



Well-decorated passage in a cave of the eastern Harz mountains (Germany).

Photo:  
Marcel  
Dijkstra



***This Newsletter is issued  
by the Bureau of the  
European Speleological  
Federation (FSE)***

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## Editorial

Slowly, speleological activities return to pre-pandemic level with the first conferences not being cancelled and explorations being continued. We sincerely hope that this encouraging progress won't be throttled again by another lockdown.

This Newsletter has information on the FSE General Assembly 2021, the European Cave Protection Label (ESPL) award 2021, a new FSE art competition etc.

Please forward this Newsletter as widely as possible to caving clubs and individual cavers.

**The FSE Bureau**

## UNESCO celebrated IYCK

On 13<sup>th</sup> of September the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) was celebrated at the UNESCO headquarter in Paris during a panel discussion and several presentations (see also page 6 of this Newsletter). Several members of the UIS board as well as guest speakers were present. Jean-Claude Thies, president of the European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) of FSE, was also invited.

The event can still be seen at the UIS Youtube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6-yDYpPfjQ>

## The International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) extended to 2022

As most of you already know, the IYCK has been extended to 2022. Thus, you can join the IYCK also with your next year's event! All info is available on the IYCK website, the UIS Facebook page, as well as the UIS Twitter and Instagram pages:

[www.iyck2021.org](http://www.iyck2021.org)

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

<https://twitter.com/uisspeleo>

<https://www.instagram.com/uisspeleo/>

A list of events which have already contributed to the IYCK can be found at

<http://iyck2021.org/index.php/events/>



The UIS is glad to share with you volume 63-1 of the UIS Bulletin. This 43 pages issue was distributed in June 2021 and has articles on the IYCK as well as from UIS member countries.

The PDF interactive format can be downloaded by clicking on the link:

<http://www.uis-speleo.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/uisb631.pdf>

## FSE Partners



## Cave and Karst related events

Although the pandemic is still not over and some events have recently been cancelled or postponed, we will start again to add international events with this issue of the EuroSpeleo Newsletter as the travelling situation slowly returns to normal for vaccinated individuals. For more detailed information please consult the list of European caving events at the FSE website:

<https://www.eurospeleo.eu/images/stories/docs/bureau/European%20agenda%20of%20speleological%20events%2006-04-2021.pdf>

**18-22 October 2021**

**Australian Cave and Karst Management Association Conference** - Wellington Caves (NSW), Australia. Information at [enquiries@wellingtoncaves.com.au](mailto:enquiries@wellingtoncaves.com.au)

**26-30 October 2021**

**6th EuroSpeleo Protection Symposium "Assessing, monitoring and protecting cave biotopes and geotopes through Natura 2000 or similar programs in Europe"** - info: [symposium@eurospeleo.org](mailto:symposium@eurospeleo.org)

**29 October - 1 November 2021**

**Speleo Kamaraton 2021. International Meeting** - Marina di Camerota, Salerno, Italy - <http://www.speleokamaraton.eu/>

**29 October - 2 November 2021**

**XV Mexican National Congress of Speleology** - Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico - <https://umae.org/congreso2021/>

**11 - 14 November 2021**

**European Cave Rescue Meeting 2021** - Ramales de la Victoria, Cantabria, Spain - <https://caverescue.eu/european-cave-rescue-meeting-2021-second-circular/>

## 19th International Congress of Speleology, 2025

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) has recently voted to hold the 19th International Congress of Speleology in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, on 27 July – 2 August 2025. A preliminary video is available at Youtube. More information will be released soon in the next UIS Bulletin ([www.uis-speleo.org](http://www.uis-speleo.org)).

## Invitation: Multi-Media Competition

Our Bulgarian colleagues invite you, as a part of the program of the International Year of Caves and Karst, to the competition "Karst under protection – gift for the future generation". For all details please visit their website <http://prokarstterra.bas.bg/competition/>



**Please send info on all your international events (expeditions, congresses, symposia etc.) to [contact@eurospeleo.org](mailto:contact@eurospeleo.org)**

**19 - 21 November 2021**

**2nd National Moroccan Caving Congress: Karst, Arts, Spéléologie et enjeux de développement** - Faculty of Sciences, Oujda, Morocco - <http://speleomaroc.com>

