



# Ridgelines

Summer 2021 • #202



Millbrook Ridge View by Andrea MacScott

**It's high summer at Mohonk Preserve** and a great time to take a stroll on our shady J&S Grafton Sensory Trail at the Visitor Center or the Pin Oak Allee at the Testimonial Gateway Trailhead! In this issue of Ridgelines, we'll provide updates on our access and inclusion programs, share exciting news about the return of in-person running events at the Preserve, and introduce an important land donation in the Millbrook Ridge area.

You'll also find beautiful summer images from our Mohonk Preserve Volunteer Photographers at [mohonkpreserve.org/photos](https://mohonkpreserve.org/photos), along with a listing of generous donors who provided critical support to the Preserve in the second quarter of this year.

*We encourage you to enjoy the rest of the fleeting summer season by getting into nature at Mohonk Preserve and hope to see you soon on the land!*

## SEASONAL UPDATES



Indigo Bunting by Tom Weiner

**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/MPVPhotographers](https://facebook.com/MPVPhotographers).

**GET INTO NATURE.** See a full list of upcoming programs including Evening Yoga at the Pavilion, Stargazing: Perseid Shower Viewing and Forest Bathing with Jane Dobson.

## **CHECK THIS OUT**

**COVID-19 Visitation Protocols.** Please note: Masks are required indoors for all visitors and social distancing is encouraged for visitors at all times.

**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.

**More Ways to Get Kids Into Nature!** This summer Mohonk Preserve is offering hands on outdoor programming for young students with our Field School programs. Bring your eager learners between the ages of 6 and 12 including an adult chaperone for an immersive two-hour experience on the land with a Mohonk Preserve Educator. Learn more at: [mohonkpreserve.org/what-we-do/environmental-education/field-school-programs.html](https://mohonkpreserve.org/what-we-do/environmental-education/field-school-programs.html)

**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 April 1 through June 30, 2021:**

- Kerhonkson Mountain House
- Kevin Brew Sales





*Signing up for a Healthy Ulster pass by Susan Lehrer*

## Connecting Neighbors to Nature

At Mohonk Preserve, a crucial part of our mission includes inspiring people to care for, enjoy and explore their natural world. Our access and inclusion programs play an important role in insuring that more people can experience nature through healthy outdoor recreation, education programs and citizen science opportunities.

One of our most popular access and inclusion initiatives is our annual Healthy Ulster Pass program. Ulster County residents are invited to visit the Preserve and receive a free, six-week, all-access pass. This year, 4,800 passes were distributed in June at the Preserve's Testimonial Gateway Trailhead in New Paltz and the Spring Farm Trailhead in High Falls.

2021 marked the 11th year the Preserve has offered its Healthy Ulster Pass program. The Preserve has distributed over 42,000 free passes to Ulster County residents during the organization's annual Healthy Ulster events. Thanks to our longtime partners at the **Ulster Savings Charitable Foundation** for their ongoing support of this great community event.

Another important access and inclusion resource is our Library Lending Program. Established in 2013, this program allows people to check out a Preserve pass the same way they would check out a book from a library. The Library Lending program helps to bring more people into nature, increasing nature's relevance in their lives while also helping to ensure its future preservation. It also supports local libraries by adding value and diversity to the benefits of library membership and increasing access to community resources. Over 30 area libraries from Ulster, Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Sullivan counties are currently participating in the program.

Our newest access program is Family Equity Days for New York State SNAP and EBT recipients. Each Family Equity Day offers free 90-minute nature-themed programs for up to eight family members ages 5 and up guided by Mohonk Preserve Educators in July and August. Topics include "Pond Exploration," a hike to explore pond life at the water's edge; "Lenape Lifeways," a day of discovery about these indigenous people and their rich culture; "Stream Family Discovery," exploring a stream habitat and creatures; and "Family Orienteering for Beginners," building outdoor skills through an on-land compass wayfinding game. Registration is open now and families can register at [my.mohonkpreserve.org](https://my.mohonkpreserve.org).

So that everyone has the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, Mohonk Preserve actively promotes the inclusion of people with disabilities on the land and within our programs through our *NatureAccess*® program. We offer a variety of services for visitors, including consultation before arrival and universally designed programs wherever possible. The Preserve is pleased to offer the use of our two all-terrain wheelchairs for day visitors

at our Visitor Center by reservation or on a first-come first-served basis. For more information about our NatureAccess program, visit: [mohonkpreserve.org/visit/accessibility.html](https://mohonkpreserve.org/visit/accessibility.html).

Along with our access and inclusion programs, there are other free or low-cost ways to enjoy the Preserve. Mohonk Preserve's Visitor Center is free and open to the public daily, along with the Mohonk Preserve Foothills Loop of the River-to-Ridge Trail. Children under 12 are always free and we also offer complimentary access to active-duty military service members and disabled veterans. Our day fee is also waived for a personal care attendant who accompanies a person with a disability. Discounted memberships are available for seniors, students and the military.

We are continually exploring ways to make the Preserve more welcoming and accessible for people of all ages and abilities. We are currently working on additional access options for SNAP and EBT recipients and family-friendly amenities such as picnic tables. We look forward to sharing our progress with you.



*Pfalz Point Trail Challenge 2019 by John Mizel*

## Running for the Hills

When many people think of ways to get into nature, the first image that comes to mind might be hiking. But with the expansion of trail networks in the U.S. and around the world, trail running is becoming increasingly popular. According to the International Trail Running Association, trail running has been growing approximately 15% year-over-year globally for the past decade, outpacing all other running segments.

At Mohonk Preserve, we've also experienced an increase in trail running on our over 70 miles of carriage roads and trails. The Preserve's carriage roads provide a great soft surface for runners as they travel through a diverse ecosystem of forests, fields, cliffs, and streams. Many runners tell us that a great part of their experience is stopping to observe some of the 1,400 species of plants and animals that thrive in the Shawangunk Mountains.

