



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
November - December 2013 • Vol. 17 No. 5

New Finds: Gilboa Fossil Forest

Hi fellow Friends members. One of New York's most interesting Science/ Natural History stories recently has been a burst of discoveries of Earth's earliest forests, about 395 million years old. Schoharie County's famous Middle Devonian "Gilboa fossil forest" has been known for nearly 100 years.

Yet, the character of the Gilboa trees and whole forests have been determined only in the last ten years. A 28 foot long fossil Gilboa tree, with stump, trunk and leafy vegetation has resolved many questions. But discoveries of multiple forest floors, with varying tree species, has opened up many new questions and insights into these ancient forests.

On Wednesday November 13, Dr. William Stein of SUNY Binghamton will talk about these exciting new finds and their implications, at the time that Life first moved onto land. Come join other members and the public and learn about some of New York's, and Earth's, first forests. - *Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten, Geologist, New York State Museum*

Save the dates!

Nature's Thanksgiving Celebration

Saturday, Nov. 23, 10am– 4pm at the Thacher Nature Center

Join our annual celebration honoring the gifts of the natural world with lots of fun indoor and outdoor activities. Bring the kids and grandkids and have some fun – great for scouts too!

Holiday Bazaar

**Dec. 7, 10am – 4pm and Dec. 8, 10am – 2pm
at the Thacher Nature Center**

Come for a unique shopping experience in the Helderbergs! Local artisans will have many hand-crafted items available such as bowls, jewelry, candles, jams and jellies, soaps and beauty products, pottery, Christmas ornaments and more!



Above: Researchers examine fossil forest floor at Gilboa. Water fills fossils of roots, stump holes.

Below: Gilboa tree stump.



President's Corner *by John Kilroy*

"I like to play indoors better, 'cause that's where all the electrical outlets are."

This honest yet troubling quote is attributed to Paul, a fourth grader in San Diego in Richard Louv's landmark book, Last Child in the Woods. Louv does a remarkable job explaining how American childhood has changed dramatically over the last 20 years or so. Parents used to have problems getting their kids to come inside for meals and bedtime especially during the warmer months. Sadly, this is no longer the case in many households.

Many children spend too many hours in front of an electronic screen of some sort. Video game consoles, tablets and smart phones are ubiquitous. Too many youngsters are increasingly spending too much time within a virtual world of a few square inches and less time in the real world. Social media, texting and online gaming have become the new realities for many children. Unfortunately, we may all end up paying a price for this.

I'm not a parent but I am a high school teacher so I deal with teenagers daily and I really enjoy working with them. They're at that awkward stage between childhood and adulthood and, over four years, I watch them come of age and develop from boys and girls into men and women. However, nearly every one of them clutches a smart phone in one hand and it must be consulted frequently. It's distracting in school and I'm sure it's a bigger distraction outside of school when they're not being told to put it away constantly.

The kids are missing out on playing games with others, exploring parks and other green spaces in the neighborhood and the region and developing a sense of place in their lives. There is a notable disconnect between many young people and the natural world. Being outside compels you to pay attention. It's nearly impossible not to do so. There are sounds

made by unseen birds and mammals moving through dry leaves. There are different smells depending on where you are. Each new incident makes you increasingly aware of your surroundings and builds your attention. You want to find out the source of that noise, movement or odor. To do so requires that you pay attention.

Over the last ten years or so, I've seen the number of children I teach who are diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) rise dramatically. This fact, combined with the increased number of hours children spend in front of an electronic screen of some kind presents an interesting but troubling correlation. I don't know how many studies (if any) have been done on this, but it wouldn't surprise me if there was evidence that the two are related.

You already know what an incredible place Thacher Park is. Perhaps you've been going there since you were a kid. If so, it may have helped foster your love of the outdoors. Perhaps you've become an avid hiker, birder, fisherman/woman or hunter because of the outdoor experiences you had as a youth. This makes you a steward of the outdoors. You care deeply enough for it and it has become an important part of your life.

If you're now a parent or grandparent, I hope you can instill in your children or grandchildren the love of the outdoors that you have. Your sense of environmental stewardship will be passed on to them. Places like Thacher will become important in their lives and they will share it with others. I mentioned the disconnect between many young people and the natural world and I worry that many will never have that sense of stewardship passed on to them. What the environmental consequences will be if this continues remains to be seen.

