

**Interim guidelines for  
caving activities  
in the Buchan and Murrindal areas.**



## 1. Purpose

The most effective means of conserving cave values whilst allowing for recreational use is to request that people visiting a particular cave utilise guidelines tailored for that cave.

The guidelines adopted for each cave outlined in this document have been developed by taking into account each cave's level of significance, features, values and the potential for negative environmental impact from inappropriately managed visitation.

Although there are general conditions on cave access and codes of conduct/ethics that all cavers should respect, the primary purpose of this document is to provide caving clubs, educational and recreational groups, and licenced tour operators with guidance for visiting caves managed by Parks Victoria in the Buchan and Murrindal areas. A plan for the management of cave and karst resources in the Buchan and Murrindal areas will be produced in the longer term, superseding this document, and will provide opportunity for the community to input during its development.

## 2. Legislative Framework

All of the caves described in this document are on Crown Land reserved for public purposes and for protection of natural features under the provisions of the Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978. This Act permits specific regulations to be gazetted to assist in achieving the objectives of the reservation. These powers are contained in Regulations for Buchan Caves Reserves (1991).

## 3. Scope

These guidelines apply to caves on Crown Land managed by Parks Victoria. People intending to visit caves managed by Parks Victoria in the Buchan/Murrindal areas are required to familiarise themselves and comply with the General Cave Access Guidelines outlined in Section 4, and to the Specific Cave Access Guidelines in Section 5 of this document.

Cavers seeking to visit caves on freehold land will require permission from the relevant landholder.

## 4. General Cave Access Guidelines

People intending to enter caves on land managed by Parks Victoria are requested to follow these general guidelines.

1. All prospective cavers are required to undertake a self-registration process at 'Homeleigh' located on Gelantipy Road, Buchan, which includes:
  - a) Writing trip details (including personal details, cave entry and exit details and estimated time of return) on the 'Cavers Intentions Board'.

It is essential for trip details to be 100% accurate, as the information will be utilised by emergency services, should a search and rescue situation arise.
  - b) Completing and filing a registration form.

The registration form must also be completed prior to the caving trip.
2. All prospective cavers are required to familiarise themselves and abide by the Australian Speleological Federation (ASF), 1992 Caving Code of Ethics and Conservation, as well as the ASF, 1995 Minimal Impact Caving Code and the ASF, 1999 Cave Safety Guidelines (Refer appendix 1). Cavers are also to observe and comply with the 1991, Regulations for Buchan Caves Reserve (Refer also appendix 1).

3. In all cases, other than the show cave system, there should only be one party in the cave at the one time. Where access routes are narrow and confined, unintentional damage can occur where groups meet.
4. All persons carrying out caving activities for a trade or business must hold a Parks Victoria licenced tour operators permit and comply with the conditions outlined in their permit as well as the guidelines described in this document.
5. All trips to caves classified as 'wild caves' shall be led by two experienced guides, who have been through the cave before and are familiar with the route, and who are members of an incorporated caving club, research institution, or employees of a licenced tour operator.

For all other caves (unless specified in section 5), each trip must be led by one experienced guide, who has been through the cave before and is familiar with the route, and who is a member of an incorporated caving club, research institution, or employees of a licenced tour operator.

6. Entry to caves may be restricted in the event of bat monitoring by Parks Victoria staff or Fauna Officers from the Department of Natural Resources and Environment.
7. Caves may be closed from time to time due to risk management issues or remedial works. Signs will be placed at the entrance of the cave and cavers are to observe the no access rule.

## **5. Specific Cave Access Guidelines.**

The following access conditions apply to caves on public land within the Buchan and Murrindal areas. For each cave described, the general access conditions apply (section 4), plus the appropriate access guidelines described in this section.

### **For Table 1 the following abbreviations denote:**

**B** - that the cave is located in the Main Reserve (Buchan).

**M** - that the cave is located in Murrindal area.

**EB** - that the cave is located at East Buchan.

**BA** - that the cave is located at The Basin.

### **5.1 Application in advance**

Permission to enter a number of caves described in this section requires an application in writing to Parks Victoria at least 21 days in advance of the proposed trip. The application should demonstrate a degree of forward planning, must clearly describe the purpose of the trip and list the names of those participating. As a general rule access will only be granted for surveying/monitoring/research and/or approved restoration projects. Please note that some research methods require a permit from Parks Victoria.

## **5.2 Access guidelines for caves not described in this document**

Specific cave access guidelines have not been developed for each and every cave within the Buchan and Murrindal areas. For caves not described in Table 1, the general cave access guidelines apply (refer section 4), and for gated caves not described, an application in advance is required (refer section 5.1). In addition, a maximum group size of 4 persons per trip should be observed.

## **5.3 New cave discoveries**

In order to preserve our scarce cave resources, the detection of a new cave, or a significant find in a known cave (eg fossils, bones and insects) should be reported to Parks Victoria immediately. To assist Parks Victoria staff in relocating the cave or fossils, it is important that as much detail as possible is obtained in relation to its location.

