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Summer in the Valley 2023

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No ordinary flow: Bird and Lava

Beacon-based artist shows in Rhinebeck

by Lynn Woods

ARRIVING AT THE T2 Gallery in the wooded “T” Space preserve near Rhinebeck, one could easily miss the small path from the rise of the small dirt parking area to the gallery. A small “T2” sign off the deserted road doesn’t so much announce as hint at the gallery, and the feeling as one exits one’s car and scans the surrounding forest is of suspended credulousness. What lies beyond?

But there is the path — a path. Once one has taken a few steps the gallery seems magically to appear: an open door framing a white square of space occupied by a single art piece, a black monolith consisting of a half-circle suspended over a triangle whose symmetrical halves rest mountain-like on the floor. The luminous, naturally lit interior vividly asserts itself before you notice the box-like wooden exterior walls that rise from the wooden walkway and enclose it, suspended and barely visible within the deep shade of the forest.

The striking piece within, whose black



double arc looms above you as you approach, enhances the feeling of mystical encounter, not quite of this world.

Indeed, the sculpture seems comprised

of contradictions. The solid shapes of a suspended quarter-circle along the top and the floor-resting triangle opposite it are mirrored by identical shapes outlined in space by structural steel and wooden elements. There’s an indeterminacy to its geometry — a sense of the provisional, as of a shelter that could be folded up and transported on a journey. The vertical iron supports of the half-circle atop the black steel rectilinear base suggesting bars read as linear elements — roughly as high as a standing human — map out a closet-sized precinct which breaks the modernist orthodoxy of purely abstract forms by relating to the human body.

That half-mountain triangle obstructs as it rises. Viewed sideways, the two solid shapes are revealed hollowed out and sliced down the middle by a line of pure space. The piece could be read as





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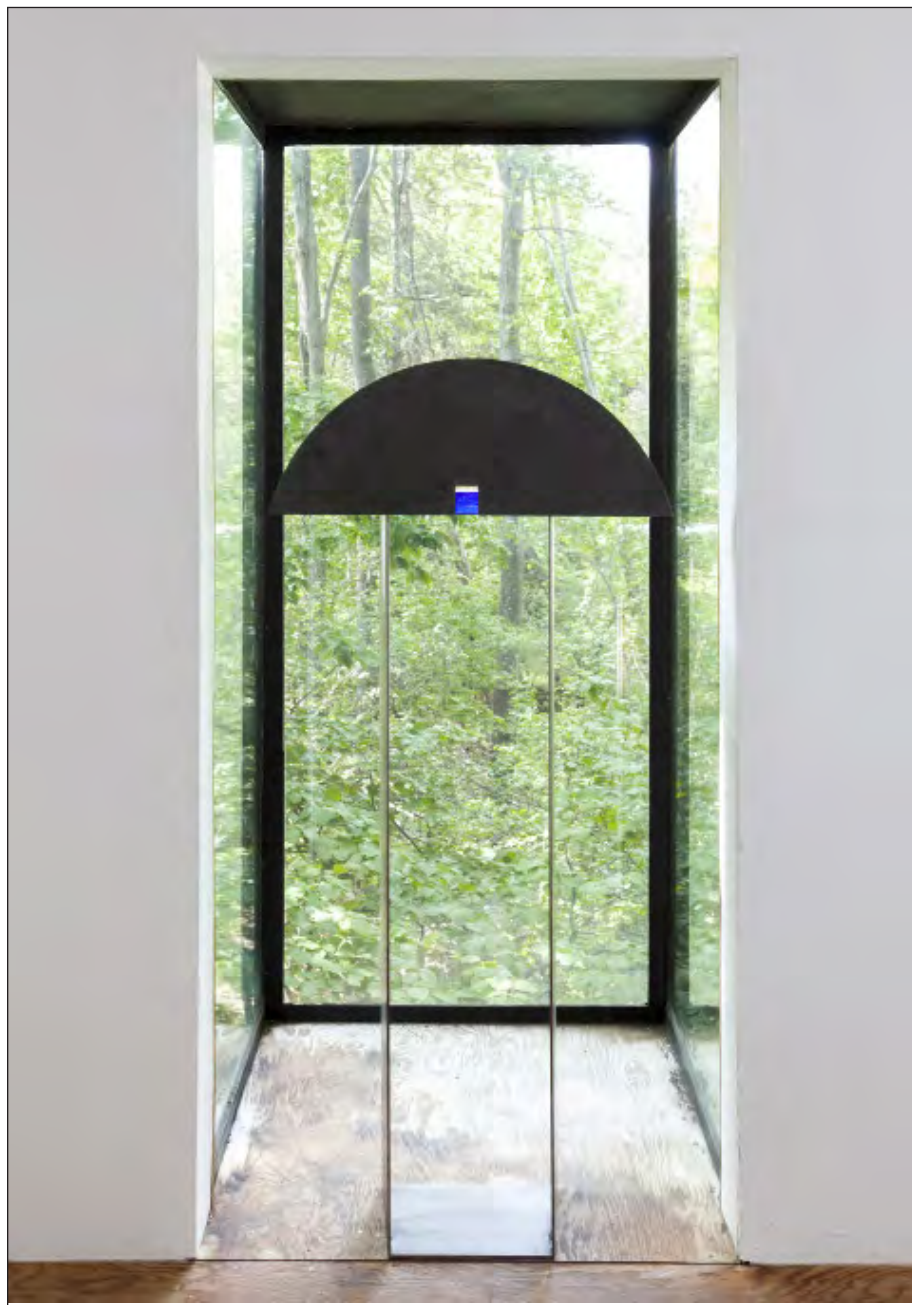
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a two-legged figure emerging from a cage, though nothing in its language of wood and steel shapes should be read as literal narrative.

It also strikes one as a kind of sign. The arched half-circle and steel supports could be read as a hieroglyph. Its rounded form recalls the painted headresses of ancient Egyptians, the barrel vaults of an ancient Roman bathhouse, or a jazzy dance step conveyed by the syncopated interchange of solids and voids.

This piece by Torkwase Dyson, entitled *Bird and Lava*, is the centerpiece of her solo show at the gallery, on display through June 9. Dyson, based in Beacon, has recently had critically acclaimed solo exhibitions at Pace London and Pace New York and has also shown at the biennials Desert X and the Sharjah Biennial.

The "T" Space press release describes the show, also entitled "Bird and Lava," as the third part of the artist's two concurrent exhibitions in St. Louis, including a large-scale sculpture displayed outdoors as part of the city's public art triennial, which is depicted in the accompanying catalog. The catalog also includes several poems by Dyson, one of which, entitled *Bird and Lava*, reads as follows: "I am certain that the beauty in black/indeterminancy, from sound to science, from/ architecture to migration, will continue to guide/our solutions to climate and form. Forms that/are deeply spatial, gen-

Hudson Valley Explore

Summer in the Valley

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Riding across the Rosendale Trestle,
photo by Dion Ogust

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Ulster Publishing (est. 1972) is a Hudson Valley media company with its office at 322 Wall Street in Kingston. For more info on upcoming special sections, including how to place an ad, call (845) 334-8200, fax (845) 334-8202 or e-mail info@hudsonvalleyone.com.

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The background of the top half of the page features a stylized American flag with red and white stripes and a blue field with white stars. Below the flag, there are green maple leaves and bursts of fireworks in blue, red, and white. The text "Expert Tree Service" is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, slanted upwards from left to right, positioned over the flag and leaves.

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erous, and haunting. In/this moment of environmental precarity, we will/need to be both liquid and mountains, bird and lava.”

The poem elucidates the artist’s exploration of Blackness as it relates to histories of oppression and liberation. The work is intended as a metaphor for natural forces, for systems and infrastructure embedded in the history of colonization and industrialism, for their impact on the environment, and for art-making itself as a kind of statement and erasure, struggle and release.

Three smaller pieces are on display in the upstairs loft. Architect Steven Holl, who established “T” Space in 2010 with the help of his foundation, designed the 750-square-foot building so that a portion of the open space is always hidden from view.

The two wall-hung pieces have textured, burnished surfaces of graphite which absorb and reflect light in such a way that they seem bathed in moonlight, the ghostly light of night. In one, a circle carved out of the surface is divided down the middle by a black cotton thread suspended from the

top and bottom of the rectangular piece. Its shape, more conventionally related to the sun and moon, is defined here as a

void, as though it were a trace, a memory, a well or literal holder.

The second piece consists of a drawing in white of an arched architectural form whose horizontal lines along the top suggest an ancient Egyptian head-dress, even as the lines are ruled as though for an architectural drawing.

The third piece, a freestanding sculpture positioned in a floor-to-ceiling window, consists of a black half-circle of wood supported on a glass and steel base. A piece of blue glass is inserted into a notch at the bottom of the half-circle at eye height, suggesting a kind of novel viewfinder. The piece is entitled *Black Scale, a Revolution* — like the large piece on the ground floor, it was designed especially for the space — suggests the invitation to a change of view is not merely literal.

Dyson’s work is an appropriate embodiment of “T” Space’s mission to foster a cross-pollination of architecture, the arts and ecology to revitalize the unity of



humanity and nature.

“Bird and Lava” will be followed from July 16 through August 20 by an exhibition of Ann Hamilton’s large-scale mixed-media pieces incorporating cloth, texts, and animal products. “T” Space, located at 125-1/2 Round Lake Road in Rhinebeck, is open throughout the summer from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sundays or by appointment.

Ninety-minute tours of the campus, including a new archives building containing 1200 models of Steven Holl’s buildings and a sculpture trail, can be booked by emailing visit@smhfoundation.org.



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DION OGUST

Perrine's Bridge in Rifton.

by Frances Marion Platt

THE MID-HUDSON VALLEY offers myriad choices of places to walk for pleasure. But for a family outing, sometimes it's not enough just to hike for hiking's own sake – especially if kids are involved.

To motivate the young, it's often helpful to organize an expedition around a specific point of interest: a spectacular view, a lake, a waterfall, some ruins, a fire tower, rich wildlife habitat, rock scrambling, a geocache. Give the kids an appealing concrete goal and they'll be more able to think of the hike as an adventure, and grumble less about be-

ing parted from their favorite electronic screens for a few hours.

