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UNION INTERNATIONALE DE SPÉLÉOLOGIE (UIS)
COMMISSION ON VOLCANIC CAVES

NEWSLETTER



U.I.S. COMMISSION ON VOLCANIC CAVES

NEWSLETTER N° 59 - NOVEMBER 2010

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



www.vulcanospeleology.org

The Commission on Volcanic Caves Newsletter has been published quarterly since December 22, 1993. The Newsletter is available free of charge to all members of the commission, and to others who are interested in lava caves.

The editors appreciate any news and information about lava caves that you can provide.

U.I.S. COMMISSION ON VOLCANIC CAVES



U.I.S. COMMISSION ON VOLCANIC CAVES

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MISSION STATEMENT

The U.I.S. Commission on Volcanic Caves encourages exploration and scientific investigation of volcanic caves, and hosts the International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology about every two years.



COVER PHOTO

An active eruption during the 1969-1971 Mauna Ulu eruption of Kilauea Volcano, Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park, Hawai'i. Photo by J.B. Judd, October 21, 1970. Photo is courtesy of the U.S Geological Survey (U.S.G.S).

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THE CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



JAN PAUL VAN DER PAS

This newsletter marks our first edition in an electronic format. I will still produce a limited number of the newsletters in the printed version. These will be sent to commission members who do not have e-mail and to numerous institutions that prefer printed material. Some of the printed newsletters will also be used as handouts at symposia and other meetings.

Since I produce the paper version and Harry produces the electronic version, please send all news-worthy information to both members of the editorial staff.

I would like to thank Greg Middleton and the organizing committee of the recent successful 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology in Australia. I have included a wrap-up of the symposium in this newsletter.

During the month of September 2010 National Geographic made a documentary film about Þríhnúkgígur crater in Iceland. You may remember Árni's presentation about the crater during the most recent symposium. Árni and I were able to descend into the crater during the filming. A full report is included.

Finally, in this news letter the Commission is happy to announce the 15th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology, to be hosted in Amman, Jordan, on March 2012. The Commission is looking forward to meeting Professor Ahmad Al-Malabeh of the Hashemite University, and all other members of the organizing committee.

I look forward to seeing you all again in Amman, Jordan, in 2012.

Sincerely,

Jan Paul

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INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON VULCANOSPELEOLOGY

UNDARA AUSTRALIA - AUGUST 2010



The 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology

Pre-symposium August 7-11, 2010
(Hamilton, Victoria)

Main Symposium August 12-17, 2010
(Undara)

By Jan Paul van der Pas

This symposium, organized by Greg Middleton and many co-organizers, was a big success. Around 25 participants from 3 continents and 7 countries (Australia, U.K., Iceland, Germany, Hungary, U.S.A., and Netherlands). Now the Commission has finally had symposia on all 5 continents!

The first part was in the South of Australia with sometimes cool but nice weather. Most participants started here. For many of us cave gear and overalls were supplied, since we were encouraged NOT to bring our cave gear

unless decontaminated, but still boots had to be very well cleaned before moving on.

Here, we visited, sometimes in different groups, e.g., Byaduk Caves, The Tunnel, Natural Bridge, The Shaft. Around Mt. Eccles we had a nice walk to look at a line of craters and associated lava canals.

Then we moved to the North, where temperatures were much higher. Here we lodged in a luxurious bush-camp at Undara. Here the real symposium started. Compared to the previous symposia several countries did not show up, as the Azores, Japan and Korea.

The caves in the Undara National Park were well guarded, and none was visited without a park-guide.

The lectures were, as always, very diverse. We started with Anne Atkinson, who dedicated most of her life to study the Undara Caves. Now in her 80s she still can tell many stories about the explorations which started some 40 years ago.

Diane Northrup is still investigating "slimy stuff" - her bacterial mats.

Árni B. Stefánsson told us about a lava cave cleaned, repaired and made into a show cave. Certainly the repair of (and with moulds of "new") speleothems was impressive.

From Hungary we got an overview of all caves formed in volcanic rocks by



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George Szentis. Impressive, but the (small) size of some of these cavities did not impress everybody.

