



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
May—June 2023 • Vol. 27 No. 3

## What About Waterfalls?



Rare is the person who hasn't seen a waterfall firsthand, whether one gently cascading over stepped rocks, roaring over a high ledge, or something in between. The braver (or more foolish) have risked their lives walking over wide falls on a tightrope or barreling, literally, over the edge of fast-moving falls. Most

of us, however, have risked little more than getting wet while on a tour boat such as the Maid of the Mist at Niagara Falls or walking behind falls, such as one does on Indian Ladder Trail in Thacher Park.

However, while snapping countless photos, have you ever considered there might be more to a waterfall than meets (or wets) the eye?

There's no standard way to classify waterfalls, but some categories are by average volume of water, by width, by height, and by the way the water descends. For example, a *block waterfall* descends from a wide stream; a *cascade* descends over a series of rock steps while a *cataract* has a large, single vertical drop; a *chute* is a waterfall in which water streams through a narrow passage; a *fan waterfall* spreads out horizontally as it descends; a *frozen waterfall* is just that, a *horsetail* maintains contact with the hard rock that underlies it while a *plunge waterfall* loses contact with the hard rock; a *multi-step waterfall* has a series of connected waterfalls, each with its own plunge pool, and a *punchbowl* has a wide pool at its base. Most waterfalls fit more than one category.

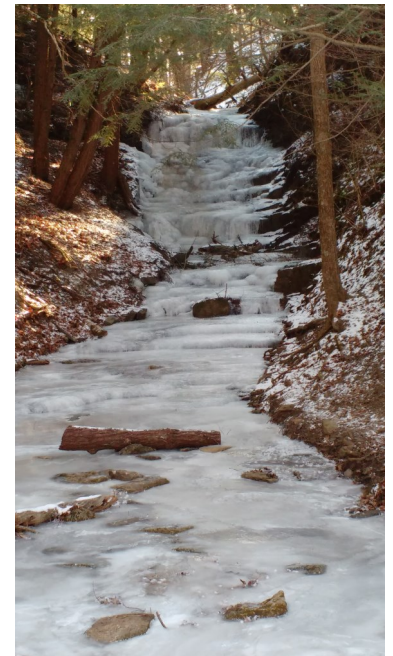
It's difficult to get a consensus on which waterfall is the tallest, the largest, etc. The Smithsonian claims one of the most beautiful is Niagara Falls, that "few waterfalls come close to matching the sheer size and power that define Niagara Falls." A cataract waterfall, it is the largest by volume in the U.S. and, generally agreed, the most famous waterfall in the world.

The largest waterfall in the world is in the ocean. How is that possible? Cold water is denser than warm water, so when cold water flows into warmer water it sinks. In the Denmark Strait, where frigid water from the Nordic Seas meets warmer water from the Irminger Sea, the colder water sinks and then flows over a huge drop in the ocean floor.

Thacher Park may not have the largest or tallest waterfalls in the world, but it has its fair share. The exact number has been difficult to come by, partly because many of them dry up during the summer. In an online discussion at [nyfalls.com](http://nyfalls.com), one person claimed the park has no less than 20 waterfalls, but then admitted he was still pulling together the photos he had taken, so there might be more!

It's that time of year when waterfalls start flowing more vigorously. Meandering the various hiking trails in Thacher Park, this writer has encountered a cataract, a cascade, a chute, a multi-step and, in winter, a small frozen waterfall. How many might you find?

- by Jill Harbeck



Photos of Thacher waterfalls by Jill Harbeck

## Historic Helderbergs Day a Hit!

Hundreds of people (380 by one count) braved the cold and snow on February 25, 2023 to attend Historic Helderbergs Day at the Thacher Park Visitor Center. This far surpassed attendance the year before.

