



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
March - April 2015 • Vol. 19 No. 2

Winter is for the Birds!

As I write this, the wind is howling outside and the latest cold front, the Siberian Express, is moving in for another deep freeze. But, let us divert ourselves with some bird talk . . .

This winter Thacher Park has been involved in a survey of wintering golden eagles. In New York, golden eagles are listed as endangered and rarely seen. The eastern North American population breeds in Canada and a small part of this population winters in New York. Camera traps are being used by researchers to learn more about these golden eagles. Our local Audubon chapter requested permission to set up and monitor a baited camera trap in Thacher Park. We are happy to support the project and got permission to also set up one of the Friends' trail cameras at the site. Audubon volunteer Angelika Beckmann is managing our site, replenishing the "bait" (deer carcasses supplied by DOT), and submitting photos to the research group. An animal carcass attracts scavengers, including ravens, which are common in the Helderbergs, and the noisy ravens attract hawks and eagles to the feast. We have not yet caught a golden eagle on camera, but there have been lots of ravens and several red-tailed hawks feeding on the carcass. Unfortunately there have been far fewer sightings of golden eagles this winter, according to the head researcher, apparently due to the extreme cold. (Even the birds are fed up.)

Surprisingly, however, our local bald eagle has been seen regularly near Thompson's Lake this winter. Commonly bald eagles move down along the Hudson in winter, where they can still find some open water for fishing. On a recent

train ride to NYC, I counted at least 10 adult bald eagles along the partially frozen river searching for prey. While we've seen bald eagles on the lake regularly in the summer for quite a few years, this is the first time we've had sightings all through the winter months. (Now why haven't those ravens lured that eagle up to our trail cameras?) We do know at least one source of food, as one cold morning I witnessed the eagle swooping down to grab a fish off the frozen lake, placed there by ice fishermen. That was an easy meal.

We've also been surprised by the sight of a song sparrow and a small flock of starlings at the feeder in early February. It really has been a crazy winter - "for the birds", I'm sure you agree. Ah, but very soon it will be March and the red-winged blackbirds will come back to announce the coming of spring!! I will hold that thought as I listen to the bitter winds blowing outside.

- by Nancy Engel



Three red-tailed hawks are fighting over a deer carcass while two ravens are looking on.

Updates

Dear Friends of Thacher Park:

It is with mixed feelings that I am moving on from my position as Park Manager at Thacher State Park. Although I am not leaving the State Parks agency, I am taking advantage of an opportunity to further my career and accept a position with our snowmobile unit in Albany. It has been a wonderful 15 years at Thacher and I have been very fortunate to serve in a position where the nature and beauty of Thacher Park and the Helderberg Escarpment provided the backdrop for my work setting. I have had the privilege of working with a great staff, meeting so many terrific people and forming a lot of lasting friendships. Finally, I am proud to say that I was part of a bold new master plan, participated in Thacher's Centennial Celebration and witnessed the recent re-birth of the park.

One of the most rewarding part of my job was working with the Friends of Thacher Park; what a terrific organization! The dedication of the Friends members and your passion and love for the park are truly inspiring. Never was that more evident than when the State faced a fiscal crisis and the threat of closing Thacher Park actually became real. The Friends were front and center in mobilizing support against this short-sighted idea and letting our public officials and representatives know it. Now, thanks in large part to that effort, the closing scenario is a distant memory and we have a new master plan which will guide Thacher Park into the future. Many new things are happening and will happen at the park. Soon we will have a beautiful new visitor center to welcome and orient visitors and tell the story of the history and geology of Thacher Park. The visitor center will compliment the best Nature Center in the region.

As I say goodbye, I want to thank all of you for your support, friendship and encouragement along the way. And yes, I will miss the great barbeque cookouts that the Friends have always provided at our volunteer events. With the many new enhancements coming to Thacher, I hope the Friends of Thacher Park will continue to be a strong voice for the park and a pillar of support.

I won't be a complete stranger and hope to see some of you at Thacher Park events in the future.

Farewell for now!

- Chris Fallon



Saturday, May 2, 9am – 1pm:

I Love My Park Day at Thacher Park

This is the day to "Show your Love" for Thacher Park by helping out on park improvement projects. Meet at 9:00am at the Pear Orchard Pavilion to organize. Projects include painting, planting, clearing winter debris and trail-work. There will be projects for all ages and abilities, so bring the family. Also bring gloves. At 12:30 the Friends of Thacher Park will provide a BBQ lunch for all volunteers. This event is co-sponsored by Parks and Trails New York; please register online at www.ptny.org, where you will find a link for John Boyd Thacher State Park with more detailed descriptions of the various projects. Please contact the park at 518-872-1237 with any questions.

