



Friends of Thatcher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
September—October 2016 • Vol. 20 No. 5

In Memory of Dan Driscoll

To say that we lost a big part of the community when Dan passed away a few weeks ago would be an understatement. Dan was not loud or boisterous nor ever drew attention to himself, but Dan got things done. He joined the Friends board in 2007 and we have him to thank for many things. He offered me very good advice during the parks closure fiasco of 2010 when I was about to publicly fly off the handle. I'm glad I heeded him. Cooler heads always prevail. Dan was the driving force for revising our by-laws in 2014. He gladly took this task on and all of his recommended changes were unanimously approved by the board. His years of experience in the Kiwanis Club and other organizations gave him keen insight to this job. He "patched holes" in the existing by-laws making them a stronger document. Nascent Friends groups from other parks have asked to use our by-laws as a model for writing their own. It was

Dan's involvement with the Kiwanis that led to the renovation of Knox School #5 on Ketcham Rd. inside the park. The text on the historical marker outside the school was written by Dan. One of Dan's last projects was to have the

Friends commission work on "etching plates" to be placed at the new visitor center. These are square metal plates which will be placed on posts. Anyone can place a piece of paper over them and rub a crayon or pencil across it and be rewarded with an image of a feature of the park. These plates will be a permanent fixture in the park and part of Dan's legacy in the Helderbergs.



As part of the 'Knox Traditional Strings', Dan Driscoll entertained the audience at the 10th Anniversary of the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center in 2011 (photo by Bert Schou).

all knew that when he spoke up, it was something important. I will miss his quiet presence and sage advice at our meetings.

- by John Kilroy

Eagles on the Lake



Nature Center Director Nancy Engel reports that people have come into the center wide-eyed with excitement. They just watched a bald eagle splashing and bathing on Thompsons Lake*.

In the meantime, Park neighbors and staff at the Patroon Land Farm tell of seeing a Bald Eagle kill a Canada goose in a field. For about a quarter hour the Eagle tried to fly away with the carcass, but could only move it a few feet at a time. Later an immature eagle and the same or another adult were seen feeding on the

goose. In the end, the remains of the goose carcass were seen hanging from an apple tree on the other side of Ketcham Road.

It appears that there is a nest somewhere on private land near the lake. A pair of adults and two juvenile eagles have been seen around Thompson's Lake by lots of visitors this summer. There is a good trail from the Nature Center down to the Lake. Head down that way and look to the skies. Perhaps you'll be lucky and catch sight of one or more of our local Bald Eagles!

- by Sigrin Newell

* You can see amusing Eagle antics on YouTube by searching on "Bald Eagle bathing."

Photo By Tony Hisgett from Birmingham, UK (Bald Eagle Head 2 Uploaded by Magnus Manske) [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0/>)], via Wikimedia Commons

Update on the Thacher Visitor Center

The new Thacher Park Center is taking shape and excitement is building for this new park amenity. In addition to the on-site building progress, exhibits are being designed and fabricated to highlight Thacher's significant geological features, as well as its storied past and local cultural significance.

With all this progress underway, now is a good opportunity to remind the public of sponsorship opportunities available at the new center. The Campaign for Thacher Park Center is offering brick pavers, benches and tress for sponsorship.

By sponsoring a new bench, patio paver or tree, park supporters can celebrate generations of family memories, recognize a significant occasion, or honor loved ones while supporting the new Thacher Park Center. All sponsorship and donation opportunities are available through the park center campaign's website,

www.thacherparkcenter.org.

"Since its establishment in 1914, Thacher State Park has served as a place for outdoor recreation and a beloved, scenic escape for generations of the Capital Region community," said Laure-Jeanne Davignon, member of the Thacher Park Center Campaign Committee. "As one of the most cherished destinations in the area, Thacher Park has left an indelible mark on the community. We now invite the community to participate in helping us build the new Thacher Park Center, a year round gateway to the park that will serve as a guide for future generations."

Memorial brick pavers will be featured on the patio of the Thacher Park Center. Prominent placement along this central gathering place for family and friends will ensure that memorial brick pavers create a lasting legacy.

- Open Space Institute



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, Sigrin Newell, The Open Space Institute, Bonnie Schaller, Megan Mansfield, Bert Schou 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 \$ _____.

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Supporter \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> Donation \$ _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family \$25 | <input type="checkbox"/> Corporate \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Senior (62) \$5 |
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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

Thacher Park Garden Gang 2016 Project

Sometimes before and after pictures stretch the truth but these two pictures are spot on to show a clear side by side representation of this year's Garden Gang Project.

We decided we would overhaul The Thacher Park Overlook planter. After a meeting with Park

Manager Maureen Curry all the details were approved, we were ready to work. Bill VonAtzingen and staff pulled out the three tired yews, leaving the two azaleas to recover from damage done to them by the weird winter. We're hoping they will do better next spring.

On April 24 we got to work filling in the void with St. John's Wort (*Hypericum kalmianum*) donated by the Nature Center. Daffodils salvaged from two abandoned planters helped to add some early spring color.

May 7, I Love My Park Day, Sweet Alyssum purchased from Gades Farm was planted around the edge of the planter and stuffed into as many planters that we could.



Before March 17, 2016 (photo by Jim Schaller)



After June 24, 2016 (photo by Leslie Hartnett)

In mid-June, after our flip - flop late spring, Obedient Plant (*Physostegia virginiana*), Black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*) and Butterfly Milkweed (*Asclepias tuberosa*), native plants purchased from Keystone Wildflowers, filled in any leftover space in the Overlook and the other planters.

- by Bonnie Schaller

2016 Garden Gang Members: Anita Wahlen, Bonnie Schaller, Leslie Hartnett, Jayne Maloney, Sue Fero, Cary Patak, Susan Albright, Ann Hein, Helena Lynch, Julie Hall

Our thanks to Maureen Curry, Park Manager; Bill VonAtzingen and everyone who helped with digging and watering.

Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2016

September 14, and November 9.

7:00 pm at 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



Next:

Wednesday, September 14, 2016

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Nature Center

Hawk Watch at Thacher Overlook

Fall means migration for hawks and their allies. Thacher Park is a great spot to view migrating hawks, vultures, falcons and even butterflies! The steep, tall cliffs of the Helderberg escarpment provide warm updrafts of air that are perfect for catching a ride. Migratory birds use these warm drafts to soar and conserve energy on their journey south. And what's more, the cliff runs north-south, which aims the birds towards their destination. Hawk migrations take place from September into November, with different species migrating at different times. Peak time in Thacher is mid-September, when the time is right for several species to be on the move. Hawk enthusiast Will Aubrey spends many hours scanning the skies, counting birds, and sharing his expertise with park patrons. In years past Will and friends have counted hundreds upon hundreds of Broad-winged hawks during the peak weekend! It is an exciting experience to watch these graceful birds soar

over our beautiful park! Join us at the Overlook in Thacher Park on **September 10th and 11th** to view the peak migration in our area. Richelle Ford, wildlife rehabilitator, will be on site Saturday, from 10am-2pm presenting some of the raptors in her care.

We hope to see you there!

- by Megan Mansfield



Mike Baird from Morro Bay, USA [CC BY 2.0 (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

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