therefore little damage due to muddy feet or hands.

On both sides of the Wuinant river there are beautiful sediments, clay banks, sandy soils and gravel accumulations. The regular rise in water has erased every footprint, and everything seems “pristine.” Some stalagmitic formations are adorned with a rare phenomenon: vermiculations (leopard spots). These are extremely fragile, since they are composed of wet mud, and so care must be taken to not wipe them off accidentally.

The underground landscape is very diverse, upstream most of the speleothems are pure white, but downstream they are black as night, because of a thin layer of manganese deposited by the water.

We can conclude that the Wuinant has retained 95% of its original beauty!

## THE HUNT FOR A DRY ENTRANCE

The (old) survey—though not precise—showed that the most upstream parts of the cave were close to the surface, in an area with several sinkholes: it is here that the water from the Wuinant river originates. The Magne River sometimes disappears totally in many sinks in the riverbed.

An upstream access could be very well possible here and for decades, many cavers from different clubs tried their luck digging in these sinkholes. This led to some minor discoveries (such as the sinkhole of the Gué de Saint Hadelin) but no physical connexion with the Wuinant. One of the problems was the imprecision of the survey of the Wuinant gallery that made it impossible to know for sure if the digging work was going in the right direction!

As from 2017, a few divers returned to the Wuinant gallery to resurvey the most upstream zone, and to reposition the old survey by doing a few radio locations. To their surprise they noticed a significant drop of the water level in the sumps, and they could start dreaming of finally visiting the mythical Wuinant gallery without having to use diving equipment (note: this drop of water levels is probably the result of a few consecutive dry years, but also because of heavy pumping of the groundwater in a nearby quarry).



*The Black Widow, a formation blackened by manganese deposits.*  
PHOTO BY PAUL DE BIE



*A speleothem covered with rare leopard spots.* - PHOTO BY PAUL DE BIE



→  
*Freediving the sumps remained a risky business.*  
PHOTO BY JACK LONDON



*The 40 m shaft of Trou Wuinant.*  
PHOTO BY AUL DE BIE



*The Wuinant gallery, still beautiful after all these years.*  
PHOTO BY PAUL DE BIE

The 40 m long first sump had now changed into a succession of short sumps that could be freedived, and some low ducks with a few centimetres of air. With this was a tricky, if not to say dangerous undertaking, but nevertheless in 2019, a team of cavers from different clubs resumed the post-siphon explorations. Over 25 times they freedived the sumps! They discovered vast extensions (the Flair network and Léopard network) and made a very precise and complete new survey of the cave, which made it possible to locate more precisely the upstream zone of the gallery, near the sinkhole of the Gué de Saint Hadelin. The confirmation that this sinkhole was indeed very close to the underground Wuinant river, re-motivated us to search every centimeter of terrain.

And so, a project started that same year on the right bank of the Magne River, that of the “Trou de la Haminte.” After 80 sessions of unblocking work—started with a crowbar (haminte in Walloon)—the connection with the Wuinant gallery was made in September 2020.

Freediving the sumps remained a risky business, so with the new entrance it was now possible to access the cave through a “dry” (but quite narrow) access, which was so much safer than having to (free) dive through the sumps. With the creation of this dry access to the practically unspoiled and extremely decorated Wuinant gallery, came the great responsibility to preserve this beautiful underground landscape (which is really exceptional for Belgian caves), and to manage the access in a sensible manner.

## CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION

The Trou Wuinant itself, i.e. the 40 m shaft and the river up to the first upstream siphon, was declared an Underground Cave of Scientific Interest (CSIS) by the Belgian Government in 2001, to ensure its long-term protection. A gate was installed in 2007, 6 m from the entrance. It allows air exchange, and allows bats and small animals to pass through.

In 2019, from our very first visit to the big post-sump gallery, we were aware that we would have to mark out a route to limit the damage. And once the “dry access”—the connection with the Haminte—had been made, we knew the cave would be visited much more frequently, so we immediately decided to try to preserve the beauty of this network.

During all further exploration of the cave, we tried to use the same trails as our predecessors, in order not to leave footsteps in areas that were still untouched. When walking or crawling on calcite floors was inevitable, we always removed our boots, gloves or coveralls.

The cave being really muddy, it was sometimes extremely difficult to continue the exploration without damage and in such cases, we preferred not to go on. We also made several artificial climbs and systematically, we had to start the climb in the muddy riverbed. So, we carried spare suits and clean SRT-gear with us, or made the climbs only dressed in clean underwear or undersuits.

Our muddy boots had to be taken off at a strategic moment: when reaching the pristine calcite deposits that awaited us inevitably at the top of each climb!

The protection work was threefold: first, trail delineation by the installation of markings, then the cleaning of the historical pollution and finally, the installation of the Haminte gate. With that, both sides of the Wuinant were secure.

Note: in the year 2024, the water in the sumps rose again to the original level, creating an extra and natural protection.

**The trails are marked** with electric fence wire: a nylon rope 3 mm in diameter, reinforced with a stainless-steel metal wire, unbreakable and visually not disturbing at all. This wire is stretched between short fiberglass sticks (diameter 8 mm) planted or drilled in the ground, or between stainless steel eye screws fixed in the rock walls with a dowel.



The upstream entrance, Trou de la Haminte. PHOTO BY JACK LONDON



Climbing in a clean undersuit. PHOTO BY PAUL DE BIE



It was soon obvious that we had to mark out a route. Picture taking during our first visit by Paul De Bie.

Seven 400 m rolls of electric fencing wire and some 250 fiberglass sticks were used to mark a trail of about 1300 m on both sides. It took many people no less than seven days of post-sump work (because all this was done before “La Haminte” was connected to the Wuinant gallery). The markings follow a logical path, mainly in the riverbed, so as not to damage the beautiful sediments of the riverbanks.

Their aim is to confine human impact to areas that are already impacted, to keep visitors at a safe distance from speleothems, and to prevent new and inappropriate routes.

The other major work was the **cleaning of the formations** in the upstream area (historical pollution dating from the 80s, as a result of the search for an upper entrance to this area by divers of the time). We spent several days trying to brush off muddy hand- and footprints or remove them with 10-liter garden sprayers.

The results were not always satisfactory, as some traces of mud (sometimes 30 years old!) had already become too deeply embedded in the porous calcite. In a few cases, a handprint that could not be easily removed, remained there to serve as an example for future visitors.

Finally, on the Haminte side, a solid steel **gate** was installed by a caving mason. Like the door gate of

the Wuinant, it is padlocked. Another gate, of the camouflage type, was designed and built by the same caver who skilfully inserted stones from the local rock into the frame: this gate is almost invisible.

As far as the behavior of the visitors is concerned, during all our work, we have naturally followed the ethical code of caving and ensured that each visitor behaves in the same way. We do not tolerate leaving any waste underground, such as food packaging and waste induced by unclogging operations. Everyone is using electric lights for decades and dead batteries - when we still use them - are imperatively recovered. The use of carbide lighting is strictly forbidden. This behavior is automatic and obvious to all of us.

Finally, sustainable management was put in place. The network is closed on both sides by doors, visits are possible under certain conditions.

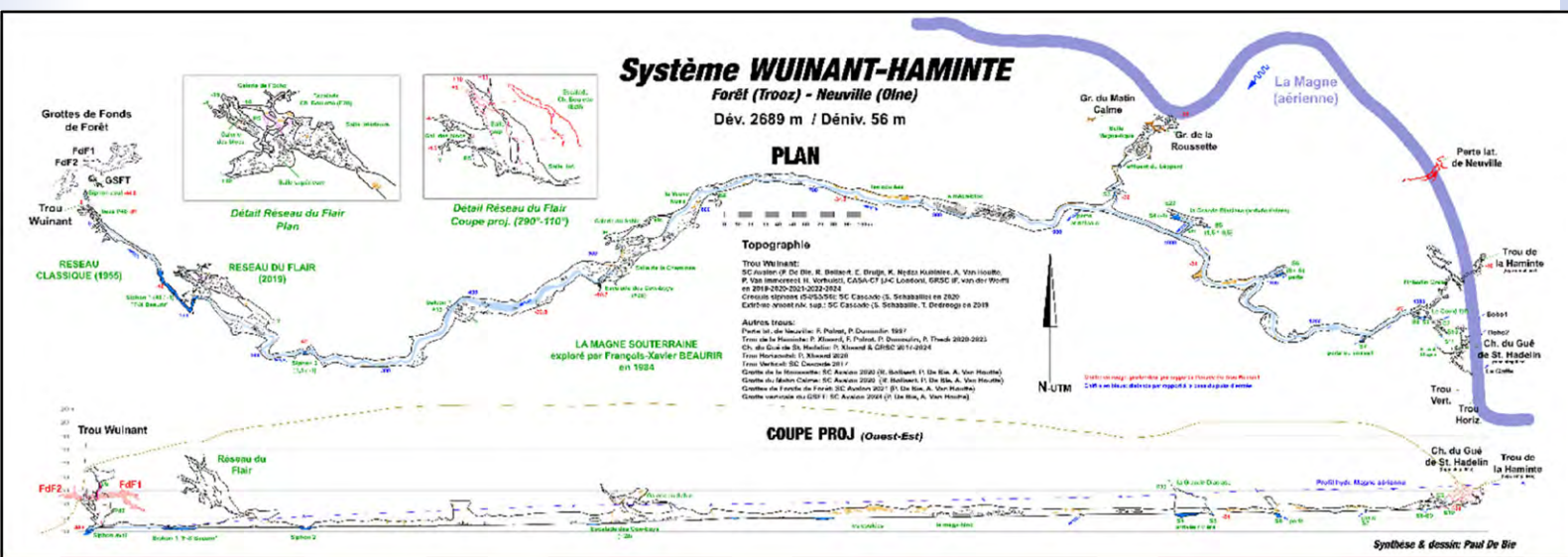
The access regulations limit the number of people per visit and require the presence of a member of the “Wuinant team.” Visitors must be experienced cavers, knowing how to progress in fragile environments. Two areas remain prohibited: the Léopard network and the most upstream network. They are of little interest, narrow, very muddy and too difficult to visit without causing damage.



Installing 2,600 m of marking wire took us many days.  
PHOTO BY PAUL DE BIE



All along the streamway, a trail is marked with fence wire, to protect speleothems and river banks. PHOTO BY STIJN SCHABALLIE



The new survey of the Wuinant-Haminte system

These measures are intended to be conservatory while allowing young cavers to see and understand the need to protect the cave environment, so they can one day take over.

**THE PUBLICATION**

During 2024, six authors worked together to write a high-quality, 140-page monograph: *La Magne Souterraine – le système Wuinant-Haminte et autres phénomènes karstiques de la vallée de la Magne*” (The Underground Magne – the Wuinant-Haminte system and other karst phenomena of the Magne valley by Paul De Bie (SC Avalon - VVS), Geert De Sadelaer (SC Cascade - VVS), Patrice Dumoulin (GRSC - UBS), Jean-Claude London (C7 - UBS), Francis Polrot (GRSC - UBS), Pol Xhaard (GRSC - UBS).

In this publication, beautiful photos take an important place, which brings a positive visibility of caving, a testament to the little-known heritage of the site, and also to its vulnerability.

The book relates not only the history of 65 years of speleological exploration in the Magne valley, but it also describes the cave system in detail, and focusses on its protection and conservation.

Dozens of unedited surveys, sketches and maps are important to complement the text as well as possible. We wanted this text to be exhaustive and lively, serious, but also leaving its share of anecdotes. While it provides conclusions, it also highlights points that remain to be clarified, particularly in hydrogeology and biospeleology.

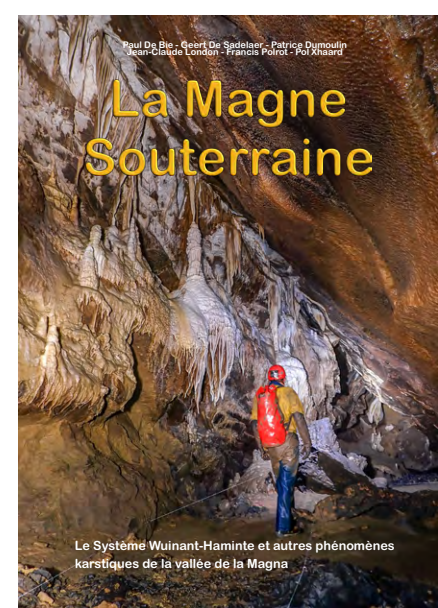
We have called on scientists: geologists, hydrogeologists, mineralogists. We also found some witnesses of the old research and rummaged through old documents (archives, articles, books). The data collected allowed us to propose the story of a collective human adventure, complemented by an approach to the network’s environment and its history.

We wanted to make our work available to everyone, also addressing the various authorities who could have a role to play in the best possible management of the site, for example how to improve the quality of water upstream of the system.

We hope that this publication will motivate cavers and scientists to continue the exploration and the study of this fascinating cave system...

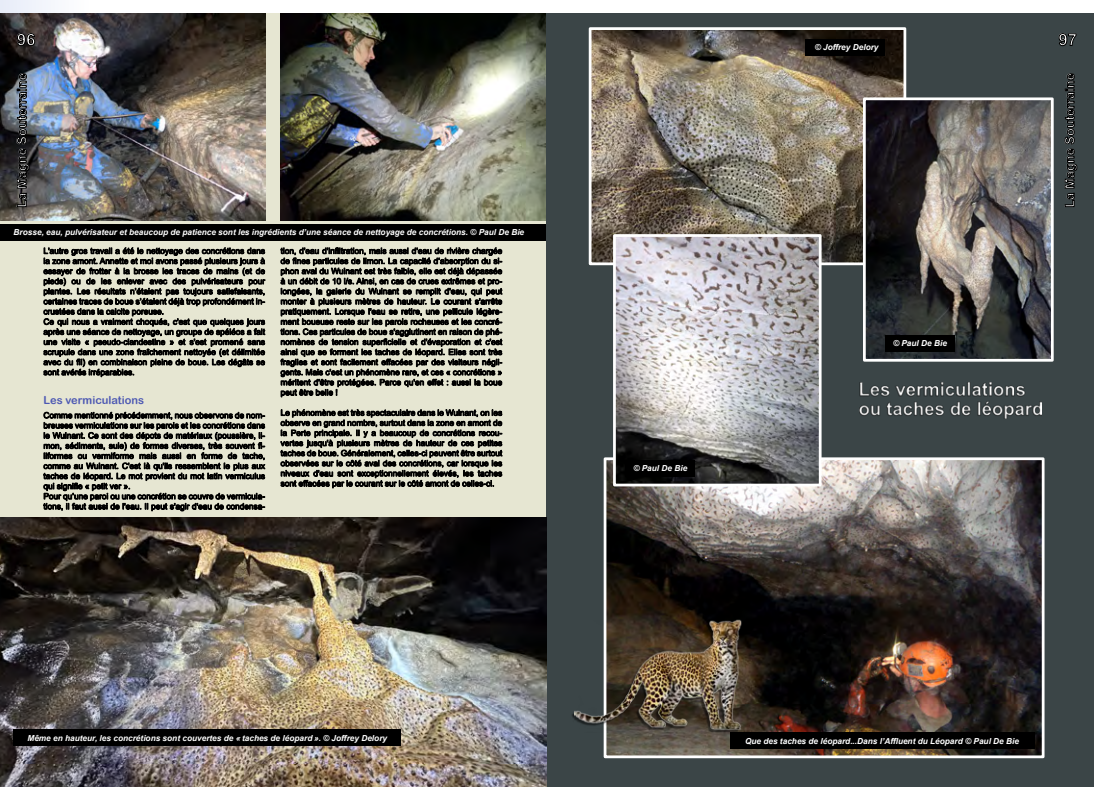


Location of the cave.  
ILLUSTRATION BY FRANCIS POLROT



Cover pages of the 2024 monography.

Finally, we would also like to highlight the exemplary collaboration between speleologists from different clubs (SC Avalon, SC Cascade, GRSC, Continent 7, ...) and that of both Flemish and Walloon regions and federations (Federation of Flemish Speleologists and Union Belge de Spéléologie).



Sample pages from the 2024 monography.

PROTECTION OF CAVE FAUNA

# THIRD INTERNATIONAL CAVE ANIMAL OF THE YEAR:

## *Lepidoptera - butterflies and moths!*

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**A**s part of the International Year of Caves and Karst 2021 (IYCK), UIS had announced the first International Cave Animal of the Year in 2021: **cave beetles**. The IYCK campaign was prolonged due to COVID and the second Cave Animal of the Year was declared: **bats**.

Projects in many countries have raised worldwide attention on the little-known zoological diversity and importance of subterranean habitats, and thus contributed to global awareness for the urgent need for cave protection.

For this reason the UIS Biology Commission has decided to launch an International Cave Animal all 4 years within the frame of the International Congress of Speleology (ICS).

For the ICS in Brasil 2025 the winner is:

**Lepidoptera - butterflies and moths!**

Butterflies and moths are regular inhabitants of caves, either as adults spending winter or summertime underground, or as larvae feeding on guano in tropical or

subtropical areas. In terms of species numbers, Lepidoptera represent the largest order of plant-eating animals. Currently, about 160,000 species have been described, but it is estimated that there are actually 500,000 species of butterflies on Earth. About 1,000 new species are described each year.

In a publication in the International Journal of Speleology 2021, Moog et al. discuss if butterflies and moths are responding to climate warming by their increasing use of caves. (<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=2361&context=ijs>)

So, it may be very interesting to take a closer look at the various species of Lepidoptera from the speleological point of view.

To be part of the project each participating country may choose a regionally occurring cavernicolous butterfly or moth species and present it to the public and the authorities as “International Cave Animal of the Year.” Regional cave animal of the year campaigns, however, may choose other species.



Interview with cave animals in the show cave Wendelsteinhöhle, Germany.  
FOTO PETER HOFMANN



GERMANY: In the brightly coloured peacock butterfly *Aglais io*, the underside of the wings is inconspicuously brown in colour. PHOTO KLAUS BOGON



ITALY: *Triphosa dubitata* in copulation - Barma Cave of Brignola Cuneo, Italy. Altitude 2,045 msl. PHOTO ENRICO LANA



Information on the different species of the first International Cave Animal of the Year can still be found at the UIS website at IYCK caves, and cave fauna.

<https://web.archive.org/web/20231011222327/http://uis-speleo.org/index.php/2020/11/16/international-cave-animal-of-the-year-2021/>

Actions for Third International Cave Animal of the Year: Caves as Shelters of Life—Cave Conservation and Biodiversity Awareness:

**1. Raise Global Awareness of Cave Biodiversity:** Promote the unique biodiversity within caves, sharing visuals and stories through social media, websites, and local groups. Educate the public and policy-makers through talks, exhibitions, and accessible materials on the role of caves in sustaining rare species.

**2. Strengthen Conservation Policies:** Advocate for laws that protect caves as natural habitats, supporting efforts to establish protected statuses and conservation enforcement.

**3. Launch Educational and Outreach Programs:** Develop materials and activities emphasizing “caves as shelters of life” to reach schools, libraries, and local communities. Include information on responsible caving and the impact of human activities on cave ecosystems.

**4. Support and Engage in Scientific Research:** Partner with universities and research organization to advance studies on cave biodiversity and ecosystems. Encourage your club and caving friends to contribute observations and data, supporting conservation research through citizen science.

**5. Fundraise for Conservation Efforts:** Initiate fundraising campaigns and seek partnerships with eco-friendly organizations to support conservation, restoration, and research projects.

**6. Promote Sustainable Caving Practices:** Establish guidelines for low-impact caving that include limited visitation, waste reduction, and safe entry practices. Distribute a code of conduct for cavers to minimize ecological impact.

**7. Foster Collaboration:** Work with us for the activation of the global caving community and approach environmental organizations to share knowledge, resources, and strategies for preserving cave biodiversity.

**8. Set a goal for the International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22, 2025) Celebration with ideas for:**

**a. Global “Biodiversity in Caves” Celebration:** Hold live-streamed cave tours, expert talks, and social media campaigns showcasing cave life, using the hashtag #CavesShelterLife.

**b. Community Exhibits and Clean-Up Events:** Set up informative displays in museums or parks and organize clean-ups around cave areas, involving local communities and schools.

**c. Cave Conservation Pledge:** Encourage people to commit to protecting caves and their ecosystems by signing a conservation pledge, promoting long-term engagement.



**GERMANY:** *Alucita hexadactyla* (twenty-plume moth) is a “micromoth” of the many-plumed moth family (Alucitidae). Its wingspan is 14–16 mm. PHOTO KLAUS BOGON



**BRAZIL:** *Hypena sp.* on a root inside the Angá dos Negros Cave, Pains, Minas Gerais, Brazil. PHOTO RODRIGO LOPES FERREIRA



**SWITZERLAND, August 2022:** Particularly in summer, moths of species that usually live outside caves can also be found inside like *Colostygia olivata*, in Chorbalm. PHOTO CHRISTAN LÜTHI

Cavers around the world, let’s protect these natural underground shelters that sustain rare life forms! Together, through advocacy, research, and sustainable practices, we can preserve these ecosystems for future generations. Join the movement to celebrate caves as vital refuges of biodiversity—Share your Cave Animal of the Year campaign and experiences with the UIS Biology Commission ([b.w.vogel@gmx.de](mailto:b.w.vogel@gmx.de)) and during the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS in Brazil 2025.

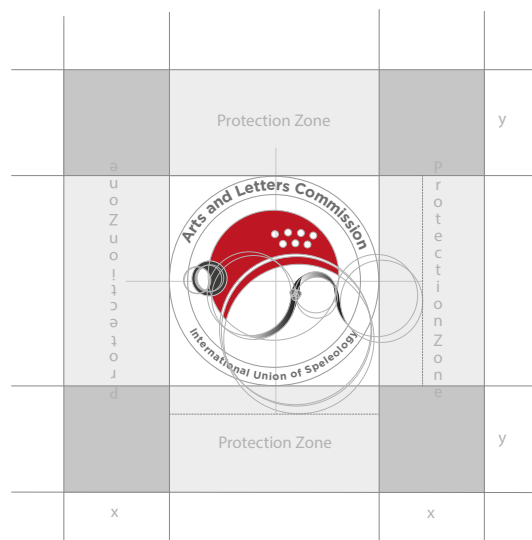
Every effort counts!



# Arts and Letters Commission

## *Presents the new logo*

By Taraneh KHALEGHI (Austria)  
President UIS Arts and Letters Commission  
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It is a great pleasure to announce that the Arts and Letters Commission now has its own official logo, marking an important step in establishing our visual identity within the International Union of Speleology (UIS). This logo symbolizes the creativity, discipline, and passion that merge arts and speleology.

### LOGO DESCRIPTION

The logo is enclosed in a circular format to denote unity and inclusivity. At its center lies a stylized red caving helmet, signifying the essence of speleology while emphasizing symmetry and balance. The clean and modern typography follows the contour of the outer circle, to provide a professional look.

The limited color palette of red, black, gray, and white conveys clarity and focus. The red helmet is the focal point, symbolizing passion and dedication, while the neutral tones of black and gray add depth. The negative space around the helmet keeps the design visually striking and recognizable.

Elements such as the headlamp and helmet strap highlight the functional tools and movement of caving in a minimalistic manner, blending abstraction with clarity. The design balances simplicity and symbolism, creating a visual identity that reflects the Commission's mission.



