

## Dear colleagues speleologists!

Speleologists of Russia strongly regret about the suspension of Russia's membership in the UIS. The unprecedented political demands made on Russian speleologists indicate that the UIS took a course on politicization of speleology.

We regret that the Ukrainian speleologists have decided to fight with their own colleagues, with whom they conducted joint research yesterday. Communication in a joint mailing list that has existed for about 30 years has turned into a one-way stream of threats and affronts against Russian speleologists. A number of Crimean speleologists, as well as other speleologists who explored Crimean caves and attended training speleological events in Crimea, were included by Ukrainian colleagues in the so-called "Myrotvorets" (peacemaker) base. Thus, for their speleological activities, they were assigned to the "enemies" of Ukraine. On the Russian site Speleoatlas, which is a publicly available electronic form of the cave cadastre, regular DDoS-attacks were organized. This is a rare case when attacks are carried out on a site that does not belong to government agencies.

It should be noted that not all Ukrainian speleologists support this form of «cooperation» with their Russian colleagues. We sincerely thank our colleagues around the world for their many letters of support. We are deeply grateful to speleologists and speleological associations who were not afraid to oppose openly the politicization of world speleology.

Regardless of UIS membership, Russian speleologists are always ready to cooperate with colleagues from any country and will be glad to see them in Russia.

*To this letter clarifications from the curator of the Russian speleocadastre (Atlas of Caves of Russia) and Crimean speleologists, who were accused by Ukrainian colleagues of "theft of the Crimean cadastre", are attached. Unfortunately, the report about the Atlas of the Caves, as well as a number of other Russian reports, was not allowed by the organizers of the UIS Congress for political reasons. In addition, putting forward political demands on Russia, the UIS Bureau was not interested in the opinion of Crimean speleologists, peremptorily accepting the position of Ukrainian representatives.*

---

### The Caves – information & search system

"The Caves – information & search system" (website speleoatlas.ru) became the extensions of the "Creation of the CIS Caves open computerized cadaster project" (2004–2016, rgo-speleo.ru), which was conducted by a group of enthusiasts without any grant support. It included data about approximately 600 caves (among them the caves more than 250 meters deep) mainly situated on the Caucasus region and on the Crimea peninsula.

The Russian Geographical Society grant (2016–2017) allowed to create an advanced database and search engine for speleologists who wants to work or just search information. The entire project was named "The Caves - information & search system". The grant certificate was presented by the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Russian Geographical Society. "The Caves – information & search system" consists of the Russian caves database, the CIS and neighboring countries largest caves database and the information search and edit engine. Also, the large library, database of the underground biota and review articles about caves geology, morphology, climate, artificial cavities etc.

On the first stage of the development the main content of the database "The Caves" consisted of the above-mentioned open cadaster, several regional cadastres (Arkhangelsk, Krasnoyarsk, Crimea, etc.), local speleo clubs and private person's data. More than 3800 caves were added to the system by the mid-2017.

This database allowed to create "Atlas of caves of Russia" in 2017–2019 (one more grant from Russian Geographical Society was received for paper edition). The book includes 768 pages, 950 photos, 168 caves surveys, more than 60 maps and schemes. More than 100 people took part in writing articles for the "Atlas..." Detailed descriptions of Russian large caves (longer than 3 km or deeper than 250 m) along with smaller, but unique in their characteristics caves and the list of all Russian caves longer than 500 m and deeper than 100 m

(442 caves) are published there. The 4 World deepest caves where Russian cavers played the important role in their surveying (in case of Krubera-Voronya along with the Ukrainian cavers. The pioneer's priority is specially mentioned) are also described. Data about caves geology, mineralogy, glaciology, archaeology, paleontology, biology, genesis, discovery and research history are proposed in the "Atlas..."

Every article in the "Atlas..." has references to the sources. There are no complaints on incorrect citation. During the preparation of the papers about several large caves, the research history description discussed with various groups worked (or still working) there, including foreign groups.

Since the late 2019, all works with "The Caves – information & search system" conduct without any grant support. Dozens of authors had added hundreds of caves (by the moment there are 5250 caves in the database). The site library is also actively developing.

The sites audience is about 400 – 700 users per day. It is also visited by foreign users from Ukraine, Germany, the USA, Kazakhstan etc. (the countries are shown in descending order of the active users).

A few words about Crimean caves. Beyond any doubt the Crimean speleologists have always played the most important role in Crimean caves research. The data about Crimean caves are mostly provided and added by them. Surely, speleologists from other cities of the former USSR are involved in the survey and research with their colleagues from Crimea (for example, speleologists from Kyiv in Kaskadnaya cave, which is one of the deepest Crimean cave, from Moscow and Kyiv in Kizil-Koba, which is the longest cave in Crimea). All information about the researchers is mentioned in the special references in "The Caves – information & search system".

