

# 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 3rd, 10:00AM at  
Kerhonkson, NY

7. Ingalls reports that a leader training session took place on August 4th for Merlins Cave, and that 6 cavers participated in it.

## Notes from September 9th, 2012 Board Meeting

1. Kappler reports Volunteer Value totals to date are 792 hours and 5455 miles driven, for a total value of \$25,438.
2. Engel reports that a total of 130 permits have been issued to date in 2012 for NCC preserves.
3. NCC to sponsor Northeast Bat Working Group meeting to be held in Albany on Jan 9-11th.
4. Board discussed tweaking the science policy procedure to make it more accomodating to both lower and higher level science projects.
5. The board is looking for people to fill the following positions
  - Acquisitions Chair
  - Fundraising Chair
  - Legal Chair
6. All management plans will be modified to contain a new section title "Research Rules", to establish minimum criteria for reserach.

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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), \$100 (Institutional), and \$300 Lifetime. 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;"><a href="http://www.necaveconservancy.org">www.necaveconservancy.org</a></p>		

## NCC Recent Activity *by Bob Addis*

1) During the NSS Convention in the last week of June, NCC Charter Member Aaron Jarvis of Parkersburg, WV suggested that the NCC do a fund raiser for the new NMS Office. He thought that since it was the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the establishment of the world’s record for stalagmite sitting in the Lost World Caverns near Lewisburg by Bob Addis, we should offer to take photos of cavers and regular tourists with the World’s Champion. Peter Jones of Camden, ME and a noted cave photographer donated his time and equipment and \$205 was raised in one evening.

This addresses more the aspect of having fun with your friends underground than raising large sums of money. The evening was highlighted with the arrival of Bob Liebman, the 1971 assistant to the event and of Cliff Forman, the leasee of Lost World Caverns, Inc. at the time. Photos taken, history made. The NCC booth was on exhibit during the week.

2) Roger Dinsmore, early explorer of Knox Cave. Over the past four years a few NCC members have kept up an email conversation with the daughter of Roger Dinsmore, one of the three 1950’s explorers credited with major discoveries beyond the Gunbarrel in Knox Cave. They were Dinsmore for the Pit Room, Mitchnier for the Alabaster Room, and Negley for the alleged Football Room. None of us current NCC “old timers” knew this early crowd who represented a previous generation of cavers so it was a great pleasure to finally meet Roger, view his amazing caving scrapbook and pick his brain.

Unfortunately Roger passed away in early August at the age of 92. NCC members attending his wake and funeral and were warmly greeted as “family” for that special part of Roger’s life – caving. A greater tribute came on August 19 at the Re-Dedication of the Knox Cave Room at the Knox Museum when several of Roger’s relatives were present to witness his presence becoming part of the Knox Cave Room. Later several relatives joined NCC members for their first tour of Knox Cave. They were all deeply appreciative for the cave trip and gained further insight into why Roger always spoke so passionately about caving. The NCC gained two new members and from the follow-up emails we will be seeing more of them.

If you will recall that the NCC was incorporated in 1978 to accept Knox Cave as its first acquisition, you will see the historical importance of this link with the Dinsmore Family. As well, it indicates more community involvement, a good thing.

Preceding the October Barn Dance, the NCC made arrangements to have the Knox Cave Room open and record numbers of visitors came then, including Roger's daughter and son in law. Bonnie and Bill later attended the Barn Dance and said that they had a good time.

3) An OTR Activity. Besides manning the NCC Booth on Vendor's Row this year, once again our Ideas Man, Aaron Jarvis suggested that we take a break and visit Stratosphere Balloon Cave on the show caves ground of Seneca Caverns. Aaron suggested that I call ahead for a group discount and as I was talking to Russell Andrews, the General Manager he wanted us as a cave conservancy to come over and analyze his new cave guides' training program. Offering lunch and a free tour of Stratosphere, we accepted. Russell ran a power point during lunch and frankly we were all quite impressed with the guides' training program and told him so. It had been prepared by a consultant and it contained adequate amounts of science specific to the two caves, conservation messages including WNS updates, first aid responses, and handling a group in an emergency, to name a few topics.