Our region being a place of many waters, bridges abound here which can certainly serve as focal points for walking excursions. It could even become a family project to “collect” as many bridges as possible during the summer break from school. Think of peak-baggers, such as the 3500 Club in the Catskills or the 46ers in the Adirondacks, trying to summit all the most prominent heights in their favorite mountain range. You could call yours the Bridge Club (though youngsters might not get the joke).

Aside from being immensely useful in a practical sense, bridges have wielded

great metaphorical power for as long as humans have been making them. We cross them when we come to them, burn them when we don't ever want to go back where we came from, build them to make peace with strangers and foreigners; or bid farewell to beloved pets as they cross the Rainbow Bridge.

Many of us visit bridges in our dreams. Typically, these may symbolize major life transitions, obstacles we have overcome or are about to face, relationships we are establishing with other people, how secure or successful we feel — even our connections to the unconscious. What that dream span means will vary based on what material it's made from, whether

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it's sturdy or crumbling, whether we're approaching or standing in the middle of it, running across, alone or with another, falling from it, constructing it.

Inside or outside of us, bridges matter. When it comes to outdoor activity, they're as good an excuse as any to get your crew on the move. Herewith is our list of suggested bridge destinations in our region, starting with the most obvious.

Walkway over the Hudson State Park

87 Haviland Road, Highland
61 Parker Avenue, Poughkeepsie
<https://walkway.org>

If you haven't been to the Walkway over the Hudson yet, it's high time you joined the 600,000 or so people each year who visit this irresistible tourism Mecca. There are compelling reasons why it's so popular, mostly having to do with the bird's-eye views from 212 feet above the Hudson River. At a length of 6768 feet, it's the world's second-longest pedestrian footbridge.

Originally opened in 1889 as part of the Maybrook Line of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad, this iron industrial structure was long abandoned following a 1974 fire. Its restoration long advocated by a determined coalition of local historic preservationists, it was spruced up and finally reopened to the public in 2009. The span connects the Hudson Valley Rail-Trail in Highland to the William R. Steinhaus Dutchess Rail-Trail in Poughkeepsie, forming a link in the Empire State Trail.

Expect to find a festive atmosphere atop the Walkway. Some folks go there daily, weather permitting, to jog or cycle or skate, do yoga or practice photography skills, walk the dog, or push the baby carriage. Other locals head there to show off the river views whenever out-of-town relatives stop by, or turn up on certain



GENIA WICKWIRE

A view of the Rosendale Trestle from Joppenbergh Mountain Trail.

special nights for fireworks displays or stargazing sessions.

Walkway over the Hudson is open year-round, with free admission, from 7 a.m. until sunset (8:30 p.m. from May 25 to August 2, 8 p.m. from August 3 to 23, 7:30

p.m. from August 24 to September 10, 7 p.m. from September 11 to 27). Visitors may be asked to leave the bridge during thunderstorms. There are parking lots at both ends of the 1.28-mile Walkway, along with welcome centers with restrooms and food vendors.

If you're feeling especially ambitious, try the Walkway Loop Trail, which incorporates the Mid-Hudson Bridge's pedestrian walkway in one direction and passes through some interesting **historic** neighborhoods on either side of the river. You can download a map at <https://walkway.org/visit/walkway-loop-trail>. The loop length ranges from 3.8 to 4.4 miles, depending on where you get off on the Dutchess County side. A staircase at 131 Washington Street in

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Poughkeepsie, short of the parking lot but with on-street parking nearby, offers entrance to the park at the east gate plaza and a shorter loop.

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further. Parking for the elevator is available at the Poughkeepsie train station at 83 North Water Street. The elevator operates seasonally from 9 a.m. until 90 minutes prior to park closing. To confirm if the elevator is running, call the elevator status hotline at 845-834-3641.

Hudson River Skywalk

27-16 Route 23, Catskill
Routes 23 & 9G, Hudson
www.hudsonriverskywalk.org

Less heavily visited than Walkway over the Hudson but even more spectacular in its panoramas is the Hudson River Skywalk, a six-foot-wide pedestrian walkway along the southern side of the Rip Van Winkle Bridge. It was conceived as an artistic pilgrimage connecting the homes of two major Hudson River School artists Thomas Cole and Frederic Edwin Church. The ambitious six-mile out-and-back loop links two national historic

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landmarks, the Thomas Cole site, also known as Cedar Grove in Catskill and Frederic Church's Olana in Hudson. The route offers sweeping views of the Hudson River and the Catskill Mountains.

Although Cedar Grove and Olana are heavily promoted as the termini of the Skywalk, there is ample parking closer to the bridge at both ends. On the Columbia County side, the traffic circle where Route 23 intersects 9G has plenty of parking

spaces, plus a couple of park benches, where the Olana access trail begins. On the bridge approach on the Greene County side, a cluster of NYS Bridge Authority buildings offer restrooms and even a vest-pocket park with Hudson River views, plus a fair-sized parking lot and additional on-street parking.

If all you want to do is cross and re-cross the bridge, enjoying the views and minimizing your total walking distance,

you can forgo the homes and museums of either or both the two great artists. In particular, the approach to Olana involves a long trek uphill. If you're a regular hiker, physically fit and fazed not at all by a six-mile walk, then by all means park either at Olana or the Cole house. Setting aside enough time for visiting the studios of these two world-renowned American landscape painters is a rewarding experience.

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You will need to take note of their hours of operation. Cedar Grove's buildings and main parking lot, located at 218 Spring Street in Catskill, are open from 9:45 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday, and the Thomas Cole National Historic Site grounds are open for free every day from dawn to dusk. When the museum is closed, you can still use the free parking lot (complete with EV charging station) that's outside the entry gate, shared with

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DION OGUST

Above, Skywalk bridges the gap across the Hudson River between the Thomas Cole House and Olana; right, Black Creek Preserve suspension bridge.

Temple Israel of Catskill.

The 250-acre artist-designed landscape surrounding Frederic Church's splendid Persian-inspired hilltop manse at the Olana State Historic Site at 5720 Route 9G in Hudson is open daily from 8 a.m. to sunset. The views from the grounds are extraordinary. Church's home itself, along with several auxiliary buildings that also host art exhibits and programs, is open for tours Tuesday through Sunday from 10 a.m. through 3:45 p.m. Organized walking tours of the grounds and electric jitney tours of the five miles of carriage roads which Church designed showcase an unfolding series of viewscapes. It's a good idea to book tours ahead online, especially on weekends, and leave plenty of time to make it over the bridge and up that hill.

If you can manage it, by all means, see the interiors of these historic buildings and the art they contain. Consider bringing a picnic, since neither museum contains a food concession. Probably the best way to fit it all into one day, however, would be to carpool and leave a vehicle at either end, only crossing the Skywalk on foot in one direction. For information about the two historic sites and the great painters celebrated there, visit www.olana.org and <https://thomascollection.org>. To view the Skywalk map, visit www.hudsonriverskywalk.org/map.

Note that the Hudson River Skywalk has gates at either end that are locked at dusk, and the one on the Catskill side is too high to climb over. Since the Rip Van Winkle Bridge is home to a peregrine falcon nesting box, it's occasionally closed to pedestrians during nesting season, between May and July,



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when the falcon parents may become aggressive toward humans they perceive as threats to their chicks.

Rosendale Trestle

720 Binnewater Road, Rosendale
<https://wallkillvalleylt.org/wvrt>

Want a bridge hike that affords stunning views from a height over a watercourse but doesn't require a crazy amount of walking? If the Skywalk sounds like biting off more than you can chew, exercisewise, check out the Rosendale Trestle, known to some locals as Walkway over the Rondout. It's the first of three bridges, north to south, along Ulster County's Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail which make highly rewarding destinations for walkers but don't require you to be at your peak of physical fitness.

In fact, the southern end of the trestle is right off Mountain Road in Rosendale. It doesn't offer parking, but a member of your party with mobility issues could be dropped off there and meet you on the bridge, after you've left your car at the (free) Binnewater kiln parking lot on Binnewater Road, a mere .six miles away. That section of the rail-trail is a pleasant, shaded, nearly level walk that follows the flank of Joppenbergh Mountain, a rocky promontory that marks the northern terminus of the Shawangunk Ridge.

First built in 1870 as part of the Wallkill Valley Railroad, the 940-foot-long, 150-foot-high trestle was dubbed the Iron Wonder in its day. The railway shut down for good in 1977, and the trestle structure was acquired by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust in 1991. It was restored with help from the Open Space Institute

and a pricetag of \$1.5 million. It reopened to the public in 2013: the linchpin in the rail-trail's 22.5-mile expanse connecting the Town of Gardiner with the City of Kingston.

The prospect from the middle of this span is nearly as impressive as any of the Hudson River crossings. Although the Rondout Creek far below is a much smaller waterway, the glaciers that



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formed its bed carved out a wide, deep gorge, with Joppenbergh's craggy limestone cliff faces looming overhead. Far below, the colorful buildings of Rosendale's charming downtown spill across

the valley floor like the contents of some child's overturned toybox. The view is an excellent payoff for a three-mile round-trip walk and highly recommended for a family outing.

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The Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail is open from dawn to dusk year-round. It's very popular with cyclists, and a reasonable ride either from Kingston or New Paltz. There are no restrooms or other amenities along the trail itself nearer than the Rail Trail Café in Tillson, but Main Street in Rosendale (Route 213) is lined with restaurants, taverns and shops where you can refresh yourself.

Springtown Truss Bridge

Springtown Road, New Paltz

<https://wallkillvalleylt.org/wvrt>

About five miles south of the Rosendale Trestle, the Wallkill Valley Rail-Trail makes another major stream crossing — one that may look familiar to you, if you're a fan of sci-fi or horror movies. In the film *A Quiet Place* (2018), most of the earth's population has been wiped out by an invasion of hostile aliens from a lightless planet. These creatures are incredibly sensitive to sound, so the only human survivors are people who are good at staying totally silent. A family returning to their farmhouse from an errand to restock supplies in an empty town are tiptoeing across an old railroad bridge when the youngest child begins to play with a noisy toy spaceship. In one horrific moment, the boy is carried off.

