

Talus





A Gunks Climbers' Coalition publication

**WELCOME TO THE SEPTEMBER 2005
ISSUE OF TALUS, THE NEWSLETTER OF
THE GUNKS CLIMBERS' COALITION.**

A SEPTEMBER GREETING TO EVERYONE

Summer solstice is long past, but here at the Gunks we've no shortage of sun—so get out and take advantage of all these long days perfect for climbing. Sure, it's too hot, too humid, and too full of bugs. But it's the Gunks—what do you expect at this time of year? Think of it this way: come mid-Fall, the trade routes will be three deep.

So square away your pack the night before, scope out your routes, and get out to catch the early morning breeze. You'll be glad you did.

In this issue you'll catch up on the GCC's organizational development, upcoming events, Shawangunk etymology and our members' creative output!

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© 2005 Mike Stanislaw

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© 2005 Mike Stanislaw
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© 2005 France Menk
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FROM THE STEERING COMMITTEE

An important
meeting
for the future
of the GCC:

6-8PM
SEPTEMBER 24TH
MOHONK PRESERVE
VISITOR CENTER
route 44/55 north
of the intersection of
299 and 44/55

This will be a
General Meeting
the same day as
'Adopt a Crag.'
The General
Meeting
will include
election
of officers per
our bylaws.

All people who
are and want to
be directly
involved with any
aspect of our work
should attend!

THE GCC COMPLETED A CLIMBER SURVEY

on August 10, 2005. We had about 150 respondents. This will help us evaluate our goals and mission along with the immediate direction of our future as the GCC.

SUMMARY OF TOP PRIORITIES:

1. ENSURE THAT CURRENT AREAS STAY OPEN.
2. OPEN CLIMBING AREAS THAT ARE NOW CLOSED.
3. INFORM CLIMBERS ABOUT MINIMIZING ECOLOGICAL IMPACT.

FINISHED-IN THE WORKS-ONGOING:

Helped the Preserve get a grant from the Access Fund for a new kiosk and climber education program. Working toward opening 3 new areas within Minnewaska and one major bouldering area in Rosendale. Maintaining our outstanding relationship with the Mohonk Preserve.

SECONDARY PRIORITIES:

Supporting the recruitment of volunteers for Dick Williams' trail crew; contributing to Gardiner Rescue Squad & buying rescue equipment.

TERTIARY:

Arranging slide shows and events to raise funds for rescue equipment and for expert assistance with the Rosendale project and others.

ITEMS OF LEAST INTEREST:

Cleaning chalk off cliffs: we decided not to continue after having cleaned the Mac Wall. Cleaning chalk off boulder problems will only be part of 'Adopt-a-Crag' at Peterskill. We need to strengthen the relationship between climbers and the local land managers.

OTHER ISSUES:

- ☞ A strong majority want selective replacement of pins and bolts. This has been addressed by the Mohonk Preserve Fixed Anchor Committee, and our data will be shared with them.
- ☞ A plurality would like more bolted belay/rappel anchors. This data will also be shared with the Preserve.
- ☞ More climbers use *gunks.com* than our site: ***gunksclimbers.org***.
- ☞ The Mohonk Preserve is by far the favored climbing venue.
- ☞ New kiosk: "may be better to have it at the "Bistro Mountain Store."

SYNOPSIS:

MAINTAINING AND IMPROVING CLIMBER
ACCESS IS JOB NUMBER ONE.

Everything else is secondary."

GUNKS NEWS

by Chris Moratz

Ajax Greene and Chris Moratz of the GCC met with the Mohonk Preserve's Glenn Hoagland and staff members in the month of July to discuss various issues. Dave Rosenstein of the Access Fund was also present. Here's a brief synopsis of what was discussed.

Various issues have recently surfaced surrounding Gardiner private landowners, zoning laws, and related issues. Overall, there is little the Preserve or GCC can do to influence these types of political issues, as they fall outside the scope of our mission and goals. There are trends in the ridge townships that are creating complications for public use land acquisition in general, and landowners' attitudes toward cliff and talus sections of property have been changing over the past few years. It seems that the overall perception in the past may have been that cliff and talus was of little worth. This has now changed very markedly; owning cliff and talus land is very desirable, whether the land owners are climbers or not. Certain landowners remain very climber friendly and enjoy watching climbers

on their section of cliff while others may not be as welcoming. There does not seem to be a uniform attitude toward climbers, but landowners do not seem especially unfriendly toward climbers.