Really beautiful was the presentation of the Mill's about an expedition to Fingals Cave, very well known, but not well explored. All of Staffa was shown, with the accompaniment by the famous music of Mendelssohn.

A lecture by Chris Wood described his work (very recent) in China. Only locations of volcanic caves, but no pictures yet. China, a country for a future symposium?

Greg did a fantastic job on a Guidebook for Undara, while Ken Grimes did the

same for the Guidebook of "the Volcanic Caves of Western Victoria."

Two CD ROMs were issued.

One "Karst in Australia" produced by Ken Grimes, with a chapter on volcanic caves.

The other one, "Reprints of papers relating to McBride Volcanic Province and Undara Lava Caves, North Queensland" by Greg Middleton. However it has a remark: For private study or research. Not for sale or reproduction...



14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology, West Victorian Field-trip, August 2010

Back: Árni Stefánsson (is), Steve Holden (au), Ken Ingham (us), Gerhard Noss (au), Jan-Paul Van Der Pas (nl), Greg Middleton (au), Harry Marinakis (us), Stephan Kempe (de), Martin Mills (uk), Kirsty Mills (uk), John Brush (au), Nick White (au).

Front: Diana Northup (us), Janeen Samuel (au), Susan White (au), Gunnhildur Stefánsdóttir (is), Marjorie Coggan (au), Ken Grimes (au).

Standing on Turtle Cave (3H-90), a "lava blister" at Byaduk.

KG100584jat K.G. Grimes, 8-2010



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Some miscellaneous notes on participation and other things about the symposium

In Australia (2010) there were no participants from the Azores, while since a long time they came as a group of at least some 5 persons. When asking for the reason: the "crisis." So, no financial support from *Gespea*, their organization.

Also from Japan no participation. Reason: this period in August has a big festival, which interfered. Moreover, their amount of holidays is not as large countries. They worried about the extra travel from South to North Australia. as in some

Future Vulcanospeleology Symposia Proposals

A proposal by Dr. Theo Toulkeridis of for the *Galápagos Islands* is mentioned for a future symposium. But flights from Europe are (as far as some travel guides claim) very expensive. First to Ecuador, then another expensive flight.

Also a proposal came for a future symposium in *New Mexico* came from Kenneth Ingham (U.S.A.). In 2009 there was the U.I.S. congress in the U.S.A. Some (Dutch) speleologists (not me) skipped this due to the period (July) when there were (it is high season) no cheap flights offered. Also (but maybe



Photo above: A lava cave in New Mexico

this is just me) the extreme high temperature for field work is not attractive.

Editor's note: The best time for exploring lava caves in New Mexico (El Malpais National Monument) without the extreme summer heat is September and October. But the National Park Service recently closed all lava caves in El Malpais because of concerns over White Nose Syndrome (WNS).

Not accepted was a proposal by Carlos Benedetto for Argentina in combination with U.I.S. Bureau meeting and the National Speleological Congress. However, he could not be at Undara/Australia to give a presentation and details.

There will of course always be problems, certainly with symposia of our commission, data might be very convenient for one, but not for another...



Mount Kilimanjaro (5,895 meters)

Photo courtesy of William Crouse

William Crouse has successfully climbed Mount Everest seven times, and in 2010 completed the *Seven Summits* by climbing the highest mountain on all seven continents

The 2011 Mount Kilimanjaro Expedition

In the previous newsletter (#58) an expedition to the lava tubes on Kilimanjaro was mentioned. The original (Dutch) expedition was cancelled due to lack of participation. I myself had not much interest due to the clearly needed physical condition, and the fact that some participants had more interest to reach the top than finding caves.

The Dutch originator, Sjoerd van der Schuit, contacted Clive Ward. Clive is a professional guide on Kilimanjaro, and now it seems both are combining their efforts to make this a success.

Clive is known to the participants of the 8th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology in Kneya (1998). He had a lecture "Lava Caves of Kilimanjaro, Mawenzi Lava Tubes" (International Journal of Speleology, 27B, 1998, pp. 53-56).