That terrifying scene was shot on the Springtown Truss Bridge, long a popular destination for walkers and cyclists coming from downtown New Paltz, 2.2 miles to the south. Built in 1881, the 413-foot former railway bridge crosses the Wallkill River just before the rail trail reaches Springtown Road. Owned by the Wallkill Valley Land Trust, the bridge

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Tony Varriano and his son Chris Varriano, with their 1963 Studebaker Hawk at the Livingston Manor Bridge during the 2020 Catskill Covered Bridge Rally.

was renovated in 1993 and again in 2016. There are wooden benches along either side, and it's a great spot for watching turtles basking in the sun on piles of

driftwood that accumulate against the piers of the bridge.

There are a couple of parking spaces alongside Springtown Road, only a

couple of hundred feet from the bridge. That makes this an ideal destination for that friend or family member who needs a cane or a walker to get around. There are a number of other access points between here and New Paltz's Main Street where you can pick up the rail-trail to vary the length of your walk – Huguenot Street, for example, where the Boces parking lot is a handy place to leave your car.

Plattekill Creek Bridge

Boppy's Lane, New Paltz

<https://wallkillvalleylt.org/wvrt>

Arguably the most impressive panoramic view from the Wallkill Valley rail-trail can be found 1.8 miles south of the point where it crosses Main Street (Route 299) in New Paltz. At Boppy's Lane, just off Route 208 near its intersection with Jansen Road, a small railroad bridge spans a small watercourse called the Plattekill, which wends its way lazily westward toward the Wallkill River. The spot is known as the Plattekill Gorge, and it's a big draw for photographers. Against a stunning backdrop of the Shawangunk Ridge, cows and horses roam in sprawling meadows, and a magnifi-



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cent sycamore tree on the streambank frequently serves as a perch for a bald eagle. It would be difficult to think of a better spot in Ulster County from which to watch a sunset.

The viewing platform for this lovely prospect, known as the Plattekill Creek Bridge, was recently rebuilt by Ulster

County, the Open Space Institute and the Wallkill Valley Land Trust as part of a major renovation of the New Paltz-to-Gardiner leg of the rail-trail. The new bridge structure was reopened for public use this past February. There are a couple of park benches in the middle of the span, if you need to get off your feet; but the

view over the railings is better from a standing position.

While the walk to Plattekill Creek from downtown New Paltz is by no means daunting, this is another destination that can be accessed with minimal walking for the mobility-impaired or folks with little time to spare. The southern terminus of Plains Road, mere steps from the bridge crossing, ends with parking spaces for a couple of cars.

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www.scenichudson.org/explore-the-valley/scenic-hudson-parks/black-creek-preserve

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with nets to catch and count herring and glass eels during their migrations from the Hudson River up into the creek.

Three trails intersect at this preserve. Just off the parking lot is a rustic wooden

kiosk that begins the Yellow Trail, and less than 500 feet beyond it is the suspension bridge. It's a fun introduction to a trail network that's not overly daunting for the unseasoned hiker. There's a short,

steep, rocky stretch of Yellow Trail, leading visitors to the Red Trail loop, which passes old stone walls and vernal pools. After that comes the Blue Trail loop, which takes you to the pitch-pine

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overlook and a small stony beach on the shore of the Hudson River. There, instead of beach glass kids can collect rounded, water-worn fragments of brick from the heyday of the Hudson Valley brickmaking industry. There are also benches where you can sit and gaze out to Esopus Island and Norrie Point. It's a great picnic spot, especially on a weekday when the park is less crowded.

The shortest route from the entrance to the riverbank and back is about 2.1 miles long in total, though you can also opt to take a different way back via lon-

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Cosima von Bonin, *The Italian*, 2018,
 a permanent installation at CCS Bard.
 Photo: Chris Kendall.

ger segments of the Red and Blue Trail loops. The total elevation gain is about 440 feet. Toddlers will need some help in spots, but older kids should be able to manage this hike with little difficulty.

Be aware in advance that Black Creek Preserve has no restroom facilities, concessions or other fancy park amenities. It's open from dawn to dusk year-round, and admission is free.

Ashokan Center

477 Beaverkill Road, Olivebridge
<https://ashokancenter.org/site>

Unless you're an old SUNY New Paltz alum who remembers when the site was the college's Ashokan Field Campus from 1967 to 2008, your main mental association with the Ashokan Center in Olivebridge is probably the music and dance camps that have been going on there since 1980. It's in this place that fiddler Jay Ungar, in a burst of nostalgia

for a crop of campers who were about to leave at the end of a session, composed the haunting tune "Ashokan Farewell," which later became the main theme music for Ken Burns' PBS documentary series *The Civil War*.

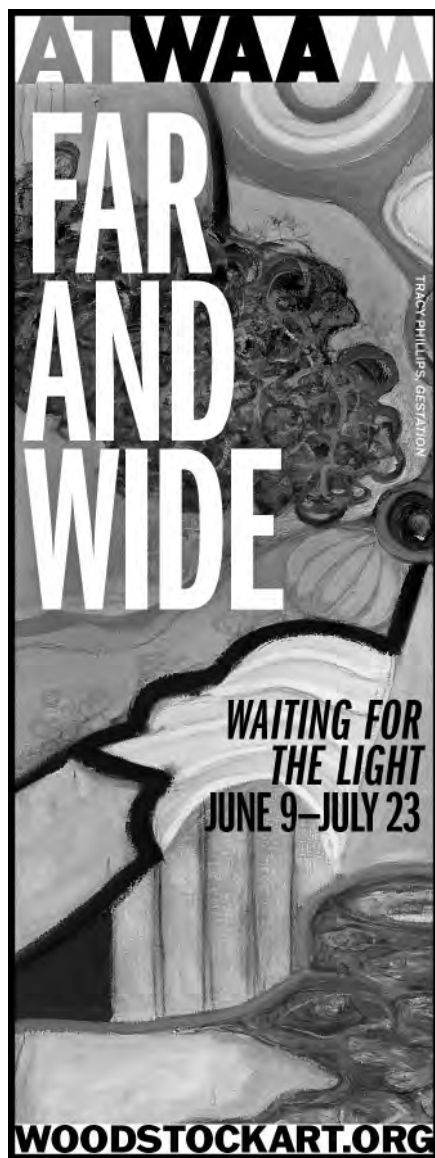
In 2008, the site was purchased by a not-for-profit foundation and transformed into a venue for conferences, meditation retreats, weddings and other private events, summer camps, musical, educational and cultural gatherings. Fans of folk music, square and contra dancing turn out for the summer and winter hoots, an annual ukulele festival and a long-running New Year's Eve dance party.

The Ashokan Center is busy with

events much of the year. But there are days when it's open to the public for self-guided tours. This summer, day passes are available on June 18, 19, 23 and 24, July 15 and 30 and August 6, 12, 25, 26 and 27, for a fee of \$10 for adults, \$5 for youth aged 12 to 17 and free for children under 12.

But why go there? What's the draw? There are a working smithy, a sugar shack and other facilities offering hands-on demonstrations of Colonial-era crafts. You can go fishing or canoeing, try out a ropes course, hike to a waterfall and more. Two of the top attractions are – you guessed it – footbridges.

Just past the Killian Dance Pavilion,



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George A. Hill, *Camp Hill, Autumn, 1940*, courtesy of the New York State Museum, Historic Woodstock Art Colony, Arthur A. Anderson Collection

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View from the Rosendale Trestle.

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over an inlet to the Mill Pond, stands the Wiggly Bridge, irresistible to kids. It bounces wildly when you walk across it. And spanning the Esopus Creek, near the beginning of the Orange Trail that leads to Cathedral Gorge, is a true historical treasure, the Turnwood Covered Bridge, built in another location in 1885 and moved here circa 1932. It was fully restored in 2018.

Perrine's Bridge

Route 213, Rifton

Another covered bridge requiring neither a day pass nor more than a few steps to access lies just four miles north of New Paltz, crossing the Wallkill River on Route 213 in Rifton, just off Route 32. Named for French Huguenot immigrant James W. Perrine and constructed in 1835, Perrine's Bridge is the second-oldest surviving covered bridge in New York State. It's also the longest-standing Burr arch covered bridge in the state.

Perrine's Bridge is a 138-foot-long, 20-foot-wide, single-span timber structure, built using a kingpost-and-arch truss system patented in 1817 by Theodore Burr of Torrington, Connecticut. The bridge was most recently restored in 1997.

There isn't really any trail connected with Perrine's Bridge. You can park right



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next to it on the side of Route 213, and stroll over it and back. It would therefore make an appealing outing for elderly folks who find themselves more interested in history than in strenuous walking.

Catskills Covered Bridge Tour

Ulster, Sullivan and Delaware counties
www.1903autorun.com/covered-bridge-rally

Intrigued by historic covered bridges

and willing to travel farther afield to visit them? There are a bunch of them tucked away deeper into the Catskills. If you want to hang out with classic-car enthusiasts for a lovely autumn day and don't mind spending \$50 for the privilege, check out the fifth annual Catskill Conquest Covered Bridge Rally, taking place on October 14.

Participants in the 135-mile, three-county excursion will meet at 10 a.m. at the Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey Catskill Visitor Center at 5069 State Route 28 in Mount Tremper. From there, the caravan will make stops at the 1860 Van Tran Bridge in Livingston Manor and the 1865 Beaverkill Bridge near Lew Beach in Sullivan County, and then move on to the 1854 Downsville Bridge, the 1859 Hamden Bridge, and the 1870 Fitch's Bridge just past Delhi, all in Delaware County.

You can also follow all or part of this same tour route on your own, on whatever day you find more convenient. You can find maps and directions online at www.1903autorun.com/tour-loops-maps.



