



Annual Report

2022-2023

To protect and manage the unique and endangered natural communities and species of the Albany Pine Bush, for ecological benefits and controlled and appropriate public recreational and educational use.

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Photo by Nurali Virani

Dear friends,

It's been another great year! Please enjoy this annual report highlighting the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission's accomplishments over the last 12 months. From April 1, 2022 through March 31, 2023, we showcase for you how we've been protecting and managing the Globally Rare, Nationally Significant and Locally Distinct Albany Pine Bush Preserve in addition to offering family and school programs at the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center.

The 3,400-acre Albany Pine Bush Preserve is located in New York's Capital District and protects one of the best remaining inland pitch-pine scrub oak barrens in the world. This is an extraordinary fire-dependent ecosystem that provides habitat for many plants and animals, which includes more than 20 percent of the New York State-designated wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need, such as the endangered Karner blue butterfly. The preserve is the largest open space area in the Capital District and has the distinction of being a National Natural Landmark, National Recreation Trail Site, Maurice D. Hinchey Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Site, a New York State Unique Area, Bird Conservation Area, NYS Birding Trail and a National Audubon Society Important Bird Area.

Characterized by rolling sand dunes and over 20 miles of trails, the preserve offers visitors many recreational opportunities including hiking, bird watching, cross-country skiing, horseback riding, mountain biking, hunting, fishing, and paddling. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is a public-private partnership created by the New York State Legislature in 1988 to protect and manage the preserve and provide the public with educational and recreational opportunities.

As the gateway or "front door" to the Pine Bush, the Discovery Center is a gold LEED-certified interpretive center where visitors come to understand why the Pine Bush is rare and special. A visit to this unique destination is an exciting exploration where learning comes naturally through interactive exhibits, an outdoor Discovery Trail, and numerous programs through all four seasons on ecology, natural history, cultural history, and natural resource management.

With the pandemic thankfully starting to wind down, we fully resumed family and school opportunities and general visitation at the Discovery Center. We hosted most of our programs in-person with schools as well as science lectures, educational activities, and webinars. The preserve and trail system continued its notable increase in usage, being a major draw for tens of thousands of new and regular visitors enjoying this essential open space resource in our region.

Throughout the seasons, we have many opportunities for you to get involved! Visit our website at AlbanyPineBush.org to donate to the Friends of the Pine Bush Community. You can also find details on our family programs like an owl prowl, terrific turkeys or cunning coyotes or test your camera skills and submit your Pine Bush images to our annual photo exhibit. Consider trying out our volunteer offerings as a Discovery Center docent, community scientist or as a preserve naturalist, and also sign up for our e-newsletter and follow us on social media, including Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. We look forward to you joining us to protect, manage and discover the Albany Pine Bush!

Sincerely,


Anthony Luisi
Board Chair

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Director, Region 4



Christopher A. Hawver
Executive Director

Albany Pine Bush
Preserve Commission



Background and Mission

Photo by Elizabeth Anderson

What is the Commission and what does it do?

Established by the New York State Legislature in 1988, the Commission is a unique public-private partnership that works with willing landowners and a number of municipal, state, federal and private partners to assure the protection, restoration and management of the natural and cultural resources of the Albany Pine Bush.

In advancing its mission to protect and manage the Albany Pine Bush for ecological, recreational and education benefits, the Commission believes in a balanced approach that takes into account the positions and recommendations of its members as well as input from property owners, interest groups and the general public. It has no regulatory authority.

Where is the Albany Pine Bush, and what does it contain?

The Pine Bush contains remnants of ice age sand plains that were part of a vast river delta at the edge of Glacial Lake Albany. The Pine Bush spans parts of the cities of Albany and Schenectady and the Towns of Colonie and Guilderland and supports

the best worldwide example of an inland pitch pine-scrub oak barrens—a unique ecosystem—and more than 20 percent of New York State's wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve consists of 3,400 acres of lands protected within the Pine Bush and managed by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission.

How does the Commission protect and manage a viable Preserve?

Protects land: The Commission works with willing landowners to acquire or otherwise protect priority lands within Pine Bush Protection Areas with a goal of building a truly viable preserve of approximately 5,380 acres.

Manages land: The Commission uses prescribed fire, as well as mechanical and chemical treatments to reduce wildfire risk and restore ecological communities, wildlife habitat, and control invasive species.

