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Höhlen und Karst in Österreich (Caves and Karst in Austria)

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This publication is the latest in an informal series in which karst and caves of individual countries are presented. Regarding weight and volume, it beats all other publications by far. The book is divided in a general part, where scientific principles are explained, and a regional part, where the karst areas of Austria are presented. All subchapters were written by specialists and compiled into a book by the editors.

The book not only addresses cavers, but also general readers interested in nature and natural science. Therefore, the general chapters are written in more detail than usual. However, this way the book can be read without having to refer to literature wherever details are mentioned. Of course, references are present and added to the end of each chapter. Dealing with Austria in particular, it is not surprising that even the general chapters refer to this country most of the time.

A quick look into the book reveals a multitude of coloured photos and graphics, which make the reading very agreeable. Each chapter, albeit written in German, contains an english summary, and all the picture legends are written in both languages. This way, also non-german readers can have an idea on the content.

The general part, larger than the regional chapters, deals with geology, environmental and climatic science, biology, the relation cave and man, and speleology in general. Because of the large extent of the general part, many aspects can be described which are (generally) not of primary interest, for example cave laws. This way, the general part is a compelling encyclopedia that is of interest also outside Austria.

The change to the regional part is abrupt. This section of the book presents the karst areas from West to East and then to the South, and it contains also the metamorphic marble karsts of central Austria. This regional overview is very helpful: Austria has a long caving tradition, but rather rarely presented its karst and caves in international congresses and publications.

At the end, three registers are found. First a thematic one dealing with keywords and themes, then a person's register, used to find mentioned people, and finally a cave list.

The book is of interest for all (mostly German-speaking) readers interested in caves and karst of Austria or any of its specific regions. The careful editing and the good mix of pictures and text makes it easy to read and pleases the bibliophilic caver. Congratulations to the editors for this big work!

Philipp Häuselmann