

SHAWANGUNK WATCH

Winter 2007 Preserving Open Space in the Shawangunks Volume 12 #2

Friends of the Shawangunks & The Shawangunk Conservancy

The Shawangunks in 2007

The Shawangunks, as we know them today, have grown substantially in the last 25 years. The 52-mile long ridge—the Northern and Southern Shawangunks—from Rosendale to the New Jersey border near Port Jervis is in protective and watchful hands. Almost 44,000 acres of land on and around the Shawangunk Ridge has been preserved to date. In the Northern Shawangunks we have 40+ square miles of open space.

From north to south we have the Mohonk Preserve, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, the Sam's Point Preserve, the Shawangunk Ridge State Forest, Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area and Huckleberry Ridge State Forest.

Minnewaska State Park Preserve is now 21,006 acres in size. It is the largest public park preserve in New York State. This park was assembled through 37 separate acquisitions, ranging from the 6,995-acre acquisition of the Lake Awosting tract in December of 1971, to a 1/3 acre acquisition on Jenny Lane in the early 1970s. Recent acquisitions include a 3,800-acre portion of the Sam's Point Preserve which was transferred into the Minnewaska State Park Preserve last March; 2,518 acres of the Awosting Reserve which was acquired by Open Space Institute and Trust for Public Land and transferred into the park preserve; two parcels on the northern banks of the Saunderskill; two parcels on Route 44-55 as one leaves the park heading for Kerhonksen; lands on Rock Haven Road; and several tracts of land in the vicinity of the ice caves and Verkeerderkill Falls.

The Sam's Point Preserve bucked current trends by shrinking in size with the transfer of 3,800 acres from the Sam's Point Preserve to Minnewaska State Park Preserve, reducing the Sam's Point Preserve to 1,045 acres in size. This was done in large part to put these lands back on the tax rolls (Minnewaska State Park is a taxpayer), a promise OSI made to the village of Ellenville. In an unusual arrangement, these land were conveyed subject to a strict conservation easement held by OSI which limits improvement to the ecologically sensitive pitch pine barrens.

In the Southern Shawangunks the Shawangunk Ridge State Forest, the Basha Kill Wildlife Management Area, and the Huckleberry Ridge State Forest are part of an area that has been a real success story. The three units of state ownership south of Route 52 protect nearly 11,000 acres of land on and adjacent to the Shawangunk Ridge. In the last two years OSI has protected another 730 acres in all three areas. OSI also made two conservation loans to the NY-NJ TC to enable them to protect lands in the Shawangunk Ridge State Forest and the Huckleberry Ridge State Forest.



Significant achievements have been made over recent years. Three large preserves—two private, one public—now straddle the Shawangunk ridge. The western reaches of the park preserve now stretch west to the Rondout, and south to Sam's Point. Major Shawangunk landscapes such as Napanoch Point, Indian Rock, the ice caves, and the Mine Hole Hollow, are now permanently protected. A stunning intact parcel of wilderness land that is now more than 30,000 acres in size, including a vast roadless area south of Lake Awosting and north of Lake Maratanza has been assembled.

Some day we might be able to look forward to a contiguous band of conservation land along the spine of the Shawangunk Ridge and along the Basha Kill that stretches from Rosendale all the way to Otisville, with a protected trail corridor linking Otisville to Port Jervis.

In the shadow of the Shawangunks ridge, OSI wants to protect significant amounts of farmland in both the Wallkill and the Rondout Valleys. Over the last two years six farms totaling over 1,500 acres have been protected.

With new projects on the horizon, we look forward to 2008!

Friends Files Lawsuit against Gardiner ZBA

Friends of the Shawangunks filed a lawsuit on September 24 against the Town of Gardiner Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) and Werner and Joan Wustrau over the granting by the ZBA of four variances requested by the Wustraus and over the ZBA's failure to abide by the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). It should be noted this is the first test of Gardiner's Shawangunk Ridge Protection (SRP) zoning regulations adopted in 2006, and would thus set a precedent.

The Wustraus own a landlocked parcel of more that 40 acres that extends into the area between the Millbrook and Bayards cliffs. They have a right of way to their property but wanted to construct a driveway to a proposed house site. The location of the property and the steepness of the slope to the site present a number of problems that prevented the proposed driveway from meeting the SRP standards. The ZBA was asked to granted four variances because:

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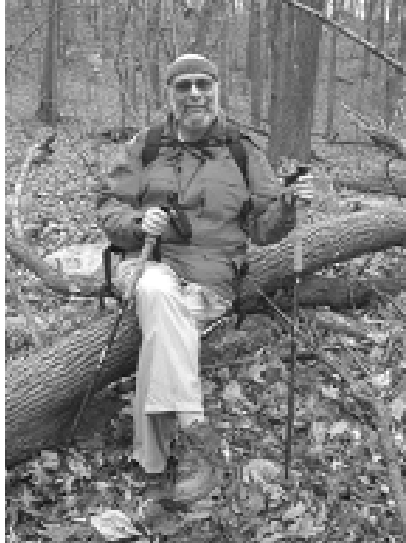
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NEIL ZIMMERMAN ELECTED NEW PRESIDENT OF FRIENDS OF THE SHAWANGUNKS

By Tom Nozkowski

H. Neil Zimmerman was recently elected the fifth president of the Friends of the Shawangunks and The Shawangunk Conservancy. Zimmerman resides in the Town of Rochester and New York City, and is longtime member of Friends of the Shawangunks. He has served on the Friends board since 2001. He succeeds Keith LaBudde, who completed 18 years as President of the organizations.



Neil initially came to the Shawangunks as a hiker and advocate for conservation. He served as the president of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference for twelve years. Prior to that, he served as board member and map chair for them. In that role, his first project was the production of their highly successful Catskill Trails Map Set (1978). Neil and the NY/NJTC were then approached by the Mohonk Preserve and asked to help create a Shawangunk Map Set. Now

in its sixth edition, these maps have become essential for anyone interested in walking on and understanding the geography of our ridge.

