

# The Editor's Corner

photo by John Macek



## RETURN OF THE NATIVES

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In *Moby-Dick*, Herman Melville used the Catskill eagle as a soaring symbol of hope and renewal for humanity (see p. 2). In Melville's time, the eagle lived and nested throughout the Hudson Valley and North American continent. Yet in a few short decades, it had all but disappeared from the lower 48 states.

A similar fate befell the Peregrine Falcon, whose demise from the Shawangunks began in the later 19th century and culminated in the Hudson Valley and elsewhere with the 20th-century use of DDT. Other birds, such as the turkey, bluebird, and raven, were also exterminated or nearly so from loss of habitat, use of pesticides, and overhunting.

Yet, as Melville knew, nature has a way of renewing itself, its creatures resilient and adaptive if given a chance and at times a helping hand. Peregrine Falcons have found quite acceptable new digs, rooms with river views for the taking, on Hudson River bridges and Manhattan skyline balconies.

And this past spring -- for the first time in 40 years -- peregrines tried to nest again on the ridge. It's the most hopeful news of the century's close. The turkey, bluebird, and raven (not to mention deer and coyotes)

have all successfully returned to the Shawangunks. Things are indeed looking up.

I remember the first time my husband and I looked up to see a Wild Turkey crossing our front lawn in the mid-1980s. Look there -- a dinosaur caught in a time warp! What else could it have been? History takes on a new perspective when we realize that Wild Turkeys have only been back for about 15-20 years.

Perspective, our fall theme, can be seen from several angles: from time, place, or point of view. During the 20th century, there was a major shift in the belief of humankind's view of itself as occupying the top of the animal hierarchy to a more realistic one in which people are seen as only one part of the complex web of life. We need to remember to save the worms and the frogs as much as we save the whales and the eagles.

Melville's eagle, still "invisible in the sunny spaces" above the Shawangunks, are slowly returning to New York State. One day, they may descend again to nest in its tall pines and craggy places. One day soon, a peregrine nest will succeed, too. With other birds and creatures who have returned, the eagle and falcon will soar together once more to live and raise their young in the bounty of their native home.

