

Ode to the Covid Cave

Text & illustration—Kirsty Dixon

While sitting and pondering the current state of the world and how nature is coming back in surprising ways in surprising places, it occurred to me that perhaps Mother Nature needed some social distancing as well – from us.

A chance to take a few deep breaths and reset to rhythm of the earth – for all of us.

In combination with the opportunity for the ACKMA Cave Climate Project to do some collecting of baseline temperature and humidity data from show caves during this downtime through the project being coordinated by Andy Baker, Andy Spate and Dave Gillieson, it inspired me to consider how caves in particular were being affected by the Covid lockdowns and the lessons and benefits that could come from this.

In a surge of socially distanced creativity I have prepared some musing on this topic for your pondering and enjoyment. The artwork is a snapshot of the Covid Cave, with all its infrastructure, having a chance to just be – without

The first thing Andy S said when I showed it to him was that the stairs and railings were not up to Australian standards – oh well, chalk that up to artistic licence! You may also note that there are two data loggers recording temperature and humidity shown – can you find them?



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Forming over eons,
The slow drip, drip, drip
of dissolution and deposition.
Forming and reforming,
labyrinths of crystal magnificence
in the dark, waiting...

Ancient humans found them and thought them to be
places of wonder and reverence,
Realms of the ancestors and portals to the underworld.
Shelter and security in the bosom of earth mother.

As humankind discovered how to make better and brighter light,
Slowly the wonders of the caverns were revealed,
and while some of the reverence diminished, the magic
never disappeared.

Yet slowly we began to take them for granted,
A place for a lovely day's outing,
scaring the kids,
pretending we were once again brave warriors facing the
unknown,
conquering the darkness.

For some a way to make a quick buck,
For others a way to illuminate their own fantasy crea-
tions, with garish lights and fanciful names...
Natural amusement parks.
The toll of visitation is leaving its mark.
The ever-increasing demand of tourism for better, bigger,

longer, higher -
and the ever-increasing numbers.
How are these marvels of creation to cope with such de-
mands?

And then came Covid.
Everything in shutdown and lockdown,
A brutal awakening to a world that would never be the
same.

And yet there is hope.
This chance for everyone to remember their connection
with the natural world,
To reawaken the wonder, reverence and appreciation for
things we have for too long taken for granted.
To give Nature a chance to take a few deep breaths and
reset back to a more natural rhythm.

There have always been those who still carry a vision of
wonder and awe,
And wish to help others revive and appreciate the ancient
wonders we have been gifted with.

As we get ready to welcome revisitation,
let us take this wonderful opportunity to highlight the
specialness of the places we have guardianship over,
and reawaken the sense of wonder, awe and reverence for
these marvels of the earth.