

## STRANGER IN THE FOREST

By Eric Hansen

Reviewed by Cathie Plowman

This is not a book about caves. Set mostly in 1982 it is an account of the author's desire to walk across Borneo, his efforts to turn this desire into reality and then his several months spent walking through the forests of Sarawak and Kalimantan with the company and hospitality of the Penan.

While the caves are not mentioned, the long walk does come close to Mulu. Regardless of caves or not, many ACKMA members who have been to Mulu will be interested in reading this experience of the forest and the people who live in and with it.

As a child, Eric Hansen is captivated by jungle movies and Kipling's *Jungle Book*. Several decades later he travels to Singapore via a stopover in Kuching. Like many tourists today, his few days there include a river trip and longhouse visit and Hansen senses that he has 'come home' to the place of his childhood longing. Six years later he returns to walk in the forest, but logging and barges have already removed the forest of his previous visit.

Despite the romantic beginnings of *Jungle Book* and a quest to walk across an unknown land, this is not an easy journey. Making contacts with locals, learning local bartering systems, finding guides, learning the language and where to start the journey seem insignificant when compared to interrogation by people

fearful that this unaccompanied white stranger in their forest is an evil spirit.

The book is also a gutsy tale of determination in often extreme physical discomfort and a quest to pursue the urge to immerse himself in the rainforest. After two months of walking, Hansen safely completes his planned journey. But as he travels away from the hardships of the forest, he realises that his true journey is incomplete and does an about turn to embark on a far more challenging walk across Borneo via remote forest and isolated people.

The book is illustrated with some beautiful black-and-white portraits of Penan in the rainforest. There is an extensive bibliography but I found the maps hard to figure out in relation to the text. (Likewise the author found his maps irrelevant to way-finding in the forest.)

The book concludes with a photo of nomadic Penan standing with their spears on a logging road. Certainly roads like this have intruded much more since Eric Hansen concluded his long walk and the forest and the Penan lifestyle, which the reader gleans from the book, have greatly changed since then too.

*Stranger in the Forest: on foot across Borneo*

By Eric Hansen

Vintage Departures, 2000



*The jungle of Borneo - a memory of ACKMA meeting 2010. Photo Steven Bourne*

## BATS OF THE LIMESTONE COAST

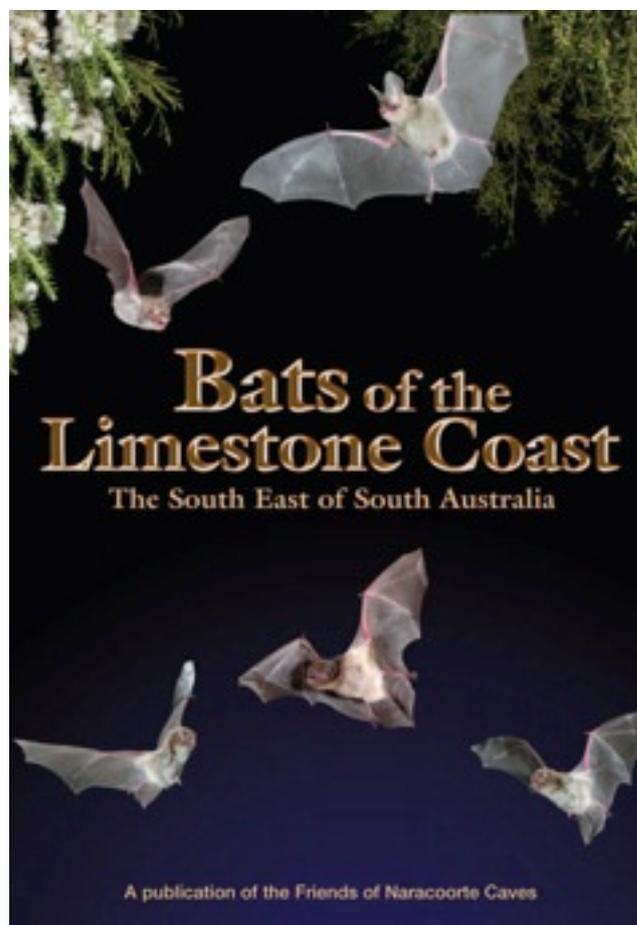
By Terry Reardon and Steve Bourne

Reviewed by Sasa Kennedy

Published by the Friends of Naracoorte Caves 2004

Whilst only a slender volume this booklet contains a wealth of useful information about bat classification, diversity, behaviour, habitats, diet and life cycle. Beginning with these general topics it then goes on to introduce the bats of the Limestone Coast. For these local species identification pointers, size and weight, distribution, behaviour, diet and conservation status are outlined. The booklet concludes with an excellent section on bat conservation, including threats, how to help and what to do if you find an injured bat.

The book is clearly and concisely written and includes excellent photos and distribution maps of all species local to the Naracoorte region. It is a great introduction to micro-bats in particular. Its usefulness is not limited to residents of the Limestone Coast. The general information is relevant to all bat species and many of the local species can be found in other karst areas of Australia. It is a very useful resource for guides wishing to understand and explain the role of bats in the ecosystem as part of their cave interpretation and could also prove useful when trying to identify bats that are brought in injured to visitor centres, bearing in mind that not all Australian bats are included. In short, like a microbat, it is a little gem.



### Coming Events

2011: Oct 25-26, Nov. 25-26	<b>Centre for Gippsland Studies. Churchill, Vict (Workshop and Conference)</b>
2011: Oct 30-Nov 1	Global Geotourism Conference, Oman
<b>... and Looking Ahead:</b>	
2012: May	<b>ACKMA Annual General Meeting, Wee Jasper, New South Wales</b>
2012: Aug 5-10	International Geological Congress, Brisbane
2012: Sept 6-15	World Conservation Conference. Jeju Island, South Korea
2013: May	<b>ACKMA 20<sup>th</sup> Conference, Waitomo Caves, New Zealand</b>
2013: 21-28 July	International Congress of Speleology, Brno, Czech Republic
2015: May	<b>ACKMA 21st Conference, Naracoorte South Australia</b>