The Preserve hosts local high school and college trail running teams that practice on the carriage roads. During the school year, you might find a running team from Rondout Valley High School stretching at the Spring Farm Trailhead's Slingerland Pavilion before heading out on their daily training run. The Preserve also partners with area running clubs including the Shawangunk Runners, who hold a series of races on the ridge.

Two of the Preserve's most popular running trails are the 5-mile Undercliff/Overcliff Carriage Road loop at the West Trapps Trailhead and the more strenuous 9.5 mile run along Bonticou, Cedar Drive and Guyot Hill carriage roads at the Spring Farm Trailhead.



Mohonk Preserve also has a great line-up of trail races, beginning with the annual Pfalz Point Trail Challenge coming up on Sunday, August 29, 2021. Runners will cover ten miles of extraordinary trails including broad open meadows with spectacular views, steep and rocky footpaths, and gently rolling carriage roads. The course begins and ends at the Preserve's Spring Farm Trailhead in High Falls, where runners are treated to a post-race chili lunch. For over 20 years, proceeds from race registration fees have supported the Preserve's conservation programs, including restoration and maintenance of the historic carriage roads.

For runners who are up for an even greater challenge, registration is still open for a limited time for the Rock The Ridge 50-mile Challenge on September 25, 2021. The goal is to run or hike a 50-mile course within 18 hours. The course winds along well-maintained carriage roads, through lush forests and over ridgelines with magnificent vistas. The 18-hour time limit accommodates people with a wide range of abilities, including hikers, as well as joggers, runners, and ultramarathoners. For those not up to doing the full 50, relay teams of 2 or 4 are a great option with each participant covering either one half or one quarter of the course.

Rock The Ridge is also an environmental fundraiser with proceeds supporting the Preserve's programs including over a century of conservation and climate change research; protecting critical habitat for wildlife and public recreation; managing and maintaining over 70 miles of carriage roads and trails; and inspiring the next generation of conservationists by providing accessible environmental education programs for kids and adults. Since the event launched in 2013, Rock The Ridge has grown every year and Ridge Rockers have collectively raised over \$1.8 million to support the Preserve.

If you're not quite ready to tackle a trail race this year, the Preserve's 2022 race season will kick off again in early spring with the annual Rock and Snow Bridge 2 Bridge 5-mile Run in April. Whether you run solo or participate in a group race, running is a great way to get into nature. For more information on running at Mohonk Preserve, visit [mohonkpreserve.org/visit/activities/run.html](https://mohonkpreserve.org/visit/activities/run.html).



*Pfalz Point Trail Challenge 2019 by John Mizel*

## Working Together to Leave a Conservation Legacy

Mohonk Preserve was created because of the foresight and generosity of individuals who understood that protecting land is vital to the well-being of both nature and people. This legacy continues today as landowners across the Shawangunk Ridge work with the Preserve to safeguard special places forever.

The Preserve works with local landowners to protect land that has high ecological, cultural and recreational value through acquiring land or conservation easements. Sometimes, these acquisitions are the result of

the generosity of neighbors who wish to permanently protect their land by donating it to the Preserve for stewardship in perpetuity.

Such is the case with Preserve's latest land acquisition, the first since 2019. Longtime Preserver members **James Silbert** and **Elizabeth Horton** made the decision to leave a conservation legacy by donating approximately 24 acres of property near Millbrook Ridge. In addition to their donation of the property, the couple also included a generous gift to cover future stewardship costs.

This property, which will remain a backcountry location with no public access or trail development, contains cliff and talus slopes that support ferns, lichens, reptiles, and other rock-dwelling species, and are a key priority environment for protection. Additionally, the property contains seeps and other features whose protection contributes to improved water quality. Preservation of this parcel will also help protect the view from the Millbrook Ridge Trail and iconic views of Millbrook Ridge from the valley below.

Liz and Jim worked closely with Preserve Director of Conservation Programs **Julia Solomon** and Land Protection and GIS Manager **Ed Pestone** to develop the land donation agreement according to their wishes and needs.

"We are deeply grateful for the generosity and foresight of these landowners," Julia said. "From the start of our conversations with them, it was clear that they love both their land and Mohonk Preserve, and that they wanted to find a way to protect the land while helping the Preserve. We are thrilled that we were able to work with them to conserve a truly special place on the ridge."

"The Millbrook Ridge Trail has been one of our favorite hikes – long ago before we were married, then with our kids, and now with our grandkids," Liz and Jim said. "While knowing we owned a small piece of this mountain top was satisfying, it never really did seem to belong to us, but rather to the deer and the snakes and the hawks – and to the many people like us who love the Shawangunks. Now we take great pleasure in knowing that the land will continue to be a place of refuge for all of us as part of the Mohonk Preserve."

Working together with committed conservationists like Liz and Jim, the Preserve is able to continue to protect fragile habitats and scenic viewsheds to leave a conservation legacy that will last for generations, fulfilling our promise of saving the land for life.



## In Appreciation of Gifts Received April 1 through June 30, 2021

### In Memory of

**Pat Guralnik** from  
Larry and Charlotte Burgess

**Dorothy Sherman** – In memory of  
beloved wife, mother, grandmother,  
aunt, friend, Dorothy Sherman. Always in  
our heart from  
Anonymous

**Bert Smiley** from  
Nina Smiley

**Daniel Smiley** – Thanks for teaching me  
about Mohonk from  
Peter Lane

**Gerow Smiley** from  
Larry and Charlotte Burgess

### In Honor of

**Anna Rumi** – Happy Birthday! from  
Anonymous

**Jane Van Ingen** – for a wonderful  
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John Van Ingen

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