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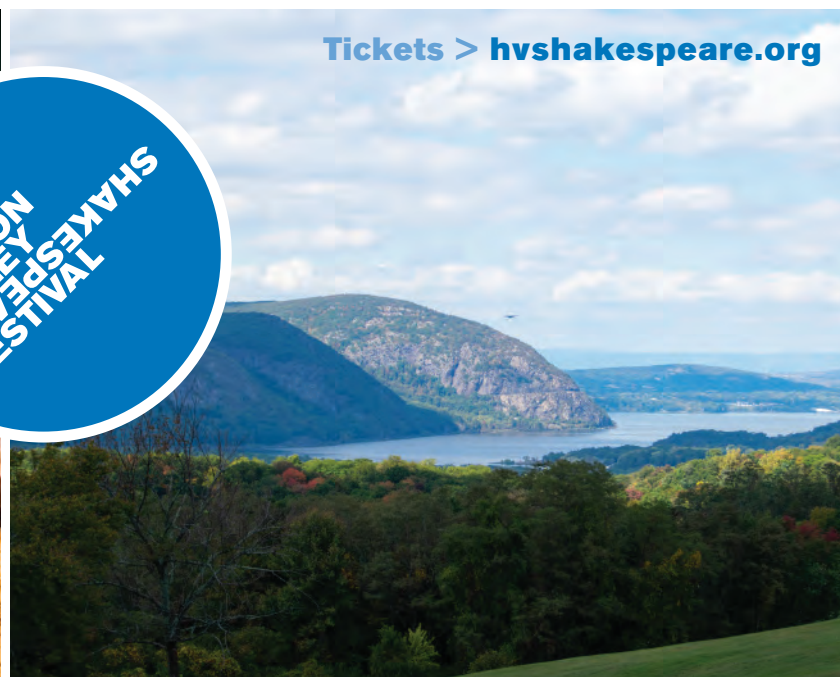


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Art and spirit

*Historic Woodstock churches
will hold public arts events this summer*

by Violet Snow

“INSPIRATION IS REALLY a mental attitude of accepting input from a higher sense than your own person,” Woodstock Christian Science church

member David Robertson told me in 2010 when I interviewed him for the church's centennial. As a writer, I found that the parallel he made between creativity and prayer stuck with me.

Public events uniting the arts and spirituality will be offered this summer

by the three churches closest to the center of Woodstock: Reformed, Lutheran, and Christian Science. All three have histories entwined with the arts community.

Robertson spoke about the influx of artists into the town in the early 1900s, and how the radical spiritual principles of Christian Science, then a new religion, were a breath of fresh air to many of the newcomers, with their open-minded attitudes and experimental approach to life. Clarence Bolton, known for the delicate style of his lithographs, was a church member and the first proprietor of The Nook, which later became the Café Espresso. In his 1940 article in the *Christian Science Sentinel* magazine, Bolton described how prayer guided his creative work.

Since I joined the First Church of Christ, Scientist, Woodstock in 2013, I have attended services in a building that was once the summer school of the Art Students League. The tall, north-facing windows of the former studio bring clear natural light into the simply appointed church sanctuary, located at 85 Tinker Street.

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DOUGLAS MILFORD

Above, the Christian Science church at 85 Tinker Street; below, Christ's Lutheran Church at 26 Mill Hill Road, with COVID pandemic memorial in front.



VIOLET SNOW

The public is invited to view this peaceful space, as well as the new reading room, at the church's open house and art show on Sunday, July 9, from 2 to 5 p.m. Entitled "Creative Mind: Beyond Imagination," the event will include a panel discussion on art, spirituality and history led by art historian Bruce Weber, an expert on Woodstock art. Thought-provoking quotes about creativity from Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of the religion, will accompany the exhibit, which is curated by church member Penelope Milford. Live music will be provided by virtuoso fiddler Peter

Halvorsen.

"We hope people will get a sense of the science of creativity," Milford said, "how it can be understood as a process of connecting with the higher consciousness that's accessible to us all."

The two oldest churches in town were founded a century before artists began the pilgrimage to Woodstock, but these congregations have also embraced the arts, despite a few delays. The early European settlers of the region were Dutch, so the predominant religion in Ulster County in 1800 was Dutch Reformed, but intermarriage with English settlers had already produced a mostly English-speaking populace. By 1805, the residents of the town had obtained approval for a congregation. In 1867, the denomination dropped the word "Dutch" from its name, according to Bill Rhoads, a member of the Woodstock Reformed Church, which is located on the village green. The building with the tall, graceful spire has been painted and drawn many times by local artists. Clarence Bolton executed two lithographs of the church, which Rhoads, a retired professor of art history at SUNY New Paltz, called "formal and dignified views, sympathetic to the church as an institution." In fact, said Rhoads, "Newspapers, especially the New York City papers, commented on how artists would often represent the church but rarely, if ever, attended it."

Harvey Todd, pastor of the Woodstock Reformed Church from the 1920s to the 1950s, was in favor of temperance/ He

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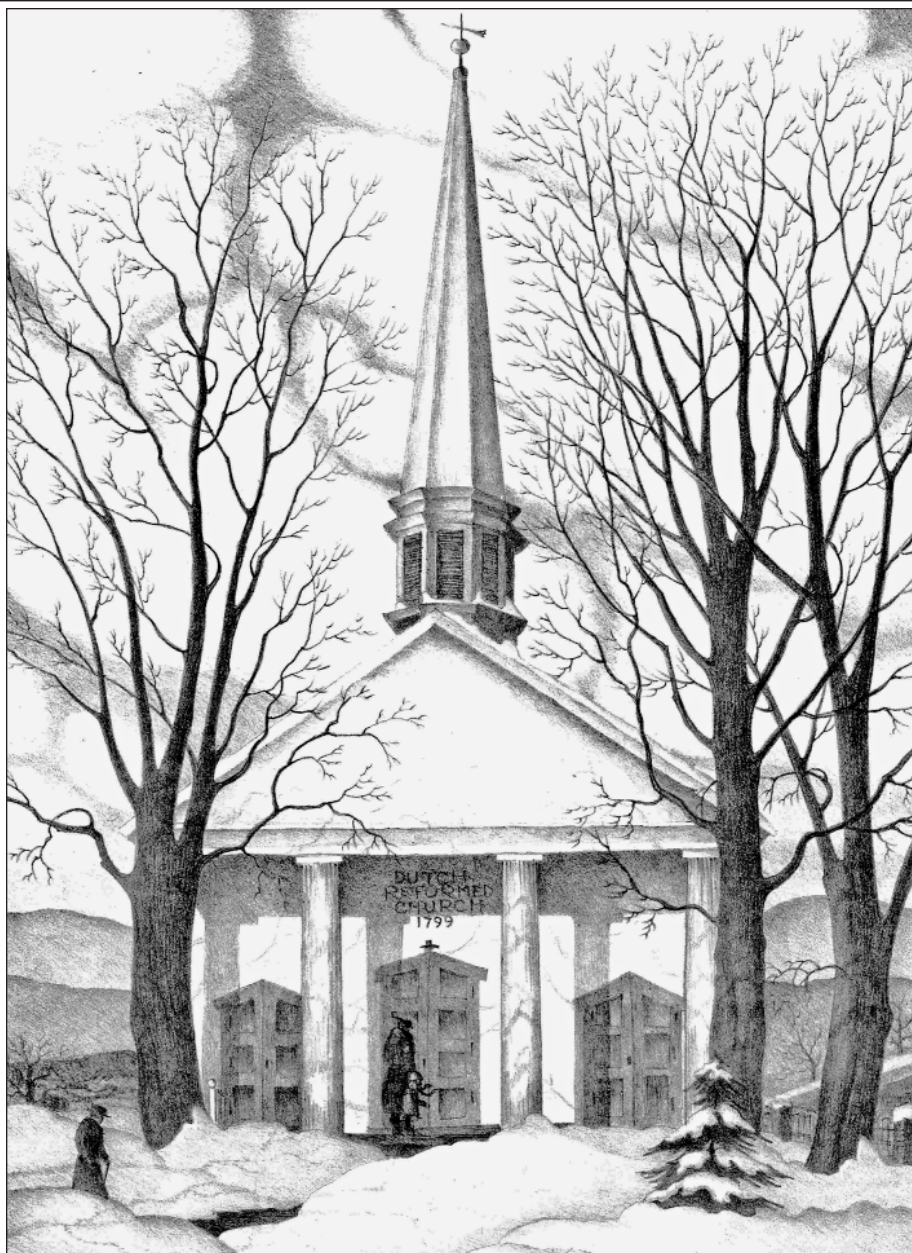
As seen on HGTV's "Flea Market Flip"!

often came into conflict with Hervey White of the Maverick art colony over “licentious behavior” at the uproarious Maverick summer festivals. However, the two men eventually collaborated, Todd inviting White to speak at the church in 1931. The pastor later became supportive of the arts community and even participated in a foundation of artists helping other artists in financial need after World War II.

In the past, Protestant churches lacked stained-glass windows and organs, said Rhoads, as both features were considered redolent of the Catholic church. Among the archives, he found a report that in the 1840s a music teacher was forbidden to hold a concert in the sanctuary. By the early 20th century, however, Woodstock churches did acquire organs and modest stained glass windows.

Today, art and music are heartily welcomed at the Reformed church, and some of the congregants are artists. In 2005, member Helen Chase put together a bicentennial art show with two dozen views of the church by Woodstock artists.

This summer, the Reformed church will host film and music events open to the public. On Saturday, July 15, at 7 p.m., the series “Movies with Spirit” will present a French film, *Le Papillon* (*The Butterfly*), about the relationship between a lonely girl and an elderly man who collects butterflies. The roving series, said founder Gerry Harrington, seeks to “awaken our sense of joy and wonder, inspire love and compassion, and evoke a deepened sense of integral connection with others and



COURTESY OF WILLIAM RHOADS

The Woodstock Reformed Church at 16 Tinker Street on the village green, in a lithograph by Clarence Bolton.

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with life itself.”

The films are screened in places of worship and reverence across Ulster and Dutchess counties at 7 p.m. on the third Saturday of every month, with discussion following. Admission is free, and donations are accepted. See facebook.com/MoviesWithSpirit for a full schedule.

On Saturday, August 26, from 3–5 p.m., an outdoor concert, “Soulful Serenade,” will be held on the front porch of the Reformed church. The slate of musicians, still being formed, so far includes Praise B, the church band (Ken and Krista Cayea, Pam Grayboys, Karl Krause, Bill Pfaff, Jim Ulrich & Paige Wagner), and The New Zeitgeist, a husband-and-wife

folk duo (Jen Reilly and Eddie Bluma). Church music director Krista Cayea said, “The music will range from folk to rock to bluegrass, all with an uplifting message.”

The second oldest congregation in Woodstock is Christ’s Lutheran Church, established in 1806. It is believed to be America’s first English-language Lutheran church, founded by descendants of refugees from war and famine in the Palatine region of what is now Germany.

The current church building was constructed in 1894 at 26 Mill Hill Road. Inside are four murals by Paul Wesley Arndt, who belonged to the Woodstock Artists Association during the Great Depression, when many local artists

were employed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) of the Federal Arts Project. Arndt was a student of Jean-Léon Gérôme in Paris and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. He became known for his murals on steamships, in public buildings, and in theaters around the country.