## SPELEOLOGICAL MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

# STUDY ON THE CUBAN “OSITO” DESCENDER”

By

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## INTRODUCTION

The **Osito**, is a descender made with materials that can be found almost anywhere, it was used in Cuba for decades to explore caves with very good results. Its shape is similar to the branded descender known as the “figure 8” but with the addition of two soft-tipped ears. (Fig 1).

Starting with the descriptions obtained from interviews in Cuba with those who used it and one photograph, we gave ourselves the task in the UIS Materials and Techniques Commission of replicating the descender using the same materials described by the Cubans, until finding the right configuration to create a new product.

It was then designed again based on the photograph that was sent to us, a sample was printed in a 3D model, then the metal casting was duplicated to create a new Osito similar to the original in the photograph. The resulting duplicated equipment was used and tested in a laboratory to verify its resistance and with the result of these studies a technical manuscript was created.

## HISTORY

The Materials and Techniques Commission of the International Union of Speleology (UIS) has among its projects the study and survey of hand-crafted equipment made with ingenuity, arising from the need of speleologists to explore caves. Among the pieces of equipment that have been studied is the so-called “Cuban Osito” which is a “double-eared” descending equipment, hence its name.

It was handcrafted using pieces of aluminum used in pressure cookers and pieces of cast Russian motorcycle pistons, copper and then cast in a mold at the

Mechanical Plant factory in the city of Santa Clara, Villa Clara Province, Cuba.

The Osito was widely used and has been the companion of a whole generation of Cuban speleologists, who used it in various environments and humid conditions, in muddy conditions and subjecting it to temperatures of 34°C in summer and 4°C in winter. Taking into consideration this data, questions arise as to how safe such home crafted equipment is. According to research, there was never an accident due to breaking failure of the descender device.

But the question arises of knowing for sure, what is the long-term durability of the Osito as far as the results with the safety standards of mountaineering equipment used today.



**Fig. 1:** The original Osito descender.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HAYDÉE GONZALEZ

## METHODOLOGY

It all began with an original photograph of the descender (*fig. 1*), with the aim of replicate it, test it, create a technical manuscript that included recommendations from the UIS Materials and Techniques Commission to make it available to the caving community.

*Cuerdas Mendy* (Mendy Ropes) in Argentina has state-of-the-art technology to carry out the task of replicating the Osito descender, so we started working with them. The first task was the collection of the greatest amount of information about its origin, use, manufacture and anything related to the Osito descender.

Mónica Ponce, President of the UIS Materials and Techniques Commission contacted Haydeé González Pombal of the Candil Speleological Team of Cuba and invited her to participate in the commission, later Haydeé was in charge of conducting interviews with the caving groups in her country to identify those who knew the Osito descender, then she managed to contact who made it and used it for more than 20 years without experiencing any kind of problem or accident from its use (unfortunately, he did not keep any records that we could use).

In fact, it is not known for certain who created the original. However, thanks to the conversations with all of them, we were able to obtain a detailed description that, “by eye of a good cubano”—as the Cubans say—we began the task of reproducing it as faithfully and as accurately and as close to the original design as possible. With the right advice we managed to make this project advance significantly.

## ADDITIONAL NOTES

**Haydeé González:** *“Rolando Ferrer is the one who manufactured the Cuban Osito descender at the end of the 80s, early 90s; but he does not remember the proportions, they did it ‘estimating a measurement without any type of precise standard’ rather empirically, using pieces of aluminum that are used in pressure cookers, they added small pieces, pistons from cars and motorcycles to obtain silicon, which is an aluminum with properties of greater hardness—and continues, saying:— some were made of phosphoric bronze, but they were very heavy. The Osito was initially tested hanging it from a crane,*

*then loading it with two concrete railway sleepers, both in the factory and in other places in the province where they were also handcrafted, but those manufactured in the “Mechanical Plant” were subjected to load and resistance tests in the factory’s own laboratory with good results. How to use it: A carabiner was placed on one of the ears and the rope was fed through the circular hole. The working system was very similar to the figure of eight descender, it was used in descents to up to 50 meters with both dry and wet ropes (in this last case the rope is given one more turn). If the person accidentally released the rope, the equipment had the tendency to stop the friction, it was used in any condition and it worked.”*

Some other comments referred to the fact that they were made in France or in the United States, and that perhaps they were not a Cuban invention; that some colleagues from the Red Cross organization owned the original descenders from the factory, but there is no photographic evidence of this. Among other photographs of memories from former cave-dwelling friends, Haydeé mentions that is said in the stories that these were manufactured at home with a diameter varying between 8 and 10 cm.

With all this information, a 3D replica of the Osito was made in Argentina for the first time from the photo (*fig. 01*), resulting in a “plastic” piece (*fig. 02*) to be used as a model for casting. The image of this piece was shared with Cuba where it was analyzed by former users of the product, receiving corrections and suggestions. The plan was drawn up again, 3D printed, and the result was the third piece called “Osito A”.

For the metal casting of the sample, a specialized workshop in the city of Tandil, Argentina, a place with a long metallurgical tradition, was set up. There, the molding box was made using the “Osito A” as the model. Since we did not have the original piece or data to perform the composition analysis of the aluminum used, it was decided to prepare an aluminum casting “by eye of a good cubano” proportion as indicated.

Then, discarded aluminum pieces from pressure cookers and car recyclers were used, emulating the artisanal process in the same way that it was manufactured in Cuba in the late 1980s. The result was the piece called “Osito F”



**Fig. 2:** 3D printed Osito.  
PHOTO D. MENDY



**Fig. 3:** Osito A (left, 3D model) and F (cast model).  
PHOTO D. MENDY



**Fig. 4:** Osito F (cast, deburred and polished finish). PHOTO D. MENDY

## TESTS AND RESULTS

In the rope laboratory of the company “Cuerdas Mendy Hnos” in Argentina, two tests were carried out with the static dynamometer. In the first test, the piece was subjected to a constant load of 250 kg of weight on the Osito descender connected to the rope and blocked, simulating a normal load situation. In the second test, the rope connected to the blocked Osito is continued to be stretched until it breaks.

The dynamometer is a piston machine with two fixing points, which are separated at a constant speed, and is connected to a load cell that measures the resistance of the object to be stretched.

### BLOCKING AND LOADING TEST

One end of the rope was connected to one of the fixed points of the dynamometer and then the Osito descender was connected with its corresponding lock, while the other end was connected to the dynamometer. The system was then loaded with 250 kg for 3 minutes and the load was released (Fig. 5).

### RESULTS

The Osito descent equipment did not break and it was very easy to unblock the rope.

### BREAKING TEST

The breaking test was carried out in the same way as the previous test, with the Osito connected and locked. The machine was then pulled until the descender was destroyed, which occurred at 660 kg. (Fig. 6 and 7).

Tensile strength at break with dynamometer:  
660 kgf or 6.6 kN (fig. 05).

Test with a second sample:  
720 kgf or 7.2 kN.

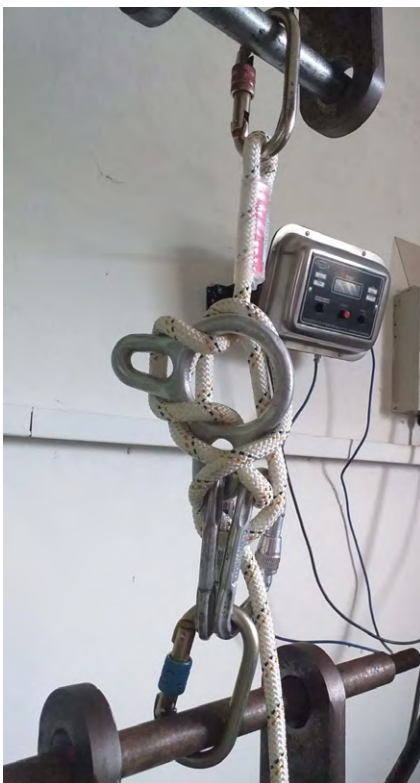


Fig. 5: Osito loaded and locked. PHOTO D. MENDY



Fig. 6 and 7: Destroyed Osito. PHOTO D. MENDY

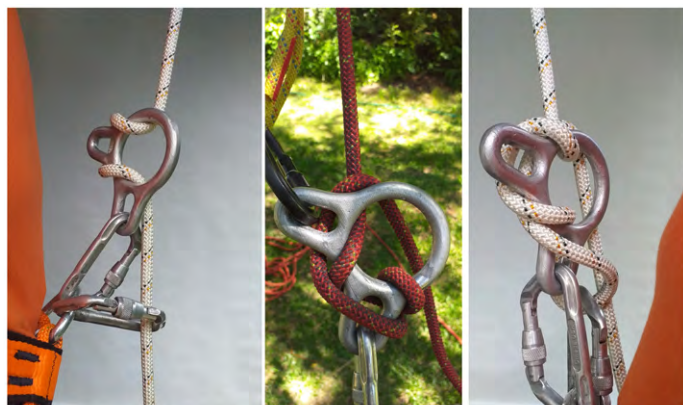


Fig 08: Uses, configuration, and blocking. PHOTO D. MENDY

## CONCLUSIONS

The Osito has turned out to be a figure eight-type descender that, due to its double ear, makes it very practical when locking it with a simple movement of the hand. It is also easier to unlock as the aperture allows several configurations to generate more friction providing greater security as well (Fig. 8).

As for the breaking strength, it is between 6.6 and 7.2 kN, with 22 kN being the minimum required today.

From the point of view of safety, it would clearly not exceed any standard being produced under these artisanal manufacturing conditions, however the design could be industrialized with modern techniques and controlled materials. In fact, there are currently two-ear descenders for canyoning on the market.

Despite the Osito’s artisanal manufacture, few questioned the detail or exact specification of the device. Nevertheless, it was used successfully by many cavers to explore the underground for years without anyone experiencing problems or mishaps.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Maximiliano Astete Millán, for the 3D design.
- Casting company of Mariano Lucas, who cast the piece.
- Guillermo Mendy from Cuerdas Mendy (Mendy Ropes), who carried out the tests in the laboratory.
- Rolando Perez and Carlos Abad, for their shared experiences.
- Antonio Llufrú, Vice President of the Commission, for English translation.

EVENT SUPPORTED BY THE UIS



# THE NEW FACE OF BALKAN CAVERS' CAMP 2024 IN CROATIA

*Journey beneath, bond beyond*

by Lovel Kukuljan (Croatia)  
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BCC 2024 logo  
Made by  
Luka Brezarić

In the period from May 29 to June 2, the Center of Excellence "Cerovac Caves" in Gračac, Croatia, hosted a large number of speleologists from the Balkan countries and beyond at the traditional annual gathering. This tradition of organizing gatherings, known as the "**Balkan Cavers' Camp**" (BCC), has been ongoing for 17 times since 2002, when the Balkan Speleological Union (BSU) was founded in Bulgaria with the aim of fostering cooperation between speleological organizations of the Balkan countries, as well as the wider international community.

This was the second edition of the gathering held in Croatia since the first edition held in Ogulin in 2015.

This year's event gathered as many as 215 participants from a total of 17 countries (Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, Poland, Greece, Slovenia, Serbia, Czechia, Germany, Ukraine, Italy, Austria, Thailand, Singapore, Israel, Hungary and Bosnia and Herzegovina).

During the four days of the program, participants could take part in numerous activities: workshops and lectures, presentations and panel discussions, visits to caves in the area, competitions, etc.

**ABOVE PHOTO:** Participants of the 17<sup>th</sup> BCC gathered in the courtyard of the Center of Excellence "Cerovac Caves".

PHOTO: BORIS STANOJEVIĆ

The gathering was organized by the Zagreb Speleological Association (ZSS) and members of caving societies within the Speleological Committee of the Croatian Mountaineering Association (KSHPS) and the Croatian Speleological Federation (HSS). The event was kindly supported by the International Union of Speleology (UIS) through financial support.

The gathering began on Wednesday, May 29, with the opening speech from Marina Grandić, recently appointed BSU Croatia delegate, who presented the new vision of this year's Balkan Cavers' Camp. Unlike many previous BCCs, which focused mainly on visits to nearby caves, this year's gathering put a lot of emphasis on workshops and lectures.

The goal of the workshops was to enable the exchange of experience among speleologists in the fundamental areas of speleological activity, including digital cave survey, technical speleology (rigging, aid climbing, and self-rescue), digital navigation, use of mobile devices and GIS, and cave science.

Experienced presenters and lecturers (as many as 26 of them) from 12 countries were invited. Among them stand out Marco Corvi from Italy, the author of TopoDroid, the most wide-known mobile app for digital cave survey, Alexandar Stoev from Bulgaria, one of the authors of the CaveSurvey app, Federico Cendron from Italy, one of the authors of the cSurvey program,

and Siwei Tian from China, current provider of DistoX2 chips who presented the development of a new laser measuring device.

The digital survey section was enriched by workshops in the field of cutting-edge scientific efforts in constructing affordable LiDAR scanning device, which would enable wider application in speleology. This was led by Loris Redovniković, full professor at the Faculty of Geodesy, University of Zagreb, and Janusz Będkowski, invited researcher of the Institute for Fundamental Technological Research of the Polish Academy of Sciences.



Center of Excellence „Crnopac Caves“ in Gračac, Croatia, where the 17<sup>th</sup> BCC was held. PHOTO: BORIS STANOJEVIĆ



The digital cave survey workshop held in the Center's courtyard. PHOTO: BORIS STANOJEVIĆ



Display of the affordable LiDAR devices. PHOTO: BORIS STANOJEVIĆ



Practical part of the digital cave survey workshop. PHOTO: BORIS STANOJEVIĆ



Demonstration of setting up a 3D LiDAR scanning custom-made device. PHOTO: BORIS STANOJEVIĆ

The workshops were not limited to only theoretical lectures; a large part of the technical workshops included practical exercises in caves or on external rock cliffs. The participants of the workshops on digital navigation got acquainted with different mobile applications useful for finding their way around in nature, which they practically used in the game of treasure hunting. Popular scientific workshops were also held, where speleologists could learn more about karstology from geologists from Romania, the impact of climate change on speleology, and had the opportunity to get to know the diverse living world of the Croatian underground.

The evening program of the gathering was reserved for presentations and thematic panel discussions. On Thursday evening, the topic titled “Beneath the surface: State, cavers, and cave cadasters” focused on the current state of national speleological cadastres, which were presented by panelists from Croatia, Bulgaria, Slovenia, Romania and Greece.

On Friday evening, the topic shifted to somewhat “invisible” problem of pollution of karst underground titled “Beyond the challenge: Unearthing solutions to cave pollution”. Panelists from Croatia, Serbia, Slovenia, Romania, Bulgaria and Greece discussed what is the state of the matter regarding recording of polluted caves in different countries, but also concrete steps in education, remediation and prevention measures to mitigate this problem.



Evening program – presentations. PHOTO: PAULA SKELIN

↓ Evening program – panel discussions. PHOTO: EMA MARCU



Participants of BCC during one of the excursions to a nearby Upper Cerovac Cave. PHOTO: EMA MARCU



Every day, a tireless team of 22 volunteers organized visits to nearby caves and pits, primarily the Upper and Lower Cerovac Caves, which were recently renovated for tourist visits as part of the visitor center Center of Excellence “Cerovac Caves” of the Velebit Nature Park.

Touristic routes within each cave stretch 700 m, though they both extend over 4 km in total, predominantly horizontally. Visiting speleologists had the opportunity to take a peek into vertical caves as well. In this way, they could get a sense of what the Crnopac Massif underground looks like, where the Crnopac Cave System is hidden—the longest cave in the entire Dinarides at a length of 62 km and one of the 100 longest caves in the world.



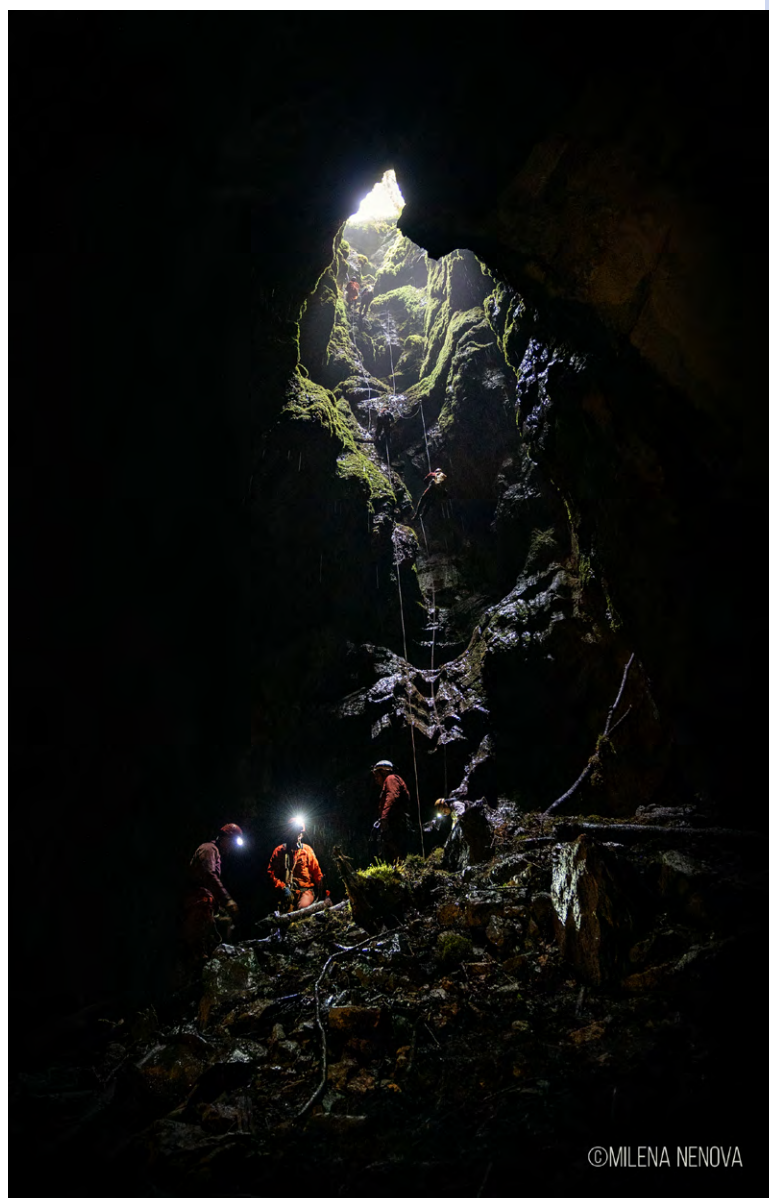
©MILENA NENOVA

*The wonders of the caves on the Crnopac Massif. PHOTO: MILENA NENOVA*



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*The wonders of the caves on the Crnopac Massif. PHOTO: MILENA NENOVA*



©MILENA NENOVA

*Inside one of the caves prepared for vertical visit. PHOTO: MILENA NENOVA*

BCC 2024 hosted the “We and Caves” exhibition again this year, and participants could enjoy 22 selected photographs by professional authors from 14 countries. During the gathering, a contest was held for the best amateur photo, where the main criterion was the photo’s ability to tell an interesting story. The winning photo, the work of a Romanian author Adrian Radulescu, showed the fascinating detail of a bat trapped in a stalagmite. In addition to the photography competition, there was also a competition for the best poster, where Sunčana Sokić from Serbia won with a set of illustrations, including a special illustration prepared specifically for this year’s BCC.

The competition for the best film was also won by a Romanian team documenting the exploration of the Grind cave, a cave with the potential to become the first 1000-meter-deep cave in Romania.

Saturday evening was reserved for “Speleobalkanijada” (Balkan Speleo Quest), an event that enriched this year’s edition with various challenges. Competitors first had to show precision in shooting a target while descending on the Tyrolean traverse, after which the six best competitors tested their speed and agility on a rope polygon. In this competition too, the most successful was the representative of Romania, who was awarded with the Scurion 900 caving lamp as the main prize.

On Saturday, the BSU general assembly was held, where the idea of a new BCC concept, which was conceived here in Croatia with a fundamental focus on the exchange of experience, was supported. Also, a new bureau leadership was elected for the next term and Alexey Zhalov was appointed as the Honorary President of the Balkan Speleological Union.

On the last day of the gathering on Sunday, the program was adapted for the general public under the name “From the underground of Earth to the underground of Mars”. Younger generations had the opportunity to try the Tyrolean traverse and learn how speleology is a good preparation for future explorations on Mars.



“Speleobalkanijada” competition on BCC 2024.  
 PHOTO: MATEJA DIMITRIJEVIĆ

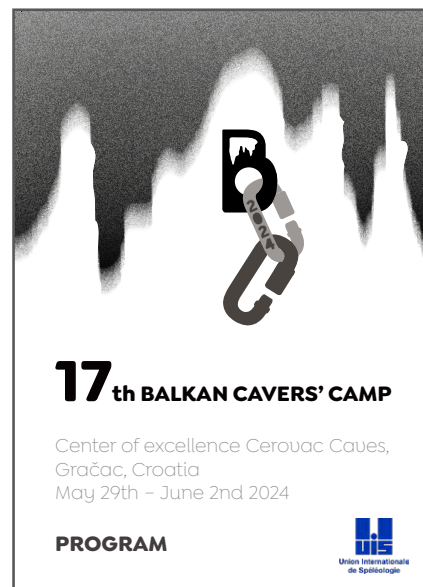
The organization and implementation of this international gathering required significant resources in the form of time, energy and financial resources. Our organizational team of eight members tried their best to make the event as pleasant and accessible as possible for all participants. Hot meals were organized every day, and in order to avoid the use of single-use plastic utensils, each participant received a welcome package that included a dish, cutlery and a cup. Also, valuable prizes were awarded for each competition, discounts on tickets to various parks and visitor centers were provided, while camp accommodation was not charged. The program of the gathering was collected in a BCC’s booklet on 27 pages, detailing the content of lectures, workshops, presentations, available excursions etc.

The success of this event would not be possible without the exceptional support of our sponsors and donors, to whom we sincerely thank. We especially highlight the Velebit Nature Park, which provided an ideal location and comprehensive support during the event. We are also grateful to the Baredine cave, and the Speleological Committee of the Croatian Mountaineering Association.

A big thank you is also sent to the UIS, Balkan Speleological Union, the Croatian Speleological Federation and the Tourist Board of Zadar County. Prizes and logistical support were made possible by Scurion, Bim Sport, RepettoSport, Cuesta, Annapurna, Zmajška pivovara, Cetina and Speleon. We are also grateful to the Croatian Mountain Rescue Service for the logistical and safety support of the gathering’s participants.

The event was also supported by the International Speleological Union (UIS), whose president personally participated in the gathering through speech, presentation and panel discussion.

We are honored to have been approved a patronage under UIS and financial support.



Front page of the 17<sup>th</sup> Balkan Caver’s Camp program booklet.



EVENT SUPPORTED BY THE UIS

# 14th International Cave Rescue Conference

June 6-9 2024



## Ramales de la Victoria. Cantabria, España

Fundación Espeleosocorro Cántabro



By

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President UIS Cave Rescue Commission  
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The UIS Cave Rescue Commission (CRC) was founded in 1965 as one of the first three original Commissions of the UIS. The commission has worked well over the past decades. The CRC held conferences in several countries over the past four years and it also held meetings during the various International Congresses of Speleology (ICS).

The 14<sup>th</sup> International Cave Rescue Conference (ICRC) have been organized by the Fundación Espeleosocorro Cántabro (ESOCAN) which has more than 120 federated volunteers and on behalf of the International Union of Speleology. The 14<sup>th</sup> ICRC was held in Ramales de la Victoria/Cantabria/Spain between 6-9 June 2024. The event provided a great opportunity to

discuss and decide how to continue and develop our efforts in the area of Cave Rescue.