As Neil tells it, he had no real experience in the Shawangunks until he started on the map project. Each week he would set off to check the map drafts with his longtime hiking partner Stella Green. At the end of each hike they would turn to each other and say “that had to be the best hike ever”— yet each weekly walk would be more stunning than the last. There were not enough superlatives to describe this landscape and Neil decided that the Shawangunks were the place for him.

His favorite jaunt is to ride his mountain bike to Lake Awosting and then hike the Long Path to Mud Pond and, when time permits, continue on to Verkeerderkill Falls.

Neil has served as the Chair of the American Hiking Society, as a Governor of the Adirondack Mountain Club, and as a member of the Forest Preserve Advisory Committee of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. He was a member of the Minnewaska State Park Master Plan Advisory Committee, formed by State Parks shortly after the Lake Minnewaska addition. He is the co-author of two books in the popular *Fifty Hikes* series: the Lower Hudson Valley and New Jersey. He has just completed a revised edition of the Hudson Valley book to be published in 2008.

Neil works as the chief librarian of the Population Council in New York City. The Council conducts research worldwide to improve policies, programs, and products in three areas: HIV and AIDS; poverty, gender, and youth; and reproductive health. He is a graduate of Penn State and Long Island University.

Neil says although this appears to be a bit of a quiet moment here in the Shawangunks there is always something bubbling up that has to be monitored. Certainly the pressures of development on and around the Ridge have never been greater and will continue to represent the greatest challenge. Friends has grown increasingly concerned over recent years with the situation in the Southern Shawangunks and Neil hopes we can play a helpful role down there.

Zimmerman comes to this leadership position at Friends with a long and successful history as an activist and an advocate for the environment and the community. He would enjoy hearing from any Friends members who would like to share their concerns about Shawangunk issues with him.

Welcome Neil!


Thomas Nozkowski is a painter who has had over sixty one-person shows of his work since 1979. His most recent exhibitions include an installation of new work at la Biennale di Venezia (2007), a mid-career survey at the Ludwig Museum in Koblenz, Germany (2007) and one-person exhibitions at Max Protetch Gallery and BravinLee Projects, New York (2006). The New York Studio School presented a twenty-five year survey of his drawings in January 2003. Forthcoming one-person exhibitions include PaceWildenstein Gallery in New York City (April, 2008) and the Douglas Hyde Gallery of Trinity College, Dublin (June, 2008). His work is represented in the collections of the Addison Gallery of American Art, The Brooklyn Museum, The Corcoran Gallery of Art, The High Museum of Art, The Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, The Museum of Modern Art and The Phillips Collection among many others. He is a Guggenheim Fellow and has received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Medal of Merit (2006). He is Professor of Painting at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University and lives in the Hudson Valley of New York State.

FRIENDS LAWSUIT

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- ◆ The proposed driveway was 3,130 feet long, but the code sets a limit of 2,500 feet.
- ◆ SRP regulations prohibit construction of more than 250 feet of driveway on slopes of between 20% and 30 %; the Wustrau’s proposal called for 1,031 feet of driveway on such slopes.
- ◆ The proposal also called for construction of 200 feet on slopes greater than 30%, although the regulations prohibit construction on slopes of more than 30% under any circumstance.
- ◆ The grading and cutting required was well in excess of the 8-foot-wide limitation.
- ◆ The violations of SEQRA were numerous. Most significant was the approval of the driveway without considering the plans for the house. This is known under SEQRA as “segmentation,” and is clearly prohibited because if a developer breaks a project down into small enough pieces, it is possible that no individual piece will violate the law when the project as a whole would. A 3-2 majority chose to ignore the provisions of SEQRA.

Once our lawsuit had been filed, the Wustraus claimed in an article in the *New Paltz Times* that they had no intention of building a house at the end of the driveway, in spite of including a house site in their plans and discussing the house site in their presentation to the ZBA. But, having been presented with plans that included a house site, we believe the ZBA was required to do an environmental review of both the driveway and the house at the same time.

Friends of the Shawangunks decided to bring this suit not only because the ZBA had clearly not done its job properly, but because approval of this project would set an unacceptable precedent for other property owners to use for developments that would adversely impact the ridge. We are asking the court to annul the ZBA’s action and to prohibit the construction of the proposed driveway. 

WATER LEVELS DROP IN SKY LAKES

By Maureen Radl

An unusually dry summer and autumn, with precipitation deficits as far back as May, resulted in drops in water levels in the major lakes on the Shawangunk Ridge. According to Paul Huth, director of the Daniel Smiley Research Center, Mohonk had dropped more than three feet by November, while Minnewaska and Awosting had each lost about a foot. The most striking loss occurred at Maratanza with a drop of 10 feet.

The five sky lakes are so-called because they lie upon the top of the ridge on the bedrock of faults or glacially-gouged depressions. They all obtain water from rain and small tributary watersheds with sub surface seepage in times of good flow. The area feeding Mohonk is 43 acres; Minnewaska, 6 acres; Awosting, 270 acres; Mud Pond, 26 acres; and Maratanza, 170 acres. Without sufficient precipitation, these lakes lose valuable input from other sources.

Although this was a dry summer it did not break any records, as did the severe drought in this area in the 1960s. Huth reported, however, that the eight ground springs which the center monitors had gone dry by early summer. Lakes naturally lose water in the summer through evaporation when there is low humidity, bright sun and a breeze. This, combined with a lack of rain over an extended period of time, can quickly reduce water surface in these lakes which do not receive water for other sources.

Decline in water is always a complex issue, and the startling drop at Maratanza, which is the only lake drawn upon for public usage, is a case in point. Management at the Sam's Point Preserve has been monitoring levels at the lake since visitors first became dismayed by the diminishing water. Because it is shallow—seventeen feet at its deepest point—it is not unlike a saucer sitting on the tabletop ridge. Any drop in water level rapidly reveals the lake bottom as the water retreats. Originally, Maratanza had been a six- to ten-acre shallow body of water smaller than Mud Pond. It was described by turn-of-the-century botanists as a small warm-water pond with water lilies and muskrat lodges. This year, even the foundation of the hotel, built on its shore in 1902 but destroyed by fire a few years later, resurfaced when the water receded. In 1922 Maratanza and its surrounding acreage were purchased by the Village of Ellenville. The lake was dammed and dredged, increasing its surface to 40 acres, creating a reservoir to provide water for the village—a function which it still performs today. Water is usually drawn daily from the lake and is fed by gravity into a filtration system along with water from other sources for the Village.

