



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
July-August 2016 • Vol. 20 No. 4

The President's Corner

“Summer’s here and the time is right for dancing in the street” is a great line from Martha & the Vandella’s 1964 hit Dancing in the Street. The song has been covered by numerous artists since then and is one of the great anthems of the summer freedom many people feel this time of year. The music is catchy and the lyrics tell the entire world to just grab a partner, dance and don’t worry about anything else. It’s the joy of a youthful summer packed into 2 minutes and 45 seconds. Who couldn’t love that?

I love the imagery of this Motown staple but I’d like to offer an alternative to Martha’s shout out: summer’s here and the time is right for walking in the woods. As much as I love street fairs, festivals and parties, I’m often mentally drained by the time I get home. There’s an awful lot of stimulation at these events and when I arrive home afterwards, I prefer to sit quietly and read or (more likely) climb into bed. For many people, however, these events are restorative and make them feel energized.

When thinking about what to write today, I recalled an article in The Atlantic that I came across a few years ago. “How Nature Resets Our Minds and Bodies” was written by Adam Alter and appeared on March 29, 2013. In it, he relates studies of how well surgical patients recovered depending on the view outside their windows. Those who had a window facing a brick wall had slower recovery times than those who looked out on a stand of trees. There’s more than one study cited in the article and they all point to how being in nature restores our well-being. Children with ADHD are often easily distracted but when left to play outdoors they become relaxed and more focused. Children who grow up experiencing hardship are distressed and lack self-esteem except when they live in more natural environments. There are other studies cited by the author and I invite you to look it up online for more information.

The information here is probably nothing new to anyone reading this. You’re a member of the Friends and have a love of this great park. You know how you feel after hiking the trails here or anywhere else for that matter. The fact is that nature can help people cope with mental and emotional trials. Back in the dark days of early 2010 when Thacher faced imminent closure, I met an extraordinary young man. His name was Chris and he was an Iraq war veteran. During our time together, he told me about some of the hideous things that had happened while he was in combat and what he was going through as a result. He was suffering from PTSD. He was particularly concerned because after he returned home, Thacher was his salvation. He was at the park every day for months following his discharge and couldn’t imagine what would happen to him or others who needed to be there for similar reasons. I listened to him as he spoke with legislators and their staff that day. Anything I said paled in comparison.

If you’re feeling depressed, stressed or anxious about anything in your life, or if you have friends or loved ones in this situation, come up to the park. Surround yourself with the forest. Find a quiet spot and read that book that’s been waiting on your shelf for months. Listen to the birds. Bring your sketch pad and find that suitable subject you’ve been looking to draw. Or, maybe, just lay down in the grass for a while. Chances are that you’ll feel better leaving the park than when you came in. As Martha sang, “Calling out around the world...”

- by John Kilroy



Mountain Biking - Etiquette for All



On what was usually considered hiking/cross country ski trails, there has been a sharp increase in mountain bicycling and with this a need to highlight simple trail etiquette so all users may enjoy the wonders of John Boyd Thacher

Park. Simple courtesy can go a long way and help reduce the impact on the hiker's walk in the woods.

Similar to "Share-the-Road" with motorists, there are some simple rules to follow when sharing trails. The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation website adapted easy to follow "Rules of the Trail" from the International Mountain Bicycling Association (IMBA), some of which I have listed/modified below:

Ride Open Trails

- Respect trail closures (they are closed for a reason and help preserve the natural beauty and wildlife of our parks. Only ride on trails where bicycles are allowed.) Do not trespass on private land.

Leave No Trace

- Wet and muddy trails are more vulnerable to damage than dry ones. When the trail is soft, consider other riding options. (Thacher Park's soils are thin and easily eroded.)
- Stay on existing trails and do not create new ones. (Do not alter trails! This includes moving rocks/debris for crossing logs. Never create new trails!)

Control Your Bicycle

- Inattention for even a moment could put you and others at risk. (For hikers, an unexpected cyclist can be startling, especially on blind curves and hills.)
- Ride within your limits

Yield Appropriately

- Do your utmost to let your fellow trail users know you are coming – a friendly greeting or bell ding are good

methods. (Yelling "on your left" probably isn't the best option on wooded trails, slow down or in some situations, stop and let hikers pass.)