Overtures that were made to landowners recently about acquiring land for public use perhaps have not reflected the change in this situation with regard to the level of offers made. Adjustments to the status quo will take some time.

There are trends in the ridge townships that are creating complications for public use land acquisition in general...

After things settle down, hopefully in the not too distant future, and these adjustments have been made, progress can once again happen on the issues of land acquisition in the Shawangunks.

In the present uncertain climate, it seems vital to work more intimately with private landowners. Monitoring these issues is of high importance.

The Mohonk Preserve would like to host more events and meetings, perhaps even a regular monthly membership meeting at the Headquarters building.

... owning cliff and talus land is very desirable, whether the land owners are climbers or not.

There is an excellent relationship between the Mohonk Preserve and the GCC, so important to the future of climbing in the Shawangunks. 🗨️

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Minneswaska access draft**
- **Rosendale Waterworks Bouldering Project**
- **Access Fund Affiliate strategy**
- **Donations to Gardiner Fire Department and Mohonk Preserve of \$1000 each**
- **Helped Mohonk Preserve obtain a grant of \$6000 from the Access Fund ...**

check out our website for in-depth coverage at gunksclimbers.org

EVENTS

SEPTEMBER 24: 'ADOPT-A-CRAG DAY' AT PETERSKILL
& THEN OUR **GENERAL MEETING** AT THE MOHONK PRESERVE VISITOR CENTER, 6 - 8PM



GENERAL MEETING

OCTOBER 29TH:
GCC presents a **HENRY BARBER**
slide show at the Mohonk
Preserve route 44/55 north of the
intersection of 299 and 44/55

MEMBERS' CORNER



© 2004 Robert Wilson

AN ENTRY IN CATWOMAN'S DIARY:

"What I did on my summer vacation 2004...flew out to Toulumne to climb heroic routes in the backcountry. Got my tail whipped by two 20-somethings - no, it's not as enticing as you would think. Had a great time. Will never go into the backcountry being an out of shape flabby 40-something again. Summer vacation 2005 - heading out to Toulumne backcountry again - hoping to get my tail whipped by a 20-something in a most enticing way. We'll see what happens. Bye for now!"

The photo was taken by Bobby Wilson as he stood on the backside of Cathedral Peak. John Goin and Barb Moran are standing on the summit of Eichorn Pinnacle in August.

SHAWANGUNK REDUX

by Christopher Spatz

“When the Dutch troops left it, it was a terrible picture of desolation. The huts had been burned, the bodies of the Indians who had been killed and thrown into corn-pits had been unearthed by wolves and their skeletons left to bleach on the plain, with here and there the half eaten body of a child. For years it was a fable told to children that the place was haunted by the ghosts of the slain. It is a place full of history, full of poetry, full of the footprints of the aboriginal lords.”

Taken from E.M. Rutterber’s 1906 “Indian Geographical Names,” this poignant narrative is a colonial reflection on the aftermath of the 1663 Second Esopus War, a massacre which effectively dissipated the native Lenape and opened up the western mid-Hudson interior to colonization. One Lenape linguist has recently suggested that the torching of this fort at the eastern base of the Shawangunk Ridge is also the source for the place-name *Shawangunk*.

In the second edition of “Talus,” we reprinted part of an article from “The Weekender” magazine describing the etymology of *Shawangunk* and its horde of suggested meanings, with a clarification of its pronunciation – the colonial *Shong-gum* favored by some locals being a contraction of the Lenape *Sha-wan-gunk*. The piece appeared before we learned of the Lenape scholar Ray Whritenour, who came to our attention last year in an online critique of Evan Pritchard’s “Native New Yorkers,”

where he boldly stated that Pritchard’s “mountains where you go south” translation of SHAWANGUNK

(echoing a number of “southern place” translations included in “The Weekender” piece), was “absolute balderdash.”

It is also the first time where his translation for *Shawangunk*, “in the smoky air,” appears.

