

SHAWANGUNK WATCH

Spring 2005 Preserving Open Space in the Shawangunks Volume 10 #1

Friends of the Shawangunks & The Shawangunk Conservancy

Gardiner Begins

by Matthew Bialecki

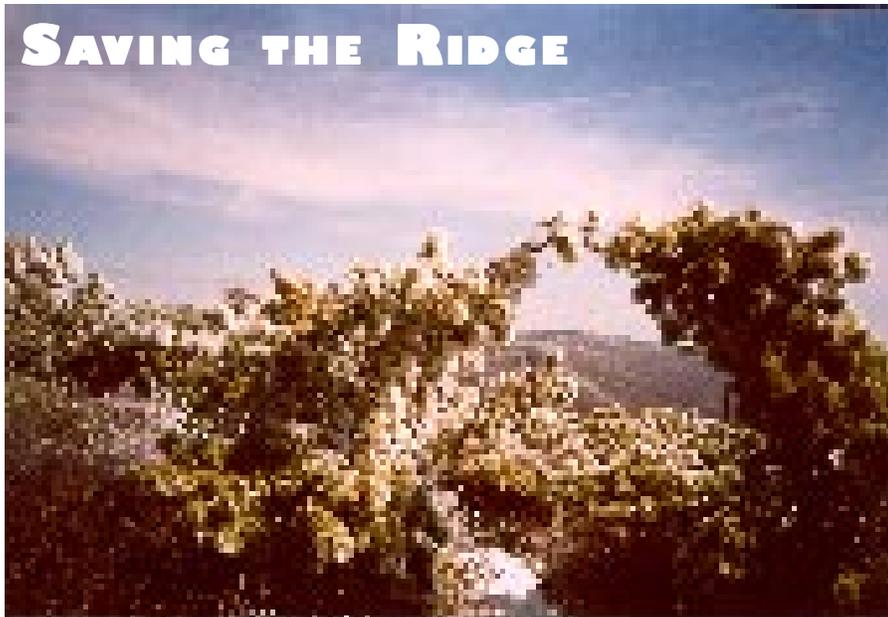
While we all know the Shawangunk Ridge and the eastern escarpment for its unique environment and stunning beauty, many of us do not realize just how much of it is in Gardiner, and how much of this land is not presently protected. The large majority of the Town of Gardiner ARR-200 zone is comprised of the foothills, slopes, escarpments, and plateau of the eastern escarpment of the Shawangunk Ridge. This zone contains over 10 linear miles of cliff face and talus, 7,500 acres of intact chestnut oak forest, and many habitats for rare and endangered species. It is contiguous to Minnewaska State Park Preserve and the Mohonk Preserve.

When we talk about the grand eastern escarpment we are referring to: Millbrook, the Bayards, Gertrudes Nose, the Palmaghatt Ravine, the Clear Brook, the Hamilton Point/Castle Point cliffs, and the great mantle of forest that surrounds them and rises up from the Wallkill Valley floor. These are the face and shoulders of the Ridge; the symbol and soul of the Shawangunks. It is not idle boasting or excessive local pride that allows one to say “Here lie the crown jewels of the Shawangunks”.... It is, simply, mere fact. It is also a fact that all of this is in the Town of Gardiner, and with one small exception—it is privately owned. (see photos, page 3)

The ARR-200 zone is also home to a thriving neighborhood of over 700 residents. Focused along the roads that run generally parallel to the cliffs along the break of slope (Route. 44/55, North/South Mountain Road, Beecher Hill and Aumick Roads, the neighborhood has typically developed along the lower slopes of the ridge (400-600 feet above sea level) that have been more accessible. This historic building pattern along the lower ridge elevations has not generally had a negative impact on the fragile environments of the escarpments at higher elevations and steeper slopes.

Unfortunately, development proposals since the year 2000 have been largely focused on the higher elevations. The most notable being the 350-lot Awosting Reserve proposal, but many other minor subdivisions and building permits were also proposed that would affect the ridge. The current zoning laws allow residential uses on 2-acre or

SAVING THE RIDGE



Winter view of a distant Sky Top from the Verkeerderkill trail by Annie O'Neill

It is not idle boasting or excessive local pride that allows one to say “Here lie the crown jewels of the Shawangunks”.... It is, simply, mere fact. The ARR-200 has it all!

5-acre lots throughout the entire zone, while also permitting many other commercial and institutional uses. This “residential all over” zoning has raised many concerns about the impact of new development on the Ridge. Until last September, when the Town Board enacted a moratorium on building permits in the ARR-200 zone, an individual with a pre-existing lot could have—by

right—constructed a home half-way up the side of the Millbrook escarpment or any other prominent Ridge feature without any analysis of the environmental impacts of such an action.

The new Town Board members who took office in January 2004 (Carl Zatz, Nadine Lemmon, and I) were elected with broad community support to propose laws that would protect the ridge. The Board has been active ensuring the Ridge is protected for future generations and is not compromised by excessive development. One of the first actions of the new Board was forming a Zoning Advisory Committee (ZAC) which began work a year ago on a new zoning law. In addition, the Town Board also passed a building moratorium in October prohibiting major subdivisions, special use permits, and any construction over 750’ elevation. The moratorium will expire in mid-April and an extension has been passed to allow more time to finish the re-zoning.

With the moratorium in place the ZAC began working with Joel Russell, a lawyer and expert in open space preservation. He is one of the most respected planning consultants practicing in the Northeast. The ZAC held dozens of public meetings and numerous hearings, and received and responded to hundreds of public comments. Russell’s initial diagnostic work identified the fundamental problem: how can

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SMOKE SIGNALS

by Chris Spatz

You know the one about a cigar being just a cigar, about Freud's famous wink at mythologizing his own work. I mention it here as a caution, as a foil to wild-eyed speculation, after I started chasing down the answer to a prayer. Since I returned to the Gunks five years ago and began searching the texts and digging into the etymology of the name Shawangunk, something always seemed to be missing—at least to my bent of reckoning. Surely, this evocative ridge possessed something in the name that reflected both its singular majesty and its often bawdy, soulful history. To wit: wasn't there a myth linked to the ridge through its native Lenape appellation?