The Lutheran church sanctuary is open Wednesday afternoons and some Saturdays in summer, so visitors may view the paintings and the elegant wainscoting of the varnished wood interior.

Outside the back of the church, near Deanie's Alley, a mural was painted in 2019 by Dominican-American artist and Woodstock resident Julia Santos-Solomon. Inspired by the view across the Ashokan Reservoir, with a color palette that recalls the Caribbean, "Woodstock Visual Peace" highlights aspects of our world worth cherishing.

Pastor Sonja Maclary said a summer concert series is planned, with dates and artists to be announced on the church website, <https://christwoodstock.org>.

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Goin' yakkin'?

A primer for local kayaking aficionados

by Rokosz Most

YEAH, IT'S A dumb phrase. Sounds like some sort of hill-billy slang, meant to offend. Kayak enough and you'll hear it, too. Maybe mockery, maybe in earnest. The line between parody and sincerity blurs.

But take it in stride.

Yes, good sir or madam, I am going yakking.

Out on the water, drifting with the currents, hunting for the negative ions produced at the pounding base of waterfalls, penetrating deeper inland along dreamy water-built byways. And a good day to you.

It's true. Away from the busy routine of the city, away from the noise of the road traffic, floating on the waterways, held up by courteous buoyancy.

Paddling upstream in the Eddyville section of the Rondout Creek. Tall walls of trees own the banks absolutely, crowded against each other in that slower-than-the-eye competition for sunlight, race to the top beset by climbing vines that strangle plus the chemical warfare practiced by the vegetation down lower to the ground. Pine trees drop their needles to smother plant life below. Anything that dies at the foot of a tree, the roots will drink up the remains. Trees are patient.

But from the water, immersed in this green gestalt, leave off paddling and

drift. Meditate and be mindful. Whatever you call it, stop thinking. Listen with an empty mind. Depending on the hour, the water is the same color as the sky. Depending on the remoteness, without the proof and sounds of civilization, it is just like it was 300 years ago. Or even a thousand.

Go back centuries. The rivers were here. The trees. Another people, yes, but not us.

Which is strange to think about. They also drifted down the water. No doubt about it.

As did almost everyone who ever lived near a river.

Kayaking is similar to learning the words and music to a very old love song lost and forgotten.



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Kayaking to the Esopus Lighthouse.

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core kayaking geeks are using to charge out into the open ocean. They're not hunting Stingray. Neither are the loud-talking, lycra'd sheathed bike riders in Prospect Park actually going to compete in the Tour de France. Don't worry about these noisy extroverts.

Here to be shared is the recollection of a man proud of the length of his kayak.

"Anything less than 14 feet," said he, consummating a craigslist deal in a parking lot, "was a pool toy."

Never mind him.

For any price under \$200, a used Pelican is fine. They're a trash-brand pool toy, but hard to tip over. They float. They're thick within reason and relatively light. They're so stable one could lie back, fall asleep, and drift along the river.

Get one of those double-bladed paddles that separate in the middle of the shaft by depressing a spring-loaded ball. And you're off to the swim meet, provided

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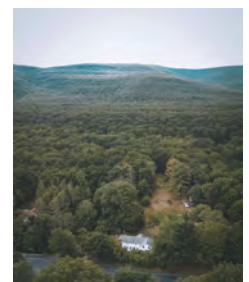
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The most popular style of apparatus used to mount the kayak on the car roof are called J hooks. Really, a kayak can be placed upside down on the roof of a sedan and firmly ratchet strapped into place through the open windows of the back-seat passenger window frames if necessary. But no one wants to be traveling along even at 40 miles an hour and see a ten-foot kayak disappear in the rear-view mirror like a wind sail. Use at least two 500-pound ratchet straps. Some cautious souls tie their vessels by stem and by stern to the towing rings under the bumpers.

Other necessary accouterments for

practical kayaking include river shoes. An old pair of sneakers will do. A headlamp for straggling after the sunset. A waterproof bag, known as a drybag, to keep water away from the cellphone or other selected perishables. A ziplock bag will do in a pinch.

Wear a straw hat to keep the sun off your face. Wear loud colors to exaggerate your visibility. Invest in a length of paracord and a folding knife. Good advice for life in general.

And there is the issue of drowning. For the purposes of responsible recreating, life vests are to be considered mandatory equipment, even on a placid lake.

One will also be thought wise to note whether the rubber cork is plugged into the scupper. Usually located on the top-side rear of the vessel, the scupper is a hole for draining water taken on during the adventure.

From here on out, it's pure impro-

visation.

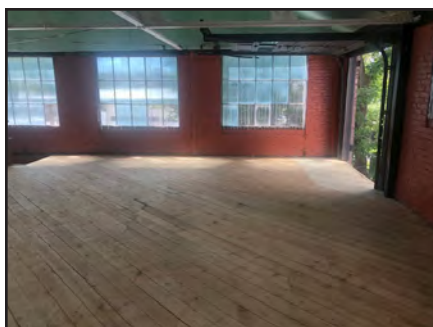
Where to go?

Kingston Point Beach *Beginner to intermediate*

This is by far the easiest spot to enter the water. The sandy shore of Kingston Point Beach gradually declines into the Hudson, and a large cement launch allows for watercraft of all sizes to enter the water. Jet skis are popular. Stay near the shore.

On weekend nights, Kingston Point Beach is a convenient spot to barbecue, set up a PA system, play DJ, dance, swim, see and be seen. Excellent backdrop to casual kayaking. Headlamps suggested.

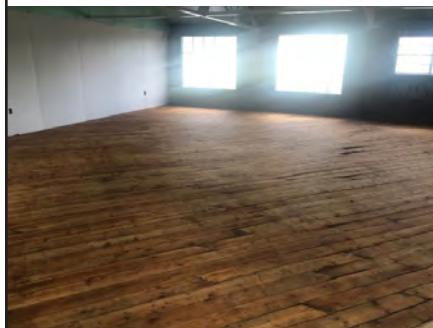
Unfortunately for the beach party, the newest iteration of Hudson Valley luxury moved into the brickyard next door, and after-dusk parking in the lot there occasionally has been closed by the city government when the volume



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of the revelry interferes with the wedding festivities over at the brickyard's outdoor pavilion.

But this won't be a problem in the daytime.

Veer your kayak to the left and get a look at the bougie riverbank glamping structures from the water. Or keep heading north to a massive old warehouse on the water full of screaming birds.

Or veer downriver instead, paddle around past the storage tanks to Kingston Point Park, the terminus of that portion of the rail-trail where the train tracks allow the arrival of a trolley with a gay and festive whistle for the conductor to pull on the weekends. Children adore it.

Depending on what the tide is doing, a small wooden walking bridge arches up, allowing entry into a protected wetland cove of sorts. Beavers have been observed there. When displeased, they'll slap the water with their fat tails.

Rondout Creek, Eddyville *Beginner*

A dirt parking lot with a rope swing off the side of Creek Locks Road in Eddyville us what comprises the Rondout Creek waterway access. An humble graded launch allows you to walk right in. Head downstream a short way to capitalize on the release of negative ions from what amounts to a waterfall — the old stone weir built long ago by the Army Corps

of Engineers. The never-ending rush of water over the edge can increase or decrease depending on how much water from the Wallkill River the Sturgeon Pool hydro dam upriver lets through.

An unidentified man fishing just below the weir notes that the water level increases every day around three o'clock.

Though he claimed to be a local, some people will tell you anything.

Head upstream to what may be one of the best stretches of creek anywhere in the Hudson Valley. It's deep enough so that rocks aren't a problem, and if the exertion becomes tiring, you can let the creek carry the kayak back to the

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beginning.

Away from the hyper-stimulation that defines the end of this epoch in the progress of humankind, the physical world as it is reasserts itself.

At first, by comparison, this can manifest as boredom. The dopamine receptors have become badly calibrated for the actual requirements of living. The nervous system is threadbare or numb from flashing lights and repetitive commercial interaction. How can the wind in the leaves and fall colors compete?

They can. According to John Burroughs, local woodsman hero and scribbler with a philosophical bent, all that is required for happiness are books, friends and nature. Not to quibble with the dead, but his taste for happiness seems unnecessarily limited. Quote Nikos Kazantzakis instead, another dead writer, and all that is required here and now to feel happiness is a frugal heart. Note that



Going Kayaking!

Kazantzakis did not define the things that can bring happiness, only suggested a way in which we could receive them.

In this stretch of the Rondout is a holy place in the most primeval sense of the word. Of this place no more will be said. Search for it or not, recognize it or not.

Sturgeon Pool Beginner

There's space to park on a loose gravel turnout heading south on Route 213 just before Rifton proper. Look across the dark blue body of water that is Sturgeon Pool for the eagle's nest high atop a pine tree.

Dammed, the Wallkill River feels like a small landlocked ocean. Floating above the dam, one can paddle right up to the edge. A rope interspersed with floating rubber fenders has been laid out across the top of the water, designed to save the reckless from themselves and certain disaster.

The intrepid kayaker is vulnerable on this wide sea to sudden ambush by storm clouds appearing from behind the Catskills. Churning waters and rippling waves, freshwater sea spray can be goaded on by thunderstorms and buffeted by bellicose winds. These things are possible at the Sturgeon Pool.

The Dashville hydroelectric station does increase the output of the Wallkill River from time to time. Heed the siren.

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Kingston Waterfront**Intermediate because of boat traffic**

There are a few spots to embark.

An easy paddle to the Rondout Lighthouse, closer to where the creek meets the Hudson River, a short aluminum dock juts out just past the Cornell Steamboat building which housed the Artport gallery and Robert Ianucci's many motorcycles on East Strand.

Minding the arriving and departing pleasure boats, follow the creek jetty out to the mouth of the creek to the Rondout Lighthouse. Or cross the Rondout towards an abandoned drydock crane, an ersatz topological feature rusted into permanence above the old docks disintegrated around it. Down into the water where scuttled barges built is an artificial peninsula at the tip of Port

Ewen, it is said.

At the top of the rusted crane arm is an eagle nest, one of the choicest digs in the area.