With a focus on historic crafts, activities included archery and trapping by the Department of Environmental Conservation), butter making by Cornell Cooperative Extension, candle making by Evie Peralta, cheese making by Cotton Hill Creamery, colonial games & toys by Peter & Parker Duerr, Dutch colonial recipes by Marina Dreeben, dyeing with plants by Carol Kress, milking by the Altamont Fair, live

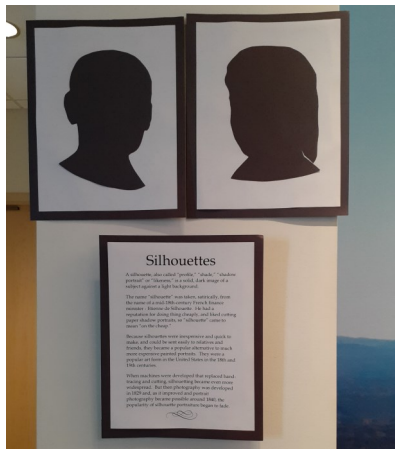
raptors and songbirds by Kelly Martin, rug braiding by Shannon Duerr, do-it-yourself s'mores, and storytelling by Claire Nolan.

Throughout the day there was a steady flow at a craft table hosted by the Friends of Thacher Park. More than 90 people of all ages stopped by to create black on white facial profiles, called "silhouettes" after French finance minister Étienne de Silhouette, who was fond of cutting out such images. Silhouettes were highly popular in America from about 1790 to 1840.

This is an annual event so, if you have a crafty side, consider volunteering your talents next year!

- by Jill Harbeck

Photos by Christine Gervasi



Drawing Silhouettes ...

.... and Post Production

## Program Highlight: May 13<sup>th</sup> Sunset Hike

When the daytime turns to night, it's tempting to think that the world has gone to sleep. While this may be true for humans, the same cannot be said for many of the animals that call Thacher home. This is especially true in springtime, when warmer temperatures and a growing food supply encourage increased animal activity. A single spring evening can hold many wonders: the low hum of a drumming grouse, a parade of amphibians migrating to and from their mating sites, and the silent overhead flight of birds returning to their breeding grounds by the thousands.

Join us on May 13<sup>th</sup> as we observe how the natural world prepares for nightfall. Participants will go on a two-mile round-trip hike through some of the park's most remote spaces. Beginning at the Old Stage Road Trailhead, we'll

observe birds foraging in forests and fields before their nighttime migration northward. Next, we'll take in the sunset from High Point. Finally, we'll watch and listen for signs of frogs, bats, owls, and other animals on our return hike at dusk. By the end of the program, we'll see that night is just as active and important a time for wildlife as is day.

- by Peter Farquharson



**Saturday, May 6, 2023**

**9am - 12pm**

Join us for the 12<sup>th</sup> annual spring cleanup! Register at <https://www.ptny.org/events/i-love-my-park-day>. Friends of Thacher will have a sandwich lunch ready for you afterwards! Hope to see you there!

## Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2023

Meeting dates are Wednesdays, May 10, July 12, September 13, and November 8.

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center. Come join us!

(Mask guidelines will follow CDC recommendations)



# Raptors!

The red-tailed hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*) is the most abundant hawk species in North America. While their natural habitat varies from

grasslands to open forest, they are highly adaptable and often take up residence in urban settings as well. Highly skilled opportunistic hunters, their diets include everything from rodents and snakes to other birds, and even the occasional frog. Their population is thriving and predicted to continue increasing, largely due to their ability to adapt to changes, both natural and human-induced.

While red-tailed hawks are certainly the most common, they are far from the only birds of prey in the Capital Region. Often mistaken for their cousins, the red-shouldered hawk (*Buteo lineatus*), shares similar brown and white patterning. Unsurprisingly, they are most easily distinguished from one another by their tail feathers. Other raptor species found in the area include the northern harrier (*Circus cyaneus*), sharp-shinned hawk (*Accipiter striatus*), and Cooper's hawk (*Accipiter cooperii*). Unlike

their larger, redder counterparts that reside here year-round, the latter three typically only make appearances during breeding season, which is typically between February and May. Population sizes are harder to estimate but seem to be trending upwards as well.

In addition to hawks and harriers, the nearby Mohawk and Hudson Rivers attract many large fish-eating species, including osprey and bald eagles. While osprey are the smaller of the two, they still boast a wingspan of up to 5.5 feet. They have dark brown top feathers, white bellies, and a prominent dark stripe across their eyes. Not to be outdone, adult bald eagles are easily identified by their white heads and impressive size, with a wingspan of up to 8 feet. Naturally, both are known for building huge waterfront nests, often in trees or on power poles, which must be strong enough to accommodate the large birds and their offspring. We are very fortunate to have such diverse local habitats capable of supporting all these, and other, birds of prey!

