



Protecting Biodiversity in a Changing Landscape

Shawangunk Ridge Free Lecture Series

January – February 2006

During January and February 2005, the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership will present six lectures about the biodiversity and open space value of the Shawangunk Mountains. Lectures will be held on Wednesdays between January 18 and February 22, with the January lectures being held in Ellenville (a location change from prior press coverage), and the February series, at SUNY New Paltz. This free series is funded by a grant from the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation of Connecticut.

For more information about the lectures, contact Hatti Langsford, Park Interpreter, Minnewaska State Park Preserve, (845) 255-2011, Hatti.Langsford@oprhp.state.ny.us.

January Lectures

(For February lectures, see other side)

Held at the Ellenville Public Library & Museum, 40 Center Street, Ellenville. (Parking on Route 52 [Canal Street], just west of Route 209.)

Wednesday, January 18, 7 p.m.

Fire ... Friend or Foe?

Wildfires have been a powerful force in shaping the forests of the Northeast, but 100 years of human fire suppression has disrupted a natural process that many of our ecosystems depend on. Dr. William A. Patterson III, Professor of Paleoecology, Fire Ecology and Management at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, will discuss how we developed the ability to use prescribed fire to manage our forests in the Northeast. Learn about the differences between wildfires as a destructive force and prescribed fire as a tool for achieving ecological goals and other land management objectives. Dr. Patterson has been at the forefront of research in fire ecology and prescribed fire for nearly 30 years and is one of the most experienced prescribed burn practitioners in the Northeast.

The first series of prescribed burns in the Shawangunks in over twenty-five years was successfully completed in December on the Mohonk Preserve by the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership. Additional controlled burns are planned for 2006. To view a slideshow of the 2005 burns, visit www.gunksfireplan.org/press.html.

Wednesday, January 25, 7 p.m.

***A Day in the Life of a Backyard Bird:
The Audubon at Home Program and You***

Creating backyard habitat is an important part of conserving our local landscape. Our backyards are increasingly critical for the conservation of birds and other wildlife as more land is lost to development. Our everyday choices around our homes, lawns, and gardens have a profound impact on bird conservation and the greater environment. Come learn easy and cost-effective ways to create a healthy backyard habitat, without relying on pesticides. Your wildlife watching will increase! Sean Mahar is the Associate Director of Conservation for Audubon New York of the National Audubon Society.

Composed of non-profit and public agencies, the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is dedicated to protecting the sensitive wildlife habitat and other natural resources of the Shawangunk Mountains. Informed by field research and scientific analysis, partners manage over 40,000 protected acres of the Shawangunks, provide environmental education, and work with local communities to preserve open space on the slopes of the ridge.



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February Lectures

(For January lectures, see other side)

Held at the SUNY New Paltz Lecture Center, Room 100. For directions and a campus map, consult www.newpaltz.edu/map. The Lecture Center is between the Library and the Humanities Building on the west side of the campus. From Route 208, take Southside Avenue onto campus, turn left after the Terrace Restaurant onto Sojourner Way, Lecture Center is on right. Note: If parking on the SUNY New Paltz Campus, secure a visitor-parking permit from the permit vending machine outside the campus police building on Route 32 South.

Wednesday, February 1, 7 p.m.

Don't Tread on Them: The Hidden Lives of New York's Timber Rattlesnakes

Why protect the most widespread venomous snake in the eastern U.S.? Dr. Rulon Clark, a postdoctoral associate in the Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology at Cornell University, has studied the behavior and ecology of timber rattlesnakes for more than six years. Dr. Clark will talk about the natural history of timber rattlesnakes in New York, including their relationship to people, and why we need to protect them and their habitat.

Wednesday, February 8, 7 p.m.

Eco-services: The Effects of Changing Plant Communities on the Environment

Research is revealing that plant species distribution can change dramatically in response to a changing environment. Yet plants not only respond to their environment, but also provide critical ecosystem services such as flood and erosion control, climate stabilization, soil enrichment, and others upon which we rely. Dr. Valerie Eviner of the Institute of Ecosystem Studies will share her findings about the positive and negative consequences of the changing environment and the potential for these changes to produce a win-win situation for the Hudson Valley region and the local economy.

Wednesday, February 15, 7 p.m.

Teeming with Life

Why is the Hudson Valley so rich in life and species and how does the Shawangunk Ridge fit into this picture of the diversity of life? How can local communities contribute to biodiversity conservation? Laura Heady, Director of Education at Hudsonia, will discuss Hudson Valley habitats, and how informed land use decisions can help protect the species these habitats support. Hudsonia's critical work with local communities relates to the efforts of the Biodiversity Partnership as it helps citizens to understand biodiversity and how to identify significant habitats so that science can be integrated into planning for the future.

Wednesday, February 22, 7 p.m.

Wildlife of the Shawangunk Mountains

David Johnson has been photographing wildlife of the Shawangunk Mountains in their natural habitat. His endeavors have resulted in the most comprehensive photo study of species along the ridge. Dave has worked as a professional photographer throughout the world for the past 30 years, specializing in environmental and humanitarian subjects. In addition to photography, he is also known for his work as a teacher, author, researcher, and lecturer. To learn more about Dave's work, visit www.global-learning.us.