

# SHAWANGUNK WATCH

Fall 2010 Preserving Open Space in the Shawangunks Volume 15 #1

Friends of the Shawangunks & The Shawangunk Conservancy

## Open Space Institute Continues Protecting Shawangunk Lands

OSI recently protected 67 acres of cliffs, helping to continue a rock climbing legacy in the Gunks. This recent acquisition from a local landowner will safeguard a vital ecosystem, dramatic views and an historic climbing area on the southeastern edge of the Shawangunk Ridge. The area has cliffs reaching 350 feet in height and extensive talus slopes at its base, making it visible from across the Hudson Valley. The property has played an important role in regional rock climbing history, provides key habitat for rare plants and cliff-dwelling animals (such as peregrine falcons and five-lined skinks), and is part of an international flyway for raptors and migratory songbirds.

Known locally as the Millbrook Mountain Cliffs, the property was acquired by OSI's land acquisition affiliate, the Open Space Conservancy, from longtime landowner Julien J. Studley. OSI's acquisition now paves adding the land to the neighboring Mohonk Preserve for management as a public recreation area.

"This project reflects the strong partnership among landowners and conservation organizations that exists in the Shawangunks, and which ultimately benefits the public and the environment," said Joe Martens, OSI's president. "This is not only a visually stunning parcel of land, but is also of interest to the international rock climbing community and ecologists."

In the 1930s, renowned climbers Fritz Weissner and Hans Kraus discovered the rock formations that today make the Shawangunks one of the most challenging and popular rock climbing sites on the East Coast. Weissner and Kraus forged a route on the highest cliff in the area—located on the just-protected Millbrook Mountain Cliffs parcel—which not only established rock climbing as a sport in America, but established the Shawangunks as a mecca for climbers.

The rock formations that comprise the cliffs on the Shawangunk Ridge feature many different microhabitats for plants and animals, making the talus on the property a rare and unique ecosystem. As such, it had been regarded as a conservation priority in the New York State and Town of Gardiner open space plans.

The Open Space Institute has protected more than 26,000 acres over the last two decades along the Shawangunk Ridge, from Rosendale in Ulster County to Port Jervis on the New York–New Jersey border. Over the past several years OSI has teamed up with Mohonk to add more than 500 acres to the preserve, the largest member- and visitor- supported nature preserve in New York State.



Millbrook Mountain by Annie O'Neill

"For over thirty years I have lived at the base of the Shawangunk Ridge and marveled at its beauty and grandeur," said Julien Studley. "These pristine and unspoiled lands mean the world to me, and I am pleased to pass on this legacy of stewardship to the Open Space Institute and the Mohonk Preserve."

"This acquisition is based on today's land protection strategies, but has deep roots in the historic appreciation for the unique qualities of the area," said Glenn Hoagland, executive director of the Mohonk Preserve. "Climbers will now be able to enjoy the challenges and beauty of Millbrook Mountain and the land will be protected forever. We are grateful to Julien Studley, OSI, and our generous supporters for making this possible."

— OSI acquisitions....continued on Page 4

## Annual Members Meeting on October 17

On Sunday October 17 at 10 am, the annual members meeting will take place at Stone Mountain Center, 310 River Road Extension, New Paltz.

From New Paltz, take Rt. 32 North for about 5 miles, cross the steel bridge over the Wallkill River and turn left onto River Road. Go to the stop sign and continue straight ahead, crossing Springtown Road onto River Road Extension. There is a tall green sign saying "Stone Mountain Farm" and a dead end sign at the intersection of River Rd Ext. and Springtown Road. Follow the extension around a right and left curve, then pass underneath an old railroad trestle and bear right at the fork. Continue on the gravel road, then make a right up the driveway to the building at the top of the drive. Park in the circular parking lot or as directed.

Short "fall-splendor" hikes will start after the meeting. Bring appropriate footwear, water, lunch and/or snacks.

For additional info: [Stonemountaincenter.com/site/aboutus/directions](http://Stonemountaincenter.com/site/aboutus/directions)

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## The New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike

Keith LaBudde



AS I'VE WANDERED around the Shawangunks, I have often—usually without realizing it—encountered remnants of the New Paltz-Wawarsing Turnpike, a nineteenth-century toll road from the town of New Paltz in the Wallkill Valley to

the Town of Wawarsing in the Rondout Valley. When I learned that the Mohonk Preserve's parking lot at its West Trapps Trailhead had been constructed on the former roadbed of the Turnpike my curiosity was aroused, but it wasn't until recently that I decided to find out what I could about the building of the Turnpike, and to try to identify its route in relation to what is on the ground today.

In 1855 there was a very steep road over the mountain from Gardiner, crossing where Route 44/55 now does, but there was no direct route from New Paltz. A turnpike from New Paltz to Liberty had been authorized by the New York State legislature in 1834, but it was never built. On March 22, 1855 a meeting was held at the hotel of P. D. Smedes (Smede gave his name to the cove in the break in the ridge between the Near Trapps and Bayards cliffs.) to try to determine if there was enough commercial activity west of the Shawangunks to make a toll road a profitable undertaking. At that time the land routes from the Ellenville/Wawarsing area to the Hudson River went to Newburgh, a distance of 30 to 35 miles, so a route to New Paltz, only 23 miles in length, might be commercially viable. This was intended to be a profit-making enterprise, to compete with the Delaware & Hudson Canal. After investigating the businesses on the west side of the ridge, the potential investors decided that the factories in Lackawack (tannery), Naponach (axes and iron), and Ellenville (glass), along with the 14 sawmills, offered sufficient potential traffic.

A route was surveyed in 1856 that started at the bridge over the Wallkill at New Paltz. It went through the pass between the Trapps and Near Trapps cliffs (identified on the survey as "THE TRAPS"), ending at an area south of what is now Kerhonkson. It was built quickly with a dirt surface, supplemented with planking in wet areas, at a cost of about \$1,000 per mile. Unfortunately for the original investors, it proved to be a money-losing proposition from the very start and was sold at a sheriff's sale in 1861. Others took over the Turnpike, but I have been unable to determine how long it remained in operation.

