

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, December 9th 10AM at the Gallupville House, in Gallupville, NY.

Notes from the Last Board Meeting

- 1) The Cheryl Kenez Memorial Fund is established for the protection of caves and karst in the Northeast.
- 2) There is a new acquisition policy re-written by Bob Addis. But this still needs to be worked on. It was accepted as it was better than the other one already in place and since we have a possible acquisition in the pipeline this interim one will help move it along.
- 3) There was an Ad Hoc Committee formed to study and make recommendations on this policy. Chuck Porter, Peter Youngbaer, Jay Siemion are on the committee.
- 4) There is now a separate appendix on how to write a Cave Management Plan.
- 5) Sellecks and Ella Armstrong cave preserves were both up for management review. Both preserve managers state that the management plans are ok and the preserves are working fine.
- 6) Harry White from the Weantinoge Heritage Land Trust met with us to discuss the turn over/management of Torys Cave.
- 7) Belknap (XTC) Cave owners are in negotiations with the NCC. The owners have closed the cave for now.

- 8) \$500.00 for the cost of a professional appraisal for the parcel of land containing the Merlin's Cave, Columbia County.
- 9) Act 10-28 is amended.... delete "for Clarksville property" and insert.... an approved acquisition.
- 10) David Lyons was appointed as Chairman of the Education Committee, reporting to the President.
- 11) Executive discussion (only board members) to discuss Beckers cave.

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<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>		

NCC Recent Activity

by Bob Addis

A significant part of my business has been my involvement with the Acquisition Chair on work for Merlins Cave (Formerly known as XTC Cave). This has been very exciting work for Chuck and me for a number of reasons. First of all, Merlins is a truly outstanding cave, a newly discovered marble cave of significant length. One knowledgeable caver ranked it as one of the top three marble caves in the United States! Whether that statement is true or not begs the question; Merlins is still a remarkable cave and one that has been offered to the NCC. I can't wait to visit the cave when it is permitted.

The second part of this exciting challenge is the fundraising. This will be twice as large as any previous NCC acquisition so it will mandate new methods, new resources. Chuck and I have expectations of cooperation with the Columbia Land Conservancy (CLC), the land trust who will hold a conservation easement on the parcel. We are hopeful that the CLC will introduce us to some fund raisers and fund raising methods that we haven't used in the past. I see this aspect as our greatest challenge; this truly represents growth on the NCC's part. We are also cooperating w/DEC for a bat survey in Jan/Feb 08. If endangered species of bats were discovered, this could greatly change our plans and possibly aid our funding.

Some advantages and disadvantages of pursuing the purchase of this new cave are listed below; from our acquisitions chair:

ADVANTAGES

- Large, well-decorated marble cave with several different kinds of passage geometry: crawlway maze, plunge-pools canyon, domes, huge room, breakdown. Includes aesthetically pleasing marble banding, insoluble protrusions, and in-cave stream with waterfalls.

- Pristine passages barely affected by human exploration, with geologic features (faulting, mineralization, sediments, hydrology, etc) that warrant further study

- Hibernaculum for hundreds of bats.

- Pleasant open wooded property growing to maturity with no invasive species present. Location likely to remain free of pollutants and in washed debris.
- Line of large sinkholes may lead to further cave passages. Potential for digging continuation of both Merlin's and Dragon Bones caves
- A sporting cave, with climb and squeeze challenges
- Friendly and enthusiastic neighbors
- A trail system could provide recreational opportunities for the general public
- A different type of NCC preserve in a new area for the NCC.

DISADVANTAGES

- High purchase price, with the need for an expensive property survey.
- High annual property taxes (but we should eventually attain tax-free status)
- Remote from the usual Albany-Schoharie caving area; potential stewardship problems.
- Tight, muddy, wet entrance section, with access difficult or impossible in high water, and hazards due to loose and shifting rocks (one injury already), exposure on climbs.

