

Northeastern Cave Conservancy News

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November 2015

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC) is a not-for-profit corporation committed to the conservation, study, management, and acquisition of caves and karst areas having significant geological, hydrological, biological, recreational, historical, or aesthetic features. To these ends, the NCC combines the resources and expertise of affiliated cave explorers, educators, scientists, landowners, and conservation officials.



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The *Northeastern Cave Conservancy News* is published quarterly by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. The Northeastern Cave Conservancy promotes the study and preservation of speleologically significant properties in the northeastern United States. Annual membership is \$15 (Regular), \$5 (Additional Family), \$10 (Student), \$50 (Benefactor), \$100 (Institutional), \$100 (Family Life Membership), and \$300 (Life Membership). All checks should be made payable and sent to:

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Next Board Meeting

December Board Meeting
Sunday, December 6, 10:00 a.m.
Speleobooks - Schoharie, NY

Spring Board Meeting

Sunday, March 6, 2016 10:00 a.m.
Location in Connecticut to be determined

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC) is a not-for-profit corporation committed to the conservation, study, management, and acquisition of caves and karst areas having significant geological, hydrological, biological, recreational, historical, or aesthetic features.

To these ends, the NCC combines the resources and expertise of affiliated cave explorers, educators, scientists, landowners, and conservation officials.

The NCC programs are focused mainly on the preservation of caves and karst. Outreach includes education in schools and local communities, establishment of park spaces on karstlands, and educational messages about the significance of groundwater pollution on this sensitive underground ecosystem.

NCC members assist in the exploration, survey, and protection of these natural resources, and manage them so you can explore them yourself.



NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY, INC.

September Minutes - Summary

September 13, 2015 Board meeting held at Gallupville House, Schoharie County, NY

The Board went into Executive Session concerning Knox Cave during the meeting.

Cave Closures Discussed – DEC is providing signage for the properties and a brochure.

Wording about the Northern long-eared bat will be added to the Clarksville management plan.

The Board thanks the Gallupville House for the use of their meeting space and will donate \$40.

The Executive Committee meeting will be Saturday November 7th at 10:00 am in Kerhonkson, NY. Conference call will be set up. Please call 605-475-6111 and use code 814008.

The December Board meeting will be December 6th starting at 10:00am at Speleobooks. The NCC spring Board meeting will be March 6th, 2016 at 10:00 am in Connecticut (location to be determined).

Knox Cave Preserve – The Board is still in Executive Session concerning the damages done to the property. The EC understands urgency but it also tempers it with due diligence.

Acquisitions – The donation of Spider Cave continues at the speed of town planning board monthly meetings, which has not been bad. The Planning Board of the Town of Wright is scheduling a site walk in the next few days, followed by the normal steps of certified letters to all abutting landowners, a legal notice in the papers, and finally a public hearing.

Ad Hoc Bat Hibernaculum Committee – Put in applications for unsuitability for Onesquethaw. Apply for research permit for Clarksville. All NCC caves except for Sellecks will have to be posted as closed this winter.

Bensons – Visitation is slightly up from last year, with 8 permits given out, and 7 trips confirmed.

Bentleys – 114 visitors signed into the register since the last report (between March 21, 2015 and July 24, 2015). There were no recorded visitors between July 24, 2015 and September 10, 2015.

Clarksville – We have three small signs that direct visitors to our trail. Over a nine-day period in August, these were broken, destroyed, or removed four times. They have been replaced and the Sheriff's patrol was asked to swing by occasionally as the signs are near the parking area.

Knox – We've issued 26 Knox permits and answered numerous inquiries since the last report. We've issued one Crossbones permit. There is evidence of unauthorized access attempts at Crossbones.

Onesquethaw – Permits were issued for 23 groups, with a total of 148 individuals for a mean group size of 6.4.

Special Use Committee – During the period 113 permits were issued. Clarksville accounted for 88 (78%) of these. In the same period, 19 permits were denied. Five permits were issued and returned as the trips were cancelled. Special Use Reservations – Limit to 2 slots for July and August

Surprise Cave – We have the new agreement in place and a number of folks have sent me their Individual Volunteer Agreements. I have scheduled a rescue pre-planning visit, which will be coordinated in-cave by NJ IRT and Sam's Point SAR personnel. I have requested a meeting with our new coordinator at NY DEC.