An assessment of the cave will be conducted by a multi-disciplinary team managed by Parks Victoria to survey and assess the condition and significance of the cave or the find. After the assessment appropriate access guidelines will be developed and implemented.

**TABLE 1 Specific Cave Access Guidelines**

<b>Cave</b>	<b>Classification (Davey &amp; White, 1986)</b>	<b>Maximum group size per trip</b>	<b>Total no. of trips permitted</b>	<b>Season restrictions</b>	<b>Other guidelines/conditions</b>
B-1 Spring Creek Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	6	20 per year.	Limits on the time of the year, depending on the presence of bats.	Guided tours available through Parks Victoria and fee for entry applies. Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-2 Moon Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	8	2 per year.	Limits on the time of the year, depending on the location and activities of the platypus.	Application in advance. Due to the presence of the platypus, access will only be granted for research, monitoring and/or restoration projects.
B-3 Green Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	8	No limit.	No access between 1 June to 30 September, due to the hibernation of bats.	One experienced guide must accompany each group.
B-4 Dukes Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	5	1 trip every 2-3 years.	Limits on the time of the year, depending on the presence of bats. No access during peak holiday periods, as well as during and after high rainfall.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects. An additional trip may be permitted following heavy rainfall/flood conditions to inspect possible changes to the cave.
B-5 Fairy Cave	1.2 Show Cave.	20	No limit.	Cave may be closed due to periods of high rainfall.	Guided tours available through Parks Victoria and fee for entry applies. Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.

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B-6 Royal Cave	1.2 Show Cave.	30	No limit.	Cave may be closed due to periods of high rainfall.	Guided tours available through Parks Victoria and fee for entry applies. Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-4/5/6 Non tourist sections of the show cave system.	3.1 Wild Cave.	4	1 trip every 2-3 years.	No access during peak holiday periods, as the side chambers are highly visible to tourists in the show caves.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research/exploration opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-7 Federal Cave	1.2 Show Cave.	12	No limit.	None.	Guided tours available through Parks Victoria and fee for entry applies. Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-9 Root Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	5	6 per year.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for recreational caving/surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-10 Coles Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	6	10 per year.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for recreational caving/surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.

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B-11 Potluck Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	4	1 per year.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-15 Children's Cave	1.1 Adventure Cave.	8	12 per year.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for recreational caving/surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-20 Whale Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	6	6 per year.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for recreational caving/surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-22	1.1 Adventure Cave	4	No limit.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for recreational caving/surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
B-26 Blue Grotto Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	4	6 per year.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for recreational caving/surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.

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B-32 Moon Swallet Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	4	1 trip every 2-3 years.	No access during peak holiday periods as visitors may sight cavers entering or exiting the cave and be encouraged to follow.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.  An additional trip may be permitted following heavy rainfall to inspect possible changes to the cave.  2 accredited leaders must accompany each group and all cavers require suitable caving experience as this is not a "beginners cave"
B-72 Bone Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	4	No limit.	No access during and after periods of high rainfall.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
BA-1 Slocombes Cave	1.1 Adventure Cave.	6	No limit.	None.	Two experienced guides must accompany each group.
EB-4 Wilsons Cave	1.1 Adventure Cave.	8	No limit.	None.	
M-7 Murrindal Cave	1.2 Show Cave.	10	16 per year.	None.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects. Guided tour only available through Parks Victoria.
M-8 Lilly Pilly Cave	1.1 Show Cave.	10	No limit.	Cave may be closed due to periods of high rainfall.	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects. Guided tour only available through Parks Victoria.



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M-11 Anticline Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	5	No access.	No access until research is conducted on the bats utilising the cave.	Application in advance. Access only granted for approved research and the group must hold a current Parks Victoria Research Permit.  The cave houses three species of bats at various times of the year. It is the only known cave in Victoria with this level of species diversity and is important for breeding in Summer and hibernation in Winter.
M-12 Baby Pierre	3.1 Wild Cave.	6	No limit.	None.	Experience in vertical caving is necessary.
M-14 Baby Berger	3.1 Wild Cave.	6	No limit.	None.	Experience in vertical caving is necessary.
M-30 Dicksons Cave	1.1 Adventure Cave.	6	No limit.	No access between 1 June to 30 September due to the hibernation of bats.	
M-41 Honeycomb Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	6	No limit.	None.	Two experienced guides must accompany each group.
M-48 Jampot Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	6	No limit.	None.	Two experienced guides must accompany each group. Experience in vertical caving is necessary.
M-56 Oolite Cave	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	5	No limit.	None.	Two experienced guides must accompany each group. Experience in vertical caving is necessary.

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M-124 Razor Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	5	No limit.	None.	
M-125 Exponential Pot	2.2 Outstanding Natural and Cultural Value.	5	1 per year.	None.	Two experienced guides must accompany each group. Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.
M-130 Stirlings Cave	3.1 Wild Cave.	5	No limit.	None.	Experience in vertical caving is necessary.
MX-441 Paleo Pot	Unclassified.	4	To be determined.	None	Application in advance for surveying/monitoring/research opportunities and/or approved restoration projects.