

Northeastern Cave Conservancy News

Volume 22, Number 4 December 2020



Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.

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Next Board Meeting

Sunday, December 6, 2020 at 10:00 am

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, this will be a virtual meeting. If you would like to attend the meeting and have not already been provided with log-in information, please contact secretary@necaveconservancy.org to get log-in instructions.

Winter Board Meeting

Sunday, March 7, 2021 at 10:00 am

Virtual Meeting

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.

NCC logo design by Christa Hay



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

— Bob Simmons —

What a Year.....

Dear Friends,

What a year this has been! I sincerely hope you are all well and continue to thrive, despite all that has and will continue to happen. For those who have lost loved ones to this disease or whose life situations have been upended, there is little that can be said that matters. Know that your friends are here and someday we will all be gathered around the campfire, having a beer, and talking about tomorrow's cave trip once again. Until that day, stay safe, keep your loved ones close, and we will see you when this is over.

Things have been both crazy and subdued at the NCC this year. We were able to close on the acquisition of the Salamander Cave Preserve (number 11 and our first foray into Ulster County), but have had to postpone many workdays and projects due to Covid-19, such as the build out of the Alan Traino Preserve in Coeymans, NY. This is preserve number 10, which we closed on just about a year ago. Wow, so much has happened in the intervening year since that closing and yet that seems like it was just last week.

Spring and Fall NROs were cancelled. OTR and the NSS Convention were cancelled. Our planned Second Annual Members Appreciation Day was cancelled. The annual Barn Dance was cancelled. Caving trips galore and informal get-togethers and grotto meetings were cancelled or went virtual. At so many of these events and get-togethers, we get the chance to hang out with members, friends, and other cavers (i.e., potential members). These events have also been where we sign up new members, get existing members to renew, hold auctions, cook and share meals, accept donations, etc. They are our financial lifeblood. Covid-19 has also curtailed a lot of the usual visitation to our caves this year, particularly the annual summer influx from schools, camps, and scouts. We have received significant donations from many of these groups over the years as thanks for preserving the caves and providing access for recreational and educational purposes.

As a result of these Covid-19-related cancellations, our income this year is down significantly while our expenses continue unabated. Sounds like everyone's situation these days, right? While we are looking at some different opportunities to help fund these shortfalls, I am asking those who are able to do what you can. Our members have been the bedrock of our organization and your generosity over the years continues to amaze me, time and again.

"Okay, Bob, we get it. It's that time of year and every organization is out looking for end-of-year donations..."

What do you want us to do?"

Thanks for asking! We all give what we can of our time, talent, and treasure. That is what keeps an all-volunteer organization going and growing. Here is what you can do: Please renew your individual, family, or organizational membership, if it has lapsed or is coming due. You should receive a renewal notice from our Membership Chair, if your dues are/were coming due. Maybe consider upgrading your membership to a higher category or consider giving a gift membership to someone who should be a member but has not joined yet. Straight-up donations are always welcome, too. You might consider adding a few extra bucks, on top of the membership fee, when you join or renew.

One cool thing is coming up. We are trying to get an online auction of caving-related items up and running—more on that to follow. Please participate as you can. We have received donations from the Traino Family of a lot of Alan's caving and digging gear. Local caver, Mark Cook, recently passed away and his family has donated Mark's collection of caving books and maps (mostly of Schoharie County). Also, several members have offered to donate caving equipment. Once we have the logistics worked out, we will get the info out to everyone.

"Money is pretty tight right now Bob, I can pay my dues, but that's about it. Is there any other way I could help?"

Why yes there is! Thanks for asking. Look at the "Help Wanted" article (see page 4) in this newsletter and you will see there are several open positions that we are looking to fill. Throw your name in the hat for one. Most of our existing committees could use help. So even if you are not comfortable or don't feel qualified to take on a major roll, if there is something you'd like to help out with, we need it. Several of our volunteers wear multiple hats and perform multiple duties within the organization and are always looking for assistance; on-the-job training is provided.

