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Report of 6th Balkan Cavers meeting 2012

The 6th Balkan Cavers Camp was held in Logatec (Slovenia) from 28.6. to 1.7.2012.



Welcome banner of the 6th Balkan Cavers Meeting (Logatec, Slovenia)

Time-sheet

Wednesday, 27.06.2012

Afternoon was intended for assembly and accommodation of participants. There was already one cave on programme. Reception was open until 5 in the morning.

21:00 Opening of the meeting with a speech by the representative of Administration for civil protection and disaster relief, the President of Speleological Association of Slovenia and representatives of BSU and FSE. Followed by the presentation of the program of the meeting. Emphasis was given on safe and environmentally friendly visiting of caves and existing legislation that regulates visits to Slovenian caves. Representative from our Ministry for environment

Thursday, 28.06.2012

08:00 Organized departure of participants to 8 caves of varying difficulty levels and one tourist caves. Visits was organized by caving clubs.

21:30 Presentation of the Slovenian-Croatian joint European project »EU Proteus« and the first results of the project – Identification of all special conditions and dangers in caves.

Friday, 29.06.2012

08:00 Organized departure of participants to 9 caves of varying difficulty levels and one tourist caves. Visits was organized by caving clubs.

14:00 Meeting of the Bureau BSU

17:30 Assembly General of BSU

21:00 Presentation of the Cave Registry of the Speleological Association of Slovenia – system of Cave Registry and applicability in research and rescue. Follow the results of the review and updating of records of significant caves in the Cave Registry in Slovenia and Croatia within the framework of the EU Proteus project and presentations of important expeditions into the deep and long caves with a focus on individual problem areas in the cave.

Saturday, 30.06.2012

08:00 Departure of cave rescuers to Najdena jama, where international cave rescue exercise was held. Slovenian and foreign cave rescuers, who have so far attended one of the three international programs Cave Rescue training (in Montenegro, Macedonia or Bulgaria) and national cave rescuers participated.

After 08:00 Organized departure of participants to 6 caves of varying difficulty levels. Visits was be organized by caving clubs.

09:00 or 17:30 Meeting of BSU commissions for Training, Cave protection and Cave Rescue.

19:00 Presenting awards of photo contest »We and caves«.

20:00 Closure of Camp: Speech of the representative of Administration for civil protection and disaster relief, president of Speleological Association of Slovenia representatives of BSU and some visiting country. At the end also analysis of the entire camp will be performed.

21:00 Joint closing dinner and cultural program.

Sunday, 01.07.2012

Cleaning and leaving the camp.

Altogether there were 206 participants, who included 47 Slovenian cavers and cave rescuers to help with organization of the camp and guiding to caves in addition to a 159 foreign cavers. The number of countries represented and participants included Bulgaria (74), Croatia (6), Germany (2), Greece (2), Ireland (1), Macedonia (2), Montenegro (3), Poland (3), Romania (35), Serbia (14), Turkey (16) and Austria (1). We were impressed with the number of participants, which caused some logistic problem in last preparation on event and on registration evening (wednesday).



Cave expedition sign in place at the info point.

The main aim of this meeting was to bring together cavers from different countries and visit as many caves as possible. Slovenian cavers and cave rescuers helped the event organizers to accomplish this goal. Every day participants had an option to visit one or more of the 25 listed caves. These caves were categorised according to the level of skill required for their exploration. Categories included "Hard", "Middle" any "Easy". On Thursday (28th June) there were 115 cavers in 8 caves, while on Friday there were 120 cavers in 9 caves. Besides cave rescue exercise where attended 42 participants on Saturday also 45 cavers visited 6 caves. We have special arrangement with Škocjanske jame that participants of the camp pays only entrance fee for children. We have no information how many visitors choose this option. On all days there were 6 vans available for transfers to airport, train and bus station and to caves. All participants were impressed with the level of organization shown during the meeting. The logistics and information centre were run by Slovenian cavers and cave rescuers.

Presentations



Cave rescue training

Due to the interest shown by cave rescuers at the meeting, we arranged an international cave rescue exercise in Najdena jama. Najdena jama is a complex cave system, characterised by a labyrinth of passages, abysses, water and a lot of mud. This took place on the Saturday (30.6.2012). The exercise was headed by Maks Merela and forty-two cave rescuers from nine countries including Bulgaria, Serbia, Poland, Turkey, Croatia, Romania, Montenegro, Macedonia and Slovenia participated to the exercise. The goal was to recover an injured caver located at a depth of 120 m approximately 1.2 km from the cave entrance.

Cave rescuers were organized into six rescue teams working in the cave; additionally we setup our headquarters (HQ) in front of the cave. HQ members note down all the important events that occurred during the training exercise. Each instructor deliberately chose rescuers from different countries to see how international cooperation with rescuers with various levels of experience would work. Organizing such an action is a real challenge not only because of communication problems but also because it is not possible to know in advance the personal experience and skill level of each rescuer.



Najdena Jama cave and HQ personnel in front of the cave entrance. Communication between rescue teams in the cave and HQ was available *via* a wired telephone.

The first rescue team entered the cave at 11:00 pm. Their task was to take a stretcher into the cave and all the necessary material and equipment to prepare the casualty for evacuation. Immediately afterwards, the second team installed the telephone system to allow communication between rescuers and surface personnel. An efficient communication system is vital in a cave rescue situation because the underground cave environment does not allow the use of simple wireless connections such as two-way radio systems.

All other members of the cave rescue teams then entered the cave one after the other. Prior to evacuation (at 14:48) the casualty was prepared i.e., fitted with a body warming device and placed securely on the stretcher.



Preparation of the casualty for a long muddy journey out of Najdena jama & starting the evacuation by hauling the stretcher upwards with a pulley system.

The cave layout meant that rescuers had to prepare several cave specific manoeuvres for getting the stretcher across the many obstacles.



Preparation of the equipment for safe stretcher transport & hauling the stretcher by rope.

At 17:33 the casualty finally emerged from the cave. The whole evacuation took just under 3 hours. The cave was then de-equipped and the final rescuer emerged from Najdena jama at 19:10.

Analyse of the International cave rescue training exercise

The whole rescue exercise was considered a success. Evacuation of the injured caver was fast enough albeit there were some deficiencies. These included:

- Communication problems (language).
- The use of different and in some case incorrect rescue techniques.
- Some of the rescuers did not have the correct personnel equipment and did not carry out optimal rescue manoeuvres.

Ljubljana, 28.8.2012

Meeting coordinator: Uroš Ilič

Rescue exercise report prepared by dr. Maks Merela