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HUDSON VALLEY Parent

Family Friendly Field Guides A trip to .. Minnewaska State Park

5281 Rte 44/55, Kerhonkson, NY 12446
845-255-0752 • nysparks.com/parks/127
Open every day from 9 a.m. to dusk
\$10/vehicle

Whether you're looking for a scenic picnic area, an easy walk around the lake or a challenging back-country outing, [Minnewaska State Park Preserve](#) has it all! With over 85 miles of trails to travel on foot, bike, horse, cross-country ski and snowshoe, Minnewaska offers healthy adventure all year long. The park preserve also features rock climbing, paddling, swimming in two pristine lakes, dramatic waterfalls and year-round education programs.



Before you go:

Visit the Minnewaska [website](#) to check out weekly public programs, including guided hikes and family programs. You can also check out books on the area to get the inside scoop from the experts. Recommended titles include:

- "Scenes and Walks in the Northern Shawangunks" by Jack Fagan
- "A Rock with a View: Trails of the Shawangunk Mountains" by Steve Weinman

For your outing you will need:

Good hiking shoes, water, food and a [trail map](#) (available at the parking booth).

Vocabulary to know while visiting:

- **Carriage road:** Roads in parks that bicyclists, horses, and sometimes cars are allowed to share with walkers and hikers
- **Timber rattlesnake:** The largest poisonous snake in New York State
- **Nature preserve:** A piece of land with special protections for the nature and animals that live there
- **The Gunks:** A widely used nickname for the Shawangunk Ridge that has been in use at least since the mid-19th century. Both "Shawangunk" and "Shongum" are popular pronunciations of the ridge, which got its name from the Munsee Lenape tribe Schawankunk.
- **Shawangunk Quartz Conglomerate:** a type of very hard, durable rock composed of quartz pebbles and

sand. This white bedrock, which averages less than 500 feet in thickness, withstood the erosive forces of the last glacier to become the Shawangunk Ridge.

Learning in action: Nature Detectives

Listening Game: While walking the trails at Minnewaska, stop in an area with lots of trees overhead, close your eyes and listen for sounds for two to three minutes. Count the number of different sounds you hear and then share what you heard with your group.

These sounds will likely include man-made sounds such as planes, as well as natural sounds like the wind and bird calls.

Also, look for signs of animals living at Minnewaska:

1) Look at the ground for animal footprints, which are called tracks. Count the number of toes in each track, measure the distance between tracks, side to side, and front to back. See if you can figure out what direction the animal was walking and why they were going that way. If you have a tracking field guide, use that to try to figure out what animal you are observing.

2) Look for animal homes, such as bird and squirrel nests in trees and chipmunk holes in the ground.

3) Listen for animal sounds, such as squirrel chatter, bird song, and insect hums.

4) Look for signs of animal activity including eating, and eliminating. For instance, chewed pine cones may indicate red squirrel browse, and a pile of scat (wild animal poop) on a rock might be from a coyote.



Bring it home:

Pine cone birdfeeders

In order to foster your child's interest in observing wildlife, you can make a treat for the birds that you hang outside in the cool weather. No foraging is allowed at Minnewaska, so make sure to gather your pine cones from your own property.

Here's what you'll need: pine cones, string, popsicle stick, vegetable fat or peanut butter, bird seed

Tie a 12-inch piece of string securely around the top of your pine cone. Use the tongue depressor to spread the vegetable fat or peanut butter all over the surface of the pine cone. Then, roll the pine cone in bird seed. Hang the pine cone outside in a place that's easy for you to observe and safe for birds. Remember, don't do this if you have cats near your house and also, bears may want to eat your treat if it's available to them before and after hibernation.

For more resources, visit fieldguides.hvparent.com