



Friends

of Thacher and Thompsons Lake State Parks

Emma T Thacher Nature Center, 87 Nature Center Way, Voorheesville, NY 12186

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Friends website: www.friendsofthacherpark.org

A New Piece of Thacher Park History, Circa 16,000 Years Ago?

By Dr. Chuck Ver Straeten, New York State Museum/Geological Survey

Hiking along the top of the “Indian Ladder” cliffs in the newer, northwest parts of Thacher Park, I’ve noticed a few gaps in the cliff. Areas a couple tens to hundreds of feet across, eroded back from the cliff, where deer, porcupines, humans and others can walk up or down slope where the cliff once stood tall. They are odd ravines - no water runs through them currently, to erode them out. And they’re not like the streams active along the Park’s cliffs today, which end in high waterfalls at the cliff. Why are they so different, and how did they form? Good mysteries to a geologist, like myself.

Last fall, 35 of us from 7 to 75 years of age traipsed atop the escarpment there, on a public geology walk. As we hiked through the wider ravine (see arrow on images), a veteran of geology walks wondered if they could be “glacial meltwater spillways”. That is, channels cut by large glacial water flows as the last great continental glacier was melting back. What a striking speculation.

As we continued walking and checking out the geology along the cliffs, my mind considered the idea. Narrow to broad

ravines, cut through the cliff where there are no streams today. They are obviously old features. And the great relative width of the large one seemed to indicate it was eroded by large flows of water.

Thinking on the idea more, it seemed a plausible speculation. At some point around 16,000 years ago, the great continental glacier had largely melted off the top of the Helderberg escarpment, and higher lands to the south. Yet ice still filled the Mohawk and Hudson valleys, flowing southward from Canada through the Champlain Valley. For some time that ice was stacked up against the Thacher cliffs, and beyond the park to the west and south.

It appears plausible that these erosional ravines may have been eroded out by high volume water flows when glacial ice still filled the valley below up to about cliff level. Similar features are known from across New York. Water from the melting of remaining ice in the Hilltowns and higher elevations was dammed by ice in many areas, except in certain places where lower topography allowed the water to flow through. Great volumes of water, enough in the wider gully to make a river a couple hundred feet wide, flowed over the cliffs, and carved its way down through them over time. Eroding the wider odd gully, and the others nearby.

At present this is only a “hypothesis”, one possible explanation. We await further study of the features by glacial geologists.

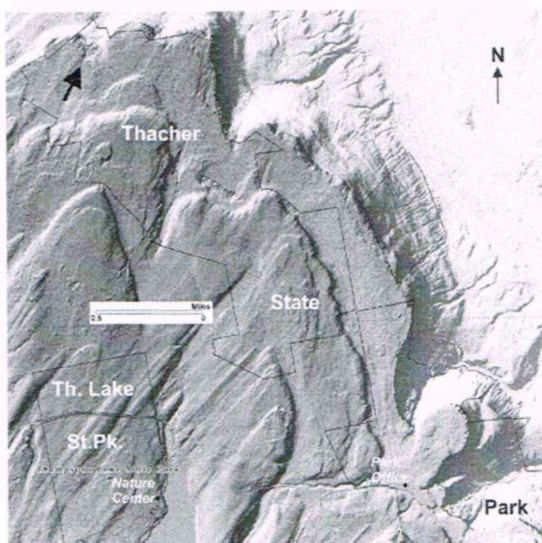


Figure 1: From a LIDAR image of the topography of most of Thacher State Park and surrounding area. Note where the park’s steep cliffs are eroded through, at black arrow in upper left. This is the “wider ravine”, thought to be eroded by large water flows from melting glacial ice.

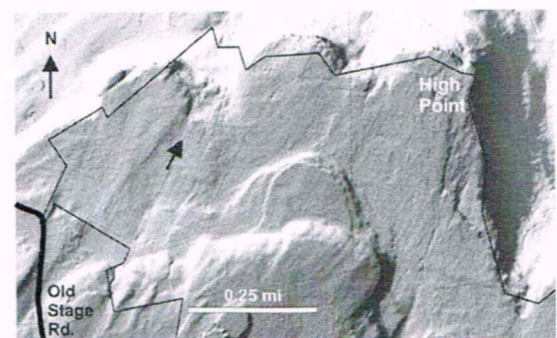


Figure 2: Close up of LIDAR image, in the northwest corner of Thacher State Park. Black arrow points in direction of water flow through the wider ravine, cut down through the cliff.

Updates

SAVE THE DATE!

On May 4th, Thacher Park will once again host an I Love My Park Day event.