Trying to identify the route taken by the Turnpike is complicated by the fact that much of it was obliterated by the construction of today's roads. However, there are some remnants that can be clearly identified. The first obvious remnant of the Turnpike is what appears to be a driveway leading from Route 299 to a house sitting out in an open field between Butterville Road and the Humpo Marsh. West of the Humpo the Turnpike crossed Paltz Point Road, a road leading up to what is now Mohonk Mountain House. (Paltz Point was then the name for what we know today as Sky Top.) This was probably the route taken by Alfred Smiley in 1869 when he first visited the site, and it came to be known as Old Stage Road.

The next section of the road that can be easily identified is Wawarsing Road, a public road off of Route 299 that leads into the Sparkling Ridge development. Wawarsing Road is paved for just a short distance to where Sparkling Ridge Road veers off to the right. At this point the unpaved road (marked by a "Dead End" sign) continues straight ahead; this is actually part of the old Turnpike. It is possible to follow this route on foot as it winds uphill to what is known as the Wawarsing parking lot adjacent to the Mohonk Preserve's Visitor Center.

From the parking area the Turnpike crossed today's Route 44/55 and made its way up to the top of the ridge at the overlook. Looking south from the overlook one can see an earthen ramp that brought the Turnpike up to the gap at the top of the ridge, where a toll collector was stationed. From here the route followed what is now a path leading from the steel bridge to the Preserve's West Trapps Trailhead parking area, situated on the Turnpike's former roadbed. It continued down to the Coxing Kill, crossed it and essentially followed the current Trapps Road across what is now Route 44/55 to what is now Lyons Road. This road follows the Turnpike's route for only a short distance to the point where it makes a left; here the Turnpike continued straight ahead on the old section of road that Minnewaska State Park Preserve has closed off.

The Turnpike at this point essentially took what is now Route 44/55. The survey map shows the route ascending "THE STEPS," the name given to the steep ascent to Minnewaska's entrance. The next remnant is found just past the entrance; it is the road that connects the entrance to the Awosting parking lot. From here it crossed the current Route 44/55 at a point just west of where the High Peters Kill Trail starts. This next section can be easily followed to the Saunders Kill, where one can still see the remains of the Turnpike's bridge abutments. After crossing the kill, it crossed into Minnewaska's Jenny Lane area and continued straight ahead down the mountain on the route now used by the Long Path. Today's Old Minnewaska Trail, Route 44/55, and Fordemoor Road follow the old Turnpike's route to its end.

The Turnpike was authorized to have a tollgate for every 10 miles, but no two gates were to be within four miles of each other. As noted in the accompanying article, a toll collector was stationed at the point where the Turnpike crossed the ridge. In "Turnpikes and Taverns in the Shawangunks," a Mohonk Preserve research report by Daniel Smiley and Alice Cross, the authors report finding reference to only this tollgate on the Turnpike. The 1880 census lists 22-year-old Hiram Van Leuven of the Trapps hamlet with the occupation of "gate keeper."

The following tolls were established when the Turnpike was first authorized in 1834:

- ◆wagon, cart or other wheel carriage drawn by two horses, mules or oxen....12.5 cents
- ◆for every additional horse, mule or ox....3 cents
- ◆for every cart, sulky, wagon or other wheel carriage drawn by one horse or other animal....6 cents
- ◆for every score of horses, mules or cattle....20 cents
- ◆for every score of sheep or swine....6 cents
- ◆for every horse and rider or led horse....4 cents

**One must remember that a penny was worth something in those days.**

Another benefit of the turnpike construction comes from a report from the trustees of the Trapps hamlet school for the 1856 school year. It showed that only 20 of 42 students in the district actually attended school that year. It ended with an interesting note: "Our school is situated in a mountainous District which is the cause of our school being so small and it is with difficulty we can keep a school but a turnpike is going through our neighborhood and will facilitate the way of children getting to school another year."

Keith LaBudde is a longtime member, and ex-president, of Friends.

# The Little Stony Kill

Tom Nozkowski

The Little Stony Kill is one of the most extraordinary and beautiful natural features of the Shawangunk Ridge. It is little known and mysterious, wandering through some very remote parts of Minnewaska State Park Preserve as well as across private and unprotected lands. About half of the length of the Little Stony Kill lies in protected land, much of that acquired by the Open Space Institute for Minnewaska State Park Preserve. The remainder is in private hands and like all of the land on the Ridge is under possible threat.

Running a bit under five miles in length, the Little Stony Kill is born in Polack Swamp, a small boggy area near the site of Four-Mile Camp on the Smiley Road. Falling 1,680 feet, it ends in the Rondout Creek, about 200 yards southwest of Route 44/55. It is an elusive creek, unnamed on both the Kerhonkson and the Napanoch USGS Topographic maps. It is not even shown on the Napanoch map, although one can easily see its course by first following the parallel foot-path that follows the kill and then the clear indents in the map's contour lines. This is an undeserved insult to one of the prettiest of the Shawangunk kills. While it may shrink down to just a trickle in the driest August, the Little Stony stays wet enough to nourish the largest and tastiest high bush blueberries on the Ridge.

Its very name is elusive. Berry-pickers called it Polack Brook; the Foord Sanatorium—which at one time owned half its length—mapped it as Nonkanawa Brook; and it is called Little Stony Kill on most survey maps. Marc Fried has written a witty and entertaining history of the “naming” of the Little Stony Kill in his *Shawangunk Place-Names*.

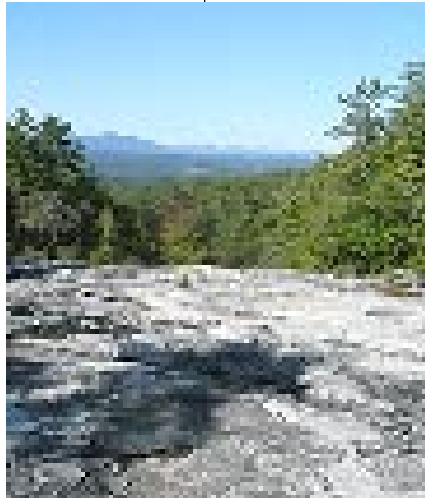
**Berry pickers named the upper part of the stream after Polack Joe and his family who camped on the Smiley Road where the stream crosses (Marc Fried)**

The only place where the Little Stony can casually be seen is where it crosses Foordmore Road, 500 feet east of the entrance gates to the Ukranian National Association (UNA) estate, Soyuzivka. A beautiful and extensive stone paving, more typical of the upper reaches of the kill, is visible from the

road. This area is owned by the UNA.