Reviews proposed development projects: The Commission does not have the ability to approve or deny development projects, but does advise

Commission member agencies on how a project (in the study area) may affect the creation and management of a viable preserve. The Commission also provides recommendations on how potentially negative impacts may be minimized or avoided altogether.

Offers educational programing: The Discovery Center provides visitors with interactive exhibits and activities, and is an invaluable tool for schools, colleges, scouts and other groups. Through hands-on discovery-based learning, staff and volunteers help visitors learn about the unique characteristics of the Pine Bush and nurture a sense of stewardship for the preserve.

The Board of Directors

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission is established in the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and consists of eleven voting members: the Commissioner of NYSDEC; the Commissioner of the NYS State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation; the Mayor of the City of Albany; the Town Supervisors of the Towns of Colonie and Guilderland; the Chief Executive Officer of the County of Albany; the State Director of the New York field office of The Nature Conservancy and four members appointed by the Governor with the advice and consent of the Senate. The four appointed private citizen members of the Commission are, by training, education, experience or attainment, qualified to analyze, interpret or support matters relevant to the protection, maintenance and management of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.



Hon. Kathy M. Sheehan
Mayor
City of Albany



Jessica Ottney Mahar
Director of Policy &
Strategy
The Nature Conservancy
in New York



Erik Kulleseid
Commissioner,
NYS Office of Parks
Recreation and
Historic Preservation



Hon. Peter Barber
Supervisor
Town of Guilderland



Hon. Peter Crummey
Supervisor
Town of Colonie



Hon. Daniel P. McCoy
Executive
Albany County

Anthony Luisi
Director, Region 4,
NYS Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Citizen Members:
Dr. Harvey Alexander
John Brust
Nancy Pierson
Dr. Steven Rice



Photo by Paul Nance



Photo by Allen Landes

Project and Programmatic Highlights

Big News in the Pine Bush...

Teamwork. Most scientific discoveries take teamwork and that's certainly true for what we have learned about this now 9+ year old male prairie warbler, photographed by Volunteer Naturalist, Allen Landes. The bird was initially banded in July 2014. It is simply stunning to think about the things this little 8-gram bird has experienced during his nine 4,000-mile round trips between the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and the island of Hispaniola. We are grateful for Allen's time and his camera skills, which documented the continued survival of this extraordinary summer resident of our globally rare inland pine barrens and National Natural Landmark. According to the USGS he is now one of the 4 oldest documented prairie warblers in the USA. *Photo above.*

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve adds 15 more acres. We recently acquired a 15.1 acre parcel of land to add to the 3,400 acre preserve. protected land in western Colonie.

The Commission purchased the property from a landowner that indicated they were interested in selling. This new addition adds to the 41 acres the Town of Colonie dedicated to the preserve in February 2022, making up an area of nearly 120 connected acres of protected land in western Colonie.

The Albany Pine Bush designated a New York State Capital Region Birding Trail Site. The New York State Birding Trail highlights world-class birding opportunities across the state. The trail provides information on places anyone can go to find birds amid beautiful settings. The trail is not a physically connected or built trail, but a network of promoted birding locations that can be accessed by car or public transportation and providing an inclusive experience for all.



Re-discovery! Through some historical research that our education staff was doing, we discovered that the APBP was designated as a National Recreation Trail (NRT) in 1985. Preserve information was on their website but it was outdated. We worked with staff from NRT and the National Park Service to update the information and get new pictures on the site. You'll notice that the Kings Highway is called out on the page. We think that was the prominent trail in the Pine Bush in 1985 and its history is part of the reason for the designation.

In Our Community...

Over the past year, engagement in our school education programs reached almost 3,000. A variety of our programs engage students of all ages through a single visit to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve including Discover the Pine Bush and Habitat Watch.

In other programs, students engage with the preserve more than once a year like our Help a Habitat Part I and Part II program.

Pine Bush Perspectives: A juried photo exhibit now in its ninth year. The Pine Bush Perspectives juried photo exhibit has become a much-anticipated event for our staff and community alike. This year's exhibit contained 42 photographs from the 155 submitted by visitors to the preserve. The exhibit ran from December through March 2023, and was sponsored by the Friends of the Pine Bush Community. *Below: 1st Place: "Teeny Tine Treefrog" by Liz Ricci*



Assisting our partners. Our Fire Manager served as the lead instructor for the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Region 4 Annual Fireline Refresher which trained 72 wildland firefighters.