- by Victoria Gellatly



Photos by Tristan Gellatly

## 2023 Thacher Native Plant Sale

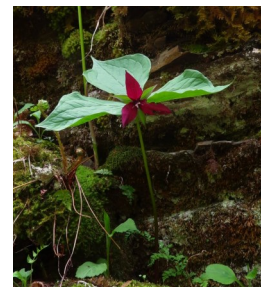
If you spent the winter dreaming of wildflowers or are interested in building habitat in your yard, consider native plants! Join us on May 20, for the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Thacher Native Plant Sale. Whether you're looking for flowers, grasses, shrubs, or trees, Thacher Park educators will be there to help you choose the right plants for your yard. You'll also have the opportunity to learn about the benefits of backyard habitat from our friends at Wild Ones and get garden planning help from one of Cornell Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners.

This year's plants are largely species listed as rare, threatened, or endangered in New York State – everything

from trillium to pawpaw. You may wonder if there are legal limits to adding listed plants to your garden: nope! New York State habitats benefit from the addition of vulnerable species. Taking responsibility for a plant purchased through a reputable grower prevents the poaching of wild plants, diversifies garden habitats, and benefits everyone.

This year's Native Plant Sale will take place on Saturday, May 20<sup>th</sup>, 10am-3pm at the Thacher Park Overlook. Together we can build beautiful gardens and vital wild habitats!

- by Shannon Duerr



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

### Officers of the Friends Board of Trustees

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

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.

### Other Trustees

Jim Schaller	(518) 861-7452	Brian Horl	(518) 461-8360
Chuck Ver Straeten	(518) 872-2223	John Kilroy	(518) 872-1501
Bert Schou	(518) 221-8693	Jill Harbeck	

Many thanks to Jill Harbeck, Peter Farquharson, Victoria Gellatly, Tristan Gellatly, Shannon Duerr and Brian Horl for their contributions to this newsletter.— Christine Gervasi (Editor)

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

**Wednesday, May 10, 2023**

**Next:**

**Board Meeting**

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

### ***Huath— The Merry Pagan Month of May***

Also known as the Hawthorn month. The Hawthorn month runs from 5/13 through 6/9. It follows right behind the celebration of Beltane. Beltane is celebrated on the first full moon after the Hawthorn tree has blossomed. Cattle were driven between two bonfires to purify them before being moved to summer pastures. Young people were adorned with flowers and lay in fields to empower their relationships and crops with fertility and prosperity.

May is called the Hawthorn month after the Hawthorn moon and the Hawthorn tree. It is celebrated as a time of fertility, masculinity, sexual energy and fire. It is considered to be a time when male potency is high. The Hawthorn is closely linked to witches due to the ancient belief that witches had been transformed into trees. Magic performed next to a Hawthorn tree or during its month was thought to be twice as powerful as regular magic.

Its Celtic name is Huath and it is believed that it represents healing, protection, passion, commitment and challenge. Use the fertility and prosperous energies attributed to the Hawthorn moon to help spice up your life. This is the time for lovers to attend to matters of the heart.

The Hawthorn has a raw phallic sort of energy about it. It can be used for magic related to masculine power, business decisions and making professional connections. Hawthorn is also associated with the realm of the Faerie. When the Hawthorn grows in tandem with an Ash and Oak it is believed to draw the Faerie.

Adorned with flowers in spring, berries in autumn and thorns in winter has led to its association with the three faces of the Great Goddess. The Maiden (virginal white flowers of spring) The Mother (rich fertile red berries of summer) and the Crown (the cruel thorns of winter).

May is a very busy month loaded with a lot of days of celebration. The following are just a few. May 4<sup>th</sup> is the Festival of the god Mercury. The first Saturday in May is World Naked Gardening Day. As you may guess it's not widely celebrated in our area because it can still be a little cold out in early May. But if it's a warm sunny day, why not? Just remember your sun screen. Every 3<sup>rd</sup> year on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Belgium is the Festival of Cats. May 23<sup>rd</sup> is World Turtle Day. May 26<sup>th</sup> is World Dracula Day. It commemorates Bram Stoker's novel 'Dracula' being first published on May 26<sup>th</sup> 1897. With a little research you can find many more. Hope your May is happy and prosperous.

*- from the Porch, by Brian Horl*

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