In an email response to our query, Whritenour explains his translation:

Schawan is an inanimate intransitive verb, meaning ‘it is smoky air.’ Its noun-like participle is *schawank*,

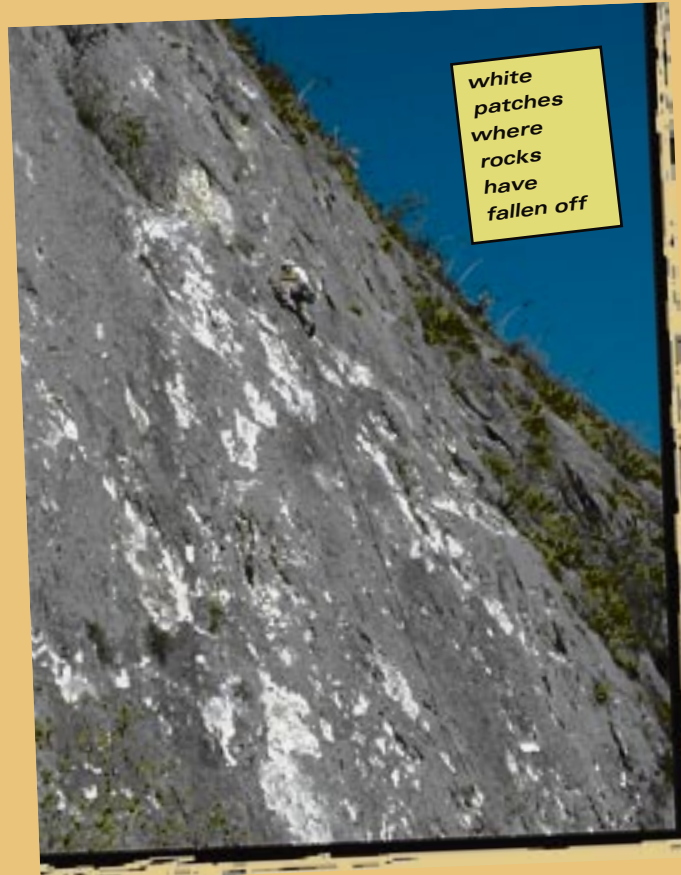
meaning ‘that which is smoky air.’ Adding the locative suffix gives us *schawangunk* (‘in that which is smoky air’ or, more simply, ‘in the smoky air’). This word has no relation to those signifying ‘south’ or ‘southerly,’ etc.”

Whritenour’s translation is cited in historian Marc B. Fried’s recent book, “Shawangunk Place-Names.” While Fried suggests the name may have derived from atmospheric conditions that existed when the first European parcel near the massacre was purchased from the Lenape nineteen years after the war (a foggy morning; smoke from a speculative fire on the famously tinderable ridge), he also states that the name’s unprecedented spread across the lowlands and onto the ridge suggest *Shawangunk* had been established as a proper name by the natives before the sale, though he doesn’t speculate further on the origin.

Whritenour has attributed the persistence of the name across the basin to the deep impression the fort’s torching made on the surviving Lenape. Nearly 350 years later, the final line of the narrative quoted above appears more resonant than ever. 🌀

ACCESSING POTRERO CHICO

Article & Photography by Jannette Wing Pazer



For the past 4 years I have visited Potrero Chico in Mexico during the winter months to climb the huge limestone walls.

You can find climbers from all over the world enjoying the huge number of routes here, including a number of multi-pitch sport routes. Clip and go for 7, 10, 15, 21 pitches and more!

For a Gunks climber like me, used to climbing in an environmentally sensitive area with a strong history of trad climbing and ethics, Potrero Chico seemed like an "anything goes" kind of place.

New routes are going up daily; just about everything is bolted. Approach trails criss-cross all over the hillsides - although I'm not sure how many

are from climbers and how many are from the cows who occasionally roam the valley. I've never seen one of these cows on the trails, but their cow patties are everywhere. You can tell from far away where the routes are by noticing the paths up the rock which have had their vegetation cleared and they are usually spotted with lighter colored rock where loose rock had fallen off or was trundled by the first ascent to make it safer.

There is quite a bit of loose rock at Potrero, so some of it could be unintentional. But trundling does go on at Potrero - I heard some climbers were upset when they saw that the first ascent of a climb was done with considerable rock trundling, to the point where all the vegetation in the canyon below it was covered with rocks.



