



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
September — October 2021 • Vol. 25 No. 5

“The Time Has Come...”

... the Walrus said, to talk of many things” is a line from Lewis Carroll’s poem, “The Walrus and The Carpenter” which happens to be one of my favorites. The time has come for me to talk about a few things. I’ve been president of the Friends of Thacher State Park for thirteen of the last fourteen years and it’s been a great ride but the time has come for me to step down as president. In March, I informed the Board that I will not continue in this role after my term is up in January.

I’ve had a lot of fun as president over the years and enjoyed meeting Friends members and people who feel just as passionately about Parks as I do. Many of you stepped up to the plate when needed on I Love My Park Days, Parks Advocacy Days at the Capitol and back in 2010 when Thacher was shuttered along with 57 other state parks and historic sites. For your passion and work, I’ll always be thankful. You made my job easier.

The staff at Thacher is top-notch and I’ve always been impressed by how much they enjoy working at the park and doing the daily jobs that allow the public to have a great time.

Most of all, I’ve enjoyed working with the Board. What a wonderful group of people! Everyone has been supportive and encouraged me whenever needed.

To give you an idea of how long I’ve been around, I’ve been president through four park managers, four New York governors, three New York Parks Commissioners, four U.S. presidents but only one British monarch.

I’d like to finish this by asking you to seriously consider joining the Board of the Friends of Thacher. If you’re one of our members, you’re eligible. There are only six board meetings per year which take place at the park and you get to volunteer your time with some really wonderful folks who work at Thacher. Don’t worry if you’ve never served on a board before. It’s a quick study and you’ll be helped by other board members and/or park staff with any questions you have. So, if you’ve been looking for a way to give back to the community or have recently retired and have a little more spare time or if you love Thacher and want to get more involved, come to our next meeting on September 8. We’re looking forward to meeting you!

- by John Kilroy



John advocating for Park and Friends at one of the Park’s Fall Festivals many moons back. Photo by Christine Gervasi

Thacher Park Trail Maintenance

DR Work & Lopping - by Jim & Bonnie Schaller

On Wednesday June 23rd, 2021, Jack Holmes (from the Office of Parks & Recreation) ran the DR Brush & Field Mower, and Bonnie accompanied him - carrying a gas can half way, and doing selected lopping.

Jim, accompanied by two "Friends" volunteers (Debra Barnes Breitenbach and Richard Underwood) followed up - lopping, trimming, and removing some smaller downed trees from the trails. We used the new Kubota – (with enclosed cab) and new ramps to transport Jack, Bonnie, and the DR. We did the Meadow Loop and Salisbury Trail all the way to the Perimeter Trail and back. Later, we did the Nature Center Trail along Nature Center Way. The Kubota was stored at the Campground - for "Part 2".

On Friday, June 25th, we all gathered at the "Quarry" on Carrick Road. Jack and Bonnie got a head start - doing the DR work on the upper sections of the Fred Schroeder Trail. They loaded the DR back on the Kubota and drove to Old Stage Road. Jim and Debra followed up on the Fred Schroeder trail and at the straight section's end went down the hill to the four corners and continued on the Schroeder Trail. A side trip was done – lopping on Trail W-5 for about 200 feet and back. Then, it was on to the Long Path. Between there and Hang Glider Road intermittent areas had heavy buckthorn, sumac, thorn bushes, and honeysuckle growing into the trail – which was cut back and cleared out.

Jack, and Bonnie DR'd the same route to the "giant sinkhole" and back from the split off the Long Path near

High Point Road. Actually, James had mowed most of the fields off Old Stage and High Point Roads, so the Perimeter Trail and beginning of the Fred Schroeder Trail in the fields had already been done. Jim and Debra hiked out on Hang Glider Road back to the Perimeter Trail.

But - a surprise - a big pickup truck came up behind us on Hang Glider Road. The driver introduced himself as the caretaker for Hang Glider Cliff and the road to it. He had two chainsaws, a lawnmower, and two weedwhackers in the bed of his truck. He offered to give us a ride from the trail junction back to the Quarry. He told us he also volunteers for cliff and cave rescues with the Albany County Sheriff, State Park Police, and State Police. He also rock climbs, hang glides, and is an arborist by trade. We thanked him for the ride.

We would like to recognize Jack and James for their mowing; Jeff, John and Gary for transporting the Kubota, DR and gasoline; and Debra and Rich (Friends of Thacher Park) for their hard work on the Thacher Park trails on those days.

- by Jim Schaller



Nature Center Trail. Photo by Dave Tieman

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

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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 John Kilroy, Jim Schaller, Grace Brennen, Savannah Wilson and Victoria Gellatly for their contributions to this newsletter.

