



# Ridgelines

Spring 2021 • #201



Million Dollar View by Siu S. Yuen

**Spring has sprung at Mohonk Preserve and our 2021 season is already in full bloom!** In this issue of *Ridgelines* we'll share exciting news about the return of the Plein Air Art Walk and Auction on May 22, 2021. We'll also profile our returning Peregrine Falcons and highlight how we are focusing on land and climate through a new internship supported by the Land Trust Alliance.

This is a great time of year to get outdoors for one of our on-land programs or learn something new on one of our online programs. See our upcoming programs and events at [mohonkpreserve.org/events](https://mohonkpreserve.org/events).

## SEASONAL UPDATES

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



Photo: Playful Fox by Karen Maloy Brady

**GET INTO NATURE.** See a full list of upcoming programs at [mohonkpreserve.org/events](https://mohonkpreserve.org/events) including a "iNaturalist: The Citizen Scientist's Best Friend" Webinar. New this spring, check our website and Facebook page for special "Pop Up" Programs like Waterbugs, Turtles, and Tadpoles- Oh My!.

## 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>.

**Bring a digital Mohonk Preserve trail map with you on any mobile device!** Our new trail map is now available on Apple iOS and Android devices using the Avenza Maps app.

**Mohonk Preserve is pleased to sponsor The Ride for Mental Health** on June 19 and 20, 2021 in New Paltz, NY. The proceeds raised will be donated to McLean Hospital, a Harvard Medical School affiliate, for the education, research and treatment of mental illness including anxiety, borderline personality disorder, depression, eating disorders, and substance abuse. For more information, visit [rideformentalhealth.org](https://rideformentalhealth.org).

**Our Annual Healthy Ulster Pass program** is happening on Wednesday, June 2 through Sunday, June 6, 2021. Visit [mohonkpreserve.org/healthyulster](https://mohonkpreserve.org/healthyulster) to learn more.

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

**We welcome our new business members who joined between January 1 through March 31, 2021:**

- AVH Glocal LLC
- Carol Garfinkel, Associate Real Estate Broker, Keller Williams Realty Hudson Valley North
- Ray America Inc.





*Artist at Work During the Autumn Plein Air by Larry G. Arvidson*

## The Art Of Nature

Mohonk Preserve and Roost Studios are collaborating once again on a Plein Air Art Walk and Auction, an inspirational project connecting land, art and community, at the Mohonk Preserve Testimonial Gateway Trailhead, on Saturday, May 22, 2021 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. (rain date Sunday, May 23).

"Last year's October event featuring 19 Hudson Valley artists was a great success," said Mohonk Preserve Special Events Manager **Tom Leader**. "We're working together with Roost Studios on selecting this year's expanded group of 24 artists, which will include some returnees from last year's event, along with first-time participants."

The Testimonial Gateway Trailhead landscape in which the artists will work features the historic Testimonial Gateway Tower and magnificent views of the Shawangunk Ridge and surrounding Mohonk Preserve Foothills' fields and historic farms.

The artists will be stationed along the tree-lined Pin Oak Allee on the Lenape Lane carriage road and the Ridgeview Trail, part of the Mohonk Preserve Foothills Loop of the River-to-Ridge Trail. Each artist will create art in the form of a painting or drawing, on site in plein air based on the theme of nature and the outdoors. Visitors will have the chance to view artists working in a safe and socially distanced way while enjoying the outdoors and finding their own inspiration on the land.

The in-process and finished artworks will be photographed throughout the day by volunteer photographers from Mohonk Preserve and Roost Studios. The finished works will be included in an online auction following the event. Proceeds from the auction will benefit participating artists, Mohonk Preserve and Roost Studios.

"Last year's event exceeded all our expectations," Tom noted. "Over 200 people attended, feedback from the artists was overwhelmingly positive, and auction bidding was brisk. We're excited to present an even bigger and better version of the event on May 22!"

The event is open to Mohonk Preserve members at no charge and to visitors with the purchase of a day pass for \$15 per person.



*Peregrine Watch by Deborah Tracy-Kral*

## Protecting the Peregrines

Since 1998, Mohonk Preserve staff and volunteers have been monitoring the annual return of Peregrine falcons to the Shawangunk Ridge. These birds may not be the largest raptors in North America (that distinction belongs to the Bald Eagle), but what they lack in size, they make up for in speed and stamina!

About the same size as a large crow, Peregrines have black backs and facial “sideburns,” long pointed wings, and a narrow tail. Their habitats are diverse, including cliffs, bridges, and even city skyscrapers. They are carnivores, and their meals include birds of many sizes as well as bats and other small mammals.