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees

President:	John Kilroy	872-1501
Vice President:	Laure-Jeanne Davignon	872-2723
Treasurer:	Betsey Miller	869-0739
Secretary:	Sigrin Newell	439-6705
	Former President Barbara Flindt	

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Chuck Ver Straeten	872-2223	Bert Schou	221-8693
Dan Driscoll	872-0602	Linda Hodges	872-0940

As always, call 872-0800 or 872-1237 to verify activity times and dates.

Please feel free to call any board member with questions or suggestions.

Many thanks to John Kilroy, Sigrin Newell, Christine Gervasi, Chuck Ver Straeten and Bert Schou for stories and photos, and Rodger Fink, webmaster.



Friends of Thacher Park Member Form

Member benefits: Newsletter, Scheduled Events Calendar & 10% Discount at the Nature Center Gift Shop. Renewal date follows name on address label.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

I'd like to become a member of the Friends of Thacher Park. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

I am renewing my membership. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.

- | | | |
|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Donation \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (62) \$5 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student \$5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor \$100 | |

Please make checks payable to the Friends of Thacher Park and send to Bonnie Schaller, 6324 Hawes Rd, Altamont, NY 12009. For more info: bonsgreta@yahoo.co.

Toyota Grant Aids Board Planning

One year ago, the Friends received a \$5,000 grant from the Every Day Capacity Building project, which is funded by Toyota. Through work with consultant, Elissa Kane, we developed a mission statement and a strategic calendar which describes actions to implement our goals on a monthly basis.

Mission statement: The Friends of Thacher Park support and advocate for the parks through volunteerism, education and environmental stewardship.

Elissa facilitated small group conversations in which board members decided to focus on three areas. We will:

- Increase visibility of the Parks and the Friends through publicity, advocacy, and an enhanced website.
- Increase the number of school visits though a campaign to raise money for more school bus visits.
- Improve governance of the Friends board using the strategic calendar to guide our actions.

As we worked on the strategic plan, board members also became aware of many Park activities that we will continue to help with. The salamander rescue, Fall Fest, I Love My Park Day, Trails Day, and next year's Centennial Celebration all are highlights on our calendar.

We are grateful to the Toyota corporation for making it possible for Board Member to gain new perspectives on what we have accomplished and to plan our direction for the next five years.

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Public Lands Every Day
A National Environmental Education Foundation Program

Friends of Thacher Park
c/o Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center
87 Nature Center Way
Voorheesville, New York 12186-2601

11/13 Friends Annual Meeting
“The Ancient Forest of Gilboa” with Dr. William Stein
7:00 pm at Thacher Nature Center

Fall Fest 2013

September 28 turned out to be a perfect day for the Fall Festival at Thacher State Park this year: warm, sunny and beautiful. The park got to show off its gorgeous fall foliage and plenty of visitors took advantage of the beautiful day to stop by and enjoy the festivities.

You could learn about birds of prey, enjoy live music with the Tune folk (and even put music requests in), go on storytelling and history laden hayrides with Claire Nolan or Tim Albright, try your hand at skillet tossing or the two person saw, or take a spin on the cider cycle. A variety of local vendors had homemade arts, crafts and produce for sale. A new attraction this year was archery, run by volunteers from the Westerlo Basic Valley Fish and Game Club, which attracted the young in age as well as the young in heart.

My personal favorite was the kids' craft tent. Here, kids could get their faces painted or make their own crafts. A big hit this year and a new addition was the festive harvest hat making table: rather than harvest hats, the young crafters created the most beautiful princess hats, lavishly and skillfully decorated with buttons, trailing ribbons, flowing tufts of sheer fabric, veils and



sparkles. The more adventurous of the budding fashion designers went for brown paper bags and turned those into quite amazing pieces of fashion accessories. Another craft was making old-fashioned dolls out of corn-husks, thread and fabric.

It is always a pleasure to see how much joy the kids get out of this simple craft; some kids stay for half an hour or more to get just the right face and the right dress on their doll. Some have come back to this table every year and must have quite an extensive family of dolls at home by now. It is always a pleasure to see familiar faces among the young visitors. And then there are the new visitors, some still a little too small to tie the threads themselves and Mom or Dad have to help with the dresses, but I hope they will be back next year and maybe start a collection of their own of corn husk dolls. –Christine Gervasi – volunteer doll maker