



AAC Publications

Snakebite

Shawangunks, Trapps Area

In May 2023, a Gunks climber was bitten by an eastern copperhead. This pit viper is endemic to eastern North America and favors deciduous forest and mixed woodlands, where it may occupy rock outcroppings and ledges. Photo: Selbymay | Wikimedia

On May 13, a female climber (30) was on the approach to a climb called Sort of Damocles (1 pitch, 5.8) in the popular Trapps area. The individual was bitten by a copperhead and later treated by SAR rangers. Though snakebites are relatively uncommon, climbers can get bitten if they step too close or do not see snakes. This was the case for the climber. Unfortunately, she also elected to wear sandals for the approach.

ANALYSIS

It is common in the Gunks to find various snakes along approach trails. The 2023 season saw an increase in copperhead activity in the Trapps. Though rarely fatal to humans, copperhead envenomation can cause severe wounds and scarring, especially if untreated at a facility equipped for snakebites. Wearing protective clothing, including pants and hiking shoes, can help protect climbers from a snakebite and prevent injury. (Sources: Mohonk Preserve Rangers, Dan Cassidy, and Andrew Bajardi, Chief Ranger.)

Images



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