



# Ridgelines

Autumn 2020 • #199



Photo by Sami Shub

**Autumn has been more active than ever at Mohonk Preserve!** The leaves may be mostly gone, but our members and visitors continue to arrive in record numbers to enjoy the beautiful fall weather.

In this issue of *Ridgelines* we'll explore how the Preserve is connecting more people than ever to nature during these challenging times and how you can help. We'll update you on how donor support is enabling us to expand the *City Kids on the Ridge* education program, and report on the great success of our first ever Plein Air Art Walk in partnership with Roost Studios and plans to host it again in the spring.

**If you haven't had a chance to visit our Testimonial Gateway Trailhead, we invite you to stop by for a late autumn walk and experience the breathtaking ridgeline views!**



Photo by Tom Weiner

## SEASONAL UPDATES

**PHOTO GALLERY.** View seasonal photographs by our volunteer photographers, visit [mohonkpreserve.org/photos](https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/photos). See more photos by the Mohonk Preserve Volunteer Photographers on their Facebook page: [facebook.com/www.mpvp](https://www.facebook.com/www.mpvp).

## CHECK THIS OUT

**COVID-19 Visitation Protocols.** In accordance with state and CDC guidelines and to ensure the health and safety of members, visitors and staff, Mohonk Preserve has instituted several important protocols for visitation. Please be sure to wear your mask and practice social distancing. Read more at <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/visit/visit-us.html>.



**Looking for the perfect holiday gift?** We have many other great nature-themed gifts available at the Visitor Center, including our new trail map and Mohonk Preserve **hats, mugs, sweatshirts, and more**. Visit the Nature Shop or call 845-255-0919.

Give the gift of year-round adventure with a **Mohonk Preserve gift membership**, visit <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/how-to-help/join/gift-membership.html> or call 845-255-0919.

**Our 2021 Calendar makes a great holiday gift!** Our calendar is full of photos from our talented volunteer photography team and natural history observations like average temperatures, bird arrivals and migrations, plant cycles and more. Get yours in person at our Visitor Center, call 845-255-0919, or order online at <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/who-we-are/newsletter-and-publications/2021-calendar.html>

**MOHONK PRESERVE MEMBER REWARDS PROGRAM.** Show your valid Mohonk Preserve annual or life membership card at nearly 40 local businesses listed at <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/how-to-help/join/member-rewards-program.html>, and receive a discount or special offer.



*Photo by Kevin Case at the Visitor Center Trailhead by Bryan Coppede*

## **Nature and Community – an Essential Connection**

The past year has altered the ways we live, work and recreate. At Mohonk Preserve, the COVID-19 crisis resulted in unprecedented changes in how we do our work and deepened our connection to the communities we serve.

After a brief pause to adapt to evolving COVID-19 protocols and mandates, transform our trailheads, retrain and hire trailhead assistants, and mobilize volunteers, Mohonk Preserve reopened to record visitation, which has continued throughout the year. Our Stewardship and Ranger teams, along with our dedicated volunteer Trailhead Ambassadors, have worked tirelessly to ensure safe and meaningful experiences in nature for all Preserve visitors – from first timers to longtime members.

And speaking of members, we've also experienced significant growth in Preserve membership. Our Membership staff, assisted by specialized volunteers, has been processing memberships nearly around the clock, and we are delighted to welcome many new members as well as those who have not visited regularly for some time.

“We believe this growth in visitation and membership reflects a growing appreciation of and yearning for nature and its powerful ability to provide inspiration, connection, solitude and renewal, while also protecting the environment by keeping water clean, hosting diverse plants and animals, and soaking up carbon,” said Mohonk Preserve President and CEO **Kevin Case**. “I see it as my job, together with the Preserve’s exceptional staff, to keep those experiences accessible while protecting the land and its habitats forever.”

“More people than ever are discovering that the Preserve provides an “essential service,” Kevin added. “In this way, COVID-19 revealed to the public at-large what our members already knew – the natural world is essential to our sense of well-being. Our mental, spiritual, emotional and physical health are intrinsically linked to the natural world. We literally can’t live without it.”

For the Preserve to continue to fulfill this growing need for nature, we must increase our capacity to protect and care for both the land and the people who love it. From our mountain rescue team and land stewardship staff, to environmental educators, conservation science experts, and land protection staff, your support underpins everything we do. Help us ensure that the Preserve has the resources to steward this extraordinary place now and into the future. Your contribution today to our annual fund online at <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/yearend/donate.html> will keep the Preserve strong and ensure that nature and community will always be connected. Thanks, and we hope to see you on the land!