There are many striking natural features strung along the length of the Little Stony. About one quarter of the way uphill from its end at the Rondout we find the Green Pool—a swimming area for the UNA—in a hemlock grove, beneath a little waterfall. Beyond this pool, as

the kill starts to cut into the rock cap of the Shawangunk Ridge, it creates a deep and shady ravine. Upstream the gorge starts to fill with talus, and after a sharp turn, reaches the base of the great falls of the Little Stony. In high water, the 75-foot-high, buttermilk-style falls presents an awesome spectacle. An old and largely overgrown trail on the east side of the gorge here leads up to a viewpoint and then, through some very dense laurel, to the top of the falls. From this point, turning around to look back, we see the first of many jaw-dropping views of the Rondout Valley and the Catskills. From this point onwards, the Little Stony is on rock and surrounded by rock—miles and miles of Shawangunk grit.



Tom Nozkowski

A trail maintained by the UNA crosses the Little Stony here—part of a looped network that starts and ends at the Soyuzivka resort and takes an interesting path parallel to the kill. Also at this point, the remnants of an early incarnation of the Long Path may be seen. In the 1970s the Long Path came down the Little Stony to this point, crossed it and turned east to reach the power lines near Rock Haven Road. With some care and thoughtful deliberation it is possible to find enough old turquoise blazes to follow this ghost Long Path upstream. Continuing upstream we cross into Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

The old path wanders back and forth, close and then away, from the west bank of the Kill until—a little more than halfway to its source—we reach Pulpit Rock. This was a major landmark for berry pickers and sits at the intersection of many old trails. Unprepossessing at first glance, it is more likely to be identified by an old orange-painted “P.R.” on the creek side than by obvious distinction. At the top, it is another story, with a wonderful view of the ridge-top landscape stretching away in all directions. One lightly-cairned trail heads northwest from here to Healing Spring Rock, and another—the Tombstone Path—southwest to Four-Mile Camp on the Smiley Road.

There are no named landmarks on the Little Stony Kill above this point but it remains beautiful beyond comparison: plenty of rock, pure and bubbling water, great vistas, old paths to nowhere in particular, blueberries, blueberries and even more blueberries; it doesn't get better than this. 📧

*Tom Nozkowski knows the Shawangunks better than almost anyone. He is a painter who shows internationally and is represented by The Pace Gallery in N.Y.C..*

## Trapps Gateway Acquisition by OSI

Between 1995 and 2006, OSI acquired over 170 acres of land and structures in the area of the Trapps Gateway, which consists of the gentle foothills at the foot of the Trapps escarpment. OSI donated all of the land it acquired in the Trapps Gateway area to the Mohonk Preserve, which protects and manages nearly 7,000 acres of forests, fields, streams, and other environments across 12 miles along the Shawangunk Ridge. In 1998, Mohonk Preserve constructed a visitor center and administrative facility on the one of the parcels it received from OSI.

The small “inholding” parcel and the residential structure just purchased by OSI are strategically important to the Mohonk Preserve. The structure is located only several hundred feet from the Preserve's

visitor center, and its acquisition opens up additional space for future use by Preserve rangers and educators while eliminating the possibility of incompatible development occurring in a largely protected area. In addition, Mohonk Preserve plans to incorporate a portion of the property as an addition to its “children's forest,” where young visitors learn about woodlands and the plant and animal habitat contained within. The parcel contains mature woods and a stream that is a tributary to the Marakill, part of a critical regional watershed.

More OSI Acquisitions on next page

## EASEMENTS TO PROTECT FARMLAND IN SWEEPING SHAWANGUNK VISTAS

OSI plans to protect an additional 3,500 acres of farmland in the two picturesque valleys that surround the Shawangunk Ridge. In partnership with the town of Rochester, OSI has announced the acquisition of a conservation easement on the 149-acre Domino dairy farm on Airport Road in the town of Rochester. Conservation easements restrict the development and subdivision of a property. The landowner retains ownership of the land and may pass it on or even sell the land, although the terms of the easement must be adhered to by future owners. The easement allows for dairy operations to continue on the historic farm, but ensures that the land, owned by Margaret DeWitt and managed by the DeWitt family, will not be developed. The preservation project is part of OSI's ongoing Two Valleys Campaign, which focuses protection efforts on working farms in the Rondout and Wallkill valleys, areas of scenic beauty and abundant farmland.

In addition, adjoining landowners Robert and Eileen Rominger plan to donate a conservation easement on their property, which is currently leased to the DeWitts. The easement protecting 93 more acres will be held by the Rondout Esopus Land Conservancy and OSI's land acquisition affiliate, the Open Space Conservancy, bringing the amount of protected land to approximately 242 acres.

Three-quarters of the cost of the Domino farm easement was funded by a \$693,900 Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) grant awarded by the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Farmland Protection Program. The Open Space Conservancy provided the required 25-percent local match of \$231,300.

The 54-year-old farm is situated in the foothills of the Shawangunk Ridge at the edge of the Catskill Mountains and enjoys a spectacular view of the Sky Top Tower and lands of the Mohonk Preserve. OSI has protected several other local sites, including the 268-acre Paul Farm, the 93-acre Osterhoudt Farm, the 320-acre Davenport Farm in the town of Marbletown, and the 361-acre Davis Farm on Route 209 north of Kerhonkson, which was protected in 2008. To date, OSI has protected 18 farms and a total of 2,904 acres in nine separate towns in the Rondout and Wallkill Valleys, preserving an important component of the region's local economy as well as its traditional rural character.

