The Speläo Südwest, organized by the Giengen/Hürbener Höhlen- und Heimatverein took place from September 10-12 around the showcave Charlottenhöhle. An estimated 150 participants have registered. 18 lectures, 2 workshops and 10 excursions were offered.

Some participants stayed for a short time, others joined later. Especially well attended was the public lecture on Friday evening, which was part of a whole cave week organized around the Charlottenhöhle.

The first highlight was the evening lecture on Friday. The latest research in the Blau Cave System was reported in three parts. Three groups presented their successes in the Hessenhauhöhle (Arge Blaukarst), the classic Blautopfsystem (HFGOK) and in the new research success of the Blaubeuren Caving Association, the Steebshacht. The weather was a particular factor. Would it rain or not? The weather lasted— not a drop of rain in the sky. Following the lecture, there was a musical evening program and cozy get-together. The music should be emphasized: especially for the Speläo-Südwest the organizers "imported" two well-known musicians from Austria, Toni Burger and Ed Guggenberger, whom they know from the Totes Gebirge.

After breakfast the lecture and workshop program started, which lasted into the afternoon. Detailed reports about the different research projects on and around the Alb were the focus of these lectures. It started with the lecture by Michael Ross about the newly opened hiking trail around the Schandtauberhöhle. The result of many years of cave research is now presented to the public with great effort and public funds. Thereupon the contribution of Herbert Jantschke and Rainer Straub about the caves in the upper Danube valley. Further topics: Butterflies in the caves of Baden-Württemberg (Hannes Köble), The variance of speleothems in Blauhöhle (Rainer Straub), Föhnerquelle (Michael Hottinger) and Erdfall bei Bleichstetten (Frank Schüler), Neroschytic speleogenesis (Harry Scherzer), Schlossbergbröller (Andreas Kücha), Wasserfalldoline (Rudi Martin), methods of 3 D surveying (Markus Steffen), Farrenwiesschacht (Hannes Hesse, Klaus Sontheimer), Seligengrundhöhle (Andreas Länge). In the afternoon, Iris Bohnacker organized a workshop on rocks in the Charlottenhöhle and Hannes Köble collected cave animals, investigated them under a microscope with his group afterwards.

Parallel to the lectures and temporary workshops, a challenging course was set up for all those who wanted to train and improve their rope skill. At the same time, the Baden-Württemberg Cave Rescue Service presented interesting facts about safety in caves. For young and old there was a crawling box, young cavers could do a quiz and on top of that there was also a handicraft program for kids.

The cave photo quiz, in which the task was to correctly assign photos from caves to the fitting cave name, was also very popular.

In the evening, after the barbecue buffet, there was a presentation open to the general public that showed the Swabian Alb from three perspectives: from the point of view of speleologists (presented by Uwe Krüger, board member of LHK), geology (presented by Sandra Teuber, the new managing director of the Swabian Alb GeoPark) and archaeology (presented by Benjamin Schürch). It was a presentation that clearly illustrated that we can’t understand the world and the caves in a whole, considering only one view. We cannot do it "completely" anyway.
On Sunday all came together at 10 a.m. to split up in excursion groups. An attractive range of topics and locations was offered. It was so good that some would have liked to visit two or three caves at the same time. One had to decide.

Article by Franz Lindenmayr, shortened and with comments by Sibylle Scheuerle, November 2021