



Nullarbor Bunda Cliffs Exploration

Expressions of Interest sought from 17th ICS participants

This work is part of an ongoing project to explore and record the caves in the Bunda Cliffs on the Great Ocean Bight, on the edge of Nullarbor; a 173 kilometre (110 mile) long cliff-face reaching up to 100 metres (300 feet) above the sea.

In 1988 members of the Cave Exploration Group of South Australia (CEGSA) hired a light plane to fly along the Nullarbor Cliffs to record images of the cliffs to document the caves. The prospects were fascinating, especially as it is possible that when the sea level was lower, the caves in the modern-day cliffs may have been accessible to people and animals. Around 15 000–18 000 years ago sea levels were around 100 metres lower than today's levels and, since then, rising sea levels and erosion has resulted in retreat of the cliffs and exposure of karst features.

In 2003, a second aerial mapping flight was undertaken using higher resolution cameras to record the cliffs. At face value, the flight confirmed that the vast majority of caves were large sea caves at the foot of the cliffs formed by wave action, not karst features formed by solution. However, it was not until 2011, when the film was re-examined, that it was realised that a number of dark shadows seen in the grainy images of the cliff mid-face may be natural solution caves typical of caves discovered inland on the Nullarbor.

In 2012, 2013 and 2015, successive expeditions have investigated over 40 unexplored caves, but have barely covered 10% of the cliff face. A small expedition is planned for 2016, and a major expedition is planned for 2017 to follow just after the 17th International Congress of Speleology in Sydney (23–29 July 2017).

Expressions of interest are sought from cavers participating in the 17th International Congress of Speleology to join the Nullarbor Cliffs team in 2017 to investigate and explore new cave targets for two weeks in the field. Places are limited, vertical caving experience is essential, and hardship is expected. Bush camping is de rigeur. References required.

Application to join the Bunda Cliffs exploration excursion should be sent to Steve Milner steve.milner@adelaide.on.net by 1 December 2016. Bookings for this excursion can be made via the ICS registration facility only after the participant's application to join the excursion has been approved and their names advised to the ICS organisers.

Contact Steve Milner for more information: +61 402 884 121 steve.milner@adelaide.on.net

More people have been to the moon than to any of these caves.