These falcons are very fast fliers, able to average more than 30 miles per hour and typically reaching speeds of nearly 70 miles per hour when directly pursuing prey. When leaving its hunting stoop, a Peregrine may drop heights of more than ½ mile and reach speeds of 200 miles per hour to reach prey.

Peregrines generally return to the ridge in late winter, with mating occurring soon thereafter. Peregrines build shallow, unlined nests on the ledge of a cliff or in an old raven nest. Their eggs are reddish brown with dark brown splotches. Chicks hatch in about a month and usually fledge about six weeks later.

These graceful birds of prey began to return to the Mohonk Preserve in 1998 to nest on our cliffs, and since then, new generations of Peregrines have successfully fledged. In 2005, a Peregrine was banded at the Preserve for the first time in 50 years.

Each year, the Peregrines are monitored by Preserve Conservation Science staff and volunteers as part of the Peregrine Watch program. This program runs from late February through August. Participants monitor and observe Peregrine behavior and breeding activity to identify areas that should be temporarily closed off for the breeding falcons. Once breeding nest sites are identified, participants observe in three locations of the ridge to view the breeding season and record their observations of the nest activity – egg laying, incubation, prey exchanges, presence of chicks, chick feeding, chick fledging, and young in flight. Participants also contribute to public outreach and interpretation of the importance of Peregrine conservation. You can follow the Peregrine Watch at [mohonkpreserve.org/peregrine-watch](https://mohonkpreserve.org/peregrine-watch).

For the 2021 season, we have identified nesting pairs at all three heritage sites – Millbrook, Trapps and Bonticou. The Preserve has temporarily closed sections of cliffs surrounding these areas to climbing to help support undisturbed breeding areas for the Peregrines. Birds that nest in natural areas are less tolerant of humans and can attack people they perceive as intruding on their territories. This can result in injury to both people and birds. Also, nesting birds that leave their nests expose their eggs or young to predators, scavengers and inclement weather.



To further protect the nesting Peregrines, the Preserve doesn't disclose specific information about nest locations or outcomes, We continue to closely monitor these nests to track their progress during the breeding season.

The Preserve has worked collaboratively with the climbing community for decades to help protect the Peregrine falcons and we appreciate their support of our conservation mission and patience as they wait for their favorite climbs to reopen once the Peregrines successfully fledge. We also thank the dozens of Peregrine Watch volunteers, many of whom are climbers, who have generously donated their time and energy to help this magnificent bird.

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## Conservation in a Changing Climate

In 2021, Mohonk Preserve hired its first-ever Land & Climate Intern, **Rayna Berger**. Rayna will fulfill a part-time position through the spring and summer working mostly remotely, but she also looks forward to meetings on the land.

Rayna brings deep skills and experience to this role. She is currently working on a Master of Science degree in Climate Science & Policy at Bard College's Center for Environmental Policy, where she focuses on local climate action planning. Her undergraduate work centered on environmental policy and justice at Warren Wilson College in Asheville, North Carolina. She specialized in how institutions can integrate climate policy and action, and we look forward to working with her to integrate climate impacts into our work here at the Preserve.



*Rayna Berger between two old-growth tulip poplars by Steve Rasovsky*

This internship is supported by a grant from the **Land Trust Alliance** Land and Climate Program, with the goal of embedding climate considerations into our land protection and land management work, as well as our communications.

"When I moved to the Hudson Valley in late summer of 2019, I fell in love with the Catskills and found a familiar home here in the northern Appalachian mountains," Rayna said. "I'm excited for this opportunity to work with the Preserve to more deeply integrate climate impacts into their existing land management plans."

Rayna will be working closely with Conservation Science and Land Protection staff and will collaborate with other departments across the organization, including Stewardship and Marketing & Communications. She will also participate in the staff Climate Change and Sustainability Task Group and will interact with several Board committees.

"The Preserve is working to integrate climate considerations into the heart of our programs, and this project is an important step," said Director of Conservation Programs **Julia Solomon**. "Ultimately, our goal is to protect the land that is most important in a changing climate and to make sure that our protected lands stay healthy as the climate shifts. As we begin to respond to climate change, we

are finding that the same qualities that have served us well since our founding will help us meet this new challenge. By observing closely, keeping careful records, and thoughtfully prioritizing land for conservation, the Preserve can provide critical habitat for plants and animals in need of refuge and ensure that our lands retain the qualities that we love for generations to come.”

“The Preserve has over 100 years of recorded climate data which creates a beautiful leadership opportunity in land management planning processes, to be aware of climate impacts when making decisions in all aspects of the organization,” Rayna noted. “Building a solid foundation of climate considerations allows the Preserve to remain rooted in their goal of creating a place where people and nature thrive by creating resilient landscapes.”



## In Appreciation of Gifts Received January 1, 2021 through March 31, 2021

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