**20 - 21 November 2021**

**24th Scientific Speleological Days** - Han-sur-Lesse, Belgium - <https://sites.google.com/view/jss24/>

**25 - 28 November 2021**

**Conference of the Arabian Journal of Geosciences** - Istanbul, Turkey - <https://10times.com/elzd-x555-f2xf>

**3 - 6 June 2022**

**36th Brazilian Congress of Speleology** - Brasilia, Brazil - <http://36cbe.org.br/>

**16 - 19 June 2022**

**German annual caver's meeting** - Truckenthal/Thuringia - see [https://www.vdhk.de/termine?tx\\_news\\_pi1%5Bnews%5D=526&cHash=5f94cc912580ccde55db11b973f1ccf8](https://www.vdhk.de/termine?tx_news_pi1%5Bnews%5D=526&cHash=5f94cc912580ccde55db11b973f1ccf8)

**22 - 25 June 2022**

**EuroKarst 2022** - Malaga, Spain - <http://www.eurokarst.org/>

**18 - 22 July 2022**

**25th International Conference on Subterranean Biospeleology** - Cluj-Napoca, Romania - <https://www.25icsb.com/>

**24 - 31 July 2022**

**18th International Congress of Speleology** - Savoie Technolac, Le Bourget du Lac, Savoie, France - <http://uis2021.speleos.fr/>

## Geoscientific Symposium in Vienna, 12 Nov. 2021

As a contribution to the International Year of Caves and Karst, the Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Innsbruck University, as well as the Museum of Natural History in Vienna cordially invites you to a geoscience symposium on 12th November 2021. The Symposium will be held at the Museum of Natural History, Maria-Theresien-Platz, Vienna. Presentations will start at 13H00 (local time) and will last until about 18H30.

A number of well-renowned international scientists and cavers will present talks on karst and caves from several continents, e.g. on the Alps, Greenland, Romania, the Czech Republic and Nevada. Robbie Shone will contribute with a multimedia presentation on the World's deepest caves.

The symposium is designed for cave explorers but at the same time is intended to also allow the public and geoscientists a view of the hidden world below our feet.

Registrations will be possible until 4th November, 2021.

Contact and inquiries: [viktor.bruckman@oeaw.ac.at](mailto:viktor.bruckman@oeaw.ac.at) or at <https://www.oeaw.ac.at/geok/detail/event/hoehlen>

## EuroSpeleo Projects recently accepted by FSE

ESP 2021-05: Biodiversity in Rwanda Lava Caves (Switzerland)

ESP 2021-06: Biodiversity in Georgian Caves and Karst Areas (Slovakia)

# IUCN resolution on geodiversity adopted

At its 2020 Congress the IUCN has agreed, with 97% of positive votes, to a resolution, reproduced below, on the protection of geoheritage and geotopes. The resolution strives to put geodiversity on an equal footing with biodiversity – so far, caves were often only recognized as habitats for cave life in legislative texts. Protection of Geotopes is still entirely missing, e.g. in the European Directive Natura 2000. Also, features inside caves (like formations) are not protected by European and many national legislations.

## WCC-2020-Res-074-EN Geoheritage and protected areas

CONSIDERING that our well-being and survival depend on the elements and processes of both geodiversity and biodiversity;

NOTING the growing commitment with respect to the preservation, study and sustainable use of geoheritage;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the main geodiversity elements directly influencing biodiversity are geological substrates, which determine hydrology, erosion, nutrients, the chemistry of soils, and vegetation health and cover; landforms, which determine climate, hydrology, soils and habitats and species distributions; and active geological processes, which determine habitats and species distributions and survival;

RECOGNISING that selected geodiversity elements and processes, designated as geoheritage, play a crucial role in underpinning biodiversity conservation and the conservation of protected areas, as well as providing other scientific, conservation and ecosystem-service benefits;

CONSIDERING the specificity of natural cavities resulting from complex dynamic processes linking the Earth's surface and underground rocks;

RECOGNISING the biological and geological interest in natural cavities, which combine endokarstic and volcanic geological formations with terrestrial and aquatic habitats, and which support fauna, flora and fungi specific to these environments, and include elements and landscapes without any equivalent on Earth's surface;

RECALLING that underground environments remain largely unknown because they are invisible to most people and hard to access, and are a pioneering frontier for scientific research and discoveries;

CONCERNED that the role of geodiversity in ecosystem services is not yet being fully addressed by protected area policies and management;