So now the idea is to go in September/October 2011 and be some 10 days on the mountain. It should be clear a certain condition is needed – the exploration of caves will take place on a level of 4,000 meters high. Permission of the government and park authorities is already established.

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For more information about the *2011 Mount Kilimanjaro Expedition*, please contact:

speleokibo@gmail.com

ward.clive@yahoo.com



Árni B. Stefánsson (left) rappels into a 30-meter deep volcanic vent called the Shaft on Mount Eccles during the 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology in Australia. Steve Holden (right) arranged the ropes.

Commission Meeting during the 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology Undara, Australia August 16, 2010

At the end of the symposium the traditional commission meeting was held. Most of the participants attended (some 20 people from 6 countries).

Status of the commission. No news (=good news). The commission has no problems.

Information to report since the commission meeting in 2008:

No news about the book issued by Chris Wood, but he delivered a lecture (read by Martin Mills) about lave tubes in China.

No news about the WoMo Voc project. No participants from the Azores attended the symposium, so no information.

The committee of the commission will be extended, Harry Marinakis will be the vice-chairman. He wants to bring the news letter in digital form via e-mail.

Next symposium!! Amman, Jordan, March 15-22, 2012. by Dr. Ahmad Al-Malabeh of the Hashemite University of Zarka. He could not be at the symposium, but the introduction and presentation done by Prof. Stephan Kempe was accepted by the audience. More ASAP.

A Visit to Þríhnúkagígur, Iceland

No pictures please...

No jeans please...



Introduction

By Jan Paul

Those who participated in the Korean symposium (2008) might remember the lecture by Árni about the project to make “Threenookageegur” (Three Peaks Crater) a part of a tourism project. This crater was mentioned again in Newsletter #57, page 15-17.

Just after the Australian symposium (2010) Árni invited some commission members to have a look in this crater for their meaning and opinion of this

feature and possibilities as World Heritage project. The entry possibility was possible due to a National Geographic project, which would include a hauling system, making access easier than going up and down 120 meters with single rope technique.

Photo above: Árni B. Stefánsson (left) and Jan Paul van der Pas at Þríhnúkagígur in September 2010. (National Geographic prohibited photos so as not to interfere with their filming, so this is the only photo we have of Árni and Jan Paul during their trip to Þríhnúkagígur.)



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Just after the Australia Symposium an e-mail arrived from Árni to come to Iceland and have a look in the Þríhnúkagígur Crater. Actually some other commission members were also invited but had an excuse due to condition, lack of money or lack of time. So just me. It was supposed to give an opinion about this feature, which Bill Halliday had already stated to be “the most important vulcanospeleology phenomenon on earth.”

On my first visit to the entrance of the crater a huge constructions had been built. Above the entrance, which is actually pretty small, a heavy metal beam, over 10 meters long, had been installed with the help of a huge Coastal Guard helicopter. “Smaller items” were flown in by a smaller helicopter which must have made many lights. To the heavy beam a smaller construction, forming a “T” (functioning as a bridge) gave access to the hauling system, a basket big enough for 4 persons, driven by electric motors.

The first trip was in good weather, and it was very impressive to see the solidity of the whole set-up. A very sturdy tent had been erected to give some shelter, a 10kWW generator hummed friendly. Going up to the crater I had already been told that my jeans were a “no-no.” Beside the National Geographic crew all work was done by members of Icelandic rescue teams. They were very experienced climbers, and had experience with both climbing expeditions in Pamir, Himalaya and so on and serious rescues. Jeans in their eyes get too wet and will give hypothermia problems, of which they

have seen fatalities. Taking pictures was also not allowed, since all material had a copyright by National Geographic. Later, probably February, all this material, after being shown in Iceland, will be donated by the Icelanders.

However, this was just a trip to the top of the crater. View from the top is staggering, some 30 km away Reykjavík is clearly visible.

Visitors will have to wait until National Geographic is not filming – we will interfere with lights or sounds. We have to dress on this crater for very special weather. As some visitors of Iceland know, Icelandic rain seldom come down vertical, you are better prepared for horizontal rain. Here however you are warned for rain coming vertical upwards due to the wind on the slopes. Wind is sometimes heavy – the really very sturdy tent has to be taken down before it blows away. Later I am informed the very first trip down had the same problems, but all solved.

