

# 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

Saturday, June 19th, 2004, 2:00PM  
at the Schoharie Cabin, Schoharie, NY  
Potluck BBQ to follow

## Notes from the Board Last Meeting

- 1) The last NCC board meeting was held on 3/27/2004 at the Cave House in Cobleskill, NY.
- 2) The board approved the Research Policy proposed by Science Coordinator, Larry Davis
- 3) Bob Addis continues to negotiate for Ella Armstrong Cave
- 4) Marie Christiano is working on grants for Clarksville
- 5) The board voted to accept donation of the Gregory Entrance of Clarksville from Albany County
- 6) There was considerable discussion on conservation easements on NCC properties.

## Notes from the Last Executive Committee Meeting

- 1) There was much discussion on fundraising for Clarksville.
- 2) Discussion of preparations for the spring NRO
- 3) Ella Armstrong – Owner may be willing to sell only area around the cave.
- 4) Paul Murphy has volunteered for the Finance and Investments committee.
- 5) NCC email addresses for the four officers will be obtained.
- 6) Bill Folsom is working on registering the NCC as a foreign corporation in Vermont

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Deadline for next issue – 7/31/2004

### Earth Day Happenings

The NCC participated in a couple of Earth Day events. The first was at Howe Caverns on April 24th. The day turned out to be a very nice and there were many visitors. On April 25th the NCC had a booth setup in Troy at the River Front Park- unfortunately the rain drove us away but we were able to hold the Executive Board meeting at the Porter's house. We made contact with the Rensselaer County Land Conservancy. They have a conservation easement on the land surrounding Bear's Den Cave, and stated that Bentleys Cave is on private land in Rensselaer County.

Thanks to everyone that helped: Paul Murphy, Al Lehmann, Emily Davis, Thom Engel, Bob Addis, Christa Hay, Bill Folsom, Robin Strashun, Joe Levinson, Craig Cantello and Chuck and Connie Porter.

### NCC Success at Spring NRO *by Christa Hay*

This year the Vermont Cavers Association hosted the Spring NRO. It was held in Arlington, Vermont at Camping on the Battenkill Campground. Even though it rained some Saturday night there was about 124 people in attendance. The NCC hosted the dinner, which went very smoothly. We sold a total of 93 out of 100 meals for a profit of \$561.12. Donations towards the meal came from Vince Kappler, Chuck Porter, Robin Strashun, Emily Davis and myself. We also had some paper product supplies left over from previous events that were put to good use.

The auction was a great success with a profit of \$1705.00! It was a lively auction even though it was pouring rain a few times. Bob Addis was in his element as the auctioneer trying to get people to part with their money and bid on items. Thanks to all that donated items. The 50/50 total was \$127.00 and the lucky winner was Chuck Porter and he turned around and donated he winnings of \$63.50 right back to the NCC – thanks Chuck! There were also several donations. The office report will have the final numbers.

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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;"><a href="http://www.caves.org/conservancy/ncc/">www.caves.org/conservancy/ncc/</a></p>		

A motion was made and passed by the Grottos for a \$1,000.00 donation to the NCC Clarksville Cave Purchase to come from the NRO Treasury subject to the approval of all 3 NRO Officers. This 3-person approval was made a part of the motion since only Chairman Ken Nichols was present and he felt that the NRO Officers should be in agreement. Thus the NCC should see an additional \$1,000.00 from the weekend.

Thanks to everyone that helped to make this NRO such a success for the NCC and the Clarksville Cave purchase. Here is a list of helpers and I hope I did not miss anyone: Robin Strashun, Bill Folsom, Christa Hay, Bob Addis, Emily Davis, Mike Warner, Tom Rider, Joe Levinson, Marie Christiano, Alan Tranio, Chuck Porter, Steve McLuckie, Art Portmore, and the helpers for the 50/50 ticket sales.

### **Subdivision Near Bensons Cave**

*by Bob Addis*

The following is a letter sent to the town of Cobleskill Planning Board regarding a proposed subdivision near Bensons Cave, which is owned by the US Cave Conservancy. The Planning Board assured us that any development of the subdivided parcels would receive close scrutiny.

Jim Harbison, Esq, a principal of the United States Cave Conservancy, called me on 5/10 and asked if I would look into and/or attend this subdivision hearing on 5/12 on their behalf. The NCC and the USCC are like-minded organizations doing many of the same things, and Jim thought that we were closer to the situation and more knowledgeable of local conditions. Therefore, I have asked a Trustee of the NCC, Al Lehmann, to speak to the Planning Board.

