

*Annual Report  
of the*



ALBANY  
PINE  
BUSH

PRESERVE COMMISSION

**2019-2020**

**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 Dean Bouton*

Dear friends,  
We're proud to offer the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission's Annual Report. It provides some of the past year's highlights from April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2020 including ways we manage the Globally Rare, Nationally Significant and Locally Distinct Albany Pine Bush Preserve and the opportunities offered by the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center.

For some background, the 3,350+/- 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, Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Site, a New York State Unique Area and Bird Conservation Area, 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 NYS 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.

The end of the fiscal year in March 2020 brought unprecedented changes with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, requiring the temporary closure of the Discovery Center and administrative offices. However, the preserve and trail system remained open with numerous visitors enjoying some peaceful respite during a time of many unknowns.

As our community moves towards safely resuming activities we have several ways to get involved in addition to our wonderful trails.

Visit us at [AlbanyPineBush.org](http://AlbanyPineBush.org) to donate to the Friends of the Pine Bush Community or to get details on self-guided programs including a StoryWalk, Photo Exhibit submissions, scavenger hunts and the Karner Kids Film Festival. You can volunteer as a community scientist or as a preserve naturalist, sign up for our 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 – be safe and be well!

*Sincerely,*

**Keith Goertz**  
**Board Chair**

NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Director, Region 4

**Christopher A. Hawver**  
**Executive Director**

Albany Pine Bush  
Preserve Commission



*Photo by Zach Stufflebeam*

## Background and Mission

### **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 78 wildlife Species of Greatest Conservation Need. The Albany Pine Bush Preserve consists of 3,300 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. Paula A. Mahan**  
Supervisor  
Town of Colonie

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



**Keith Goertz**  
Director, Region 4  
NYS Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation



**Hon. Daniel P. McCoy**  
Executive  
Albany County



*Photo by Cynthia Spuzy*



# Project and Programmatic Highlights

*Ilya Raskin photographs lupine in Blueberry Hill for BirdWatching magazine.*

## Big News in the Pine Bush...

**Funding.** Fire Manager, Tyler Briggs, and Conservation Director, Neil Gifford, successfully secured a \$125,000 grant from the US Forest Service to assist with prescribed fire in the preserve.

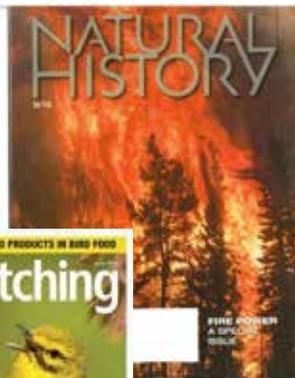
**Preserve Science in the news.** Prescribed fire and wildlife conservation science were featured in Birdwatching Magazine, Natural History magazine, and WAMC Northeast Public Radio in 2019.



**The Albany Pine Bush: Growing the Preserve.** Our staff partnered with local PBS station WMHT to produce a 13-minute video to promote one of the top messages in the Audience Development Plan. The message is that the The APBP is not complete; the public can help protect more land as well as support the restoration of this globally rare National Natural Landmark. The video will be shown in the Discovery Center, online, at public venues, as part of conferences and programs. [www.YouTube.com/TheAPBPC](http://www.YouTube.com/TheAPBPC)

**Pine Bush Banners.** More wayfinding and sense of place pole banners were installed around the Routes 20 & 155 intersection in the Town of Guilderland. These help people find the Discovery Center and help raise awareness about the extent of the preserve.

**School Programs.** Each year, APBPC Education staff reach thousands of students, introducing them to the Albany Pine Bush and actively engaging them in place-based learning. Program participation over the past year totaled 3,889 with students engaged in Discover the Pine Bush, Habitat Watch, Help a Habitat and more. Students contributed hours of data collection and over 1,300 lupine plants to the preserve.



## In Our Community...

**We hosted the Rapp Road Historical Association's 4th Annual Fundraiser in May.** Approximately 70 attendees enjoyed light fare, music, a photo gallery, and celebration of the community. Christopher Hawver was recognized as the year's honoree.



**Community Science.** The APBPC Community Science program has been flourishing with over 70 dedicated volunteers helping collect data around the preserve. Many of these volunteers conducted surveys for American woodcock in the preserve.