Russell and two guides then took us into Stratosphere Cave, so-named because of a large formation resembling a balloon. This cave was commercialized in the 1930's but closed for decades due to the dangerous nature of rotting wooden staircases and platforms. More recently Seneca Caverns has been removing the old stairs and substituting rope handrails for the continual steep descent/ascent. It never had electric lighting and today it's a semi-wild tour using their helmets, lights and gloves. For more money they offer a wilder tour featuring crawling and climbing ladders. We had a good time on the semi-wild tour and made some good friends there.

## **Volunteer Value: An NCC Success Story** *by Vince Kappler*

2006 was our first year of tracking Volunteer Value (VV) which is the monetary value of volunteer work performed for the benefit of the conservancy. We documented 20,862 miles of driving and 1390 hours of actual work supporting the conservancy for a total value of \$29,955.00. The NCC is now completing its seventh year of recording VV. Since the start the hours reported have remained somewhat consistent at an average of 1,223 while the miles members drove to perform the work has varied wildly yet averages over 12,000 per year. The per hour rate of work has gradually risen with inflation but is kept below the VV dollar rate of \$27.32 for New York State as determined by independent research agencies. We should close out 2012 with a VV of more than \$40,000 for a grand total of more than a quarter million dollars of benefit dedicated to karst conservation efforts since 2006. I'm sure there are some members who have not yet submitted data on the volunteer work they've done for the NCC. It is not too late and it is very easy: for large group activities be sure you sign in with the project manager; in the case of individual effort, you can report your time, miles and out of pocket expenses on this form

[http://www.necaveconservancy.org/add\\_vv.php](http://www.necaveconservancy.org/add_vv.php) . Or, if you are involved in a long term, reoccurring project (mapping, repeated trail maintenance, or committee work) just keep a log of date and times and send the information to me.

The NCC generally follows the guidelines for calculating VV that are published in Appendix AN of the *Board of Governors Manual*, <https://secure.caves.org/nss-business/bog/Append-AN.pdf> . The current rate for working on NCC projects is \$25 per hour. The value for the miles driven to work on a project is the same as the IRS business rate used for tax purposes. (The IRS Standard Mileage Rate for 2012 is 55.5 cents but that is not the rate an individual can claim as a charitable deduction for income tax purposes.) Any volunteer effort performed by an NCC member to further the conservancy's goals is eligible VV and should be documented. Preserve maintenance and sink hole cleanouts are high visibility activities but the more mundane chores that many routinely do to support the NCC are equally important. We would not have been able to raise the funds necessary to purchase our caves or we wouldn't enjoy the respect and support

of many local and regional governmental agencies without the work of many individuals and committees. Attending a town meeting to discuss our plan for a property, maintaining a membership database, preparing agendas and minutes for board meetings are all activities that support the organization and are eligible to be counted in VV. These and many similar volunteer projects are memorialized in the VV database but I am sure that more members are doing great things for the NCC that go unreported. Did you lead a beginner trip, did you help out at an orientation to cave rescue event held for first responders, did you man the NCC booth at a town event or convention, or assist on a NY DEP bat count in a cave or obscure mine somewhere in the NE? All of these activities benefit the NCC either directly or indirectly and should be counted as VV.

Reporting and recording the contributions of NCC volunteers creates the documentation that proves cavers are dedicated to the protection of fragile environments. When a member makes a presentation to a local authority and can emphatically state that a dedicated core of conservancy members have contributed “X” number of hours and had driven “Y” number of miles to support the mission of the organization, we are seen as more than a loosely knit band of individuals interested in caves. We are proving that as an organization we are a good neighbor and provide a benefit to the community. VV can also be used as our “in kind” contribution when competing for financial grants offered by larger not-for-profits and governmental agencies. And lastly, VV is a measure of the viability of the organization and an indicator that our members support the NCC Mission Statement because they are willing to contribute their talent, time and personal resources to ensure the conservancy’s success and continued growth.