The first day of filming the project leader is down, but has to sit six hours without light and making no sounds due to the filming. At the same time the dome is measured again for better accuracy.

But the, finally, the day is there: “Visitors” are allowed down. No filming will take place, so we can not disturb the action of National Geographic.

Árni, Gunnhildur, myself and the controller enter the basket and slowly go down. First the entrance throat has to be negotiated, but then the vast space under us opens up. The basket sinks slowly with



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A friendly sound, and due to big lamps attached to it we have breathtaking views of the walls around us, and also the bottom I visible due to other big lights. The walls are very colourful, from gray to orange-brown and red. After some time we are 120 meters deeper, and land on top of the immense heap of debris.

It sure is due to all the heavy lights that this unique vast hall can be appreciated. We are sitting on top of the heap which slopes down in all directions, and on some places goes down for another 80 meters. Some persons are there, the void is remapped and everyone goes around. I myself am completely overwhelmed and just sit down to observe this phenomenon. Later some other visitors are coming down, this is a group of officials from Iceland who are hoped to become sponsors for the project to raise this to a World Heritage status and tourist attraction. They are lucky, they do not have to climb the mountain - they are flown in by helicopter. After some time - I completely lost any idea of that - we have to go out. In the meantime it is nearly dark, but visibility is good, and far away we see all the lights of Reykjavík.

The possibility to visit this volcanic feature was unique. The invitation by Árni for this event is a once-in-a-lifetime possibility. Actually more persons from the Commission were invited, but had to cancel for several reasons. The best person to give a professional opinion, Bill Halliday, had regrettable to skip due to health reasons.

It was also supposed to get an opinion

from the Commission about the feasibility of this crater to make it a World Heritage site, and a tourist attraction.

I think anyone of the Commission would be impressed by the work done till now. Árni is working on this for nearly 20 years, and has collected (as witnessed on the spot and seen from publications) a group of dedicated and professional co-operators that hardly have their match in the world.

After the visit to the crater Árni and the chairman of the Commission had an interview with the Icelandic Minister of Environment, Svandís Svavarsdóttir. Proposals for making the area a national park with supervision, and proposal for a World Heritage site were very positive received, and meetings for the future with government officials proposed.

Afterwards Árni told me he was surprised this meeting indeed could take place, as at the same moment some riots in Reykjavík took place and probably the government officials had 'other' things to do than receive visitors. Then this personal note: a huge thanks to Árni and Gunnhildur for the immense hospitality they offered - it felt like being 'at home.'

For more information, see:

Newsletter of the Commission on Volcanic Cave, June 2010 (#58)

NSS News Vol 28(3), August 1992

Árni B. Stefánsson
gunnhildurstef@simnet.is
Kambsvgur 10
IS-10 Reykjavík, Iceland

Book Review
By Martin Mills

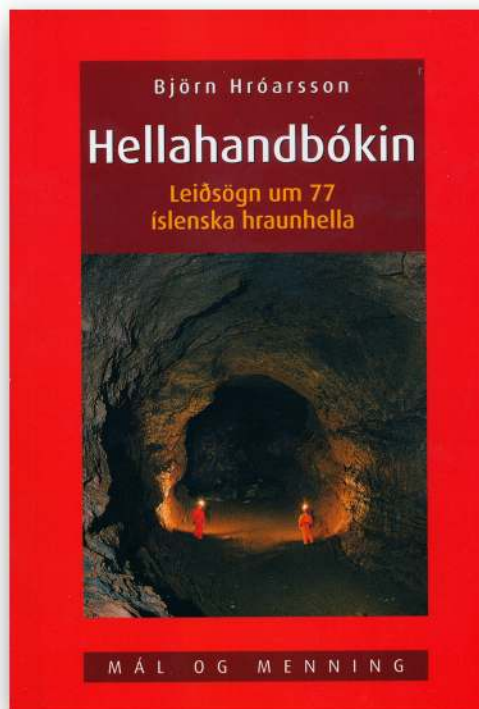
Hellahandbókin by Björn Hróarsson

Mál og menning, Reykjavík. 2008..256 pp. 5 maps, 29 surveys, 224 colour photos

A5 softbound with plastic protective cover

Price around the equivalent of £20 sterling.