The horde of variations on the name that became Shawangunk are well documented. They appear like grunting mutts—Chauwangong, Chauwangung, Sawanconck, Shawengonck, Shawangunk and more—a dogfight of European transliterations, emerging in land deeds and patents adjacent to the tableland site of the 1663 Second Esopus War three miles northwest of Wallkill, in the lowlands bounding the Shawangunk Kill. Whether Shawangunk applied to the fort of the Munsee band of Lenape Indians torched by the Dutch in the raid, or whether it was the name for the region, remains uncertain. But the name first appears recorded for the creek below the fort, and for land parcels by 1682, where it spread to the ridge at the beginning of the 18th century.

While Shawangunk rose to be king of the mountain—names for the ridge like Alaskareying, Pitkiskaker, and Aiskawasting didn't stick—its possible meanings are scrapping still. *White rock, the place of leeks, country of the strong water, at (or on) the hillside* are some of the arguable contenders. The most consistent translation from ethnographic sources and histories has settled around interpretations of the Lenape word for south: Schawaneau. The Reverend Charles Scott, pastor of the Reformed Church of Shawangunk from 1851 to 1866, suggested in an early paper to the Ulster County Historical Society “the place of south water.” E.M. Ruttenber's 1906 *Indian Geographical Names* cited “South Mountain, South Water, South Place,” favoring the latter. Most recently, Evan Pritchard has offered “mountains where you go south” in his 2002 *Native New Yorkers*.

Sound speculation regarding this southern root has been suggested: the location of the village in relation to its sister Kerhonkson fort burned earlier in 1663; the Shawangunk lowlands lying south, in bundled parcels, of Nescotack and New Paltz; the ridge's run down the southern horizon. Not the kind of musings I was looking for—no poetry, no myth—but there's the evidence.

Then I heard from a friend whose grandmother was of mixed-blood Lenape descent, who spoke about the ridge as a serpent or “the Shawangunk dragon,” which my friend said was called Schawanachgook. She mentioned a kind of creation tale for this snake, who crawled out from the sea and passed away, leaving its bones to benefit the Lenape.

Here was a cigar to chew on, to say nothing of Freud's take on snakes: this long mountain ridge that stretches the length of the eastern seaboard, in whose valleys once ran the blood of native trade; whose cliffs rise and dip, undulating like the humps of a great serpent; whose winter waters breathe vapor like a big, seething dragon. Here was a beast worthy of those libidinous Vulgarians and Peter's Kill bacchanalias. Could Shawangunk be—despite all the three syllable variations—a clipped version of Schawanachgook, just as Shon-gum is a 19th-century contraction of Shawangunk?

I started Googling. I found a Lenape website, with a Lenape dictionary. There was Schawanachgook: horned snake. Horned snake? I found the Contents page of John Bierhorst's *Mythology of the Lenape*, with a chapter entitled The Delaware Snake Legend. Had to get that book. Then I read a bracing critique of *Native New Yorkers* dismantling Pritchard's linguistic errors and translations by a Lenape linguist named Ray Whritenour. Scroll down, and...Shawangunk. Following Pritchard's “mountains where you go south” was this: “Absolute balderdash! This place-name means “in the smoky air,” from schawank (“smoky air”) + -unk (“in”).” Huh?

I found Mr. Whritenour, on a Lenape discussion board, and e-mailed him, inquiring about the apparent affinity of the words and mentioning the serpent tale. His reply:

I know of no documentary variant of this name which would admit its interpretation as “Schawanachgook (‘horned snake’). At least, not in my mind.

“Schawan” is an inanimate intransitive verb, meaning ‘it is smoky air’ or ‘there is smoky air.’ Its noun-like participle is “schawank,” meaning ‘that which is smoky air.’ Adding the locative suffix gives us “schawangunk” (‘in that which is smoky air’ or, more simply, ‘in the smoky air’). This word has no relation to those signifying ‘south’ or ‘southerly,’ etc.

Devastatingly succinct and scholarly. I thanked Mr. Whritenour, and chewed for a couple of months on smoky air and the ridge's fire dependent pitch pines

and the burns that raged across the Shawangunks during the century of the berry-pickers.

I located *Mythology of the Lenape*, a collection of all extant Lenape tales, narratives recorded primarily in the 20th century preserved through the Lenape's long exoduses to Ontario and Oklahoma.

“The horned serpent, or great horned snake, known to the Unami as *mexaxkuk*, to the Munsee as *w'aXkok*, is one of the consistently menacing supernaturals in Lenape lore...this creature lives in a rock den within a river and displays an unwholesome interest in sex.”

Here was a creature worthy of Freud! As my friend suggested—though there was no hint of her mountain creation story—in several tales (all from the more southern Unami Lenape), its scales and charred bones became rain charms and talismans. Like maybe those hunks of Gunks crystals trafficking around?

I got back to Mr. Whritenour. Schawanachgook, it turns out, is the copperhead, a different snake entirely from the horned serpent of myth, which he also called *machachgook*.

I asked him then, where ‘in the smoky air’ may have derived. “From the torching of the palisaded fort and outbuildings,” he suggested, a subject he'd been discussing with historian Marc B. Fried for Fried's new book on the region's place-names. We talked about the pitch pine ecosystem and the berry-pickers and Annie Liebovitz's winter photographs of those smoldering Shawangunk waters. And Mr. Whritenour reminded me that the Lenape tended to describe places in simple, descriptive terms, echoing a note in Ruttenber. “There is no poetry in the them—,” he wrote in *Names of these Indian terms*, “no “glittering waterfalls,” no “beautiful rivers,” no “smile of the Great Spirit,” no “Holy place of sacred feasts and dances...” And apparently, little myth.

But I keep wondering, since a Munsee serpent tale is curiously absent from the texts, if some unrecorded vestige of a myth didn't remain behind in the Shawangunks with those surviving Lenape who bred with the settlers of the Trapps Hamlet.

The sad ashes of a narrative from the fort's destruction had lingered into Ruttenber's time.

“When the Dutch troops left it, it was a terrible picture of desolation. The huts had been burned, the bodies of the Indians who had been killed and thrown into the corn-pits had been unearthed by wolves and their skeletons left to bleach on the plain, with here and there the half eaten body of a child. For years it was a fable told to children that the place was haunted by the ghosts of the slain...”