### **Surveying Merlin’s Cave** *by John Dunham*

When I volunteered to work on this project over the summer, I fully expected it to take more than just the summer to complete. My own busy schedule combined with those of many others conspired to make available days few and far between. Surprisingly, we were able to complete it by the bat hibernation closure date of October 1st. We managed seven survey trips—two in June, one each in July and August, and three in September. This was done in large part to the generous efforts of Joanne Beliveau, Chuck Porter, and Joe Armstrong, who have my

enduring appreciation for coming out to multiple survey trips, as well as Mike Chu, Morgan Ingalls, Jacob Morris-Siegel, Aaron Tester, and Sarah Sung, who all helped out on various efforts. It was doubly difficult because the day that I could reliably be there was Monday, when few people are available, and the one attempt at a weekend survey day had no attendees and had to be canceled. At the end of the summer, though, we had surveyed 2008.4ft of passage to a depth of 141.5ft below the entrance, establishing Merlin’s as one of the longest marble caves in the northeast.

The survey itself presented a number of interesting challenges. One of the most obvious was the passage character—vertically oriented, twisting and winding passages, often partially blocked by breakdown, made shots particularly difficult. A combination of short turns, climbs, drops, crawlways, and junctions meant average shots of less than 15ft, with only three shots above 40ft in the entire cave, the longest at 52.9ft.

Short shots present their own accuracy challenges, but the cave also contains significant deposits of iron carbonate. We learned through trial and error that these mainly occur in the dolomite boudins that are ever-present in Stockbridge marble, and that in some areas the deflection was greater than 35 degrees. Backsights on every shot were a necessity not just for accuracy, but also to find and avoid these anomalies. The most challenging part of the cave was the Fortress Canyon and Ironclad Room, in which rust-colored iron latticework protrudes from the walls on all sides. Fortunately, this section of the cave is a “dead end” in the survey sense, and so we didn’t have to worry about any small errors there skewing the rest of the passages.

A challenge for me as a sketcher was getting all of the passage details without spending forever on each shot. With passages much higher than they are wide, there tended to be multiple levels of overlapping detail that needed to be sketched, including ledges, speleothems, and breakdown. This is where the art of sketching came into play—I chose to represent the passage character and primary features with as much detail as possible, without becoming unreadable. Often I focused on the details of the travel area, leaving small overhangs or ledges far above head-height off rather than letting them clutter and confuse the map.

A further challenge was keeping the book clean enough to be read when I got home—the lower levels of the cave contain deposits of intractable mud and

slime that mercilessly adhere to gear, hands, lights, faces, etc. I did find that using a pelican case made for a tablet PC, I could easily set the book down inside a clean spot, sketch the passage, and then protect everything for travel without having to constantly fuss with plastic bags or taking things in and out of packs.

Drafting again represented challenges, though fewer than I had expected. My goals were to make a map both practical and artistic, containing a density of information that could be used or ignored depending on the reader's intentions. I dislike the hanging nature of many offsets on cave maps, and was glad that the tilted nature of the joints meant only three places where passage overlap required them. I also used a combination of (I hope) understated colors for things like water and mud to help keep the map even more readable.

The final map was completed in late Dec 2012, but is too large to print easily in a small medium. A split version with the plan view separated from the profile and cross-sections is included with this article. (Ed. note: maps are found at the end of the newsletter).