In the last few months, the website "The Caves" have been DDoS-attacking. The first one was registered on the 3rd of April 2022 (50K of requests). In mid-May during one week more than 300 million requests to the website were registered. The undertaken measures allow the website to continue to work. Unfortunately, we had to close the access to the website for some European countries and the United States of America, because main amount of DDoS traffic goes from ip-addresses of that countries.

The report about "Atlas of caves of Russia" and "The Caves – information & search system" for the UIS Congress was rejected by the organization committee at the last moment before the conference. This short text was written to clarify the situation.

*The Project Coordinator  
Alexei L. Shelepin*

---

### **Cadastre of Crimean caves**

The history of the Crimean inventory of caves began in 1941, when the Special Purpose Expedition was created under the leadership of academician A.E. Fersman. As a result of its work, the first catalog of natural and artificial caves of the Crimea was compiled. In 1958, the Complex Karst Expedition was created in the Crimea under the leadership of Doctor of Geological and Mineralogical Sciences Yu.Yu. Yurk. The heads of the teams were employees of five institutes of the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR (geophysical – B.M. Smolnikov, paleozoological – G.A. Bachinsky, hydrological – D.I. Drozd, archaeological – O.I. Dombrovsky, "mine" – V.N. Dublyansky). Since 1959, the expedition began to cooperate closely with sportsmen-speleologists, among whom was V.V. Ilyukhin (later he became the representative of USSR in UIS).

For 7 years (1958–1964) of work in the Crimean Mountains, 704 karst caves were discovered and explored. Most of the research materials from separate speleological teams were received by the Institute of Mineral Resources and systematized by V.N. Dublyansky and Yu.I. Shutov, who continued to supervise this direction of studies. The results of the work of the Integrated Karst Expedition were published in the form of inventory in 1974.

Since 1972, Crimean karstologists, scientists of the Simferopol State University in the Laboratory of Karst and Speleology under the direction of V.N. Dublyansky worked on an inventory of Crimean caves. Since 1974, B.A. Vakhrushev has been the head of the work on compiling the inventory of Crimean caves, and since 1992 – G.N. Amelichev.

In 1982, in Moscow, under the Scientific Council for Engineering Geology and Hydrogeology of the USSR Academy of Sciences, an inventory of the largest karst caves and mines of the USSR was published (volume “Crimea”, authors V.N. Dublyansky and V.V. Ilyukhin). In 1987, an expanded base of the caves of the Crimea was published at the Academy of Sciences of the Ukrainian SSR by the editorial board of “Geological Journal”. Its authors were V.N. Dublyansky and B.A. Vakhrushev (Crimea), A.B. Klimchuk (Kyiv), V.E. Kiselev (Moscow).

In 2006, the Ukrainian Institute of Speleology and Karstology was organized at Simferopol University, in which Crimean scientists continued to generalize materials about Crimean caves and keep their inventory records. The laboratory of karst and speleology was the center for collecting and consolidating information about the caves of the Crimean Peninsula. Along with the Crimean speleological teams, which submitted most of the information about the Crimean caves, the Laboratory received materials from speleological teams from other regions of Ukraine and Russia, as well as some other countries (Poland, Romania). Thus, for many decades, the Crimean scientific school has been methodically and systematically working on the formation of the inventory of Crimean caves.

In 2017, employees of the Crimean University, successors of the Crimean karstological school (based on the basis of Simferopol State University under Professor V.N. Dublyansky), became key creators of the electronic inventory of Russian caves. Material about the caves of the Crimea collected over 60 years scientists of the Crimean karstological school have entered into the general database of caves in Russia. This expanded the possibilities for preserving the accumulated materials and opened access to them to all interested researchers.

It is surprising that our Ukrainian colleagues accuse us of having dared to use our own materials about the nature of the Crimean peninsula! Ukrainian propagandists, together with some European colleagues, called our half-century work on the inventory of caves of Crimea “the theft of the Ukrainian cave inventory and its integration into the Russian cave inventory”.

If necessary, Crimean speleologists are ready to provide extended information about the composition of the inventory and the history of its formation.

*Boris Vakhrushev,  
Curator of the Crimean Cadastre 1974–1992, Simferopol*

*Gennady Amelichev,  
Curator of the Crimean Cadastre 1992–2022, Simferopol*

*Gennady Samokhin,  
Chairman of the Crimean Mountain and Speleological Club, Simferopol*

*Ruslan Svetlov,  
Chairman of the Karst Club, Simferopol*

*Alexey Akimov,  
Chairman of the Big Sevastopol speleosection, Sevastopol*

*Sergey Chernov,  
Chairman of the speleo club Skala, club Nabat, Kerch*

*Andrey Leonov,  
Chairman of the Feodosia Association of Speleologists, Feodosia*