BEARING IN MIND that, while certain countries have geoheritage protection, it is generally recognised that the mechanisms available, whether internationally or nationally, are not enough to guarantee conservation of the most significant geosites, and that many of these sites are at risk, mostly due to threats from human activities;

WELCOMING the efforts of the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS) in supporting the Global Geosites Programme to identify geological sites of international relevance, and the initiative of the IUGS International Commission on Stratigraphy, which identifies sites of global significance as standards for Earth's geological time and its record;

RECALLING that Resolution 5.048 Valuing and conserving geoheritage within the IUCN Programme 2013 – 2016 (Jeju, 2012) specifically called on the World Commission on Protected Areas (WCPA) to “promote and support, in collaboration with UNESCO and the International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS), the elaboration and extension of the inventory for the Global Geosites Programme, as well as other regional and international inventories of sites of geological interest”;

RECALLING Resolutions 4.040 Conservation of geodiversity and geological heritage (Barcelona, 2008), 5.048 (cited above) and 6.083 Conservation of moveable geological heritage (Hawai'i, 2016) in favour of geoconservation;

ALSO RECALLING Resolution 6.041 Identifying Key Biodiversity Areas for safeguarding biodiversity (Hawai'i, 2016), which reveals that identifying, promoting and protecting geodiversity is missing in the global conservation agenda;

FURTHER RECALLING Resolution 6.063 Avoiding extinction in limestone karst areas (Hawai'i, 2016) regarding the conservation of very specific life forms hosted in karstic environments; and

WELCOMING the reports of WCPA's Geoheritage Specialist Group to develop effective best-practice guidance tools addressed to protected area managers;

## The IUCN World Conservation Congress 2020, at its session in Marseille, France:

1. REQUESTS the Director General and WCPA to:

a. mobilise IUCN Regional Offices and the IUCN Global Programme in support of national efforts to collect, compile and publish data on geoheritage and geodiversity in protected areas, including proper inventories, research, and sustainable management and protection of geological substrate, landforms and active geological processes;

b. support the development of a detailed study envisaging the establishment of a future IUCN initiative on Key Geoheritage Areas, as a complement to the existing Key Biodiversity Areas programme, in order to protect geoheritage sites of global conservation significance and move towards more integrated nature conservation;

c. encourage work, including by protected area managers, to enhance the information and proper interpretation of geodiversity and geoheritage in order to increase the awareness of visitors of all natural features inside natural cavities and protected areas and the ways in which geological, biological and cultural elements are often inter-linked; and d. engage with the Commission on Ecosystem Management (CEM) to encourage a concerted effort to conduct ecosystem Red List assessments of geologically interesting ecosystems, and to incorporate geoheritage assessments as part of the normal procedure for red-listing and ecosystem assessments;

2. ENCOURAGES national Member organisations, other nature conservation organisations, civil society, academia and managers of protected areas and outstanding underground sites to:

a. foster knowledge about geodiversity and geoheritage inside and outside protected areas and to integrate nature conservation principles and methods into the management of protected areas to ensure the effective protection of this component of natural heritage;

b. establish or improve national legislation concerning the protection of geoheritage, and enabling the necessary conditions to ensure the implementation of effective conservation measures; and

c. encourage the respectful exploration and study of underground environments and their interrelations with the surface; and

3. CALLS ON states, non-governmental organisations, universities, researchers, economic stakeholders and protected area managers to take into account the specific issues linked to underground environments in the definition and implementation of nature conservation policies and to adopt a holistic approach to the management of underground natural environments, considering all relationships between biological and geological elements.