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

The Highlights of Nest Watch Season

The birds have finished nesting, they have raised their babies, and many are getting ready to migrate south for the winter. As a result, NestWatch is wrapping up. If you've never heard of NestWatch (<https://nestwatch.org/>), it is a citizen science project run by Cornell Lab of Ornithology that anyone can participate in, even you! It simply involves having a Blue Bird nest box and checking on it at least once a week during the summer.

Here at Thacher Nature Center we have 27 nest boxes that we monitor every week during nesting season. We look at the materials the birds have built their nest with to determine the species, count the number of eggs that get laid, and make note of any that have hatched. Then, as weeks go on, we watch as little baby birds grow their feathers, open their eyes, and learn how to survive. There are typically three species that use our Blue Bird nest boxes: Eastern Blue Birds, Tree Swallows and House Wrens.

Here are some of the highlights of our summer!

160 Eggs Laid

116 Eggs Hatched

65* Birds Successfully Fledged

*this number may go up as high as 89 as last of our feathered friends leave their nests!

-by Grace Brennan



Photo of Tree Swallow by Christine Gervasi

Thank You, Laurel Tormey-Cole!

On behalf of the Emma Treadwell Nature Center and Thacher Park, I'd like to congratulate Laurel upon her retirement. Laurel has been the Programs Assistant and Native Plant Expert for Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center for 20 years and has been responsible for establishing the Native Plant Sale at the Nature Center. If you've ever been to one of the Nature Center's Art Shows, Holiday Bazaars, invasive plant removal programs or purchased a plant to enjoy in your own garden, you have Laurel to thank for organizing those events.

We wish Laurel a long, happy retirement!

- by Savannah Wilson

Among her many, many contributions to the Park and Nature Center, Laurel's passion for and knowledge about native plants has inspired many over these past decades! Laurel's legacy lives on not only in the Nature Center's native plant and bog gardens, but also in many gardens (including mine) all over Albany county and beyond. On behalf of the board of Friends of Thacher, thank you, Laurel for all you have done for us! Happy retirement and enjoy all the exciting adventures ahead of you!

- by Christine Gervasi

Hawk Watch at Thacher Overlook!

Saturday September 11, 10am to 3pm.

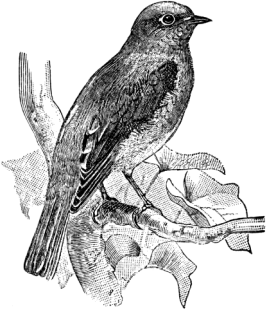
Fall is a time for many species of birds to migrate south to their wintering homes. A great place to watch migrating birds of prey in particular is the Helderberg Escarpment. Here, the steep cliffs provide warm updrafts of air that allow the birds to catch a ride and conserve energy during their journey. At Thacher Overlook, you can see them up close and at times from above as they soar past! Hawk Watch leader Will Aubrey will be present at the Overlook on Saturday to answer questions and help with identification. No registration is required for this program.

Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2021

Meeting dates are Wednesdays September 8, and November 10.

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center. Come join us! (Masks may be 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, September 8, 2021

Next:

Board Meeting

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

What's not to like about Lichen?



British Soldier lichen (Cladonia cristatella). Photo by Christine Gervasi

Lichen easily fall into the category of common and underappreciated organisms. They are often mistaken for other species, which is reflected in many of their English common names. Reindeer moss, chalice moss, and velvet moss are actually lichen! Indeed, these creatures are a combination of cyanobacteria (think algae) and fungi (think mushrooms or yeasts) living together as one unit. The fungus component provides structural support, and the algae component provides nutrients via photosynthesis.

Approximately 17,000 different lichen species have been identified around the world, each with unique characteristics.

Most often, lichen are classified based on their growth patterns. For example, common crustose lichen are relatively flat and form a rough skin over the surface they inhabit. Fruticose lichen however, tend to form branching structures, and may even look like coral growing on trees! These diverse forms allow different species to aid in nutrient recycling (like nitrogen fixation) and survive in nearly any biome, including the arctic tundra.

While lichen are important producers and decomposers, they also serve as indicator species and reflect how an ecosystem is functioning. Not only do lichen absorb minerals from surfaces they inhabit, but they also absorb carbon and chemical pollutants that may be present in the atmosphere. In a process called lichen biomonitoring, these chemicals can be extracted and analyzed. This provides incredibly valuable information about the general health of the environment. Though at first glance they may seem small and nondescript, lichen are some of the most unusually beautiful and functional species in the world. They're worth an extra moment (or several) of appreciation.

- by Victoria Gellatly

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