

Northeastern Cave Conservancy News



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.

Next Board Meeting

Sunday, June 7th 1:30PM at the
Seventh Day Baptist Church, Berlin NY

Seventh Day Baptist Church
45 N Main St
Berlin, NY 12022
(518) 658-2868

Directions: Seveth Day Baptist Church is located north of the center of Berlin, NY. It is on N. Main Street, which is just off of Rt 22.

Notes from the December Board Meeting

- 1) The board voted to immediately close all of the NCC caves to any visitation until May 15th, 2009, and in the interm work with US F&W to improve the efficacy of their White Nose Syndrome closure recommendations to make them more effective.
- 2) Addis forms an ad-hoc committee to formulate a conservation policy. The committee will be headed by Simmons, and includes Lyons and Armstrong.
- 3) The board votes to appropriate \$17K of the current general funds towards the purchase of Merlins Cave. The money will be returned to the fund if the purchase is unsuccessful.
- 4) Kappler reports that VV totals for 2008 include 1680.5 hours of work for a total value of \$36,926.
- 5) Clarksville and Onesquethaw managers report that the December ice storm brought down some trees on both properties and that the debris has been cleaned up already.
- 6) Hicks and Youngbaer presented a WNS update and answered WNS related questions from the audience and board.

In this issue

Notes from the March Meeting.....	Page 1
Merlins Cave acquisition nears	Page 2
Statement on Region Cave Openings ..	Page 3
and efforts to contain the spread of White Nose Syndrome	
Bentleys Cave Cleanup Information	Page 4
Upcoming Events	Page 5
Pictures	Page 5

Merlins Cave acquisition nears

by Chuck Porter, Acquisitions Chair

Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.		
Officers		
President	Bob Addis	(518) 237-1165 raddis3@verizon.net
Vice President	Peter Youngbaer	(802) 454-7752 youngbaer4@aol.com
Treasurer	Bill Folsom	(845) 626-4220 rockeater@mindspring.com
Secretary	Christa Hay	(518) 237-1165 c.hay@ctmale.com
Trustees		
David Lyons		cavewine@hotmail.com
Al Hicks		achicks@gw.dec.state.ny.us
Vince Kappler		(973) 579-2116 vkappler@nac.net
Michael Chu		chum2@rpi.edu
Joe Armstrong		gonecaving@hotmail.com
Peter Haberland		518-928-4300 peterhaberland@yahoo.com
Michael Warner		(518) 295-7978 mike@speleobooks.com
Craig Cantello		ccantello@earthlink.net
Bob Simmons		rwsimmons1@msn.com
Committee Chairs		
Acquisitions	Chuck Porter	(518) 274-4863 chuckporter@earthlink.net
Bylaws	Joe Levinson	(973) 208-9049 jlevinson@tellurian.net
Conservation	Joe Armstrong	gone@hotmail.com
Education	David Lyons	cavewine@hotmail.com
Finance & Investments	Joe Levinson	(973) 208-9049 jlevinson@tellurian.net
Fundraising	Alan Traino	PollackOpticians@aol.com
Legal	Mark Seltzer	legal@necaveconservancy.org
Membership	Sean Ryan	beloq@juno.com
Nominating	Mike Martuscello	mikemart@superior.net
Office	Mike Warner	(518) 295-7978 mike@speleobooks.com
	Emily Davis	(518) 295-7978 emily@speleobooks.com
Preserves	Thom Engel (Onesquethaw)	(518) 478-9664 onesquethaw@necaveconservancy.org
	Jay Simion (Sellecks)	(518) 928-4300 sellecks@necaveconservancy.org
	Emily Davis	(518) 295-7978
	Jay Simion (Knox)	knox@necaveconservancy.org
	Michael Chu Thom Engel Chuck Porter (Clarksville)	clarksville@necaveconservancy.org
Joe Armstrong (Ella)	ella_armstrong@necaveconservancy.org	
Publications and Publicity	Christa Hay	(518) 237-1165 c.hay@ctmale.com
Newsletter Editor	Michael Chu	chum2@rpi.edu
Website	Michael Chu	chum2@rpi.edu
Science Coordinator	R. Laurence Davis	(203) 932-7108 rldavis@Newhaven.edu
Special Use Coordinators	Amy Cox	(203) 426-4602 specialuse@necaveconservancy.org
<p>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 addtl. (Family), \$10 (student), \$50 (Benefactor), and \$100 (Institutional). All checks made payable and sent to:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. P.O. Box 254 Schoharie, N.Y. 12157</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.necaveconservancy.org</p>		

The NCC is raising funds to purchase Merlins Cave, a splendid sculpted and decorated marble cave in Columbia County, New York. Discovered in 2006, well over 1000 feet of intricate passageways have been explored and partially mapped, with numerous unchecked leads and digging possibilities remaining. But, until purchase by the NCC, the landowner has placed Merlins Cave off-limits to further visits, due to insurance requirements. (The only exceptions are spring DEC bat surveys.)

Formed in Stockbridge Marble and developed along a Taconic thrust fault, Merlins Cave contains colorful insoluble remnants which produce striking and unusual features. An entrance maze precedes a scenic canyon with domes and waterfalls, leading to an immense room which has not yet been fully explored. This sporting cave is in pristine condition. For more info, visit www.necaveconservancy.org and look under "Acquisition News."

Plans for the approximately 34-acre preserve include a parking area, kiosk, and trails—both along the line of sinks (which extend well beyond the present limits of Merlins Cave), and to nearby Dragon Bones Cave. This promising dig could connect to Merlins. The woods are open, attractive and free of invasive species. Merlins is also a significant bat hibernaculum.

