

What is that shiny gold and silver stuff on the cave walls?

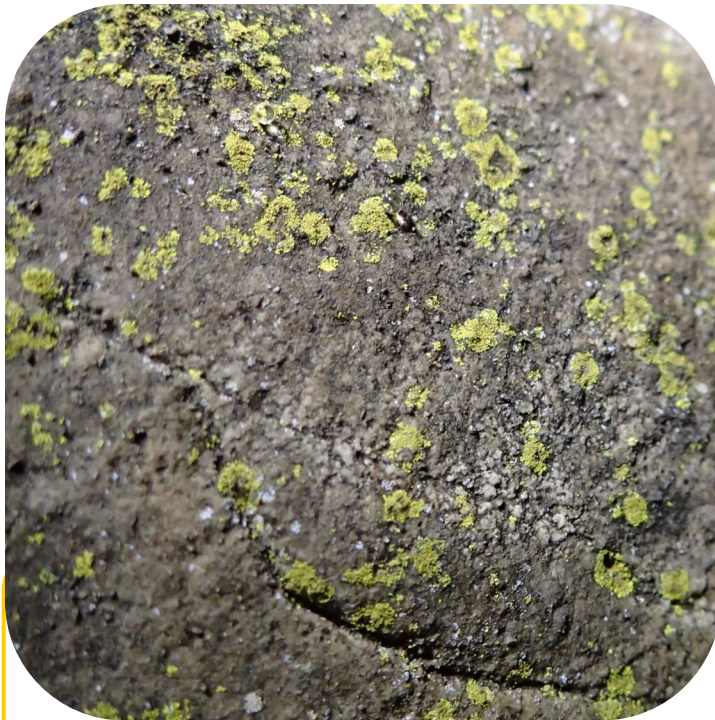
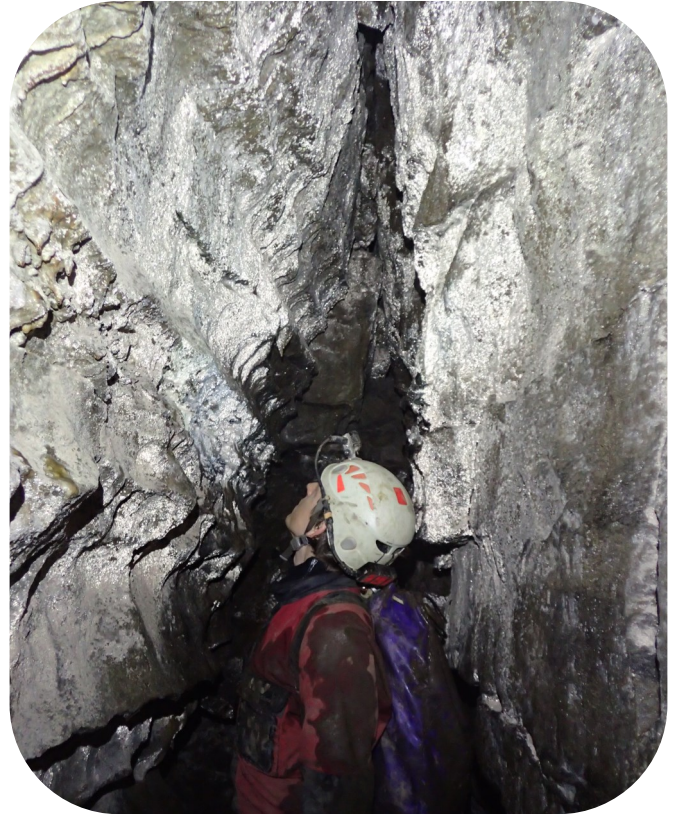
JO WHITE 2021

What do they look like?

When you're exploring caves you might see some yellow or white deposits on the walls. Water droplets often condense onto them which makes them reflect the light. This makes them shine and look like gold or silver. They are sometimes referred to as **Cave Silver** or **Cave Gold** (Herzog Velikonja et al. 2014).

Where are they found?

These deposits are quite common and have been found in caves, mines and lava tubes around the world (Porca et al. 2012).



What are they?

Only a few studies have been conducted on these deposits. The research so far has shown them to be microbial communities consisting of a collection of bacterial strains and possibly fungi. Different strains of bacteria account for the different colours (Portillo et al. 2007).

References

Herzog Velikonja, B., et al. (2014). "Diversity of cultivable bacteria involved in the formation of macroscopic microbial colonies (cave silver) on the walls of a cave in Slovenia." *International Journal of Speleology* 43(1): 45-56.

Porca, E., et al. (2012). "Comparative analysis of yellow microbial communities growing on the walls of geographically distinct caves indicates a common core of microorganisms involved in their formation." *FEMS Microbiology Ecology* 81(1): 255-266.

Portillo, M. C., et al. (2008). "Metabolically active microbial communities of yellow and grey colonizations on the walls of Altamira Cave, Spain." *Journal of Applied Microbiology* 104(3): 681-691.

FOR FURTHER READING PLEASE VISIT: [WEBSITE LINK HERE](#)