## EuroSpeleo Protection Label 2021 awarded to "CaveLife App"

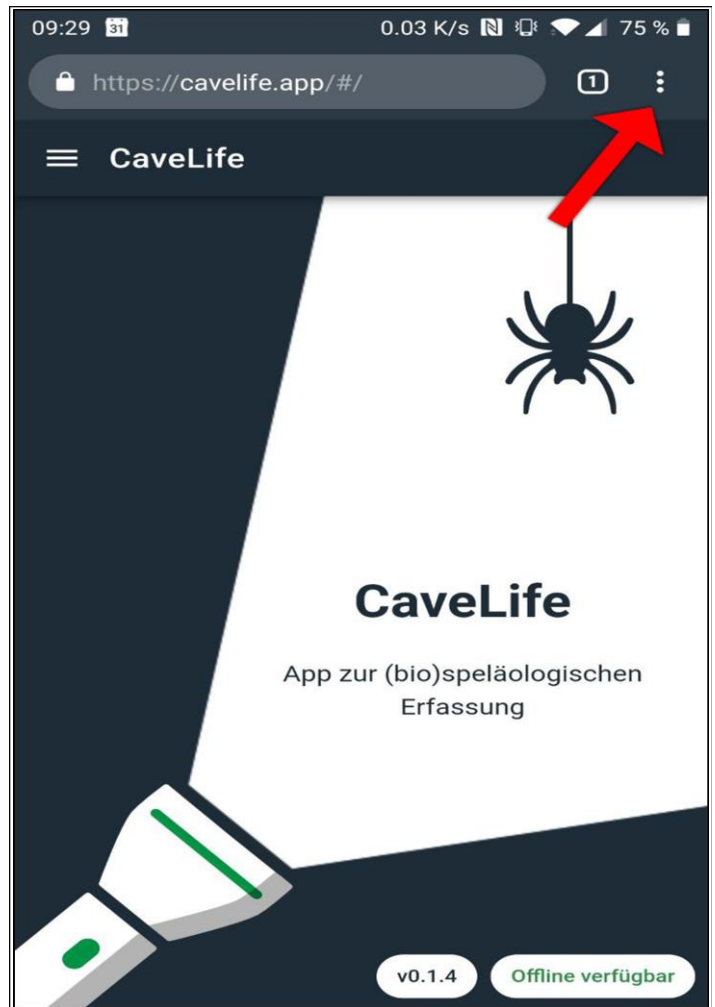
The European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) of the European Speleological Federation (FSE) is pleased to announce that, following the evaluation of the applications received, the EuroSpeleo Protection Label 2021 has been awarded to the Verband der deutschen Höhlen- und Karstforscher e.V. for their Project "CaveLife App". The award consists of EUR 800 as well as a Scurion lamp set.

**The Project:** The "Biospeläologisches Kataster" (Biospeleological Register) is a joint collaborative project of the German Speleological Federation and Hesse Federation for Cave and Karst Science.

Its aim is to bring together all recorded zoological data from caves, artificial cavities and groundwater-dependent ecosystems (e.g. springs) in a single database under the authority of the Department of Biospeleology of the VdHK. In addition, the parameters important for basic data collection and monitoring under the European Fauna-Flora-Habitat Directive with regard to habitat type 8310 (caves not developed for tourism) will also be recorded.

**The App:** The "App for (bio)speleological assessment" serves to create the foundation for a uniform recording of the cave and groundwater fauna as well as the assessment of the state of a cave. With the smartphone-based app, all necessary general data on the sites and the species groups (taxa) that can be determined by visual observation can be recorded on site. In the case of natural caves, FFH (Fauna-Flora-Habitat Directive) assessment of habitat structures and threats can also be made. The use of the app is free of charge for any non-commercial use. All data collected is automatically transmitted by the app to the biospeleological database and can be evaluated for scientific purposes by the Department of Biospeleology. Every user has the right to retrieve/request/change the data reported by him at any time.

All info at: <https://cavelife.app>



## The European Environmental Bureau (EEB) and FSE

The EEB is the European head organization working on civil and nature protection at EU level. This is achieved by many workgroups in all relevant domains. FSE became a member of EEB in 2011 and is closely involved in the EEB activities and working groups.

The European Cave Protection Commission (ECPC) represents the FSE in the EEB. Currently, we have subscribed to 3 important working groups:

Biodiversity - Jean-Claude Thies, Ferdinando Didonna;  
Water - Bärbel Vogel;  
Agenda 2030 SDG - Bärbel Vogel.

Since 2015 the FSE is an EEB Board member as a "European Network Organization". Bärbel Vogel has covered this task for the period 2015-2018. The Board position is now occupied by Jean-Claude Thies for the period 2018-2021 and 2021-2024.

EEB Membership now comprises three caving organizations. Besides FSE and VdHK (DE) the Italian SSI has been accepted as a full member on the EEB General Assembly 2019 in Berlin.

Further information at <https://eeb.org/>

## Three Counties System (UK): traverse creates a new 86 km (53 miles) long cave

The Three Counties System is a cave system spanning the borders of Cumbria, Lancashire and North Yorkshire in northern England. Over time many caves have been connected with the most southern entrance currently being Large Pot, and the most northerly entrance currently Bull Pot of the Witches. The cave system is extremely complex and contains a number of major subterranean water courses, all of which eventually reach the phreatic zone where exploration is only possible by cave diving. Main resurgences are Leck Beck Head above Cowan Bridge and Keld Head in Kingsdale.