Domino Farm is one of only four remaining dairy farms in Ulster County. Purchased by the DeWitt family in 1955 and named "Domino" for the black and white patterns on Holstein cows, it has developed into one of the preeminent dairy herds in the country. Its 175 cows and 150 heifers, mostly Jerseys now, ranked among the top 10 in the nation for herds of its size. In the future, the DeWitts anticipate selling value-added milk products such as butter and cheese locally.

The purchase and preservation of the nearly 300-year-old, 140-acre Appeldoorn Farm was announced on April 22, 2010. It is another historic Dutch farm protected in Accord. It is known locally as the Sykes Farm. The farm has an extensive history intertwined with the history of the Schoonmaker family, which has been farming the fertile fields of the Rondout Valley for 330 years.

According to the Friends of Historic Rochester, the original Schoonmaker to settle in the Rondout Valley, Jochem Schoonmaker, helped his son Benjamin build a dwelling on the Appeldoorn property in 1722. Five generations of Schoonmakers owned and farmed the property before it was inherited by two Schoonmaker nephews, Howard and Edward Sykes, in 1931. The Sykes nephews substantially expanded the old farmhouse into the manor house that it is today, and sold the property in 2003.

The property includes 140 acres of productive farmland and woods, running along Route 209 with a beef cattle operation run by Wayne and Cathy Brooks. From Airport Road, the property (which includes an old runway used for crop dusting) has extensive views of the Shawangunk Ridge and the Rondout Valley.

"By acquiring this farm, OSI has a chance to protect both agriculture and important regional history in this part of New York State," said Joe Martens, OSI's president. "Appeldoorn furthers OSI's commitment to preserving farmland in the shadow of the Shawangunk Ridge while paying tribute to the hard-working Dutch farmers who tilled the soil for more than three centuries."

OSI intends to market and resell the historic stone houses subject to an historic preservation easement, and to ensure the long-term preservation and continued farm use of

the extensive farm fields, through which the North Peterskill stream winds.

This is the seventh farm that OSI has protected in the Rondout Valley, bringing the total acreage of farms it has protected to over 1,250 acres.

### NEW PALTZ LANDS IN VIEWSHED OF THE SHAWANGUNKS PROTECTED

On January 20, 2010 OSI and the Town of New Paltz partnered on a scenic conservation project. Together with the town of New Paltz, the Open Space Institute has acquired a conservation easement that will protect 52 acres of open fields, meadows and wildlife habitat in the scenic Ulster County town.

The acquisition of the easement is the first transaction to use funds from the landmark \$2 million Clean Water and Open Space Protection Bond Act that New Paltz voters approved three years ago. Based on the scenic, agricultural and ecological values of the property—a landscaping nursery known for its open fields and meadows—the New Paltz Clean Water and Open Space Protection Commission identified the property as a high priority for protection. Using bond funds, it is sharing with the Open Space Conservancy, OSI's land acquisition affiliate, the purchase price of the \$200,000 easement.

The property is distinctive for its expansive view across open, wet meadows along the course of the Kleinekil Creek at the base of the wooded Shawangunk Ridge. The easement was conveyed by the property owners, Vernon and Barbara Palmateer, who have owned and operated the nursery on the adjoining property since 1972.

"When we purchased this place 37 years ago we had a good idea of keeping a portion of it forever wild," said Vernon Palmateer. "We think it's a great thing for the town. And now all the little critters that live down in the fields here—they might not know it, but they're going to have a place to live."

Adopted in 2006, the Clean Water and Open Space Protection Bond Act marked the first time that Ulster County residents authorized the creation of funding for open space conservation. Similar acts were passed in the Ulster County communities of Marbletown and Gardiner around the same time.

The Wallkill Valley, where the parcel is located, is the northern terminus of an immense "ridge and valley" system that starts in the southern Appalachians and runs northeasterly for hundreds of miles. At its northern terminus in Ulster County, the Wallkill Valley and its sibling, the Rondout Valley, straddle the Shawangunk Ridge on the east and west. These valleys and the ridge are the epicenter of a substantial amount of conservation work undertaken by OSI and other

### Protecting farmland in the valleys protects the view from the Shawangunk ridge.

continued on next page



# Wild Heart

Karen Schneller-McDonald

Recently I brought my two granddaughters, who live in Colorado, to the Verkeederkill Falls. This is a very special place to me; it's also, as the sign proclaims, "One of the Last Great Places on Earth!" I was fresh from a long discussion with their parents about the educational and communication wonders of new technology, i.e. the ipod, ipad, twitter, etc. My daughter-in-law believes that kids today have already evolved beyond previous generations in terms of information retrieval and assimilation, and communications skills. The wonders of our future can only be imagined as our technological capacity grows.

I left the discussion mildly depressed. In my field, ecology and conservation biology, evolution means something more. I see increased evidence of our inability as a culture to effectively protect our most valuable natural resources based on the availability of information alone. In fact, from where I'm sitting, I see land-use decisions being made in the absence of science-based information, even though more and more of that information is available to decision makers. Sometimes the lament is that there is too much information or you can't tell which information is true or not, or the political will to protect natural resources is just not present.

In my experience, there is more to the equation of knowledge + information = environmental protection. That missing piece? A day at the Verkeederkill with Hannah and Joelle made it obvious to me. It's heart.

The missing piece is an emotional pull, the feeling of the wild. Somewhere there has to be a personal connection to some element of the natural world that makes enough of an impression to last and to motivate. You can't 'get it' just from reading about it, or watching a video. You have to be there, to catch that glimpse of the unexpected—something large as a bear, or small as a squirrel, shuffling in the brush, pausing for just a second to catch your eye before disappearing; or the stunning color of a tiger swallowtail alight on a branch of mountain laurel. Or the exhilaration of a splash of cold clear mountain stream water after a hot sweaty hike, the smell of the ferns, the soft coolness of a mound of green moss at the stream's edge... As Richard Louv, in *Last Child in the Woods* so aptly puts it:

*"...while knowledge about nature is vital, passion is the long-distance fuel for the struggle to save what is left of our natural heritage...Passion does not arrive on videotape or on a CD; passion is personal. Passion is lifted from the earth itself by the muddy hands of the young; it travels along grass-stained sleeves to the heart."*

At eight and ten Hanna and Joelle are accomplished athletes and students, quite adept with their ipads. Their lives are structured to allow little time for just "being" out of doors, and though they hike, it is always in order to arrive at a destination. There is always an itinerary.