We assisted the US Fish and Wildlife Service and the NYSDEC with a 45-acre prescribed fire at the Helmer Creek Wildlife Management Area in Steuben County. In addition, we assisted The Nature Conservancy with a prescribed in Ossipee Pine Barrens Preserve in Ossipee, NH. We also sent a crew to assist New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and NYSDEC with the suppression of a wildfire in Minnewaska State Park.



Visit the Pine Bush...

Participation in our public interpretive programs and guided hikes exceeded 1,300 over the past year. Our programs offer visitors a diversity of learning opportunities including in-person Karner blue butterfly hikes, the historic Trolley Tour and Learn & Paint as well as online programs like our Winter Bird Identification.

Nature Night Out- A new event series to draw the public into the Discovery Center and trails during the summer twilight hours. The events were held in June, July and August between the hours of 4-7:30 pm and attendees were treated to live music, food trucks, activities and crafts and interactive exhibits in the Discovery Center. Attendance surpassed 200 individuals each evening and the events were considered by staff and public to be a rousing success based on the number of people on hand and the level of enjoyment observed.

Discover the Night Week. The third week in February often marks the arrival of winter break for most school districts in New York State. The Discovery Center & our staff helped people Discover the Night throughout the week with specialized programming and the resurrection of a beloved exhibit, the augmented reality sandbox. The highlight of the week was the return to an in person special event called the Night at the Discovery Center. More than 200 visitors flocked to the Discovery Center in a snowstorm to interact with the exhibits as they came to life.



On the Ground...

Financial support for a successful prescribed fire program. With the help of a USDA Forest Service award of a \$150,000 Wildfire Risk Reduction Grant, we implemented prescribed fire on 323 acres in 2022.

Seed cleaning. As in past years, we partnered with the Big Flats Plant Material Center in Big Flats, NY to clean the seed collected over the course of the field season in preparation for restoration planting. The Big Flats Plant Material Center has all the equipment and generously allows us to use their facility free of charge. We cleaned horse mint, New Jersey tea, and tick trefoil along with nearly 50 pounds of bush clover.



Stewardship staff completed last year's wild blue lupine seed cleaning through a partnership with the NYSDEC Saratoga Tree Nursery. We used their equipment to clean 82 pounds of lupine seed that will be planted this year and next to create many acres of new habitat for Karner blue butterflies. Wild blue lupine is the only food source for Karner blue caterpillars.

Invasive plant removal completed for another season. Contractors traveled on foot across over 850 acres of the preserve, cutting and treating invasive plants. Primarily focused on black locust and aspen, they also treated the occasional burning bush, tree-of-heaven and Norway maple. Each year the preserve is becoming more and more free of these invasive plants, allowing native pine barrens plants and animals to flourish.

Forest thinning completed in early 2023. Selective tree removal on 138 acres in the Great Dune and Kings Highway Barrens areas was completed. The goal is to restore and rebuild pine barrens where tree density is too high or invasive black locust trees are taking over, adding to the total acres of high-quality pine barrens wildlife habitat in the preserve.

Over a 6-week period in late 2022, 187 acres of pine barrens were mowed. This was preparation for subsequent tree removal in the winter of 2022-23 and prescribed fire in the summer of 2023. Mechanical management mowing is an important tool to help manage pine barrens fuels and the unique habitats associated with them.



Our Experts...

Knowledge exchange. Our conservation science staff contributed to numerous learning opportunities, from addressing NYS Master Teachers and academics from numerous universities, to presentations at regional conferences.



Pitch Pine Perfect Volunteers - A new volunteer recognition program. Pine Bush volunteers have logged thousands of hours hiking, teaching, building and mending, observing, collecting data, creating, and prescribed burning. Starting in July 2022, preserve staff began to recognize

one outstanding volunteer per month. The volunteer is staff selected and departments rotate the honor of nominating a volunteer under their supervision. Each Pine Bush Volunteer of the Month is celebrated on the volunteer wall of fame in the Discovery Center's Lupine Learning Center.