Inland from the lighthouse, passing

under the graceless Route 9W traffic bridge begin the docks along the water where daytrippers can tie off before tying one on. The Friday-night scene boasts a collection of ruddy well-to-do retirees,

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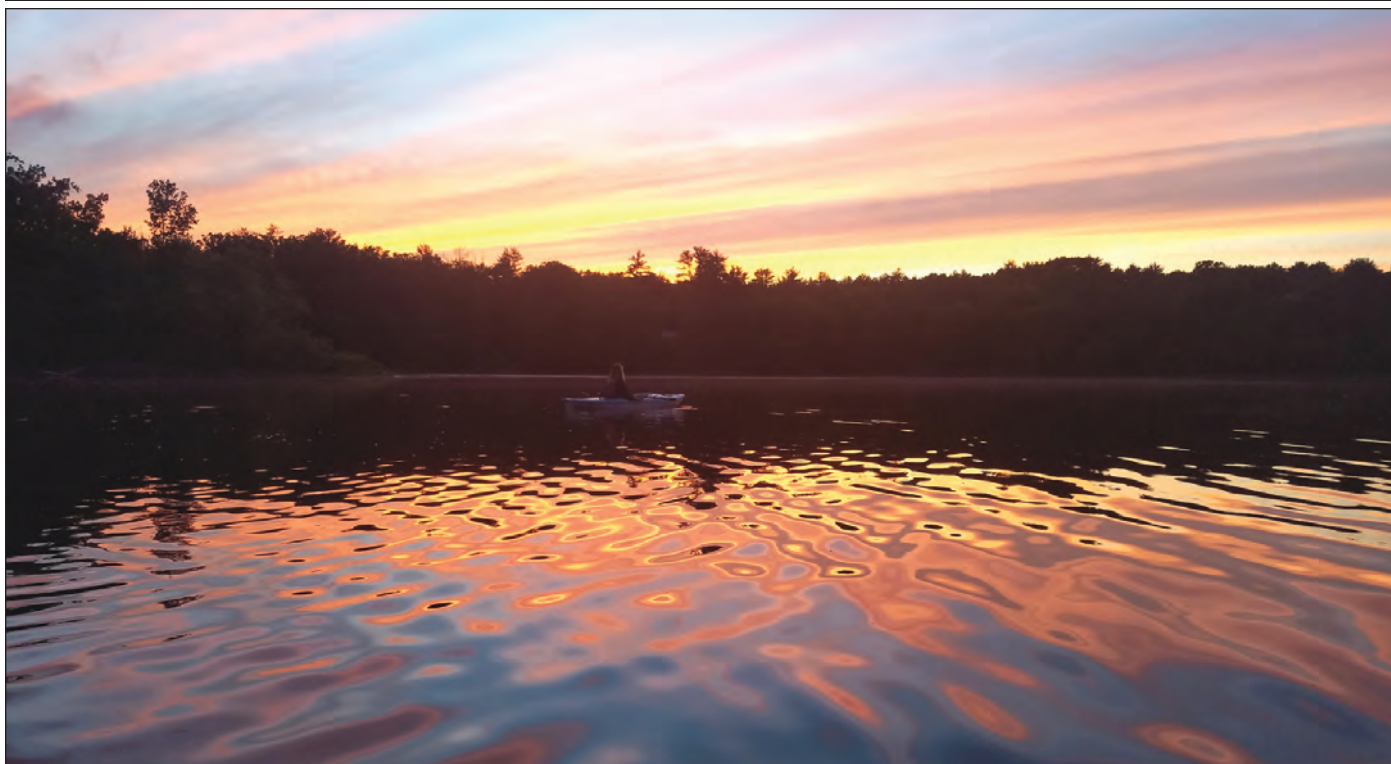
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Sunset from the water.

young bucks in polo shirts and boat shoes, and anyone who can pilot a speedboat up from Beacon, Poughkeepsie, Newburgh,

Cold Spring, Hudson, Coxsackie and more farflung regions like Maryland and California.

A tacky plaque in the T.R. Gallo Waterfront Park purports to honor “all those lost at sea.” A slew of restaurants have

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capitalized on the riparian commerce. It's unclear where kayakers can stow their vessels to come aboard.

Away from all that, take the south fork of the water inland back under the Route 9W bridge, past the marinas in Connelly, past the Kingston Power Boat Association and under the sky-high train trestle above that carries CSX boxcars over it. Past the bluestone church.

A gritty, waterfront industrial scene with vessels tied nearby awaits.

Zapping crackle come from the welding torches of the Feeney shipyard, bright blue flames even in the noontime sunlight. Hear the non-stop whoosh of compressor hoses across the creek, see where barges have been dragged out of the water and set above the ground on concrete footers. Angle grinders work cleaving iron and steel while the hulls are sandblasted, sometimes behind enormous shower curtains, other times not.

At the scrapyard next door, the West Kingston Recycling Corporation, great steel panels are bent from the stress of

tons of scrap. A giant claw on a steel brontosaurus neck dips to clutch claws full of awful scrap metal.

Keep moving inland. A great brick smokestack rises up out of the dense tree cover, a reminder of the time when the dark satanic mills of production fouled the skies in every booming city.

Saugerties Beginner

There's a landing next to the Tina Choras Waterfront Park that puts you right into the Esopus Creek about a half-mile from the old paper factory dam, which as it produces never-ending negative ions doubles as a bonafide waterfall.

All that turbulence from the falling water kicks up a lot of suds, though. Depending on whether or not the Ashokan Reservoir is releasing large amounts of muddy overflow, the water can get turbid and foamy. Still, it's worth it. There are rocks to sit and meditate on, in view of patrons of the newly branded Black Barn, a.k.a. the Diamond Mill, a.k.a. the paper factory.

Good place to smoke weed at if that's still any fun now that it's legal. Mushrooms may be next. Buoyed by scientific evidence, pharmaceutical companies are champing at the bit to release a market a whole new class of anti-depressants. Legislation introduced by Manhattan assemblymember Linda Rosenthal aims to do just that. Is Saugerties ready for folks sitting on rocks at the bottom of the dam waterfall nibbling at mushrooms?

Hudson River Experienced

Only for the bold. Lifejacket absolutely necessary as well as an understanding of the tides. Mahicanituck, the river that flows both ways, can leave the inexperienced kayaker miles up or down the river from where they embarked.

The best time to attempt the mile-wide river crossing is during the slack tide, that peaceful hour that plays like a long rest in a sheet of music before the river switches direction again. The weather and wind also play a factor. After a spring tide, for instance, that highest of king tides which results from the phase of the moon. At that moment when the water is being sucked back out to the Atlantic, throw in a blustery wind and storm action, and the Hudson River can become just as choppy and full of whitecaps as the open ocean. Add the ever-present contrary currents under the surface to that predicament.

Because of these possible complications, it is prudent to pick a sunny day with a blue sky and clear visibility to play the game of dodging speedboats and barges sometimes as large as aircraft carriers. Worst-case scenario, take shelter behind the large metal buoy and wait for a hot rodder with the rooster tail to go past. There's really no way for a barge to sneak up that nature hasn't provided for.

Rosendale to Eddyville on the Rondout Experienced

Rosendale has not made it easy to park close to the water for the launching of kayaks. Despite this, with firm resolve it can be done. This adventure is a one-way trip. It requires logistical planning that includes a waiting car parked down at the Rondout Creek waterway access parking lot in Eddyville.

It should be noted that the creek is only passable between these two points when the water is high because of freshets in the

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springtime or whenever large amounts of rain fall. Take heed, however, that the well-informed people at the Riverkeeper, those ornery guardians who view clean water as a bedrock principle for living, counsel everyone to stay out of the water after a heavy rain. They say that storm drains upriver mostly overflow because of runoff from the salt and muck on the surface of asphalt roads.

It's a tradeoff.

Drop the kayaks off and if possible the kayakers, who must accept carrying their water craft for 500 feet or so along

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Loading the kayak onto the roof of a car.

the creek before entering the water just under the Rosendale trestle.

For those that overcome adversity, congratulations. Joppenbergh Mountain honors that spirit, and will approve and congratulate you on your way to the unseen waterfall. It's a lazy ride through

a sort of shallow riverbed with countless rocks waiting just beneath the surface. When you clear town, you will pass under the blue bridge at the Route 32 crossing where police officers wait at night to sting speeders and drunks.

There is more lazy drifting to come. This is a six-mile waterborne adventure, going with the flow.

Then the riverbank rises on either side, and whatever fate you were assigned has been sealed. You'll hear the waterfall before you see it, and you won't see it for a long time after you hear it. One could say that you won't see it at all until you're on top of it, going over. But the line between the tops of the falls and the sky will be apparent for anyone looking for it.

Through careful approach, one can get out and carry or drag the kayak around over jagged rocks to avoid the waterfall, which isn't that tall. The terrain isn't that tricky. Upper body strength will figure prominently. Never drag a kayak across rock.

If going over the falls is your thing, be sure you wear a helmet and don't get a limb jammed between some rocks underwater. You'll be fine. Broken bones mend, as the skateboarders will tell you, and drowning hurts more than falling.

One can almost hear the laughter of the

skulls buried in the earth of the riverbank. Adventure awaits!

A final note about water quality

Algal blooms are bright green and should be avoided. Algal blooms are not generally fatal to humans, but can definitely kill your dog.

After a rainstorm the fecal bacteria count in the water will go up. Enterococcus, the type of bacteria in question, slang name Entero, generally thrive in the guts and intestines of human beings and can survive in halt, salty, acidic environments. Take that any way you want.

RiverKeeper tracks enterococcus bacteria counts provides an online resource tributary and waterfront data per 100 milliliters. Zero to 60 is acceptable, above 61 is not. As recently as May 23, kayaking the bottom of the paper-factory dam a.k.a. waterfall in Saugerties may need to be avoided as the Entero count measured at Saugerties Village Beach just above the dam showed counts of 115 per 100 milliliters, though over a quarter-inch of rain was recorded in the days previous to the sampling.

For the most recent testing results available about local tributaries and rivers, check out <https://www.riverkeeper.org/water-quality/citizen-data/>

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“Just listen,” said John Cage

by John Burdick

THE MID-HUDSON VALLEY music scene may be too narrowly defined, if not even a little tyrannized, by one extravagantly glorious chapter, the one starring the Band, Bob Dylan, Albert Grossman, and so on. That tradition is of course not only still alive locally but thriving, fully restocked with a dazzling community of young players and contemporary roots-rock classicists. It does tend to hog our mythological bandwidth, however. Often overlooked is another musical tradition in which this valley has achieved an unlikely and disproportionate importance: the tradition of free jazz, avant-garde, experimental, and purely improvisational music.