*Photo below by Sarah Martinez*



**Certified Seed Collectors.**

Seventeen new Certified Seed Collector volunteers were trained in the intricacies of plant identification, seed species ID, how to collect seed, and how to work with and lead other volunteers. Once trained, these volunteers can collect seed throughout the preserve on their own schedules, for later use by preserve staff in restoration planting.

## Visit the Pine Bush...

**Visitation.** Visitors travel to the Discovery Center from both near and far each year to learn about the Albany Pine Bush, its unique ecology, history and recreational opportunities. Over the past year, we recorded 12,823 visits to the Discovery Center.

**Temporary Exhibits.** The Discovery Center hosted multiple temporary exhibits over the past year. Highlights include the Schenectady Photographic Society's Capital District Nature photo exhibit, the annual Pine Bush Perspectives Juried Photo Exhibit and the "Fact Finders Lab" interactive exhibit in the Karner Classroom.

**United States Forest Service (USFS).** We hosted the USFS Regional Fire Management Officers annual meeting at the Discovery Center on November 7th, providing an opportunity to showcase our fire management

program to state and federal fire management professionals from across the northeastern United States. *Photo at bottom.*

**Albany Pine Bush, a Living Lab.**

Conservation science staff hosted several restoration field trips for local universities, including: Green Mountain College, Paul Smith's College, SUNY Albany, Hudson Valley Community College and SUNY Plattsburgh. These opportunities continue to build important relationships with academic partners and provide truly unique learning opportunities for aspiring conservation professionals. *Photo below: Paul Smith's College Fire Ecology & Management Class*



# Our Expert Staff

## & Volunteers...

**Sugarloaf Wildfire.** The APBPC Rx fire crew assisted the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) with suppressing the ‘Sugarloaf’ Wildfire (80 acres). The wildfire took place in the Hudson Highlands State Park, along the Breakneck Ridge.

**Keynote Speaker.** APBPC Conservation Director, Neil Gifford provided the keynote address at the Lakes States Fire Science Consortium 6th Annual Burning Issues Workshop & 20th Michigan Prescribed Fire Council Annual Meeting, at the Fort Custer National Training Center in Battle Creek, MI in February.

**Training.** We partnered with NYSDEC to conduct three National Wildfire Coordination Group training classes that certified 123 wildland firefighters. Assisting partners. The APB fire crew assisted The Nature Conservancy (TNC) with two prescribed fires (80 acres) in the Waterboro Barrens Preserve in Maine.



**Public Programs.** This year, participation in interpretive programs led by APBPC staff, volunteers and partners totaled 1,956 participants for our public interpretive programs and 696 for special interest groups including Cub Scouts and Girl Scouts. Popular programs included Discover the Pine Bush, Night at the Discovery Center, Owls and Hors d’oeuvres, Karner Blue Butterfly Walk, Trolley Tour and the Science Lecture Series. In August 2019, we hosted our first Ant Identification Workshops where participants helped to add a new species, *Lasius umbratus* (photo below) to our preserve list!



## Happening on the Ground...

**Seed cleaning.** Stewardship staff partnered with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Plant Materials Center in Big Flats, NY to clean all of the native seed that we collect and use during our restoration effort at the preserve. This was an especially productive seed collection year, and we collected large amounts of Bush Clover, Horsemint, and Goat’s Rue.



**Prescribed Fire.** The APBPC conducted 16 controlled burns totaling 427 acres, a record. *Photo above of an April 2019 Rx fire from a commercial airplane courtesy of Willie Janeway.*

## Restoring the pine barrens of the preserve is an ongoing process.

We have been implementing management activities across hundreds of acres each year and the fall/winter of 2019/20 was no different. Management included mowing 156 acres of pine barrens, reducing the tree density on 77 forested acres, stumping 22 acres in preparation for spring planting and chasing down invasive plants on over 600 acres.

**Facilities improvements.** Secure space for preserve management equipment is important to keep the equipment out of the weather so it will last as long as possible before needing replacement. The large red barn at the management facility on Kings Road was updated with a new roof and green metal siding. The loft of this restored barn is used for drying native seed that is collected in the preserve for habitat restoration plantings.



**Truax Family Burial Grounds Restoration.** Work on restoring the Truax Family Burial Grounds was completed in the spring of 2019. A total of five gravestones of the Truax Family were restored and a fence was added to delineate the site of this historic cemetery.