According to Elliot Auerbach, Ellenville Village Manager, several factors contributed to the decline of water in Maratanza this summer. First, the natural lack of rain reduced the amount of water in the lake as well as Ellenville's water supply from its other sources. This necessitated the Village to draw more from the lake as a secondary water source. In addition, a leak developed in one of the Village's holding tanks which rapidly dropped from thirty to ten feet. The Village hired a water consultant to evaluate the system and has begun to rectify the problems. According to Michael Avery, of the Ellenville Water Department, the Village will not draw upon Maratanza again until it is at full capacity.

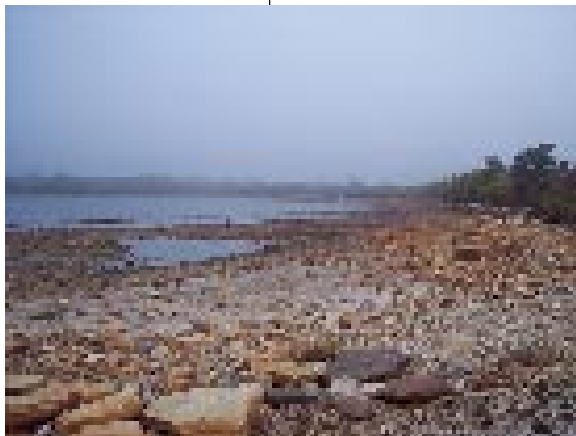
Fortunately, rains in late October and early November have begun to replenish the lakes and ground water is again evident. In addition, vegetation shuts down at this time of year and does not utilize as much water as it does during the growing season. Although last winter was unusually dry, Paul Huth predicts that the Northeast is moving into a moderate La Nina weather pattern which should produce normal precipitation this winter.

Even though the lakes may eventually regain their original levels, this year's decline draws attention to the fact that water is a finite resource. Maratanza's sudden drop was of particular concern to the residents of Cragmoor, some of whom have had to drill wells as deep as 430 feet and others who have wells which are running low. They

are also concerned that the groundwater levels of the mountaintop hamlet might be negatively impacted by the water demands of the proposed Mahamudra Buddhist Hermitage project, and they have taken their concerns to the Wawarsing Planning Board.

To all of us who reside on the ridge or in the surrounding valleys, fluctuating water supplies are a warning that, even without additional development, we need to reevaluate our attitudes toward its consumption. According to Paul Huth, the average per person consumption today is 200 gallons, whereas, in the past it had been less than 125 gallons. Water is too accessible. Perhaps, if we had to carry it into our homes, every day, we would be more careful about how we use this precious resource.

Maureen Radl, a Cragmoor resident, is a longtime board member and Shawangunk Ridge activist.



photos of Lake Maratanza by Hattie Grifo

Locals Concerned about the Privatization of Natural Resources

Noelle Damon, a Rosendale resident and Save the Lakes spokesperson, sent this letter to Friends

In our rural community of Rosendale, about two hours north of NYC, we are encountering a problem that has faced many small towns around the nation. A property of 737 acres and two lakes (8.6% of the township) is for sale. It is being considered for “overdevelopment” by Canopy Development (aka Hudson River Valley Resorts) that is being funded by Steve Case CEO of AOL. The plan is to build a Miraval Spa/Hotel/Resort, and a large, gated exclusive resort community. The good news is that this property has not yet been sold and it is not too late to stop this project. If it goes through, however, it will permanently change the nature of our community and this area of the county. Case has recently started a wellness company called Revolution, Inc. with the idea of “revolutionizing healthcare.” He offers destination resorts and spas to help bring wellness and health to the wealthy—each of his resort units costs upwards of \$1 million, and a week of R&R costs approximately eight thousand dollars per person. His newest project has our town in its sights. Canopy is interested in buying the

It's a perpetual struggle to resist over-development, and to maintain environmental integrity and public access

Binnewater Lakes that have

always been accessible (though not free) to the public. What is even more distressing is the public relations spin that Canopy uses to seduce the public into believing their development plans will benefit the townships. They use the now-politically correct jargon of “green” development practices, while they talk of plans to fill in wetlands, to extend beach areas, and to build a high concentration of housing units. They promote ideas about economic benefits and promise increased tax revenues. However gated communities, especially exclusive resorts, aren't usually interested in the world outside their gates. Instead, they become large and powerful voting blocks that influence how townships appropriate funds, often demanding large portions of tax dollars to support their increased infrastructure demands. Most often they remain oblivious to the needs of the host township. What we have seen around the country, is that the ‘locals’ are forced out due to foreclosures from increased tax bills they can no longer afford, and in turn more land falls in the developers’ hands. This large scale land acquisition of areas of natural beauty for exclusive vacation resorts is an unfortunate trend. It is happening up and down the coasts on both sides of the continent, and around most lakes and rivers. These developments are threatening rural areas where people have settled because of the affordable lifestyle, open spaces and accessible natural resources.

I have helped to form a group called SAVE THE LAKES. We are among many groups nationwide that have had to organize in order to hold off large, well-financed land developers. Our work is labor intensive and time consuming, but if it isn't done we will find ourselves living along the dusty roads that lead to gated, park-like areas and inaccessible to the public.

In researching public access rights in other countries I have found that British Columbia, England, and many countries throughout Europe have cultural and societal traditions of public access that are now protected under law. They recognize that access is an important asset to the community's economic and mental health, and have run successful political campaigns to protect those rights. Germany and Norway have long-standing access arrangements that continue to be upheld. In England, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act was passed in 2000 and has been successfully implemented since October, 2005. It is interesting to read that in countries where public access is protected, the public is primarily seen as a welcome, safeguarding presence. By contrast, in the US public access is being challenged by our societal traditions which celebrate individualism and private

ownership. It is somehow understood that people should not be separated from their local natural environments that promotes wellness. Wealth should not predicate who can be well and who cannot, who can have access to healthcare and who does not, who can walk along a lakeside and who cannot. But this is the wave of the future, and it is arriving with force. This is not the world in which I chose to bring up my children. This is not only an environmental problem, but a problem of classism and segregation. Save the Lakes is a large and growing group that is now a member of the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition and is in partnership with the Friends of the Shawangunks. We have gathered overwhelming support from environmental groups within the region and we work diligently to inform the public, and our town officials about the hazards of the privatization of natural resources and overdevelopment. Please visit our website regularly to see what we are doing and how you can get involved.