APB science in print. Conservation Science staff coauthored on a new study published recently in Ecological Applications titled 'Integrating data types to estimate spatial patterns of avian migration across the western hemisphere'. We also coauthored on a new study published recently in Bird Study titled 'Effects of light-level geolocators on return rates and inter-annual territory fidelity of Prairie Warblers *Setophaga discolor*'. Lastly, we worked with a team of authors from around the world to write a chapter for a book that is now in print. The second edition of Dragonflies and Damselflies Model Organisms for Ecological and Evolutionary Research. *Photo below: Amanda Dillon displays the text book she contributed a chapter to.*



Latest Research...

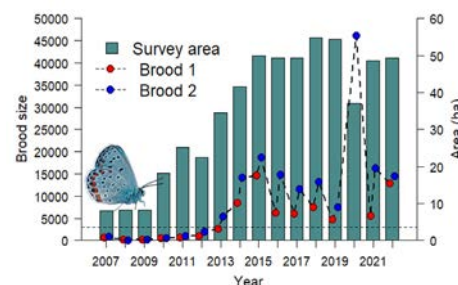
Karner blue recovery. NYSDEC Region 4 Wildlife and our staff collected female Karner blue butterflies in the preserve to assist the New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game with population augmentation efforts in the preserve and in the Concord (NH) pine barrens. *Photo below: NYSDEC Region 4 staff collecting female Karner blue butterflies.*



Our science staff assist with coring a sand dune. Dr. Wolfe is a Geologist with the Geological Survey of Canada who specializes in paraglacial sand dune geomorphology; Dr. Franzi is a Distinguished Teaching Professor of Geology at SUNY-Plattsburgh with a specialty in geomorphology (the study of landforms and landscapes).



Fall bird banding and tracking. Science staff completed the 16th year of fall migration bird banding in the preserve. On 17 mornings between September 2 and October 28 we captured and processed 698 birds from 68 species. Staff also fitted ten eastern towhees with Cellular Tracking Technologies life tags (photo above) and to understand Eastern whip-poor-wills breeding ecology, they equipped several male whip-poor-wills with GPS data loggers.



Karner blue butterfly report. The estimated sizes of the first and second broods in the area surveyed in 2022 were about 12,800 and 14,500 butterflies, respectively.

Financial Highlights

Condensed Statement of Activities
(For Year Ended March 31, 2023)

Revenues, Gains & Other Support

Government Grants	\$ 2,919,003
Mitigation Revenue	\$ 116,124
Lease Revenue	\$ 174,647
Investment Income	\$ (550,416)
Contribution Revenue	\$ 88,732
Program/Other Revenue	\$ 43,619
Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support	\$ 2,791,709

