

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF **CAVES** AND **KARST** 2021

"Explore, understand and protect"

www.iyck2021.org



Union Internationale
de Spéléologie

PLANNING GUIDE

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An Introduction to the International Year

International years are typically organized under the auspices of the United Nations (UN) or the United Nations Education, Science, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Their primary purpose is to educate the public and celebrate important aspects of life and the world around us. They are a series of events by international teams that include partners from non-governmental organizations, government agencies, businesses, and interested individuals. When the year is over, there is a great worldwide increase in appreciation for the year's topic, which often appears as increases in funding, better regulations, and protection of peoples and important areas.

The International Union of Speleology (UIS) is organizing the International Year of Caves and Karst (IYCK) for 2021. This will not be a UN or UNESCO event. Currently, the UN and UNESCO are not supporting most international years and we have been advised to organize the IYCK on our own. This makes sense because even with UN or UNESCO support, most of the IYCK work will still fall on the UIS and its partners. So what is that work?

This IYCK Planning Guide will give you the information you need to organize events in your countries and raise the level of understanding and respect for caves and karst as globally important physical, ecological, and cultural systems. A successful IYCK will lead to new caves opened for exploration, and more funds and support for exploration, research, management, and protection, at levels we've never seen before.

Let's get started.

Seven Simple Steps to a Successful IYCK

"Do what you can." This is the simple guidance we give to everyone as they begin their involvement with the IYCK. The UIS will not make your participation in the IYCK difficult or beyond your abilities. We recognize our partners represent diverse cultures,

skills, and resources. Therefore, as you read the following steps, please remember that we ask you to do what will be most successful for your culture, appropriate to your skills, and within the limits of your resources. No single person or group can do everything, but together we will reach people across the world.

While the following steps are written for organizations, from international associations to local clubs, they also apply to people who are not members of organizations but want to contribute as individuals.

Step 1: *Start Planning Now!*

As you read this, you may think that you have a year or several months before the IYCK, and that you have a lot of time to plan. For many activities, you will need to coordinate now to work effectively with partners and reserve dates on people's calendars, plus reserve places to meet for your events. One year is not much time! By the end of 2020, you will want your activities well planned and announced to maximize the number of the people who will attend.

Step 2: *Get Organized*

Create a committee or team that is committed to arrange events and activities from your organization. Discuss in general what you would like to do for the IYCK and assign people to work on whatever is needed. That could be a website, social media, or fund raising. Other jobs can be assigned later when more detailed plans are known.

Step 3: *Create a List of IYCK Activities*

Think about your area and the people you want to reach. Remember that the IYCK is to educate the general public, including educators, politicians, scientists, businesses, and land managers who need to know about the importance of caves and karst. What will interest those people? How can you get them involved? What physical resources are available to you,



such as caves, parks, and lecture halls, and community events you can join, such as festivals, meetings, and parades?

Can you organize one event or several? Ideally, it would be good to have an event every month of 2021 and in different locations and on different topics. If that is not possible, then maybe an event every two or three months. The IYCK is a year-long celebration of caves and karst, so activities that occur throughout the year are best. If this is not possible, do what you can. It will all help.

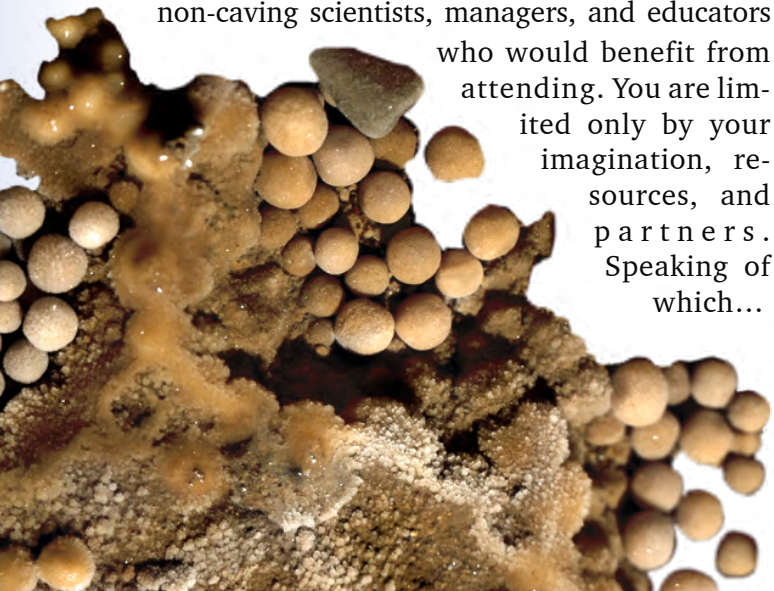
What types of events and activities should you organize? There are many possibilities. Here are a few examples:

- Lectures for the public and school groups.
- Educational caving trips and walks through karst areas.
- Demonstrations of caving techniques.
- Interviews on television and other media.
- Public cave art projects.
- Meetings with politicians and other decision-makers.
- Exhibitions of cave photography.
- Cave film festivals.
- Community clean-ups of trash in sinkholes or graffiti in caves.
- Public conferences, symposia, or other meetings on important cave and karst issues in your area.