The main goals of that CRC are to promote cave rescue and provide information to all UIS member counties. We also plan to build closer relationships and collaboration among cave rescue organizations all over the world.

We also plan to assist countries where more help is needed to make them more effective as first responders to cave accidents.

This conference provided an excellent opportunity for participants to get to know each other better, learn from each other's experiences, and strengthen international cooperation.

The theme of the conferences was **“Cave Rescue from Cavers to Cavers”**

The main objectives of the organization have been:

- Establish cooperation amongst cave rescue organisations of the UIS member countries and regional cave rescue organisations
- CRC has to create communication channels

A total of 82 people registered from 15 countries for the event and finally 84 people from 13 countries participated (Australia, Brazil, China, Czech Republic, Hungary, Indonesia, Japan, Poland, Romania, Russia, South-Africa, Spain, and the United Kingdom).

**MOST RELEVANT PRESENTATIONS**

- Juliana Bortone (*Brazil*) - Brazil 2025 - The 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology and 65 years of the UIS
- Gyula Hegedűs (*Hungary*) - History of UIS Cave Rescue Commission
- Yuniat Irawati (*Indonesia*) - Sport Massage: Benefit and Focuses of Area What Massage Therapy Needs for Caver During Vertical Caving Activity
- Brian Evans (*Australia*) - Cave Rescue in Australia

- Justin Hall (*New Zealand*) - New Zealand Cave Search & Rescue
- Juliana Bortone (*Brazil*) - The Brazilian Cave Rescue Structure
- Simone Devus (*Brazil*) - The Brazilian Management of Cave Rescue - Structure and Learning
- Miklos Nyerges (*Hungary*) - Hungarians in the Operation Deep Purple
- Manuel Sellés (*Spain*) - Fracturing with expansive gases

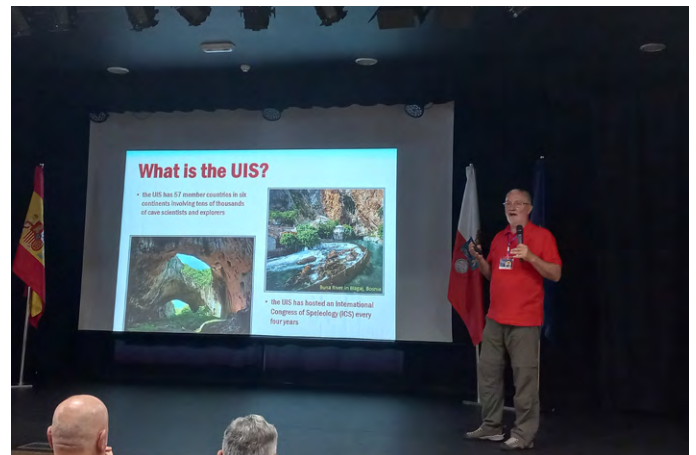
The conferences featured other interesting presentations:

- Caves of Burgos - from Edelweiss group.
- The Cueva de las Estegamitas - from the scientific committee of the Cueva de las Estegamitas
- History of caving in Spain - from the Museum of Speleology
- Art exhibition by Ian Ellis Chandler: The artist of the cavities
- Caving in vertical rescue competitions

Besides them, there was a video titled “Caving Rescue in Vertical Rescue competitions” and a half-day demonstration: Cave Rescue Without Borders.



Opening Ceremony of the 14<sup>th</sup> International Cave Rescue Conference: Gyula Hegedűs (red shirt) and César García García, City Mayor of Ramales de la Victoria. PHOTO ÁNGEL ZARZA ROMÁN



Gyula Hegedűs during his presentation on UIS itself and the history of its Cave Rescue Commission. PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



Posters exhibition about The Cueva de las Estegamitas organized by the Scientific Committee of this cave. PHOTO GYULA HEGEDŰS



Exhibition “History of Caving in Spain” organized by the the Museum of Speleology. PHOTO GYULA HEGEDŰS

During the Conference participants could do many visits in caves and other caving activities as follows:

- **Covalanas Cave:** During the conferences, all the places available for visits to the Covalanas Cave were reserved. World Heritage Cave with access restricted to 3 visits of 4 people per visit. In the end, 10 people participated.

- **Cullalvera:** This natural cavity adapted for all audiences was visited by 10 people.

- **Mur Cave:** A natural cavity of low difficulty was visited by 9 participants in three different visits.

- **Coventosa:** A natural cave of medium difficulty was visited by 18 participants in 4 visits.

- **Torca del Porrón:** Throughout the conferences, 4 different teams and a total of 20 participants managed to descend this demanding cave.

- **Altamira Museum:** A total of 15 participants visited the neo-cave of Altamira and the museum.

In connection with the last presentation of the ICRC, we discussed what we want from the UIS/CRC, how it can help the community of cave rescuers worldwide. In addition, we also discussed how the members of the UIS CRC can help, and what kind of contribution they can offer in order to achieve the jointly defined goals, who and how can support the work of the CRC.



**Cullalvera Cave:** This natural cavity adapted for all audiences was visited by 10 people. PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



**Mur Cave:** Classified as low difficulty, this cave was visited by 9 participants in three different turns. PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



Preliminary demonstration at the Ramales de la Victoria multi-sports gym. PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



Complex stretcher movement exercise at the Ramales de la Victoria multi-sports gym. PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO

## CONFERENCE SUPPORT

- International Union of Speleology (UIS)
- Ramales de la Victoria Town Council
- Spanish Association of Caving and Canyoning (ASEDEB)
- Matienzo Caves Project
- Edelweiss Speleological Group
- National Association of Rock Fragmenters (AFRONA)
- Civil Protection Group of the San Vicente de Toranzo Town Council
- Museum of Speleology

## COLLABORATING ENTITIES

- Ertzantza Surveillance and Rescue Unit. Basque Government rescue group
- Military Emergency Unit
- Mountain and underground rescue groups of the Mossos d'Esquadra of the Government of Catalonia
- Speleosocorro Sin Fronteras
- Municipal Public Library
- Ramales de la Victoria Tourist Information Office
- Santander Volunteer Firefighters

## WE ALSO THANK THE SPONSORS

- Machay Speleology and Canyons S.L.
- Malmon Outdoor S.L
- Alto Asón Cave Network
- Rodcle Equipment
- Descent Magazine

We would also like to thank the International Union of Speleology for the trust and the opportunity to organize that event. Thank you to the Town Council of Ramales de la Victoria for their unconditional and constant support, and to all the volunteers of the ESOCAN Foundation who have collaborated with their effort, talent, and patience in the organization of these conferences.

As the last official event of the 14<sup>th</sup> ICRC, the participants said goodbye to each other in good spirit at an organized party.

THANK YOU ALL VERY MUCH!



*The auditorium used for classes and presentations.*

PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



*General view of the karst in the Ramales de la Victoria region.*

PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



**Torca del Porrón:** Throughout the conferences, 4 different teams and a total of 20 participants managed to descend this demanding cave. PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



**Group at the Coventosa Cave,** a natural cavity of medium difficulty that was visited by 18 participants in four turns.

PHOTO MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



For more information about the 14<sup>th</sup> International Cave Rescue Conference (ICRC) including

- Presentations
- Photo Gallery

[CLICK HERE](#)

14<sup>th</sup> ICRC Staff. PHOTO ARQUIVE MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



14<sup>th</sup> ICRC participants gathered for the traditional and historic photo of the event. PHOTO ARQUIVE MARTÍN GONZÁLEZ HIERRO



**EVENT  
SUPPORTED  
BY THE UIS**



# SYPHONIA 2024



## 16° EUROSPELEO FORUM

# International Speleology Meeting

by  
**Francesco Maurano**  
 President Tetide APS  
[presidenza@tetide.org](mailto:presidenza@tetide.org)



## RELATION

The event organized by Tetide APS in collaboration with the municipal administration of Caselle in Pittari and the social cooperative Labor Limae saw a large participation from all over Italy but also from Spain, France, Austria, Switzerland, Croatia, Cyprus, Germany, Holland, Luxembourg, Poland, United States, Canada, and Greece, for a total of 908 participants and the registration to the event of 619 residents.

The event has obtained the patronage of: the International Union of Speleology, the European Speleological Federation, the National Research Council, the Italian Speleological Society, the Italian Alpine Club, the Association of Italian Tourist Caves, the National Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corps, the Scintilena - Speleological News, the Campania Speleological Federation, the CNSAS—SR Campania, the Italian Culture Sport Association—Provincial Committee of Salerno, the FondazioneMIda - Integrated Museums of the Environment

**Collaborators included:** the European Speleological Federation, the Vallo di Diano Speleological Mountaineering Group, the CAI Naples Speleological Group, the Natura Esplora APS Speleological Group, the Association of Cave Enthusiasts, Wikicaves, the Scientific Commission of the French Federation of Speleology, Mediterranean Caves, Moroccan Explorer, Israeli Cave Research Center, Hellenic Federation of Speleology.

**Was supported by:** the municipality of Caselle in Pittari, the Cilento Vallo di Diano and Alburni National Park, the International Speleological Union, the European Speleological Federation, the Italian Culture Sport Association – Salerno Provincial Committee, the Italian Albino Club, the Campania Speleological Federation, the Natura Esplora APS Speleological Group, the Trieste Alpine Club, the TRIESTINO SPELEOLOGICAL GROUP APS, the CAI Naples Speleological Group, CLEMENTE LORENZO srl, DUEGISport, Beal, Scurion,



Aventure Vertical, EDELRID, KONG, RAUMER, Vertical Evolution, Korda's, Annalisa Basili, Giampaolo Pinto, and Pino Palmisano.

The International Conference on Digital Speleology "Data, Technologies and Cadastres for the Protection of Underground Heritage and Management of the Territory" was supported by: the Directorate-General for Education, Research and Cultural Institutes (MIC) and the Italian Speleological Society with the patronage of ISPRA.

In the three days, countless initiatives took place, following a subdivision by type:

## 4 Conferences

• **Thursday 31 October:** International Conference on Digital Speleology "Data, Technologies and Cadastres for the Protection of Underground Heritage and Management of the Territory"

• **Friday 1 November:** 10<sup>th</sup> European Expedition Symposium

• **Saturday 2 November:** Focus "Bussento: yesterday, today, tomorrow history of the cave explorations"

• **Saturday, November 2:** From the Proteus to Speleo-Diving. The Evolution of Homo Spelaeus Towards the Flooded Unknown

## 24 Reports/presentations

• Alien species in the groundwaters of Lazio: the case of the Louisiana red crayfish *Procambarus clarkii*. G. Catoni, C. Of Russo, C. Lucky, V. Carpe, A. Martini (Shaka Zulu Club Subiaco)

• Human-bat interactions in urban areas of Malawi. L. Auletta (African Bat Conservation)

• Investigations of animal remains in caves: methodologies and protection. A. Pereswiet-Soltan, S. Pospuła (Institute of Systematics and Evolution of Animals Polish Academy of Sciences, Club Speleologico Proteo Vicenza APS)

• Cave Animal of the Year 2025. F. Didonna, G. Salvi, F. Mosconi G. Ragone (Cave Animal 2025 Working Group)

• In the Dragon's Belly explorations in the thermal-sulphurous karst area of Lengarices. A. Benassi Edited by CSI Consorzio Speleologi Ipogenici

• Structural and stratigraphic control of the speleogenesis in the Carta Valley (TX) Hypogene Karst System. A. Gaudio, T. Charlton, Y. Chuah, B. Carter (Greater Houston Grotto of the National Speleological Society, Houston, TX – USA)

• Montenegro Speleo Expedition 2024. M. Tavagnutti (Karst Research Center "C. Seppenhofer" APS)

• The salt of the Earth: caves and karst phenomena in the salt diapirs of Zinga (Italy). A. Benassi (Italian Speleological Society; Acheloos Geo Exploring)

• Sternes 2024 Expedition – Discovering the Pandora Room and the Ichor River. P. Papadakos, S. Zacharias (Speleological Association of Crete (SPOK))

• Luftloch, a dream come true. M. Restaino (Adriatic Speleological Society)

• Timavo System Exploration 2024. M. Restaino (Adriatic Speleological Society)

• The search for the Timavo and drinking water in Gorizia. M. Tavagnutti (Centro Ricerche Karst "C. Seppenhofer" APS)

• The Monte Croce Complex (Friuli Venezia Giulia). G. Benedetti (Trieste Speleologists Group APS) F. Serafin (Karst Studies Society "AF Lindner" APS)

• Important discoveries in the Cave of Screams. P. Turrini, R. Pettirossi, V. Callaringi

• The Grotta dei Conoidi, a new Speleo-Archaeological discovery in Umbria. M. Todini (Speleological Group Todi)

• Caverna(e) solertes inquisitores. The first scratched testimony of a speleological exploration. CC Ancona, R. Rotondo (Gruppo Speleologico Martinese)

• Archaeology and Cavities of Anthropogenic Origin in Campania, I. Guidone (FSC, GSNE, Tetide, SSI)

• Interactive TOCC SpeleoMedit Project. F. Maurano (Tetide APS)

• 150 years of "Adriatica". M. Restaino (Adriatic Speleological Society)



Jean-Claude Thies (center), President of the European Speleological Federation (FSE), talking at the Syphonia 2024 Opening Ceremony. PHOTO B. BOCCHINO



Translation table (LEFT TO RIGHT): Valeria Pellecchia, Antonio Cherillo, and Rossana D'Arienzo. PHOTO B. BOCCHINO

- National Alpine and Speleological Rescue Corps: our first 70 years. R. D'Arienzo and M. Guiducci (CNSAS)
- Monitoring of the cave salamander (*Speleomantes supramontis*) in the Supramonte ZSC of Oliena, Orgosolo and Urzulei – Su Sercone. R. Cogoni\*, T. Saba, M. Pappacoda \*Speleological Union of Cagliari
- Presentation of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Speleology Congress – Brazil 2025
- Status of research conducted in Libya within the Cyrenaica Karst Project. R. Ruggieri (Centro Ibleo di Ricerche Speleo-Idrogeologiche)
- Abandoned underground mines in Abruzzo, Current situation, new discoveries and future prospects. G. La Rovere (Industrial Archaeology Research Group of Majella)

### 3 Seminars/workshops

- Third Sector Reform, State of the Art. We Talk About It at an 'AperiRuns' with A. Basili, R. Cossu
- Cave surveying: future evolutions (CavWay) and a powerful but little-known tool (Therion). M. Corvi.
- Communicating (to) Speleology–(Tuscany Speleological Federation Communication Commission)

### 3 Round Tables

- Round Table: Bats and Speleologists Coordinated by A. Tomassini (Bat Conservation) and M. Olivieri (FUGS)
- Round Table “Bussento, the river to be preserved, current situation and future prospects”
- Round Table between the Italian Speleological Federations organized by the Umbrian Federation of Speleological Groups

### 2 Competitions

- **Underground Visions** – Digital image competition for creative representation of underground environments, promoting environmental education and

awareness of the significance of underground ecosystems and conservation efforts worldwide. 38 works participated. 4 prizes were awarded (1 jury prize and 3 popular prizes).

- **Ideas Competition** – Hunting for Syphonia aimed at high school students of first and second grade wants to involve the new generations in the knowledge of the karst territory and its protection since it has been shaped by water and is still in close relation with the most precious asset for life: “Water”. 3 schools participated. The first won the entrance to one of the caves adhering to AGTI (partner of the competition).

### 7 Videos/Movies

- The Search for the Hidden River (film 50') Directed by T. Bernabei, introduced by M. Restaino (Adriatic Speleological Society)
- Timavo System Exploration (film 50') introduced by M. Restaino (Adriatic Speleological Society)
- The Eighth Sphere – The Millenary Mine (film 45') C. Crema and G. Ronaghi
- Crypt of the Megafauna (film 45') L. Espinasa, M. Girard, M. Sandone
- SpeleoMedit – Project for the protection and documentation of Mediterranean caves (film 21') V. Ferrer
- The geography of the void (film 30') S. Arrica (Giovanni Spano Speleological Archaeological Group)
- Shtares 2024, exploration and research in the Albanian Alps (film 30') Introduced by A. Marraffa (Gruppo Speleologico Martinese)

### 4 Book Presentations

- Caves that turn yellow. F. Fabrizi and F. Rossi (Speleological Association of Siena SSI)
- Here Paris. S. Gambari (CSR)
- The eternal and invisible pollutants in water. Stories of denied rights and active citizenship – G. Unghereso
- Speleology Manual SNS CAI. U. Del Vecchio (CCST-CAI)



Stefan Näff (Switzerland), President of the Informatics Commission of the UIS, talking during the **Conference on Digital Speleology: A deep “dive” into digital speleology**, highlighting data, technologies, and cadastres as useful tool to protect underground heritage and manage territories. Key topics included the [Grotto Center Platform](#), [Wiki Cave Experiences](#), and innovative cave data management approaches. PHOTO B. BOCCHINO



General view of the stands of technical materials available for participants. PHOTO B. BOCCHINO



One of the expositions outside of the venue to promote caves and karst from different countries. PHOTO I. NUNNERI

## 8 Assemblies and meetings

- Assembly of the Italian Speleological Society
- Meeting of the National Commission of Speleology Schools of the SSI
- Meeting of the SSI Land Registry Commission
- SSI Artificial Cavities Commission Meeting
- European Speleological Federation – Bureau meeting
- European Speleological Federation – General Assembly
- OTTO CAI meeting
- Meeting of the Cave Groups of the Italian Alpine Club

## 1 Representation

- Discovering Paradise in the Bowels of the Earth (Theatrical Performance). D. Ciarloni

## 10 Exhibitions

- Speleological Tuscany (Tuscan Speleological Federation)
- The Hidden World – Silvia Arrica (Giovanni Spano Speleological Archaeological Group)



The Syphonia 2024 SpeleoBar. PHOTO I. NUNNERI

- Paper Protei – Isabella Abbona (Adriatic Speleological Society)
- Here Paris – Stefano Gambari (Roman Speleological Circle)
- Relief: between art and technique – CNCCN SSI Prize Competition
- Underground Visions – International Image Competition
- Underground fauna through SpeleoCollection
- SpeleoCollection Pages from the Magazine “Above and Below the Carso”
- “Hypogean Waters” Postcards from Italian Caves
- SpeleoMedit (Mediterranean Caves, Tethys APS)

## 9 Association Stands

- European Speleological Federation
- Italian Speleological Society
- Italian Alpine Club – Central Commission for Speleology and Canyoning
- Tuscan Speleological Federation
- Bibliothèque de la Société Suisse de Spéléologie
- Speleo Club Berlin
- Roman Speleological Circle
- Todi Underground
- Mediterranean Caves and Tethys APS

## 11 Stands of technical materials

- Mountain Items
- Two Sports
- The Buranchetto
- Kong – Alp Design
- Holy Wednesday
- Repetto Sport – Vertical Adventure
- Scurion
- Spit Sport Outdoor
- T 2.0 – Mountain Equipment
- Raumer - Vertical Evolution
- Gaibana

At the tensile structure set up in the parking lot on Via F. Lo Guercio:

## 6 Food and wine stands

- Speleo Club Ibleo
- GES “Andrea Pietrolungo” CAI Pescara and Lemurs Group
- Olianese Hypogeum Association and Greather Houston Grotto
- Persephone APS
- Tetide APS with the collaboration of the Speleo Club Roma
- Urbino Speleological Group

## 3 Concerts

- October 31: Massimo Ferranti and Marco Repetto
- November 1: Fusion
- November 2: o’Rom and Dj set

### Halloween - Syphonia What Magic

On November 1<sup>st</sup> starting at 10:30 am, the event dedicated to children (about 70) was organized with a biscuit workshop, trick or treat and final party.

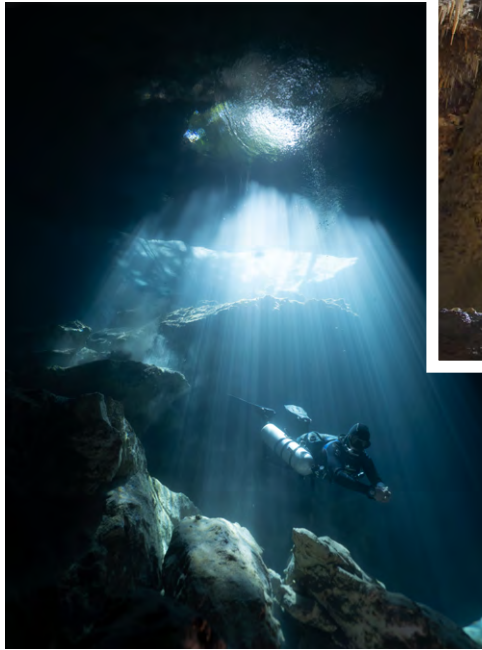
### Cave excursions

Over 200 people participated in the excursions carried out by the event.



**FIRST PLACE BY THE AUDIENCE**  
*Castel di Lepre Cave*  
(Marsico Nuovo, Potenza, Italy).  
PHOTO GIANMICHELE PAVONE

## SYPHONIA 2024 IMAGE CONTEST

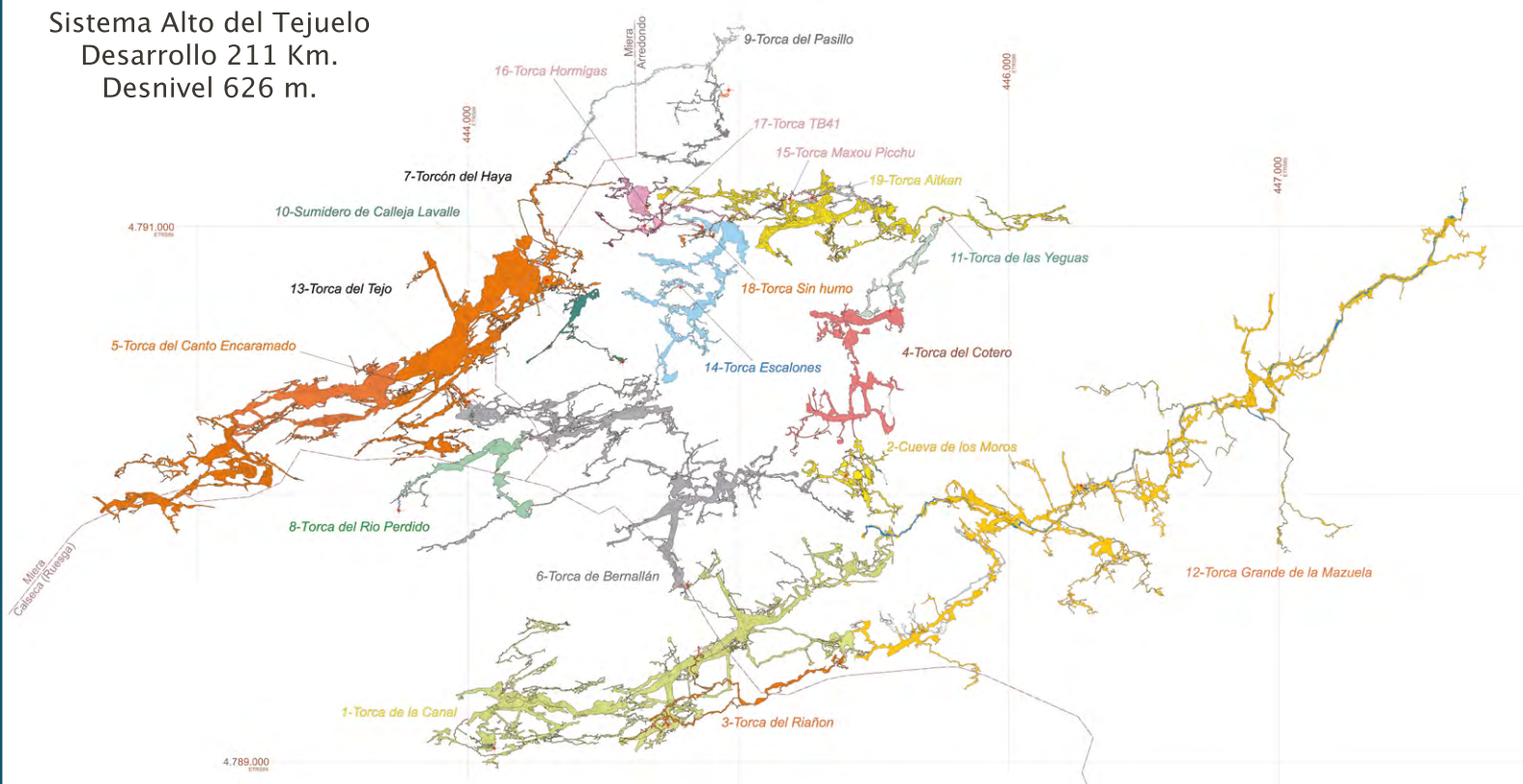


← **SECOND PLACE BY THE AUDIENCE**  
*Cave diver in Mexican Cenote.*  
PHOTO SIMONE VILLOTTI



↑ **THIRD PLACE BY THE AUDIENCE**  
*Murgulavo' Cave (Supramonte di Baunei, Sardegna Island, Italy).* PHOTO SILVIA ARRICA

Sistema Alto del Tejuelo  
Desarrollo 211 Km.  
Desnivel 626 m.



