



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
January—February 2024 • Vol. 28 No. 1

## John Boyd Thacher Park designated U.S. National Natural Landmark!



Photos by Dave Tieman

On December 11, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Dab Haaland designated John Boyd Thacher State Park as a U.S. National Natural Landmark. It is one of only two sites to achieve this distinction this year, and one of now 604 sites nationwide.

Thacher Park earned this honor because of the extraordinary value of the Helderberg Escarpment: The cliff face shows a cross

section of distinctively layered rock that spans 63 million years (450—388 million years ago). Most interesting are the layers that cover the Middle Paleozoic Era (444–359 million years ago) and include fossil rich deposits. Thacher Park has the most complete and minimally disturbed fossil record of the Middle Paleozoic Era in the Appalachian Plateau, and possibly across North America, according to the National Park Service. This era is critical in the study of North American Geology since most of eastern North America consists of rocks of that period.

To add to the rich geological history, the local forests have been protected from development and support a strong network of biodiversity including unique plants, animals, and habitat.

As most of you know, the park is open year round and is located about 12 miles from Albany. It offers miles of scenic trails that include waterfalls and vistas that will amaze anyone who has ever been there.

This dedication has been many decades in the making. Many thanks to everybody who was influential in bringing this about, starting with Tim Albright who first sought this designation over three decades ago, to Nick Venti from the Massachusetts Geological Survey and Friends of Thacher board member Chuck Ver Straeten from the New York State Museum who were involved in the most recent application. Stay tuned for updates on a Dedication Ceremony!

- by Brian Horl

### Further reading:

<https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/new-landmarks-reveal-stories-millions-of-years-in-the-making-below-and-above-ground.htm>

<https://altamontenterprise.com/12152023/nps-cliff-face-thacher-park-shows-63m-years-earths-history>

<https://altamontenterprise.com/12142023/man-mission-tim-albright-succeeds-having-thacher-park-recognized-national-natural-landmark>



## LONG PATH RE-ROUTE

### - from the Indian Ladder Trail to Hailes Cave - and a History

It was in the late 1990's, when the Long Path was extended north - beyond the Indian Ladder Trail. I was there. When I found out that the plan was to go across the field, and into the woods, and the trail would extend on to Hailes Cave, I expressed my concern that the trail should instead follow the "Escarpment" fence, with the extended views. But, I was told that the Long Path was intended to be in the woods as much as possible! I wasn't involved with the trail building though.

Four "re-routes" resulted over time: About  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the way, the trail angled left, up a hillside, before descending, and crossing the old ball field. The first thing that happened was that the trail was discovered to be on private land and had to be relocated! So, that section of the trail was moved back down on more level ground, and still went across the ball field.

Second: near the beginning, to get the trail off higher, uneven ground, it was planned to move it right. But we hit a roadblock. Two or three deep drainage ditches crossed the proposed path in the woods - taking runoff, storm water, etc., to a deep natural crevice. Then the water flowed underground under the road to the escarpment's cliff. It had been that way since the Park was created in that spot years before. So we decided that the quickest and easiest way to solve that problem was to run the trail out of the woods - across the fields - and then back into the woods (right where the deep crevice was on the left!).

We next decided to relocate the loop trail going around, to

(and across) the ball field. That was done with a straight trail through the pines. Near the trail's end, it had turned sharp left on an old woods road and looped around to its end near the "pillars". But that old road was low, and often filled with water from snow melt or rain. The simple remedy - abandon that section and run the trail straight - through the pines - to its end by the pillars. That section of the Long Path trail has then remained the same - up to today.

In 2022, it was first proposed to relocate that section of the Long Path - out of the woods, and then along the Escarpment Trail fence - from just below the Visitors Center - to Hailes Cave. And it happened in 2023! On August 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023, I joined four part time/seasonal employees of Thacher State Park - Al, Tanner, Theresa and Jake. We met at Hailes Cave. We used Long Path "jade" paint with 2" x 4" templates. The four switched off with painting the LP blazes on the fence posts, and lopping overhanging brush, and limbs. I carried the paint can to make it go faster and easier, and somebody else carried a bag with all the extra items. We began at about 8:15 am and finished up at 11:15 am - three hours flat! The entire length of the escarpment fence from the Indian Ladder Trail's entrance - north to Hailes Cave - (approximately 1 mile) is now marked as the *LONG PATH*! New directional arrows and Long Path signs will follow, and other signs and Long Path blazes removed when the old trail is "erased", and the new trail becomes official.

Special thanks to the Park employees I worked with for making the project go quickly and successfully, and to Carley Kiernan for setting it up!

- by Jim Schaller



Theresa and Jake



### Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2024

Meeting dates are Wednesdays, January 10, March 13, May 8, July 10, September 11, and November 13.

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

# Friends' Event: Rachel Carson portrayed by Claire Nolan

Saturday, January 13th, 1:00pm to 3:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center



Join the Friends of Thacher board members to hear Claire Nolan, a professional storyteller, teacher, and lifelong environmentalist tell the story of Rachel Carson. Marine Biologist and author of *Under the Sea and Silent Spring*, Rachel Carson is credited with initiating the contemporary environmental movement.