Haunting still, it seems, in the smoky air of suggestion.

Christopher Spatz writes about the Gunks for Blue Stone Press, where a version of this essay appears in their Spring edition of The Weekender magazine. A collection of his writing, Shawangunk Conglomerate: Pieces from the Ridge, published by the Atkerton History Project, will arrive later this year. He first climbed in the Gunks in 1975.

GARDINER ZONING

you have such a rare and unique ecological area zoned for 2 to 5 acre residential sprawl? The zoning must be changed to protect the ridge, while preserving the necessary property rights of existing landowners.

On December 7 the ZAC and Joel Russell presented a final draft to the Town Board recommending dividing the ridge zone into three "tiers" based on elevation, slope, and other ecological considerations. The ZAC has focused its efforts on maintaining continued residential uses on the lower elevations of the ridge while encouraging private sector land conservation on the upper elevations. The primary tools for protecting higher elevation lands are requirements for the clustering of development, lowering allowable densities (from 5 acres/lot to as low as 20 acres/lot in Tier #3, at the highest elevation), limiting non-residential uses, and establishing design standards for construction and development. All construction in the upper elevations of the ridge (Tiers #2 & 3) would require a special use permit and would be required to meet new more conservation oriented development standards. Major subdivisions and developments proposed for Tier #3 would have to be built in Tiers #1 & Tiers #2. The law will substantially protect over 2500 acres of the most scenic and fragile cliffs and talus slopes of the Eastern Escarpment. The face and shoulders of the Shawangunks will be protected.

The Town Board has currently completed the first series of required public hearings and is coordinating the comments of the Gardiner Planning Board and the Ulster County Planning Board. Revisions will be made during April to incorporate these agencies' reviews and

additional public comment. New hearings are planned for May with a vote on the new zoning hopefully occurring in June. A copy of the proposed law as well as a schedule of public meetings is posted on the Town website (www.townofgardiner.org).

I believe the proposed zoning will be a historic accomplishment for Gardiner and for ridge preservation. I urge all members of Friends of the Shawangunks to support it and have their friends support it. I would especially like to thank my fellow Board Members Carl Zatz, Nadine Lemmon, and Fred Fischer for their commitment and support of this effort. It has taken a lot of courage and effort to support this new law in the face of some very stiff opposition. Also, the Zoning Advisory Committee (ZAC) has been untiring in its efforts and remarkable in its achievements: Mike Beck, Chris Company, Kathy Hudson, Paul Muessig, and Paul Schwartzberg have all been extraordinary. It has been a pleasure serving as their chair.

Please feel free to e-mail me at mb@mbialeckiarch.com if you have any questions about the re-zoning or what you can do to help the efforts. Thank you.

Matt chairs the Zoning Advisory Committee that is developing the new zoning regulations for the old ARR-200 zone. He is an architect and recently designed the soon-to-be-opened Sam's Point Preserve Visitor Center.



THE EASTERN ESCARPMENT OF THE SHAWANGUNK RIDGE

What looks protected



PROJECTION OF EXISTING PROPERTY LINES ON THE EASTERN ESCARPMENT

Is in private hands!

photos courtesy of Zoning Advisory Committee

CHACO, Inc. takes a step to help preserve the Shawangunks

By Gary Jacobson

Friends of the Shawangunks has recently benefited from a charitable program of Chaco, Inc., a company whose sandals have become ubiquitous in the Gunks and worldwide.

Their program encourages its sales representatives to publicize Chaco products in their sales region. Holly Booth, a local climber and Chaco sales rep graciously appropriated \$1500.00 of discretionary

funds to Friends of the Shawangunks for use to protect the ridge against adverse environmental impacts. We are fortunate to have Holly as a supporter, and fortunate that Chaco encourages programs and organizations that support the environment.

Learn more about Chaco at <http://www.chacousa.com>

MARBLETOWN

Another town protecting the Ridge

By Steve MacDonald

Bill Warren of Marbletown has good things to say about the town's new strategies to preserve open space and rural character. That might not seem unusual—preservation always rates near the top when townspeople are asked what's most important to them—but Warren is no ordinary citizen.

He's developing 97 acres of prime viewshed land he owns on Route 213 west of High Falls. Just as he was getting started, last August, his project hit a wall. The town enacted a one-year moratorium on major subdivisions and launched an ambitious plan to toss out the old rules and write new ones. Warren was frustrated and angry at first, but today he's a poster boy for new ways of planning.

"I'm very happy with the way the town is working with us," he says. "I hated on principle to have any rights taken away, but this is what people want."

If Bill Warren is happy you can bet that Marbletown Supervisor Vin Martello is happy too. Martello, who took office in January 2004, was committed to meeting the challenge of rampant development, but he knew that any successful strategy would have to be, in his words, "a win-win scenario."

One piece of luck for Martello was that much groundwork had been laid by his predecessor, Tom Jackson. Another was that Marbletown has a culture of nonpolitical volunteerism. Besides the usual Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals, it has a recently reactivated and highly energized Environmental Conservation Committee, a Planning and Zoning Committee that advises the Town Board on strategy, and a Community Development Committee that carries out projects identified in town-wide visioning sessions—the latter two established under Jackson.

The first move, already under way, was to update the Town Plan. This document, typically, had been gathering dust since its adoption 35 years ago. Town plans are not required, but a strong one that lays out a clear, current vision can help a town defend against unruly development. Marbletown's new plan, which includes provisions to keep it up to date—it's on-line at an interactive web site (www.marbletownplan.com)—passed in January.

The centerpiece of Marbletown's strategy is to upend the zoning and subdivision process, and it hired Randall Arendt, who literally wrote the books (*Growing Greener*, *Rural by Design*, *Conservation Design for*

Subdivisions) on conservation planning, to assist. Arendt's approach reverses the subdivision-review process: It begins by blocking in the natural and visual resources that the town wants to protect and then tucks the houses out of the way. The effect varies, but it is never the familiar column of naked buildings marching across desolate lawns.

