



WELLINGTON CAVES JOINS NEW INTERNATIONAL GROUNDWATER RESEARCH PROJECT

Researchers from the University of Freiburg (Germany) and the University of NSW are researching soil moisture and water recharge at the Wellington Caves as part of an international research project.

Wellington Caves Coordinator Michelle Tonkins said the researchers are on site conducting measurements and collecting data that will add to the body of knowledge about the karst system and contribute to international studies.

“The Wellington Caves are an important site for scientific research and having experts on site and conducting scientific research is of great benefit as it provides more data and knowledge about the karst and cave system,” Ms Tonkins said.

“It’s also great for guests to appreciate the importance of the Caves beyond being a fantastic tourist attraction but as an important place for scientific study,” she said.

Researchers Andreas Hartmann (University of Freiburg) and Andy Baker (University of NSW) are part of the research group *Global Assessment of Water Stress in Karst Regions in a Changing World* and will be conducting research at Wellington Caves until 6 April.

About the Research Project:

The research project ‘Global Assessment of Water Stress in Karst Regions in a Changing World (GloW)’ is funded by the German Research Foundation and at Wellington research is funded by the National Collaborative Research Infrastructure Strategy (NCRIS).

About one quarter of the world’s population is completely or partially dependent on drinking water from limestone aquifers. Researchers are studying in part how this groundwater resource will be impacted by climate and land use change.

Andreas Hartmann, a Junior Professor from the University of Freiburg, is measuring groundwater recharge processes in five countries - Germany, England, Spain, Puerto Rico (USA) and Australia - with very different climates. Here in Australia, he is working with Wellington Caves, NSW, and Professor Andy Baker, UNSW Sydney. The team will investigate groundwater recharge and evapotranspiration processes in a water-limited climate.

Above Wellington Caves, a new long-term experimental site to measure soil moisture has been established. Results from this experiment will be compared to the recharge reaching Cathedral Cave, where it is already being measured by loggers measuring cave drips.

Junior Professor Andreas Hartmann says “Soil moisture measurements in karst have rarely been done before and we

expect exciting results from our global monitoring system.”

Professor Andy Baker says “This is the only cave and karst environment in the world where the rainfall, the soil moisture and the water infiltration to the groundwater are being measured at the same time. As well as helping Junior Professor Hartmann’s research project, it will be a wonderful resource for research students, science teachers and cave guides”

Media Contact:

Andreas Hartmann and Andy Baker are working at Wellington Caves from 26 March to 6 April.

For interview opportunities contact Andy Baker on 0450 148 648

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The background is a solid blue color. It features several stylized virus particles of varying sizes and shades of blue and white. The largest virus is in the center, with a dark blue body and white spikes. Smaller, lighter blue viruses are scattered around it. The overall aesthetic is clean and modern.

COVID-19 RESPONSE