Also, a number of the climbs in popular areas are actually labeled. I've seen names painted in stencil at the base of some climbs, and in other places, very pretty rocks are painted with a picture and the

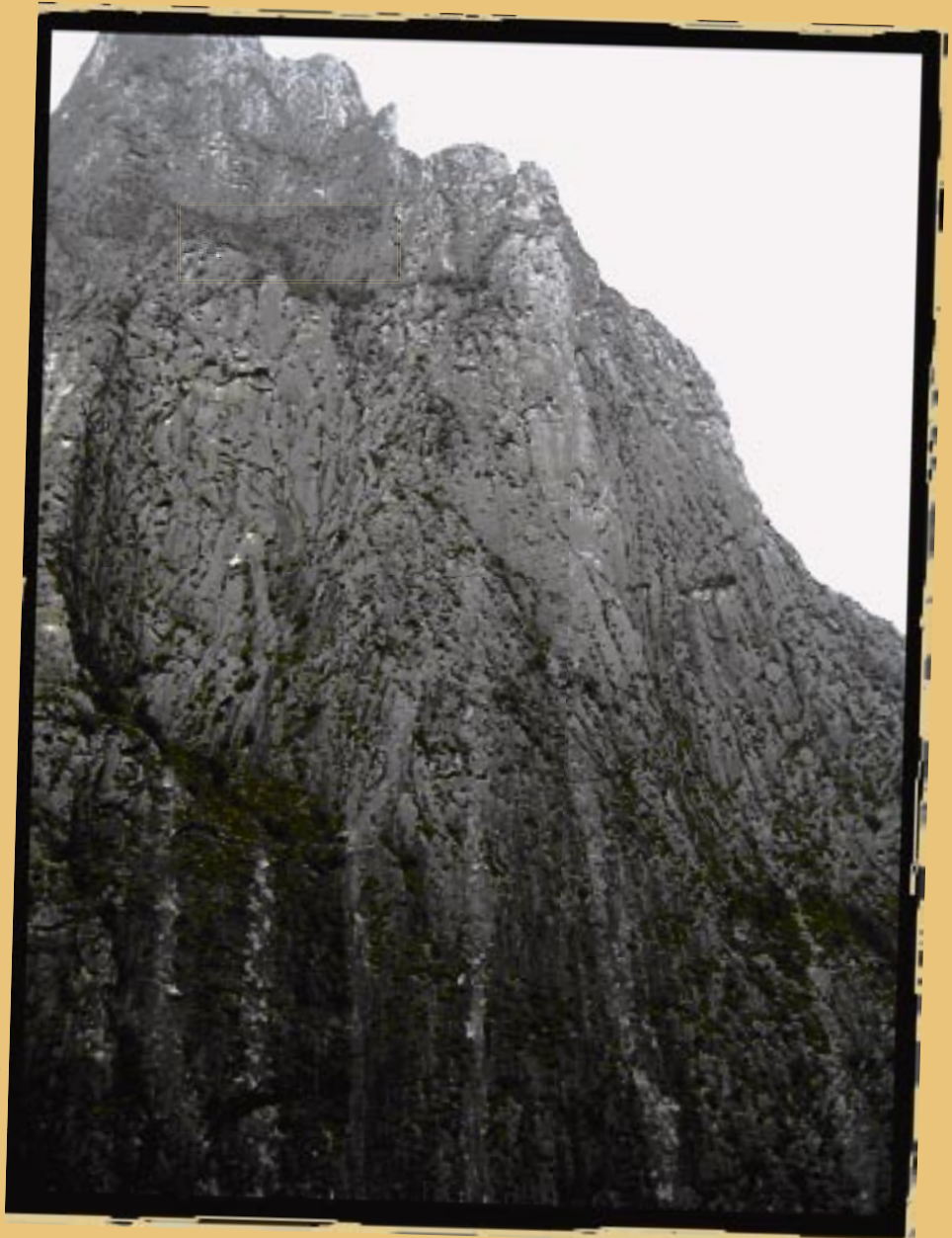
name of the climb and glued to the base of the climb. I asked Tammy, an American living in Potrero Chico and author of the guidebook, why the climbs are labeled. She explained that new routes are put up so quickly that those following older guidebooks can get themselves into trouble when they count the number of bolt lines to locate the route they want to climb, not realizing there are new ones there and ending up on the wrong climb, and possibly something harder than they can handle.

So some of the popular routes are labeled so it's easier for newcomers to figure out where they are.

Potrero Chico isn't just a climbing destination, it's a local park.

There is a large municipal pool complex in the canyon. In the hot summertime, Mexican vacationers fill the *quintas* that the climbers occupy in the winters. Year round, locals gather in the canyon to blast music from their cars and drink beer, sometimes bringing a BBQ grill and relaxing with their families. They enjoy watching the climbers.

You can hear what sounds like Mexican polka music playing in the canyon while you're climbing. But there is litter everywhere! However, I'm not sure how much is from locals partying and how much is from climbers. The amount of garbage lying round is pretty alarming.