After a VERY ROUGH INVESTIGATION of the notice, I offer the following comments:

1. It would not appear that the Northeastern Cave Conservancy nor the United States Cave Conservancy should voice any objections to the proposed subdivision.
2. We do, however, express concern over future development on any or all of the parcels, although I understand that this may not be addressed at this meeting. We have vast amount of scientific evidence - geological and hydrological studies - that all three parcels have a direct and speedy connection to the water aquifer of the area, including the lands and caves owned by the United States Cave Conservancy. It would be a serious shortcoming to permit future development, even a single family residence, in the so-called "regular" permitting fashion. THE TOWN OF COBLESKILL MUST ADAPT REGULATIONS SUITABLE TO A KARST REGION IF THEY DON'T ALREADY HAVE THEM. This may on be as difficult as it sounds since several sources of knowledge are available at little or no cost.
3. Karst is an area, typically limestone, that shows the features of caves such as sinkholes, sinking or rising streams, and caves them selves. Much of Schoharie and Albany Counties exhibit this. The Town of Schoharie and the Town of Knox (Albany Co.) both have dealt with development in karstlands, and I venture would share with the T/Cobleskill. As well, the NCC would lend assistance on a pro bono professional basis because this is part of our mission statement.
4. Several areas could be impacted by hasty or improper development on these parcels.
  - a. Although downstream, the tourist attraction, Secret Caverns is nearby.
  - b. Howe Caverns and its multi-million dollar tourist trade.
  - c. The Howes Cave Quarry and all related businesses - The Cave house Museum, Cobleskill Stone Products, Glens Falls Cement Works, Callahan Industries, the Pepsi distributing company, Schoharie County Humane Society, and others I have failed to mention.

d. Several family residences south of Caverns Road down to NYS Rt. 7, including much of the village of Howes Cave.

All of these residences and businesses depend on a water supply that runs through and under the proposed subdivision, so our concerns are apparent.

Thank you for your attention, and we remain ready to assist in any manner possible.

### **The First National Cave Conservancies Forum, Lewisburg, WV, April 15-17, 2004**

*by Bob Addis*

Held in a beautiful setting at the right time of year, this first ever event was attended by 45-50 serious cave managers from a wide area of the US. It was the brain child of Jeff Brey of the West Virginia Cave Conservancy and Mike Warner of the Northeastern Cave Conservancy. Indications from its success is that it will become an event every two years, and judging for the quality and quantity of information exchanged, it will be anticipated in the future. Mike and Jeff are quick to point out that this forum was NOT intended to compete with the National Cave & Karst Management Symposium, but rather to serve the needs of hands on type managers. (Sidebar: Mike Warner is heading up the NCC's sponsorship of the Fall 2005 NCKMS in Albany, NY.)

We had reasonably priced accommodations, great round table discussions each evening on any topic interesting us, and quick field trip to Lost World Caverns, and other field trips which unfortunately I didn't have time enough to attend. Besides the NCC and WVCC, attendees included Bubble Cave, LLC; The Karst Conservancy; CC of Hawaii; VA Karstlands; Ozark Underground; The Nature Conservancy; Indiana KC; Michigan KC; CC of VA; Mid-Atlantic KC; Carroll CC; Western CC; CC Foundation; NJCC; Butler CC; Bluegrass KC; Karst Waters Institute, and the NSS - Impressive!

By listing papers given, I think that you will see the diversity of subjects discussed, and I hope that you will be interested in attending in 2006.

1. Intro of Conservancies. Cave Stewardship, Pat Seizer.
2. Fund Raising, Jeff Brey.
3. The Whys & Hows of Management Plans, Thom Engel.
4. Insurance: Who Needs It?, Bob Addis
5. Creative Partnerships for Karst Protection, Kriste Lindberg, IKC.
6. Managed Access to Conservancy Caves & Lands, Emily Davis.
7. Managing & Protecting Biological Resources, David Culver.
8. Conservation Easements, Beth Wheatley, TNC.
9. The Land Trust Alliance Perspective, Rane Curl, MKC.
10. Delineating Recharge Areas for Critical Caves, Tom Aley, Ozark Underground.
11. How to Obtain an NSS Grant to Help Purchase Cave or Karst Land, Phil Moss.
12. Deferred Giving for Conservation, Ted Kayes.
13. The John Guilday Preserve, Fred Grady.
14. Restoration Conservation Practices of the Carroll Cave System, Edgar Simmons, MO.
15. Searching for Bits of History, Bob Handley.
16. Meeting of the NSS Cave Conservancies Committee, John Wilson.

You'll be hearing more about the information that we gathered as time goes along, but it's easy to see that good ideas were exchanged.

### **Northeastern Cave Conservancy to Buy Clarksville Cave**

*by Chuck Porter*

*(Reprinted from the NSS News)*

Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc. (NCC) has signed an agreement to purchase Clarksville Cave, a popular horizontal cave in Albany County, NY. With about 4800 feet of passage and three entrances, Clarksville is surely the best-known and most-visited wild cave in the Northeast. Schools, church and social groups, summer camps, college outing clubs, geology classes, families, novice and experienced cavers

all have enjoyed caving here for at least two centuries. Local grottos conduct occasional cleanups, and the annual flooding also helps wash away the effects of the thousands of visitors.