- Anticipate other trail users as you ride around corners.
- Bicyclists must yield to other non-motorized users. (With the advent of Fat Tire bikes, in winter this courtesy should also be given to cross country skiers/snowshoers. And wherever possible without widening a trail, stay to one side of ski tracks.)
- Bicyclists travelling downhill should yield to ones headed uphill.
- In general, strive to respect everyone you meet on the trail.

Never Scare Animals

- Animals are easily startled by an unannounced approach, a sudden movement or a loud noise.
- Give animals enough room and time to adjust to you.
- When passing horses, use special care and follow directions from the horseback riders (ask if uncertain).

Plan Ahead

- Know your equipment, your ability and the area in which you are riding and prepare accordingly.
- Strive to be self-sufficient:
 - Keep your equipment in good repair. (A simple rule to follow would be to do a quick check of tires, brakes and general operating condition of a bike).
 - Always wear a helmet and appropriate safety gear.

Prevent the Spread of Invasive Species

- Invasive species can hitch a ride from place to place not just on bodies of water, but can also be moved both on clothing and tire treads which can hold seeds in mud and debris. Check your bike and clothing for hitchhikers before arriving at the park.

- by Bert Schou

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 John Kilroy, Bert Schou, Katie Leung, Laure-Jeanne Davignon, Betsey Miller and Nancy Engel for their contributions to this newsletter.

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

Meet our Wild Neighbors

This spring Katie Leung, an intern at the Nature Center, deployed two wildlife cameras on a camera trap line off Beaver Dam Road for two weeks to find out who's living in the neighborhood. Jim Kisselback assisted with scouting out the best locations. Here is Katie's report:

The first camera was set up about 30 yards into the woods off the trail and the second was set up about 250 yards from the trail. Our goal was not only to snap some exciting images of wildlife, but to determine whether there would be more activity closer or farther from the trail. For both cameras, a skunk-smelling stink bait was smeared on visible logs, trees, dead branches, and rocks that were within the range of the motion sensors, potentially attracting mesocarnivores like coyotes, foxes, fishers, and perhaps even bobcats. (A mesocarnivore is an animal whose diet consists of 50–70% meat with the balance consisting of non-vertebrate foods which may include fungi, fruits, and other plant material.) The first camera captured a total of 39 images, only picking up several deer. The second camera had a much greater success, snapping a total of 745 images, including those of mesocarnivores! It was situated on the base of a tree 4 feet from a porcupine's ground den. Sure enough, porcupines were seen going in and out of the hole.



There was also a significant number of mesocarnivores that moseyed around the den. Most of them were raccoons, which took note of the camera. One of them was even curious enough to get up close and personal with the camera, showing off his beady eyes, black "mask", and whiskers.



An occasional fisher walked passed and also seemed to eye the camera, determining whether or not she should be wary of it.



A fox also came along to sniff the den, but quickly moved off after looking up at the camera.



As a surprising treat, a barred owl dove into a shot trying to catch some prey in the afternoon! We weren't sure if the owl was successful or not, but it is very uncommon for a nocturnal bird of prey to be hunting during the day.



From this camera line, we have concluded that there is more mesocarnivore and overall wildlife activity further into the woods than there is closer to the trail edge. We will continue deploying camera lines throughout different areas of the park to further garner photos of Thacher's wildlife and data of where the animals are mostly active.

- by Katie Leung

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



Wednesday, July 13, 2016

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Nature Center

Campaign for Thacher Park Center Over Halfway to Goal



**THACHER PARK CENTER
CAPITAL CAMPAIGN**

celebrating the past, building for the future

With a recent \$25,000 donation from community partners M&T Bank, the Campaign for the new Thacher Park Center is officially more than halfway to a \$1 million fundraising goal! A new mobile-friendly

Campaign website was also launched recently. You can visit the website: www.thacherparkcenter.org today to learn more about the Campaign and secure naming opportunities like bricks, trees and benches at the new Center.

- by Laure-Jeanne Davignon

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!



Once again the members and friends of Thacher Park have come through for the children of the capital district. Thanks to your support we raised \$5,040 for funds for buses to bring children

to Thacher Park; allowing us to bring up to 20 buses of children from schools that can not afford to pay for field trips for their children. On behalf of the Board of the Friends of Thacher we are grateful that our members and friends continue to support this important issue each year. Know that your support makes a real difference in children's lives.

- by Betsey Miller

Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2016

July 13, September 14, and November 9.

7:00 pm at Thacher Nature Center. Come join us!

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