Most importantly, please stay healthy and safe, get underground if you can do so safely, or out in the woods. It does a world of good and makes you feel almost normal for a while in this truly abnormal time we are in.



HELP WANTED - VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES AVAILABLE

— Bob Simmons —

The Northeastern Cave Conservancy has several open positions we are looking to fill. Hours are flexible and pay is nonexistent, but the rewards are immeasurable! Please take a read below and see if there is a position that you think you might be able to help with. If you have experience in one of these areas, that would be fantastic; even if you don't, we could use the help. Take a look at the front page of this Newsletter listing the volunteers that keep this organization running for the benefit of all. You'll see some people doing double and triple duty. You'll also notice a lot of "old timers" in there, too. Many hands make light work, as they say.

Preserve Manager, Sellecks Karst Preserve. This opening is for our Sellecks Preserve, located in Carlisle, NY. Joey O'Reilly had been our Manager up until recently when he left the area. Thank you, Joey, for all your hard work and dedication!

Preserve Manager, Salamander Cave Preserve, Kingston, NY. That's right, NCC Preserve number 11. We closed on the property in mid-October. This Preserve will need infrastructure (parking, trail development, kiosk, changing area). We are also working on a cooperative agreement with the owners of the adjoining property (the one with the quarry and Tree Cave, for those who know the area). Thanks again to Valerie Connors (and the late Dennis Connors) for their amazing generosity with this donation and their continued friendship with the caving community.

Membership Chair. After many years of spectacular work, vital to the organization, Peter Youngbaer has asked to step down from this position, due to other commitments. This is a particularly critical position in the organization, and we need to fill it by year's end. The Membership Chair maintains the membership database, sends out renewal notices, and provides a quarterly report to the Board concerning the status of our organization. The Chair also motivates the members, recruits new members, and informs and advises the membership concerning opportunities they might be interested in.

Fundraising Chair. This position has been open for quite

some time now and I think that is because people think it may be an intimidating role. Now more than ever—particularly in these days of Covid-19, during which so many of our usual sources of funding have been cancelled or postponed (NRO Auctions, OTR, the Barn Dance, etc.)—we need creative and energetic folks to help us fund the day-to-day operations of the NCC, build security for the future, and fund the acquisition and protection of more caves and karst. Frankly, this is a position that could be taken on by more than one person. It need not be someone that has a lot of experience with the process, just a willingness to learn and the time and energy to participate.

Investments Chair. Many thanks to John Fioroni for helping us get this position off the ground. Reporting to the Treasurer, this individual would assist the NCC with long-term investment strategies to help us grow our nest egg, with the goal of providing sustainable income to fund future operations and acquisitions. Some significant experience with investments would be helpful, but energy and attention to detail are equally as important.

Vermont Land Trust Liaison. Here's a unique position for one of our Vermont members to take the horns on a nascent project and see where it goes. We have had some preliminary discussion with the VLT about assisting them with a number of projects and have put together a draft Memorandum of Understanding between the NCC and VLT. Under the MOU, we could provide such services as developing a GIS layer to assist VLT in evaluating current or proposed properties for the likely presence of karst, reviewing potential acquisitions for possible cave and karst resources, and identifying potential caves or karst lands that the NCC could acquire and/or manage, depending on the situation. This is a great opportunity for someone that has good people skills, experience with GIS (optional), and likes to get their hands into projects.

If you might be interested in any of these positions (or know just the right person we should approach), please let me know at president@necaveconservancy.org. Also, feel free to reach out to current Managers or Interim Managers of these preserves (or any of our other preserves) if you'd like to get more directly involved in cave stewardship.