**FIRST PLACE BY THE JURY:** *Topography of the Alto del Tejuelo System (Cantabria, Spain).*  
Authors: Miguel Ángel González and Gallego Rodríguez Barbero

INTERNATIONAL EXPEDITION UNDER UIS PATRONAGE



Tham Saohin Cave - PHOTO: ALEXIS RATEAU 02/2024

# EXPEDITION KHAOPHUTHONG KHAOTHAKHANUN 2023-2024 IN THAILAND

## Summary Report

by Didier Rateau (France)  
[rateauminis@orange.fr](mailto:rateauminis@orange.fr)



**T**he expedition took place in three distinct phases, and is a continuation of the previous nine since 2016, mainly in the Kanchanaburi region (250 km northwest of Bangkok).

First of all, the month of January was devoted to the continuation of explorations in the national parks of Saiyok Yai, and Thong Phaphum. Topographies of new cavities were undertaken including Tham Tangodfri which was discovered in 2020 where we had reached a muddy narrowness at 625 m from the entrance.

We surveyed the small tributary stream of the Tham Keaw a system active in this period of low water. The area is in an epikarst that holds beautiful surprises. We completed 18 km of topographic networks in the Saiyok Yai sector.

Exploration of the entrance area of Tham Nok han Aen (D 3000 m), we accessed through a large karst window 120 meters deep (Swallow cave porch h 70x40 meters - cave of the Ostermann bivouac 1986).



We met with the Rangers of the Lam Nkhlong Ngu National Park to prepare the next phase of the expedition, taking advantage of the presence of Philippe Crochet we devoted time to photography.

Identification of access to Tham Yai downstream of the current system (under exploration).

Tham Daoprasut, with CO<sub>2</sub> levels above 5%, a large paper on this hypogenous karst is in progress. (many photo shoots, and readings of CO<sub>2</sub> levels) (National Park Srinagarindra).

Tham Nam Mae Krabung (Srinagarindra National Park) development now reaches 3,230 m (topographic, and under exploration).

In a second phase, in the continuity of the two previous trainings, the month of February was devoted to the training course in rope progression techniques, and to topography with distox2-xble for geologists from the Department of Minéral Ressources (DMR) and the Department of Groundwater Ressources (DGR), Bangkok.

To complete the route, the exploration and the topography of Tham Nok Han Aen 2 was completed with the Rangers. This is part of the gigantic galleries marking the canyon of Mae Nam Nkhlong Ngu for more than 30Km following a fracture, enclosed in the Upper Permian massifs with a power of 200 m at this point.

Observation of (Um Luk Formation -Ban Muang Song Tho geological map 1/50.000 – edition 3-RTSD-4738 2011) and in contact to the EAST with the Bong Ti Formation much more resistant and less soluble. (Khao Bo Ngam karst). National Park Lam Nkhlong Ngu -Amphoe Thongphapum.

Thirdly, the beginning and end of March was devoted to the exploration of Tham Saohin, the extreme downstream of Lam Nkhlong Ngu, with some interruptions in the calendar related to the fluctuating and mysterious beauracracy of the National Park! The large 147-metre shaft was descended at the end of March, and what is believed to be the world's tallest column of stalagmites was verified at 68.62 metres.

A quick incursion into Tham KangKhao did not allow us to continue downstream, which this year is obstructed by ice jams, the air current was no longer perceptible. A few samples of pseudo scorpions and other millimetric samples were taken by Claudine Masson in the different cavities, and photographic sessions were carried out by Thierry Masson and Alexis Rateau.

Tham Saohin is currently 3,210 meters long and counting!! (the upper networks are being explored at the end of March 2024).



Interns at the entrance porch of Tham Walee Cave. PHOTO DIDIER RATEAU



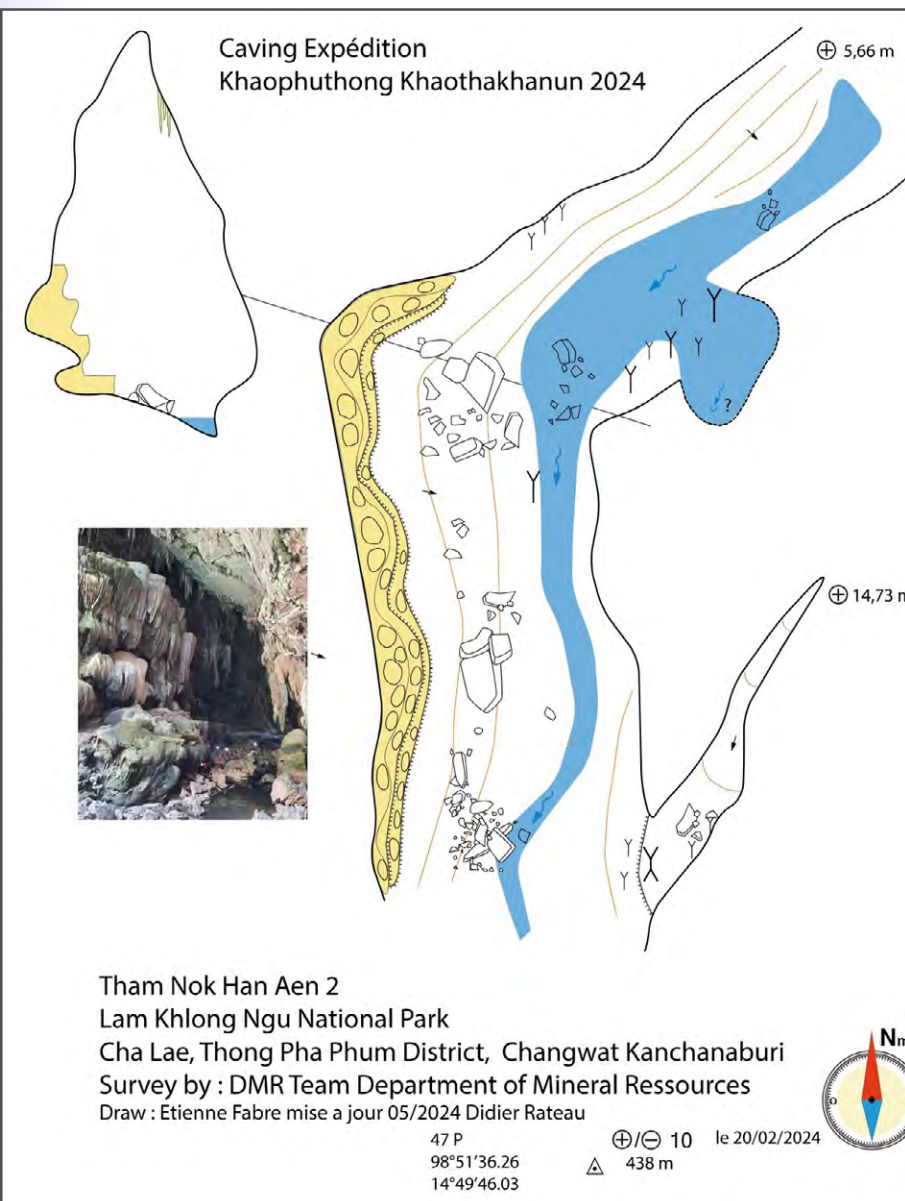
Pseudoscorpion in study, Tham Kang Khao Saiyok Yai-Kanchanaburi. PHOTO CLAUDINE MASSON



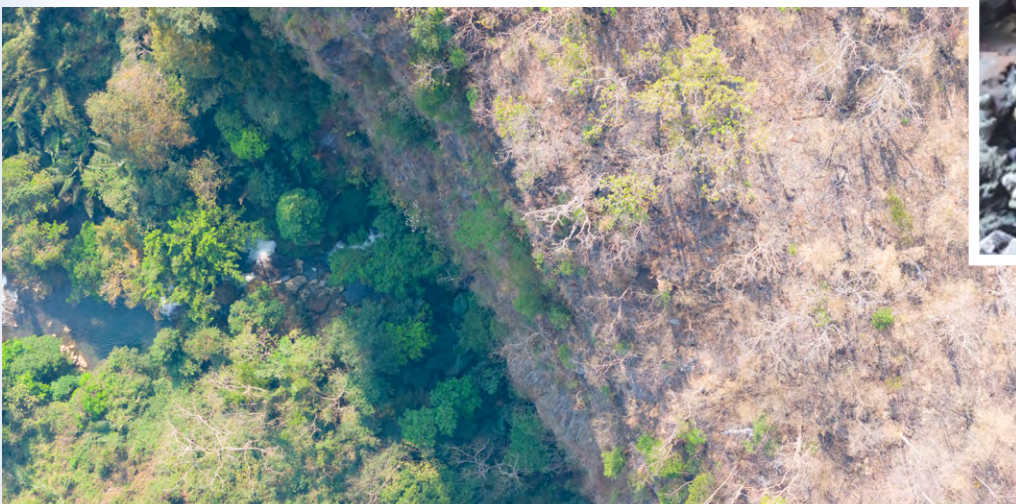
Map showing the locations where the activities of the expedition were carried out in 2024. - AUTHOR: RUSSARINT SIRIPATAPURENON D.M.R.

The topography of Tham Putoei is complete, and the development now exceeds one kilometer. The 2025 expedition is already planned, and a team will be in Thailand this summer.

The topographies, the contribution to a geological study and biospeleology are included in the report which is currently being drafted.



Surveys carried out by the Thai team.



One of the tallest stalagmitic columns in the world (68.62 meters) in Tham Saohin Cave.  
PHOTO THIERRY MASSON- ALEXIS RATEAU



Entrande of Tham Nok Han Aen 2 Cave.  
PHOTO © DMR TEAM DEP. OF MINERAL RESSOURCES

Tham Saohin Cave resurgence at the foot of the 160-meter cliff.  
PHOTO ALEXIS RATEAU 02-2024



Ya



Bank 2

**TROMBINOSCOPE  
OF THAI  
TRAINEES**



Bank 1



Tat



Sprite



Max



Park



Sueb



May



Chaiporn



Paeng



Dream



Pat



Fern



Kittipong



Nen



Nun



*Biocorrosion in hypogene-Tham Daoprasut karst  
Srinagarindra National Park Kanchanaburi - PHOTO PHILIPPE CROCHET*

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

**January:** Peter Lenahan and Andrew D. Foord (*National Speleological Society-NSS*); Annie Guiraud, Philippe Crochet, and Didier Rateau (*French Federation of Speleology-FFS*).

**February Training Internship:** Etienne Fabre and Didier Rateau (*FFS*); Kotchapan Loedtawiwong, Kittipong Palee, Chutikan Sittikot, Phratharine Sopitthammakul, Jeamliga Duangkeawroen, Russarint Siripattarapureenon, Chaiporn Siripornpibul, Jutamas Junpanghern, Itsara Phromta, Surachet Saengsawang, Weerachon Unsen, Piyaporn Hinsang, Patinya Uttha, Thiengthum Chaweenun, Narongrit Boonchaiwong, Suriya Pantawan, and Naruenat Kangwanwong (*DGR/DMR*).

Participation of some Rangers occasionally (*Lam Nkhlong Ngu National Park*).

Special Thanks to Chaiyasit Krusorn (*DMR*)

**End of February to March 5 and end of March:** Marc Bourreau, Claudine and Thierry Masson, Alexis and Didier Rateau, Valentin Bertrand, and Etienne Fabre (*FFS*).

Occasional foreign non-FFS speakers: Ryan Gardner (*NSS*), Emilie Bertrand, Sylvain Mercier, David Templeman, Karn Romyasai, Wataka Pink, John Shepton, and Harris Walter.

For more information:

<https://thailandcavers.fr/>

<http://uis-speleo.org/>

<https://www.ffspeleo.fr>

<https://www.aventureverticale.com/>

<https://www.croque-montagne.fr/>

<https://www.scurion.ch/jm19/en/>

<https://www.cds37.fr/>





## CAVES AND KARST IN DANGER



The village Questenberg in the gypsum landscape of South Harz - PHOTO: M.K.BRUST

# PROTECTED AREAS OF RARE GYPSUM KARST IN GERMANY UNDER THREAT

## *Resolution for the protection of the karst landscape in the southern Harz*

by **Baerbel Vogel** (Germany)  
UIS Adjunct Secretary  
President German Speleological Federation (VdHK)  
[vorsitz@vdhk.de](mailto:vorsitz@vdhk.de)

**Friedhart Knolle** (Germany)  
Editor German Speleological Federation (VdHK)  
[fknoelle@t-online.de](mailto:fknoelle@t-online.de)

**T**he gypsum karst landscape of the southern Harz is a unique natural area that extends over around 100 km and includes parts of the German federal states of Lower Saxony, Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt.

Within this region there are 16 areas protected by European Union Natura 2000 Directive, but also many quarries, which have already destroyed large parts of the landscape. Only in the federal state of Saxony-Anhalt is the gypsum karst still completely intact.

This area has therefore been designated as the ‘South Harz Karst Landscape Biosphere Reserve’ by the German federal state Saxony-Anhalt – so far it is the only relevant biosphere reserve in the world in a sulphate karst!

Despite this outstanding position, central parts of this area could soon be destroyed forever. Citing the coalition agreement of the state government of Saxony-Anhalt, the responsible district of Mansfeld-Südharz plans to approve an application by the gypsum company Knauf to drill eight exploratory boreholes to explore the local gypsum deposits. The government of Saxony-Anhalt has reportedly indicated that it would accept quarries if gypsum mining were to be carried out here.

The German Speleological Federation VdHK published this “Resolution for the protection of the karst landscape in the southern Harz” in September 2024. 15 supporting letters arrived in early October. All were sent to local authorities and ministries.

What makes this landscape so important is its special geological situation. In Germany these are the only sulphate (anhydrite and gypsum) deposits of this form and thickness which extend over a large area and are close to the surface. Furthermore, the southern Harz is the only gypsum karst in the world that is richly forested and the combination of remarkable caves, surface karst landforms and their associated ecosystems make this an excellent candidate as a World Heritage Site. If the gypsum is quarried away, then the potential World Heritage Site will be lost together with its bio- and geotopes. Caves, springs and underground flow paths as well as gypsum biocoenoses would be destroyed here forever as it is impossible to restore destroyed gypsum karst areas.

The area of the planned drilling is not only protected by the Natura 2000 Directive but also as a nature reserve and landscape protection area, as well as a nature park. Quarrying would result in destruction

of the core areas of the biosphere reserve and if these test drillings are not stopped, a precedent will be set for gypsum mining in almost all forms of protected areas in Germany and Natura 2000 protected areas in Europe.

Over the course of several 10,000 years, a gypsum karst landscape with extreme karstification intensity, morphological and biological diversity and uniqueness has emerged in the southern Harz. For this reason, it is part of the German Federal Agency for Nature BfN hotspot areas of biodiversity 18 and 19 and is of outstanding importance for numerous bat species, such as the pug bat *Barbastella barbastellus*, the Brandt’s bat *Myotis brandtii* and *Myotis mystacinus*, and the mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis*, to name just a few.

The structurally rich landscape also provides a habitat for many amphibians such as the fire salamander *Salamandra salamandra*. Other special features include caves like the Questen cave near Questenberg, the highly fluctuating water levels in large sinkholes and poljes, as well as periodic lakes and karst springs. In addition, the southern Harz is characterised by a particularly rich groundwater fauna and groundwater habitats worthy of protection.

In addition to the Natura 2000 habitat types and species, other species with a special protection obligation also occur here. For example, the creeping gypsophila *Gypsophila repens* and the slender cotton grass *Eriophorum gracile* grow here. The slender cotton grass is considered to be threatened with extinction throughout Europe. And the lichens also have something special to offer, such as the colourful soil lichen community or the extremely rare *Psora saviczii*, whose German name ‘Gips-Erdschorf’ (gypsum soil scab) already indicates the special growing place.

**We vehemently oppose any new mining project in the gypsum karst of the southern Harz region.**



Locations of the 8 planned test drillings (in yellow) of the Knauf Company - in red protected areas. SOURCE: KNAUF



Gypsumkarst South Harz  
PHOTO: ELKE BLANKE / BUND NORDHAUSEN

#### WE ASSERT THAT:

- The state of Saxony-Anhalt must recognise and accept its responsibility for the internationally significant gypsum karst landscape in the South Harz and protect it accordingly. Protected areas must be respected, whether under German legislation or the European Natura 2000 Directive.

- The state of Saxony-Anhalt should not allow any further destruction of the gypsum karst, not only because of the adverse impacts on biotopes and geotopes but because it will impede future development of the region as a tourist destination.

- The state should instead promote future- and climate-oriented plants and companies that produce alternatives to building plaster. Building materials made from renewable materials such as plant fibres and recycled minerals have been on the market for a long time.

The German Speleological Federation is very grateful for the support of the resolution by the:

- International Union of Speleology (UIS);
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)/World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA)/Geoheritage Specialist Group (GSG)/Caves and Karst Working Group (CKWG);
- UIS Karst and Cave Protection Commission;
- European Cave Protection Commission;
- Association for Research, Promotion and Protection of Karst Landscapes;
- Italian Institute of Speleology;
- Speleological Committee of Croatia Mountaineering Association;
- Italian Speleological Society;
- Austrian Speleological Association, and many more.

UIS President Nadja Zupan Hajna wrote on behalf of the UIS: *“The gypsum karst of the South Harz is not only of national importance, but also of global value due to its rare geological formations, including hypogene caves, and its rich biodiversity. The potential destruction of this landscape, especially in a protected biosphere reserve, sets a dangerous precedent for the exploitation of other protected areas in Germany and beyond.”*

John Gunn, Chair of IUCN Caves and Karst Working Group, stated on behalf of the IUCN/WCPA GSG Cave and Karst Working Group: *“In 2023 I was able to visit some of the hypogenic caves in the same area which are developed in both anhydrite and gypsum. The caves are of very high scientific interest and amongst the most spectacular that I have ever seen, not for speleothems or huge passages but for the morphological variety and the beauty of the rock in which they have formed.”*

Paolo Forti, UIS Past President 2013-2017, explained on behalf of the Italian Institute of Speleology: *“I have carried out a detailed bibliographic survey of the 10 areas with sulphate karst most important in our planet. Obviously, the evaporitic karst area of South Harz was among these areas and in my humble opinion it could also aspire to become a new World Heritage in the future.”*

Together we are strong for cave protection – if you would like to support this resolution, please send it to Baerbel Vogel, President VdHK via [vorsitz@vdhk.de](mailto:vorsitz@vdhk.de).

For further information see

<https://www.vdhk.de/en/protected-areas-and-geoparks>

## EPIDEMIC IN CAVE FAUNA

# WHITE-NOSE SYNDROME AND AUSTRALIAN CAVE DWELLING BATS

## *Keep Australia free of the WNS fungus*

by

 Nicholas White - [nicholaswhite1943@gmail.com](mailto:nicholaswhite1943@gmail.com)

 K Cox-Witton - [kcox-witton@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au](mailto:kcox-witton@wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au)

 J Hufschmid - [huj@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:huj@unimelb.edu.au)

**B**iosecurity measures are an essential part of protecting Australia from exotic diseases of commercial and wild animals. Currently Australia is free of the fungus that causes White-nose Syndrome (WNS). Introduction of the fungus could threaten Australia's cave dwelling bats, particularly in the southern and south-eastern portion of Australia. These bats are already impacted by other threats such as drought, bushfire and the landscape change from human settlement and agriculture. Some, like the Southern Bent-winged Bat, are listed as Critically Endangered.

To protect Australia's bats, it is important to prevent the introduction of the WNS fungus. The Australian Speleological Federation, Wildlife Health Australia and the Australian Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry are working together towards this aim.

The fungus causing WNS, *Pseudogymnoascus destructans*, devastated North American cave dwelling bats when first detected in New York in 2006. It has spread and has killed millions of bats of a range of species. The fungus is cold-loving and infects hibernating bats. The fungus can be spread by bats, but cavers can also inadvertently spread it on contaminated clothing, footwear and equipment.

Studies have shown that the fungus is widespread from Europe through to China but without the mass mortalities seen in North America, indicating the resistance exhibited in these species evolved with the fungus over a long period of time. Australia is currently free of the fungus but has cave dwelling bats which are immunologically "naïve", indicating these have never been exposed to the fungus, as was the case in North America. The south and south-east of Australia has cave temperatures permissive for WNS fungal growth in bats.

The cave-dwelling bats of southern and south-eastern Australia are the Southern Bent-winged Bat (*Miniopterus orianae bassanii*), Eastern Bent-winged Bat (*Miniopterus orianae oceanensis*), and the Eastern Horseshoe Bat (*Rhinolophus megaphyllus*). Other bats do not occur in large numbers as cave dwellers and have wider distributions in warmer areas.

The Southern Bent-winged Bat (SBWB) is critically endangered, and the Eastern Bent-winged Bat has



*Little brown bat exhibiting infection with White-nose Syndrome fungus* - PHOTO ARCHIVE M MARVIN US FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE - <https://www.fws.gov/>

also been declared critically endangered in Victoria and is classed as endangered further north in New South Wales and Queensland. Protection of these species is vitally important, and land managers and government agencies are involved in biosecurity and response planning, such as for the Naracoorte Caves National Park which has a major maternity cave of the SBWB. Research is also being conducted to better understand the risk of WNS to Australian bats.

Cavers play a vital role in protecting Australian bats from WNS. Cavers coming from a country where the fungus does not cause significant disease could still introduce it to Australia, where it could have a devastating impact on Australian bats. This can be prevented by visiting cavers not bringing in clothing, footwear or caving gear that has been used in other countries. If clothing, footwear or gear are to be brought into Australia, there are US decontamination guidelines that can be followed: <https://www.whitenosesyndrome.org/mmedia-education/national-wns-decontamination-protocol-u-s>.