Although first proposed by Dave Brook in 1968, a complete traverse of the Three Counties System from Large Pot in North Yorkshire to Top Sink in Cumbria was completed over the week-end 25-26 September 2021 by cave divers Chris Jewell and Jason Mallinson. This success was achieved following months of preparatory work by over fifty cavers from numerous northern caving clubs and elsewhere, linking parts of the system making it over 86 km in length and 253 m (830 feet) in depth. Prospects for further major connections are promising, which could increase the cave system to a total length of well over 100 km.

Since 1964 sixteen speleologists have lost their lives exploring the Three Counties System.

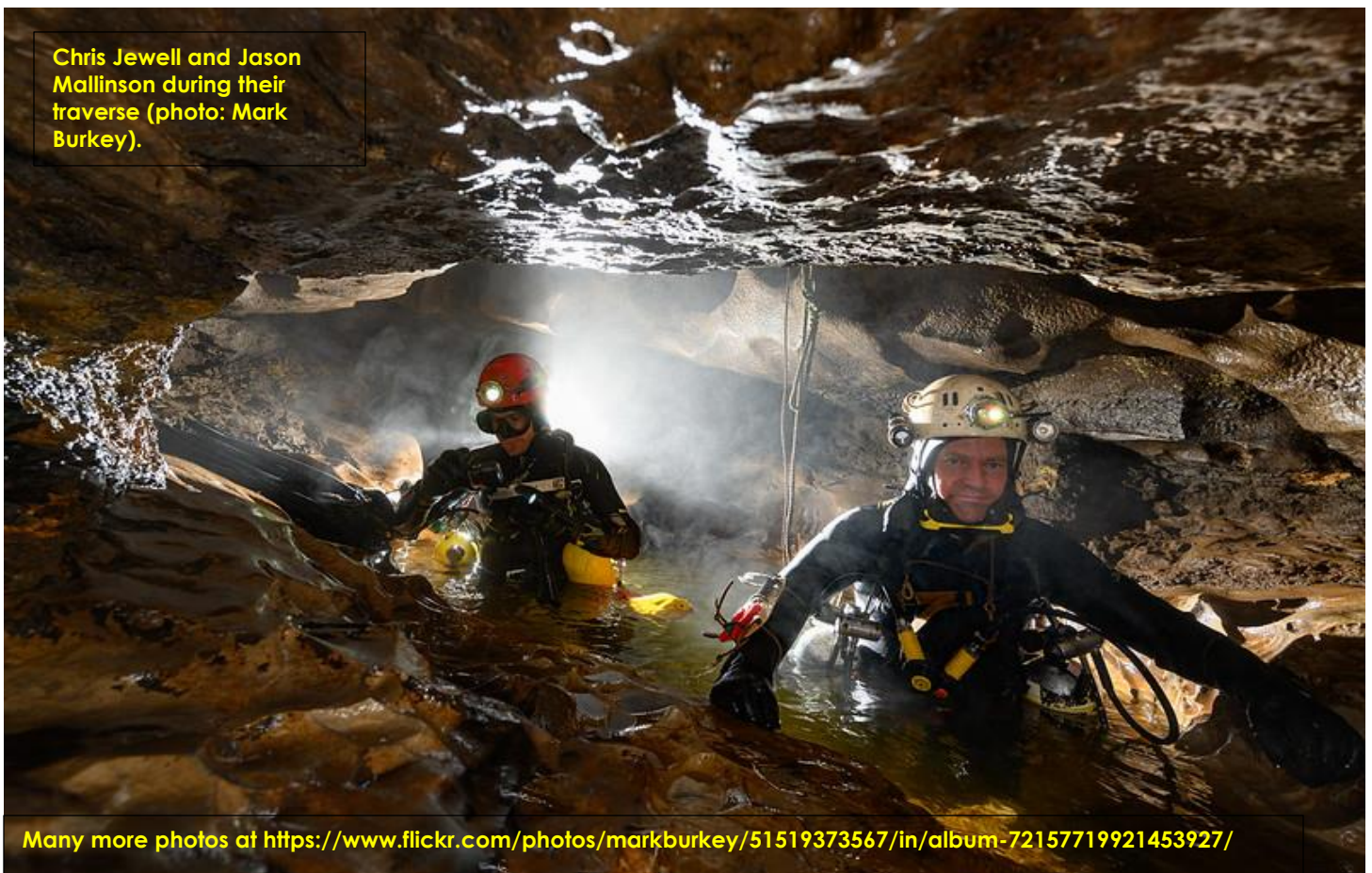


## 2021 FSE General Assembly Meeting (GAM)

On 7th October the FSE held its virtual General Assembly Meeting (GAM) by Zoom. Twenty delegates from 17 member countries discussed the reports of 2020 and the budget and planning for 2021/2022. Three Bureau members were re-elected for the period 2021-2025: President Gerard Campion (UK); General Secretary Alena Gessert (SK); Vice-Treasurer Ernest Geyer (AT).

The Bureau thanks all participants for the successful meeting and we sincerely hope to see each other next year in a face-to-face setting again at the GAM in France during the International Congress of Speleology.

**Chris Jewell and Jason Mallinson during their traverse (photo: Mark Burkey).**



Many more photos at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/markburkey/51519373567/in/album-72157719921453927/>



