

"Is this cave worth saving?"

By Rick Coles (Chair, The Canadian Cave Conservancy)

Yes, we DO have to pick our fights. Victoria has already lost half of the caves that are known to have existed in this area. So, using that context, yes.

Caving and speleology in general is a double edged sword. We try to ascertain the sensitivity of the caves as we explore them, yet we also have to rule out even entering certain passages as we are sure to cause ir-repairable damage to fragile cave formations which take thousands of years to form but only a second to destroy. Parts of caves will be left just because we can't morally "push" them. All this while trying to get every meter of exploration and then complete a survey it to back it up.

This comes to the generalisation that cavers can be "cliquey" as they won't tell anyone where the caves are. For some of the caves, it's for a good reason. The term I use for this is "security by obscurity".

In the case of Langford Lake Cave, there is more there than just the hole in the ground. There is a viable unique ecosystem that encompasses the cave and the epi-karst (from the surface features down); some of this is still not understood. There are a few sinkholes in the immediate area and the carbonate bedrock is more extensive than the immediate LLC area, but otherwise there are comparatively few vertical solution openings in the epikarst exposures. It's the same sort of thing on Skirt Mountain. In fact, the level of epikarst development in the broader karst unit would be rated at "low" using the provincial method (KISVAP, 2003). This low level of visible epikarst development and indeed the very subtlety of the karst in this particular limestone formation, together with the woodlands type, makes these cave and karst occurrences all the more unusual and valuable.

Most of that hillside from the end of Leigh road to the TransCanada Highway is karst. It's not a small area.

All caves are worth something, even as small and apparently insignificant as some are.

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