Consider. In 1971, the late, great composer, vibraphonist, pianist, and nice guy Karl Berger formed the Creative Music Studio (CMS) here with Ornette Coleman and Ingrid Sertso. It was the East Coast’s answer to Chicago’s famous Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians. In its workshops and performances CMS, preached an egalitarian, non-dogmatic approach to improvisation, welcoming non-musicians to its programs as happily as the jazz virtuosi drawn in by the luminary founders.

It is now under the leadership of the drummer Billy Martin of Medeski, Martin, and Wood fame.

The daring 20th-century composer Pauline Oliveros based her Deep Listening Institute in Kingston. Her friends,

students and artistic heirs continue to populate the local scene across the arts, and her philosophy can be heard in action regularly in the racket raised by one the city’s premier bands, the groovy, cacophonous improvisational collective Ultraam.

The elite experimental jazz pianist Marilyn Crispell has lived, recorded and performed in Woodstock for much of her storied and ongoing career.

Up river, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute’s Experimental Media and Performing Arts Center (EMPAC) in Troy must be one of the best-funded and best-equipped programs of its kind, an international magnet for aspiring outré artists of all stripes.

Bard College is no laggard in this respect, either, and even SUNY New

Paltz has established the Davenport Residency for New American Music, welcoming challenging composers for semester-long residencies and steering its program toward an open embrace of contemporary, global, and experimental classical music.

Wait, not done yet. For reasons unclear, the southern Dutchess and Putnam County region — Beacon, Cold Spring, Garrison, etc. — is home to a bevy of notables in the experimental scene, like David Rothenberg — the man who jams with animals — and the electronic trumpeter Ben Neill. Finally, the veritable theme song of provocative 20th-century avant-garde horseplay, John Cage's "4'33", was debuted by pianist David Tudor at Woodstock's Maverick Concert Hall on August 29, 1952. Take that, Bethel.

Proximity to New York City is never the only explanation for anything luminous and weird about the mid-Hudson, but in this case it is obviously a central one. Experimental music, like all niche genres and rigorously acquired tastes, needs to hit a lot of heads in order to connect with just a handful. Also, the very nature of experimental music — provocative, con-



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CLAIRE STEFANI

The elite experimental jazz pianist Marilyn Crispell.

trarian, often begrudging with familiar pleasures — positions it somewhere between art and practical philosophy or critical theory. It thrives on urban ferment, heterogeneity and confrontation. And when city artists and thinkers move upstate to nest and breed, you know they bring their strange ways with them.

Commercially, of course, it can be a tough sell — up here, anywhere. That's why, at its poshest levels, experimental music is largely driven by grants and patronage, and also why it can be a genuinely underground guerilla affair everywhere else. Here we will look at three ongoing and very different programs of largely improvisational music, all thriving quietly, somewhat under the radar, ready to challenge and edify the willing listener with rich summer programming. But what do we even mean by experimental and improvisational? Buy my book, I guess, should I ever write it. For now, as John Cage famously said when being attacked over the scandals of his music, "Just listen."

Catskill Harmony Guild

Every Wednesday, 7 to 9 p.m.

The Pines, 5327 Route 212, Mount Tremper. <https://catskillpines.com/>

No one is going to mistake Danny Blume's Catskill Harmony Guild for jam rock — it is far too downtown and BK hip, with global stylistic range and sonics and traces of John Zorn and the Lounge Lizards, with whom Blume used to play. But if the term were a blank slate, carrying no deleterious cultural associations, jam rock might well be good name for what CHG does: they rock in a rainbow of ways, and they jam — liberated, expansive, out-on-a-limb ensemble jamming with Danny audibly (the Pines is a small, small room) calling out key changes, assigning solo spots, and even describing dynamic moves in real time. The band is rotating, but drawn from a small pool of really fine, industry-credentialed players like drummer Aaron Johnston, bassist Jeff Hill, and keyboardists Tyler Wood and Zach Djanikian.

When versatile, polished, ace players like this go completely uncorked, tuned in to each other and intent on making moments happen collectively, it can be exhilarating for everyone in the room. "CHG uses familiar tunes as springboards," says Blume. "We'll deconstruct and mashup with reckless abandon. The fact that the audience will recognize a melody draws them in and keeps us an-

chored as well, giving us a strong place to return when returning is called for."

The bars in and around Woodstock have always been good for the occasional incongruous sighting — walking into a small club and finding it's NRBQ rocking therein; checking out a jazz brunch of the kind every community has, but discovering Jack DeJohnette or John Abercrombie serving up the jazz that day, for the hell of it. CHG shares a bit of that energy. You start asking yourself how cats so heavy landed in a room so small.

"This is all about the joy of playing music and nothing else," says Blume. "I called people I have been recording with recently, get along with well, whose musicianship I love, and who always deliver the goods. They're well known for their ability to back up singers and support and enhance what the vocalist is doing. As players and producers, that's our stock in trade. I want to keep CHG mostly instrumental and let the musicians shine. We'll always sing a couple songs, and Jeremy Bernstein [Pines owner and respected local rocker] usually joins us for a few, but that's secondary to the instrumental aspect. I think that years of focusing on being in a supportive role has made all of us listen to each other and not over-

play — even when there is freedom to do so. The focus is on the feel, groove and ensemble over showboating.”

Noise Salon: The Climb Series

Monthly performances

Green Kill Art Space, 229 Greenkill Avenue, Kingston. <https://greenkill.substack.com/>

The Noise Salon series of musical encounters is curated by Guided by Voices bassist Mark Shue and the well-known local music agitator and Chrome Cranks front man Peter Aaron. The brand was launched by Shue in Brooklyn more than a decade ago. His concept is simple — bring together a variety of musicians and sound makers for some on-the-spot creations and negotiations, guided by the smallest footprint of an advance structure and some chance processes that Cage and William Burroughs would approve of.

Next, see what happens.

The character of each performance will vary dramatically based on who is in this month's cast and through the agencies and strange dialects of extemporaneous interaction. Like all performances

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at Green Kill, the Noise Salons are livestreamed and archived. While the results are as diverse and abstract you'd expect, they also speak to the paradoxical notion that "free" does in fact have its own dialects, common sources, and performance traditions. There are, in fact, accepted and expected ways of being free.

"I first created these Noise Salons in a limited series I curated at Secret Project Robot art space," says Shue. "I had been out touring earlier that year playing bass guitar with Kid Millions [John Colpitts, the drumming force behind NYC psych-rockers Oneida] in his new project called Man Forever. We would enlist different musicians in each city on tour to join us to perform a live rendition of this 30-minute-long piece of music that Kid had birthed. Sort of an old Chuck Berry pickup band concept, but applied to much more abstract music. I was inspired by the chaos and the magic that could take place when different musicians, many of whom had never played together before, were brought together to create a piece of music, using just a simple structural framework to guide them."

A lot of the art is in the casting, the recipe. "We try to mix players that come from a wide range of musical backgrounds," Shue says. "I find it exciting to combine musicians who are seasoned in the improvisation and noise circles, along with musicians who might hail from more 'traditional' musical backgrounds. For each Noise Salon, we try to create some loose concept of a "band" — typically consisting of some healthy mix of percussive elements, melodic elements, and a general diversity of instruments and approaches."

Uniquely among musicians, avant-garde, experimental and noise artists are always expected to justify, rationalize, and defend their mode. It must get wearisome (although I suspect Cage felt that the heated debates were part of the compositions — words like rain on the roof). But Shue and Aaron step to the plate in this regard. What's in this music for someone who is not familiar with the sounds and pathways of free music?

"Improvised music is just abstract expressionism for the ears," says Aaron. "If you like Jackson Pollock or weather formations or the way a wild garden looks — and think of that stuff when you're listening, I bet you'll dig it. It certainly has a lot of psychedelic elements. Mark



The daring 20th-century composer Pauline Oliveros based her Deep Listening Institute in Kingston.

and I and the other musicians involved in the series love to listen to and play structured music as well. Gotta have that stuff, too, for sure. But always being grounded can get boring. And there are certainly already plenty of local musical

(electronics), Peter Aaron (bass).

Friday, August 11 at 8 p.m. Lineup TBA

Elysium Furnace Works

Extreme music booker/promoter, established 2016 in Beacon

Founded by the guitarist/promoter James Keepnews, Mike Falloon, and founder emeritus Steve Ventura, Elysium Furnace Works continues to serve the region with its healthiest share of "out" music and fully-pushed envelopes. EFW itself and its principals have also been integrally involved in the nightly weirdness of Quinn's in Beacon, perhaps the area's only music club with a commitment to experimental music (though the wonderful Tubby's in Kingston might quibble).

"Elysium Furnace Works grew out of a separate series I started in 2016 for music that was too out even for Quinn's," says Keepnews. "It was originally called Orthogonal Hustle Industries Unlimited.

Keepnews is frank about the commercial realities of the music he loves and serves. "Building an audience that consistently supports uncommercial, uncompromising music remains a challenge for us. We pay our artists decently but far from lavishly. That cost, in addition to renting our truly exquisite performance spaces and promoting our concerts via ads on social media, has almost invariably meant we do not break even on these events. Achieving this most modest of goals is something we have yet to figure out. That said, we are fiercely proud of our independence and, if this is the price

"I think that years of focusing on being in a supportive role has made all of us listen to each other and not overplay — even when there is freedom to do so. The focus is on the feel, groove and ensemble over showboating."

events happening that focus on great linear music and actual songs."

Upcoming Noise Salon performances:

Friday, July 14 at 8 p.m.: Ryan Jewell (drums), James Richardson (guitar), Al Margolis (electroacoustics), Zach Lehrhoff (baritone guitar), Tom Law

of DIY cultural production, without concession or institutional interference, we're more than happy to pay it."

