

# 2021

## Cave beetle



## Australian Cave Animal of the Year

### It's Beetle-mania in 2021

#### Cathie Plowman

Australian Cave Animal of the Year is its third year and, in 2021, along with several other countries with cave animal programs, we're celebrating the many beetles that live in caves.

About a quarter of all animals on planet Earth today are beetles! Over 400,000 species have been described—with beetles living in a wide range of habitats, including the dark world of caves.

The 1832 description of a blind cave beetle collected from Postojna Cave, Slovenia, is now recognised as the commencement of biospeleology as a scientific discipline.

Only about 25 species of Australian cave beetles are troglobitic, meaning that they are specialised for underground life and not found above ground.

Most troglobitic beetles in Australia are short-range endemics, generally restricted to a single cave or karst system. Tasmania has the richest cave beetle fauna in Australia with around 17 described species to date. The other troglobitic Australian cave beetle species are from Victoria, New South Wales, South Australia and the Nullarbor Karst (South Australia–Western Australia).

There are many, many other beetles living in caves which are not troglobites. These include troglaphiles (the term for cave animals that can also be found above ground) and guanophiles (the term for cave animals that live and reproduce within guano piles—the mounds of bat excrement that build up in caves).

For more details on Australian cave beetles visit: [www.caveanimaloftheyear.org.au](http://www.caveanimaloftheyear.org.au)

As 2021 is the International Year of Caves and Karst, the countries that have Cave Animal of the Year programs (there now being eight) were encouraged collectively to focus on cave beetles.

To check in on efforts from other countries with Cave Animal of the Year programs visit: International Cave Animal of the Year – IYCK ([iyck2021.org](http://iyck2021.org))

Cave Animal of the Year programs are building momentum in efforts to increase appreciation of cave animals and the importance of caves as important animal habitat.

Our Australian promotional products include beautiful posters, bookmarks, stickers and mugs. Our products have won a printing industry award here in Australia and several awards two years running at the National Speleological Society congress in the USA.

Don't miss out!

While the 2021 mugs have all sold and there's only a handful of stickers left, posters and bookmarks are still available in limited quantities.

It would be great if all the Australian show cave sites could join us in our efforts to increase community appreciation of cave animals by displaying the poster and having out beautiful bookmarks available for your visitors (both are free of charge).

To order supplies please email:

[hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au](mailto:hello@caveanimaloftheyear.org.au)

Thanks to the Australian Speleological Federation's Karst Conservation Fund for assistance with this program.