Students from San Miguel Academy at Spring Farm by Gabby Tait

## Expanding the *City Kids on the Ridge* Education Program

Thanks to support from the **John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation** and **The FairWays Foundation**, Mohonk Preserve will be continuing its existing *City Kids on the Ridge* program, forging new relationships with underserved urban school districts, and offering new outreach and remote learning components in response to student needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Since 2013, the Preserve has been developing the *City Kids* program, first working with underserved students in Newburgh from the San Miguel Academy and then expanding to include the Nora Cronin Presentation Academy. Funds from the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation and The FairWays Foundation will support participating educators, additional transportation required under social distancing regulations, outdoor education and recreation programs, and other program equipment and supplies.



The grants will also support forging new relationships with other underserved students in urban centers throughout the region, new outreach and remote learning components in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, integrating a new arts component to increase student engagement, and piloting a new educational project at Kleinekill Pool in the Mohonk Preserve Foothills.

For 2021, we will take formative steps to increase access and program participation. Program expansion is expected to result in new relationships with regional urban schools expressing interest in future participation.

The Preserve's Education team is also designing new arts-based modules to better engage students in nature-based STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and math) education. We will introduce more artistic opportunities, including nature photography and more writing, journaling, drawing, painting, crafting, and modeling to help them access science and conservation content.

"Our school-site outreach programs, including Pond Keepers, were underway when COVID-19 school closures began. We quickly switched gears and provided lessons via video designed for home learning. These lessons covered a variety of indoor and backyard activities including nature explorations, math in nature, daytime astronomy, homemade weather instruments and more," said Mohonk Preserve Director of Education **Kathy Ambrosini**. Visit <https://www.mohonkpreserve.org/what-we-do/environmental-education/nature-nuggets.html> to view an example. "For 2021, we will continue to explore, develop, and pilot new ways of delivering remote learning where needed to supplement our outdoor programs, adding innovative technologies and methods to enhance student engagement and increase the number of schools and students served."

"The overall goal of the City Kids program is to improve student motivation, confidence, and ingenuity in STEAM and environmental conservation, resulting in improved problem-solving abilities, intellectual capacity, and high school readiness," Kathy noted. "Long term, we expect that these students will become important voices in their communities for responsible stewardship of the environment."

Thanks to generous grants from the John T. and Jane A. Wiederhold Foundation, The FairWays Foundation and the Dorr Foundation, along with donors to the **Sean E. Davis Memorial Fund** and the Preserve's annual auction, Mohonk Preserve's City Kids on the Ridge will continue to grow and inspire students today and into the future.



Plein Air Art Walk by Kate Schoonmaker

## The Crossroads of Art and Nature

Mohonk Preserve and Roost Studios collaborated to create the Preserve's first-ever Plein Air Art Walk and Auction, an inspirational project connecting land, art and community, at the Mohonk Preserve Testimonial Gateway Trailhead, on Sunday, October 18, 2020.

"Roost Studios Executive Director **Marcy Bernstein** contacted me back in early August to discuss the possibility of doing this event and I thought it was a fantastic idea from the start," said Mohonk Preserve Special Events Manager **Tom Leader**. "We worked together to carefully plan how to involve artists, map out vantage points, and spread the word to the broader community."

The participating curated group of recognized Hudson Valley artists included **Rosalind Banks, Greg Correll, Mira Fink, Stacie Flint, Lynne Friedman, Katherine Gray, Emeline Hastings, Barbara Holt, David Holt, Eva Kusmirek, Ward Lamb, Laura Martinez-Bianco, Howard Miller, Jacqueline O'Malley-Satz, Arthur Raphael, Daniel Shornstein, Gerald Teters, Marianne Tully and Marlene Wiedenbaum**. For more information about the artists and their work, <https://www.roostcoop.org/plein-air-artists>.

The Testimonial Gateway Trailhead is the first new trailhead at the Preserve in over 26 years. The landscape in which the artists worked features the historic Testimonial Gateway Tower, which served as the entrance to the Mohonk Mountain House until 1945. From many vantage points, the views of the Shawangunk Ridge and surrounding foothills, fields and historic farms are magnificent.

The artists were stationed along the tree-lined Pin Oak Allée on the Lenape Lane carriage road and the new Ridgeview Trail, part of the Mohonk Preserve Foothills Loop of the River-to-Ridge Trail. Each artist created one or more works in the form of a painting or drawing, on site in plein air based on the theme of nature and the outdoors.

The in-process and finished artworks were photographed throughout the day by volunteer photographers from Mohonk Preserve and Roost Studios. The finished work was included in an online auction for 48 hours following the event. A portion of the sales from the event benefitted participating artists, Mohonk Preserve and Roost Studios. While the auction has ended, the artwork may still be viewed at <https://e.givesmart.com/events/iUN>.

"The event exceeded all our expectations," Tom noted. "Over 200 people attended and were able to experience artists at work in a safe and socially distanced way. The feedback from the artists was overwhelmingly positive and auction bidding was brisk. We are already planning another Art Walk in May of 2021."

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