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees

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Treasurer:	Betsey Miller	869-0739
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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 Nancy Engel, Chris Fallon, Betsey Miller, Laurel Tormey-Cole, Joy Scism and Bonnie Schaller for their contributions to this newsletter, and to Rodger Fink, webmaster.

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 _____

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 \$ _____.
- 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 Park** and send to Bonnie Schaller, 6324 Hawes Rd, Altamont, NY 12009. For more info: bschaller@nycap.rr.com

School Bus Drive 2015



We want to thank everyone who has contributed to the "School Bus Fund Drive" in 2015, to bring children to Thacher

Park and the Thacher Nature Center. As of mid-February we have raised almost \$3,000. Our goal is to raise \$3,500, so if you have not had a chance to donate yet please consider making a donation. Each \$5 donation allows an additional student to come to the park and experience nature. See the form on the last page for information on how to donate.

Using the funds we raised last year, 20 buses and 720 kids visited the park. For many children this is the first experience in the woods. Some children express fear and reluctance to enter the woods. But once they venture in, with the help of the Nature Center staff and interns, they quickly lose their fear and become curious about their surroundings. One highlight last year was a chance to view a mother turkey and her chicks in a nest in the woods, some-

thing many of us who regularly visit the woods have never had a chance to see. In addition, some kids got the opportunity to see the bald eagle that has been sighted at Thompson's Lake for the past few years.

Within the Nature Center, some children express strong dislike for bees, and they have little or no interest in viewing the hive. But as the instructors begin to explain what is going on in the hive, they move a bit closer and often end up being drawn in and asking questions about the hive. All of these experiences help to change their initial fear of nature to a curiosity we hope will grow with them throughout their lives. We hope for some of the children this is the beginning of a lifelong connection with nature. For others it helps strengthen a connection they have already begun.

For those of you who have already contributed, thank you for your support. For everyone else, please consider taking the time to make a contribution using the form on the last page of this newsletter. All of our children can grow from more exposure to nature. Please help make this possible.

-by Betsey Miller

Friends Board Meeting Dates for 2015!

The Friends meet every second Wednesday of every second month at 7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center. Come join us! This year's meetings will take place on

March 11, May 13, July 8, September 9 and November 11 (Annual meeting)

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

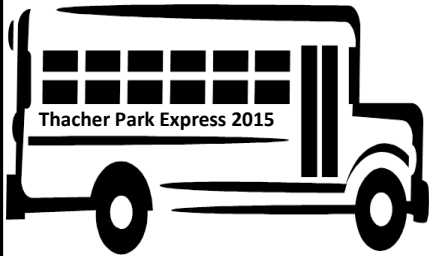


Wednesday, March 11, 2015

Next:

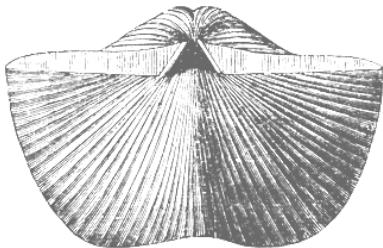
Board Meeting

7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center

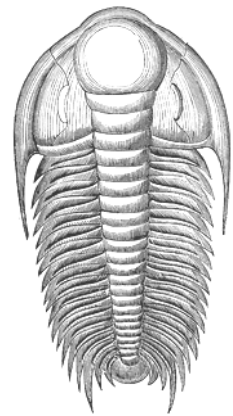


School Bus Fund Drive 2015

Thacher State Park celebrated its 100th Anniversary this past September. After 100 years of showing people the wonders of nature, Thacher's future rests in the hands of an enlightened public. Would you consider a \$5 donation to put a child on a bus to learn of the natural world and area history?



- | | | |
|-------|-------|--------------|
| \$5 | _____ | One Child |
| \$10 | _____ | Two Children |
| \$50 | _____ | Ten Children |
| \$250 | _____ | Fills a Bus |
| | _____ | Other |



Please make checks payable to:

Friends of Thacher State Park

87 Nature Center Way, Voorheesville, NY 12186

Friends of Thacher Park is a 501(c)3 not for profit organization - all donations are tax deductible. All monies collected go to the drive - there are no administrative costs.

As always, you can find a color version of the newsletter at www.friendsofthacherpark.org/pages/news.html