Schenectady, the Performing Arts Center at UAlbany, and Thacher Park.

Claire's love of history has sparked her interest in learning about women who have changed the world. And her interest in nature and the environment led her to tell the story of Rachel Carson, the first environmentalist. Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring*, published sixty years ago, was the wake up call the world needed. Claire believes that the world cannot fall back into complacency and business as usual and this is why it is so important that Rachel Carson's story continues to be told.



A lifelong environmentalist, herself, Claire is a member of Save the Pine Bush, an advocacy group dedicated to preserving the unique splendor of Albany's Pine Barren.

Bring the family and enjoy hands-on activities, refreshments, and Claire Nolan's engaging performance of Rachel Carson, compliments of Friends of Thacher Park.

**Ages 10+. No registration is required.**

**CLAIRE NOLAN** is a teacher of English as a Second Language at UAlbany. She tells stories to international students and immigrants. She can also be heard telling tales locally at Caffe Lena in Saratoga, Proctor's Theater in



The Friends of Thacher look back on a fun and fulfilling year working with the Park, from making silhouettes with young (and old) visitors at the Helderberg Historic Day in February, through providing lunch for helpers on 'I Love My Park Day' in May, dedicating Frederick Holman's painting of the Escarpment to the Visitor Center in August, to serving hot mulled cider during the Winter Bazaar just a few weeks ago. The Friends helped fund the Nature Bus and we are working on taking on a more prominent role in the Native Plant Sale next year. Friends

members helped with trail maintenance including the Long Path Trail re-route, road side cleanup, and Native Plant on-site sale, helped staff the Nature Center, led Educational Programs, and helped our beloved Thacher Park and its mission in many other ways. Our heart-felt thanks to all of you who contributed in one way or other to the Friends! We are looking forward to working with our Park partners and volunteers again next year!

**Happy Holidays and a happy, healthy 2024 from the Friends Board!**



Part of the hot cider crew at Thacher Park's Winter Bazaar: From the left, Friends' members Jill Harbeck, Margaret Naughton, and Christine Gervasi. Photo by Bert Schou.

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
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Bert Schou	(518) 221-8693	Jill Harbeck	

**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, Dave Tieman, Jim Schaller, Rebecca Schneider, Bert Schou, Claire Nolan, and Jill Harbeck for their contributions to this newsletter.

— Christine Gervasi (Editor)

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

Wednesday, January 10, 2024

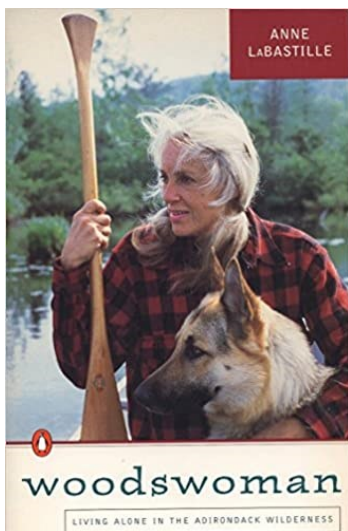
Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

## Woodswoman

### A book suggestion from Jill Harbeck



While we're still in the darkest and coldest months of the year, it's the perfect time for a comfortable chair, a hot cuppa and a good book. If enjoying an outdoor adventure without having to brave the cold yourself, or if you've ever dreamt of running off to live in a cabin in the woods (which anyone who loves the outdoors has probably thought of doing at least once), consider curling up with *Woodswoman: Living Alone in the Adirondacks Wilderness*.

First published in 1975, *Woodswoman* relates the adventures and misadventures of Anne LaBastille as she builds a cabin in the New York Adirondacks and then sets about living there with her dog Pitzi. And learning to live without such modern-day amenities as electricity and running water. Correction: There was running water – in the forest streams and rivers.

In this memoir, Ms. LaBastille interlaces her experiences of living in the wild with historical facts about the Adirondacks and discussions of conservation measures. She also addresses such burning questions as: What do you do if you injure yourself, have no access to medical care and only a dog to help? How do you obtain supplies when the waterways become unpassable during freeze-up and going on foot puts you at risk of getting lost and freezing to death? Is it safe to drink the water? What was in the big bag someone found stuffed in their chimney after winter was over?

Have I intrigued you yet?

Ms. LaBastille passed away in 2011 at the age of 75, but not before completing *Woodswoman II: Beyond Black Bear Mountain*, *Woodswoman III: Book Three of the Woodswoman's Adventures*, and *Woodswoman IV: Book Four of the Woodswoman's Adventures*. Altogether, the series spans four decades of her life in the Adirondack Mountains.

All four books are available in the Upper Hudson Library System (UHLS) and the Mohawk Valley and Southern Adirondack Library System. An audio version of the first book is also available through UHLS.

So what are you waiting for? Let's get reading!

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