



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
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The Undiscovered Country

I have lived in Albany the better part of 30 years and have sporadically taken the drive up to Thacher Park to hike, mountain bike or cross country. Each time I go I think to myself that the park is such an amazing place, and a great resource. But the thought comes and it goes and it might be another six months or a year until I find myself there again.

Not so this past month. I found myself there three times within three weeks and each time will stand out in my mind for years to come...

Three weeks ago I took my ecology class on a nature walk in Thacher Park. Of the 12 students in my course, only three had ever been there. Two of my students had never been on a hike. We went to Hop Field and walked the trail for a few miles. The students lifted rocks and logs and found red efts. Even for someone like me who has always loved to hike, the sight of a red eft in the fall is always amazing. And while all of my students are biology students, most are aiming for medical school and so the world outside has never been as important as the grade on the test. I think this walk changed things for them. The silence of the trail, the call of the birds, the tinkling of the stream. That day the leaves were just starting to change and the sun glinted on the leaves making them sparkle. On the way back to campus we stopped at the overlook and they all were dazzled by the sight of Albany in the distance. Since that walk, every week they beg for another field trip back there. While I am not sure that they learned much ecology, they at least have an appreciation for the forest.

Fast forward one week...I was home on a Saturday staring at a houseful of teenagers and dirty dishes when I suddenly had the urge to get outside and away from the day to day tedium. With Thacher Park so recently on my mind, I thought that was the place to be. I called my friend and we decided to take our two aging dogs on a walk in Thacher. That is one of the

wonderful things about Thacher park. It is only a 25 minute drive from the center of Albany, but it is another world once you are there. On this particular Saturday, the leaves were in full peak and again I was struck by the way the sun illuminated the colors so as to make them practically glow. We walked the dogs for a few hours, mainly in silence, both of us enjoying peace of the woods and the joy of watching happy dogs walking in a forest. All four of us, humans and dogs were pleasantly tired and rejuvenated after that walk. That walk will stay with me because it was the last walk that my friend's dog, a quirky, sweet, beagle-basset mix will ever take. Within the week he had to put down due to complications from an undiagnosed tumor. My friend, while heartbroken over the loss, is happy that on his last weekend he was able to be outside doing what he loved best.

Finally, on the last weekend before Halloween I participated in the Hairy Gorilla/Squirrely Six trail race put on by the Albany Running Exchange (ARE). This trail race is put on by the ARE every year, but it had been years since I participated. This race has to be one of the best Halloween trail races in the country. Volunteers dress as giant squirrels and gorillas, others hide behind trees and bushes and jump out at you as



The author (right) and her friend at Thacher Park

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you run, blaring their chainsaws. As you cross the finish you dodge a barrage of bananas being hurled at you by the volunteers in the gorilla suits. Most participants of the race come fully suited in costume garb, although we just came wearing our devil horns. The night before the race ARE volunteers spend hours placing gravestones and skeletons along the race course so you always have something to look out for or avoid as you are running. This year there was a ton of rain the day before so the trails were muddy and hard to negotiate, but the day was that perfect post rain, hint of sun autumn day that made the day magical. The fog was lifting from the valley, and along the course you could stop at the ridge and see the trees glinting in the sunlight while the mist lay below. Everyone stopped to take pictures and just to look. You couldn't run fast through that mud, so why not stop and admire the beauty. Again I came away from Thacher with a sense of peace and a feeling that this park is mine and I can come here anytime I need to. I won't be letting another six months go by for my next visit.

- by Pauline Carrico

Stickers on your socks

People come to Thacher Park to see dramatic things; visitors enjoy the escarpment, hawks, yellow spotted salamanders, and wildflowers. In the fall, while hiking in the park, you will encounter something more annoying than dramatic. The hundreds of seeds stuck on your socks and pant legs are called Beggar Ticks. Although tick is in the name and they do look rather like ticks, you needn't worry that they carry Lyme disease. The name is based on resemblance only.

Thoreau had a much more dramatic description of these seeds. "It is as if you had unconsciously made your way through the ranks of some countless but invisible Lilliputian army, which in their anger had discharged all their arrows and darts at you, though none of them reached higher than your legs."

The Latin name of this plant also focuses on the seed. Bidens, meaning two-toothed describes the two prongs that arise from each of the small seeds, ready to grab any passing animal. The ripe seed head is almost globular, with all of the hooked seeds sticking out in a sphere, ready to hitch a ride on you or any passing animal with maximum efficiency.

The leaves of the plant are eaten by the cottontail rabbit and caterpillars such as the Painted Lady. The seeds are eaten by small rodents and many birds, including the Bobwhite and the Purple Finch.

