

The caves of Hellfjell and eastern Vefsn

The caves of Hellfjell

This article describes about 60 karst caves of modest length and complexity in semi-circular marble outcrops on Hellfjell and linear outcrops east of Mosjøen in Vefsn kommune. These caves, with a total passage length over 3km, were explored during eight South Nordland expeditions from 1997 until the final one in 2011. However, many marble outcrops and some mapped underground flow routes still await investigation. Most of these caves were probably initiated during the deglaciation of the Weichselian icesheet and enlarged by vadose and sump dissolutional processes in the Holocene, although a few caves have relict upper levels that probably formed during the previous deglaciation. From knowledge of early Holocene isostatic uplift and the recession of the ice margin, it is clear that a seaway existed between Vefsnfjord and Elsfjord for over 500 years, which flooded the lower altitude caves that had just been formed for over 2000 years.