Wildlife Health Australia has a number of resources available, including a fact sheet, how to report a suspect case, and guidelines for bat research in caves: <https://wildlifehealthaustralia.com.au/Resource-Centre/Bat-Health>.

## UIS HISTORY IN FOCUS

# ONLY TWO COUNTRIES

*Ready to host the UIS congress a second time, Brazil will occupy a prominent position on the world map of speleology*

By Nivaldo Colzato (Brazil)

UIS Vice-President of Operations / UIS Bulletin Editor

19<sup>th</sup> ICS - UIS Relations

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*As difficult as it is to organize the UIS congress, it is almost as hard to be granted the right to organize it. Being selected to host such an event in 2001 and again in 2025, Brazil joins the USA as the only countries that have had the privilege to host two.*

## INTRODUCTION

Organizing the International Congress of Speleology (ICS) of the UIS is no small task, much less an easy one. Held every four years, the ICS is a multifaceted event that brings together a wide range of themes, specialties and practices. Its audience, usually from more than 50 countries, is made up of renowned experts of speleological science, professionals from related fields, academics, students, or simply cave lovers, with their own identities, languages and customs, who interact at the ICSs for a single passion: the underground world.

Whoever is qualified to organize such an event needs to understand this dynamic in order to offer these people a structure and operation that is appropriate to their needs and expectations.

Therefore, whether due to complexity or size, organizing an ICS is a major challenge. On the other hand, those who take on this task put their country in the spotlight on the world speleology map. Hosting two editions of an ICS is an honor reserved for a very select group of privileged countries.

To date, only the United States has effectively organized two UIS congresses (Bowling Green 1981 and Kerrville 2009). France organized the first ICS in 1953, when the UIS did not yet exist, and the 18<sup>th</sup> in 2022, as a UIS congress. In the case of the Czech Republic, although the city of Olomouc—which hosted the 6<sup>th</sup> ICS in 1973—is located on its territory, at the time of the event it belonged to “another” country, Czechoslovakia.

Thus, with the 13<sup>th</sup> ICS (Brasília 2001) and now the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS in 2025, Brazil will join the USA and become the second country to host two editions of the UIS congress.



Getting to the point that the UIS General Assembly (GA) approves a country to host its main event takes time, usually years, of dedication, persistence, behind-the-scenes negotiations, and the right timing to present (or withdraw) the candidacy.

Above all, teamwork and professionalism are needed to, in the end, gain the trust of the international community, the UIS Bureau, and the Delegates who represent the member countries and vote in the GA that defines the host of the world’s premier speleological event. Although the importance of this trust is not always recognized, it deserves great appreciation.

## SUPPORT AND SPONSORSHIP: THE GUARANTEES OF THE EVENT

Once the grant to organize has been obtained, the most challenging stage begins, which is the construction of the event itself. At this moment of transition, two questions emerge and deserve reflection: why would a country be willing to organize an ICS? Going further, what makes it want to organize it a second time?

The simplest answer, at first glance, lies in the collaborative essence of speleology itself and the passion it instills in those who dedicate themselves to it.

Those who are willing to undertake a challenge of this magnitude, in addition to their love for exploring, studying and preserving caves and karst, cultivate within themselves an institutional attachment, a will to work for the collective and for the development of both speleological science and the associations that represent it.

It is true that these requirements are in the essence of the Brazilians responsible for the two proposals, but this is not enough.

Before requesting these events for Brazil, these people sought the fundamental guarantees that effectively make the congress viable. Support and sponsorship, therefore, are the “magic” words, without which the event simply does not happen. This was the case in 2001 and has been repeated now. When Brazil officially presented its bid to host the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS in 2025, the following support, on behalf of the Brazilian Speleological Society, was already guaranteed, without which the proposal would not have been presented:

- of the Brazilian speleological community as a whole
- of the UIS itself
- of numerous scientific associations throughout the country
- of the federal government, through ICMBio/CECAV
- of the State Government of Minas Gerais
- of the City of Belo Horizonte

With regard to sponsorship—an essential item that can be translated as funding—a good initial amount was obtained, not actually from financing, but from the Speleological Compensation Commitment Term (TCGE CECAV/VALE N° 1/2022) signed between the Vale do Rio Doce Mining Company and the National Center for Research and Conservation of Caves (ICMBio/CECAV).

This amount gave the Organizing Committee considerable support, but it was not enough to fund the ideal project, that is, to offer a participation fee that was accessible to people of all levels of speleology, from renowned scientists to young enthusiastic students and cavers. Because an ICS must be, above all, the ultimate celebration of world speleology at all its levels of activity or knowledge.

Over time, important sponsorships were secured, thus ensuring not only low registration costs, but also several other benefits, especially for Full Category, whose registrants will be entitled to the Wednesday excursion, the Closing Banquet, printed proceedings,

a bag, mug, t-shirt, and pin, all of them at no extra cost. To give an idea, the cost of these items for the congress is higher than the price of the promotional registration, which is R\$600 or €100, valid until January 31, 2025.

This is undoubtedly a great achievement, but the challenges are endless. Less than seven months before the event opens, the Organizing Committee continues to work hard on the layout and distribution of the facilities in the nearly 23,000 m<sup>2</sup> available at the Minascentro Convention Center, the venue of the event.

The assembly is complex and involves professionals from engineering, decoration, painting, logistics, security, IT, communications, health, food, and other areas. Not to mention the installation of the SpeleOlympics circuit, which requires a detailed engineering and safety plan to function properly and without risks to competitors.

The auditoriums, meeting rooms, exhibition areas, and other places that will house all the event’s content, whether in the scientific, sports or leisure fields, are in the final stages of development and specialized companies are being contracted.

The rules, notices and manuals for the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS are available on the website with all requirements, deadlines and detailed guidelines for participating in competitions, submitting papers, and other event activities, as below. Click on the name to access the respective document.

[Photo Salon Regulations](#)

[Cartographic Salon Regulations](#)

[SpeleMedia/Video Contest Regulations](#)

[Sponsor and Exhibitor Manual](#)

[Notice to Pre- and Post-Congress Participants](#)

[Scientific Paper Template](#)



**JULY 1997:** Well-coordinated hard work by the Brazilian Delegation at the 12<sup>th</sup> ICS (La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland) resulted in Brazil’s selection to host the 13<sup>th</sup> ICS in 2001. The success of this event put Brazil on the world speleology map and ended up contributing to its selection to host the UIS Congress for the second time in 2025. PHOTO ARCHIVE JOSÉ AYRTON LABEGALINI

In addition to the event program on the venue, the coordinators of the 25 itineraries available for pre- and post-congress excursions—some of which have already been filled—are looking forward to welcoming those who have registered for these trips. Along the routes, participants will have the opportunity not only to learn and enjoy our rich and diverse speleological heritage, but our cultural diversity, and our delicious cuisine too.

Everything is being prepared with great care and dedication so that, just as in 2001, the congress participants will return home taking with them great memories, both of the congress and its organization and of the renowned hospitality of the Brazilian people.

For those who intend to present paper but have not yet registered, remember that the deadline for submission is January 20<sup>th</sup>.

### FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If Brazil is organizing a UIS congress for the second time, it is because its speleological community has people who believe in unity and the strengthening of institutions as tools for long-lasting achievements in favor of caves, karst, and speleology itself.

These ideals were what brought the 13<sup>th</sup> ICS (2001) and the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS (2025) to Brazil, both of which having received fundamental supports and sponsorships, with emphasis on the partnership between the Brazilian Speleological Society (SBE) and the National Center for Research and Conservation of Caves (ICM-Bio/CECAV).

On July 27, 2025, when the UIS flag is lowered, folded, and handed over to the organizer of the 20<sup>th</sup> ICS 2029, it will be confirmed that Brazil and the USA are the only countries privileged to have hosted two editions of the ICS within the scope of the UIS.

The long and challenging journey will not be over yet because we will still have the post-congress excursions. One more week and the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS will be officially over. With all the dedication, enthusiasm, hospitality, support and sponsorship involved in this bold project, it will have the same success as SPELEOBRAZIL 2001.

May it be so!

**IMPORTANT:**

**For those who intend to present paper, remember that the deadline for submission is January 20.**

**Also, the deadline for registrations with a 75% discount is January 31. So register soon!**



# 19<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SPELEOLOGY

## 38<sup>th</sup> Brazilian Congress of Speleology

20-27 July 2025 - BELO HORIZONTE - MINAS GERAIS - BRAZIL



[www.speleo2025.org](http://www.speleo2025.org)

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# 19<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF SPELEOLOGY

## 38<sup>th</sup> Brazilian Congress of Speleology

20-27 July 2025 - BELO HORIZONTE - MINAS GERAIS - BRAZIL

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[www.speleo2025.org](http://www.speleo2025.org)

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- 16 Wednesday Excursions
- Photo Salon
- Cartographic Salon
- Art Salon (SpeleoArt)
- SpeleMedia
- SpeleOlympics
- UIS 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party
- Michel Le Bret Awards Party
- Congress Awards Party
- UIS Awards Party
- Banquet and closing ceremony
- Printed Proceedings
- Congress bag with many souvenirs

Except for pre- and post-congress trips, which must be paid separately, all other events and benefits will be available – at no additional cost – for participants registered in the FULL CATEGORY.

For those registered in the Partial Category it is possible to purchase Wednesday Excursion (€50), the printed Proceedings (€100), and the Closing Banquet (€50) separately.

Take advantage of this exceptional opportunity. Visit the congress website and secure your registration at the lowest price.

The Brazilian hospitality and its exuberant karst in six different biomes are waiting for you and your family.

Website (for registration) - <https://www.speleo2025.org>

### FULL REGISTRATION FEE

Early Registration - € 100 - until January 31  
Intermediate Registration - € 130 - from February 1<sup>st</sup> to March 15  
Regular Registration - € 200 - from March 16 to June 30  
Late Registration - € 400 - From July 1<sup>st</sup> to the congress

### PARTIAL REGISTRATION FEE

Early Registration - € 60 - until January 31  
Intermediate Registration - € 80 - from February 1<sup>st</sup> to March 15  
Regular Registration - € 120 - from March 16 to June 30  
Late Registration - € 240 - From July 1<sup>st</sup> to the congress



Cave of São Mateus III, Terra Ronca, São Domingos, Goiás, Included in the pre-congress program PRE-11 TERRA RONCA COMPLEX AND CAVES OF GOIÁS (GO) - Complete description of the program on page 50 of the [19<sup>th</sup> ICS Second Circular](#).

PHOTO JOSÉ HUMBERTO M. DE PAULA



# CASA ITALIA

## A new way designed and created by the Italian Speleological Society to participate in International Congresses of Speleology

by Paolo Forti (Italy)

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Italian speleology has participated in all the International Speleology Congresses (ICS) starting with the first held in Paris in 1953. In all of them its contribution has always been important not only from a scientific point of view but often also from an organizational and proactive point of view.

Starting from the 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress, held in Le Bourget-du-Lac in France from 24 to 31 July 2022, the Italian Speleological Society (SSI) decided to create a fixed installation, called “**Casa Italia**” (Fig. 1).

This space only had the function of a meeting point for all the Italian speleologists who had registered for the Congress, but also, and we would say above all, it had to serve to present the current state of Italian speleology to all the participants in the event.

Therefore, in the rooms made available by the organizers of the Congress (an independent space of approximately 300 m<sup>2</sup>) there were: a projection room for films and lectures (Fig. 2) and two rooms dedicated to 3 exhibitions on very different themes, organized by the SSI itself (Fig. 3).

The first exhibition entitled “**Speluncarum Mirabilia**” (Speleological Wonders) (Fig. 4, 5) presented, through all original materials (paintings, prints, jewels, ivories, stamps, books etc.), an exhaustive panorama of the works inspired by the speleological world and created between the 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries by artists and artisans outside the narrow circle of “cave experts.”

The second and third exhibitions were based on posters in collaboration with the Emilia-Romagna Region. They presented two other peculiar aspects of human activity underground.

The first, entitled “**Usi Impropri**” (Improper Uses), described from a bird’s eye view the other numerous human activities that may take place inside natural and/or artificial cavities, but which speleologists consider improper because they believe caves are their “exclusive realm.”

The second, entitled “**Gessi & Solfi**” (Gypsum & Sulphur), specifically dealt with a particular aspect of the underground (the mines) which nowadays in Italy are increasingly attracting the interest of cavers for their rediscovery as underground environments.

For each of these exhibitions an explanatory booklet was printed in 3 languages (Italian, French, and English) to be given free of charge to all those who visited them (Fig. 6, 7).

Furthermore, exhibitions and posters from individual Italian associations also found space, including the contributions provided by *La Venta Esplorazioni Geografiche* and the *Pugliese Speleological Federation*.

For the entire period of the congress, films and slides alternated in the projection room on important events and explorations carried out by Italian speleologists both at home and abroad.



Fig.1: Entrance of the “Casa Italia” building at the 18<sup>th</sup> ICS in Le Bourget-du-Lac, France (July 2022). PHOTO PAOLO FORTI

All the activities carried out had an excellent reception from the Congress participants, so much so that, in the end, the great majority of the Congress members had stopped by at least once to visit *Casa Italia* and 210 of them, coming from 29 different countries, wrote particularly flattering comments in the visitors register.

Therefore, given the undeniable success achieved in France, the Italian Speleological Society decided to replicate “*Casa Italia*” at the Belo Horizonte Congress as well. Thanks to the enthusiastic collaboration of the Organizing Committee, we are already confident that we will have a venue even more prestigious and central than the previous Congress and, most importantly, just as large.

Although it is too early to draw up a detailed program, it is already certain that three new exhibitions will be presented.

The first, totally based on authentic objects created between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, refers to the iconography of the most represented cave in the world: Fingal Sea cave in Scotland (Fig. 8).

The second will focus the original drawings made by the caver Veronica Chiarini for the volume “*Le Forme del Vuoto*” (The Shape of the Void) (Fig. 9, 10), which represents a new way of looking at caves at the moment of their exploration and which, in Italy, has already sold almost 2,000 copies in less than a year.

The third exhibition will be entirely based on posters and will introduce a more in-depth knowledge of the Caves in the Evaporites of Emilia Romagna and why, in September 2023, they were inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage List as the first, and to date only, gypsum karst site of our planet (Fig. 10).



**Fig. 4:** Paolo Forti, the organizer of the *Speluncarum Mirabilia* exhibition, beside some of the paintings on display.  
PHOTO SERGIO ORSINI



**Fig. 2:** The projection and/or lectures room. PHOTO SSI ARCHIVE



**Fig. 3:** Partial view of the large room where two of the three exhibitions were arranged. PHOTO SSI ARCHIVE



**Fig. 5:** Brochure created in English and French for the *Speluncarum Mirabilia* exhibition.



**Fig. 6 and 7:** The covers of the two catalogs, printed in three languages, created for the other two exhibitions based on posters. Left the one on “*Usi Impropri*” and right the one on “*Gessi e Solfi*.”

For this reason, the SSI decided, in collaboration with the Brazilian Speleological Society, to produce English and Portuguese editions specifically for the Brazilian Congress, where they will be given as gifts to all full Participants.

Of course, there will still be screenings of new films, conferences and other activities that both the

various SSI commissions and the Italian speleological groups will decide to organize on their own in the coming months.

We are therefore sure that “*Casa Italia*” will be, as already happened two years ago in France, one of the attractions of the 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology in Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

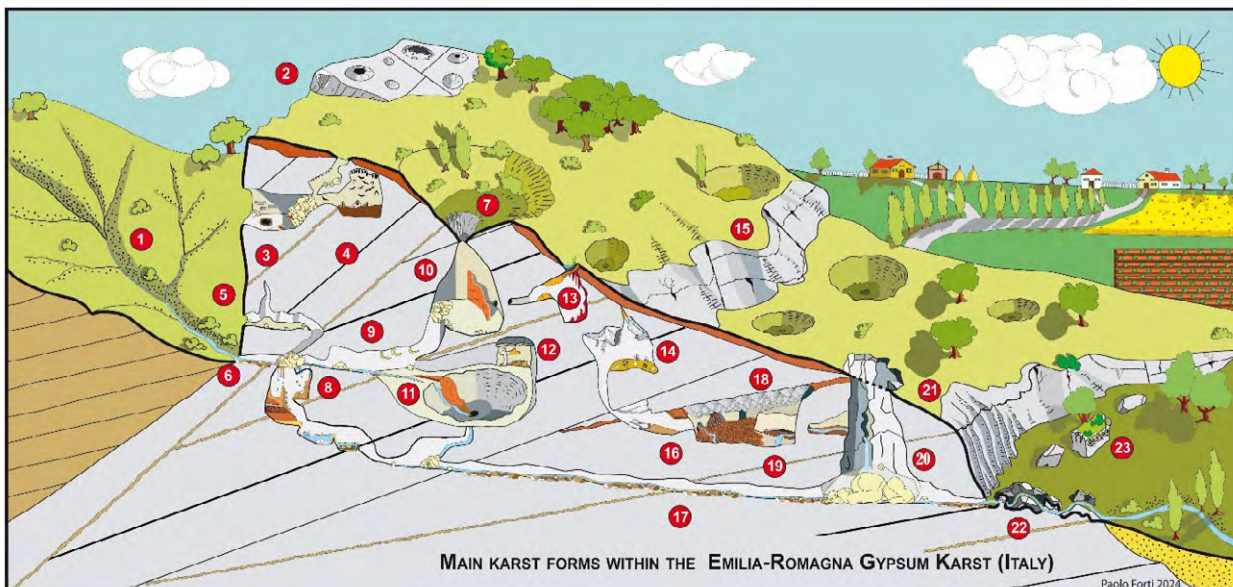


**Fig. 8:** Left: a magic lantern slide painted on glass inside a mahogany frame from the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century; on the right, a Liebig figurine of the entrance of Fingal Cave from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



**Fig. 9 and 10:** One of the original drawings by Veronica Chiarini and alongside the cover of the Italian volume by Jo De Waele & Veronica Chiarini of which the Portuguese and English edition will be printed for the Congress.

The third exhibition will consist on posters and will introduce to a deeper knowledge of the Evaporites Caves of Emilia Romagna and why, in September 2023, they were inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage.



**Fig. 11:** Diagram illustrating all the main epigeal and hypogean forms present in the gypsum karst areas of Emilia Romagna.

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Union Internationale  
de Spéléologie  
www.uis-speleo.org

# UIS BUREAU MEETING

August 11, 2024 (9:30 am–01:00 pm, 02:00 pm–05:00 pm - GMT +7)

Faculty of Geography, University Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

IN PRESENCE AND ONLINE

Minutes & List of Actions/Decisions compiled by **Mario PARISE** - Revised by **Johannes MATTES**

## ATTENDANCE

**President:** *Nadja ZUPAN HAJNA*

**Vice-President of Administration:** *Zdeněk MOTYČKA*

**Vice-President of Operations:** *Nivaldo COLZATO*

**Secretary General:** *Johannes MATTES*

**Treasurer:** *Mladen GARAŠIĆ*

**Adjunct Secretaries:**

*José-Maria CALAFORRA*

*Gerard CAMPION*

*Marc MENTENS*

*Mario PARISE*

*Nathalia Vanessa UASAPUD ENRÍQUEZ (virtually)*

*Bärbel VOGEL (virtually)*

**Past-Presidents:**

*Andy EAVIS*

*José Ayrton LABEGALINI*

*George VENI*

**Guests:**

*Jean-Pierre BARTHOLEYNS*

*(President of the UIS Commission on Cave and Karst Protection)*

**Excused:**

*Patricia SEISER (Adjunct Secretary)*

## 1) Opening Session - President welcoming introduction / Approval of Agenda

*(N. Zupan Hajna)*

The UIS President opened the meeting by welcoming bureau members commenting that it was good to see everybody since the last meeting. The agenda was formally approved. Mario Parise is in charge of the minutes of today meeting.

## 2. Review Action Items and Decisions of previous UIS Bureau Meeting (04/2024) – Decisions to be made on follow up un-accomplished actions

**a. Working-Group UIS List on Endangered Caves and Karst Features** *(B. Vogel, J.-M. Calaforra, M. Parise, P. Seiser)*

**b. Bärbel Vogel** reports that, following an online meeting where it was decided to prepare a form to distribute among the delegates to collect news from the different countries, nothing has been done yet. Mario Parise adds that in early September he will have an oral presentation on this issue at the Italian Congress of the Italian Geological Society, in Bari (co-authors: Vogel, Calaforra, Seiser, Zupan Hajna).

A discussion follows on the need to prepare the form as soon as possible. Bärbel and Nathalia will work on this.

**ACTION 1: Working Group needs to work on this issue and to prepare the form.**

**c. Final report of the International Year of Caves and Karst** *(G. Veni)*

George Veni sent a report, stating that 1124 events were counted, while still 247 others are missing in the historical archive of the website. The number of people participating is about 6 million. The events involved 263 partners from 51 countries and 23 international organizations.

**d. Vote on two new categories for UIS awards for long-term distinguished service and intermediate/young speleologists** *(J. Mattes)*

In the last meeting Johannes Mattes suggested two new awards, with medals made by UIS. The Bureau votes on this proposal, and approves it.

**DECISION 1: The Bureau votes on this proposal, and approves it.**

Zdenek Motycka notes that the text should be presented to the next General Assembly, providing it in advance to delegates.

**e. Official Report of the 18<sup>th</sup> ICS by the French organizing committee** *(J. Mattes, N. Zupan Hajna)*

The revised version of the report (in French) does not contain the requested information on the financial aspects of the congress. The French organizers did not adhere to the UIS Congress guidelines or reporting requirements, and did not fulfill their duties in terms of financial obligations.

Therefore, there was no income for UIS from the percentage linked with congress registration. Nadja Zupan Hajna will mention this in the President's column in the Bulletin.

**DECISION 2: Bureau members agree on Nadja Zupan Hajna's proposal.**

## 3. Finance Update *(M. Garašić)*

The UIS currently has a balance of **37.628,31 EUR**, and **50.687,93 US dollars**. Some countries have continued to default on payment of subscriptions, including France. All the countries were listed in the Bulletin. No money has been received from the French Speleological Federation (FFS) regarding the last ICS.

Paying the financial support of last call, at the end we will have about **33.000 EUR**.

We are in a positive financial position, but we will have to think about the future.

Nadja Zupan Hajna suggests to have a zoom meeting with FFS to know what they intend to do.

**ACTION 2: Johannes Mattes will arrange the meeting with FFS in the second half of September – beginning of October.**

## 4. UIS Bureau business

Short updates and reports *(President, Vice-Presidents, Secretary General, Adjunct Secretaries)*

## a. UNESCO & International Day of Caves and Karst

(N. Zupan Hajna)

### i. Status & updates

### ii. Letter from ISCA

Nadja Zupan Hajna presents the work she did as concerns the International Day of Caves and Karst: she thanks John Gunn and Paul Griffiths for reviewing the proposal she prepared, originally sent to all national delegates and the main international and regional organizations. The proposal is more or less complete, with the exception of a sentence in red (karst soils), that we should discuss if to incorporate it or not. This is the draft version, we can then take a decision in the next Bureau meeting. All Bureau members must read it carefully to achieve this goal, since we have to cover all aspects of karst and caves, and make efforts to emphasize everything. After vote, we will send it to UNESCO for check.