Act locally, think globally, get involved.

Sincerely,

Noelle Damon, Steering Committee Member, Save the Lakes

Save the Lakes Fact Sheet

Save the Lakes, an organization recently established to work on protecting the natural resources of the land included in the Williams Lake property in Rosendale, is pleased to announce that it has been accepted as a member of the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition. The Friends of the Shawangunks, a 401C nonprofit organization is providing fiscal sponsorship so that Save the Lakes can accept charitable tax deductible donations.

The Shawangunk Ridge Coalition is an advocacy alliance of grassroots, regional and national organizations dedicated to creating a continuous, protected corridor along the entire 50-mile length of the magnificent Shawangunk Ridge in New York State. An explosion of development proposals threatens to destroy this precious environment. The Coalition's mission is to protect the Ridge's pristine water quality, unique wildlife habitat, and biodiversity, and to provide public access to its spectacular beauty and world-famous recreational opportunities. www.shawangunkridge.org

The Shawangunk Ridge Coalition is comprised of many independent organizations each of which is unique in its goals, positions and programs.

Save the Lakes was established in the summer of 2007 specifically to address the situation of a proposed large scale luxury development on the Williams Lake property.

The mission of Save the Lakes is to protect the natural resources of all the land included in the Williams Lake property and preserve it in perpetuity for the region. The organization is working to insure that the future of Rosendale is planned in concert with community needs and values. Save the Lakes researches information and provides data to the public and to area decision-makers. See: <http://savethelakes.us>

The Williams Lake property is a 737 acre parcel at the north end of the Shawangunk Ridge in Rosendale. The property includes lake front on Williams Lake (also known as Fifth Binnewater Lake) and Fourth Binnewater Lake. A large portion of this parcel (416 acres) is subject to a conservation easement held by the Rondout-Esopus Land Conservancy. The developers have not yet brought final plans to the Planning Board of the Town of Rosendale. Preliminary plans outlined to town and county officials have described a 100 room exclusive spa hotel and 100 to 200 residential units, including town house condominiums on the lake, all in a gated “resort” community.

For further information please contact: Noelle Damon, Save the Lakes, P.O. Box 153 Rosendale, NY 12472 info@friendsofwilliamslake.org

The Evolution of a Medley

by Annie O'Neill

A recipe lists ingredients for a particular dish. There are instructions on the mix, the steps, and the subtle blending. And of course an outcome of an often mysterious, but magical, process. I often wonder what is the mix of subtle ingredients that produces a four-star environmentalist? Paula Medley, the environmentalist I looked to for answers, is a force to be reckoned with. By examining her checkered life, I was able to fathom the evolution of dedication and values, and how the mix gelled.

Too often we forget about the potential ridge disasters that could have taken place from the proposed Skyline Ridge Highway, to the French theme Park on the Lundy property, or the mega-resort at Minnewaska. Perhaps we forget that there are always people behind these fights. It serves us well to understand what makes them tick!

Paula's life began in New Jersey, jumped across the continent to the San Francisco Bay area, took a swing through the South, and then headed Northeast again. It sounds like one of those road trips of development. It began with her father hitching out west from Pennsylvania in the 1930s, taking part in WW II, and then realizing that after the war he wanted to start his family in a place like California.

Paula did her significant growing up in California and became a teacher with an abiding overlay of the 60s quest for a meaningful contribution to life. Instead of joining the Peace Corps in 1969, she became a VISTA (Volunteer in Service to America) volunteer and was dispatched to Eunice, Louisiana, just when schools were being integrated. This Cajun area, 75 miles west of Baton Rouge, was entrenched in rural attitudes. She was there to do social service, to help people understand their rights, but found herself at the behest of the established white community. In a movie-like scenario, the eight VISTA volunteers were threatened with removal by nightfall! Paula felt she hadn't finished there, severed her ties with VISTA, and went back to live with a black family to do "her work" on her own terms. One night she was arbitrarily fired and decided, along with a sympathetic civil rights priest, to file a law suit against the Archdiocese of Lafayette. She lost her suit, but she knew she was right, and she would always defend the right and just cause. In Louisiana she learned that she provided an example so that people understood there was another way.

After doing food coop work in Los Angeles, she moved back East. It was a complex political time when black power people didn't want whites helping with programs.

Her quality of persistence and determination landed a job at a residential facility for abused children. It was there that she met her husband Mike, who had just left the Brothers of the Holy Cross. They married in Milbrook, New York, and then moved across the river to Cragmoor, an area they knew and loved through Shawangunk hiking.

In 1981, after working as a disabilities evaluator, she decided it was time to take a break and develop outside interests. This is when her focus on the environment really began. As a volunteer at the historic Cragmoor Free Library, she had her finger on the pulse of the community. 1983 was a pivotal year. She became a board member of the Cragmoor Association. Their first issues were ultralights and then windmills. Perhaps some of you remember the proposed Genro, then Flo-Win, wind farm that called for 500 windmills on what is now the Sam's Point Preserve. Friends of the Shawangunks was involved in

that issue. She first met Bob Anderberg back then. Friends wanted the Cragmoor Association to join them in their lawsuit, but the CA realized they had their own interests they wanted to protect. Paula knew nothing environmental. She and her associates had to be "quick studies and learn process in a hurry." By the end of 1984 she was put up for president, at first refused, but then realized she was competent and liked to win. She says that she has always been an "overachiever"

and wanted challenges she could stay with no matter how great the struggle. She allowed herself "no luxury of being defeated for any length of time." She is most proud of getting the Palisades Interstate Park Commission involved in the legal process fighting the windfarm. It slowed down the process, and then the economy changed and the windfarm was dropped. This was her textbook in SEQRA. She also learned how critical it is to rely on networking and friends such as Friends. You have to have many approached to a problem. She says it is "like throwing out a lot of darts and if you are persistent, one will hit the bull's-eye." She

learned there are many schemers out there waiting to exploit property and you have to organize with others and look for long-term solutions.