Thacher Park – Thom Engel attended the first face-to-face meeting regarding the exhibits for the new Thacher Park Center. The main structure is well under construction, and work should continue over the winter. Thom Engel has been asked to serve on the interior design (displays) committee. Thom Engel will match dollar for dollar up to \$5,000 for the

publicly assisted side of installing displays. Fund-raising details to follow.

Membership Committee – Our official overall membership level has declined, breaking our string of three consecutive record highs. However, some of this is likely attributable to the scheduling of the NRO during the summer.

Volunteer Value Committee – Year to date totals: 11495 hours of volunteer work and drive time for NCC projects for a total value of \$43,629.00. The total value is a 51% increase over what was reported in June. Volunteer hours were reported by the managers of Knox and Bensons Preserves as well as cavers working on the Thacher Park project. Volunteer hours were also submitted by the Membership and Office Committees.

NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKS BOARD CANDIDATES

The Nominating Committee is continuously soliciting nominations for candidates for the NCC Board of Directors. Each spring, three of the nine board seats come up for election to be seated at the June meeting. If you would like to be considered for candidacy, know of someone who would make a good candidate, or are simply curious about the process, please contact Bob Simmons, Nominating Committee Chair, at rvsimmons1@gmail.com or call 860-620-2055. You can also speak to any NCC board member or officer with no obligations.

CHAIRPERSON - RISK MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Risk Management Committee (RMC) will monitor NCC publications and policies for compliance with NCC approved risk-management standards, attorney recommendations, or insurance-carrier policies, and will research any other risk issues that come before the NCC. The RMC Chairperson will appoint a liaison who will be the primary NCC spokesperson and contact with our insurance broker(s). If interested in this position, please contact Vince Kappler at vicepresident@necaveconservancy.org.

CO-CHAIRPERSON - MERLINS PRESERVE

The Co-Chair will help to manage property of the Merlins Preserve. This includes keeping the management plan updated, reporting on visitations, visiting the site and reporting to the Board, and being a physical caretaker during the summer and early fall. The Merlins Preserve Co-Chairs will report to the NCC President. If interested in this position, please contact Vince Kappler at vicepresident@necaveconservancy.org.

CHAIRPERSON - BENTLEYS CAVE PRESERVE

The Chairperson will help to manage property of the Bentleys Cave Preserve (Rensselaer County, NY). This includes keeping the management plan updated, reporting on visitations, visiting the site and reporting to the Board, and being a physical caretaker during the summer and early fall. The Bentleys Cave Preserve Chair will report to the NCC President. If interested in this position, please contact Vince Kappler at vicepresident@necaveconservancy.org.

NCC VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

Cavers can get involved with many volunteer opportunities offered by the NCC. These include work on various committees or assisting with one of the cave-preserve management teams. Volunteers contribute to the maintenance and preservation of unique underground environments and help to support various NCC educational and outreach activities. To learn more about volunteer opportunities, please contact Vince Kappler at vicepresident@necaveconservancy.org. You can also speak to any NCC board member or officer. Don't pass up the chance to give something back to the caves that are so important to us all.

THE SEVENTH ANNUAL NCC BARN DANCE
— Emily Davis —

On September 19th, the NCC hosted the 7th Annual Barn Dance in Amy and Russ Pokorny’s beautiful Octagon Barn. Our caller was Paul Rosenberg with his group, Tamarack. They played a wonderful selection of traditional, American, Celtic, and French-Canadian fiddle tunes. Paul encouraged all to join the dance by teaching contra, square, and folk dances at a level that all could follow and enjoy. A crowd of almost 60 local families and cavers danced the night away.

Christa Hay provided a great selection of refreshments, and Emily Davis provided home-pressed cider from her apple trees. Bill Folsom was our MC. Bill and Mike Warner set up the NCC tent to shelter our always-popular silent auction. The auction goods, as well as the great raffle prizes were gathered by Leslie Hatfield.

Also, a big thank you to NBT Bank, Amy and Russ Pokorny, and Vince and Sue Kappler, who have helped with financial support for the Barn Dance. We made over \$700, which will go into the general fund.

The following companies generously donated goods or products for the auction and raffle. Please make sure to thank them for their generosity.

