



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
May — June 2021 • Vol. 25 No. 3

## A more natural healing

Using herbs and plants for healing predates written history. Evidence found in a Neanderthal cave in Iraq that dates to about 60,000 years showed large amounts of pollen from eight different plant species. Seven of these are still used medicinally today. It is believed that the plants were used for both healing and burial rituals because of the amounts found with the human remains. For anyone who wants to look at it further the name of the site is “Shanidar IV”.

One of the earliest known herbalist would be Ötzi. He was the iceman found frozen in the Alps for 5,000 years. He was treating himself for an intestinal parasite with herbs he was carrying. We know this because the herbs were found not only with his belongings but also in his system. About the same time as Ötzi, the Samaritans in Mesopotamia were writing on clay tablets about medicinal herbs they were using. These tablets included hundreds of plants including opium. It's believed it was used for pain, but it would be foolish to think they didn't discover other uses for it.

Sanskrit documents dating back to 4,000 B.C. have been found in India. An herbalist named Sushruta wrote the Sushruta Samhita. It is considered one of the most important ancient texts on surgery and medicine to survive today. He describes over 1,120 illnesses, 700 plants and herbs, along with 121 various preparations for treating ailments. He includes the taste, digestive effects, and appearance along with their benefits. This is an amazing amount of knowledge for his time.



Emperor Shennong of China is credited with writing the Shennong Ben Cao Jing. This work included over 165 plants and their uses. China has a strong belief in the potency of herbs and animals in treating ailments. Although it strays a little from this article, I must mention that Eastern medicine also uses animal parts to treat certain ailments. This practice is highly controversial and is outlawed in many countries because of its effect on endangered species.

In the middle ages, monasteries provided Europe with much of its medical knowledge. Most of it was transcribed from earlier works. They developed very little of their own discoveries. Their herb gardens were very well stocked which led to the Monasteries becoming the go to place for treatment. Wise women were also common at the time. They would travel to surrounding villages as traveling herbalists. They would give advice, herbal medicines, spells and enchantments to people who would pay them. Unfortunately, this became a dangerous profession to be associated with when the church demonized “Witchcraft”. One herbalist at the time was a 12<sup>th</sup> century nun named Hildegard von Bingen. A talented women, not only in herbalism, but also composing music. She wrote the Causae et Curae. She believed not only in the power of spiritual, but also herbal healing. If not for being a Catholic nun she may have been considered a witch herself.

Many people today don't realize that a lot of drugs used today had their origins in plants and herbs. These

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old ways of treating common ailments have been replaced with synthetically produced drugs. These have a history of being over-prescribed, leading to many bacteria becoming resistant to antibiotics, though over-prescribing is becoming less frequent as doctors are becoming more aware of the consequences. I believe it is time to start treating common ailments with plants and herbs again. Part of the problem is that we have become a “fix it now” society. It is easier to get a prescription from the pharmacy and take a pill than to steep a tea from plants and herbs. I’m certainly not saying that it’s for everyone.

Not everyone has the time. But think of the satisfaction of brewing a tea to treat your cold or cure your headache. You may also find that getting out in nature to collect your own herbs and plants is very relaxing. That is something we all could use. It gives a new meaning to “stop and smell the roses”, for there are health benefits to rose hip tea. If this should inspire you to take a more natural approach to your health, there are many books and web sites to help you down this path.

- from the porch, by Brian Horl

Rosehip photo courtesy of Natubico, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia Commons

### **WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING AT THE PARK?**

March and April was an exciting time of gearing up for our spring and summer programming and events. It has been exciting to look forward to what the changing of the seasons will bring us here at the Nature Center. Grace and I have been busy setting up and checking the trail cameras here at the park. I always enjoy seeing what new animals we have caught on camera. This spring we both also helped with the amphibian migration; I have never participated in anything like it and it was a great experience to be a part of.

As the months get warmer and the snow melts off I have been getting out to look at all the geology that has been uncovered. I have been working on my fossil identification skills and it has been quite fun to go out with my fossil guide and spend some time examining all the amazing fossils that can be found here at the park. I have been posting a fossil Friday every week on the Thacher Park Instagram and Facebook sites, which has helped immensely with my fossil identification skills. Outside of work I have been enjoying sitting on the porch in the sun with a good book and riding my bike!

Thank you!

- by Anna Pirkey



photo of a Trilobite fossil found by park employee Michelle Johnston

### **Save the Date!**

July 17 is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center!

Join us for educational guided walks, food, vendors, crafts and so much more!

