



Friends

of Thacher and Thompsons Lake State Parks

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

September-October 2013 • Vol.17 No. 5

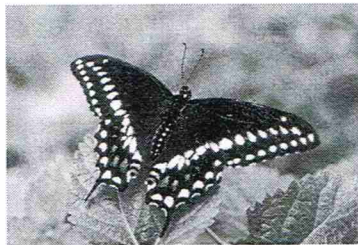
Friends website: www.friendsofthacherpark.org

Alive at the Nature Center!

At the Nature Center we find that nothing captures the interest of visitors like live animals. Our honeybee observation hive is a big attraction and everyone loves our little Musk turtle. Every spring and summer we supplement our exhibits with temporary displays of live local critters. It begins when the salamanders migrate in late March/early April. We collect 2 or 3 adults during the migration and later collect an egg mass, so visitors can observe the development of salamander larva. These large mole salamanders are rarely seen, so visitors are amazed at the sight of them. We also keep pond life displays going through early summer, with lots of fascinating macro invertebrates like dragonfly larva and water scorpions. One of our young visitors this spring had an outburst of pure delight when she observed and identified tiny phantom midge larvae in the pond water. She enthusiastically shared her discovery with every one of her classmates - those moments truly inspire us!

We also like to have a Garter snake on display in the summer and encourage them to shed their skin for some extra drama. Not everyone appreciates snakes, but who doesn't love those cute little Red-spotted newts? Frogs, toads, and newts are short term visitors, happy to go free after a day or two. This summer we placed a rock covered with zebra mussels in a tank with a large crayfish. Visitors see and learn about this invasive mussel species that is now living in Thompson's Lake, filtering out the microscopic food that other aquatic animals depend on. It is a depressing story to tell, but it's important for people to be aware of these invasive species and to avoid transporting them elsewhere. The crayfish is interesting to observe, and actually enjoys snacking on the zebra mussels! It's good to find a little justice and hold some hope that nature can find a balance.

During the summer we like to raise butterfly larva and invite visitors to release the adults when they emerge. It's something special for the kids who come to visit early in the morning, when we usually find our



newly emerged adults. The most reliable source for caterpillars seems to be the volunteer dill plants that come up in my garden each spring. Again this year I found at least a dozen Black Swallowtail larvae sprinkled through the young dill plants. We raised 4

of the caterpillars, watching with visitors as they ate, grew, and molted through the five stages called instars. They completed their chrysalids and we watched and waited for the beautiful Black Swallowtail butterflies to emerge. However, what emerged from 2 of the chrysalids were bright orange wasps! They were *Trogus Ichneumon* wasps, a species of wasp that parasitizes the larvae of swallowtail butterflies. It's a rather disturbing tale. The female wasp inserts her ovipositor into the caterpillar and lays an egg. For good measure she adds a dose of a virus that tells the caterpillar's immune system to ignore this intrusion. The butterfly larva continues to develop, with the wasp larva feeding on it inside. When the caterpillar enters its chrysalis stage, the wasp larva devours it completely and enters its own pupal stage inside the chrysalis. Two weeks later an orange wasp emerges, instead of the anticipated butterfly. These kind of parasitic relationships are common in the natural world, and they are fascinating, it is true. But that doesn't prevent us from feeling somewhat horrified by the sad fate of our caterpillars. We raised several more swallowtail larvae and are watching the chrysalids and waiting, hoping to release a few lovely Black Swallowtails.



-Nancy Engel

Updates

PARK NEWS *Chris Fallon*

Master Plan Public Hearing

The public hearing for comments on the final draft Master Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for Thacher and Thompson's Lake State Park's was held on August 1st at the New Scotland Town Hall. We had a good turnout with approximately 65 people showing up to attend the hearing. About 20 people were officially recorded providing their verbal comments. Many more promised to submit written comments. Overall, there was very positive feedback for the plan. Several individuals and organizations voiced their concerns on issues ranging from cave access and rock climbing to mountain biking and beach expansion. The next part of the process is that responses will be drafted to all comments. Those responses may or may not result in some modification to the plan. After that, the plan will be submitted for final adoption by the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Thanks to all of you who provided valuable input and participated in this process.

Work Scheduled For Indian Ladder Trail

Some much needed repair work to the steps heading down the Indian Ladder Trail will get underway early this fall. The work will focus on the stone steps on the initial approaches to either side of the trail; not on the steel staircases. We are hopeful that some additional funding can be secured at some point in the future that will focus more work on the actual trail.

****Board Meeting Dates 2013****

Sept 11, **Annual Meeting:** November 13

2014: First meeting of the year will be January 8



FALL FESTIVAL

THACHER PARK'S PEAR ORCHARD PICNIC AREA

SEPTEMBER 28, 10 – 4

History Hayrides on the Helderberg Express!