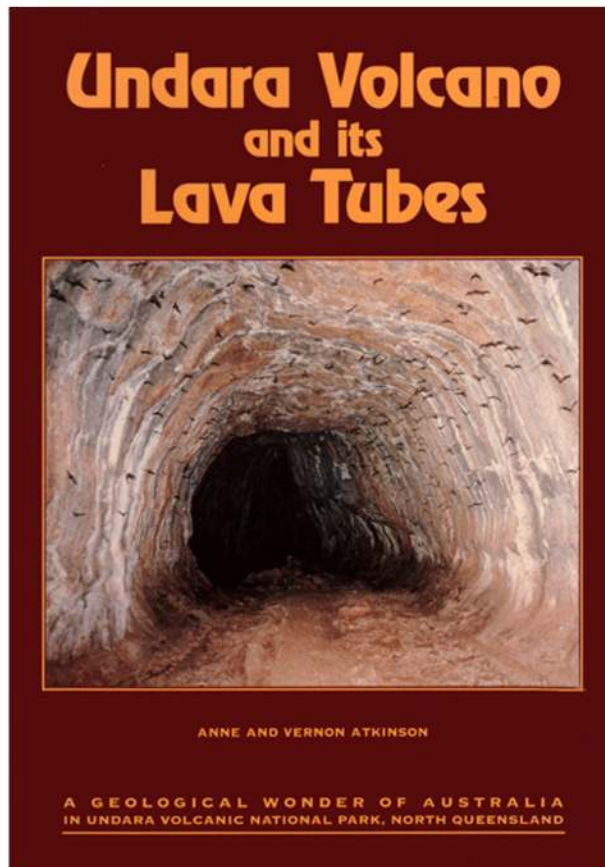
ISBN 9979-3-2924-6



Some may remember Björn Hróarsson's previous books "Hraunhellir á Íslandi" (1991) and his impressive "Íslenskir Hellar" (2006). The latter comprised two large coffee-table volumes in a slipcase; each running to over 300 pages crammed with fantastic photographs and weighs in at 5.8kg. The price originally was around the equivalent of £190 sterling, but understood to have been recently available in Reykjavík for around €100. My only reservation at the time was that some of the photographs (many double paged) seemed over large. On re-examining my copy I noticed at least five duplicated photographs, e.g. p. 56 and p. 589. Not that this is in any way a criticism.

Now we have his third caving book. Although it is altogether a more clearly is intended for field use; nonetheless it

is still significant and details 77 lava caves in 23 lava cave bearing flows compared with some 490 lava caves in over 60 flows in his previous tome. For example Hallmundarhraun in the previous work detailed 23 sites, condensed in the present volume to 3 caves. It is liberally illustrated at almost one colour photograph per page. Many, but not all, have been previously seen but for me lose none of their impact for being in smaller format. The photos on adjoining pages 246 and 247 were noted the same but with different perspectives. As one would expect it is in Icelandic, which precludes me from reviewing it in any depth. The survey of Littli-Björn has been changed. I also noticed a photo credit to Cliff Child which should read Childs. Controversially dare I mention there is a list of GPS co-ordinates for each cave and most entrances.....? MTM



Book Review

By Jan Paul van der Pas

Undara Volcano and its Lava Tubes

by Anne and Vernon Atkinson

First edition 1995, revised printing 2001

A4, 21x29.5 cm, 86 pages, weight 530 grams, the number of pictures is enormous, several on each page.
English language

Price around A\$ 30-40

ISBN 0 646 24580 5

A fascinating book (I knew about it but still did not have it...). During the 14th International Symposium of Vulcanospeleology *Australia, August 2010) a fascinating fact happened: The author, somewhere in her 80s, attended this meeting. Anne also had a lecture during this symposium. The symposium took place at Undara, an area she (and her husband) had studied in detail so many years ago.