Nadja Zupan Hajna illustrates the structure of the proposal. It is important to point out why this day is different from the others, already established by UNESCO.

**ACTION 3: All Bureau members should read and comment on the proposal.**

Still on the issue of the International Day, Nadja Zupan Hajna moves to show the ppt presentation that will be presented tomorrow at the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference. We have received support from only nine UIS members so far.

We need letter of support from national and regional institutions, and Nadja invites all UIS members to try to get as many letters as they can. Slovenia will be the applicant but it would be good to have as applicant other countries, especially if they are outside Europe.

The final vote will occur on November 2025 at the General UNESCO Assembly.

We will work to go to UNESCO in Paris on this November or on April 2025. We need to use all our contacts to let countries know that they need to vote on it. Nadja Zupan Hajna is traveling to Canada (BC) in September on Haida Gwaii (Queen Charlotte Islands) where indigenous people live in karst, and will present the proposal to them in order to have them as supporters or co-applicants. Further, she asks the UIS Bureau members to discuss the opportunities to have a letter from this congress to support it.

As regards the relationship with ISCA and their proposal about the International Day, they celebrate June 6, and would like to negotiate with UIS Bureau regarding their proposals.

**DECISION 3: Bureau members agree that Nadja Zupan Hajna is empowered to answer the ISCA President about the IDCK proposal.**

In addition, Nadja Zupan Hajna reports that she worked to prepare the proposal for UNESCO through many meetings and zooms. She was in Morocco with Zdenek Motycka, and then had a meeting with New Zealand speleological associations, and at the Balkan Camp, always to highlight the initiative. She also presented it at the Karstological School in Postojna, in June 2024.

She informs the Bureau that the UIS is now registered at the Slovenian Portal for publishers at the National and University Library where now any book or ebook produced by UIS can get an ISBN through the portal, since we are now registered as publisher in Slovenia.

Nadja Zupan Hajna thanks Nivaldo Colzato, Nathalia Uasapud and Marc Mentens for their work in preparing the Bulletin and for representing UIS at several meetings, Johannes Mattes for his work with delegates, Peter Matthews and Jasmina for their technical support.

## b. Other reports

**Zdenek Motycka:** Besides accompanying Nadja in several meetings about the UNESCO day, he will talk later on about his duties with the Commissions, and on the archive.

**Nivaldo Colzato:** Two issues of the Bulletins have been released. He is very happy with the content, seeing that organizers of events/expeditions supported by the UIS are now more concerned they have the responsibilities to publish reports in the Bulletin. The Guidelines have been translated in 28 languages, already published in the UIS website.

It is his opinion that we need to improve the Bulletin, in terms of graphic and content, and to promote events such as the International Day. We need to improve the general communication with the media, we maybe too old fashioned in our communication. The Bulletin is only one product in the overall UIS communication.

**Bärbel Vogel** was very pleased with Nivaldo's overview of the Bulletin's topics and suggested adding two more categories: biology and UN related topics.

**Nivaldo Colzato** informed that, after 11 years and 20 issues under his responsibility, it is time to change the editor of the UIS Bulletin. Therefore, he will edit the next two issues (Volumes 66-2 and 67-1), after which he will step down as editor.

**Johannes Mattes** says that, as Secretary General, most of his work involves replying to requests and processing applications. However, he also drafted the successful ISC membership proposal with support from Nadja and collaborated with Nathalia Uasapud and Simone Sambento on the guidelines for social and gender equality.

**Ged Champion** attended the EuroSpeleo in Germany, where he stepped down from his role of FSE President. He further assisted Johannes Mattes to update contact with the delegates, and worked with Ferdinando Didonna to include more Mediterranean countries in the Speleomedit network. Together with Andy Eavis, he tried to give more visibility to UIS in the UK.

**Marc Mentens** obtained some donation from sponsors to use in the next congress in Philippines. In Morocco he is working for an expedition to send the material and avoid any transfer costs. He prepared some material for the congress in Indonesia, and in Malaysia donated some material at the beginning of the year. As concerns his task to find other connections with some countries, in Mongolia we need a new contact since nobody is replying to the email, while there is no contact at the moment with Tajikistan.

**Mario Parise** reports he has been active in increasing the visibility of UIS in Italy, and, as before mentioned, has been working in the Group for Endangered Caves and Karst for the paper to be presented at the Congress of the Italian Geological Society. Further, he was in June 2024 one of the chairmen of the international congress Eurokarst, that was held in Rome, with over 230 participations; on that occasion, Mario has advertised the next congress in Belo Horizonte, on behalf of the Brazilian colleagues.

**Nathalia Uasapud** attended the Colombian congress where the next congress was presented by the Brazilian organizers. She was contacted to film a movie in caves but this is quite a problem here for existing regulations.

**José-Maria Calaforra** reports that the Spanish Federation of Speleology has not been in existence for the past ten years, due to economic problems. In October we will have a new president, and probably will adhere in the future to UIS.

**Bärbel Vogel** has been working on the biology commission, where it was agreed to have butterflies as animal of the year. Further, she was following with Ferdinando Didonna and George Veni issues at UN. While Ferdinando lived in Nairobi, where he could provide important UNEP contacts and input. Now he has moved back to Costa Rica. For the international day, she contacted the German Federation.

**Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns**, present as the President of UIS Commission on Cave and Karst Protection, agrees with what was stated by Mario Parise, about the fact that many cavers do not know about UIS, and says that we should ask delegates to work on that. Johannes Mattes confirms he will do that.

## 5. UIS Media

### a. UIS Bulletin (N. Colzato)

Nivaldo Colzato summarized the activities for the UIS Bulletin in the previous point.

### b. UIS website, social media, and Guidelines for Cave and Karst Protection (N. Colzato, N. Uasapud Enríquez)

**Nathalia Uasapud** adds that UIS has now more followers on Facebook, but the situation is not so good for Instagram. We need to post more material on the media. Nathalia Uasapud added the expeditions to the UIS Calendar.

**Bärbel Vogel** says that in Germany they had the same problems, and one idea was to have a competition of best cave picture of the month. She proposed to contact the UIS Arts and Letters Commission to take that task for UIS.

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** suggests we publish the short movie after the UIS visit to UNESCO, and invites to start thinking to the logo for the International Day.

**Marc Mentens** suggests sending to the social media some material from UIS Bureau trip to Mulu and from the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference as well.

**Nivaldo Colzato** adds that, as concerns the website, we should have more info about the UIS history and the prizes. Further, he notices that the website design is not modern, and should be more dynamic. Eventually, he informs that we will have a new website for the Arts and Letters Commission, to be linked with UIS website. The same for Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns for a new project, whose facebook page (run by the Cave Protection Commission) will be populated by the cavers participating to the project.

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** suggests including the news about the endangered caves and karst in the latest news.

As **Nathalia** mentioned a request of a movie company on cave protection, **Bärbel Vogel** said, that cave protection information is missing on the UIS website and it would be good to have an overview of the main topics as well as links to studies.

## LUNCH BREAK

## 6. UIS Relationships with Regional Organizations and Countries

### a. Member countries: Mongolia, Tajikistan, Morocco, etc.

(M. Mentens)

**Marc Mentens** informs that we still have problems with Mongolia and Tajikistan, we need to have new contact address. With Morocco we have now very good relationships, after our visit there. They also sent the letter of support for the International Day.

### b. Recent updates regarding UIS delegates (G. Campion)

Given the importance of the international day of caves and karst proposal, **Ged Campion** explains that he has tried to chase delegates whose contact details have changed and illustrates the main difficulties with some countries (Ukraine, after Klimchouk's death; Portugal, with three federations, etc.).

### c. Regional organizations: FSE, FEALC, NSS, AUS (meeting during conference), Balkan Speleological Union (Zoom meeting requested)

Thailand is not a UIS member, we should try in the next days to talk with people from Thailand. Delegates from Vietnam were contacted but did not respond at all.

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** indicates the need to have more contacts in Africa to get new members, especially because we are supporting some expeditions there.

**Ged Campion** suggests that at the next FSE general assembly (in Italy in November), further efforts should be done to engage delegates, since **Nadja Zupan Hajna**, **Mario Parise**, **José Ayrton Labe-galini**, and **Nivaldo Colzato** will attend the meeting.

As for FEALC, **Nathalia Uasapud** informs of informal meeting during the 3<sup>rd</sup> Colombian Congress of Speleology in June 2024, a coming virtual meeting with delegates, and of a meeting in Cuba, next January.

Tomorrow the Bureau will have a meeting with the Asian Union of Speleology.

Eventually, the Balkan Speleological Union has asked an on-line meeting with the Bureau.

**ACTION 4: We will try to have new contacts with cavers from the countries where we had no reply, or difficulties in contacts.**

**ACTION 5: Johannes Mattes will schedule the meeting with the Balkan Speleological Union.**

## 7. UIS Relationships with International Organizations

### a. International Science Council & ISC GeoUnions

(N. Zupan Hajna, J. Mattes)

UIS became category 1 member in April in the ISC, and we are very proud of that. The ISC recognized the opportunity that speleology in many countries can be acknowledged as a science, and not simply a sporting activity. **Nadja Zupan Hajna** and **Johannes Mattes** plan to go to Oman for the next General Assembly.

### b. Standing Committee for Gender Equality in Science

(J. Mattes, Uasapud Enríquez)

#### i. SCGES Working Group on Best Practices

**Johannes Mattes** and **Nathalia Uasapud** became representatives of the SCGES, and **Simone Sambento** member of the SCGES working group on best practices. They attended SCGES meetings and accomplished a survey on social and gender equality. They found out that almost no country has established guidelines on social and gender equality even though many are discussing it. The working group is planning to publish a short report of 1-2 pages in the next UIS Bulletin.

#### ii. UIS Guidelines for Social and Gender Equality

(J. Mattes, S. Sambento, N. Uasapud Enríquez)

**Zdenek Motycka** states there is no need of approval by the General Assembly, since some guidelines such as those for financial event support are decided by the Bureau.

**Mario Parise** agrees with the idea, but is afraid about the point where we ask member countries for reports; he thinks this should be avoided since it may be difficult to get such reports.

**Bärbel Vogel** would like to add a paragraph on Social and Gender Equality within the UIS Bureau.

**ACTION 6: Zdenek Motycka and Bärbel Vogel will send their additions and suggestions to Johannes Mattes.**

### c. Bärbel asks to talk about the work of the Committee on International Governance

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** replied that the name of the committee has to be changed because it can lead to misunderstandings.

**Bärbel** reported that the group members agreed not to focus on the UN Major Group because this year's topics were not urgent for cave protection input. Ferdinando Didonna tried to get information on UNEP: Global report on the environment. Karst was never mentioned there, Ferdinando Didonna and herself tried to see if there is any possibility to have karst included.

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** replies that the Bureau was not informed about this, and that the UIS representatives at ISC are herself and Johannes Mattes. Being now category 1 in ISC, UIS can be involved using the ISC contacts. Nadja proposed to contact ISC and to report back to Bärbel.

## 8. UIS Commissions and Expeditions

**a. Recent call for financial event support** (*Z. Motyčka, J. Mattes*)

**Zdenek Motycka** reports that the call in November received 6 requests. We supported 3 of them for a total amount of 3.700 EUR. The last call opened in the spring and we received 18 submissions: 8.000 EUR dedicated for 2024, so we had 4.000 EUR at disposal. 3 were rejected, not meeting the conditions. Finally, the Bureau decided to support 10 requests for a total of 4.000 EUR.

Evaluating the proposals is a lot of work, since the submissions are often of great length. Each Bureau member scores the submissions and then there is the vote.

**Marc Mentens** suggests to open more space for young cavers, that have less room in expeditions, and Nadja Zupan Hajna replies that we could add a point to our scores when young individuals are involved.

**Mario Parise** emphasizes the need to have report after the expeditions for the Bulletin but also to encourage other publications, in speleological as well as scientific journals.

**Johannes Mattes** says that, when there are more than 5-8 submissions, the work becomes too large. This is because most of the applicants initially are not very precise and there is a huge flow of emails to follow. He would be grateful if others from the Bureau could help him in this work. As for young cavers, he suggests only to add a sentence stating that we encourage particularly young cavers to submit proposals, and that the Bureau will take this into considerations.

**Mario Parise** declares himself available to help Johannes in the management of the initial proposals.

**DECISION 4: Bureau members agree to add this sentence in the next call.**

**ACTION 7: Mario Parise will support Johannes Mattes in case of need, when more proposals than usual are presented.**

**b. Commissions activities and support – outlook to the upcoming meeting with the Commission Presidents on August 12** (*Z. Motyčka*)

**Zdenek Motyčka** says that from the last UIS Bureau only one request for support was received. Tomorrow there will be a virtual meeting and we could discuss with the presidents.

**Ged Campion** notices that from one of the tables in Nivaldo Colzato's report many commissions are not active.

**c. Establishment of new commissions (children & young people education, extraterrestrial caves, ...)**

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** reports she had some talk about new Commissions: in detail, Education, with interested people from Morocco, USA, and Croatia; and Extraterrestrial Caves (Francesco Saurò, with agreement from ESA and NASA).

## 9. 19<sup>th</sup> ICS in Belo Horizonte

(*N. Colzato, J.A. Labegalini*)

**Nivaldo Colzato** says that the organization is progressing well. After this Bureau meeting, there will be a 3 days meeting in Belo Horizonte. He informs that the registration is open, up to today we have 57 registrants. Nivaldo poses a question to the Bureau regarding the number of individuals whose registration fees should be covered.

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** replies that usually 10 individuals receive support, specifically those from middle- and low-income countries in need of financial assistance.

**ACTION 8: Johannes Mattes will send an email to UIS Bureau members asking for proposals of people needing financial support.**

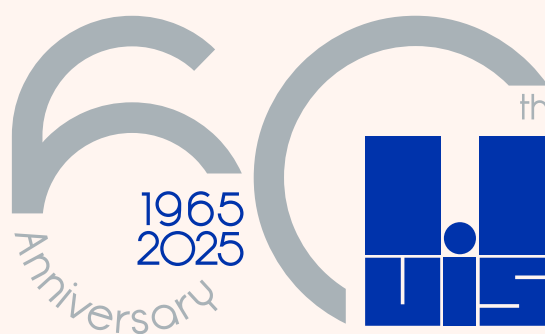
**Nivaldo Colzato** also informs that in the next month the new website will be active, and that the room for the UIS booth is 480 m<sup>2</sup>. At this regard, we need to discuss what to put in there: materials from the Commissions, financed expeditions, historical publications and materials of the UIS, movies, leaflets, as well.

Further, we need to find a voluntary in the UIS Bureau to coordinate this activity, taking into account that the deadline for the UIS project should be November 30<sup>th</sup>. **Marc Mentens** volunteers, and will work on it especially with **José Ayrton Labegalini**.

**ACTION 9: Marc Mentens will co-ordinate with José Ayrton Labegalini the activities for this.**

## 10. Logo for UIS's 60th Anniversary

(*J.A. Labegalini*)



**Nivaldo Colzato** expresses the intention by the organizers of the next Congress to use the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary logo.

**Zdenek Motycka** states that it might be confusing with the previous one which is too similar.

**DECISION 5: Bureau members will think about it until next zoom meeting in October.**

**ACTION 10: Zdenek Motycka will send his proposal for a revised logo to Nivaldo Colzato and José Ayrton Labegalini.**

## 11. UIS Archive

(P. Bosák, Z. Motyčka)

**Zdenek Motycka** reports that the archive by Hubert Trimmel was brought to Postojna. In the report, provided by Pavel Bosák, it is indicated that we have still uncompleted proceedings. The UIS archive is in paper and digital forms.

**ACTION 11: Mario Parise will check the library of the Italian Speleological Society for likely double copies of the missing books/proceedings, and will inform accordingly Pavel Bosak and Zdenek Motycka.**

## 12. Attendance to future events

### a. 58<sup>th</sup> Speleological Symposium

10–13 October, 2024, Piwniczna-Zdrój, Poland

<http://www.speleo.ptpk.org/58sympozjum.html>

### b. 5<sup>th</sup> Middle East Speleology Symposium

22–25 October, 2024, Muscat, Oman

[https://speleoliban.org/index.php?f=Mess\\_5](https://speleoliban.org/index.php?f=Mess_5)

### c. 16<sup>th</sup> Eurospeleo Forum “SYPHONIA 2024”

31 October – 3 November, 2024, Caselle Pittari, Italy

<https://www.tetide.org/syphonia2024/>

## d. 3<sup>rd</sup> ISC General Assembly

26–30 January, 2025, Muscat, Oman

<https://council.science/events/isc-ga-2025/>

As for the planned participation by Bureau members, **Mladen Garasic** will be in Poland, **Mario Parise** (and maybe **Nivaldo Colzato** and **José Ayrton Labegalini**) will attend Syphonia.

**Nadja Zupan Hajna** and **Johannes Mattes** will go to Oman in 2025.

**Natalia Uasapud** will attend the Cuba congress in January 2025.

Not on the list, there is the Philippine conference, where

**Marc Mentens** will be present.

## 13. Date of the next online Bureau Meeting

(N. Zupan Hajna, J. Mattes)

16<sup>th</sup> October 2024 (4 pm, CET)

## 14. Any other business

**George Veni** asks whether there is any discussion about the 2029 ICS. Actually, there is time until the end of year 2024, so up to now nothing has been decided yet.

**George Veni** informs that Eko Haryono has finished the complete translation of the Guidelines in Indonesian.

## 15. Closing Statements (N. Zupan Hajna)

Tomorrow at 4:00 pm we will meet the Asian representatives, and other likely potential UIS members.

# UIS BUREAU MEETING - AUGUST 11, 2024 - YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA





# UIS BUREAU MEETING - AUGUST 11, 2024 - YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

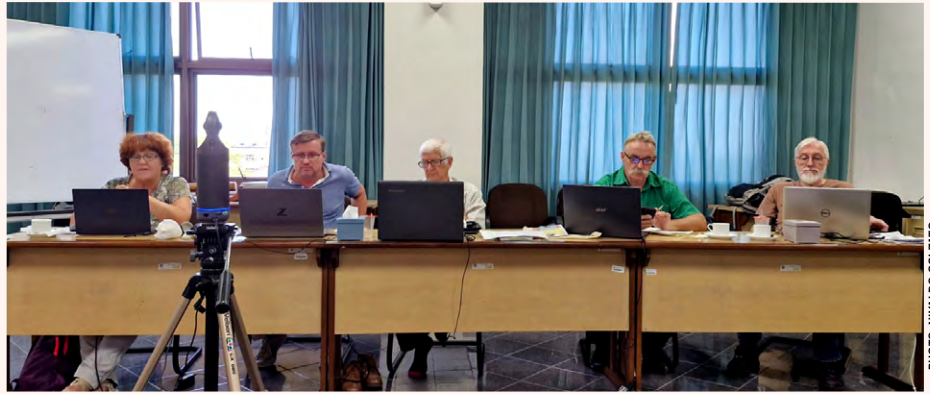


PHOTO: NIVALDO COLZATO



PHOTO: JOHANNES MATTES



PHOTO: MLADEN GARASIC



PHOTO: NIVALDO COLZATO



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# UIS BUREAU MEETING

with the Asian Union of Speleology

August 12, 2024 (4:00 pm–06:00 pm local time),  
Faculty of Geography, University Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia  
IN PRESENCE - Meeting Summary provided by Johannes MATTES

## ATTENDANCE

1. Zhang Yuanhai (China, President Asian Union of Speleology)  
[zhangyhai5225@icloud.com](mailto:zhangyhai5225@icloud.com)
2. Johannes Mattes (Austria)  
[johannes.mattes@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:johannes.mattes@oeaw.ac.at)
3. Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns (Belgium)  
[jp.bartholeyns@gmail.com](mailto:jp.bartholeyns@gmail.com)
4. José Ayrton Labegalini (Brazil)  
[ja.labegalini2@gmail.com](mailto:ja.labegalini2@gmail.com)
5. Ros Fatinah Muhammad (Malaysia)  
[rosfmuhammad@um.edu.my](mailto:rosfmuhammad@um.edu.my)
6. Mladen Garašić (Croatia)  
[mgarasic@grad.hr](mailto:mgarasic@grad.hr)
7. Nivaldo Colzato (Brazil)  
[ncolzato@gmail.com](mailto:ncolzato@gmail.com)
8. Marc Mentens (Belgium/Philippines)  
[marcbingcacao@gmail.com](mailto:marcbingcacao@gmail.com)
9. Maria Villareal (Philippines)  
[mjzwillareal@gmail.com](mailto:mjzwillareal@gmail.com)
10. MD Rosman MD Haniffah (Malaysia)  
[cavediving.my@gmail.com](mailto:cavediving.my@gmail.com)
11. Satoshi Goto (Japan)  
[goto@tokyospeleo.jp](mailto:goto@tokyospeleo.jp)
12. Gerard Campion (UK)  
[ged.campion@talk21.com](mailto:ged.campion@talk21.com)
13. Eko Haryono (Indonesia)  
[e.haryono@ugm.ac.id](mailto:e.haryono@ugm.ac.id)
14. George Veni (USA)  
[gveniassociates@gmail.com](mailto:gveniassociates@gmail.com)
15. José-Maria Calaforra (Spain)  
[jmcalaforra@ual.es](mailto:jmcalaforra@ual.es)
16. Zdeněk Motyčka (Czech Republic)  
[z.motycka@mediform.cz](mailto:z.motycka@mediform.cz)
17. Nadja Zupan Hajna (Slovenia)  
[zupan@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:zupan@zrc-sazu.si)
18. Dave M. Hutabarat (Indonesia)  
[davehutabarat.dh@gmail.com](mailto:davehutabarat.dh@gmail.com); [info@finspac.co.id](mailto:info@finspac.co.id)
19. Mario Parise (Italy)  
[mario.parise@uniba.it](mailto:mario.parise@uniba.it)
20. Nyi Nyi Aung (Myanmar)  
[climboclock@gmail.com](mailto:climboclock@gmail.com)
21. Sitit Wicaksuno (Indonesia)

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. Introduction and Project Updates

Each participant introduced themselves and shared insights about their ongoing projects, aims, and concerns related to speleology in their respective countries.

### 2. Importance of Updated Contact Information

The UIS Bureau emphasized the need for UIS member countries, their delegates, and member organizations to promptly inform the UIS Secretariat about any changes in email addresses or contact information to ensure continuous communication.

### 3. Speleological Event Support Schemes

The UIS highlighted the availability of speleological event support schemes, which provide funding for expeditions, conferences, and projects involving participants from at least three countries. There are two calls for applications per year.

### 4. Encouragement for Non-Member Countries:

Representatives from (Asian) countries that are not yet UIS members were invited to contact the UIS Bureau to discuss potential membership.

### 5. Support for the website of the Asian Union of Speleology

The UIS Bureau committed to financially supporting the Asian Union of Speleology to help set up and maintain a website. An application should be submitted to the UIS Secretary General to initiate this support.