One other area of the pleasant acquisitions work I so enjoy was the researching of ownership of Novemberkill Cave, Albany County, NY as part of the Hailes Cave System and therefore part of our new relationship with the Thatcher State Park. Novemberkill you may recall as a small stream resurgence proven to be the low water flow route of the stream in Hailes Cave and a possible area to modify passage in an effort to prevent sudden flooding in Hailes and the resultant killing of the endangered Indiana bats. Hailes is clearly owned by the Park but Novemberkill's ownership is in question. My first attempts to contact the owner of record disclosed that he had died and the property had sold. Finding the new owner(s) has proved to be more difficult since there is corporate sheltering taking place.

Finally, the Texas Cave Conservancy has started an effort to monitor development which threatens caves and karst in the United States and has asked the various cave conservancies to supply a list of possible counties in the states where each conservancy operates. The NCC has listed a few counties in the Northeast (and obviously can amend this at any future date). This group will electronically search the records for permits filed, planning board meeting notices, general news, etc. nationwide and inform the conservancy possibly affected. Probably most notices we will have heard about ahead of time, but this costs us nothing and it might help.

In case you are wondering about the threat of development in the Northeast, I recently read a professional journal article on urban sprawl. They defined it and then cited areas where sprawl was out of control, where local officials were not doing an adequate job of planning and permitting. Does it come as a surprise to discover that the Capital District of NY was cited as one of the worst examples of urban sprawl? Obviously we have caves and karst in this area and it is threatened, as defined by the professionals who study this kind of thing. Food for thought.

Why we work with camps
by Larry Davis

Over the past couple of years, I have become more aware of a phenomenon that, sadly, seems to be growing in the United States (and, perhaps, elsewhere). It is the detachment of our children from the natural world. This problem first came to my attention when I heard about (and later read) the book by Richard Louv, *Last Child in the Woods* (I highly recommend it). Louv's thesis is that being outdoors and "in" nature is important to our well-being and development. He "links the absence of nature in the lives of today's wired generation to some of the most disturbing childhood trends: the rise in obesity, attention disorders, and depression" (taken from the publisher's blurb on the back cover of the paperback edition). He coined the term "Nature-Deficit Disorder" to cover these problems and has founded an organization, "Children and Nature Network," to help combat it. Its motto is "No Child Left Inside."

While as a scientist I am naturally a bit skeptical of some of his claims, intuitively I feel that his

premise is true. The final part of Louv's book is titled "To Be Amazed." This is reminiscent of Rachel Carson's book *A Sense of Wonder*. At Pemi, in formal and informal settings, in large and small ways, we are "amazed" by Nature every day. We develop that sense of wonder. It keeps us going. Recently, a camper asked me what I like best about my job. I answered that it was the pleasure of helping others to open their eyes to what is around them. Over the years at Pemi I have helped thousands of children connect with Nature and helped them to feel comfortable with their sense of wonder. I have seen the beneficial results. My talks with dozens of alums at the recent Centennial Celebration convinced me that this wonder and amazement, this connection with Nature, made at camp, lasts a lifetime. I am pleased with the work we have done and determined to continue it for years to come.

Volunteer Value 2007

by Vince Kappler

The NCC membership continued its strong support for cave and karst conservation in 2007 by contributing over 700 hours of labor and driving over 11,000 miles to do volunteer work for the Conservancy. The current totals (roughly 60% of last year) are not yet final and I expect them to go up as additional reports from members are submitted by the end of December.

The concept of Volunteer Value continues to grow within service organizations as well as caving groups. Google the term "Volunteer Value" and you will get millions of articles which is an indication of the economic importance of volunteer work for community benefit. Closer to home, read the NSS Officer Reports <http://caves.org/nss-business/index.php> and you will find numerous instances where cavers are tracking VV, especially on projects on government lands. Statistics on conservation activities and

community relations are an integral part of the NSS Annual Report <http://www.caves.org/info/annual%20reports/index.htm>. VV data is also used to support the NSS application for Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) status, which is a very successful fund raising campaign for the NSS. The NCC provided data for the Annual Report and the CFC application.

On the regional level, the NCC's dedication to conservation has opened the door to many opportunities. Nature and land conservancies in neighboring states recognize our members' commitment and enthusiasm and are working closely with us to develop partnerships that will benefit karst features. Locally, we participate in local festivities and we offer educational opportunities to the public. We are active members of our communities and good neighbors.