Well, this time we took them for a pretty rigorous, meandering hike, some of it bushwhacking (no small matter in mountain laurel) some of it climbing boulders in the streambed and along the rock face of the Ridge. The top of the falls was impressive, and they were especially interested in that sign: "What does that mean, "Last Great Place" and why is it called that?" My reply was short; mostly I let the Ridge work its magic. At that point, my job was merely to show the way, guide them to the experience. The swimming hole was gratifyingly awesome! It knocked their socks off, literally, and all I had to do was smile and take pictures, and jump in myself!

There were even a few early blueberries. How good can it get?

Then the kids wanted to explore upstream, and we entered that magical Verkeederkill "tunnel" of overhanging bushes, cushy bright green mosses, and stepping stone slabs of rock with just enough running water to challenge our footsteps and keep us cool. They left me sunning on a flat rock, and wanted go a little further just on their own. I let them have their own small adventure in the stream channel.

I didn't sell it. I didn't push it. All I did was get them there, and leave the door open for them to discover the magic themselves. Days later, after their return to Colorado, the message came back: the pool and the stream at the top of the falls was the best part of the whole trip. I have no idea if Hannah and Jo, as adults, will care enough to do what they can to preserve and protect our spectacular, special wild places. Do they know that the future of clear clean water and healthy air is in their hands? Do they understand that protection of the world that harbors the flash of wild, bright eyes through the leaves will be up to them? Maybe not yet. But, eventually, I hope so!

In the meantime, I want to speak for the value of passion about our natural world. I want to encourage those who understand the value of unpolluted air and water and the survival of all the other creatures that share the earth, the FEEL of it all, to take any opportunity however small to show that world to a child. It doesn't have to be a rare species, it can be a bird at a backyard feeder, a praying mantis in a grassy meadow, small fish in a stream, a firefly at dusk.... What do you love most about the world of the wild? Why do you want to protect it? Share that. The possibilities are endless.

*Karen Schneller-McDonald, a native of the Town of Shawangunk, has over 26 years experience in natural resources planning, wetlands delineation and mitigation, biodiversity, habitat assessment, environmental impact review and analysis. In the past 8 years she has worked with more than 25 towns in the mid-Hudson valley as an ecological consultant and wetland specialist with Hickory Creeks Consulting, LLC.*



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## OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE ACQUISITIONS...continued from previous page

conservation groups over the last 30 years. In that time, OSI has protected more than 26,000 acres on the Shawangunk Ridge and nearly 3,000 acres of farmland in the Wallkill and Rondout valleys.

"The preservation of this property, using Open Space bond funds for the first time, expands the protection of landscapes that are important to OSI—the Shawangunk Ridge and the Wallkill Valley," said OSI President Joe Martens. "It protects important views along Mountain Rest Road and prime habitat along the Kleinekill."

The protected property is nestled on the eastern side of the Shawangunk Ridge, forming part of the scenic backdrop of the village of New Paltz. The property has more than 1,000 feet of frontage along the Kleinekill (known locally as the Humpo Creek), and falls within an area designated by New York State as an "Important Animal Habitat Area" for several varieties of rare turtles and salamanders. A wooded area on the property provides connectivity between the lowland and ridge forest and protected lands.

The property is a half-mile west of the Jewett and Khosla farms, two Huguenot farms that were protected by OSC and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust in 2006 as part of the "Two Farms" campaign.

## INSECTS

Karen Schneller-McDonald

Hidden among the leaves of familiar trees is an incredible variety of native insect life. Rarely seen, these myriads are busy eating and being eaten, powering ecosystems throughout our ridge and valley.

Incredibly diverse as a group, insects are essential for healthy ecosystems, providing services that include: pollinating plants, returning nutrients in dead plants and animals to the soil, keeping populations of insect herbivores in check through predation, aerating and enriching the soil, and providing food (directly or indirectly) for most other animals, including songbirds. While our attention is captured by news about incredible environmental damage by certain “alien” insects (e.g. woolly adelgid, emerald ash borer) that have arrived here from other parts of the world, we usually don’t hear much about the importance of protecting native insect life.

How is this great variety of insects sustained? Have you ever wondered how many different kinds of insects can live in our native trees and shrubs, and whether the same number of insects are supported by shrubs or trees that have been introduced to our region from other places, such as Southeast Asia or China? How is information about insects and their tree preferences related to biodiversity conservation on the lands surrounding the Shawangunk Ridge?

A recently published work by the head of the Entomology Department at the University of Delaware sheds some light on these questions while providing homeowner-friendly guidelines for how to conserve biodiversity in residential neighborhoods. *Bringing Nature Home: How you Can Sustain Wildlife with Native Plants* by Dr. Doug Tallamy, describes biodiversity in terms of insects and their place in the ecosystems that sustain us. Dr. Tallamy, who recently presented his work at the Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies in Millbrook, states that “our native insects will not be able to survive on alien plant species.” His work supports and promotes the use of native plants in landscaping and the native insect species that depend on them.

Protected lands are extremely important, but they alone are not enough to prevent significant regional decreases in biodiversity over time. This is in part due to the extent of habitat loss across the overall landscape; to maintain viable populations of species it is essential to maintain habitat connections among a mosaic of habitat patches. The Shawangunk Ridge, like other high-biodiversity areas (or “biodiversity hubs”), does not exist in isolation. The biodiversity of the Ridge affects and is affected by its surroundings; its connects to habitat patches (comprised of native plants) throughout the surrounding landscape. Increasingly, land development results in the removal of native plants, which are all too often replaced by ornamental trees, shrubs and flowers that are not native to our area.