In 1992 the Cragmoor Association was involved in the Mt. Menagha area where motorized off-road riders proposed a "hare scramble." At this point the Association realized they had to tighten up loopholes in the local constitution and bylaws.

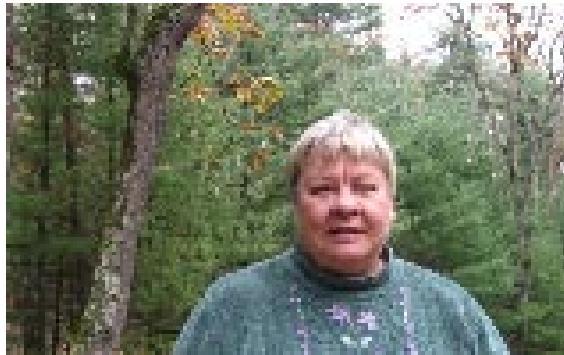
By 1995 Paula felt it was time to resign as president, and leave the board. She thought there was too much dependence on her to solve all environmental ailments, and the CA was becoming an inverted pyramid with its strength foundering. For organizational health to be restored it was time for her to move on.

The 90s was when the Ellenville Tract was being discussed. Amazingly, the first discussions about this area took place in 1970 when Nash Castro talked to the Village Board, but they declined. Then in 1991, OSI opened discussions with Ellenville, and in 1992, after lengthy discussions with Fred Grau who owned the lease on Ice Caves Mountain, OSI optioned the stock. It was not until 1997 that they closed on the acquisition. In 1998 the Sam's Point Advisory Committee was formed after the acquisition of the Ellenville Watershed Tract and Paula acquiesced to work on it.

In 1997 she and Mike left Cragmoor for Westbrookville, an area high above the western side of the Basha Kill. She was about to embark on a more leisurely life. Well that is history. She and Mike joined the Basha Kill Association and for a brief period she was not involved, until the hearing on the master-plan in 2001 when she was hooked again. It is a lot of work and aggravation but it "turns me on, it is my avocation!"

Did I forget to tell you that during all of the above, Paula had returned to work in 1984 for Orange Ulster BOCES where she developed a new worksite program. She only retired this past June. It is hard to imagine having a full-time job on top of a full-time avocation?

Now, from their perch in woods that reminds Mike of the Adirondacks, she is once again going to public hearings. This lady does not like to be ignored—she is suited to participate and control, but knows now that as a private citizen you cannot "go it alone." She is a born problem solver and loves the creativity involved in tackling issues. Wisdom has taught her that you have to be part of an organization to accomplish your goals.



Fast forward to 2004. Paula is at the helm of the Basha Kill Area Association. She is now starting her fourth year working on such projects as the proposed mushroom plant, monitoring giant subdivision plans such as the 450-acre Homowack proposal for a densely populated planned community called Kiryas Skver in Spring Glenn. She loves the BKAA, a multifaceted organization that has extensive educational programs in their effort to modify the stereotypical image some locals have of environmental organizations. As a member of BKAA, Paula is involved peripherally in many Shawangunk Ridge issues. She would like to broaden the geographical scope of the organization. Friends of the Shawangunks, Paula tells me, is a major reason the BKAA was able to continue efforts since FOS financially supported them at critical intersections.

So what are Paula's shortcomings? Well, some consider her Luddite qualities amazing in this day and age. The lady does not drive! She might soon consider e-mail!. Her husband Mike is critical part of Paula's environmental pursuits. He gets her to meetings, he drives her to lobby in Albany. Mike can always find a recreational opportunity near one of her meeting places. I must admit during my visit she fields constant phone calls and demands on her time as she sits in her living room keeping watch on the Southern Shawangunks to the east and the Basha Kill below. Watch out when she is up to computer speed, since this lady has boundless and unflagging energy. Luckily most of her friends are in the environmental community—she says they are the only ones who will put up with her. Maureen Radl, a dedicated activist from Cragmoor says "Through the years, Paula's courage and determination have inspired many of us less hardy souls to step up and join her battles to protect open space. Without her in the forefront, many causes, which dragged on for years, would have been forsaken."

She is certainly a force to be reckoned with, an example of just the ingredients that are critical to produce that necessary environmental outcome. And, as in inventive cookery, Paula has taught me that above all you must continually come up with fresh ingredients and approaches. It is critical to be creative and patient if you are to achieve your desired results. No fast-food in the environmental struggle.

Keep up good work Paula!

Annie O'Neill is an artist, climber, hiker and Shawangunk enthusiast. She is a longtime Friends of the Shawangunks board member.



Field Guide illustration by Lilith Jones

BASHA KILL FIELD GUIDE

It took almost seven years to complete, but the *Basha Kill Wetlands: A Field Guide* is now available. The largest freshwater wetland in southeastern New York is at the base of the Southern Shawangunks. You can visit the area by foot or

canoe, and it is well worth the trip for birdwatchers, painters, fisherman or those seeking tranquil recreation.

This complete guide to the richness of the Basha Kill ecosystem was produced by a small committee of the Basha Kill Area Association. It is beautifully illustrated by Lilith Jones.

The guide is available at the Catskill Hiking Shack or at the Canaltowne Emporium in Wurtsboro, online at www.thebashakill.org, or you can call Paula Medley at 845-754-0743 or Maryallison Farley at info@thebashakill.org. It costs \$25 and belongs in every Shawangunk enthusiast's and local naturalist's library.

PROJECT WATCH

\$500 MILLION FOR STEWART DEVELOPMENT

by Maureen Radl

At an inaugural event on November 1, the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey officially took over the operation of Stewart International Airport. The Port Authority is the largest airport operator in the country with Kennedy, LaGuardia, Newark, Teterboro, and now Stewart under its command.

