



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
January—February 2019 • Vol. 23 No. 1

Barkscaping — A New Perspective on Thacher Park

Hugh Johnson, the meteorologist who spoke at the Friends Annual Meeting predicted that we would have a winter with more snow than usual. Everyone can look forward to sledding on the Beaver Dam Road sled hill, and cross country skiing and snowshoeing on trails throughout the park. Snowshoes are available for rent at Thacher Nature Center and trail maps can be found at the Nature Center as well as the Thacher Visitor Center.

However, as has been true in past winters, it's also likely that there will be weeks in which there's little or no snow on the ground. This would be a good time to come up to the park to discover an alien (unexpected) and totally surprising world. Barkscapes is a name given by artists and naturalists to the “landscapes” seen on the bark of trees. To explore barkscapes, bring a hand lens or magnifying glass and walk right up to the trunk of a tree so that you almost put your nose on the bark.

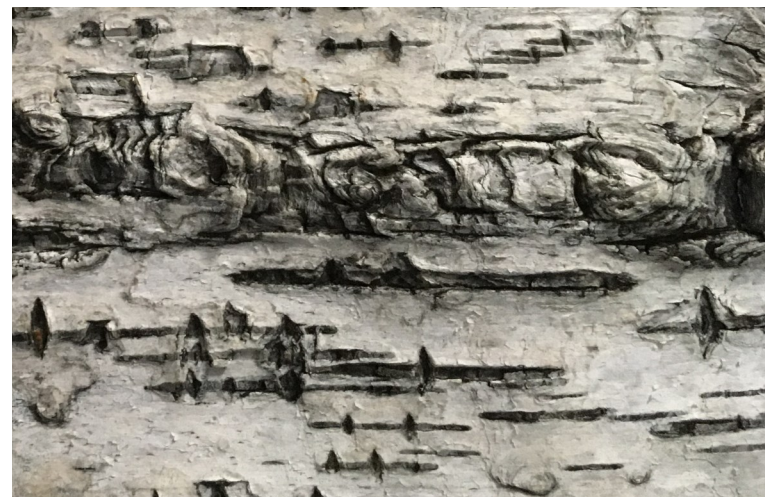
Seen from so close, the bark of a tree takes on an abstract quality that can inspire your imagination. Some crevices seem as deep as the Grand Canyon while other bark might remind you of a grassy prairie. Mosses, lichens, and liverworts seem like a miniature forest, perhaps the realm of fairies. You might find scenes of peaceful coexistence where miniscule plants grow amicably side by side. On other trees you might find signs of struggle as one plant clearly is trying to overwhelm another.

Photographing barkscapes can add another dimension to your exploration of this magical realm.

Color, texture, and form vary from tree to tree. Some barkscape photos can be abstract and painterly. Others could be quite realistic. One might even photograph a few insects on a bright sunny day, venturing out of their hiding places in bark crevices.

Other hikers in the park may think you're weird when they see you with your nose and a magnifying glass poked up against a tree trunk. Invite them over and introduce them to the pleasures of barkscaping, a great year round activity for adults and kids alike.

-by Sigrin Newell



The President's Corner

As I sit down to write this, we're on the verge of turning the calendar page to another year. So, to paraphrase Frank Sinatra, "When I was fifty-two, it was a very good year..."

The park is still here after 104 years and that's thanks to the decades of park staff who have cared for it and to you, our members past and present, who have dedicated your time and money to the preservation and upkeep of this little slice of heaven. In March, Maureen Curry retired as park manager and Nola DalGallo took over. Then the power went out. Welcome to your new job, Nola!

The park's electrical system finally gave up the effort after well over a half century of continuous work. The Visitor Center and some of the satellite picnic areas were left without electricity. You probably saw the large generator sitting outside the Visitor Center for quite awhile this year. Events still went on and it was business as usual while the electrical system was repaired and updated.

Winter hung on as long as it could (too long, some were heard to say) but it gave way to spring, and with it, droves of volunteers came up for another successful I Love My Park Day on May 5. Thacher is very popular. We had to cap the number of volunteers this year since we were concerned that there wouldn't be enough for people to do. Despite the cap, people continued to contact me to tell me that they didn't want to volunteer at another site. All kinds of work got done and the park was ready for another summer season. Wildplay got into its first full season at the park so Christine and I decided to see what all the fuss was about. We did one of the adventure courses and had a lot of fun. If you're not afraid of heights, give it a try after it opens in May.

In June, Jim and Bonnie Schaller organized another National Trails Day volunteer work detail for some of Thacher's miles of trails. If you did any hiking through the park this year and enjoyed the trails, thank Jim and Bonnie the next time you see them.

Many visitors were happy when Indian Ladder Trail reopened this year after being closed for most of the 2017 season.

During the fall, Route 157 through the park was closed for work on two culverts passing beneath the road. Both are done and you can now pass through the park without issue.

We welcomed Bill Hein to Thacher this fall. Bill is the park's new assistant manager and comes to us from the Long Island Region. If you're at the Visitor Center, say hello to Bill. You can't miss him - he's the tallest one in the building and usually has a smile on his face.

On behalf of the membership, I'd like to thank all the park staff for all their hard work during 2018. We're looking forward to 2019 and another great year at Thacher!