We're about ready to sign a purchase agreement and arrange for the required land survey. We'll also arrange parking details (with a friendly and enthusiastic neighbor) and present subdivision plans to the Town of Canaan.

Total costs will be in the low \$90,000s and we have already raised half of that thanks in part to generous matching grants from Dick Blenz and Thom Engel. Mike Chu has just offered to match donations up to \$1000 so here's a chance to double your donation.

Send your check to Northeastern Cave Conservancy, PO Box 254, Schoharie, NY 12157. Or you can pay online at www.necaveconservancy.org. Click on the blue "Donate" line at the left. Contributions are fully tax-deductible. Donate today and help acquire this hidden treasure in the hills of Columbia County.

Statement on Regional Cave Openings and Efforts to Contain the Spread of White Nose Syndrome

May 15, 2009

The following statement was prepared following a meeting May 6, 2009 attended by representatives of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS), New York Department of Environmental Conservation (NYDEC), the Northeastern Cave Conservancy (NCC), National Speleological Society (NSS) New York Nature Preserve Managers, and the National Speleological Society White Nose Syndrome Liaison.

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy and the National Speleological Society's New York cave managers announced that their New York caves will open on May 15, 2009. Cave visitation will be subject to the usual conditions, including any group use permits, waivers, and proper equipment and experience. All cave visitors are asked to follow the cleaning and decontamination procedures of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, which can be found at: <http://www.fws.gov/northeast/whitenosemessage.html>. In addition, no gear or clothing used in these caves should be taken outside the region.

NCC Caves opening are: Clarksville, Ladder, Onesquethaw, Knox, Crossbones, Ella Armstrong, Selleck's, Levy's, and 545. Information on visitation conditions can be found at <http://www.necaveconservancy.org/default.php>.

NSS Cave openings are: Schoharie Caverns, Barton Hill (Gage's Cave, Keyhole Cave, and Green Cave), and the McFails Preserve caves (McFails, Hanor/Disappointment, and Featherstonough's Flop). Information for these preserves may be found at <http://www.caves.org/preserves/>.

In its Advisory, the USFWS urged "agencies and partners who manage cave resources to strongly consider limiting access to caves and mines to slow the spread of WNS," and encouraged "national and local caving organizations to continue their outreach and education efforts to spread the word about WNS and about responsible resource stewardship."

To that end, on March 29, 2009, the NCC closed all its caves until May 15. The NSS caves had previously been closed for the winter. All of the

NSS caves and some of the NCC caves maintained hibernating bat populations that had been decimated by White Nose Syndrome. The winter closures protect surviving bats from disturbance, hopefully supporting successful reproduction and the rebuilding of bat colonies. As these bats typically give birth to only one pup per year, full population restoration will take years.

The NCC and the NSS believe it is imperative to do whatever we can to contain the spread of WNS, including minimizing any potential human vector. While it is clear that bats are likely the primary source of WNS transmission to other bats, and human transmission is not proven, nor likely easy, staying out of caves within the Advisory area for the time being is clearly the best way to minimize any potential for humans to inadvertently spread WNS.

However, other management and education considerations must be taken into account. If these caves remained closed, there is evidence that it encourages local cavers to travel elsewhere for caving. This increases the possibility of caving gear used in WNS-affected sites to be taken out of the region. It also encourages local cavers to seek access to other local privately-owned caves that may be more environmentally fragile, or more dangerous, increasing the possibility of cave rescue.

Further, as all of these caves either are already WNS-affected sites, or do not contain bats, no further damage to these caves or their bats would occur, especially in the summer, when bats are gone from hibernation. Continued closure would also have increased the risk of vandalism, a concern raised by property managers and adjoining landowners, and enforcement is difficult, if not impossible.

In addition, there are 105 youth and other groups that regularly visit these caves, where we have kiosks, managers, permits, and the ability to interface with thousands of individuals who are not members of the organized caving community. Educating them about WNS, as well as caves, karst, groundwater, and safe caving techniques, would be missed without that contact. We would forego all of these opportunities if the caves remained closed.

The NSS has prepared a special information brochure on WNS, which the NCC has printed and will be available at the cave properties. It is also

available for download on both the NCC and NSS websites: <http://www.necaveconservancy.org> , or <http://www.caves.org/WNS/index.htm> .

In conclusion, we all agreed that keeping people caving locally is better than creating a situation where people feel compelled to travel elsewhere. As no additional harm would occur to caves or bats locally, providing local outlets for caving lessens the potential spread to uncontaminated areas in other parts of the country.

Please note that the status of these caves is subject to change. Those that normally close for the winter to protect hibernating bats according to their management plans will do so October 15. It is always wise to check the NCC or NSS websites for these caves prior to any trip for the latest information.

Finally, we continue to stress that any local cavers traveling outside the region to cave not take any gear or clothing that has been exposed to a WNS-affected cave. Buy new, if you can, or borrow locally. Thank you for your cooperation.

Bentley's Cave Cleanup Information

The next NCC meeting will be held in Rensselaer county near the Bentleys site. A clean up (trail clearing) will take place at 10:00AM at the property and then a board meeting at 1:30PM at the Seventh Day Baptist Church (directions on the first page). Bring your lunch, water and tools.

The new parking area is 2/3 mile south of the Stewarts in Berlin, and further south than the traditional parking area. See map below.



Upcoming Events

June 7th, 2009: Bentley's Cave work day and NCC board meeting.

June 13-20, 2009: 2009 NCRC Weeklong, in Bedford, Indiana.

July 19-26, 2009: 2009 NSS Convention, in Kerrville, Texas

August 8th, 2009: NJ Tri-state Speleological Society presents www.benefit4thecaves.com



Entrance to Dry Valley Cavern, located on the Bentley's Cave Preserve
Photo by Mike Chu (off a cell phone...)