**(An excerpt from) CAVE SURVEY  
PROJECTS  
by JoAnne Beliveau**

***(From Nov-Dec2012 NNJG Speleothems,  
reprinted with permission)***

MERLIN'S CAVE SURVEY

In 2012, another survey opportunity was posted at the Spring NRO. John Dunham, Vermont Cavers Association member, asked for help in mapping the Northeastern Cave Conservancy's newest acquisition...Merlin's Cave. I jumped at the chance to try another project. It was not known at that time exactly how long the project would take...that depended on how many teams would show up to survey. That was the first sign of trouble in my mind. Hopefully it would not have to be abandoned as the Surprise CaveSurvey due to lack of help.

I had previously volunteered three separate days for the Northeastern Cave Conservancy's call for help to clear a trail through the woods to the cave entrance, as well as an off road area for parking six cars. I also helped NCC board members place and cement the posts for the kiosk/changing area adjacent to the

parking lot. These were long work days in preparation to have cavers have a good parking area and a nice hike up to the cave. I never had the opportunity to visit Merlin's since it's discovery, so I was looking forward to getting inside a new, New York marble cave.

Since this article is being written after the survey was completed, I'll just give this report based on my feelings of this experience. Being totally unfamiliar with Merlin's Cave, I thought of it as an adventure. The project took seven full days to complete. I missed two out of the seven days...one because I had fractured my wrist when I fell while doing another type of survey, and another day because I was on vacation in Spain and France. (A future story will be on visiting caves in the Pyrenees)

I knew I wanted to commit to completing this project...one more check off on my bucket list! I missed carpooling and having company to talk with on these treks. The roundtrip drive alone took six and a half hours. No one else from my grotto had shown any interest nor could they make the work trips that were scheduled for Mondays.

The time in the cave surveying took anywhere from 5 to 8 hours, depending on our stamina that day. The mindset for surveying is really different than a normal visit to a cave. You actually look for every nook and cranny, and possible continuation of passage within the cave. I learned to do the book, work both ends of the tape, and read the instruments a lot better than on my previous survey experiences. Keeping all this gear clean and dry was a challenge. I needed expedition weight long underwear, a full wet suit and cave coveralls just to stay warm. We needed to bring webbing for an etrier, a harness with lobster claws for the traverse, a cable ladder, more webbing and rope, along with the standard cave pack necessities. Our in cave packs were really heavy and helping each other in passing the packs along in tight or exposed areas was welcomed.

We traversed though passages that were quite varied: tight belly crawls, wet, muddy, exposed drops offs, water falls, questionable stability, nicely decorated, walking passages, fragile formations, and ending up in extreme slime with good prospects for a future digging project!

Many thanks to John Dunham, who was an excellent project leader. He was considerate of the teams needs as well as a cave master motivator. He encouraged us to continue when possible, as well as call it quits when we were fatigued. John was the sketcher and

wanted an accurate map of Merlin's, so we had to repeat many measurements and back sights were a necessity. I had the pleasure of surveying along with Joe Armstrong, Morgan Ingalls, Chuck Porter, and Aaron Tester. (I missed 2 work days in which Michael Chu, Jacob Morris-Siegal, and Sarah Sung, also helped to survey)

I'm really looking forward to seeing the final map of Merlin's Cave and very happy to have been a part of this project. I would recommend a caver to give this type of project a try....You'll know after only one day if you love cave surveying!

## Upcoming Events

**May 17-19:** Spring NRO, location TBA

**July 6-13:** NCRC Weeklong Cave Rescue Operations and Mangement Seminar, Schoharie NY.

**August 5-9:** 2013 NSS Convention, Shippensburg, PA.



Aaron Tester, Joanne Beliveau, and John Dunham gather around station M7, the last station and the cave's deepest point