Expenses

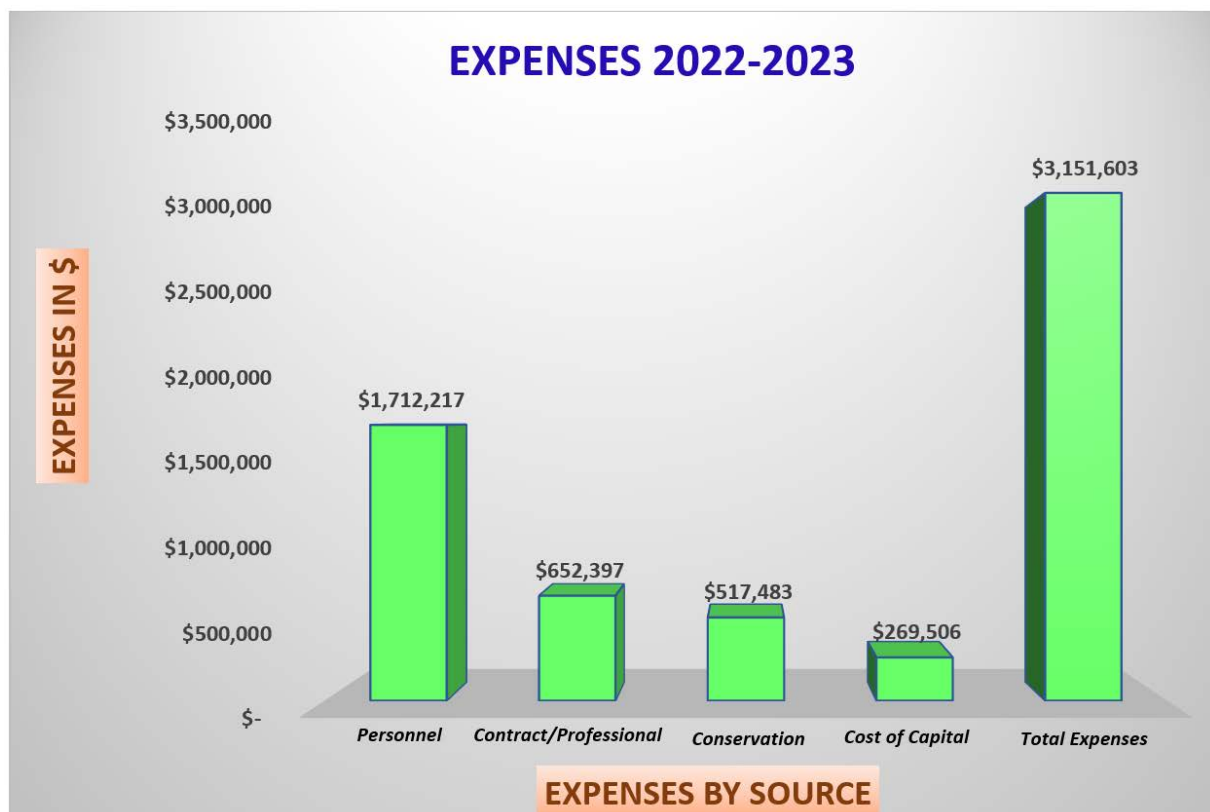
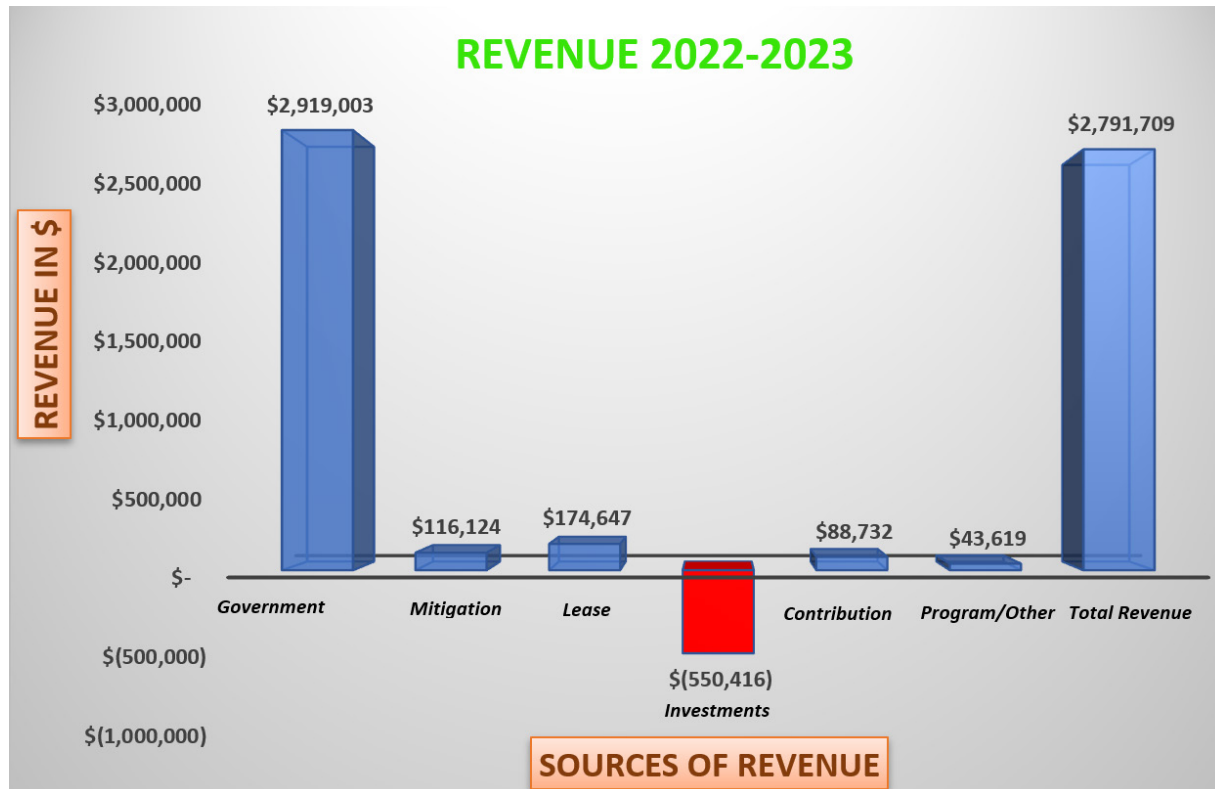
Personnel and Administrative	\$ 1,712,217
Contract and Professional Fees	\$ 652,397
Conservation and Programs	\$ 517,483
Depreciation Expense	\$ 269,506