The Hive
Stewart’s Shops
The Book House
I Love Books
Spectrum 8 Theaters
Price Chopper
Guernsey’s Orchard
Atlas Screen Printing
Speleobooks
Sharon Vrooman Quilts
Fox Creek Farm
Betsy Apgar Smith
Ragonese Italian Imports

My Way Café
Window Box Café
Honest Weight Food Co-op
Mad Dog Bicycles
Eastern Mountain Sports
Apple Barrel
Gordon Farms Beef
EOD Wounded Warrior
Program
Ichiban Japanese and Chinese
Restaurant (Western Avenue)
Schoharie Valley Farms - Home
of the Carrot Barn



THE SEVENTH ANNUAL NCC BARN DANCE



Photos by Mike Warner.





Photos by Mike Warner.



THACHER STATE PARK VISITOR CENTER — Thom Engel —

In 2013, New York finalized a master plan for John Boyd Thacher State Park (Thacher Park). The plan calls for the construction of a Visitor Center near the west end of the Indian Ladder Trail. The new Visitor Center is now under construction, and I have been asked by the state to serve on a committee to develop content for interactive exhibits and permanent displays. The Park is particularly interested in a “kids cave” and an adult-themed karst interpretive display. Currently, there is a fund-raising effort for the exhibits, spearheaded by the Open Space Institute.

Education is an important mission of the NCC. Indeed, it is the reason we are a non-profit. Helping to fund the cave and karst exhibits at the visitor center would further our mission and will, in my opinion, reach more people than we do at our preserves. To that end, between now and April 2016, I will match each dollar up to \$5,000.00 raised by the NCC for the Visitor Center displays. Please send your tax deductible contribution earmarked for the Visitor Center to the NCC Office.



Artist's conception of the completed Thacher Park Visitor Center.

NCC SURVEY DAY IN THACHER STATE PARK

— Thom Engel —

On September 22, the last NCC survey day of the season was held in John Boyd Thacher State Park. The purpose of this Tuesday session, held after Labor Day, was to survey along the Indian Ladder Trail, which is typically crowded with park visitors in the summer.

Emily Davis, Chuck Porter, Mike Warner, and I entered at the west end of the trail and checked out several small leads and caves. We surveyed the so-called Bridal Chamber (this is the large shelter cave with a fissure leading off parallel to the cliff face). Emily pushed into the small cave at the base of Outlet Falls. After a little over 20 feet, it gets too low to continue.

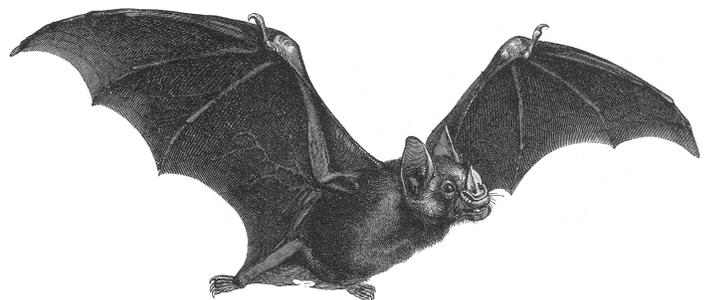
On the following Saturday, Mike and I represented the NCC at the Thacher Fall Festival. It was a beautiful day—unlike last year’s centennial—and hundreds of people attended. Foremost on everyone’s mind was White-Nose Syndrome.



Emily Davis during the NCC Karst Survey at Thacher State Park. Photo by Mike Warner.



Thom Engel (seated) talks with visitors to the Thacher Festival. Photo by Mike Warner.



FALL FESTIVAL - THACHER STATE PARK



Photos by Mike Warner.



A VISIT TO KNOX AND ONESQUETHAW CAVES



On June 20th, 2015, the Mintel family went into Knox and Onesquethaw caves. Ed Kennedy, our family friend, came with us. The big metal ladder was a challenge, but we got through it. The younger kids, Matt, Jack, and Annie, were belayed with a rope. This picture was taken in the dungeon of Knox Cave. Back to the present—me in a national cave conservancy was one of my biggest dreams. Meeting expert caver Emily Davis was also on my bucket list. I am excited to be a part of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy, and thankful to all its members who help conserve caves and who take the time to show the public how important caves are. So thank you for all you have done. Photo by Ed Kennedy.