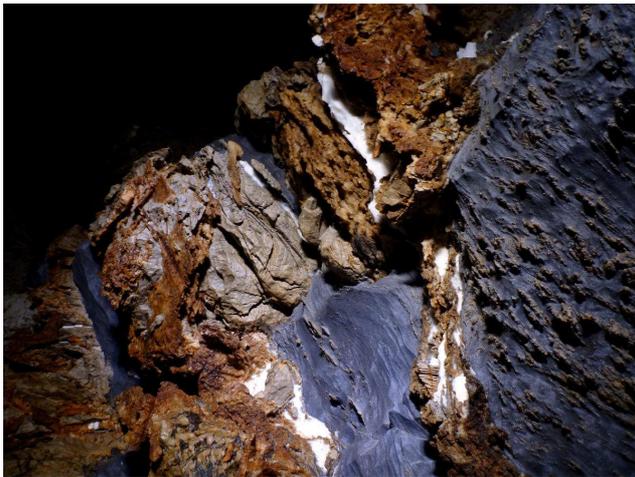
**Merlin's Cave Map and Additional Photos**  
*by John Dunham*



Sarah Sung at station J11, which was magnetic



Jacob Morris-siegel points at Station N1 in the Bat Canyon slime pit



Iron carbonate lattices in the Ironclad Room

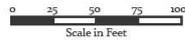


Aaron Tester descends the Slime Climb

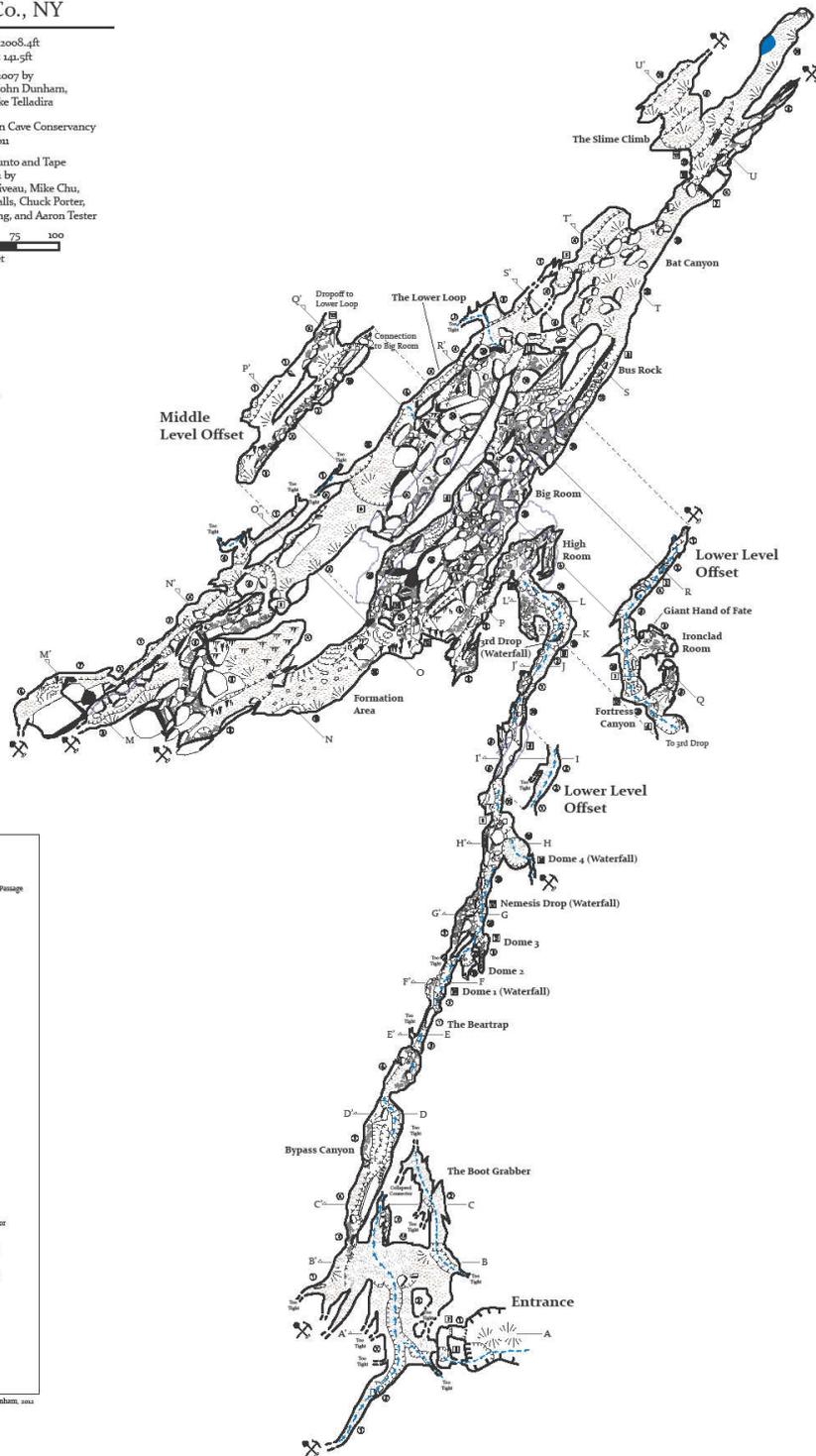
# Merlin's Cave

Columbia Co., NY

Surveyed Length: 2008.4ft  
 Surveyed Depth: 141.5ft  
 Discovered Fall 2007 by  
 Larry Botto, Bob Dion, John Dunham,  
 Clint Matter, and Mike Telladine  
 Purchased by the Northeastern Cave Conservancy  
 in August 2011  