The insects that live here did not evolve to feed on these non-native plants. “Every plant species protects its leaves with a species-specific mixture of nasty chemicals. With few exceptions, only insect species that have shared a long evolutionary history with a particular plant lineage have developed the physiological adaptations required to digest the chemicals in their host’s leaves. They have specialized over time to eat only the plants sharing those particular chemicals. When we

present insects from Pennsylvania with plants that evolved on another continent, chances are those insects will be unable to eat them. We used to think this was good. Kill all insects before they eat our plants! But an insect that cannot eat part of a leaf cannot fulfill its role in the food web.... My research has shown that alien ornamentals support 29 times less biodiversity than do native ornamentals.” (Tallamy, *Bringing Nature Home*).

This research includes studies of the number of different species of butterflies and moths that are supported by various native and non-native trees, shrubs and flowers. By substituting non native plant species for those that evolved here in the Hudson Valley, we reduce the

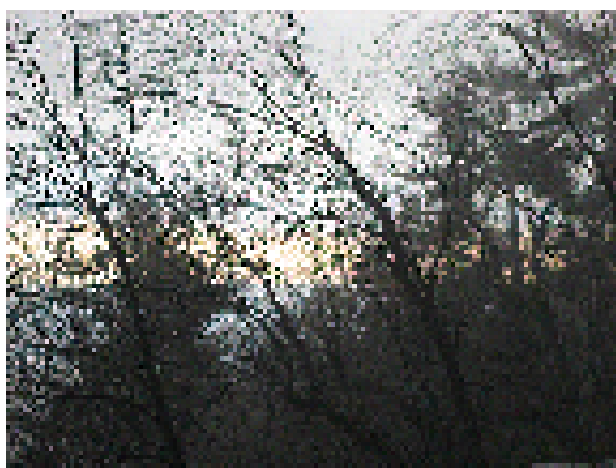
amount of plant food available for the insects that form the base of the food web. Extensive information including planting recommendations and lists of native and non native plants with the number of insect species they can support, can be found at the website: [bringingnaturehome.net](http://bringingnaturehome.net)

Dr. Tallamy writes that “a plant that has fed nothing has not done its job,” but this idea is the opposite of what we expect when we plant gardens where the object is to prevent plants from being consumed by insects. The cumulative impact of all of these insect resistant planted gardens and landscapes on native insect populations and on the birds and other species that

depend on them as a food source becomes significant when you multiply each household’s garden/plantings times the thousands of homes that are scattered across the countryside. For a national context, *Bringing Nature Home* provides the following information:

*The population of the U.S., now over 300 million people, has doubled since most of us were kids and continues to grow by 8,640 people per day. We have connected all of our developments with 4 million miles of roads—the paved surface is nearly five times the size of New Jersey. So far we have planted over 62,500 sq. miles, some 40 million acres, in lawn. Each weekend we mow an area 8 times the size of New Jersey to within 1 inch and then congratulate ourselves on a job well done. And it’s not like those little woodlots and “open spaces” we have not paved over or manicured are pristine. Nearly all are second-growth forests that have been thoroughly invaded by alien plants such as autumn olive, multiflora rose, Oriental bittersweet, and Japanese honeysuckle. Over 3400 species of alien plants have invaded 100 million acres of the U.S., and that area is expected to double in the next 5 years.*

To create insect-free gardens, people have planted non native trees and shrubs (generally inedible for many insects), implemented designs with less plant diversity (i.e. a mix of trees, shrubs, and ground cover), and used a variety of insecticides. As a result, our landscaping and gardening efforts may result in nearly sterile systems (including lawns) that cannot support the array of native insects needed to provide the base for the region’s biodiversity. Ironically this formula creates gardens that are more susceptible to insect pest outbreaks. One reason for this is the destruction of insects that eat other insects, along with the insect pests themselves.



The basic premise behind *Bringing Nature Home* is that we can significantly improve biodiversity conservation throughout residential subdivisions and other areas if we pay more attention to what we are planting and create functioning, sustainable garden ecosystems. Research on this subject has only begun. But with biodiversity decreasing all around us, what have we got to lose by landscaping with native species. The following are examples of what we may gain in terms of some of our more visible species: butterflies and songbirds.

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**Planting native” helps to protect the regional identity of our communities, and the rural character that is so important to our quality of life.**

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In nature everything is connected. A summary of research on the relationships between tree/shrub species and butterflies and moths in eastern deciduous forests indicates that the type of trees you plant can make a big difference in the insects available for birds. Oaks head the list, with the potential to support more than five hundred species of butterflies and moths; native species of willows, cherries, plum, and birch each can support more than 400 species. Butterflies and moths represent more than half of all insect herbivores in the US, and are an important component in the diet of many birds. While some alien plants provide berries or fruit for birds, these food sources are used after nesting season. During reproduction and nesting, most birds (including nestlings) require insect protein and fat. If alien plants have replaced native plants there will be fewer insects available to support birds during reproduction, resulting in reduced nesting success and fewer birds in future. By encouraging native plants that provide food for a good supply of insects, we are increasing the chance that some of our most loved birds—including birds of conservation concern—will continue to thrive in our area.

An aerial view of the Shawangunk ridge reveals the extent of surrounding development and land disturbance. To sustain the biodiversity of the ridge it is important that these surrounding lands retain ecological value, which in turn depends upon native plants and insects at the base of the food chain. As *Bringing Nature Home* asserts, it is possible to produce a residential landscape that includes so many more native plants than are typically used in traditional development practices.

And in addition to its biological value, “planting native” helps to protect the regional identity of our communities, and the rural character that is so important to our quality of life. 🏡

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

*Butterfly Gardens that function as effective butterfly habitat require two types of plants—species that provide nectar for adults, and species that provide food for butterfly larvae (caterpillars). If we only plant non-native butterfly bush (Buddleja species), not one species of butterfly can use this bush as a larval host plant. Butterflies only lay eggs on the plants to which their larvae are specifically adapted. In contrast, milkweeds are a food source for butterflies and their larvae. Cone-flowers and black-eyed susan provide similar dual roles. To continue to enjoy butterflies, we will need to replace native host plants that are removed when land is developed. This is especially important in lands that connect with our best wild places, like the Ridge.*

# Bird Talk



## Perigrinations in the Shawangunks

Tom Sarro

The peregrine falcon breeding season had its ups and downs this year, but I am happy to report that for the first time in who knows-how-many years we had eleven falcons on the

Shawangunk cliffs at one time.