Several weeks after this event, the Port Authority announced its 2007-2016 capital plan which includes a total of \$500 million to upgrade Stewart. Officials state that this amount is required to realize the airport's potential. At the inaugural event, Governor Spitzer stated that the airport has the potential to be "an enormous engine" for growth. He said it now serves 300,000 passengers annually, but can accommodate as many as three million per year with the current infrastructure. One can only speculate how many more passengers and how much cargo it could handle after \$500 million have been pumped into it. On the positive side, the Port Authority has announced that it has enlisted Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to study the airport and its environment in an effort to make it "more green."

The Governor also announced a \$500,000 Lower Hudson Valley Regional Smart Growth Initiative to help localities plan for anticipated growth. The expansion of Stewart, conversion of Route 17 to I-86, and investments recommended by the I-287/Tappan Zee Corridor EIS were cited as projects that would be supporting rapid growth in Orange, Rockland, and Sullivan counties. Ulster County was not mentioned. The grant is intended to ensure responsible, environmentally sound growth and that the actions of state planning would be coordinated with local planning. A state planning council will be formed to coordinate efforts.

The Governor also applauded the creation of a Citizens Advisory Council to ensure that the Port Authority has direct input from the Hudson Valley community that the airport will serve. The group will comprise thirty individuals representing federal, state and local elected officials, business representatives, civic and environmental leaders, labor entities, Stewart frequent flyers, and the Stewart Airport Commission. In addition, government agencies will serve in ex-officio capacity. They include NYS DOT, FAA, Transportation Security Administration, Customs & Border Protection, Air National Guard, NYS Police, and the Port Authority.

FOS was part of a coalition of ten civic and environmental groups led by Ulsterites Fight Overflight Noise who advocated strongly for the creation of an advisory group composed primarily of those residents who will be most heavily impacted by airport expansion. Unfortunately, only 10% of the seats will go to such groups. They include Scenic Hudson, Stewart Park and Reserve Coalition, and UFO Noise. Hopefully, CAP meetings should be open to the public, and anyone concerned about the impact of increased overflight noise on the Shawangunk Ridge is encouraged to attend. Call Maureen Radl at 845-647-6487 for additional information.

Maureen is co-chair of Ulsterites Fight Overflight Noise.

Bear Essentials

by Shanán Smiley

The Black Bear population in the Shawangunks is increasing. They have been seen practically everywhere, from trails and carriage roads, to local residences. Together, we share this stunning and diverse landscape. To coexist in harmony, we need to understand how we got to where we are today, and how our actions cause their reactions. If we aren't aware and careful, we can inadvertently lead to the creation of a "problem Bear", and ultimately its demise.

In colonial times Black Bear were hunted and trapped for fur, fat, and meat. It was so common a food that it was given the name "Bear Market" to one of the principal markets in New York City. Starting in 1799, with the Roosa (now Enderly) Mill on the Coxing, settlement increased in the area. This resulted in heavy cutting and opening of the forest for industries like tan bark, charcoal production, hoop poles, millstone cutting and agriculture. Bears took advantage of the subsistence farmers who grew grain and corn in their territory. Bears were seen as a threat to their livelihood. From 1892 – 1895 the state paid a \$10 bounty for each bear killed. In one year two hundred bears were killed by a single hunter. The distribution of Black Bear became limited to the Catskills and the Adirondacks.

After both World Wars, subsistence farming was no longer necessary. Many agricultural fields were abandoned and began to fill in with trees and shrubs. Large amounts of cordwood were no longer needed. The landscape began to return to wildness. In 1935, three bears were seen on the ridge at Mohonk for the first time since the 1860s. In 1943, at 70 years old, Bill Purcell of the Clove saw his first bear coming up out of the Coxing.

From 1935 to 1987 there were a few observations of bear each year. In 1988 it jumped to eleven observations of bear. The numbers of observations stayed at this level until 2000. In 2000 there were 33 observations. Previously, bears were believed to be just passing through this area. But in 2000 some of the bears had become residents. In 2001 there was a sow with three very small cubs seen crossing Mountain Rest Road in late May. Now they were breeding here. Since 2000 the numbers of observations have been increasing each year. This year there have been 52 records to date, with multiple sows being seen with three or four cubs.

According to the DEC, bear populations have been increasing, especially in southern New York. They are here to stay and we need to learn how to live with them.

Bears are omnivores, but prefer vegetation. They have a serious sweet tooth. They prefer fruit over anything else, blueberries, cherries, sassafras fruit, grapes, persimmons, and apples. Also, honey, roots, and nuts/seeds are sought for food. They will also eat insects, small mammals, birds and eggs, and if hungry enough a deer carcass. The average adult male weighs approximately 295 pounds, and the adult female weighs approximately 160 pounds. After about 100 days of gestation, sows give birth in January or February usually to 2 cubs, but

can have as many as five. Cubs also den with their mothers during their second winter and disperse as yearlings during their second spring or summer. Bears can live 20 years or longer.

Bears have an incredibly keen sense of smell. They can smell millet in a bird feeder from over a quarter of a mile away. Extreme weather conditions profoundly affect their natural food supply. In times of dry weather, like this summer, Bears leave their home territory in search of food. Their noses guide them.

Attractive food sources in unfamiliar territory when herbaceous food sources are scarce are bird feeders, trash, well used but not well cleaned barbecue grills, and pet food. Keep your homes free of potential food sources for bears. It's a good idea to hold off on feeding the birds until January. Don't keep pet food outside. Keep your barbecue grills clean, and store your garbage properly.

Once a Bear finds a food source, it will return again and again. If it is a sow with cubs, the cubs are learning that behavior and will be more likely to become problem Bears because they will see humans or houses as a food source, rather than something to avoid. Given the opportunity, Black Bears will nearly always avoid people. However, bears that learn to associate people with the availability of human food and garbage can learn to overcome their fear of people. Then we have a problem.

In the current DEC publication "Black Bears in New York: Natural History, Range, and Interactions with People" they state that the DEC responds first by removing or protecting what is attracting the bear. If this is not successful then the more persistent bears are addressed by aversively conditioning the offending bear with various negative reinforcements (pepper spray or shooting rubber "bullets"). If this tactic does not work, then killing the bear becomes the only option. Sadly, relocation is not an option. Bears have been known to travel vast distances to return to their territory. If they don't return to their territory, then they just continue their "bad behavior" somewhere else.