Although it may seem counterintuitive, many developers, like Bill Warren, come to prefer conservation planning. As Martello says, "Everybody wins: the developer because he or she saves time and money and ends up with a more attractive and marketable property, and the community because the project is in harmony with its desire to preserve its character and open space."

Another nationally known consultant, Joel Russell, is collaborating with Arendt on the language of the new laws. There has been grumbling in town that Martello is giving contractors and developers an advance look at the new regs, but so far no coordinated opposition has surfaced. The regulations are expected to come before the Town Board in May or June, well ahead of the moratorium expiration in August.

But precisely what natural and visual resources does the town have to protect? To answer that question, the town undertook a massive inventory, assisted by the Conway School of Landscape Design. The product will be a series of overlay maps identifying such features as water sources, farms, forest land, scenic and historic sites and steep slopes (the town of Marbletown includes the west side of the ridge from roughly the Mohonk Mountain House to Spring Farm). The project is nearing completion and community forums are being held to explain the findings and solicit input.

Conservation planning puts a heavy burden on the town's building and zoning department and on the Planning Board, whose members no longer merely sit in a hearing room but also get out and walk the land. And part of the appeal to developers is the promise of a streamlined permitting process. So the town has arranged for ongoing training of its personnel.

Like most other towns in the Hudson Valley, Marbletown has become a magnet for would-be developers. With its new strategy in place, officials hope they can shape the future on their own "win-win" terms.

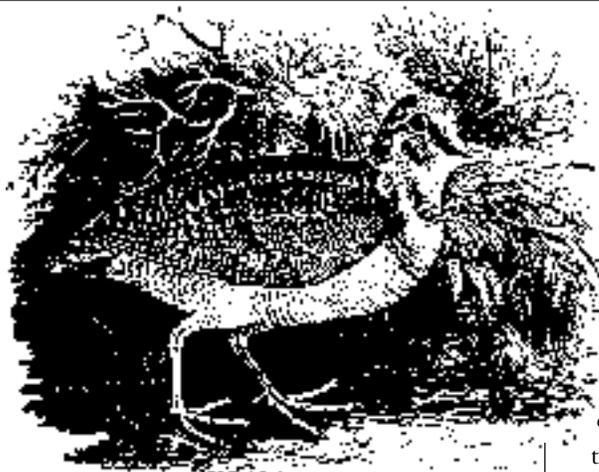
Steve MacDonald, an FOS board member, is a member of the Marbletown Community Development Committee and a former member of the Planning and Zoning Committee and the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Sam's Point Conservation Center to open in late May

The Nature Conservancy and Open Space Institute are proud to announce the opening of the new Conservation Center. The building has been designed by Matthew Bialecki, AIA. The landscape architect is Stephen Yarabek, ASLA, of Hudson & Pacific Designs, Inc. The interpretive designer is Donald Watson, FAIA, of EarthRise Initiatives. The general contractor is Storm King Contracting, Inc., the builders who constructed the Mohonk Preserve Visitor Center, the Mohonk Skating Rink and the new Mohonk Spa.



Winter trail on the Sam's Point Preserve photo by Annie O'Neill



Shongum Children's Hour

by Roger Roloff

Red, scattered rags of day glowed in the west.
 Ahead the woods road's half-filled canopy
 spread tattered shadows as I paused to rest
 beneath an old, abandoned apple tree.

Downslope the rhythmic scuffling of dead leaves—
 as berry-pickers' boys with trips and falls
 once made while wrestling near their shack, which grieves
 a wanderer now and in sad leisure sprawls...

I turned, still musing on the freestyle match,
 expecting I'd see squirrels unawares,
 not what in rose-crowned twilight made me catch
 my breath: two homeless yearlings, young black bears.

Absorbed in snacktime tussling, harmless sport,
 the pair played on as softly I slipped near
 and nearer, where each frisky grunt or snort
 was clearer to the curious human ear.

Charmed moments so—till in the apple-yard
 one bear sprang bolt upright and sniffed the air,
 rich with fermenting fruit yet somehow marred
 by foreign scent that spoke a sharp "Beware!"

Slowly two black forms joined the woodland crowd
 of silhouettes fast swallowing twilight.
 Long pondering I stood. And half-aloud
 I murmured that the mountain and home-site
 belonged to children of fruit-pickers still—
 lured back though on the loose, at work or play—
 then shouldered packs I'd spent all day to fill
 with ripe cranberries, and was on my way.

From Natural Gifts by Roger Roloff (© 2004) Roger, a New Paltz poet has been a singer since childhood and for 21 years performed as a baritone on the world's opera and concert stages. Since retiring in 1996 to a rural life he grew up in he has been involved in seasonal pursuits of hiking, gardening, berry-picking and writing poetry. His many books of poetry are available at the Mohonk Preserve Gift Shop and local bookstores.

Coxing woodcock

By Chris Spatz

for Joan & Peter Wood

mid-March in the Clove, between the Backslabs and Lost City,
 shadow spreads across the Coxing, creeping along the marsh
 round the mounds of tuft; having played for a day
 water returns to dream as ice.

bleep...bleep...bleep...bleep...too soon for bugs, then this lump
 of leaves skeets whistling past backlit in yellow over the trees.
 the valley's imagination, at last, is up; desire's tremolo begins
 to finger spring from the piccolo bill of the homely woodcock.
 a sandpiper on dachshund legs, eyes like black roe
 hatch where his ears ought to be, to periscope bob for bobcat
 as lips plumb mud until he wrings and sucks
 the coiling worm still, taking its dervish death

airborn; zigzags back and away spiraling up
 through melon and rose and cobalt ellipses
 (lekking drab, he must dandy the sunset) becoming speck,
 dissolves to nothing but solo notes dissolving to nothing

into the purple height of silence.
 having astonished, Eros vanishes.