**Check for updates at [www.friendsofthacherpark.org](http://www.friendsofthacherpark.org)**

#### **Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees**

President:	John Kilroy	(518) 872-1501
Vice President:	Laure-Jeanne Davignon	(518) 578-4718
Treasurer:	Betsey Miller	(518) 869-0739
Secretary:	Christine Gervasi	(518) 872-1501
	Immediate former President: Sigrin Newell	

**As always, call (518) 872-0800 or (518) 872-1237 to verify activity times and dates.**

Please feel free to call board members with questions or suggestions.

Many thanks to Brian Horl, Grace Brennen, Anna Pirkey, Savannah Wilson and Sigrin Newell for their contributions to this newsletter.

#### **Other Trustees**

Jim Schaller	(518) 861-7452	Brian Horl	(518) 872-1383
Chuck Ver Straeten	(518) 872-2223		
Bert Schou	(518) 221-8693		

Want to contribute? Please email me at [cgervasi@albany.edu](mailto:cgervasi@albany.edu). Christine Gervasi—Editor

What's been happening at Thacher Nature Center, and what's to come! Anna and I have been leading guided hikes all March long, focusing on the important women of Thacher Park for Women's History Month. We had the opportunity to teach visitors about Winifred Goldring, Emma Treadwell Thacher, and Martha Schroeder. The Nature Center held a maple sugaring event where we boiled maple sap that was collected from maple trees around the Nature Center. We all had the opportunity to brush up on our winter tree identification, and we were able to educate a number of families and visitors about the amazing process of maple sugaring. Finally, Thompson's Lake's mated pair of Bald Eagles have started incubating their eggs! Anna and I have been monitoring the happy couple since early February and we are looking forward to seeing the newest members of the family.

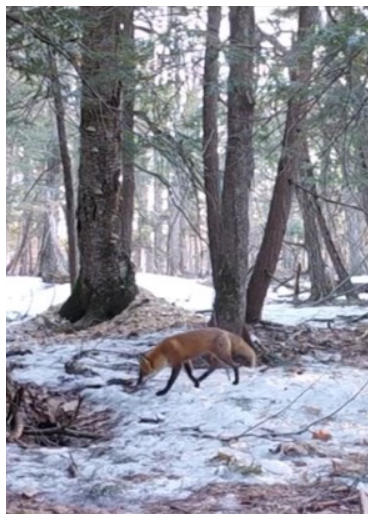
- by Grace Brennen



## Caught on Camera!

We have several trail cameras placed throughout the park in hopes of catching glimpses of different animals. One camera is placed by a karst, and over time has captured different animals climbing into, and out of the karsts! We have captured a fisher standing on its hind legs, a fox looking for food, porcupine making its way to a different feeding tree, and a raccoon leaving a karst!

- by Savannah Wilson



## Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2021

Meeting dates are Wednesdays, May 12, July 14, September 8, and November 10.  
7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center. Come join us! (Masks required)

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



<https://etc.usf.edu/clipart/>

Wednesday, May 12, 2021

Next:

**Board Meeting**

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center (masks required)

## Praise for Phytochromes

Most people have never heard of phytochromes, but our lives depend on them.

Chlorophyll is familiar.  
Light energy is changed to sugar energy,  
is changed to food energy,  
feeding animals and people.

Phytochromes are more mysterious.  
Light energy is changed to knowledge  
that the plant needs to control  
basic life functions:

regulation of root development,  
seed germination,  
stem elongation,  
movement of leaves,  
onset of flowering,  
setting of seeds.

Phytochromes are a family of blue green pigments,  
proteins that toggle between active and less

active states depending on light.  
These changes trigger plants' responses  
sending resources to where they're needed.

Phytochromes sense temperature too.  
This is why spring flowers  
may open earlier or later  
depending on the weather.

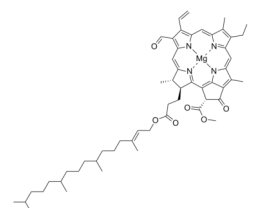
Phytochromes help plants  
resist insect attack,  
and deal with drought and infection.

Without phytochromes

there'd be no seed germination,  
there'd be no flowering,  
there'd be no setting of seeds,  
there would be no food  
there would be no you or me.

**Sing praise to phytochromes!**

- by Sigrin Newell



Chlorophyll, by Barokmusiklvr, CC BY-SA 3.0 <<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/>>, via Wikimedia

As always, you can find a color version of the newsletter at [www.friendsofthacherpark.org](http://www.friendsofthacherpark.org)