## UIS and FSE at the celebration of the International Year of Caves and Karst in UNESCO

The FSE European Cave Protection Commission president, Jean-Claude Thies (LU), was kindly invited by the UIS and H.E.Ms Metka Ipavic, Ambassador Permanent-Delegate of Slovenia at UNESCO to take part at the celebration of the: International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) 2021 "Explore, Understand and Protect", which took place on Monday, 13 September 2021 at the UNESCO headquarter in Paris.

Less than 100 persons were allowed to be physically present in the auditorium while many more joined the event online.

After an introduction in the form of the UIS video the audience was addressed by M Ernesto Ottone, Assistant Director-General for Culture at UNESCO, H.E.Ms Metka Ipavic, and Dr. George Veni, president of UIS.

The keynote presentation "A World of Karst, Caves and People" was contributed by Prof. Dr. Nadja Zupan Hajna (UIS).

Finally, a discussion panel with presentations by

Prof. Dr. Fadi H. Nader on "Safe and Sustainable use of Karst Resources" as well as Emeritus Prof. Dr. John Gunn on "Caves and Karst in UNESCO Protected Areas", and

Clayton F. Lino on "Conserving Caves and Karst in Biosphere Reserves: The Cave MAB network" and

Dr. Paul A. Griffiths: on "Karst and UN Agenda 2030" concluded the successful event, which made speleology and karst research with all its achievements well visible for a world-wide public.

## Wildbaderhöhle, a new 1,100 m deep cave in Austria

A new 1,100 m deep cave was recently explored in the Totes Gebirge (Austria) by Austrian, German and British team members of the Speleological Society in Obersteier.

Based on Austrian and French explorations in the 1970s and 1980s (which pushed Wildbaderhöhle to a depth 874 m and a length of 1.7 km), a re-survey of the cave began in 2013.

