



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
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Thompson's Lake's Creepy Crawlies



What lies beneath the water of beautiful Thompson's Lake? It looks innocent enough, clear and tranquil, but it is home to a myriad of animal life, especially

that of the creepy crawly variety. On a warm and sunny day at the end of September, my University at Albany Invertebrate Ecology students and I partnered up with Thacher Park naturalist Nancy Engel at the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center to sample and identify the lake's invertebrate inhabitants. Although it was a bit late in the season for sampling, this year's prolonged summer resulted in a treasure of invertebrates. The most abundant were the crayfish, and while we did catch some of those pesky invasive Rusty crayfish, the majority were native-good news for Thompson's lake! Creepy crawlies that we found included damselfly and dragonfly nymphs, mayfly, caddisfly, and stonefly nymphs. Although small, some types of nymphs are notorious predators-it is not uncommon for dragonfly nymphs to feast upon an unsuspecting newt. We also found different types of worms, spiders, and of course the dreaded leech. Up until the leech most of the students were ready and willing to get right into the water for the sampling, some even clamoring for a swim on what turned out to be a sweltering afternoon. The discovery of the leech, however, quickly emptied the lake of everyone but the

most adventurous of students. Luckily, we had Nancy and her super smart interns to keep collecting and identifying invertebrates. Of course we enjoyed some vertebrate sightings-frogs and salamanders, herons and hawks. A day in Invertebrate Ecology wouldn't be complete without bees and the new nature center has a buzzing bee habitat right inside. Students were able to watch the goings on of a honeybee hive and explore the other wonderful exhibits. We ended the day with the requisite, but never boring, stop at the Overlook. It was such a clear day that we were able to see Hudson-Mohawk Valleys and the Adirondack and Green Mountains. Most of the students had never been to Thacher Park and were amazed that such a beautiful park was so close to Albany. When I asked them if they would come back I got a resounding "YES... for a hike or a canoe, but NOT to swim."

(Side note-in most healthy lakes and ponds, you are swimming with the aforementioned creepy crawlies.)

- by Pauline Carrico



A Tribute to Our Interns

Those of you who have visited the Nature Center and new Visitor Center have probably met our interns, Jenny Young and Kelli Tolleson. They have been with us since January and will complete their 10-month commitment in just a few weeks. During their time at Thacher they have been a great support for our programs and have also developed new programs of their own. They have both been a pleasure to work with and we want to recognize them for all they have contributed.

Jenny has been an Environmental Educator at the Nature Center and her varied duties have included teaching school children, developing programs, monitoring nest boxes, leading walks, raising monarch butterflies, caring for our turtles, and pretty much anything we asked her to do. When Megan left on maternity leave in July, Jenny took on a larger role here and she really shined. Her creative talent for nature crafts was a great bonus for our programs!

Kelli has been a geology educator at the Visitor Center, interpreting exhibits, developing activities, creating interpretive materials, and leading walks. Until the building

opened in May she worked with Jenny on Nature Center programs and projects. When the Indian Ladder Trail closed in July, she created alternate geology walks that were very well received by visitors and teachers. Her genuine interest and enthusiasm for geology inspired visitors and planted seeds of science appreciation!

These internships are sponsored by NYS Parks, the Student Conservation Association, and Americorps. We are very fortunate to be involved with this great program that brings us talented and energetic college graduates who are passionate about conservation. We thank Jenny and Kelli for all their work and wish them the best in their future adventures!

- by Nancy Engel



- ◆ ***Do you love Thacher Park?***
- ◆ ***Do you want to help ensure Thacher Park is there for your children and their children?***
- ◆ ***Do you have a few hours a month you can dedicate ?***

It may be time for you to think about being a member of the board of the Friends of Thacher Park. We meet for a few hours every two months in the evening on the second Wednesday of the month at the Visitor's Center. The best way to decide if this is a good match for you is to come to a few meetings and check us out. Our next meeting is on Nov 8, at 6:30 pm.