Conscientiousness on our part will ensure that we are caring for this landscape and all its inhabitants to the best of our ability.

If you would like more information a great online resource is: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/animals/6960.html>. You can also watch the DVD *Living with New York Black Bears*. Funded by a grant from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the DVD is available at public libraries and DEC regional offices across the state.

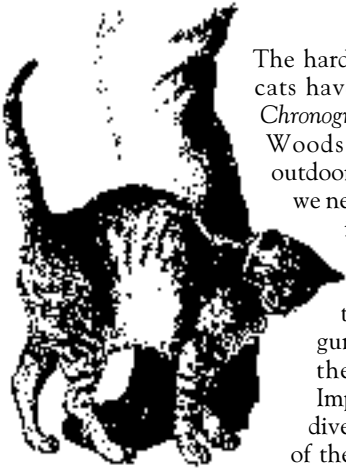
Shanan has her Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Montana State University. She moved to New York from Montana four years ago. She started out volunteering at the Daniel Smiley Research Center and is now the Research/Curatorial Assistant.



photo by Dave Johnson

Year of the Cat (not the Cougar!)

by Hattie Langsford



The hard truth for cat lovers is that outdoor cats have a huge impact on biodiversity. A *Chronogram* article last summer quotes a cutesy Woodstock artist describing one of her outdoor cats as an “avian assassin.” Clearly, we need to become better informed. I know intelligent people who fill the bird feeder and let the cat out, refusing to admit that their feline is part of the problem. The Northern Shawangunk Ridge has special designation by the National Audubon Society as an Important Bird Area. In our region the diversity and abundance of bird life is one of the key features of our ecosystem. It is absolutely necessary to protect this diversity.

In the barn two years ago, I find a spray of blue jay feathers on the lumber pile. Several adorable kittens emerge from under some bins.

The hard truth for cat lovers is that outdoor cats have a huge impact on biodiversity.

While my then four-year-old cuddles the tiny balls of fur, I tell her, “leave them, the mother needs to care for them and she won’t while we are here.” Mother and kittens vanished and only two survived. (Life expectancy for a feral cat is about 2 hellish years.)

In my small universe, these animals break the law, natural and federal. (Once in great while they agree.) The cumulative affect of cats on bird populations is staggering.

According to some studies, nearly every species of songbird is in decline worldwide and the major culprit is the domestic cat. Cats may have caused more bird extinctions than anything else including habitat destruction. As many as three billion birds worldwide are killed each year by a species we created. The Migratory Bird Treaty Act protects native birds from being killed or kept by people, but what about the careless act allowing a pet to attack birds? Birds are only 15-20% of the wild animals killed by cats. Many people believe cats serve a purpose by reducing rodent populations. I prefer to leave my rodents for birds of prey. Cats are not native predators and do not function as native predators in the landscape, they deplete the prey base for native predators like hawks, owls and bobcats. Feral cats do the most damage. Feral cats are wild animals, but they are not natural ones. They have no place in a wild landscape, nor, as I discovered, in a domestic one.

Laura Ingalls Wilder describes a scourge of gophers in her book, *Little Town on the Prairie*.* In a chapter called, “The Necessary Cat,” her family acquires a kitten, with difficulty, after gophers destroy half of the cornfield. Later in the same book, great flocks of blackbirds destroy the oat crop. It is easy to feel the frustration of these desperate, hardworking settlers. However, the destruction of the vast fire-maintained American prairies, which covered the Great Plains, (and of which, less than one percent remain today) result in an ecological imbalance that prevents Laura’s father from ever getting ahead. The settlers killed the predators, and the resulting gophers and blackbirds over bred and got really hungry before they died away or successfully adapted to life as pests.

I am not a cat person...I am allergic. I spent most of my childhood fairly ill because my mother believed that exposure to the allergen would help me “build a resistance. I feed the cats in the theory that they won’t

eat birds, but last winter this had the unexpected result of providing these cats with enough extra nutrition to reproduce. Before I fed them, I found blue jay and robin remains (If they are going to eat birds why can’t they eat starlings or house sparrows?) I return from traveling last spring to find five starving kittens on my doorstep. I capture the kittens and borrow a trap to catch the mother. I call several overwhelmed cat rescue agencies. I guess I assumed that someone would take the cats away and deal with the problem.

Marie Post, an 80-year-old volunteer who runs a shelter in Saugerties, informed me that no shelter takes feral cats, or kittens. She suggested that my daughter, now six, with her love of animals, could play an important role for these kittens by working to tame them. They start as these little spitfires, hissing so powerfully that they knock their tiny selves over with the force of their fear. My daughter, with great determination, picks them up (using gloves at first) and pets them until they calm down. Within two weeks, most of the kittens purr when they see her. I call her the teeny-tiny lion tamer. Even with all our work, once the kittens are tame we can’t find homes for all of them, and most shelters are full. (My daughter’s greatest act of sacrifice and courage was to give up every kitten she tamed, I never did “build a resistance” not to cats, anyway.)

After an extra week with her kittens the mother cat goes to the vet to be spayed. I drive her to Kingston to get a discount on spay and shots. I am surprised when they refer to her as “my cat.” I say, “she’s a wild cat, she’s not mine...look, she hates me!” and she hisses on cue. We name her “Twinkle” and her sister, “Shade.” No matter how we work at taming them, they will not be tamed, we coax them with food but they never let us get close.

By the end of the summer we had tamed ten kittens, and after spending about \$200 at the vet we have two spayed feral cats, which we feed. I caught Twinkle in the act of carrying in a chipmunk for a fresh meal, so I wonder how effective this is. She is missing since I heard a catfight at dusk one night last week; the life of a feral cat is a short and painful one.

Right now, in the news; California struggles to create laws requiring pet owners to spay and neuter their pets; New Jersey seeks a remedy for the destruction of endangered birds by feral cats; Texas, (a state well known for enlightened public policies) has decided, in the wake of a failed attempt to prosecute a birder who shot a stray cat, to pass a law protecting all cats from killing regardless of ownership. Are we so numb as to be indifferent to the misery of a cat placed in the desperate position of having to kill a rare bird to avoid starvation? We can do better, can’t we?