Despite the trash, rock trundling, labeled climbs, erosion from random trails, cow-patties and bolting free-for-all, *Potrero Chico* is still a very fun and popular destination for climbers.

I wondered if there would ever be any risk of climbers losing access to Potrero Chico.

To the visiting climber, it didn't appear that anyone cared what the climbers were doing. There were no posted rules or supervision.

There were no climbing coalitions to do clean-ups, no long history of strict climbing ethics.

I asked a local American climber if the locals had any issues dealing with so many Americans who come to climb there, due to the current political climate.

I was told they really didn't care who was the U.S. president, it was too far removed from their world.



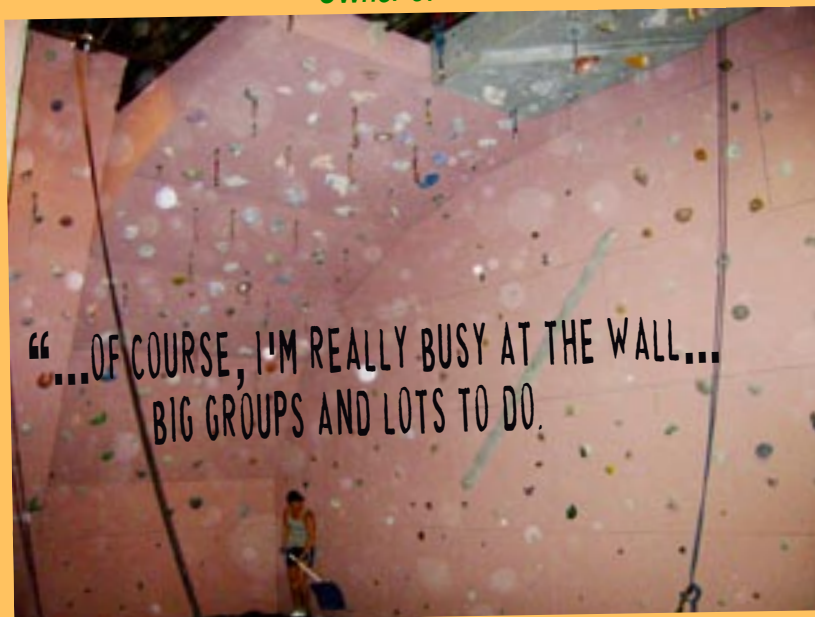
However, climbers shouldn't take potrero Chico for granted. As with any land, whether it be private or government owned, domestic or foreign, climbing access is a privilege granted to us. It is not a given that we will always be able to play there. And the reason isn't the reason that you would normally think of when it comes to access issues. It's not the litter. It's not the climbing ethics, bolting, trundling, or erosion. It's not for any political reasons. It was something I really hadn't thought about until my conversations with Tammy. It was purely cultural. What the climbers may not realize about the people of Hidalgo is that their culture is very conservative. They are offended when they see shirtless guys and women wearing skimpy jog bras and skin tight shorts wandering through their marketplace. Although some of us female climbers have experienced some cat-calls from the local men, it is extremely offensive to the locals to have visiting male climbers make cat-calls at the local women. They want to be treated with respect, just as you would if you had visitors to your town.

So when you travel to other places to climb, whether it be to a foreign country, or even to another area of the

United States, it's a good idea to treat the locals with respect and act and dress accordingly, based on the local culture. It's not just a matter of respecting the local climbing ethics, we have to take notice of the local

culture as well, whether it be in a small town in Mexico, or perhaps a deeply conservative area of the United States. Let's do every little bit we can to ensure good relations and access. ☺

COMMENTS ON OWNING A CLIMBING GYM photos & commentary by Elaine Matthews, Owner of The Inner Wall in New Paltz



I THINK THAT OWNING A WALL WOULD BE FUN FOR SOMEONE NEW, YOUNG AND AMBITIOUS... I SUPPOSE YOUNG ISN'T A PREREQUISITE. YOU GET REALLY STRONG BECAUSE YOU END UP ON THE WALLS A LOT, EVEN IF YOU DON'T CLIMB A LOT... FIXING THINGS, ETC... GOTTA WORK WITH PEOPLE WELL AND BEA JACK OF ALL TRADES TOO."



Full page photo on page 10, © 2003 Ethan Ladof

The "Las Estrellas" cliff inside the canyon of Potrero Chico at sunrise. The top is gained by climbing "Estrellitas," a 12 pitch sport climb.