**Preserve boundaries.** In an effort to continue to clearly identify the boundaries of the preserve, seasonal staff used GIS mapping software to locate and map the preserve boundaries. Existing boundary signs are being repaired/replaced as needed and missing signs are being installed. The preserve has over 40 miles of preserve edge.

## Our Latest Research...

**Climate Change.** Science staff shared nearly 30 years of Karner blue butterfly (Kbb) population data with scientists at Washington State University and the U.S. Geological Survey at the University of Minnesota. Both projects are examining the effects of climate change.

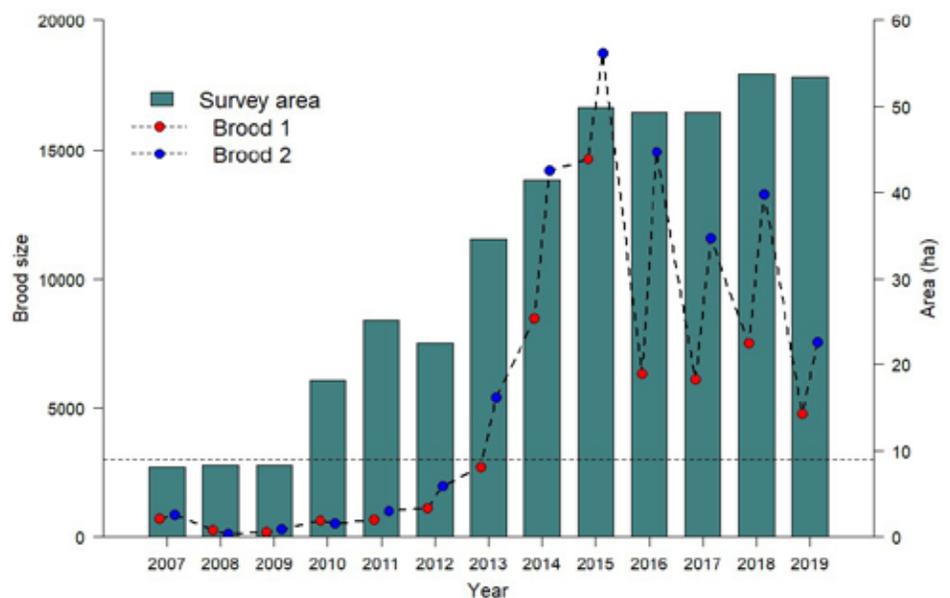
**Eastern whip-poor-will.** After more than 30 years of absence, eastern whip-poor-wills appear to have returned to the preserve. Conservation science staff tracked two of these birds using 1-gram GPS data-loggers in 2019.



**Karner blue butterfly.** The 2019 Kbb population size was estimated to be 4801 and 7552 butterflies in the first and second broods, respectively. The APBP population has remained above the recovery threshold established by the United States (US) Fish and Wildlife Service (USFW) (i.e., 3000 adults in either the first or the second brood) for the last seven years. Figure 1. Brood size estimates of the Kbb for the survey area at the APBP, 2007-2019.

Figure 1 Below. Brood size estimates of the Karner blue butterfly for the survey area at the APBP, 2007-2019.

Karner blue photo below by Jeanice Naulty



# Financial Highlights

Condensed Statement of Activities  
(For Year Ended March 31, 2020)

