

Safeguarding the Shawangunks



Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership Offers Free Lecture Series in New Paltz and Ellenville

Looking at the sheer, white cliffs of the **Shawangunk Mountains** and its spiny ridge separating the Hudson River Valley from the **Catskill Mountains**, it's hard to imagine that there's anything fragile about this 450-million-year-old section of the Appalachians.

But even the fiercest of cliff-dwelling species have had a tough battle for survival here. "Peregrine falcons used to be common in the northeast," said Paul Huth, Director of the **Mohonk Preserve's Daniel Smiley Research Center**. "But DDT use in the 1940s and 1950s nearly wiped them out. It wasn't until 40 years later – in 1998 – that peregrines returned to nest on the ridge." While new birds fledged (grew to the stage where they could fly) every year since 1999, 2002 saw two pairs arrive – but only one nested, and no offspring survived.

What's the cause? "We don't know for sure," said Huth, "but we have a Peregrine Monitoring Team, including staff from New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York City Department of Environmental Protection. The team is carefully researching the possible causes so that we can better support their return to the wild."

Mountain ecosystems – and their special requirements for survival – will be the subject of a lecture on **February 13th at 7 PM** by Lawrence Hamilton, Vice Chair of Mountains at the World Commission on Protected Areas (a United Nations agency), and professor emeritus at Cornell. To be held at the **SUNY New Paltz Lecture Center**, the evening is part of a free Winter Lecture Series presented by the **Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership**. The series is funded by a grant from the Emily Hall Tremain Foundation in Connecticut.

The Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is a ten-member consortium of state agencies, non-profit land management organizations, and private landowners protecting over 25,000 acres of the Shawangunk Ridge. The Partnership's mission is to protect the biological diversity of the Shawangunks

by using environmental research to inform cooperative land-management decisions on the ridge and in surrounding communities. The Partnership includes: the *Cragmoor Association*, *Friends of the Shawangunks*, *Mohonk Preserve*, The Nature Conservancy, New York Natural Heritage Program, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, New York State Museum, Open Space Institute and Palisades Interstate Park Commission, and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

"We are inventorying the life on the ridge in order to understand what the natural communities of the Shawangunks need to survive," said Cara Lee, Shawangunk Ridge Program Director for The Nature Conservancy. "Our goal is to share the



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