Attending a meeting or two is also a great way to see what is going on and if there are any areas you are interested in becoming more involved in. I joined the Board five years ago in 2012 as Treasurer. During my tenure, in addition to my treasurer duties, I have learned a great deal about the Park, its history, geology, and flora and fauna. I have participated in discussions about its future, talked to so many people about what the Park

has meant to them, helped prepare food for volunteers on I Love My Park Day, worked on trails, lobbied for the Park, and got to know a great group of board members. It's been my privilege to work with the board during a planning process where we developed out mission statement and our goals. One of the goals that was critically important to me and all of the board members was enhancing access to the Park for children that might not have the opportunity to visit or learn about the park and the outdoors. This goal led to the bus fund drive which has brought several thousand children to the Park over the past few years. These are children from schools who can not afford to pay for buses for school trips.

Do you have a passion for the Park and preserving it, and are you willing to put your passion to work through the Friends group? Then we would love to meet you and hear your ideas! Please join us for the upcoming meeting or any future meeting.

- by Betsey Miller

Friends of Thacher Park Annual Meeting

November 8, at 6:30 pm **at Thacher Visitor Center**. This short business meeting is followed by a presentation by Carl Herzog on bats. Come join us!



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

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

Holiday Bazaar



On the first weekend of December, local artisans will gather at Thacher Nature Center to offer unique hand-crafted gifts. This Holiday Bazaar will feature original artwork and photography, pottery, jewelry, gifts made from wood or wool, soaps and other beauty products, honey products, foods and more. So come on up to the lovely Helderbergs, find gifts for friends and family and enjoy live music while you shop.

Hours are:

10am-4pm on Saturday, December 2nd and
11am-4pm on Sunday, December 3rd.

Please call 872-0800 for more information.

Sigrin's article (see last page) sparked my interest in the galls I had been seeing on our own oaks all summer long. According to the internet, these are not oak apple galls but so-called "hedgehog galls", commonly found on white oaks in this area. Some species of wasps that create these galls can take up to two years to emerge, and even if wasps pupate in the fall in the gall, they may overwinter inside. As a biologist, I was of course curious. The gall I cut open offered what appeared to be an adult wasp which is shown in the picture below frantically scrambling away after I destroyed its home. I hope it can use the remaining days of fall to do what it evolved to do: lay an egg that induces another gall.

-by Christine Gervasi



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.

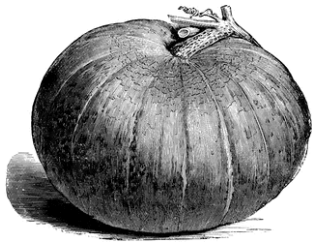
Many thanks to Pauline Carrico, Nancy Engel, Betsey Miller, Bonnie Schaller, Sigrin Newell and Bert Schou for their contributions to this newsletter.

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

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Next:

Wednesday, November 8, 2017
Annual Membership Meeting
6:30 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

Followed by a talk on bats by Carl Herzog at 7:00 pm—come join us!

A Thacher Link to History



The Magna Carta and the Declaration of Independence, documents that define our basic freedoms were written with ink made from oak galls that you can find

while walking most anywhere in Thacher Park. Galls, just a bit smaller than a ping-pong ball, can often be found lying on trails in the fall. Oak apple galls such as the one shown in the image above are formed when a gall wasp lays its eggs on leaves, branches or twigs. The insects inject a hormone into the plant tissue which causes it to grow a ball around the larvae. This gall protects the larvae from predators and provides food for the growing larvae. When full grown, the larvae metamorphoses into a wasp, drills a hole and exits. Often when you find galls, the exit hole is evident and the ball is hollow, since the larvae has eaten up the soft tissue inside the gall.

Tannin from oak trees gives ink its durability. I spoke with a woman who saw the original Magna Carta in a museum in England. The ink on the document, written in 1215, is still visible. Oak galls were used to make ink from the time of the Roman Empire and until chemical inks were invented in the early twentieth century, ink from oak galls was the most common medium used for writing.

To make such ink, crush 2 ounces of oak galls and soak them 24 hours in water. Strain the mixture and add ferrous sulfate – a mixture made with iron and sulfuric acid. A simpler method is simply to boil the gall and water mixture in a very rusty iron pot or dump pieces of scrap iron into the pot. Historically, gum Arabic was added to provide brilliance and substance. Gum Arabic is dried sap from the Gum Acacia tree. Other recipes call for dried egg whites.

As you shuffle through the leaves at Thacher this fall, keep an eye out for these little balls, a link to our shared history. It is hard to believe that these fragile crisp balls could yield ink of such quality.

-by Sigrin T. Newell

Image of the oak apple gall above by Bob Embleton, <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

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