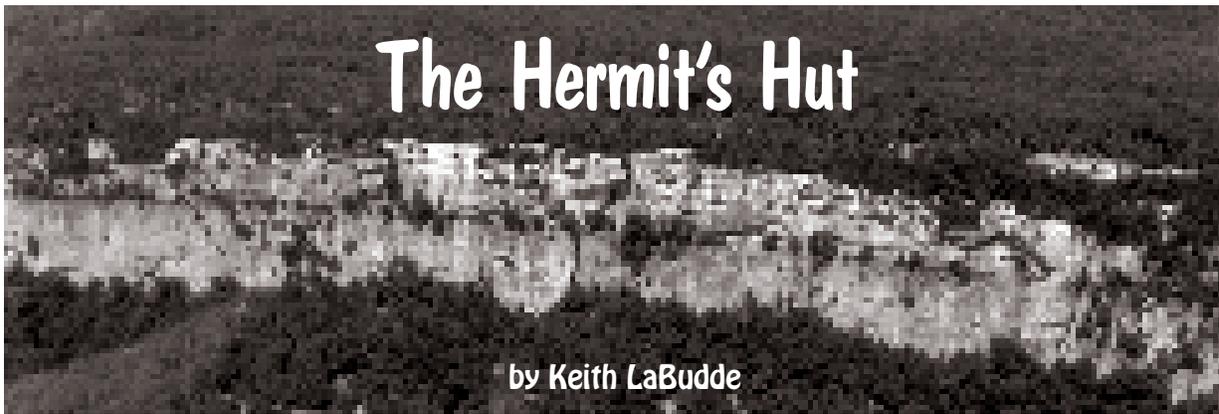
drawn from thorn and muck
 the Soul stirs, in grass and twig, in rock and lobe
 tip toe listening, waiting, waiting; at winter's end
 Beauty has pronounced her last sentence.

first starlight, out of the cold dome comes
 the oblong missile smashing off the anvil air,
 here, and here and here, then everywhere arc
 warbletwittertrills spraying calliope

down from rim to rim in the pitch of sweet relief.
 halts, melds his bits with the last light
 above the thickets, returns dumb as a drop of blood
 thumped in the mit of the heart, returns
 as the broken god to giggling, to the smitten.
 to late for bobcat, no pounce will jolt those eyes.

I will leave him here, among the rushes, beside the melted Coxing,
 for the woken bugs to pluck and tuck his arabesque
 into the guts of love breaking from the Clove,
 breaking already in echo

in coloratura mid the din of browns, crocus,
 and hanging in the clang of yellow-belled forsythia:
 echo of woodcock beginning
 what has begun.



The Shawangunks has had its hermit, and what better place for him to settle than on the top of the Trapps, looking out over the Wallkill Valley. The story of the hermit's hut comes in two parts. The first is an article from the February 1926 issue of The Mohonk Sentinel, a bimonthly publication of the Mohonk School. At that time it was the practice of the schoolboys to construct huts on the Mohonk property.

The Shawangunk Hermit

"A short time ago, two men hunting in the Trapps mountains, stumbled on a hut built in the side of a cliff between two large rocks. They said that an old man who had the appearance of a hermit lived there, and that, from the looks of several barrels of soaking corn, he was somewhat of a moonshiner also.

Weeks passed, then one day some things were stolen from the various huts which have been built by the boys. Immediately suspicion was centered on the old hermit. Several parties went over to visit him, but were unsuccessful in even finding the hut. Then one day shortly afterward, a boy who happened to be wandering around the Trapps stumbled accidentally (sic) on the hut. The next day, a group of fellows walked over and did some looking around to see if they could locate any of the stolen articles. On the third day after the re-discovery of the hermit, the sheriff was notified that a man was living on the estate without permission. Accompanied by two or three deputies and boys from school, he took a truck and drove over. The old man surrendered without a fight, and allowed himself to be put into the truck. Meanwhile, the sheriff's men pulled down part of his shack, and destroyed practically all of his winter supplies, which from all accounts, he had just gathered. None of the stolen articles were found.

While riding back on the truck with his captors, he told the story of his past life, which was rather interesting. It seems that, born in Switzerland, he came to this country some years ago and started in the cattle business in California. He secured twenty-seven head of cattle, and by hard labor and good luck they increased to twenty thousand in a short time. He sold his herd and received a tidy sum for it. He was taken sick, and went to the hospital, then when well, he came east and finally settled, penniless, in the before mentioned hut in the mountains, where he expected to spend the winter.

When the old hermit appeared in court, the judge sentenced him for the winter because of a previously committed theft to stock his hut."

The second part of the story appears in Historical/ Cultural Note No. 10 of the Daniel Smiley Research Center of Mohonk Preserve, written by Daniel Smiley in March 1985, 59 years after the incident.

The Shawangunk Hermit's Hut

The following is offered to supplement the Sentinel accounts.

"I was a member of the Straight-Eight (there were 8 members), which had the hut west of the lower part of the Laurel Ledge Road. The chimney, which I helped build, is still standing. It was our group that lost the tools that were not found at the Hermit's Hut. We never did know where they went to. (Ed. note: Another article in the same issue of *The Mohonk Sentinel* reported "the capture of two of the robbers," and that they were reprimanded and forced to return the stolen articles. As I recall, it was Henry Dougherty who rediscovered the hermit. He was along when George Young, who was outside superintendent, and deputy sheriff, arrested him. He seemed quite willing to go and philosophized that perhaps the county jail would be more comfortable in winter than his perch on the ledge. The hut is located a few hundred yards southwest of the S-turn on Overcliff Road and looks out over Sleepy Hollow swamp. It is a delightful location and I have often been there since for picnics."

"There was no evidence that the barrel of field corn, which he had, was used for making alcohol. We presumed that he was going to cook it and eat it. There were also apples and even fresh milk. How he had acquired the latter, other than milking a cow in a pasture, was a mystery. He had done a good job in closing in the two ends of the shelter with chestnut poles. Apparently, he was good at whittling and had carved out heavy wooden soles which he was going to attach to his leather uppers. When he was arrested his shoes were in bad shape. As I recall, they were wired together with copper wire. Also, he had whittled out what appeared to be spits. I have these and the wooden soles in my collection.

In 1973, when I took Nicholas Shoumatoff to see the hermit's hut, he hypothesized that this natural shelter could well have been used by the nomadic Paleo Indians (about 12,600 years ago) as a vantage point from which to watch for herds of caribou and mastodons in the Wallkill Valley.