The eyrie on Millbrook Mountain produced three chicks. An interesting feature of this eyrie was that it appeared all three chicks were of different ages. The youngest chick appeared about a week behind the older ones and at one point was located on a ledge 30' below the scrape. I was fortunate enough to see the older two as fledglings, perched on top of the cliff while still being fed by mom and dad. The younger chick was still too young to fly and the timing of my sightings was such that I did not see it fledge; I presumed it did since the adults were continuing to feed it.

The Trapps eyrie was another story. This eyrie produced four chicks and all was progressing nicely. The week prior to Memorial Day I spotted all four on the eyrie ledge and they appeared healthy and active. On the Saturday morning of Memorial Day weekend I received a call that one of the chicks was found on the carriage road alive but unable to stand up. This bird was taken to a rehabilitation center but unfortunately did not survive. On the same day at the base of the cliff a pile of immature falcon feathers was found, apparently the work of a predator. The following week, however, I did see two immature falcons perched on a snag at the top of the cliff. In summary we had at least four chicks fledge and very possibly a fifth.

Reconnaissance climbs to the Millbrook and Trapps eyries were performed following the fledging of young. At the Millbrook eyrie an egg with a portion of its shell removed revealed a developing embryo. Had this chick developed fully we would have had four young as we did at the Trapps eyrie. Also recovered from the site was a small sample of prey remains. The Trapps eyrie had no egg or shell remains but a fair number of identifiable feathers (bluejay, flicker, and redstart) and brown and grayish feathers (mourning dove, rock dove and tufted titmouse?) were recovered.

Observations for this coming season will begin in late January 2011. Anyone interested in participating should contact me at either sarro@msmc.edu or 845-569-3132.

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*Tom Sarro is a professor of biology at Mount St. Mary College in Newburgh, New York. He has coordinated the Peregrine Project for the Mohonk Preserve's Daniel Smiley Research Center for many years.*



## Janet Kern: New Board Member

“I was born in NYC, grew up in Yonkers, and graduated magna cum laude from the College of Wooster in Ohio, with majors in philosophy and political science. After college, I served for a year in the domestic peace Corps VISTA in a Florida migrant labor camp, doing what little I could to improve migrant workers’ lives, and supporting the Farmworkers Union—organizing efforts of Cesar Chavez. While I was there, the Office of Economic Opportunity sent an Oscar-winning documentary director and his crew to Florida to make a VISTA recruitment commercial featuring me. I was impressed by their work and since a philosophy major clearly has no defined professional goals, promptly decided on a career in film.



I stillwork as a freelance film technician with NYC Local #161 IATSE, primarily on television commercials. I produce/direct independent documentary films. It

has recently become clear that my chosen subjects—an Eagle Scout who chose prison when he was drafted to fight in Vietnam, the journey of a Russian delegation down the Mississippi during which by receiving the Russians we defined ourselves, and my current PBS documentary about the Nez Perce Tribe and its horses, in Idaho—are all an attempt to describe what it means to be an American. A recent journey to Turkmenistan in search of an exotic horse featured in “Horse Tribe” left me especially mindful of the privileges and obligations of my citizenship.

My mother bought an abandoned farmhouse in the Shawangunks in the late 1960s. A few years later, I brought an Appaloosa colt to her little homestead, and became more of a country girl with every ride we took on the Ridge. “Gorgeous Georgie O’Keefe” was an agile and lovely and confident creature; a quarter century ago his flared nostrils and arched neck made it clear that bears were residing, again and at last, in Spruce Glen.

Mom’s little farmhouse in Gardiner is my home now..

The fight to Save the Ridge (filmed but not yet edited) led to my election as a Gardiner Town Board member, 2006-2009. The very first vote I was honored to cast was in support of the just-written Shawangunk Ridge Protection Zoning. I now serve on the Gardiner Environmental Committee and the newly formed Gardiner Arts Steering Committee.

The Ridge, this mute and rugged “last great place,” needs all the care we Friends of the Shawangunks can give. The earth would not be the same without them.”

## Georgette Weir on Board too!

Georgette Weir of Poughkeepsie is a long-time member of Friends of the Shawangunks and many other outdoor/environmental organizations that focus on the Ridge, including the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and The Nature Conservancy. As chair of the Mid-Hudson Chapter of the Sierra Club in the late 1980s-early 1990s, she was active in the efforts to preserve Lake Minnewaska, eventually representing the Sierra Club on the citizens advisory committee to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) during the master planning process after the state acquired the lake property. She and her husband, Jean-Claude Fouere, maintain a portion of the Blueberry Run trail at Minnewaska through the Trail Conference. They also are frequent hike leaders on the Ridge for the Mid-Hudson Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club. Georgette’s professional career has been in non-profit communications. At present, she is communications manager for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference.



## Labor Day in the Shawangunks

Annie O’Neill

On Sunday of Labor Day Weekend I took my camera to see who was visiting the area and enjoying the recreational opportunities while adding to the economic impact!



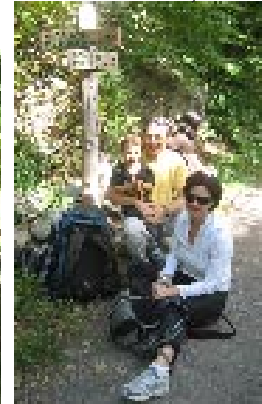
Boulderers from New Jersey visit the Gunks most weekends in good weather



Anir who works for Capgemini is living in N.J.

Stefan and Kasia Wisniewski with their son are from Poland and the U.S., and rented in the area because of the Gunks

Korean hikers on their way to Sky Top





## Shawangunk Ridge Preserves Boost Area Economy by Over \$12 Million Annually

For decades, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point Preserve have protected the area's most important natural landscapes and provided outstanding educational, research and recreational opportunities. A new study has confirmed that the three publicly accessible park/preserves also serve as important economic engines, creating jobs, driving tourism spending and contributing \$12.3 million to the local economy.

