

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, March 20th 10AM at the Gallupville House, in Gallupville, NY.

Notes from the December Board Meeting

- 1) Vince Kappler reports that volunteer value totals as of 12/9/2007 is 11,186 miles, 1100 hours of work with a total value of \$23K.
- 2) The Cave and Karst Acquisition Policy in the board manual has been updated. An addition has been made to the Research Policy and Procedure in the board manual.
- 3) Mark Seltzer was confirmed as chair of the Legal Committee. The board thanks Dan Werner for his years of work.
- 4) An ad hoc Merlin's Cave Committee has been formed, with Chuck Porter as the chairman.
- 5) A draft management plan for Merlin's Cave has been approved by the board.
- 6) The board has voted to enter into a contract to purchase Merlin's Cave and the surrounding 34 acres.
- 7) The board discussed the issue of boy scout group size and decided that they should follow their own rules—up to 12 people (including leaders) can be in a BSA group on one trip.

- 8) The NCC has agreed to be named a sponsor of the 2009 International Congress of Speleology field trip titled "Caving in New York: The NSS and NCC Preserves"
- 9) The education chair attended the "Thatcher Park Days" in October 2007 and demonstrated the karst groundwater hydrology model to many families, groups, and individuals.

In this issue

Notes from the December Meeting.....	Page 1
Notes from the WNS Meeting.....	Page 2
NCC Recent Activity	Page 2
WNS Cave Visitation Database.....	Page 3
Upcoming Events.....	Page 4
Early appearance of WNS in bats	Page 5

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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>		

Notes from the Special (WNS) Board Meeting

- 1) Youngbaer moved to spend up to \$70 from the President's budget to sponsor two students to go to the KWI banquet.
- 2) Al Hicks made a presentation on the White Nose Syndrome (WNS), and recommends cavers stay out of caves with bats, restrict caving trips outside the NE, and follow decontamination procedures for the time being. Emphasizes that much is unknown about WNS, but mortality rates for bats with the white nose appear to be very high.
- 3) Opinion of NCC science coordinator is presented—with the recommendation that the NCC closes all their caves until May 15th.
- 4) The board voted to close all NCC caves to all entry until the end of bat hibernation, May 15th 2008, pending further studies and recommendation from appropriate state and federal agencies.
- 5) The board voted to ask cavers to voluntarily restrict their caving to caves without bats until May 15th, 2008.

NCC Recent Activity *by Bob Addis*

White Nose Syndrome (WNS) has without a doubt leaped to the front of all of our attention and, with the Internet, the information (and misinformation) has spread worldwide. Answering inquiries and being interviewed has taken considerable amount of time from the EC, as well as organizing crews of volunteers to do the bat surveys with DEC. Sadly there are no conclusive results to all of the research so far and our cave management practices remain in limbo. Peter Youngbaer has been appointed by the NSS at their 3/15 meeting as liaison between the cavers and the various agencies involved. This makes sense since Peter has been heavily involved with the issue all long and he has the presence and experience to work with government. WNS has been confined to the Northeast at the time of this writing and Peter is a logical choice.

Mike Warner attended the 3/15 NSS Board meeting and gave several repetitions of the WNS

presentation that we should see at our 3/30 meeting. He is conferring with Peter in keeping the presentation up to date and available.

The Howes Cave Quarry has a permit renewal application into the DEC and its deadline is 4/3/08. On 3/10 I went to DEC's offices in Rotterdam (Schenectady) to view the permit application and photograph the proposed plans. It must be understood that as a renewal, the mining company (first Callanan and now Cobleskill Stone Products) has had an existing permit to mine a much larger area than seen at the quarry. This permit renewal has been rubberstamped by the DEC on 5-year intervals for many years, so the NCC or any public comment may not have much effect on what is permitted. We might as well understand and accept that Bartyes, Wolferts, Hells Wells, Dixie Pit and other karst features in the woods on the east side of Sagendorf Corners Road have long planned and permitted for mining.

The 2008 renewal application shows that they intent to mine there in the next 5 years (green area). I think that the so-called Life of the Mine permit which had been renewed several times allows quarrying a hole to the east of the Sagendorf Corners Rd. almost as big as the existing quarry and taking the above karst features as well as more to the east. Baugh Cave is not owned by the quarry and is excluded from the mining permit.

Finally, the 2008 Cave & Karst Conservancies Forum has been rumored to exist! The first two, 2004 and 2006 were held in Lewisburg, WV in the fall and individuals from WVCC are looking into another one for this year. It appears that the Texas bid fell through. There is plenty of sharable information to be gathered from this so I would encourage the NCC to support another event and send several attendees.

WNS Cave Visitation Database *by Michael Chu*

As most of you know, the NCC has been supporting the white nose syndrome effort by creating and maintaining a cave visitation database for the US Fish and Wildlife.

The list of caves generated by this database has helped the US F&W determine which caves outside of the Northeast may potentially be infected with WNS, and subsequently if cavers are transporting it or not.

To date (3/23/08), there have been 574 entries made by 68 people.

This is a good start, but when taking into consideration that 60% of the submitted data are for caves in the northeast (understandably so), the dataset for caves elsewhere in the country is still small enough to make F&W's decision on which caves to check with their limited resources a difficult one.