PHOTO: ARCHIVE NIVALDO COLZATO



PHOTO: ARCHIVE NIVALDO COLZATO



PHOTO: NIVALDO COLZATO



PHOTO: NIVALDO COLZATO



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# UIS BUREAU MEETING

with the UIS Commissions

August 12, 2024 (8:00 pm–9:00 pm local time),  
Faculty of Geography, University Gadjah Mada, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

IN PRESENCE AND ONLINE

Meeting Summary provided by Johannes MATTES

## ATTENDANCE

1. **Zdeněk Motyčka** (Czech Republic)  
UIS Bureau
2. **Stefan Näff** (Switzerland)  
Informatics Commission (online)
3. **Mike Lake** (Australia)  
Informatics Commission (online)
4. **Bärbel Vogel** (Germany)  
Biology / History of Speleology Commission (online)
5. **Gyula Hegedűs** (Hungary)  
Cave Rescue Commission (online)
6. **Bogdan P. Onac** (USA/Romania)  
Cave Mineralogy Commission (online)
7. **Jean-Pierre Bartholeyns** (Belgium)  
Karst and Cave Protection Commission
8. **Dino Mendy** (Argentina)  
Materials and Techniques Commission (online)
9. **Jan Urban** (Poland)  
Pseudokarst Commission (online)
10. **Mónica Ponce** (Mexico)  
Materials and Techniques Commission (online)
11. **Mario Parise** (Italy)  
Artificial Cavities Commission / UIS Bureau
12. **Johannes Mattes** (Austria/Norway)  
UIS Bureau
13. **Nadja Zupan Hajna** (Slovenia)  
UIS Bureau
14. **José Ayrton Labegalini** (Brazil)  
UIS Bureau
15. **Nivaldo Colzato** (Brazil)  
UIS Bureau
16. **Mladen Garašić** (Croatia)  
UIS Bureau

## MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

### 1. Introductions

The meeting began with brief introductions from all attendees. Members of the UIS Bureau provided updates to the commission presidents regarding the upcoming International Congress of Speleology (ICS) and solicited support for the proposed International Day of Caves and Karst.

### 2. Commission Reports

The presidents of various commissions shared updates on their ongoing work, objectives, and challenges faced by their respective commissions.

### 3. Journal Contributions

Bogdan P. Onac highlighted that the International Journal of Speleology is currently seeking review papers and encouraged contributions from commission presidents/members.

### 4. Financial Support

UIS Bureau members reminded the commission representatives that they can informally request financial support for conferences, workshops, or small projects.

### 5. Documentation

Zdeněk Motyčka offered assistance for those who need to submit documents related to their commissions to the UIS archive, in both paper and digital formats.

The meeting concluded with a reaffirmation of collaboration and support between the UIS Bureau and the Commissions.



Some of the participants of the UIS Bureau virtual meeting with UIS Commissions on August 12, 2024.  
IMAGE PHOTOGRAPHED BY NIVALDO COLZATO



Main entrance of the Faculty of Geography of the University Gadjah Mada (Yogyakarta, Indonesia), venue of the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference 2024 and the UIS Meetings.  
PHOTO NIVALDO COLZATO



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# UIS BUREAU MEETING

October 16<sup>th</sup>, 2024 (4 pm - 7:30 pm - Central European Time, UTC +1)  
ONLINE, VIA ZOOM

Minutes of the UIS Bureau meeting:

Nathalia Vanessa UASAPUD ENRÍQUEZ - Revised by Johannes MATTES

## ATTENDANCE

**President:** *Nadja ZUPAN HAJNA*

**Vice-President of Administration:** *Zdeněk MOTYČKA*

**Vice-President of Operations:** *Nivaldo COLZATO*

**Secretary General:** *Johannes MATTES*

**Treasurer:** *Mladen GARAŠIĆ*

**Adjunct Secretaries:**

*José-Maria CALAFORRA*

*Gerard CAMPION*

*Marc MENTENS*

*Mario PARISE*

*Patricia SEISER*

*Nathalia Vanessa UASAPUD ENRÍQUEZ*

*Bärbel VOGEL (virtually)*

**Past-Presidents:**

*George VENI*

**Excused:**

*Past President Andy EAVIS*

## AGENDA

### 1) Opening Session President welcoming introduction / Approval of Agenda (*N. Zupan Hajna*)

UIS President **N. Zupan Hajna** welcomed everyone to the Bureau meeting and commenced the session with a review of the agenda items, which were then approved.

### 2. Review Action Items and Decisions of previous UIS Bureau Meeting (08/2024) – Decisions to be made on follow up unaccomplished actions

**a. Working-Group UIS List on Endangered Caves and Karst Features – status and actions.** (*B. Vogel, J.-M. Calaforra, M. Parise, P. Seiser, N. Uasapud Enríquez*)

**b. Vogel** and **N. Uasapud** presented their progress on this initiative, sharing examples of information to be featured on the webpage. The Bureau approved the creation of the webpage and a form to collect information on endangered caves and karst features.

**DECISION 1: Send all relevant materials (photos, examples, etc.) to N. Uasapud to be included on the group webpage. (ALL BUREAU)**

**ACTION 1: Create the web page and upload the available information (N. UASAPUD)**

**b. Meeting with the FFS at 7 pm** (*J. Mattes, N. Zupan-Hanja*)

The Bureau is awaiting responses from the FFS concerning the final report of the 18<sup>th</sup> ICS and the outstanding debt to the UIS.

**DECISION 2: Attend the meeting with FFS (ALL BUREAU)**

**c. ICS Fellowships – Status** (*J. Mattes*)

**J. Mattes** informed the Bureau of the proposed candidates for the ICS Fellowships, noting that five individuals from Latin America are needed. Other Bureau members are also welcome to submit additional nominations. Once the list is finalized, the Bureau will proceed with the voting process.

**ACTION 2: Send the remaining names to J. Mattes (N. COLZATO - N. UASAPUD)**

**d. UIS Guidelines for Social and Gender Equality** (*J. Mattes, N. Uasapud*)

The team has incorporated the Bureau's feedback, including that from Z. Motyčka, and is awaiting final comments from a few remaining members. Additionally, UIS must pay the annual SCGES membership fee.

**DECISION 3: The Bureau accepts to pay the fee to the SCGES**

**ACTION 3: Pay the annual membership fee (M. GARAŠIĆ)**

**ACTION 4: Send your complementary comments to Johannes (B. VOGEL)**

### 3. International Day of Caves and Karst – status and actions (*N. Zupan Hajna*)

**N. Zupan Hajna** provided an update on the application process, noting that many countries, institutions, and organizations have already submitted letters of support to the UIS Bureau, with additional letters still encouraged. Materials for the IDCK will be posted on the UIS website, and discussions have begun regarding a logo or image for the IDCK. Z. Motyčka suggested creating a separate website for the IDCK to facilitate future related events.

**G. Veni** is preparing the final report for the IYCK and gathering information on all associated events. Since the IYCK webpage is no longer active and the information is now only accessible via an online archive, this archived data will be essential for completing the report. But Veni found 247 IYCK events are missing in the archive. He is working with the website managers to see if they were saved separately.

**ACTION 5: Contact the delegates of your neighbor countries and encourage them to send their letters of support (ALL BUREAU)**

**ACTION 6: Schedule a Zoom meeting with Jasmina to clarify the situation with the webpage and social media (N. ZUPAN HANJA).**

**DECISION 4: The Bureau agreed not to renew the IYCK webpage and move all the information into a web archive.**

**ACTION 7: Search for the missing information related to the IYCK on the web page and web archive (N. COLZATO)**

**DECISION 5: Start thinking about the logo, topics, and additional content for the IDCK (ALL BUREAU)**

#### 4. Finances: Problems and Rules

(M. Garašić)

UIS Treasurer M. Garašić presented the Bureau with an update on the UIS financial status, including a report and a list of countries that have paid their fees and those with outstanding balances. He reminded Bureau members of UIS's protocol on fee payments and subscriptions to prevent any misunderstandings.

**ACTION 8: Send a reminder to all the countries that are in debt (M. GARAŠIĆ)**

**ACTION 9: Ask Rodrigo Severo to send the information for making the refund for the web domain payment (M. GARAŠIĆ)**

#### 5. Organization of the 19<sup>th</sup> ICS in Belo Horizonte – status and updates

(N. Colzato, J.A. Labegalini)

N. Colzato provided an update on the ICS status and organization, noting that the congress webpage is live, registration is open, and some participants have already registered. The deadline for abstract submissions has been extended, and the organizing team is focused on ensuring a positive experience for all attendees.

#### 6. Plans for UIS's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

(J. A. Labegalini, N. Colzato, M. Mentens)

M. Mentens shared ideas for celebrating the UIS's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. The Brazilian organization will supply the materials and set up the stand.

**ACTION 10: Prepare a proposal and budget for the UIS's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary (materials, stand, etc.) (J.A. LABEGALINI, N. COLZATO, M. MENTENS)**

**ACTION 11: Send the graphic material of UIS to M. Mentens for the UIS stand (Z. MOTYČKA)**

#### 7. Application by the UISIC and Bibliography Commission (Z. Motyčka)

Z. Motyčka introduced the project to the Bureau, emphasizing its significance.

**DECISION 6: Support the project with an amount of 2000 €**

**ACTION 12: Send an email to the UISIC and Bibliography Commission to tell them about the support of the project (Z. MOTYČKA)**

The upcoming bulletin is in progress, with several articles already prepared. Additional articles and reports are expected to be included to complete the next edition.

#### 9. Next call for speleological events support (Z. Motyčka)

The budget of 4,000€ for the next call is ready, and UIS can now announce it on social media and its website.

**ACTION 13: Publish the call on the web page and social media (J. MATTES, N. COLZATO, N. UASAPUD)**

#### 10. International Science Council – Updates (J. Mattes)

N. Zupan Hajna and J. Mattes will attend the next ISC General Assembly in Oman in January 2025.

#### 11. Attendance to future events

##### a. 5<sup>th</sup> Middle East Speleology Symposium

22–25 October 2024, Muscat, Oman

(This event was postponed due Middle East crisis)

[https://speleoliban.org/index.php?f=Mess\\_5](https://speleoliban.org/index.php?f=Mess_5)

##### b. 16<sup>th</sup> Eurospeleo Forum “SYPHONIA 2024”

31 October – 3 November 2024, Caselle Pittari, Italy -

Invitation from A. Gessert for a meeting with the FSE

(M. PARISE will attend the meeting on behalf of UIS)

<https://www.tetide.org/syphonia2024/>

##### c. 3<sup>rd</sup> ISC General Assembly

26–30 January 2025, Muscat, Oman (N. ZUPAN HAJNA and J. MATTES)

<https://council.science/events/isc-ga-2025/>

##### d. 85 Aniversario de la Sociedad Espeleológica de Cuba

21–26 January, 2025, Gibara, Holguín, Cuba (N. UASAPUD)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/>

#### 12. Date of the next online Bureau Meeting (N. Zupan Hanja, J. Mattes)

The Bureau agreed that the next meeting will be held on February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

#### 13. Any other business

No other business was discussed.



## A TRIBUTE TO

# TAMÁS HAZSLINSZKY

*Hungary, 1934 – 2024*

By **Nóra Fleck** (Hungary)

Secretary General - Hungarian Speleological Society

[MKBT@mail.mata.v.hu](mailto:MKBT@mail.mata.v.hu)

Translated by **Erika Hazslinszky** (Hungary)

**T**amás Hazslinszky was born on 14 August, 1934 in Budapest, Hungary. He completed his studies in Budapest, Tirol (Austria) and Szeged. His path through life was fundamentally determined by his close relationship with nature, but his main interest lay in studies in caves and underground waters. Since several of his ancestors were involved in botany, he was naturally drawn to this area of study and graduated from the College of Horticulture and Viticulture, but ironically never worked in this field.

Between 1959 and 1972, he worked at the Research Center for Water Resources Development, from 1972 he was the chief engineer of the National Water Office, and from 1976 he became the managing designer of the Hungarian Institute for Town and Regional Planning. From 1981 to 1986 he became the head of the Speleology Department of the Environmental Protection Institute. The collation of the National Cave Register was developed under his supervision.

After several internal reorganisations, he retired as chief advisor of the Department of Caving and Geology in 1986. He played a major role in recognizing the hazards of artificial lighting in caves and how this would encourage the growth of vegetation. He actively participated in the lighting reconstruction of several domestic show caves. He played an active role in the

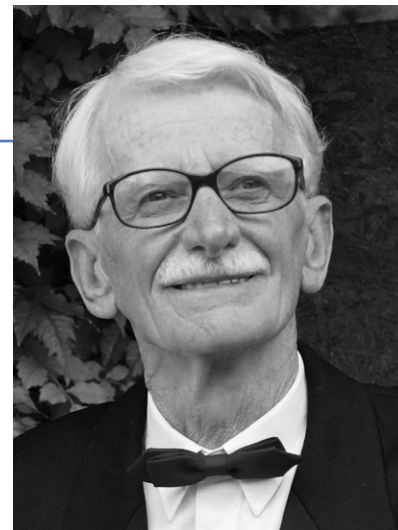


PHOTO © SZEPÉSSÉGI BARÁTI KÖR

development of tourism in domestic show caves promoting the distribution of advertising materials.

He took his first cave tours in the Buda Mountains, and he became actively involved in the research and exploration of the caves of the Aggtelek Karst from 1958. He was a founding member of the Hungarian Speleological Society reorganized in 1958, in which he held numerous functions. He was the head of the Department of Karst Botany between 1963–65, secretary between 1974–1978, then secretary general between 1978–1986 and co-president between 1986–1991 and 1999–2015.

In 1999, he was elected as honorary member of the Society, in 2016 he was elected titular president, a position he held until his death.

The years he spent in Austria as a child (1944–1947) not only played an important role in his acquisition of the German language, but also defined his relationship to mountains, alpine plants and skiing.

His excellent knowledge of the German language was later of great help in shaping international relations, translating professional materials and organizing numerous Society events.



*Tamás Hazslinszky in the 1950s.*

PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE GYÖRGY DÉNES



**1960s:** *Tamás Hazslinszky (right) with his friend György Dénes.*

PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE GYÖRGY DÉNES



**March 1964:** Tamás Hazslinszky during researchwork.  
PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE GYÖRGY DÉNES



**June 2006:** Tamás Hazslinszky (center) beside his wife Nóra Fleck. PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE GYÖRGY DÉNES



**Tamás in the Baradla Cave, Aggtelek, Hungary.**  
ARCHIVE OF GERMAN CAVERS FROM DRESDEN

He is credited with organizing and conducting the Baradla 150, International Karsthydrological Symposium, the International Lampenflora Kolloquium, the Cavelighting and the Speleobats conferences. Among them, the 10<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology held in 1989 stands out by far, of which he was the main organizer.

He also had a significant role in the organization of the conference (Speleohungary 100) held in honor of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of organized Hungarian speleology (100 years of organized Hungarian Speleology) and in the compilation of its publications.

He played an important role in the preparation of the Caves in the Arts conference organized in 1996, and in the organization of the related accompanying events.

He was able to realize his old dream when he revived the symphonic concerts organized in the Concert Hall of the Baradla cave in 1996. After that, he organized two more concerts, in 1997 and 1998. He also launched the Baradla art camps, the purpose of which was to create an artistic representation of the Baradla cave.

The processing of listing famous visitors in the 19<sup>th</sup> century guest book of the Baradla cave is testament to the versatility of his work related to the underground world. Among his favorite activities was collecting cave fiction and organizing it into volumes.

His last major work was the volume published under the title *Poetica Speologica*, which contains nearly 600 poems and excerpts relating to caves, caving and research. He was able to personally participate in the book launch of the volume in February 2024. He was the editor and author of countless association publications. From 2005, he was the editor-in-chief of the journal *Karst and Cave*.

He actively participated in the development of the Hungarian speleological education system. As part of this he significantly contributed to the development of the curriculum of the Cave Guide Course, in the organization and conduct of the courses and the examinations. He launched the Society's very successful professional study tours, of which 55 were organized from 2004 to 2023.

His work as a speleologist was recognized with numerous awards. In 1979, he was awarded the Ottó Herman medal for his long-term work for the Society; the Ferenc Papp medal for his scientific organization and dissemination of knowledge about karsts and caves in 2007; the Kadić Ottokár medal in 2009 for his outstanding of scientific work published in the field of karst and cave research. In 1989, he received a MTESZ award for organizing the 10<sup>th</sup> International Speleological Congress.

With his passing, Hungarian speleology has lost one of its most important and outstanding figures.

## IN MEMORIAM

# RABBE SJÖBERG

Sweden, 14.06.1941 – 05.04.2024

By Johannes Lundberg (Sweden)

[johalund@gmail.com](mailto:johalund@gmail.com)

**A**s a young man, Rabbe moved from Täby near Stockholm where he grew up to Nordmaling along the northern coast of the Bothnian Sea. This was in the mid-1960's, and Rabbe just got his first position as a physical education teacher. As an avid outdoor person, and a skilled ornithologist, he started to explore the surroundings, and soon found his first caves. One of the first caves he (re-)discovered was the "tunnel cave" Tjuv-Antes grotta (Thief-Ante's cave), a cave that he would return to regularly for the rest of his career as speleologist, and would in many ways change his life.

Tjuv-Antes grotta belongs to a peculiar type of rather small but beautiful pear-shaped marine abrasion caves, tunnel caves, that would be the first major research subject for Rabbe. Like so many other academic speleologists, his first step into scientific speleology was as an enthusiastic amateur, and he soon started investigating the genesis of the Scandinavian tunnel caves.

At that time, the dominating interpretation of their genesis (put forward most vocally by "the father of Swedish speleology", Leander Tell (1895-1980)) stated that they were glacial phenomena (interpreted as horizontal glacial potholes, formed by subglacial meltwater streams), but Rabbe soon noted that all known tunnel caves were situated under the highest postglacial sea level and directed towards the sea, strongly indicating that they were of marine origin.

That idea did not originate with Rabbe, something that he was the first to admit, but opposing the leading authority on Swedish speleology, Leander Tell, shows an integrity and courage in thought, and also a talent to interpret field observations without falling back to prevailing theories. During numerous field studies over several years, visiting all known tunnel caves in Sweden (and many marine abrasion caves elsewhere), and knowing that he had to present a strong case, Rabbe collected enough data to convincingly show that the tunnel caves are of marine origin.

Rabbe was never fond of theoretical reasoning or mathematical models, but rather grounded his hypothesis in empirical data collected during his many field studies.

After defending his licentiate thesis on the genesis of tunnel caves in 1986, Rabbe turned his focus on the much more complex "boulder" and "fracture" caves in the Archean bedrock of Sweden.



Rabbe Sjöberg in 2013. PHOTO LJUBA ŠROMOVÁ



2014: Rabbe during an expedition to Gobholo Cave in Eswatini/Swaziland. PHOTO MANUELA SCHEUERER



Some of them had previously been interpreted as being of neotectonic origin, that is originating during recent (postglacial) earthquakes, but only a few studies focusing on single locations had then been published. This interpretation was also supported by Rabbe, but with vastly more field data than any of his predecessors.

In the 1990's, Rabbe started collaborating with Nils-Axel 'Niklas' Mörner (1938-2020) at Stockholm University. The first part of that collaboration resulted in a Ph.D. thesis, *Bedrock caves and fractured surfaces in Sweden, occurrence and origin*, successfully defended by Rabbe in 1994.

Mörner shared Rabbe's view on the presence and impact of large earthquakes in early Holocene Sweden, triggered by glacial isostatic adjustment after the Weichselian glaciation. Together, they continued to collaborate on the research on neotectonics and Swedish bedrock caves, a collaboration that only ended with the passing of Mörner in 2020.

They continued to gather field data supporting their theory, now modified for at least some caves to also include an origin due to rapid phase transition of methane hydrate to methane gas ("methane hydrate explosions"), triggered by earthquakes.

Their views on paleoseismicity and the origin of Swedish pseudokarst caves (including the primary origin of tunnel caves) were summarised in a final paper published in *International Journal of Speleology* in 2018 ("Merging the concepts of pseudokarst and paleoseismicity in Sweden: A unified theory on the formation of fractures, fracture caves, and angular block heaps").

By a lucky coincidence, Rabbe's interest in caves coincided with the founding of Sveriges Speleologförbundet (the Swedish Speleological Society). He could not attend its very first meeting on Gotland in 1966, but he was among the very first paying members in the society. Rabbe soon became one of the most prolific writers in the Swedish caving magazine *Grottan*, with numerous contributions on all aspects of caving and speleology.

He also served as board member for nearly two decades, as well as in many other roles. He was thus a very well deserved Honorary Member since 2018. He was also for many years an active member of the Pseudokarst Commission of UIS, attending many of its meetings.

But caves and speleology also had other, perhaps even more important, impacts on the life of Rabbe. In 1984, the (then) Czechoslovakian speleological club *Orcus Bohumín* contacted Rabbe for a visit to Sweden. The person in charge of communication was Ljuba Šromová, and Rabbe and Ljuba quickly found each other. Only two years later, they married and Ljuba moved to Umeå. They didn't only share a love of caves, but also traveling and not the least of their dogs.

We in the Swedish Speleological Society, together with his many friends and colleagues in Sweden and abroad, will sorely miss Rabbe. But we are at the same time very grateful for his willingness to share his enthusiasm and knowledge through numerous contributions that will be with us for many more years to come.



2011: Rabbe Sjöberg is lecturing for the Conference on Granite Caves CGC2011 participants about the late glacial and holocene history of Knappelskär and the origin of tunnel caves.

PHOTO JOHANNES LUNDBERG



TWO PHOTOS ABOVE: Rabbe with one of his dogs in February 2017. PHOTOS LJUBA ŠROMOVÁ

## A TRIBUTE TO

# WILLIAM ROSS HALLIDAY (BILL)

USA, 09.05.1926 — 24.09.2024

by Patricia Kambesis (USA)

[pat.kambesis@wku.edu](mailto:pat.kambesis@wku.edu)

**D**r. William Ross “Bill” Halliday was a pioneering physician and surgeon, and a renowned speleologist known for his visionary contributions to both medicine and speleology. He passed away peacefully on September 24, 2024, in Shoreline, Washington, USA, at the age of 98. Born on May 9, 1926, in Atlanta, Georgia, USA, Halliday dedicated his professional working life to medicine and his aspirations to the exploration and study of caves.

After receiving his Bachelor of Arts in Zoology from Swarthmore College in 1946, he graduated from George Washington Medical School in 1948, where he was a member of the Phi Chi Medical Fraternity. Following his medical training, he served as an officer in the United States Navy until his honorable discharge in 1957.

His professional career was both varied and distinguished. From 1957 to 1965, he practiced as a thoracic surgeon in Seattle, Washington. He ultimately served as Medical Consultant and later Chief Medical Consultant and Medical Director of the Department of Labor and Industries from 1971 to 1976. His leadership and compassion in the medical field were matched by his deep commitment to vocational rehabilitation.

Dr. Halliday held the position of Medical Director for the Washington State Division of Vocational Rehabilitation from 1976 to 1982 and contributed to the Northwest Vocational Rehabilitation Group in 1984. His expertise extended to multiple roles, including Staff Physician at the Northwest Occupational Health Center. His medical career was marked by leadership, compassion, and a dedication to improving patients’ quality of life.

Concurrent with his medical career and beyond into retirement, Halliday was a passionate cave explorer, researcher, and advocate for speleology. He developed an interest in caves during childhood, inspired by excursions to places with caves with his parents.

He became a member of the US National Speleological Society (NSS) in 1946, and he continued his involvement with the NSS serving on their Board of Governors intermittently until 2001. In the early fifties when his training and profession took him to the western US, he took the NSS organizational ethic with him. He was a founding member of the Cascade, Colorado and Salt Lake Grottos and later served as a Director of the Western Speleological Survey from 1955 to 1981.



June 2006: Bill Halliday in Jeju, Korea.