"I recall when I was much younger listening to jazz and having zero appreciation that any of the music was being improvised," continues Keepnews, sounding what might well be the keynote for all the series discussed here. "It's not even that I thought it was completely notated, either. I simply had no conception of composition or improvisation as separate methods, or of there being any methods involved whatsoever; it was just music. Ideally, that's the experience I'd love for audiences to come away with from a great concert or recording of improvised performance: that it's simply great music. One of the many pleasures I've had presenting music in the Hudson Valley over the last decade-plus are the raised eyebrows that occur from listeners when I tell them the music they're in the middle of enjoying immensely is being composed in real-time."

Upcoming EFW Performances:

June 25: Improvised guitar duo with James Keepnews and Billy Stein, 8 p.m., Dogwood, 47 E. Main Street, Beacon.

July 22: Bridge Bass Quartet featuring upright bassists: Che Chen, Dave Hofstra, William Parker, and Dave Sewelson. Ballet Arts Studio, 107 Teller Avenue., Beacon. <https://www.balletartsstudio.com/>

September 23: A duo featuring Peabody Institute professor of both computer music and music engineering and technology laptop artist Sam Pluta, and director of both Electronic Music and the Princeton Laptop Orchestra at Princeton University, analog synthetist Jeff Snyder VBI Theatre at Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center. 12 Vassar Street, Poughkeepsie. <https://cunneen-hackett.org/12-vassar/>

October 21: Sana Nagano's Smashing Humans — Brooklyn-based noise-jazz violinist Nagano leads her adventurous ensemble. VBI Theatre at Cunneen-Hackett Arts Center

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The centuries call

Forest history seen through the eyes of a geologist

by Susan DeMark

BLUESTONE WILD FOREST reveals itself to Paul Rubin a bit at a time as he walks, examines, investigates and documents the forest's evidence, data, characteristics and beauty. Rubin, a geologist and hydrogeologist, has explored this forest for thousands of hours over the past three years.

Bit by bit, an inch there, a foot here, and a mile there, Rubin has been chronicling the geological features, quarries, wagon roads, remains of stone foundations, and more. His findings have sparked new questions.

Kathy Nolan, the Catskill Mountain-keeper research director, has hiked and appreciated the Bluestone Wild Forest for decades. Thanks to Rubin, she says she now looks at this forest with new eyes. Seeing it his way has made Nolan even more determined to enhance the sharing of his discoveries with the public and to protect the forest for those who come after.

You do not have to be a geologist to observe and discover what this deep forest reveals, as I found out hiking it for about five hours with Rubin on a sunny spring morning. You can be attuned to the forest landscape around you. You can see signs of the ways that massive glaciers shaped its character eons ago as you enjoy its majesty — hiking, biking, camping, and more.

The forest still holds the evidence of substantial bluestone enterprises on this land throughout the 19th century, when workers extracted, shaped, and transported bluestone. The results of their activity are still visible in places that nature has taken over, including wildlife habitats. Layers upon layers of geologic



SUSAN DEMARK

Above, Pickerel Pond; below, Hemlock Quarry, as Paul Rubin has entitled it in the studies he is compiling of Bluestone Wild Forest.



and industrial history provide a magical forest today.

An initiative is proceeding to strengthen the protection of the historic, archeological and environmental assets of the state-owned Bluestone Wild Forest more strongly. In large part due to the documented discoveries of recent years, the state government determined in 2020 that approximately 884 acres, called the Hemlock Bluestone Quarry Archeological District, was eligible for inclusion in the New York State Register of Historic

Places. This designation would give the forest special consideration during environmental reviews.

Rubin, the Catskill Mountainkeeper, the Woodstock Land Conservancy and Friends of the Bluestone Wild Forest/Save Onteora Lake are working to apply by next year to get the forest on the State Register, which would mean automatic placement on the National Register of Historic Places. This endeavor gained urgency several years ago when a developer proposed a concrete and steel fabrication plant off Route 28 near Onteora Lake. After much public outcry and organized opposition, the Town of Kingston's planning board in 2021 reversed what appeared to be a green light for this industrial proposal and voted to require more rigorous examination of environmental impacts. It has not gone forward since.

How'd it get the way it is?

On the morning of my walk with Rubin, we entered the forest from a parking lot on Morey Hill Road (the lot is about a half-mile from Route 28). Listening

to Rubin as we progress along a trail, I was – as I often do while hiking – taking in and admiring the trees and the many varied shapes and incredible sizes of the

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boulders in the forest. How did they get here, and what does their presence tell us? To tweak an old Rod Stewart song, every boulder tells a story, don't it?

The story is one of how the movements of enormous glaciers produced the unique character of the 3000-acre wild forest holds. A wide range of glacial landscapes and features took shape as glaciers stagnated, melted and receded. Glaciers sculpted the forest's popular jewel, Onteora Lake.

Rubin's research maps and interprets these features. He discussed the bluestone quarries and the wagon roads that connected the quarries.

Melting glaciers left hundreds of knolls, topped or flanked by jumbles of boulders, and kettles (depressions), creating a hilly or "hummocky" landscape, as Rubin explains it. Glacial ice, hundreds of feet in depth, picked up a lot of debris. Rocks spread through the tops of the most recent glacier.

The bluestone that later became a prized product of Ulster County's extraction industry is a bluish, clayey type of sandstone. Bluestone Wild Forest became strewn with clusters of massive sandstone boulders that accumulated below open shafts in the glacial surface known as moulins or at the base of melting glacier fronts. Seeing the massive rock everywhere in this forest provided me a sense of a slow, massive transition in the receding of the last glacier.

This was one happening, bustling area during the times of the bluestone industry, which began in 1831 when bluestone was discovered in Ulster County. This land became a place where quarry workers labored, day in and day out, to take out of what the end of the glacial age had left to extract. Prior to the widespread use of Portland cement, there was a gargantuan appetite for bluestone in the growing cities throughout the 19th century. It was grueling, risky work. We still see today the sidewalks, steps, curbstones, building stone, windowsills, and other applications throughout Ulster County and the Hudson Valley.

Quarries and roads

"These quarry workers had to deal with what the geology had left them," says Rubin, president of the environmental consulting firm HydroQuest.

Rubin's investigations in the forest, buttressed by other experts with whom



SUSAN DEMARK

Paul Rubin in Bluestone Wild Forest.

he consults, have documented dozens of bluestone quarries in the forest, the remains of an interconnected network of highly engineered wagon roads, unique geological features, stone walls and foundations, bluestone slabs, and other features. Some are readily identifiable, others remain mysterious.

As Rubin's public presentations made clear, those exploring the bluestone forest will be amazed and informed by knowing more of the forest's glacial and industrial history.

We headed early on along the Red Trail, then going off it a bit and returning a number of times. Rubin pointed out various geologic features: knolls topped by boulders; quarries that caused me to understand just how difficult it must have

been for laborers to pry out the bluestone, stone walls that indicated some type of enterprise, and remnants of wagon roads. The heavy bluestone slabs that quarrymen took out required an intricate network of roads, complete with connectors and loops, for the horse-drawn wagons to transport the bluestone out of the area, usually via the Hudson River.

Rubin has uncovered evidence of thousands of feet of wagon roads, with grooves, ruts, and rubble either visible or underneath the grassy or leaf-strewn forest surface. Every significant quarry, in a place with a high concentration of such sites, had a wagon roadway or tramway to link it to more established roadways for transportation to markets via the loading docks at Wilbur. Delineating features



A hiker in the Bluestone Wild Forest can appreciate the striking beauty of massive stone formations.

— distinct parallel wagon wheel ruts, faint parallel grooves beneath the cover of leaves, and places where a wagon-wide roadbed is built above grade on one or both sides — indicate where the wagon roads were.

The Waughkonk road, a major route, is still visible from many parts of the forest. Some believe that this wagon road followed the pathway that native peoples had used in earlier times. The wagon road snaking through the forest was important to the operations of the quarries. It was included on the 1858 map of Ulster County that J.H.

French made from surveys. Much of the road remains intact today, as well as the varied remains of the bluestone works, foundations, and connector roads near it.

Not an easy or safe job

Intensive, difficult labor took place here. The walls, cliffs, and other unique formations of sandstone are stunning to behold. Standing where the quarrymen extracted bluestone, I saw them in a whole different way. Rubin identified the varied physical features: long cliff quarries; trenches (both short and long), pit quarries (deepened cliff and trench



An old stone foundation.

quarries now flooded), and wildcat quarries (small test-trench quarries).

The bluestone we admire in a wall, sidewalk, curb, lintel, or other form is finished, neat, and striking. The quarries show it in raw form. A long cliff quarry called Hemlock Quarry shows a thick layer of “shaley stuff” at least three feet on top of the bluestone. The quarrymen had to remove the top layer to get to the bluestone by blasting, hammering, and drilling. Drill holes can be found in some bluestone slabs today.

As historian Alf Evers wrote in 1972, “Theirs was not an easy or a safe job.

Broken limbs, smashed hands, blindness, dust-caused lung disease, and other calamities were frequent.”

The forest held a mixture of sites and uses beyond the bluestone quarries, much of which Rubin has been analyzing in his more than 60 visits to this land. He shows one area where three stone foundations are near each other. “Archaeological work would be of real value here,” he said. “This was one lively spot.”

Rubin has mapped out four possible pasture areas in the southeastern portion of the forest. He has documented evidence of a farmstead located along Waughkonk road, with a foundation, cellar, a six-foot dug well, and a stone-walled pasture. “There’s so much to learn,” Rubin says.

A deeper appreciation

Concluding the hike after savoring the peacefulness of Pickerel Pond, I was exhausted but exhilarated. I had just visited a historic, geologic, archaeological, and cultural site.

Much additional work is planned and already under way to strengthen its preservation. With all that has been discovered in recent years, Catskill Mountainkeeper plans to expand public awareness and appreciation through written materials, hikes, and interpretive information, said Nolan.

With the recent discoveries in the Bluestone Wild Forest, Nolan said she treasures it in even deeper, more complex ways. “I’ve always appreciated it as a recreational site, for the beauty

near the water, for the natural areas — for the marshes, turtles, fishes, the eagles. The wild forest element has been there for me,” Nolan explained.

Now she senses even more the layers of history — how the native tribes lived here, how the bluestone industry operated here. “I am asking a lot more questions about the layers of history rather than just thinking of [the forest] in the present, which is very beautiful in itself,” Nolan says. “It has layers of depth that connect me to the people who were here before, and now I know I need to work to protect it for those who come after.”

SUSAN DEMARK

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