NCC ACQUIRES ITS ELEVENTH PRESERVE

— Bob Simmons —

Just last month, we finally were able to close on the donation of the Salamander Cave property donation in Kingston, NY. The property consists of a little more than 8.2 acres of steep hillsides and cliffs above the Rondout Creek. Many thanks to the Donor, Valerie Connors (and her late husband Dennis) for seeing this through to completion. Big thanks to our interim preserve managers, Cara Gentry and Erik Richards, for volunteering to foster this new preserve into our system and their crucial assistance and friendship, which were instrumental in making this all come to fruition. Visitation and other preserve guidelines are in the offing and will be posted on the website and in later news briefs. For those familiar with the cave area, or reading older directions/descriptions, please note that the standard way to access the cave is not a part of the preserve (it and the adjacent old quarry are on a separate parcel altogether, which is presently not open to visitation). We are working with the owners of that property to hopefully secure the former access route, but that may take some time to complete. Stay tuned!

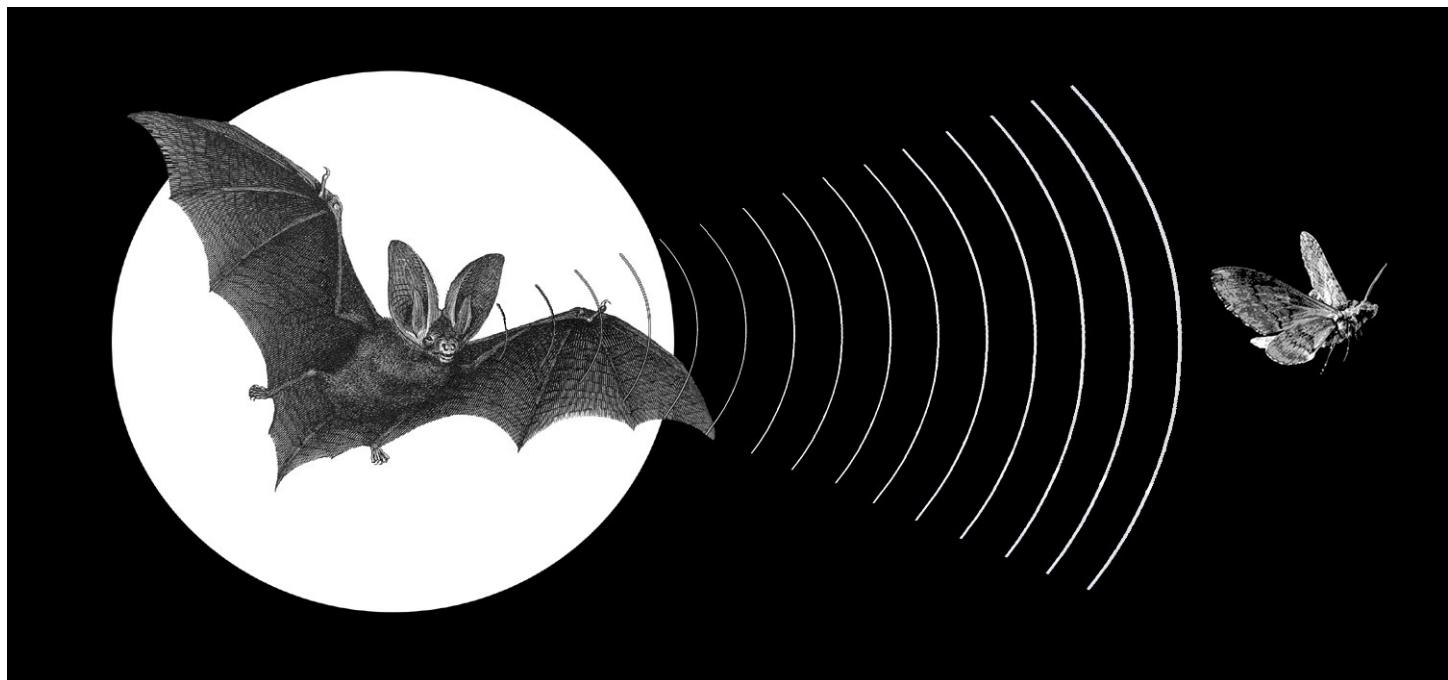
CAVES FOR SALE

— Bob Simmons —

The NCC is always looking for our next acquisition. In this process, we often come across real estate that may not be suitable (or affordable) or otherwise make sense for an NCC acquisition as another preserve. Two interesting deals are out there that would be great if they were to end up in the hands of cavers:

177 Rock Hill Road, Voorheesville, NY. An older colonial house with more than 17 acres, much of which is the limestone outcrop of the Helderberg Escarpment. The property includes two known caves: Airport and Overhead.

