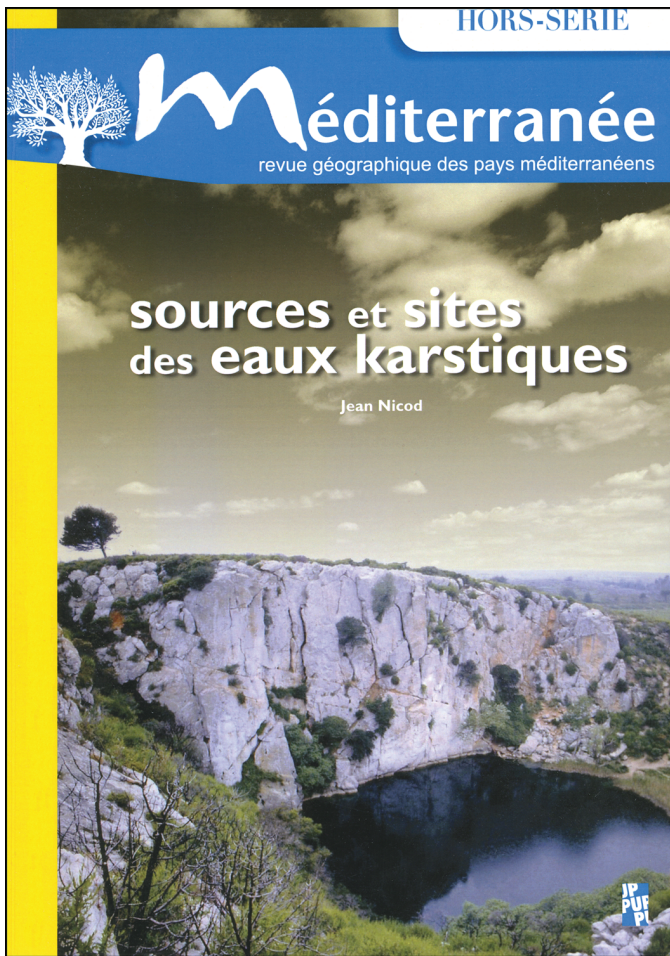


BOOK REVIEW



Sources et Sites des Eaux Karstiques (Karst springs and their settings)

Jean Nicod, 2012, *Méditerranée* (Geographical revue of Mediterranean countries), Special edition, Presses Universitaires de Provence, 29 av. Robert Schuman, 13621 Aix-en-Provence, Cedex 01, France, 277 p., 8.2 × 11.5 in., ISBN 978-2-85399-810-9, soft-cover, €30 (~\$40).

Few readers of this journal are fluent in French, but when this book arrived for review it showed promise beyond its immediate goal of summarizing the significant karst in the countries bordering the Mediterranean. Prof. Nicod, one of the world's premier karst researchers, has assembled a lifetime of information about this important region. In condensed fashion, he summarizes his own research and that of many others. It is purposely not comprehensive, but contains the most representative and instructive examples.

Karst geomorphology and land use are the major topics. The author admits to an "old-school" approach, with much

attention to the physical setting and how people have adapted to it. Most of the emphasis is on the southern European countries, less so on the Levant and northern Africa, but the geographic range extends outward as far as Germany. Many observations span several decades, giving a historical perspective. Surface features receive more emphasis than caves.

The book contains four major sections: (1) karst springs and their geographic context, (2) karst lakes, (3) water supply, dams, and aqueducts in karst, and (4) travertine sites. These are divided into a total of eighteen chapters, each containing numerous individual topics. There are many sidebars with special examples and case histories, many of them classics. In the rear are fifteen pages of color photos and maps, including a detailed two-page spread of the region covered.

Descriptions are short and to the point, but with room for instructive anecdotes. More than half the space is devoted to monochrome photos, diagrams, maps, sketches, and tables. Geologic maps and cross sections are detailed, but many of the cave profiles are simplified. Many show their age by their informal but personalized hand-drawn style. Each chapter ends with a list of pertinent references.

Case histories provide examples and odd anecdotes of the use (and misuse) of karst water, such as vanishing lakes, reservoirs that never filled, and pollution. For example, one learns that much of the upper part of the Danube River disappears underground and emerges in a distant karst spring in the Rhine basin, to reach the ocean at the opposite end of Europe from where it was originally headed. Have you heard of the accidental water-trace with absinthe? Or the deep springs that are the indirect result of the Messinian Crisis when the Mediterranean Sea dried up a few million years ago? Or what life is like in a home carved out of travertine deposited by karst springs? Or St. John of Tufa?

What if you don't read French? First find an interesting map or diagram or exclamation points in the text and enter the accompanying sentences into one of the free on-line translation sites. Optical character recognition on your scanner can even bypass the need for typing. The translation will not be poetic, but anyone familiar with karst will understand it.

Prof. Nicod dedicates this book as a tribute to his colleagues, past and present. He recognizes that their original material is scattered and increasingly difficult to find, and that modern researchers rarely probe the older literature. These statements can be read as an invitation: Researchers with a life-long passion have much to say, and they are encouraged to summarize the developments they have witnessed in their fields so that the record is preserved.

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