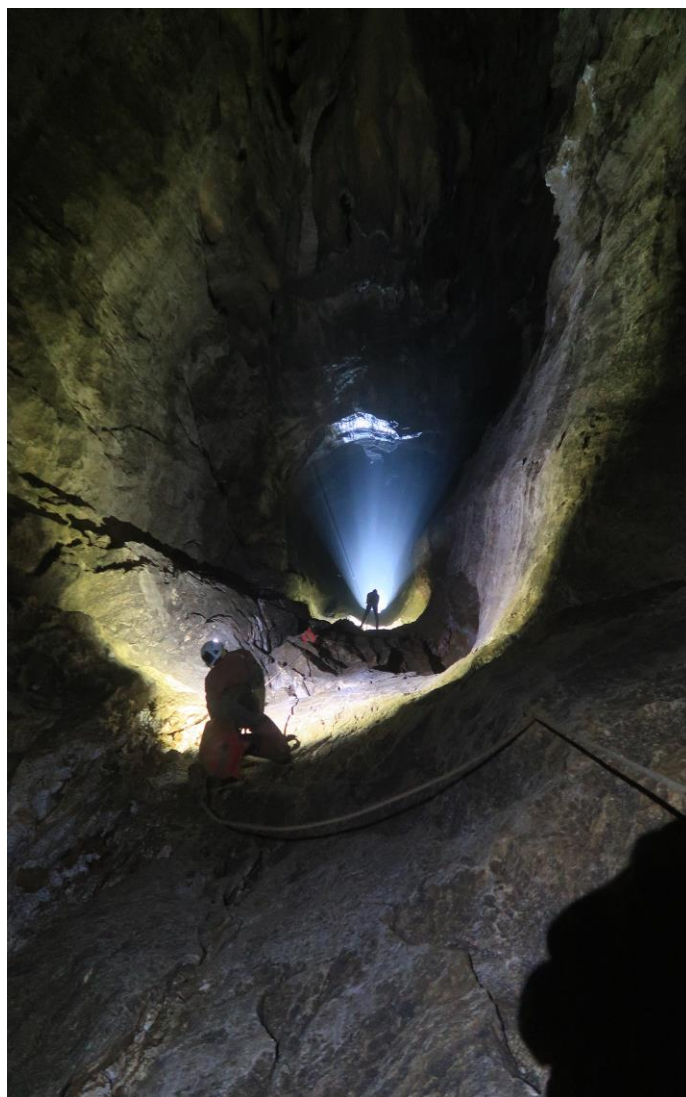
Since then several caving camps took place in this area of the Totes Gebirge. In February 2021 with stable weather conditions, an advance into the depths of this cave was made. Currently, the cave ends at a sump in a depth of 1,082 m below the main entrance. In addition, a connection to a higher entrance was made in August. The total length of the cave currently is 12.5 km with a vertical difference of 1,100 m. Eighteen caves which exceeds 1,000 m in depth are now listed in the Austrian cave register; four of them are located in the Totes Gebirge.

**Source:** Robert Seebacher (2021): Die Wildbaderhöhle, eine weitere über 1000 m tiefe Höhle im Toten Gebirge. - Die Höhle, 72 Jg., Vol. 1-4, p. 45-65.



UIS president George Veni (right) and ECPC president Jean-Claude Thies at the UNESCO event.

Below: Major pitch in Wildbaderhöhle, Austria (photo: Robert Seebacher).





## FSE's Caves and Karst Art Contest is now open for entries from anywhere in the world until 31st January 2022.

### Winners will be announced in early March 2022.

Caves and karsts are unique resources on our beautiful earth. In order to make them more visible and also to better understand these two phenomena, the global speleological community has dedicated 2021 to be the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK).

As a contribution to IYCK the European Speleological Federation (FSE) would like to sincerely invite artists as well as art lovers to participate in an international celebration by holding a contest in all fields of art.

The contest will be conducted with particular themes in relation to the protection of caves and karst.

Participants are invited to present their ideas, emotions and fantasies in five categories:

- A. Painting, Sketching
- B. Ceramics and Sculpture
- C. Graphic Design, Mixing techniques, Textiles, Prints
- D. Art Performance, Art Video, Music, Sound
- E. Publications, Poetry

Up to three winners will be selected by an international jury in each category for a certificate of appreciation. A certificate will be sent to each of the selected artists by mail.

The top three in each category will be awarded with a certificate and the winner of each category will receive a money prize of EUR 100.

An additional prize in the form of a Scurion lamp set will go to the overall winner. This lamp is kindly provided by the FSE sponsor Scurion from Switzerland.

The selected Art works will be presented on the website and social media of the FSE.

To apply for the contest please fill out the entry form which you can find at:

<https://u.pcloud.link/publink/show?code=XZVsSEXZ8yQpkHWWNyRgh2HGuhkTwhOqyafX>

Please attach photos of your art works or links to a performance, video, music or sound and send it with the entry form to the following e-mail address: [art@eurospeleo.org](mailto:art@eurospeleo.org)

The registration deadline is 31st January 2022.

**Taraneh Khaleghi, Head of the organizing team.**

**You can find more information about the International Year of Caves and Karst at**

<http://www.iyck2021.org/>

## Lands of Karst published. Free download.

The book "The Lands of Karst. A Visual Story" has been recently published and is available for free download at

<http://www.karst.edu.rs/en/>

The book is a contribution to the International Year of Caves and Karst.

The publication comprises several hundred color photographs from six "Lands of Karst": Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia. These photographs were taken by more than 70 geologists, speleologists, biologists, archaeologists, mountaineers, professional photographers or cave/karst lovers.

The editors of the book are Neven Kresic and Zoran Stefanović. The photographs in the book have short explanatory texts and they are grouped in 10 chapters.