As an item of incidental interest, the Hermit's Hut site was used for the falcon hacking by the Cornell Peregrine Fund in 1977, '78 and '79. A 1979 male from this site (or the hacking site at Millbrook) and a female hacked from Sea Island, New Jersey in 1980, nested under the Verrazano-Narrows Bridge in 1983. This marked the first time that a released New York peregrine nested. Three young were raised and banded."

A final footnote: A couple of years ago, while walking along the edge of the Trapps, I came upon a piece of rusted stovepipe in approximately the location Daniel Smiley described in his note. Is this all that remains of the hermit's hut?

Awosting Reserve

In our previous newsletter we reported that Friends and Save the Ridge were intervening in a lawsuit filed by Awosting Reserve against the Town of Gardiner Zoning Board of Appeals because of its decision that the developers would not be permitted to use a centralized sewage treatment plant. In a surprise decision, Justice Thomas J. Spargo ruled in favor of Awosting Reserve. To keep our options open, we have filed a notice with the court that we intend to appeal this decision.

Meanwhile, the development of proposed new zoning regulations for the zone in which the Awosting Reserve property is located (see article on page 1) may render moot the question of what to do with the “effluent from the affluent” (a phrase coined by Friends member Gioia Shebar). Whereas we contend that the old regulations prohibited a centralize sewage treatment plant, the new regulations would specifically permit its use. We support this change, for replacing a large number of individual septic systems with one centralized system should result in a more environmentally sound development.

The new zoning regulations would greatly reduce the number of units that can be built at the base of the ridge by increasing the lot size required. It is estimated that under the proposed zoning approximately 130 houses could be built on the Awosting Reserve property, down from the 349 originally proposed. An environmental review would be required to minimize the impact of any development close to the ridge. Unfortunately the zoning has been weakened in several key areas as a result of the response of a number of landowners who would be affected by the new regulations, .

Permitted building sizes have been increased and lengths of driveways have been increased from 1,200 feet to 2,500. The local fire companies have expressed concern about how these long driveways would create problems in fighting fires. They have suggested greatly increasing the width of the driveways, something that would require much more clearing, with an unacceptable visual impact and extensive fragmentation of the terrain. The new zoning law also allows for the construction of McMansions, totally out of character with the surrounding community.

Awosting Reserve has filed another lawsuit against the Town of Gardiner over the process by which it adopted a new master plan. Friends, along with Save The Ridge, will be participating in defense of the Town.

We are waiting to see whether John Bradley can work out his differences with Chaffin-Light, the developers who came up with the original plan. There is a suit in the courts to establish what—if any—relationship exists between the parties. Bradley has stated that they are working together again. He claims to be working on an environmentally “more friendly” plan for the site.

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Southern Shawangunks

Friends of the Shawangunks (FOS) is monitoring two developments in the Southern Shawangunks. The Yukiguni Maitake Mushroom Plant proposal is working its way through the permitting process in Mamakating. While Gov. George Pataki has dropped—at least for the present—plans for four of the five proposed casinos in Sullivan County (one of which might have been on the top of the ridge), we are still monitoring what happens to the site on the ridge.

The Town of Mamakating Planning Board has accepted Yukiguni’s environmental impact statement as complete. The statement calls for a 925,000 square-foot, 83-foot high factory on 47 acres just north of Wurtsboro on Route 209 that would use up to 366,000 gallons of water a day. After a period for public comment, the proposal goes before the Town Planning Board for site plan approval and a special use permit.

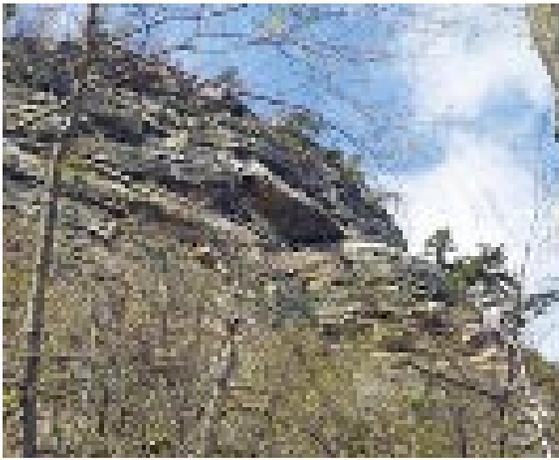
The Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) is urging the Department of Environmental Conservation to carefully consider experts’ and citizens’ comments when reviewing Yukuguni’s application for permits. In addition, it wants Congressman Maurice Hinchey to urge the Delaware River Basin Commission to deny a water withdrawal permit. BKAA regards the possible construction of an enormous mushroom plant at the Basha Kill’s headwaters as a serious concern. The major issues are plant design and manufacturing processes, storm water pollution prevention, the effect on ground water resources, and the wastewater treatment plan.

As a result of a decision of the U.S. Supreme Court limiting the sovereign rights of Indian tribes, Gov. Pataki has abandoned plans for four of the five proposed casinos in Sullivan County. One of the casinos abandoned would have been at an undetermined location in Mamakating, a location that we assume would have been the former Shawanga Lodge site on top of the ridge. BKAA, FOS, and other environmental groups will continue to monitor the plan for a massive resort/entertainment center (a casino?) at this site just off Route 17 at exit 114.

Two New Board Members for FOS and TSC

- RICHARD GELDARD is a full-time writer and lecturer living in Kerhonkson and New York City. He taught English and philosophy at the secondary, undergraduate, and graduate levels. Richard is the author of seven books, including studies of Ralph Waldo Emerson and ancient Greek philosophy and culture. A new book, *The Essential Transcendentalists*, will be published by Tarcher/Penguin in September. Richard is academic advisor to RWE.org, the Internet’s leading site devoted to the life and works of Emerson. His wife, artist and writer Astrid Fitzgerald, has been leading the anti-casino forces in Ulster County, and has been active in the fight on the statewide level. They have been working with the Shawangunk Ridge Coalition for the past two years. They have hiked throughout the Shawangunks since 1981.