I Love My Park Day is a volunteer event aimed at improving and enhancing New York's beautiful state parks and historic sites. The event is spearheaded by Parks and Trails New York (PTNY), a strong partner and advocacy organization dedicated to supporting our state parks. Last year, the inaugural I Love My Park Day was a huge success with over 35 parks and sites participating. At Thacher Park, approximately 100 volunteers gathered at our Paint Mine pavilion. The event was kicked off with some brief introductions and words of thanks and encouragement from invited guests and dignitaries including U.S. Congressman Paul Tonko and NYS Assemblyman Jack McEneny. After that, volunteers, including several members of the Governor's cabinet and staff broke off into several different groups to accomplish a great deal of work. Sections of the Indian Ladder Trail were stabilized, invasive plants were removed, perennial flowers were



planted, a bridge was constructed at Thompson's Lake campground and several other miscellaneous projects were completed. After that, the Friends of Thacher and Thompson's Lake State Parks hosted a barbeque lunch for all the volunteers and a great time was had by all.

This year, we will once again gather at the Paint Mine picnic shelter at 9:00 AM. The event will run from 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM. We have a number of projects slated included planting of trees and flowers, trail maintenance and installation of new signs at our park entrances. Once again, the event will conclude with a barbeque lunch hosted by the Friends of Thacher. We hope you will join us on May 4th and show your support for Thacher Park, Thompson's Lake Campground and the Thacher Nature Center.

To register as a volunteer for the 2013 I Love My Park Day, please go to the PTNY website address at <http://www.ptny.org/ilovemypark/>

– Chris Fallon

From Bonnie –

"I love My Parks Day" May 4, needs Gardeners! The planters will be getting their Spring Dress up, flower beds around other buildings will be spruced up and we need your help. If you have your own tools, that's great, but we will supply what's needed. Enjoy the day in our favorite Park!

If you are interested, please call **Bonnie Schaller 861-7452** or **Anita Wahlen 482-6619**



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 Chuck Ver Straeten, Nancy Engel, Laurel Tormey Cole, Bonnie Schaller, Joy Scism, Chris Fallon, and Rodger Fink, webmaster.

Want to contribute? Please email barbvoor1@verizon.net or call me at 765-4997.

— Barbara Flindt, 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 _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Cell _____ Email _____

I'd like to become a member of the Friends of Thacher/Thompsons Lake State Parks. Enclosed is my check for \$_____. I am renewing my membership, enclosed is my check for \$_____.

Individual \$20

Supporter \$40

Donation \$_____

Family \$25

Corporate \$100

Senior (62) \$5

Student \$5

Benefactor \$100

Please make checks payable to the **Friends of Thacher/Thompsons Lake State Parks** and send to Bonnie Schaller, 6324 Hawes Rd, Altamont, NY 12009. For more info: bonsgreta@yahoo.com

Look at the enclosed sheet for information about this year's Native Plant Sale:

Thacher Nature Center
2013 NATIVE PLANT SALE PRE-ORDER

“Hardy Natives”

Many native plants are Deer Resistant, Cold Tolerant, Drought Tolerant or Adaptable to a wide variety of Soils, ie: sand, loam, clay or perfect for that constantly wet area in your yard

April 7th deadline for orders

A Wild Neighbor: The Friends's trail camera photographed this Fisher in the woods near the campground trail January 15, 2013.



Friends of Thacher/Thompsons Lake State Parks
c/o Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center
87 Nature Center Way
Voorheesville, New York 12186-2601



Spring is
coming!

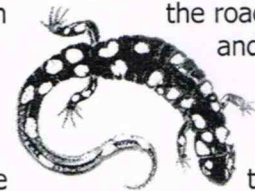
Next:

Wednesday, March 13, 2013
Friends Meeting
7pm Thacher Nature Center

Spring Salamanders!

As I write this, snow still covers the frozen ground and spring seems far off. But we know that in just a few weeks, some amazing amphibians will emerge from underground for their annual spring migration. On the first warm rainy nights of spring, salamanders migrate through woods to ponds where they perform a courtship dance, mate, and lay hundreds of eggs. For many salamanders that live in Thacher Park this journey involves risking their lives crossing Route 157. Since 1997 the Friends have been helping these little critters get safely across the road so they can complete their journey. I say little critters, but these seldom seen mole salamander species are surprisingly large, about 8 – 9 inches long! The spotted salamander is black with large bright yellow spots and the Jefferson salamander is dark grey with light blue flecks on its sides. Mole salamanders, as the name suggests, spend much of their life out of sight, under logs and underground in rock crevices and animal burrows, hunting for food - worms, arthropods, and insects. Spring migration provides a rare opportunity to see these amazing creatures moving around in plain view.

It is a special group of volunteers who are willing – and even excited – to head up to the park on a chilly rainy night and walk up and down the road moving salamanders to safety. The conditions are challenging, but the timing is even more challenging. We watch the forecast for a period of rain that extends into the night, with temperatures that stay well above freezing, about 40 degrees. If it stops raining, or the temperature drops, or the wind picks up, the salamanders will not move. But when conditions are right, it is fascinating to witness, not only the salamanders as they move out of the woods and onto the road, but also the volunteers. Adults and children alike walk up and down the road in the rain, shining flashlights and scurrying to pick up the slow moving salamanders and carry them to safety. It is truly inspiring. If you would like to join in the effort to help the salamanders cross the road, call the Nature Center and sign up on our call list. Then, watch the forecast for those salamander rains!



– Nancy Engel