There is no perfect solution, but if people take responsibility for cats on their own property, at least we could eliminate the suffering of these animals and stop their impact on wildlife. Acting responsibly is not easy. As communities, we need to provide support for spay/neuter programs so that local farmers can deal with their over-breeding farm cats. This is likely the source of many of our feral cats. This burden is too large for a few responsible citizens who are quickly overwhelmed by the magnitude of the problem; it seems like every time I set a trap there is a new cat in it. 🐾

(*Laura Ingalls Wilder wrote about a dozen books and they contain a wealth of accidental historical evidence of the ecological damage done to our native ecosystem.)

Hattie Langsford, formerly of Minnewaska State Park Preserve, is a local naturalist. She is currently new-life shopping and spends her time learning about employment and equal rights law and looking for a job.

HIKE-A-THON RAISED \$1,860

By Dava Weinstein

This is the 16th year of the annual Friends of the Shawangunk Hike-a-thon. What started out in 1992 as a number of hikes on one day, led by various F.O.S. board members has become an annual event organized by me, a former board member, and my partner Dorothy Calvani. I could no longer serve on the board, and we decided to continue our commitment to raise money for FOS. The sixteen Hike-a-thons we've organized have raised over \$20,000!

Personal friends now count on the event and bring their friends along. The fall 2007 hike had a record twenty-one people taking two different hikes with all of us meeting at Table Rocks for lunch. Some of the original hikers, who have walked since the beginning of our adventures, are now hiking more slowly while enjoying the fall colors and their joint replacements. But walk, we all do! Table Rocks was beautiful.

Each participant contributes minimally: \$50 by soliciting sponsorship, or by paying the \$50 individually. In addition to the beautiful hike, Dorothy prepares the lunch, always delicious and usually Italian. No one is hungry after a lunch finished off with homemade sweets and local fruit.

Dorothy and I feel a very intense connection to Mother Earth. The annual Hike-a-thon is a most pleasurable way to accept some responsibility for Mother Earth and have a great time. The Gunks are truly a glorious place needing protection. So if you, the reader, would like to organize a group of your friends for a hike, call it a hike-a-thon and charge them for the pleasure of walking gently on Mother Earth with you.

THE ADVENTURES OF A HIKE-A-THON CHEF

Dorothy Calvani

As Dava has outlined, the hike-a-thons can be viewed as a series of incredible walks. The hikes can also be looked at as great opportunities to dream up some wild and wooly menus—lunches that will survive (sometimes) a 6-7 mile walk, not weigh a ton, and upon arrival, look decent and taste good.

First of all, there is the vegetarian “thing.” We have basically provided non-meat options, to the consternation of some of our participants. It is fun to see folks feign weakness as they eat eggplant parmigiana, or local tomatoes with homemade mozzarella and basil sandwiches. They have had to cope with such things as fish, egg and tuna salads, grilled veggies, tortellini with pesto and other protein-challenged entrees. We actually caved in this year and had turkey.

Secondly, there are the extras: whole wheat, rye, pumpernickel, seven grain, baguettes, focaccia, etc.. All have found their way onto the ridge. Pickles, olives, hot peppers, cole slaw, tabouli stuffed grape leaves, artichoke hearts, and as always potato chips have made their appearance or are staples.

Lastly, there is the “sweet” section. There are always local apples and home made cookies (oatmeal raisin or chocolate chip). One year we all made “some-mores,” those treats with chocolate and hot melted marshmallows on graham crackers (those of you who have never been girl or boy scouts might not understand these gourmet treats!) and hot tea.

Yet the sweetest thing is to see how easy and fun it is to have a “Babette’s Feast” outdoors, looking out at the beauty of the Shawangunks. On a couple of rainy dates the hike-a-thon is easily transformed into a “lunch-a-thon.” Cooking and walking and eating is a great way to celebrate our good fortune as Gunks dwellers—for ourselves and future generations.

Thank You: Dava and Dorothy



Dorothy and Dava relax after a hike

SHAWANGUNK REDUX

Christopher Spatz

In his Summer *Shawangunk Watch* response to my “conspiracy” musings on the lineage of educators and institutions who championed the colonial pretender, Shongum, as the Lenape original, Shawangunk, Marc Fried suggests I’ve rehashed his conclusions regarding the origins of these pronunciations from *Shawangunk Place-Names*.

Beginning in 2001, my evolving essays on the two names established their etymology: locating Shawangunk’s Lenape origin, and its many three-syllable variants, in the basin east of the ridge; clarifying Shongum as a colloquial, not the indigenous, pronunciation; surveying previous translations before concluding with the Lenape linguist Raymond Whritenour’s definitive translation of Shawangunk, “in the smoky air”—all of which were later corroborated independently in the pages of *Shawangunk Place-Names*.

On two occasions prior to the publication of *Place-Names*, Mr. Fried was privy to my interest in the subject. When I interviewed him for an essay in 2003 on the sources of the pronunciations for Blue Stone Press, and when he *carefully* proofed before publication my “Smoke Signals,” smoky air piece for the Spring 2005 issue of *Shawangunk Watch*.

Mr. Fried wonders why I natter on? Despite the new research, Shongum’s masquerade continues—online, in print, and in interpretive talks and literature—as the Indian name. Nearly 150 years of embedded, institutional misrepresentation may take a lifetime of steady heckling to amend.

Unlike Mr. Fried, I don’t care a whit which pronunciation folks choose to use. I simply want them to know of what they speak; that the name that embodies this region, this place, the Shawangunks, bequeathed to us during the twilight stand of its indigenous people, is returned rightfully to the native tongue of its engendering.

Christopher Spatz is working the sightings hotline for the Eastern Cougar Foundation. He writes locally on the cultural and natural history of the Shawangunks.

Friends Goes Online

www.Shawangunks.org

Check out Friends' new website at www.Shawangunks.org. It should be launched by the time you are reading this newsletter. It has a back issue of our newsletter *Shawangunk Watch*, links to dozens of Shawangunk sites, 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.



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