MALCOLM SPECTOR has been an active member of the outdoor and conservation community since moving to New York in 1986. He is a member of the hiking committee and a regular hike leader for the New York-North Jersey Chapter of the Appalachian Mountain Club. Malcolm is a member of the Board of Directors of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference. He maintains a segment of the Red Trail at High Point on Sam’s Point Preserve and has been active in mapping and planning trails in newly acquired public lands in the Shawangunks. Malcolm lives in New York City where he works as an attorney for Legal Services for the Elderly



Trapps cliff area where Peregrine Falcons are nesting
photo by Tom Heller



Male Peregrine in flight
photo by David Johnson

David Johnson, Wildlife Photographer

David Johnson, well-known wildlife photographer is doing volunteer work for the Mohonk Preserve and Minnewaska State Park Preserve. He is interested in photographing as many species as possible. It would be very helpful if local residents contacted him with sightings of nesting sites, dens, and animals with young during the spring and early summer so that he could have the opportunity to photograph them in their natural environment. Please keep in mind even the most common sighting could be the most meaningful—from bears to common birds.

For the past 25 years Johnson has photographed environmental and humanitarian subjects and issues throughout the world. If you see something worth photographing give him a call at 845-454-1860. His website is www.global-learning.us

Marc B. Fried's *Shawangunk Place-Names* is almost off the Press

Marc B. Fried's new book *Shawangunk Place-Names: Indian, Dutch and English Geographical Names of the Shawangunk Mountain Region: Their Origin, Interpretation and Historical Evolution*, is slated to be available in late May directly from the author, and will be available at local bookstores in mid-July

For Fried place-names are the crossroads where history, geography, and linguistics intersect. Fried "takes us on a journey back through time to explore the significance of the Shawangunk region's fascinating geographical names and solve some age-old mysteries in the process. Along the way, we learn the history of the places, land patents, and settlements linked to these names, meet some of the personalities associated with this history, and glimpse the larger cultural forces at work during the course of more than three centuries."

The book has photographs of natural features, ancient maps, and other documents that complement his work. Fried received help in translating Indian names from two eminent modern scholars of Lenape ethnography and language, David M. Oestreicher and Raymond Whritenour. He has also studied earlier interpretations by Ruttenber and his predecessors. The two contemporary scholars explain that their translations can only be seen as possibilities because of the "difficulties inherent in reconstructing an ancient language, especially one with numerous and often unknown dialectical variations.

Fried says "this book is not just about names, for it is equally a book about places. I have willingly taken diversions into history, natural history, even biography whenever a place and its name beckoned with discoveries in these fields."

"The armchair reader interested primarily in our region's history, the avid hiker of the Shawangunk range curious about the origins of the geographical names encountered, the person fascinated by the euphony and linguistic variety of the names themselves, are equally encouraged to join me in this exploration: We will delve into ancient archives, hike through the mountain wilderness and along the valleys' watercourses, and ponder the mysteries and complexities of that ever-evolving cultural phenomenon that most distinguishes us from our fellow creatures on planet Earth."

Some of the names of Indian origin he has researched are Shawangunk, Wawarsing, Napanoch, Kerhonkson, Minnewaska, Mohonk, and Awosting; of English origin are Sky Top, Sam's Point, Gertrude's Nose, Jacob's Ladder, Maratanza, High Falls, and Polack Brook or Little Stony Kill; and of Dutch origin: Palmagat, The Trapps, The Clove, Walkkill, Verkeerderkill, Mombaccus, and Dwaar Kill.

There is so much more to discover in this very well researched and readable book by the author of *Tales from the Shawangunk Mountains: A Naturalist's Musings*, *A Bushwhacker's Guide*; *The Huckleberry Pickers: A Raucous History of the Shawangunk Mountains*; *Shawangunk: Adventure, Exploration, History and Epiphany from a Mountain Wilderness*; and his first book *The Early History of Kingston and Ulster County, N.Y.*

Marc has certainly enriched our understanding of a place we are all fascinated with. Look for book signings in the spring and summer where you can meet the author.

Fly Brook

This stream begins as the outlet to Mud Pond and is one of the two branches of the upper Peters Kill. It retains its name only until its confluence with the other branch, which flows out from Awosting Lake.

The word *fly* is an anglicized spelling of the Dutch word *vly*, which is itself a contraction of *vallei* or *valley* (meaning the same in Dutch as in English, according to Sewel's 1708 dictionary). In Dutch, the letter *v* is pronounced like the English *f*, so the anglicized spelling of the name preserves the correct pronunciation, at the expense of proper orthography.

In its contracted form, which may be unique to New Netherland, the word more specifically denotes a marsh or swampy depression or wet meadow. The minutes of the Rochester Trustees for March 15, 1709 refer to "the fly or marsh" along a section of the Peters Kill. The will of Jacobus Bruyn in 1744 refers to "a Certain Marsh and Wood Land...Commonly Called the Gebrande Vley Or the Burn'd Meadow... Lying on the South East side of Shawangunk Creek."

The Fly Brook lies in a watery lowland just southeast of the plateau of the Badlands. It is rich in sphagnum moss and other wetland vegetation. It first appears by name in the deed of sale from Henry Green to John McElhone, January 17, 1882, where the name appears both in capitalized and lower-case form.³ This would seem to be the latest first-occurrence of an authentic Dutch name in the records of the Shawangunk region.

Fried has been hiking the Shawangunks for over 40 years.

Peregrine Falcons reclaim “Last Frontier” & other Trapps Climbs

by John Thompson, Daniel Smiley Research Center



The vertical cliffs of the northern Shawangunks create extreme microenvironments and differ greatly from surrounding habitats. Lack of soil, significant temperature swings, and exposure to high winds limit the plants and animals that can live there. Talus areas below the cliff can be exposed or forested, but lack of soil and exposure also limit the plants and animals that can live in the harsh environment. Historically, these talus slopes and woodlands have

been buffered from human disturbance by their relative inaccessibility. Trees were seldom cut by landowners, so these slopes support some of the oldest trees in New York State. These old growth forests can be over 300 years old. Though cliffs and talus areas are harsh environments, they support a disproportionate number of rare species. In fact, the talus woodlands and slopes and cliffs support a higher proportion of rare species than the wetlands, pine barrens, or forests!

