



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
September—October 2015 • Vol. 19 No. 5

Half-wing Vampires on the Lake

Walk down the trail from the Nature Center to Thompson's Lake. There you will find two fascinating members of the True Bug (Hemiptera) family. The Latin name, meaning half-wing comes from the fore-wings which are hardened at the base and membranous near the tips. All members of this family have sucking mouthparts. They stab their prey, then inject digestive fluid which kills the prey and dissolves its innards. Then they suck the critter dry and cast away the remaining exoskeleton.



By Schnobby (Own work) [CC BY-SA 3.0], via Wikimedia Commons

Water striders are highly visible as they skate across the surface of the water on long hair-thin legs. They are supported by the surface tension of the water, each leg making a slight indentation. The tips of the legs are lined with tiny hairs that repel the water. If a strider's feet get wet, the bug climbs out onto a plant and clings there until the feet are dry. Then it can go back onto the water.

All insects have six legs, but it looks as if a water strider has only four. The front legs are short and drawn up under the head. These feet are powerful for capturing and holding prey, caught when the strider pounces. The strider locates prey with sensory organs on its legs which

respond to ripples made by the prey. Once caught, the prey is soon nothing but an empty shell.



By E. van Herk [CC-BY-SA-3.0], via Wikimedia Commons

The second vampire at Thompson's Lake is the backswimmer. This is an oval bug about half an inch long with only one pair of visible legs. It looks like a miniature rowboat, except that it hangs upside down with just the tip of its abdomen breaking the water and the rest of the body hanging at a 45 degree angle beneath the surface of the water. The legs look like oars and propel the bug forward with sharp jerks. There are rows of hairs on its belly which trap air when it goes down into the water in search of prey to jab and suck. Adult backswimmers can remain under the water for several hours. This bug is a scuba diving vampire.

While observing, be cautious. People who have caught these bugs with bare hands report that the sting is painful and the effects of the digestive fluids cause continuing pain for hours. Observe them from afar.

- by *Sigrin Newell*



Garden Gang 2015 Projects



The Garden Gang's 2015 plans for the Park Office resulted in our " I Love My Park Day" volunteers outdoing themselves. A small mountain of pine needles, branches and weeds were raked out from around the office, exposing the Rhododendrons , Yews and other plants. A start on removal of invasive plants left space for some of our native plants but as any farmer or gardener knows, getting rid of weeds is an ongoing chore. We'll keep at it! We began taming the Rhodies and Yews by selective pruning and will keep at this over the next year or so.

Thanks to the care given by Joy and Michelle during 2014, the new shrubs around the flagpole not only survived the winter, but thrived. A rescue of our Shadbush planted at the Indian Ladder restroom was just in time, as the new construction for the Visitor Center was in full swing. The shrub's permanent home is near the office and flagpole.

This year's very dry May impacted many of the already winter stressed flowers. Some flower planters saw few Coneflowers and a diminished show of what we thought was indestructible - Bee Balm. Other planters are doing just fine with the Black Eyed Susans we put in filling them with bright color. Thank goodness for the tough Irises and Daylilies, as they help fill out the planters.

Thanks to Park Manager Maureen Curry for her support and to Park Maintenance for watering the flowers.

- by *Bonnie Schaller*

Garden Gang members

Back: Leslie Hartnett, Jayne Maloney, Bonnie Schaller

Front: Susan Albright , Anita Wahlen

Not shown: Sue Fero, Cary Patak, Helena Lynch



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 Sigrin Newell, Bonnie Schaller, Laure-Jeanne Davignon, Dan Driscoll, Joy Scism 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 _____

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



Annual Fall Festival **Saturday, September 26!**

WE REALLY NEED VOLUNTEERS FOR THE FALL FESTIVAL. WE NEED FACE PAINTERS, PEOPLE TO RUN THE GAMES AND THE OLD FASHIONED ACTIVITIES, AND PEOPLE TO HELP SET UP THE DAY BEFORE AND CLEAN UP AFTER.

For more information please call the Park Office at 872-1237.

Did You Know?

Construction on Thacher Park's new Visitor Center is under way! You can see the building site, as well as the lovely view shed that has been opened up for Center visitors, near the Indian Ladder parking lot at the west end of the Park. At last report, construction is slated to wrap up within the year, for a summer 2016 open. Expect to hear in early Fall from the Friends with an update on progress, and special opportunities to participate in the Campaign for the Center.

- by Laure-Jeanne Davignon

Native Plants for Sale

As the heat begins to recede and the nights become cooler plants rejoice by sending their roots deeper into the soil as they prepare for winter. If you didn't get a chance to plant natives for pollinators and birds, autumn weather is a great opportunity to do so. Eastern Red Cedars provide food for birds as well as winter shelter. Mountain Mint is a great bee plant. Pollinators appreciate perennials such as asters, culver's root and obedient plant. Stop by the nature center to purchase small trees, shrubs and perennials for your Fall planting. And no native plant garden is complete without native and winter hardy cactus, which provides large gorgeous blossoms in summer as a bonus.

- by Laurel Tormey Cole



Annual Membership Meeting, November 11 at 6:30pm

at the Thacher Nature Center. Come join us!

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



Wednesday, September 9, 2015

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at the Thacher Nature Center

PAINTING OF THACHER PARK



At its Annual Meeting this past April, the Mohawk Hudson Land Conservancy raffled-off a painting of Thacher Park (actually a giclee reproduction of the painting). When I saw the painting I said to myself, “that belongs in the new Visitors Center.”

So I bought three chances. Of the hundreds of people at the Annual Meeting, by the grace of God, I won. I gave it to the Friends of Thacher Park at its next board meeting.

The painting was done by retired Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Robert E. Lynk of Delmar in April 2008. Dr. Lynk also donated the 25.5” x 21” framed giclee print which is currently hanging in the Emma Thacher Nature Center; it will remain there until the new Visitors Center is complete.

Curious about where the painting was done, I started exploring. It is clearly not the view from the main Overlook or from Indian Ladder Trail. My best guess is that it was done from the northwest corner of Horseshoe Lot. Where do you think it was painted? Check the next edition of the Friends of Thacher State Park Newsletter, maybe Dr. Lynk will tell us where he did his painting.

- by **Daniel A. Driscoll**