The *Study of the Economic Impact on the Local Economy of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point Preserve*, conducted by Business Opportunities Management Consulting of Rensselaer, N.Y., used Money Generation Models (MGM) developed for the National Park Service to determine the economic impacts that Minnewaska, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point have on the region, driven by visitor spending, employee spending, operations and capital expenses.

**KEY FINDINGS OF THE STUDY INCLUDE:**

- ◆ Minnewaska, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point host a combined 392,659 visitors who spend over \$13 million annually
- ◆ Annual local sales taxes generated by Minnewaska, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point total \$459,000
- ◆ Over 350 local jobs are supported by the three park/preserves
- ◆ The total economic impact of Minnewaska, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point is \$12,307,593

"We are in the business of protecting the land and providing a place for people to enjoy nature," said Glenn Hoagland, Executive Director of Mohonk Preserve. "But we're also part of the green economy, contributing to the fiscal health of the community while doing what we do best."

"This study highlights that protecting the environment and supporting the economy are not at odds, and that our preserves are an important part of the economic fabric of our region," said Cara Lee, Director of The Nature Conservancy's Shawangunk Ridge Program.

Ulster County officials also acknowledge the importance of the three park/preserves to the area's overall economic health.

"As this study indicates, the Shawangunk Ridge park/preserves are protecting areas that are vital to our economy and quality of life. I commend Minnewaska, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point for highlighting the economic impact that these breathtaking open spaces have on our community," said County Executive Mike Hein.

"The park/preserves are great examples of 'clean and green' contributors to the economy," said Ulster County Comptroller Elliott Auerbach. "In addition to benefitting the local tourism market, this study demonstrates their positive impact on jobs and sales taxes."

Other recent reports have also reinforced the bottom-line value of parks and open space preservation. In March 2010, New York State Comptroller Thomas P. DiNapoli issued *Economic Benefits of Open Space Preservation*, which noted that "rather than conflicting with other goals, open space preservation can provide significant economic benefits." The report goes on to describe the benefits of open space preservation on regional economic growth through promoting industry, such as agriculture, forestry and tourism, contributing to increased land and property values, maintaining aesthetic values and offering outdoor recreational opportunities.

A March 2009 study, *The NYS Park System: An Economic Asset to the Empire State*, commissioned by Parks & Trails New York, found that overall, state parks produce about \$1.9 billion in annual sales for private businesses in the areas around the parks, with about 40% coming from tourists outside the local communities who might not otherwise visit the areas. The study also found that the benefit-to-cost ratio of maintaining New York State Parks is more than 5-to-1 — with more than \$5.00 in benefits for every \$1.00 in costs.

While the challenges of the current economic climate have threatened many open spaces, the economic impact study of Minnewaska, Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point demonstrates that these three park/preserves are environmentally and economically significant, sustaining jobs and supporting the region's tourism economy, while also protecting and preserving the rich natural and cultural heritage of the Shawangunk Ridge.



Top: Preserve Ranger Andrew Bajardi talking to visitors  
Bottom: Climbers in the Uberfall area



Climber James Schmidt visiting from Harrisburg, Pa.



A bouldering enthusiast taking care of his son at the Buddha



Mountain House mountain bikers on a guided tour. Riders are from as far away as China, North Carolina, etc.

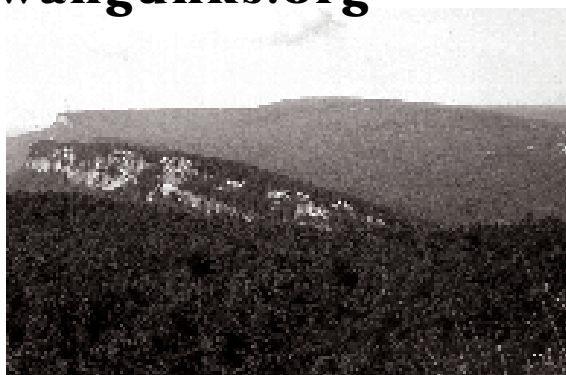
All photos by Arnie O'Neill

# Friends Goes Online

[www.Shawangunks.org](http://www.Shawangunks.org)

Check out Friends of the Shawangunks website at [www.Shawangunks.org](http://www.Shawangunks.org)

It has a back issues of our newsletter *Shawangunk Watch*, links to dozens of Shawangunk sites, updates on ridge projects and threats, and more than 80 photos showing natural features of the ridge. The site also provides an easy way to join Friends, contact us, or send a donation using a credit card.



FRIENDS of the SHAWANGUNKS  
Preserving Open Space Since 1963

**Friends of the Shawangunks, Inc.** is a not-for-profit organization working to preserve open space in the Shawangunks.

**The Shawangunk Conservancy, Inc.** is a not-for-profit land conservancy.

Friends of the Shawangunks  
P.O. Box 270  
Accord, NY 12404

e-mail: [info@shawangunks.org](mailto:info@shawangunks.org)

## Friends Tee Shirt Sale - Save 30%

From now until the end of 2010 our tee shirts will be \$15, and that includes shipping.

Our new shirt is 100% cotton, and features a portion of the NY/NJ Trail map so you can never be lost if you hike in that area! Go to our website: [shawangunks.org](http://shawangunks.org) to get an order form.



### PLEASE CONSIDER A CONTRIBUTION

There is still work to be done protecting Open Space and it is critical to be able to do it now!

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

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Editor: Annie O'Neill  
Design and production:  
Annie O'Neill,

A copy of FOS and The Shawangunk Conservancy's latest financial report may be obtained by writing to the Office of the Attorney General, Charities Bureau, 120 Broadway, New York, NY 10271, or by writing to The Shawangunk Conservancy.

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Matching Grants: If the organization for which you work has a matching grant program, just send us the forms and we will do the rest. IBM matching checks must be made out to The Shawangunk Conservancy.