## Revenues, Gains & Other Support

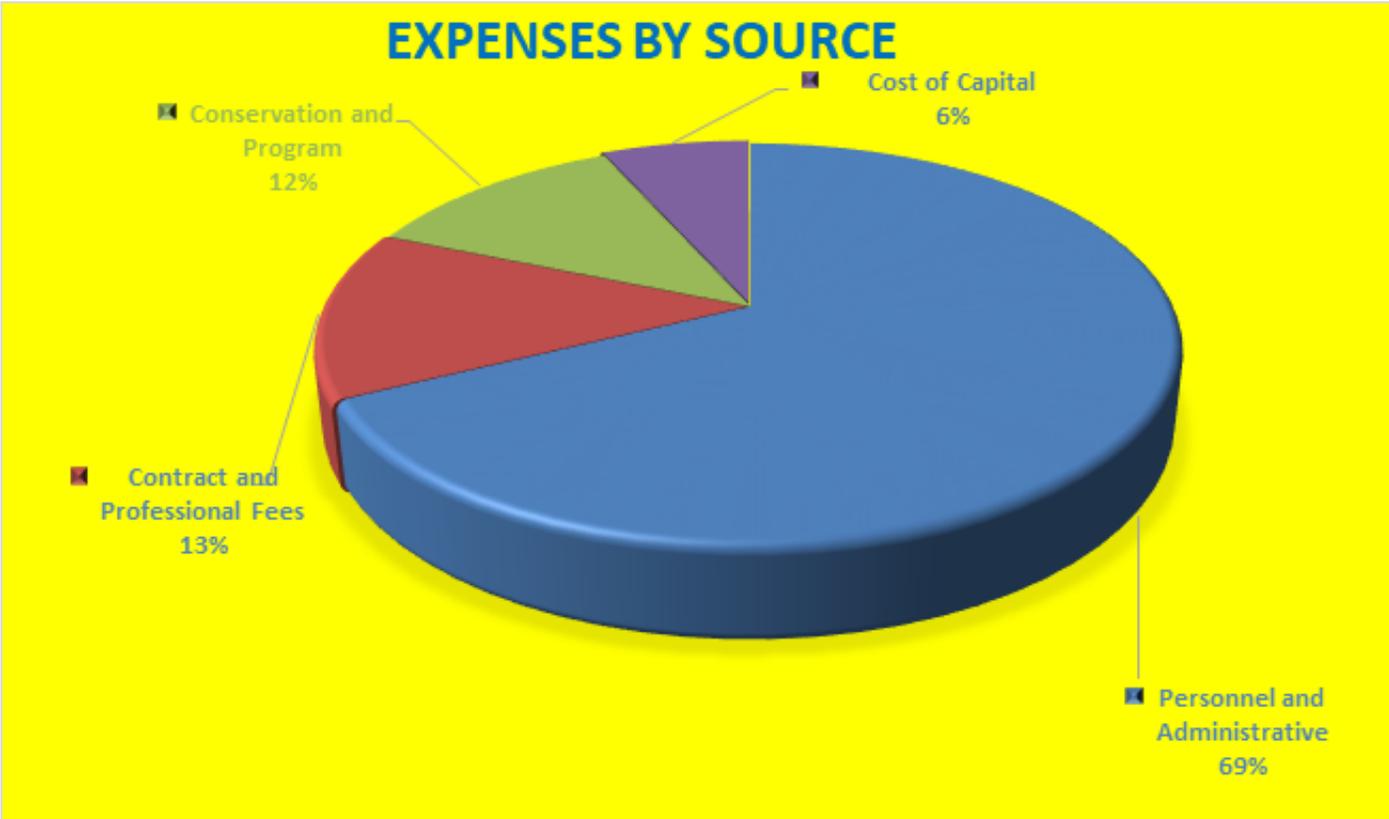
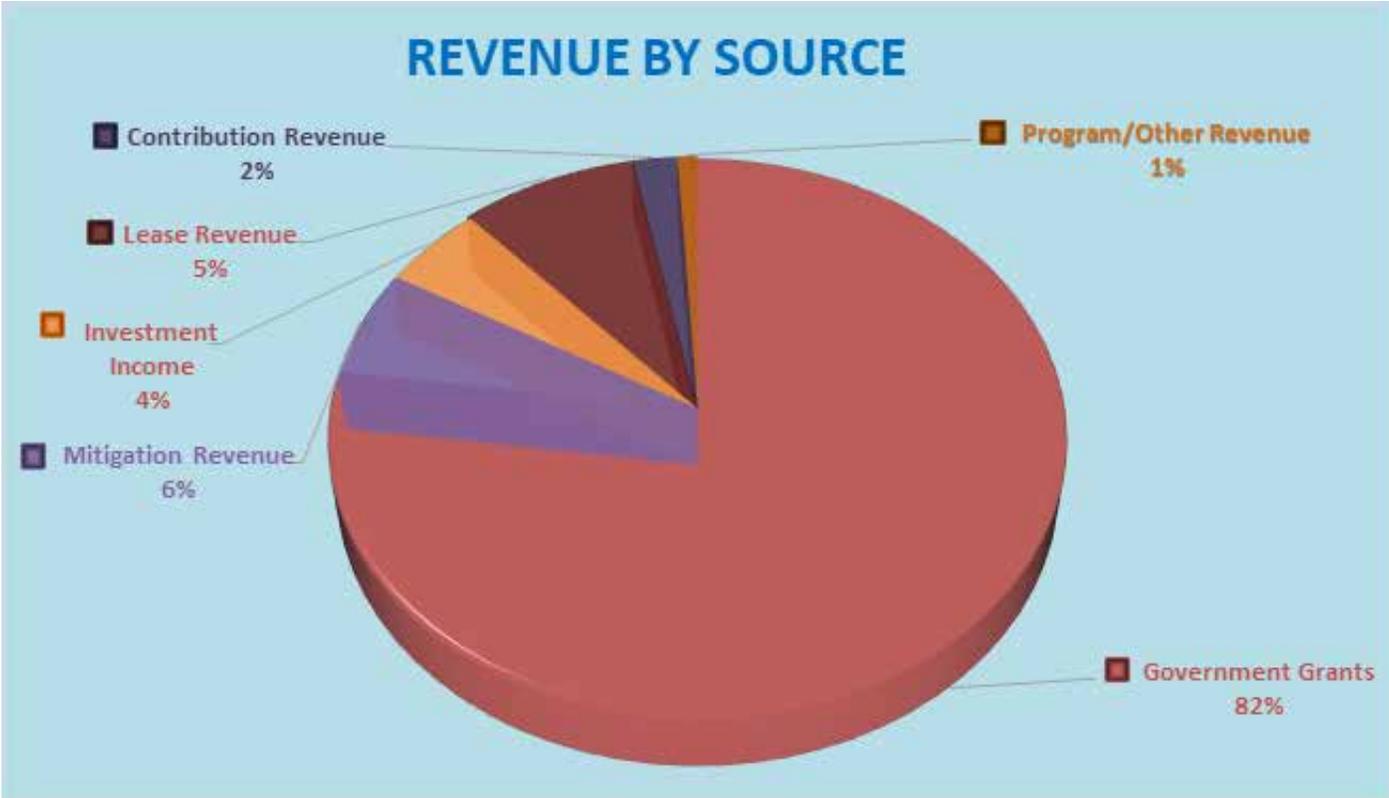
Government Grants	\$ 2,869,726
Mitigation Revenue	\$ 211,609
Lease Revenue	\$ 177,543
Investment Income	\$ 152,971
Contribution Revenue	\$ 74,281
Program/Other Revenue	\$ 30,690
<b>Total Revenues, Gains and Other Support</b>	<b>\$ 3,516,820</b>