 Grade 5 survey with Suunto and Tape  
 Summer 2012 by  
 Joe Armstrong, Joanne Beliveau, Mike Chiu,  
 John Dunham, Morgan Ingalls, Chuck Porter,  
 Jacob Morris-Siegel, Sarah Sung, and Aaron Tester



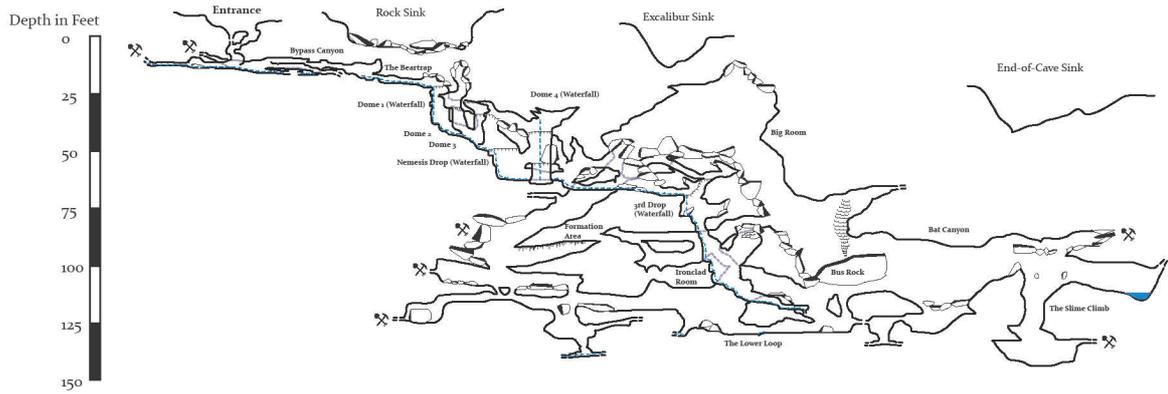
## Plan View



- Passage Walls
- Offset or Underlying Passage
- Floor Ledge
- Ceiling Ledge
- Breakdown
- Slope
- Flowstone
- Soda Straw
- Stalactites
- P popcorn
- Helictites
- Water Flow
- Gravel Floor
- Mud Floor
- Small Breakdown Floor
- Ceiling Height (feet)
- Dropoff Depth (feet)
- Dig Site
- Dolomitic Marble
- Caliche Marble
- Schist

Map and all photos copyright John Dunham, 2012

### Profile View Facing Northwest



### Crosssections