Total Expenses	\$ 3,151,603
Change in Net Assets	\$ 359,894
Adjustment to Net Assets (GASB)	\$ 4,608
PLUS: Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$ 6,873,426

Net Assets at End of Year	\$ 6,518,140
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Financial Highlights

Revenue and Expenses
(For Year Ended March 31, 2023)





Become a Member of Our Community

Get Involved

We have many easy ways that you can connect with us. The Discovery Center offers many opportunities through programs, special events and exhibits. You can participate in our community by submitting your Pine Bush story on our website or to our Pine Bush Perspectives Photo Exhibit or by joining a team for the Birding Barrens Blitz. You can help monitor rare species and study habitat quality. As a Preserve Naturalist you can also work to make the preserve safe and enjoyable for all who visit and live here.

Visit the Commission website, AlbanyPineBush.org for ways you can join the Pine Bush community.

Support

The Commission is working to build broad-based, sustained local support for preserve protection and management. Supporters active in preserve research and management through community science and attending presentations reinforce the APBPC brand as *Globally-Rare, Nationally Significant, and Locally Distinct*. They help to further establish its position as the place with which to affiliate for those interested in conservation science, ecology, and natural history.

Pine Bush enthusiasts can show support by signing up for email updates on AlbanyPineBush.org, and liking the preserve on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

Photo above by: Marty Bannan

Our Friends

Friends of the Pine Bush Community, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization formed for the charitable and educational purpose of supporting the activities of the Commission. The Friends work cooperatively with Commission staff to add additional land to the preserve, further conservation and education within the preserve, especially through organized activities and programs at the Discovery Center.

Supporters can join or donate by picking up a form at the Discovery Center or through PineBushFriends.org.





Photo by Shane Lawrence

Albany Pine Bush Preserve Current Staff

Lisa Anthony
Director of Finance & Operations
Serving since: 2011

Tyler Briggs
Fire Manager
Serving since: 2012

Steven Campbell
Conservation Biologist
Serving since: 2012

Jacqueline Citriniti
Lead Educator
Serving since: 2008

Wendy Craney
Communications Director
Serving since: 1995

Amanda Dillon
Field Ecologist & Entomologist
Serving since: 2011

Alex Garrigan Piela
Environmental Educator
Serving since: 2023

Neil Gifford
Conservation Director
Serving since: 1997

Blake Hastie-Etchison
Discovery Center Manager
Serving since: 2008

Christopher Hawver
Executive Director
Serving since: 1993

Joel Hecht
Stewardship Director
Serving since: 1994

Jesse Hoffman
Preserve Steward & Botanist
Serving since: 2008

Erin Kinal
Education Program Director
Serving since: 1998

John Loz
Discovery Center Operations Coordinator
Serving since: 2020

Elizabeth MacCallum
Outreach & Volunteer Coordinator
Serving since: 2022

Patricia McLaughlin
Office Manager
Serving since: 2017

Pammi Price
Preserve Naturalist & Educator
Serving since: 2022

Victoria Stoodley
Visitor Services Specialist
Serving since: 2015

Visitor Services Associates
Saliha Nazir Serving since: 2023
Sarah Reilly Serving since: 2017
Carol Seniw Serving since: 2021

Contact Us

**Albany Pine Bush
Preserve Commission**
195 New Karner Road, Suite 1
Albany, NY 12205
(518) 456-0655
info@albanypinebush.org
AlbanyPineBush.org

Go to
AlbanyPineBush.org/visit-us
for Discovery Center hours,
schedule of events and
directions.





Photo by Marty Bannan



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