## Expenses

Personnel and Administrative	\$ 2,763,573
Contract and Professional Fees	\$ 537,556
Conservation and Programs	\$ 463,329
Cost of Capital	\$ 259,509
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 4,023,967</b>
Change in Net Assets	\$ (507,147)
PLUS: Net Assets at Beginning of Year	\$ 8,296,073
<b>Net Assets at End of Year</b>	<b>\$ 7,788,926</b>

# Financial Highlights

Revenue and Expenses  
(For Year Ended March 31, 2020)





# 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 making a video for the Karner Kids Film Festival. 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](http://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](http://AlbanyPineBush.org), and liking the preserve on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter.

## 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](http://PineBushFriends.org).

Chipmunk photo above by: Laetitia Duret





*Photo by Shu Jun Lim*

# Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission

## Current Staff

Lisa Anthony  
*Director of Finance & Operations*

Tyler Briggs  
*Fire Manager*

Steven Campbell  
*Conservation Biologist*

Jacqueline Citriniti  
*Lead Educator*

Wendy Craney  
*Communications Director*

Amanda Dillon  
*Field Ecologist & Entomologist*

Blake Hastie-Etchison  
*Discovery Center Manager*

Neil Gifford  
*Conservation Director*

Christopher Hawver  
*Executive Director*

Joel Hecht  
*Stewardship Director*

Jesse Hoffman  
*Preserve Steward & Botanist*

Erin Kinal  
*Education Program Director*

Patricia McLaughlin  
*Office Manager*

Sara Poggi-Decker  
*Education Program Manager*

Victoria Stoodley  
*Visitor Services Specialist*

*Visitor Services Associates*  
Courtney Clickner  
Heather Oligny  
Sarah Reilly

## Contact Us

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

The Discovery Center is open  
DAILY weekdays 9AM-4PM  
and weekends 10AM-4PM.  
Closed Thanksgiving,  
Christmas Eve, Christmas Day  
and New Year's Day.





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