This is a landscape where Peregrine Falcons can thrive. These falcons were observed nesting on five different Shawangunk cliffs in the period from 1926 to 1955. Though members of the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership (SRBP) have protected 30,000 acres of land in the northern Shawangunks, including many miles of cliff, only one historic cliff eyrie is completely protected. You know that cliff—the Trapps! Millbrook Mountain, another cliff eyrie area, is only partially protected.

We have learned a lot about the behavior of wild Peregrines from watching them over the years. At Millbrook, the earliest nesting observed was on March 19, 2004, the latest egg-laying was the first week of May, 1998. The earliest fledging was May 25, 2004 and the latest (of the birds that survived to fledging stage) was June 30, 1999. In the seven breeding seasons from 1998 to 2004, the same ledge has been reused only once. With the popularity of rock climbing, hiking along cliff-edge trails, and bouldering, many people are drawn to the cliffs and into the talus. Research has shown that low impact human trampling along a cliff edge alters ground cover composition, and soil compaction and erosion in highly trampled areas is only too obvious at the top of the Trapps. A less obvious impact by climbers is disturbance of wildlife on the cliff. We know that Peregrines and other cliff-nesters do not like people above them. Startling them while they are incubating eggs may result in kicking eggs out of the nest when they fly out to defend their territory; defending against humans cause needless expenditure of energy; and nestlings may jump off a nest ledge, with grave consequences, before they can fly.

As the populations of cliff-nesting species have expanded, they are encountering recreationists in their habitat. Use of the Trapps cliff has changed significantly since 1955 when Peregrines last nested there. In the 1950s 50 people climbing was considered busy; now there are from 500 to 800 people climbing on a peak day! The Peregrines are returning to a much different cliff than the one they defended half a century ago.

At the Mohonk Preserve it is our mission to protect flora and fauna, and that may mean a temporary closure of rock climbs or trails. We will make that determination based on what is known about the species we are trying to protect and our knowledge of user impact.

Because the falcons have many ledges to choose from, and because they make nesting choices over a long period of time, predicting what their behavior might be at the Trapps is very difficult. Until they actually begin nesting we can't anticipate which ledge they will ultimately choose. And until they

choose their nest ledge we can't be sure which areas of the Trapps they may use to cache prey, perch, and defend as their own territory. Each of their decisions determines ours.

As I write this, we have a falcon pair defending territory at the Trapps cliff—the second time this has happened in the last three years. The 2002 pair stayed only during April, and then left for parts unknown. We think the current resident pair has chosen a ledge for nesting and perhaps has eggs on the ledge as you read this or by now there might be young!

On a sunny morning last week, the male falcon came flying back to the cliff with prey held tightly in its talons—a headless, bloody body of some luckless bird. The female sitting on the Grand Traverse ledge on what we call the Oblique Tweak Wall, watched him land on a ledge below her, ripping into

the meat, calling to her, and wailing. She waited a few moments, then flew down to join him and be greeted by head bobbing. They circled out from the cliff together, eventually repeating the same behavior on the ledge. Have Peregrines nest on the Trapps for the first time since 1955? We are holding our breath in anticipation!

Peregrine Falcons are a New York State endangered species. Although their population is increasing, in 2004 only three pairs were nesting on cliff sites in Southeastern New York State. Other not-endangered species that nest on cliffs include black vultures, (Three Pines and Something Interesting, two other climbs in the Trapps, were just closed for black vulture nesting), turkey vultures, common ravens, (as of April 23 a raven's nest with young was discovered in the Trapps above No

Existence) and the eastern phoebe. The Mohonk Preserve and other members of the SRBP are working on policy that will guide them in protecting animals in areas used for recreation. Land managers need to weigh many variables before limiting recreational opportunities, and they need to work closely to have consistent ridge-wide policies.

It is difficult to determine how long a closure will be. We intend to close an area to recreationists during the Peregrine's nest site selection period to avoid their abandoning a potential nest site. A closure during this stage is tricky, and the end point cannot be determined right away. Peregrine courtship can last for an indeterminate amount of time. Generally, eggs may be laid over a week or longer, and the eggs take approximately 33 days to hatch. The young take about 40 days to fledge. Our intent would be to keep the section of cliff closed for an additional two weeks so the young can become sturdy fliers. Altogether that's nearly 100 days from egg to good flyer, so a late nesting pair may require a closure until the end of July.

In order to minimize stress to cliff-nesting birds, recreationists are encouraged to continue to use sound judgment when climbing, bouldering, or hiking near nest sites or in areas where birds are repeatedly alarm-calling or exhibiting stressed behaviors. If you do confront a bird vocalizing in this way, please back away (but do not back off the cliff!) and let a ranger know what you saw and where.

Not only do we face ever-increasing challenges to protect cliff and talus of the Shawangunks, but as landowners we face ever-increasing challenges in managing the cliff and talus. We all need to work together in support of these fragile ecological communities.

John Thompson is the Natural Resources Specialist at the Mohonk Preserve's Daniel Smiley Research Center. He has been coordinating the Peregrine Falcon project in the Shawangunks for many years and works closely on this project with Tom Sarro, professor of biology at Mt. St. Mary College.



*Peregrine protecting nesting area of cliff in the Trapps
by Tom Heller*

PLEASE BE GENEROUS AT YEAR'S END

WE ARE STILL FIGHTING TO KEEP THIS VISTA THE WAY IT IS



Photo by Hardie Truesdale

The battle to save the ridge is costing money.

We need to pay:

- Legal Fees
- Consultants and Experts: (engineers, geologists, hydrologists, traffic consultants, soil analysts, biologists, archeologists. The gist is that the -gists cost money)
- Printing costs

If you have expertise that you can help us with, please let us know.
If you can organize a fundraiser, it will help us support this fight.



March and April Showers... The rains that started on 3/28 and continued into 3/29 produced a cumulative 2.85". The storm that started 4/2 and continued into 4/3 was a cumulative 3.80". (This is the storm total and not the 24 hour total from 5 pm to 5 pm) The most precipitation in 24 hours occurred on 3/2/1914 with a 6.5" total. Thanks to the Daniel Smiley Research Center records.



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.

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- Total Enclosed: \$ _____

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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. Thank you.

IBM matches should be made to *The Shawangunk Conservancy*.

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Editor: Annie O'Neill
Design and production:
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A copy of 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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