Originally two separate caves, the Ward and Gregory sections were joined by a short dig in 1963. The Thook entrance was connected in 1980. In the late 1980s, John Schweyen and Jim Brown dove the siphon beyond the Lake Room and after 200 feet surfaced in 1000 feet of passage ending in breakdown. This is heading toward passage beyond sumps in a nearby presently-closed cave. In February 2001 several cavers cleared away underwater debris in the Lake Room floor in preparation for dive trips through the sump. Rob Svensson (NSS 46971) then popped in with a pony bottle for a quick look, became disoriented, stuck, and drowned. But most other incidents at Clarksville Cave have had happier endings, after rescuers escorted out spelunkers whose flashlights had failed, etc. Clarksville Cave is developed along a thrust fault in the Onondaga Limestone and a stream runs through most of its length. Side passages and upper levels afford numerous opportunities to stay dry and many of the stream sections are only ankle-deep. But during high water the cave can become extremely sporting. Passage sizes range from tight crawls to 1000-foot-long Perry Avenue, a phreatic tube typically 10 feet high and 20 feet wide (see photo). In warm weather a popular exit is through Brinleys Sump, which often has six inches of air space and is close to the Gregory entrance. Also on the NCC property is the Ladder Dig, 300 feet of decorated crawls found after digging down over 20 feet in a surface fissure. It's near Perry Avenue but separated from it by flowstone blockages and clay fill.

The access policy will basically be park-and-go-caving. NCC members expect to volunteer as weekend stewards for the warmer months of the first year, informing groups about the NCC and its mission, safe caving techniques, cave conservation, etc. Solo cavers and groups over 15 will not be permitted, and camps and cave-for-pay groups must provide liability coverage. A detailed management plan has been adopted

but will undoubtedly change with on-site experience.

The Clarksville property consists of about 11 acres containing the Ward entrance and the Ladder Dig. A 50-foot-wide deeded access strip zigzags from the road through a sand quarry parking area and back to the wooded karst section. The purchase price is \$50,000 and a survey and closing costs will bring the total to around \$57,000. The surveyors have completed most of the field work and expect to draft the subdivision map by mid-January. Closing may have occurred by the time you read this, so your donations are needed right away! Negotiations are also underway with Albany County, which owns the small parcel containing the Gregory entrance, and we expect to reach an agreement for continued use of the Thook entrance.

As of April 20th, donations and pledges totaling \$21,304 had been received for Clarksville Cave, as well as a \$2,200 grant from the National Speleological Foundation. In addition, \$3,380 has come in via the Pete Johnson Fund. Pete, NSS 8475, died of cancer last fall and enjoyed many caving trips, including his last, to Clarksville Cave. So funds totaling \$27,109 have been received or pledged. We need your help to raise the remainder, almost \$30,000!

Think back to your very first wild caving trip. How much was that trip worth to you, now that you've become a caver? Many, many dollars, if you can put a price on an experience which changes your life. Clarksville Cave is the first wild cave experience for thousands of people, and lots of them become cavers. So help us keep Clarksville Cave open and accessible to all, as it has been for generations. Please send your tax-deductible contributions to:

Northeastern Cave Conservancy, Inc.  
Box 254  
Schoharie, NY 12157  
or donate online at  
<http://www.caves.org/conservancy/ncc> via  
Paypal or credit card.

Write 'PJ Fund' on the memo line if you'd like to honor Pete.

## Upcoming Events

Saturday, June 19th, 2004, 2:00PM  
at the Schoharie Cabin, Schoharie, NY

June 19-26, 2004: NCRC 2004 Cave Rescue  
Operations and Management Seminar, at  
Corydon Indiana.

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July 12-16, 2004: NSS Convention in  
Marquette, Michigan.



Passage in Onesquethaw Cave  
Photo by Mike Chu



Ken looking through the Gunsight at Knox Cave  
Photo by Mike Chu

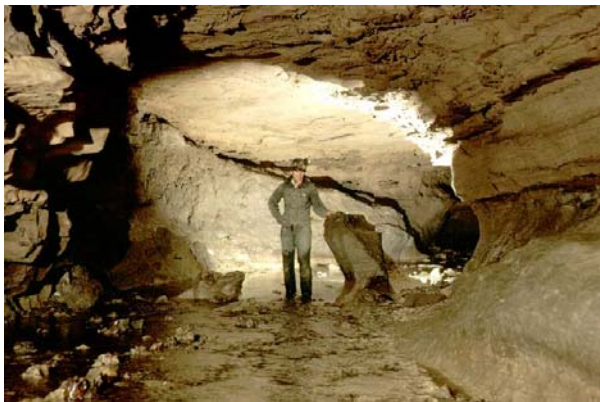


Photo by Art Palmer 12/1/1968 taken with a Leica M2  
50-mm lens, with tripod. Art set off 1 M5b bulb and  
Peg set off another by remote cable. Film was the old  
Kodachrome-X (now upgraded to K64). Peggy Palmer  
pictured.