2082 Delaware Turnpike, Clarksville, NY. Jake Moons (a.k.a. Junes Place) is up for sale. OK, no cave on the property, but the restaurant, parking, and acre of land do directly abut our Clarksville Cave Preserve. Possible business opportunity here for an enterprising caver?



NOMINATING COMMITTEE SEEKING CANDIDATES FOR VICE PRESIDENT AND TREASURER OF THE NORTHEASTERN CAVE CONSERVANCY

— Norm Berg —

At the December 2020 NCC meeting, the Trustees will elect the Vice President and the Treasurer, each for a two-year term. If you would like to be considered for either of these positions, would like to nominate someone for a position, or would just like more information on the process and requirements, please contact the NCC Nominating Committee at nominating@necaveconservancy.org.

The last day to submit nominations is November 28, 2020. Then the Nominating Committee will present the nominations as “a slate of candidates” for consideration by the Trustees. For reference, the general duties and responsibilities of the Officer positions are described below.

Vice President:

The Vice President assumes the duties of the President in the event of his or her absence, incapacity, or resignation, and presides when the Board meets as a Committee of the Whole. The following committees report to the Vice President: Bylaws, Education, Science, Special Use, Surprise Cave, and Thacher Park.

Treasurer:

The Treasurer is responsible for the safekeeping of organizational funds; maintaining and reporting financial records and statements to the Board of Directors; and filing all financial documents required by local, state, or federal regulations. The following committees report to the Treasurer: Technology, Fundraising, Membership, Office, Publications, Investment Committee, and Volunteer Value.

General Requirements:

Candidates need to be a current member of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy. Please email a pdf file, as an attachment, with your contact information, relevant experience, and what you would bring to the NCC. You will receive a reply confirming receipt.

You may wish to review minutes from previous meetings of the Board at <http://www.necaveconservancy.org/minutes/> and the Northeastern Cave Conservancy Board Manual at <http://www.necaveconservancy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/NCC-Manual-2017-09.26.pdf>.

A summary of the election process and terms can be viewed at <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ss-IJ4LfCXbCuopMyMYE6h0kJcYIPcaEum-MxnSyDo/edit?usp=sharing>.

Norm Berg
NCC Nominating Committee Chair
nominating@necaveconservancy.org

Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC)
<http://www.necaveconservancy.org>



November 21, 2019 closing on the purchase of the Alan Traino Preserve (the NCC's tenth preserve) in Coeymans, Albany County, NY. Left to right are NCC attorney Maryanne McGovern-Kenyon, Bob Simmons, Zata Palange, John Palange, and the Palange's attorney Brendan Baynes. The preserve encompasses 1.89 acres and includes the entrances to Slingerland's Hellhole and George's Surprise caves.



Family and Friends of Alan Traino that could be present bid farewell on Saturday, October 24th at the NCC's Alan Traino Preserve. The group placed Alan's ashes on the preserve and at the cave entrance in a fitting farewell to Alan, who had a special affinity for this cave. Photo by Thom Engel.



Valerie Connors and Bob Simmons at the October 21, 2020 closing on the donation of the Salamander Cave Parcel in Kingston, NY to the NCC. This 8.2-acre property becomes the NCC's eleventh preserve and the first in Ulster County.



Cleanup on the Sellecks Karst Preserve. Photos on pages 10 and 11 by William Lawrence.