In October and November, Bidens leaves turn a lovely coppery color. Except for the seeds, however, they remain inconspicuous. They are a reminder that all parts of the ecosystem have value, from the dramatic to the scarcely noticeable.

- by Sigrin T. Newell



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Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

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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 Pauline Carrico, Sigrin Newell, April Thibaudeau, Robert Lynk, Dan Driscoll and Nancy Engel for their contributions to this newsletter.

Want to contribute? Please email me at cgervasi@albany.edu
Christine Gervasi—Editor



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 _____

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- I'd like to become a member of the Friends of Thacher Park. Enclosed is my check for \$ _____.
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Please make checks payable to the **Friends of Thacher Park** and send to Bonnie Schaller, 6324 Hawes Rd, Altamont, NY 12009. For more info: bschaller@nycap.rr.com

HOLIDAY WREATH-MAKING WORKSHOP

AT THACHER NATURE CENTER

Saturday, November 28, 2015, 10 am - 1 pm.

Inclement weather date: Sunday, November 29.
 Come and create a beautiful 24" wreath from freshly cut balsam, pine cones and ribbon. Bring ornaments or special touches to make your wreath an individual holiday masterpiece. Participants should bring a pair of garden sheers for cutting greenery. Limited pairs of garden sheers will be available for use if needed. The workshop is appropriate for ages 14 and older. Fee for the workshop is \$18 per wreath. Pre-registration is required as this class fills up quickly. Please call the John Boyd Thacher Park at 518-872-1237



Disc Golf is at Thacher Park!

If you noticed metal baskets randomly placed around Pear Orchard don't be confused, they belong to the new disc golf course at Thacher Park. Disc Golf, also called Frisbee Golf, is a sport where a specialized Frisbee is thrown from a tee area to a metal basket a few hundred yards away. The sport was developed in the 1970's and is similar to golf in which the object of the game is to complete each hole with the least amount of strokes. Players' progress down the fairway making consecutive throws with their discs from where it previously landed until they "putt" it into the basket and the hole is complete. Although this may sound easy, there are usually many obstacles along the way that a player must avoid including trees, shrubs, and sharp turns.

This game is made for people of all ages and abilities and is a very inexpensive sport. The course consists of 9 holes, each at par 3, and starts at the back of the old swimming pool parking lot. Discs usually cost \$10 and range in weight and purpose from distance drivers, mid-distance, and putters. We will be selling and renting discs from the park office so you can get a feel for the different discs and the sport before you purchase your own. Stop into the park office to pick up a map and score card and start playing!

- by April Thibaudeau

Save the dates!

Annual Holiday Craft Bazaar

at Thacher Nature Center

Saturday, December 5, 10 am — 4 pm

Sunday, December 6, 10 am — 2 pm



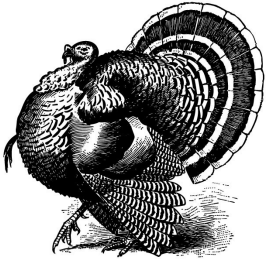
Annual Membership Meeting, November 11 at 6:30pm at Thacher Nature Center

Come join us! A short business meeting at 6:30pm will be followed by a talk at 7:00pm by

Dan Driscoll: "History of Knox School #5"

Description: The Helderberg Kiwanis restored the one room schoolhouse (joint Knox/New Scotland school district) on the grounds of the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center. The talk includes information about the restoration, interviews with former students, and the records of school board meetings from 1824 – 1905.

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



Next: **Wednesday, November 11, 2015**
Annual Membership Meeting
6:30 pm at Thacher Nature Center

PAINTING OF THACHER PARK

The September-October issue of the *Friends of Thacher Park* newsletter included a picture of my Thacher Park painting. Dan Driscoll asked, "Where do you think it was painted?" Dan could not answer his own question, so he asked me.

Anyone who came up with the correct response is very observant. Answering Dan's question required two trips to the park and time in my archives.

The lower two-thirds of the painting (the rock outcrop) was from the Glen Doone picnic area. The upper third was from the Cliff Edge Overlook area. I used my "artist's license." I wanted to include the towers of the Empire State Plaza in the aerial perspective.

Between 2002 and 2008, I painted many views of Thacher Park. The painting Dan gave to the Friends of Thacher Park is a giclee reproduction of my last Thacher Park painting. The reproduction has been very popular. It's time for me to visit the park and Nature Center and paint another vista.

- by Bob Lynk



Painting of Thacher Park by Robert E. Lynk



Photograph of the Glen Doone area (Dan Driscoll)