As it turned out new opinions were issued due to the symposium, but no way to get around this basic work.

Also, most, very important!! This book is still available!!

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Anne Atkinson (right) and Harry Marinakis (U.S.A.) at Undara Lodge in the Queensland Outback, Australia, during the 14th International Symposium on Vulcanospeleology.

Anne Atkinson does not have e-mail at the moment. Her current contact information is:

Mrs. Anne Atkinson
Unit 21
Coral Towers
255 The Esplanade
Cairns, Queensland
Australia

Mrs. Anne Atkinson
P.O. Box 18
Wescour 4870
Queensland
Australia

Volcanology Meeting Mexico, 2012

By Ramón Espinasa

During 2012 there will be a volcanology meeting near Colima called Cities on Volcanoes. They are asking me to organize a field trip to lava tubes before or after the meeting, and I'm probably organizing it to the area of Xalapa, Veracruz (I know, it is the other side of the country, but there are not many lava tubes on your side, and besides, the participants can always take a plane to go from one side to the other).

Together with this, they are proposing that we organize a parallel symposium specifically on volcanic caves (and we could also program smaller excursions to some interesting caves in your area, for example Chapuzón).

I will soon send you a short note about the Río Huichila and El Volcancillo lava tubes to include in the Commission's bulletin.

Ramón Espinasa
respinasa@yahoo.com.mx



You are invited
to the



15th INTERNATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON VULCANOSPELEOLOGY

March 15 - 22, 2012
AMMAN-JORDAN

Organized by

**THE HASHEMITE UNIVERSITY AND JORDANIAN
GEOLOGISTS ASSOCIATION**
Held in the Royal Culture Center
Amman - Jordan

President of the Organizing Committee
Prof. Dr. Ahmad Al-Malabeh
The Hashemite University

U.I.S. COMMISSION ON VOLCANIC CAVES



Proposed Symposium Schedule March 2012



- March 14: Arrival at Amman
- March 15: 2012: Opening presentations and dinner
- March 16: Day excursions
- March 17: Presentations
- March 18: Presentations, sessions & concluding dinner
- March 19-22: Harrat Excursion (if possible, a day in Syria could be included)