With a limited dataset, much of the data is spread out evenly over many caves, say 2 people per separate cave entry in state XYZ. Which cave would be considered most travelled by NE cavers? With more entries, it would be likely that certain caves would end up with many more trips than others, making those most worthwhile for them to check for WNS.

For this reason, if you meet the requirements (have been in Knox, Schoharie, Gage or Hailes since Jan 2007), they would still very much appreciate the submission of more trip data—especially for caves outside of the northeast US. http://www.necaveconservancy.org/add_wns_data.php

The form allows one the opportunity to enter a lot of data, but trips (cave name) and approximate dates are the two most important ones to this effort.

It will help speed up the determination whether cavers are contributing to the spread of this bat disease or not, and thus potentially open up caving in the northeast much sooner.

The state breakdown of the submitted data is as follows (with several entries having unlisted states):

- 348 – NY
- 48 – MA
- 39 – AL
- 36 – WV
- 27 – IN
- 16 – TN
- 9 – PA
- 8 – KY
- 7 – VA
- 7 – VT
- 4 – CT
- 3 – MD
- 3 – NJ
- 2 – HI
- 2 – FL
- 2 – MN
- 2 – SD
- 1 – Canada
- 1 – Mexico
- 1 – Belize

Thanks to all that contributed to this list.

Upcoming Events

March 29th, 6PM: Karst Waters Institute Annual award banquet.

<https://www.secure-access.net/~batgoods/KWI/>

April 26-27th: McFails Preserve (NSS) cleanup

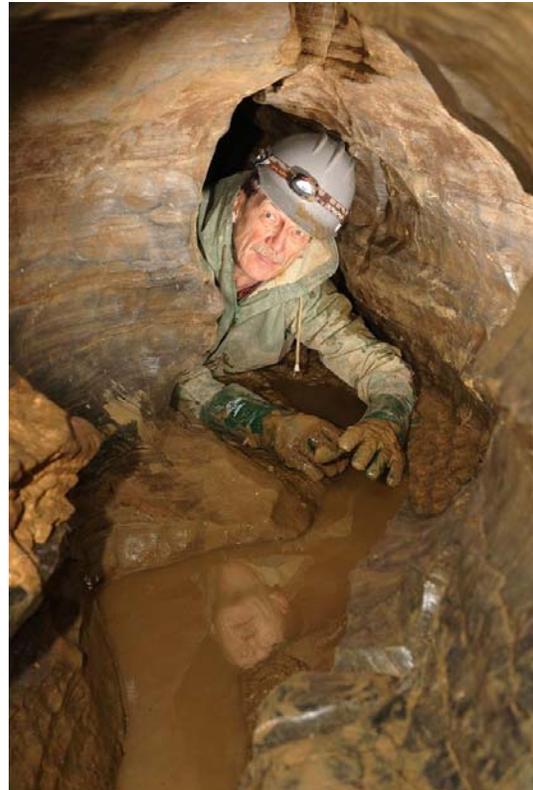
To include removal of old steel fencing wire around sinkholes, installation of new kiosk, and general maintenance. Rain date of May 3-4.

May 3 – 10: NCRC weeklong at Mentone, Alabama - 2008 Cave Rescue Operations & Management Seminars.

<http://www.caves.org/io/ncrc/2008Seminar/seminar2008.htm>

May 16-18, 2008: Spring NRO ??

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



Ben Guenther in Fat Man's Misery

Early Appearance of the White Nose Syndrome in NYS Bats

by Paul Rubin

Environmental Assessment: Early Appearance of the White Nose Syndrome in NYS Bats



White Nosed Bat



February 16, 2006 7:30 p.m. (Photo 331)

Bats in this photograph taken on February 16, 2006 are the first documented instance of bats in a New York State cave with the White Nose Syndrome. A significant reduction in the bat population occurred in the lower non-commercial section of Howe Caverns between the winter of 2005-2006 and the winter of 2006-2007. Numerous dead and dying bats were observed in February 2006 in both the cave and quarry adit by Guenther and Rubin. By March 2006, the population of living bats was severely impacted. Very few bats were present during the winter of 2006-2007, indicating that a massive die-off had occurred.

Source:
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2-28-08

Figure 1 of 2

Environmental Assessment: Early Appearance of the White Nose Syndrome in NYS Bats

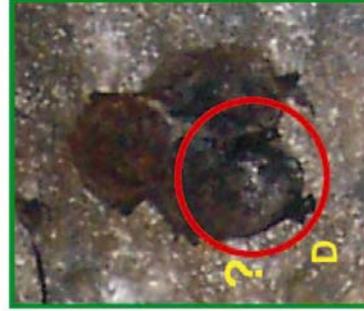


March 20, 2006 (Photo 1051)

A significant reduction in the bat population occurred in the lower non-commercial section of Howe Caverns between the winter of 2005-2006 and the winter of 2006-2007. Numerous dead and dying bats were observed in February 2006 in both the cave and quarry adit by Guenther and Rubin. By March 2006, the population of living bats was severely impacted. Very few bats were present during the winter of 2006-2007. The white-nosed bat in the upper photograph, and possibly a few others in the lower photograph, are among the first documented white nosed bats in New York State.



White-Nosed Bat



February 16, 2006 (Photo 332)

Source:
 Paul A. Rubin
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Figure 2 of 2 2-28-08