- by John Kilroy



View of the Thacher Escarpment from the Visitor Center
Photo by Michelle Johnston

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, John Kilroy, Michelle Johnston, Laurel Tormey-Cole, Brian Horl and Nancy Engel for their contributions to this newsletter.

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



Photo by Michelle Johnston

Thompson's Lake is beautiful at any time of the year, but in this frosty photo by Michelle Johnston it appears especially magical.

This past year, a pair of Bald Eagles chose these shores to raise two eaglets (reported in previous editions of this newsletter). We hope they stay and maybe you'll catch a glimpse of them!

In the meantime, stop by the Ice Fishing Clinic at Thacher Nature Center/Thompson's Lake on January 19 or try your luck at the Ice Fishing Contest on February 2. Or stroll down to the shore after attending one of the many programs offered at Thacher Nature Center throughout this wintry season. Details can be found in the enclosed program calendar. Enjoy!

Native Plant Sale Pre-order

It is hard to think about plants and planting at the beginning of January, when nature is dressed in dull browns and grays and the coldest time of the year is presumably still ahead. Yet, planning what to do in the garden in the spring can be a very rewarding task this time of year, when the holidays have passed, nights still seem too long and cabin-fever threatens to set in.

As in previous years, Thacher Nature Center will be hosting a Native Plant Sale this year. The on site sale will be at Thacher Park Overlook on May 18 and 19, but plants can be pre-ordered now. Information on ordering and plant varieties offered this year can be found in the flier enclosed with this newsletter, and a list of the very popular garden kits is below. **All Pre-orders must be received by February 19.** Happy planning!

Native Perennials — Garden Kits 2019 for Pre-order

Monarch & Butterfly Garden Kit #1
Moist to Average/Full Sun to Afternoon Sun
\$75 (a \$90 value!)

Rose Milkweed	(3)	<i>Asclepias incarnata</i>
Turtlehead	(3)	<i>Chelone glabra</i>
Helen's Flower	(3)	<i>Helenium autumnale</i>
Blue Flag Iris	(3)	<i>Iris versicolor</i>
Blue Vervain	(2)	<i>Verbena hastata</i>
Switch Grass	(1)	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>

Semi-Shade & Woodland Garden Kit
Average Moisture/Part Shade
\$50 (a \$60 value!)

Foam Flower	(2)	<i>Tiarella cordifolia</i>
Wild Geranium	(2)	<i>Geranium maculatum</i>
Jacob's Ladder	(2)	<i>Polemonium reptans</i>
Virginia Bluebells	(2)	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>
Bleeding Heart	(2)	<i>Dicentra eximia</i>

Monarch & Butterfly Garden Kit #2
Dry to Average/Full Sun to Afternoon Sun
\$75 (a \$90 value!)

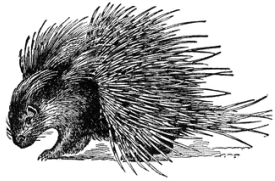
Butterfly Milkweed	(3)	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>
Prairie Smoke	(3)	<i>Geum triflorum</i>
Smooth Blue Aster	(3)	<i>Aster laevis</i>
Showy Goldenrod	(3)	<i>Solidago speciosa</i>
Northern Blazing Star	(2)	<i>Liatris scariosa</i>
Big Bluestem Grass	(1)	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>

Blue Garden for Pollinators
Moist to Average/Full Sun to Afternoon Sun
\$50 (a \$60.00 value!)

Great Blue Lobelia	(2)	<i>Lobelia siphilitica</i>
Tall Bellflower*	(2)	<i>Campanula americana</i>
Bottle Gentian	(2)	<i>Gentiana andrewsii</i>
Iris Versicolor	(2)	<i>Iris versicolor</i>
Big Bluestem Grass	(2)	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>

(*annual or biennial; self sows)

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



Wednesday, January 9, 2019

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center



A prickly rodent is the **North American Porcupine**.

They are two to three feet long and can weigh up to thirty-five pounds with as many as thirty thousand quills. The quills are

modified hairs coated with thick plates of keratin and porcupines will regrow lost quills. The stomach is the only part of the body with no quills. Their quills and guard hairs are used in traditional decorative clothing and accessories. The guard hairs are used in the creation of the North American "Porky Roach" headdress and the main quills may be dyed, and then applied in combination with thread to embellish leather accessories such as knife sheaths and leather bags. Lakota women would harvest the quills by throwing a blanket over a porcupine and retrieving the quills it left stuck in the blanket.

Contrary to myth, the porcupine can not throw its quills. They can raise the quills and make them rattle when threatened. When raised they make a white stripe

down the back to resemble a skunk. They will lash out at the threat with their tail and when the quills come in contact with the threat they embed in the skin. Body heat then makes the barbs expand and embed even deeper. Some animals like the Fisher have become experts at attacking porcupines.

Porcupines mate in late summer and early fall and are very vocal during mating season. The male will perform an elaborate dance and spray urine over the female's head. After a seven-month gestation period she will give birth to one baby. The baby is born with soft quills that harden in about one hour. The baby will begin to forage after a couple of days and will stay with the mother for about six months.

Porcupines do not hibernate in winter, but stay active, spending bad weather periods in dens and foraging during better conditions. You may be able to see evidence of their presence, such as tracks, up in Thacher Park.



- by *Brian Horl*

Photo of porcupine tracks by Linda Spielman

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