Live Birds of Prey!

Pioneer Games and Activities!

Pony Rides!

Story Telling! Live Music! Fresh Produce!

Skillet and Horseshoe Toss Contests!

Chainsaw Carving Demos! *Scavenger Hunt!*

Face Painting! Hot Cider and Donuts!

Harvest & Halloween Crafts for kids **AND adults!**

Vendors! **AND MORE!!!**

Delicious food provided by

Thompson's Lake Reformed Church!

\$6.00 parking fee per car



Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees

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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 for story & photos, Bonnie Schaller, Chris Fallon, Joy Scism, and Rodger Fink, webmaster.

I have enjoyed putting these newsletters together for the last 10 or so years. Look for a fresh approach for the November-December issue. See you at Fall Festival!

— *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
- Family \$25
- Student \$5
- Supporter \$40
- Corporate \$100
- Benefactor \$100
- Donation \$_____
- Senior (62) \$5

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



"The Thacher Garden Gang
is looking for a few good flower people. If you are interested in wearing our signature YELLOW T-shirt and getting your hands dirty, just Call Anita (482-6619) or Bonnie (861-7452)."

Zip-Line Playground Open

The much anticipated zip line playground has opened in the Horseshoe II picnic area. The playground features 2 80" long zip lines and a series of climbing boulders. This is a kids playground designed for ages 5-12. It has opened to rave reviews and the kids have been having a blast on it.

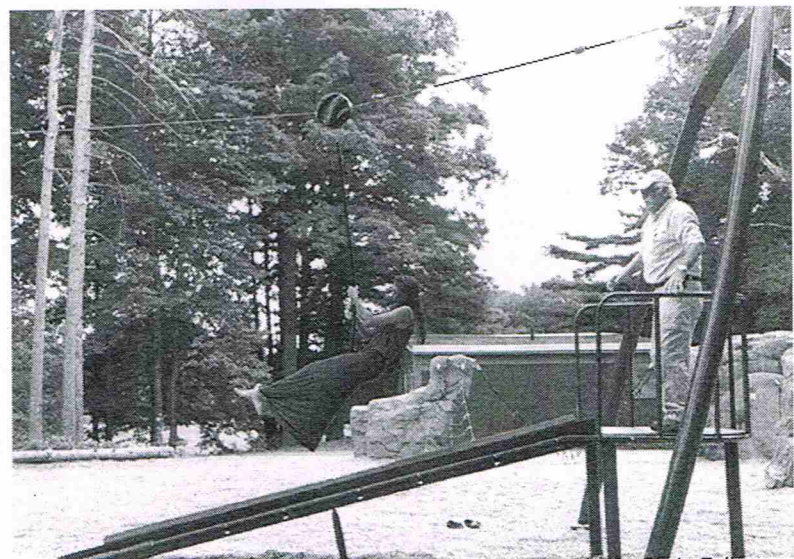


photo Chris Fallon

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



Next:

Wednesday September 11, 2013
Friends Meeting
7pm Thacher Nature Center

12th Annual HAWK Watch
THACHER PARK OVERLOOK

Saturday, September 14, 10 am – 4 pm

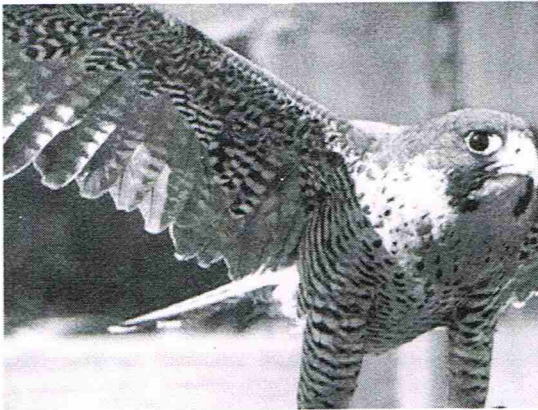


Photo by Richard Cohn

Bring your binoculars and view and identify multitudes of Migrating Raptors with Will Aubrey.

Join wildlife rehabilitator Richele Ford and her birds of prey. See raptors up close & learn about how they live!

Learn about monarch butterflies!

Take your picture in the Butterfly tent!

Face Painting!

Raptor Silhouette Identification!

How do YOU Measure Up? What's your wingspan?

Refreshments and food available!

• • • **2014** • • • **Save the Date!**

Please save the date for September 13, 2014 for a remarkable milestone in Albany County and NYS history. John Boyd Thacher State Park, encompassing 2400 acres atop the Helderberg escarpment, will celebrate its 100th anniversary.

The New York State Department of Parks and Recreation and the Friends of Thacher Park will commemorate this event on September 13, 2014 with a Centennial Celebration.

Please save the date and help us celebrate 100 years of history, preservation and the wonder of New York State's natural beauty.