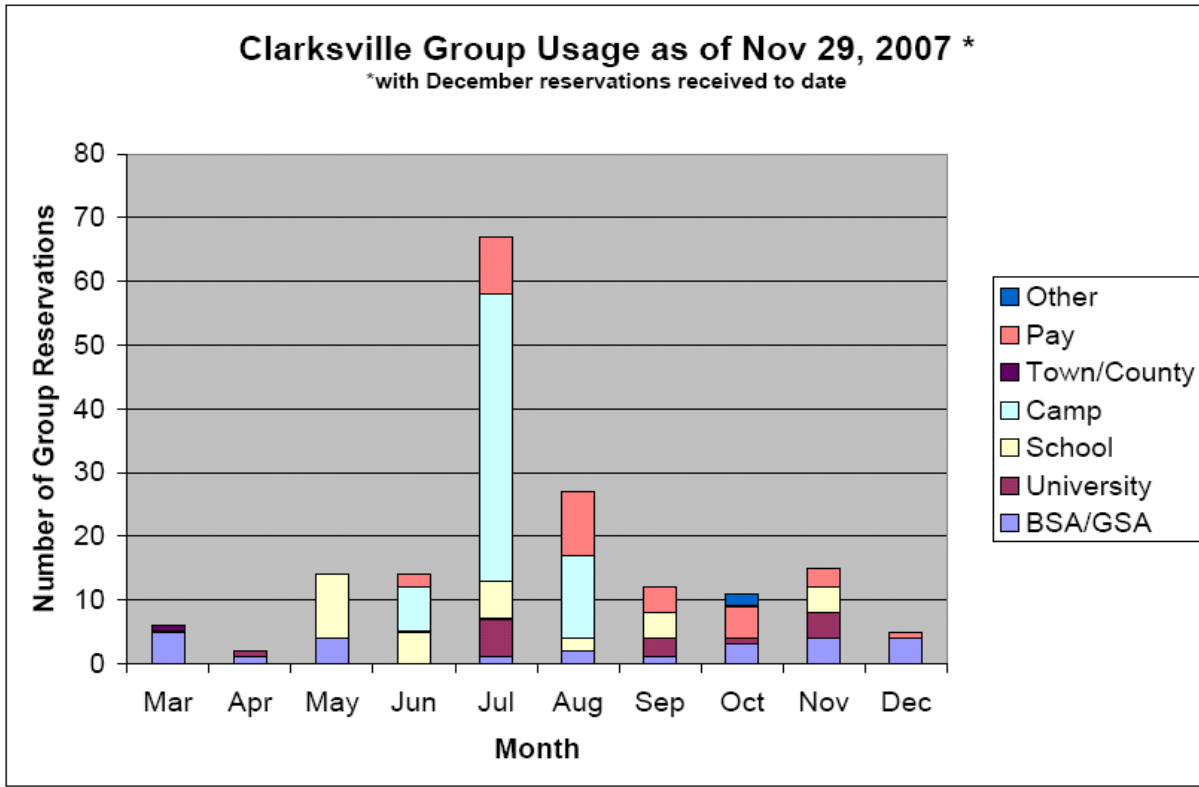
NCC members are doing an outstanding job supporting the mission of the conservancy. Documenting the hours and miles you expend to help out is the only way we can generate the statistics that really show how dedicated we are. Those statistics are then used to promote ourselves which eventually benefits the whole caving fraternity. Logging onto http://www.necaveconservancy.org/add_vv.php to fill out the form or signing in on the VV Work Sheet at projects will ensure that we remain a visible, active organization, with a large membership dedicated to preserving caves and karst in the North East.

Upcoming Events

May 16-18, 2008: Spring NRO ??

August 11-15, 2008: 2008 NSS Convention, in Lake City, Florida.

Cave Preserve Usage Statistics By Amy Cox



Definitions of Group Types

- BSA/GSA Boy scout and girl scout groups

- University Any university sponsored program whether for college-age groups, teachers, or youth camps

- School Middle and high schools, many tend to be magnet schools. Some are private.

- Camp Private summer camps

- Town/County Municipal-sponsored summer camps and youth programs

- Pay Any cave for pay group, some would otherwise qualify for other categories such as GSA, BSA, camps, etc.

- Other Any other organization