Registration & Information

Prof. Dr. Ahmad Al-Malabeh
P.O. Box: 150459
Postal Code: 13115
ZARKA - Jordan

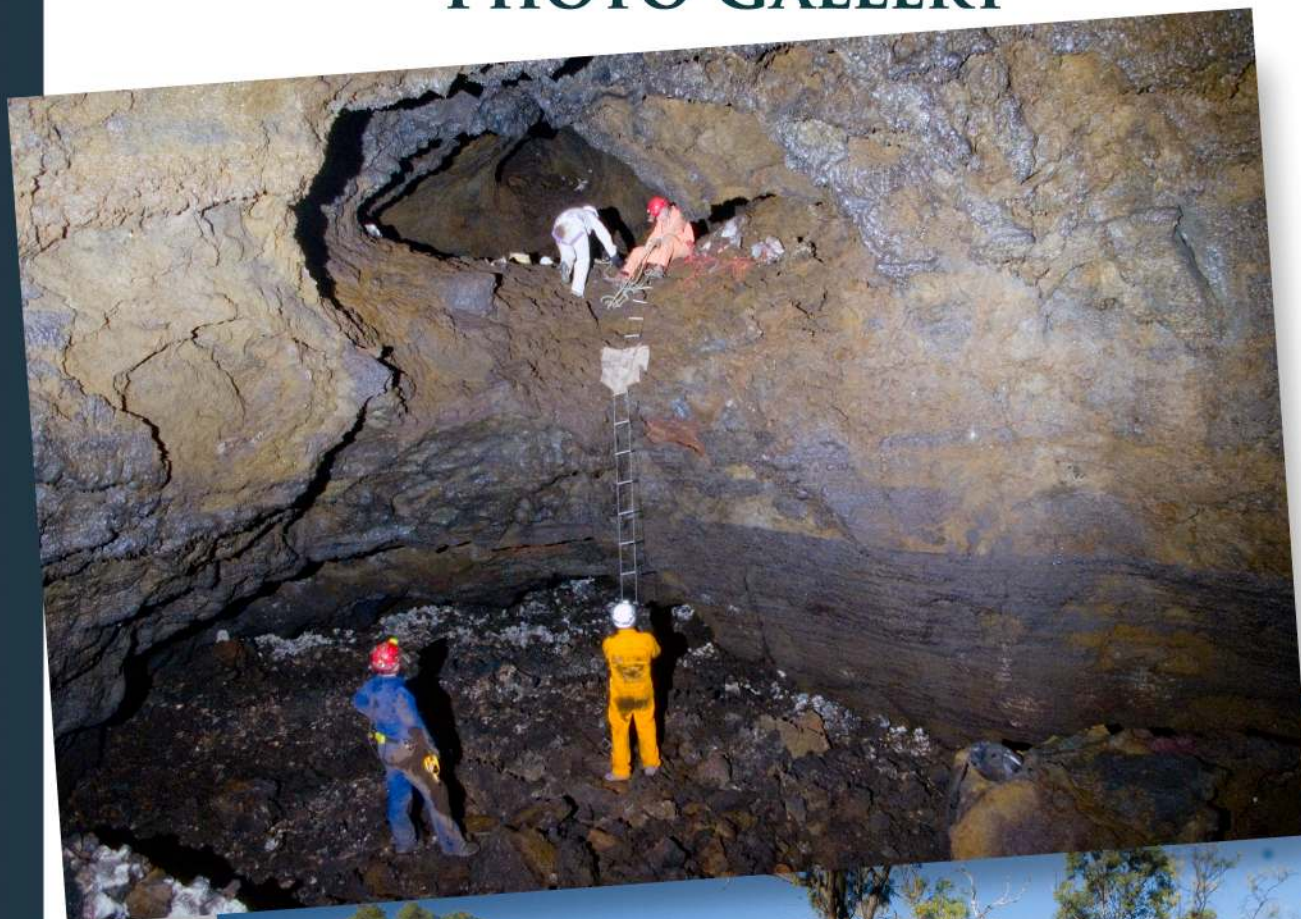
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PHOTO GALLERY



U.I.S. COMMISSION ON VOLCANIC CAVES

PREVIOUS PAGE, UPPER PHOTO:

Gunnhildur Stefánsdóttir completes the ladder pitch climb, belayed by Ken Grimes, while Steve Holden & Árni B. Stefánsson wait their turn to climb the ladder. Theater Cave, Byaduk Caves, Western District Volcano Province, Australia, August 9, 2010. Photo by Harry Marinakis.

PREVIOUS PAGE, LOWER PHOTO:

In the Australian Outback at Undara Volcanic Park

Surtur, volume 7, 1999 (probably the last), fine condition, 62 pages of glorious colour photographs with both Icelandic and English titles.



Announcements

Martin & Kirsty Mills announce that they have two issues of the out-of-print Icelandic publication *Surtur* that are available free to a good home (for the cost of postage):

Surtur, volume 5, 1994

43 pages

Used and slightly crinkled from condensation?

In Icelandic throughout.

Appears to cover a cave in Hnappinns, Klakahellir, an Icelandic cave registry?

Visits to Surshellir and Vidgelmir,

Kristjansdolum, cave surveying,

SRT, Annual Report and membership list

PHOTO: Hypipamee Crater in the Outback, Queensland, Australia. This is a very impressive 270-foot deep vertical pipe (called a diatrema) in solid granite that formed by a gaseous volcanic explosion.

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SPELEO CALENDAR

2012



XV International Symposium
on Vulcanospeleology
Amman, Jordan
March 15-22, 2012
www.vulcanospeleology.org
www.jo-geologists.com

Volcanology Meeting
Mexico
Dates and location to be
determined

SPELEO CALENDAR

2013



16th International Congress
of Speleology
Brno, Czech Republic
July 21-28, 2013
<http://www.speleo2013.com>