Your events should be fun, but also teach the importance of caves and karst and the threats they are facing.

If you are organizing a caving convention or a karst science conference in 2021, you can still include the public. For example, for a caving meeting you may be able to invite the public to participate in rope climbing, SpeleOlympics, and photo exhibition activities. For science meetings, perhaps you can plan to give away a few free registrations to influential non-caving scientists, managers, and educators

who would benefit from attending. You are limited only by your imagination, resources, and partners. Speaking of which...



Step 4: *Develop Partnerships*

The world is a big place and we need your help to reach everyone. As you think about partners, don't just think about people who explore or study caves, but people and organizations who don't realize they are affected by caves and karst. Making them partners in the IYCK is a huge step in making the IYCK a success. Here are some examples of potential partnerships:

- Museums for exhibits on caves and karst.
- Parks and show caves to assist with special "cave days" with educational activities.
- Local or regional governments to recognize the IYCK at special events and pass laws needed to better protect caves and karst.
- Environmental and business organizations, to teach them how caves and karst are important parts of our physical and business environments.
- Schools and universities to plan educational events for students of all ages.
- News media for increased publicity on the IYCK.

Step 5: *Create and Announce your Schedule of Events*

Promote your events in your area through direct advertising, news and social media, e-mail lists, and through your partners. It is also important to announce your events on the IYCK website: www.iyck2021.org. In addition, if you see that your national or international organization is not listed as a partner on the IYCK website, send your logo and website address so they can be posted.

While you may work on the IYCK entirely in your area with little or no participation from other regions, listing your events and partnership on the IYCK website will encourage participation from outside your region. It will also demonstrate to everyone the truly international reach of the IYCK. As I write this planning guide, only two events are listed on the website. But it is early and as everyone adds their events the list will grow and increase enthusiasm and support for the IYCK.

With your announcement, make sure to prepare information to distribute at your events. Send people to the IYCK website to learn about caves and karst. Download the IYCK logo and leaflet from the website. Use the logo in your promotions and print as many copies of the leaflet as you can for public distribution (the leaflet is currently available in four languages; if you want to translate it into your language, thank you and please let me know). Find and

distribute other information too, especially if it is important to caves and karst in your area.

**Step 6:
Host your Events**

Make sure to plan the details of your events well in advance. The only things that should be done at the last minute are the things that can only be done at the last minute. You are trying to impress the world about caves and karst, and to succeed you need to impress everyone that you are prepared, organized, and professional.

Make everyone feel that you are giving them special attention and support. Make it easy for the public to attend and participate in fun and interesting ways. The IYCK should educate, impress, and engage people. If possible, make sure everyone gets a gift or some information they can take home to remember the IYCK. Emphasize the motto of the IYCK: Explore, Understand, and Protect.

**Step 7:
Record and Post your Events**

During your events, assign someone to take photos, video, and collect other information to record the number of people, activities, and fun. Afterward, post them on your website and social media. It is also critically important to also post or link them to the IYCK website. In early 2022, we hope to have records of all IYCK events around the world on the IYCK website. This is vital to prove the IYCK was a success, and that caves, karst, and their explorers and scientists should be taken seriously.

Summary

Last year I wrote that the UIS is the International Union of Speleology:

International—everyone in the world!
Union—working together, and for what?
Speleology.

For the IYCK to succeed, I ask everyone who enjoys and cares for caves to join the UIS in creating IYCK events for your town, region, and country.

The UIS, its member countries, organizational partners, and individual cave explorers, scientists, managers, and educators have done tremendous work over many decades to improve the world's understanding and appreciation of caves and karst. However, despite all of our combined accomplishments, caves continue to be destroyed. Trash is still dumped underground. Karst aquifers are polluted. Many rare cave ecosystems are now endangered. Precious archaeological and paleontological materials in caves are still commonly lost and looted. And sadly, many government officials, educators, and even scientists and environmental managers do not understand caves and karst enough to prevent these tragedies, or even recognize that they are tragedies.

With your help, together we will educate the world through the IYCK about our precious caves and karst areas. Together, we can save the world's caves and karst for the future.

Please watch the IYCK website for news, send ideas and information to improve the website and IYCK, and feel free to contact me (gveni@nckri.org) or other members of the UIS Bureau at any time if you need assistance or have questions.



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<http://iyck2021.org/>
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