PHOTO ARCHIVE KYUNG SIK WOO



A young Bill Halliday in the Kitty Pooh Cave in Oregon, USA.

PHOTO CHARLIE LARSON



July 1991: Bill (LEFT) in Earthquake Cave on Hawaii National Park (USA) together with Dr. Marlin Spike Werner (who died a few years ago). PHOTO STEPHAN KEMPE

In the early 1950's Neff's Canyon Cave was the deepest in the US. Halliday and the Salt Lake Grotto conducted several expeditions into the cave. Their explorations were instrumental in mapping the cave's complex passages and understanding its geological significance. Halliday's work in Neff's Canyon contributed to the broader knowledge of cave systems in the United States and highlighted the importance of cave conservation and safety.

Because of his broad interest in diverse types of cave systems, Halliday studied and documented glacial caves, specifically Paradise and Stevens Glacier Ice Caves, located on Mount Rainier in Washington State. These were notable glacial cave systems that attracted explorers and researchers throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Halliday, along with Charles H. Anderson conducted significant documentation of these systems as part of a study conducted by the International Glaciospeleological Survey.

In 1969, Haliday and Anderson co-authored a paper titled "The Paradise Ice Caves, Washington: An Extensive Glacier Cave System," published in the NSS Bulletin of the National Speleological Society. Halliday and Anderson's work remains a valuable resource for understanding the complexities of glacial cave systems and their responses to environmental changes.

Halliday explored numerous volcanic caves, particularly in regions like Hawaii, the Pacific Northwest, and other volcanic areas around the world. In Hawaii he made significant contributions to the study and understanding of lava tubes.

His work in Hawaii encompassed various aspects of volcanic features, including their formation, classification, and the environmental concerns associated with them. In 1998 he published the paper "[Pit Craters, Lava Tubes, and Open Vertical Volcanic Conduits in Hawaii: A Problem in Terminology](#)" in the International Journal of Speleology. In addition to academic research, he served as President of the Hawaii Speleological Survey from 1989 to 1998.

Halliday actively participated in the exploration and documentation of lava tubes on Hawaii's Big Island and Molokai. His fieldwork contributed to a deeper understanding of these geological formations and their significance within Hawaii's volcanic landscape. Through his extensive research and exploration, Halliday significantly advanced the knowledge of Hawaii's lava tubes, shedding light on their geological characteristics, environmental implications, and the importance of precise terminology in volcanic studies.

Halliday's most significant impact on cave science was to establish vulcanospeleology as a distinct subdiscipline of speleology. He emphasized the geological importance of volcanic caves, which are formed by processes distinct from solutional caves common in limestone or karst terrains.

He helped foster collaboration among cave enthusiasts and speleologists interested in volcanic caves by establishing the UIS Commission on Volcanic Caves.



**February 1998:** Bill (RIGHT) handing over chair of UIS Volcanic Caves Commission to Jan Paul van de Pas at the 8<sup>th</sup> International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology (Nairobi, Kenya).

PHOTO GREGORY MIDDLETON



**February 1998:** Bill examining lava wall features, Cave #13, Mt Suswa, Kenya. PHOTO GREGORY MIDDLETON



**September 1999:** Bill & Louise (Sis) at lunch in refuge, Mt. Etna Regional Park, Italy. PHOTO GREGORY MIDDLETON

The commission operates under the umbrella of the International Union of Speleology (UIS). Halliday's contributions to the field have been substantial, including his involvement with international symposia on vulcanospeleology.

He organized the first International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology in 1972 in conjunction with the National Speleological Society (NSS) Annual Convention in White Salmon, Washington, USA. This event marked the formal recognition of vulcanospeleology as a specialized field within speleology, emphasizing the study and exploration of caves in volcanic terrains. He also organized the 1982 symposium in Bend, Oregon and the one held in Hilo, Hawaii in 1991. He authored numerous publications that have advanced the understanding of volcanic caves globally.

Halliday's work in vulcanospeleology extended beyond Earth. His passion for it led him to collaborate with geological luminaries like Ronald Greeley, who brought his expertise in planetary geomorphology to comparative studies of volcanic caves on Earth and other planets, including the Moon and Mars. Lava tubes have been identified on the Moon and Mars, and Halliday's insights into terrestrial lava tubes have informed hypotheses about potential extraterrestrial habitats. Halliday's contributions helped bridge planetary science and speleology, demonstrating the relevance of volcanic caves in understanding planetary geology and astrobiology.

Halliday was a prolific author and wrote numerous scientific papers on caves. He also wrote influential books on speleology and cave exploration, including *Adventure Is Underground* (1959), *Caves of California* (1962), *Depths of the Earth* (1966, 1976), *Ape Cave*, (1983), *Oregon Caves: Discovery and Exploration*, (1982), and *American Caves and Caving* (1974, 1984). Bill's love for the underground world and his dedication to its study remained with him until his final days.

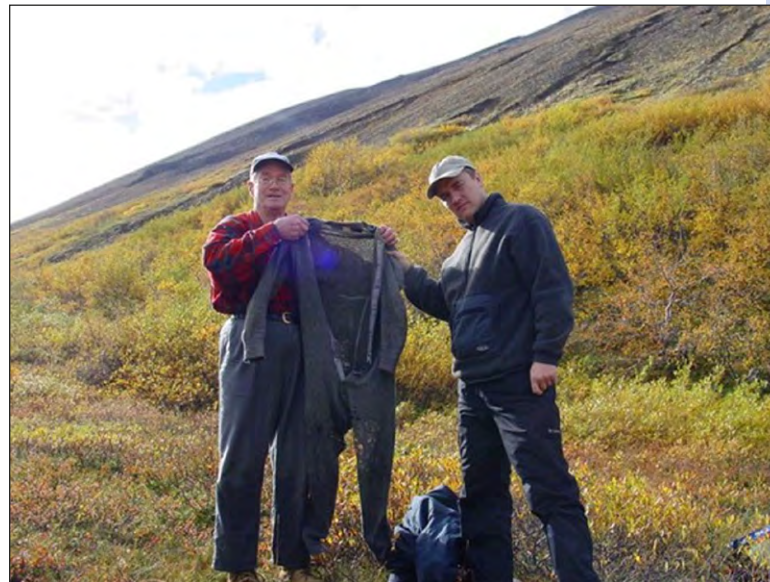
He continued to explore and write about caves well into his 80s, and his work in this field will be remembered as monumental in both scientific and adventure spheres. His work continues to inspire generations of speleologists and cave enthusiasts.

Dr. Halliday was preceded in death by his parents, Jane Wakefield Halliday and William Ross Halliday; and his two beloved wives, Eleanore Lou Halliday (married 1951–1983) and Louise (Sis) Baird Halliday (married 1988–2018).

He is survived by his children, Marcia Gojan of Sequim, WA, Patricia Halliday of Edmonds, WA, and William Ross Halliday III of Yakima, WA; his grandchildren, Michael Ross Halliday and Timothy George Halliday; as well as his stepchildren, Michael Kinnard (Kathy) of Chadds Ford, PA; Steven Kinnard (Judy) of Beaufort, SC; Jason Kinnard (Pam) of Mt. Juliet, TN; and David Kinnard (Sharon) of Nashville, TN, along with numerous great-grandchildren, step-grandchildren, and step-great-grandchildren.



**September 2002:** Bill "paying homage" to ice formation, Lofthellir ("air cave"), Iceland. PHOTO GREGORY MIDDLETON



**September 2002:** Bill (LEFT) donating a well-worn undersuit to Sigurður Jónsson, chairman of the International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology in Reykjavik, Iceland. PHOTO GREGORY MIDDLETON



**June 2006:** Bill Halliday in Jeju, Korea. PHOTO KYUNG SIK WOO

# A TRIBUTE TO ANDREJ MIHEVC

## *Geographer, Speleologist, and Karstologist*

*Slovenia, 1952 - 2024*

By Nadja Zupan Hajna (Slovenia)

UIS President

[zupan@zrc-sazu.si](mailto:zupan@zrc-sazu.si)

After a long and serious illness, we have lost our dear colleague and friend Prof. Dr. Andrej Mihevc, one of Slovenia's leading speleologists and karstologists, far too soon. With his extensive work and dedication in the field of karst geomorphology and speleology, he has left an indelible mark on the Slovenian and global scientific community. Born in Logatec, he felt connected to the karst landscape and its caves from an early age. As a high school student, he regularly visited the Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU in Postojna. During his geography studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at the University of Ljubljana, where he studied under Prof. Dr. Ivan Gams, he obtained his bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees, acquiring extensive knowledge and deepening his passion for karst phenomena and geomorphology.

After graduation, he was awarded the Prešeren Prize for his geomorphologic map of the Logatec region and began his work at the Postojna Institute. There he deepened his academic expertise with the study of contact karst and completed his doctoral thesis on the speleogenesis of the Divača karst. His work at the Institute extended to geomorphological and interdisciplinary research, where he studied cave sediments, archaeological and paleontological remains and climate change, emphasizing the importance of karst for understanding geomorphological and geological processes.

Mihevc was heavily involved in the Slovenian speleological community and had been active in the Logatec Caving Society since elementary school. He actively participated in cave explorations in the Logatec area and initiated investigations in the Kačna Jama, where the underground river Reka was discovered in 1972, as well as in other caves in the Trnovski Gozd region. His passion for exploring caves led him on numerous expeditions, including to Montenegro, where they explored Duboki Do, Lipska and Začirska Pečina. In 1988 he organized an excursion through the caves of the Dinaric Karst and in 1995 a caving expedition to Guizhou, China, where 27 caves were explored.



2010: During Dinaric Karst excursion in Bosnia & Herzegovina - PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



1993: International Conference "Man and karst", Postojna, Slovenia. FROM LEFT: Andrej Mihevc, Jurij Kunaver, and Andrei G. Filippov. PHOTO KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE ARCHIVE



2007: At the Črnotiče quarry, Slovenia. PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA

He was involved in the founding and operation of the Anthron Karst Research Society in Postojna in 1989 and served as president of the Speleological Association of Slovenia (JZS) from 1994 to 1996.

Within the International Union of Speleology (UIS), he served as adjoint secretary from 2001 to 2009 and helped establish a permanent address for the UIS at the Karst Research Institute of the ZRC SAZU in Postojna. He organized numerous cave meetings and conferences and was a member of the editorial board of the journal *Naše Jame*.

Caves were a scientific challenge for him. He was fascinated by all aspects of caves, from their formation and development to sediments, archaeology, fauna, cave climate, various forms of cave utilization and the influence of man on caves and karst.

At the beginning of his scientific career, he focused on the morphological characteristics of the contact karst in Slovenia, marking more than 220 ponors with the corresponding relief features. He also studied the gradual transition from caves to surface features due to chemical denudation and the development of dolines and wrote one of his most notable articles (Mihevc & Mihevc, 2021) on the distribution and morphological characteristics of dolines in Slovenia.

He paid great attention to the age of karst landscapes and caves. In Divača karst, he observed a multi-phase development of the karst and assessed the age of unroofed caves. Together with colleagues, he studied cave sediments using various dating methods, finding sediments older than 5 million years (e.g. Zupan Hajna et al., 2008, 2020). The group's greatest achievement was the interpretation of the sediment profile in the Račiška Pečina, which represents a climate record from the Late Pliocene to the Holocene (Zupan Hajna et al., 2021; Sierpień et al., 2021; Pawlak et al., 2024).



**2010:** Mihevc (black shorts, in the center), during Dinaric Karst excursion in Bosnia and Herzegovina. PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



**2013:** Working at Škocjanske Jame, Slovenia. PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



**2014:** At the stone table, Karst Living Museum, Sežana, Slovenia. - PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



**2015:** During the celebration of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the UIS, in Postojna, Slovenia, signing the presence book (LEFT) and showing the certificate received as Past Bureau Member (RIGHT). PHOTO PETER GEDEI



Driven by curiosity, he travelled through most of the karst areas in Slovenia and studied the morphology of karst areas in different geographical, geological and hydrological settings. He was particularly interested in the forms and development of the Dinaric karst, both in Slovenia and in other countries where the Dinaric karst extends. His excursion to the Dinaric Karst in 2010 remains unforgotten among experts.

His name will forever be associated with the great achievements of Slovenian karstology. His great curiosity and in-depth knowledge, acquired through years of cave and karst research worldwide, led to discoveries of significant importance, both locally and globally. In particular, he identified and evaluated unroofed caves (Mihevc 1996; Mihevc & Zupan Hajna 1996; Mihevc et al., 1998), where karst denudation had removed the overlying rock and expose caves and their sediments to the surface.

This discovery laid the foundation for a new scientific understanding of karst and contributed a new conceptual model for the evolution of caves and karst over time.

While investigating the unroofed caves, he focused on their age, which led him to search for paleontological remains. In 2000, he discovered and described the first fossil remains of the cave-dwelling tube worm *Marifugia cavatica* in an unroofed cave in the Črnotiče Quarry older than 2 million years.

The discovery of the first black olm (*Proteus anguinus parkelj*) in Dobliče in Bela Krajina in 1986 and the Neolithic drawings in the cave Bestažovca near Sežana are also due to him. The charcoal drawings, estimated to be around 7000 years old, represent exceptional symbols of unknown meaning created by the Neolithic community.

He presented his research at numerous conferences at home and abroad. He contributed to the Cave Act, cave protection policy, cave monitoring in tourist caves, UNESCO nomination of the Classical Karst and was a member of the Slovenian Government Commission for Hidden Graves since 2007. He has been a teacher and mentor for many Slovenian and international students.

He has received numerous awards for his work, including the Silver Plaque of the Slovenian Geographical Association (1997) and the Golden Plaque of the Slovenian Speleological Association in 2022 for his outstanding achievements in global speleology. In 2022, he was also honored as a “Distinguished Researcher” of the ZRC SAZU.

His passing leaves a deep void in the community, but his legacy will continue to inspire and guide us. He will be remembered not only for his immense contributions to cave and karst exploration and study, but also for his warmth, humor, and the lasting friendships he made along the way.

Rest in peace, Andrej. Your influence will reverberate through the caves of time.



2016: During speleological trip to B.C., Canada.  
 PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



December 23, 2019: Last time in cave. PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA



2022: In his office at the Karst Research Institute ZRC SAZU, Postojna, Slovenia. PHOTO NADJA ZUPAN HAJNA

# UIS BUREAU 2022/2025

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Andrew EAVIS (*United Kingdom*) - 2005-2013

Kyung Sik WOO (*Republic of Korea*) - 2013-2017

George VENI (*USA*) - 2017-2022



PHOTO PERSONAL ARCHIVE N. ZUPAN HAJNA

## AUGUST 12, 2024: Part of the UIS Bureau 2022/2025 at the 5<sup>th</sup> Trans-Disciplinary Karst Conference - YOGYAKARTA, INDONESIA

LEFT TO RIGHT: Johannes MATTES (*Secretary General/Austria*); José-María CALAFORRA (*Adjunct Secretary/Spain*); Gerard CAMPION (*Adjunct Secretary/UK*); Zdeněk MOTYČKA (*Vice-President of Administration/Czech Republic*); Nadja ZUPAN HAJNA (*President/Slovenia*); Nivaldo COLZATO (*Vice-President of Operations/Brazil*); Mladen GARAŠIĆ (*Treasurer/Croatia*); Mario PARISE (*Adjunct Secretary/Italy*), and Marc MENTENS (*Adjunct Secretary/Philippines*). Bureau Members missing on the photo: Bärbel VOGEL (*Adjunct Secretary/Germany*), Nathalia Vanessa UASAPUD ENRÍQUEZ (*Adjunct Secretary/Colombia*), and Patricia SEISER (*Adjunct Secretary/USA*).





Union Internationale  
de Spéléologie  
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# LIST OF MEMBER COUNTRIES as reported by the UIS Treasurer

## 57 Members in December 2024

<b>Argentina</b> (2022)	<b>Czech Republic</b> (2024)	<b>Malaysia</b> (2024)	<b>South Korea</b> (2023)
<b>Armenia</b> (2025)	<b>France</b> (2024)	<b>Mexico</b> (2025)	<b>Spain</b> (2024)
<b>Australia</b> (2024)	<b>Germany</b> (2024)	<b>Morocco</b> (2025)	<b>Sweden</b> (2024)
<b>Austria</b> (2024)	<b>Greece</b> (2024)	<b>Netherlands</b> (2024)	<b>Switzerland</b> (2024)
<b>Belgium</b> (2024)	<b>Hungary</b> (2024)	<b>New Zealand</b> (2024)	<b>Turkey</b> (2024)
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b> (2024)	<b>India</b> (2022)	<b>Norway</b> (2024)	<b>United Kingdom</b> (2025)
<b>Brazil</b> (2024)	<b>Indonesia</b> (2022)	<b>Philippines</b> (2022)	<b>Ukraine</b> (2025)
<b>Bulgaria</b> (2024)	<b>Italy</b> (2024)	<b>Poland</b> (2024)	<i>UIS Bureau decision: due to war, not paying until next ICS (2025)</i>
<b>Canada</b> (2024)	<b>Japan</b> (2024)	<b>Portugal</b> (2027)	<b>USA</b> (2025)
<b>China</b> (2023)	<b>Lebanon</b> (2025)	<b>Puerto Rico</b> (2022)	<b>Venezuela</b> (2025)
<b>Colombia</b> (2023)	<i>UIS Bureau decision: no debt, not paying until next ICS (2025)</i>	<b>Romania</b> (2022)	<i>UIS Bureau decision: no debt, not paying until next ICS (2025)</i>
<b>Costa Rica</b> (2022)	<b>Lithuania</b> (2024)	<b>Serbia</b> (2025)	<b>Vietnam</b> (2022)
<b>Croatia</b> (2024)	<b>Luxembourg</b> (2024)	<b>Slovakia</b> (2024)	
<b>Cuba</b> (2024 and half for 2025)		<b>Slovenia</b> (2024)	
<b>Cyprus</b> (2024)		<b>South Africa</b> (2024)	

### UIS MEMBERS WITH DEBTS FOR 2020 OR MORE (LAST PAYMENT)

**Iran IR** (2020)  
**Israel** (2020)

**Kyrgyzstan** (2018)  
**Libya** (first fee still to be paid)

**Mongolia** (2019)  
*UIS Bureau decision: UIS donation  
of 2 years membership dues*

Please indicate WHO is paying for your country - especially if there are two or more speleological associations in your country. The UIS Bureau can't select the payer for your country and we don't return money.

If you have a new treasurer or responsible person for payments, please send the new name and e-mail address to [garasic.mladen@gmail.com](mailto:garasic.mladen@gmail.com).

We do not know who to contact in some countries or we do not have their proper address.

**UPDATE your status now!**

**CONTACT UIS**

UNION INTERNATIONALE DE SPÉLÉOLOGIE  
[www.uis-speleo.org](http://www.uis-speleo.org)  
Titov trg 2, 6230 Postona, Slovenia

***If there are any irregularities, or if you have not found your country in this list, please, ask the UIS Treasurer Mladen Garasic***

# FINANCE

# ANNUAL CONTRIBUTIONS

By Mladen GARAŠIĆ (Croatia), *UIS Treasurer* - [garasic.mladen@gmail.com](mailto:garasic.mladen@gmail.com)



Prof. Dr. Mladen GARAŠIĆ (Croatia), *UIS Treasurer*.



© KARST RESEARCH INSTITUTE - ZRC-SAZU



Headquarters of the Karst Research Institute in Postojna, Slovenia, where the offices of the UIS are located. In the detail, the bronze plaque with the emblem of the UIS affixed below the name of the institute.

The UIS General Assembly at the 18<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology (*Le Bourget-du-Lac, France, on July 31, 2022*) approved the new amended fee categories of member countries, which are based on the number of speleologists in the national organization or organizations that represent the country to the UIS.

The new annual contributions from 2023 are as follows:

Category A: 2,000 speleologists or more .....	480 Euros
Category B: at least 1,000 but fewer than 2,000 .....	360 Euros
Category C: at least 500 but fewer than 1,000 .....	240 Euros
Category D: at least 100 but fewer than 500 .....	120 Euros
Category E: less than 100 .....	60 Euros

If the fees are not paid for more than five years, the Member Country will lose its membership in the UIS.

The UIS Bureau may reduce or waive the fee of a Member Country if the Member Country makes a written request describing the reasons why it is having difficulties making its payments and how long those difficulties are expected to continue. All fee payments and related communications are conducted between the UIS Treasurer and the Member Countries.

## UIS BANK ACCOUNT

<b>Account name</b>	<b>Account N°</b>
Mednarodna speleološka zveza-UIS Titov trg 2 6230 Postojna - Slovenia	IBAN SI56 1010 0003 7861 520
	<b>SWIFT Code:</b> BAKOSI2X
<b>Bank (name and address)</b>	<b>Accepted Currencies:</b>
Intesa Sanpaolo Bank d.d. Traška 2 - 6230 Postojna - Slovenia	EUR (Euros)

## STATE OF UIS BANK ACCOUNT ON DECEMBER 20, 2024

**EUR - Account balance = 38,433.50**  
**USD - Account balance = 50,258.61**

# Calendar of Events

2025  
2026

**If you are interested in any of the following events, contact them directly to learn if they are still planned as announced below**

## Congreso Internacional

### Aniversario 85 de la Sociedad Espeleológica de Cuba

21–25 January, 2025 (*Gibara, Holguín, Cuba*)

<https://www.facebook.com/events/>

## National Cave Rescue Commission: Regional Weeklong Seminar

January 24 - February 1, 2025 (*Bend, Texas, USA*)

<https://ncrcsouthcentralregion.regfox.com/2025-ncrc-south-central-regional>

## Hawaii Cave Week

January 27 - February 02, 2025 (*Ocean View, Big Island, Hawaii, USA*)

<https://members.caves.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1895246&group=>

## UIS History of Speleology Commission & German Speleological Federation: Speleology in Authoritarian Regimes

March 15, 2025 - *Online Simposium streamed via [VdHK YouTube Channel](#) and [UIS YouTube Channel](#)*

<https://www.vdhk.de/en/events>

First Circular: [CLICK HERE](#)

## 32<sup>nd</sup> International Karstological School

16-20 June 2025 (*Postojna, Slovenia*)

<https://iks.zrc-sazu.si/en/>

## 2025 NSS Convention

21-28 June, 2025 (*Cobleskill, New York, USA*)

<https://caves.org/event/2025-nss-convention/>

## 19<sup>th</sup> International Congress of Speleology

20–27 July, 2025 (*Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais, Brazil*)

<https://www.speleo2025.org/>

## SpeleoFotoContest 2025 - International Speleological Photography Competition

*on the occasion of the 2025 National Speleology Meeting “CapoVolta”*

October 30 - November 2, 2025 (*Volta Mantovana, MN, Italy*)

<https://www.speleofotocontest.com/>

## 10<sup>th</sup> Congress - International Show Caves Association (ISCA)

November 2026 (*France*)

<https://www.i-s-c-a.org/events-calendar>

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# EDITOR'S DISCLOSURE

Before submitting articles, please, refer to the  
**Guide for Submitting and Publishing Articles in the UIS Bulletin**

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UIS Bulletin, nor its editors are responsible for:

- misspellings
- wrongly written names
- incorrect articles
- typographical mistakes

Every effort possible has been made to keep all articles as close to the original version.

In some cases, the editors review the structure in order to present the article in a clear and consistent manner and obvious errors are corrected if found.

We appreciate your understanding.

Should you have any question or comments, please send them to:

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UIS BULLETIN



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