



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
March—April 2024 • Vol. 28 No. 2

Amazing Animal Ambassadors of the Thacher Nature Center



The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center is home to 4 live animal ambassadors that help to educate over 8,500 visitors each year! Animal Superpowers, one of the most popular field trips to the nature center, leads students to discover adaptations of local wildlife and inspires connection with nature and the creatures that call the park home. On this field trip, students discover the traits our ambassador animals have to help them thrive in their different habitats. Students are introduced to Lady, the Eastern Box Turtle; Jaws, the Red-Eared Slider; Musky, the Musk Turtle and Athena, the Ball Python. As they meet each ambassador students learn about each animal's superpower, and during a turtle race, get to see those adaptations in action. When it comes time for the adaptation experiment, students

make a hypothesis using what they've learned about each animal's superpower and put those guesses to the test when the aquatic turtle and terrestrial turtle race in water and then on land, showing off their adaptations for different habitats.

Children also get to investigate the pelts and bones of wildlife native to the Nature Center and determine how the different types of teeth are designed for different types of food. Before heading back to school, the class takes a nature hike that leads students through the forests and fields around the Nature Center to search out plants and wildlife and puzzle out which superpowers allow them to thrive in Thacher State Park. For many of our visitors, this is their first hike in nature, or first time meeting live

animals, and there is nothing better than seeing the love for nature grow as these memories are made at Thacher.

The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center is open for field trips year-round. To learn more, or make a reservation, email ThacherEducation@parks.ny.gov or call 518-872-0800.

- by Rebecca Schneider



The 2024 Great North American Total Eclipse



An uncommon celestial event is coming to New York State on April 8: a total solar eclipse! Solar eclipses happen when the moon moves between the sun and the earth, eclipsing the light from the sun. If one happens to be in just the right spot, the moon obscures 100% of the sun—a total solar eclipse. To see a total solar eclipse however, one must be in a narrow band of about 115 miles, so experiencing one is rare – a once in a life-time experience for most of us. The last total solar eclipse visible in New York State was in 1925, but on average, they occur in any one spot only about once every 400 years.

The 2024 Great North American Total Eclipse will move across Mexico, the US, including northern New York, and Canada. The eclipse will be visible in western parts of New York State shortly after 2pm, with full totality around 3:15pm. Totality will be brief and moving, occurring between 3:15 pm and 3:30pm as the moon's shadow passes across northern New York State. While Albany is not within the path of totality, we will still be close enough to experience a partial eclipse with ~96% totality.

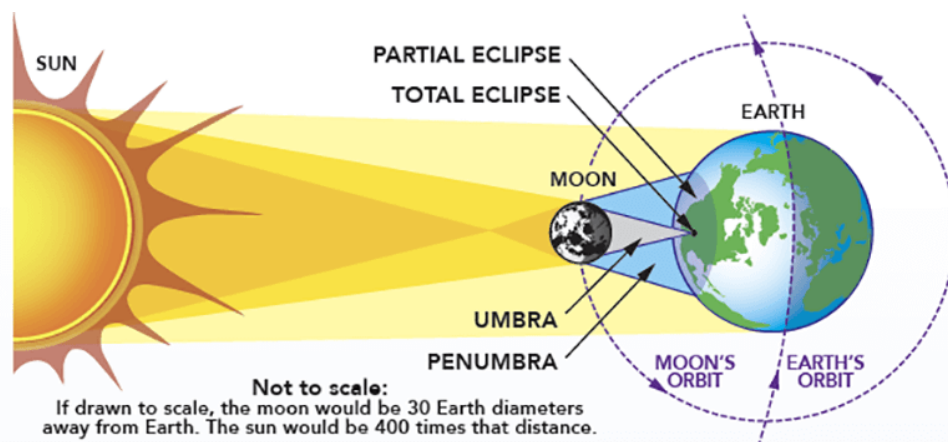
Provided, of course, the sky is clear. And as we all know, that is a big "IF" in April, in Albany, which is overcast between 53% -82% of the time in April, depending on what site you query.

Should the skies be clear though, don't forget to grab your eclipse goggles (regular sunglasses won't do!) and step outside to view this event.

For more information, check out the park's eclipse programs on March 23 and these sites.

<https://science.nasa.gov/eclipses/future-eclipses/eclipse-2024/>
<https://www.iloveny.com/events/eclipse-2024/>
<https://www.greatamericaneclipse.com/new-york-2024-eclipse>
<https://eclipse2017.nasa.gov/eclipse-who-what-where-when-and-how>

- by Christine Gervasi



https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Total_Solar_Eclipse_Graphic_%2836035462080%29.jpg

Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2024

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

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

Fire in the Sky

Every day, the sun rises to the east, travels across the sky, and sets to the west, more or less. Here in the northern hemisphere, the sun's trajectory is longest and furthest north during the summer months, and shortest and furthest south during the winter months. Accordingly, the opposite is true for the southern hemisphere. This is largely due to the tilt of the Earth's rotational axis and its position along its orbit relative to the sun. These very simplified factors explain the "where and when" of sunset throughout the year, but not necessarily the quality or "wow factor." Instead, the colors we see, and their intensity are due to the phenomenon of light scattering.

Light scattering occurs when rays of light interact with particles in the air, changing how the light travels. Generally speaking, we consider the boldest, brightest, most colorful sunsets the most spectacular. Here on earth, the air is primarily composed of nitrogen and oxygen molecules (78 and 21 percent, respectively). Compared to the size of the incoming light waves, these molecules are tiny, and mainly scatter short wavelengths, causing the sky to look blue for most of the day.

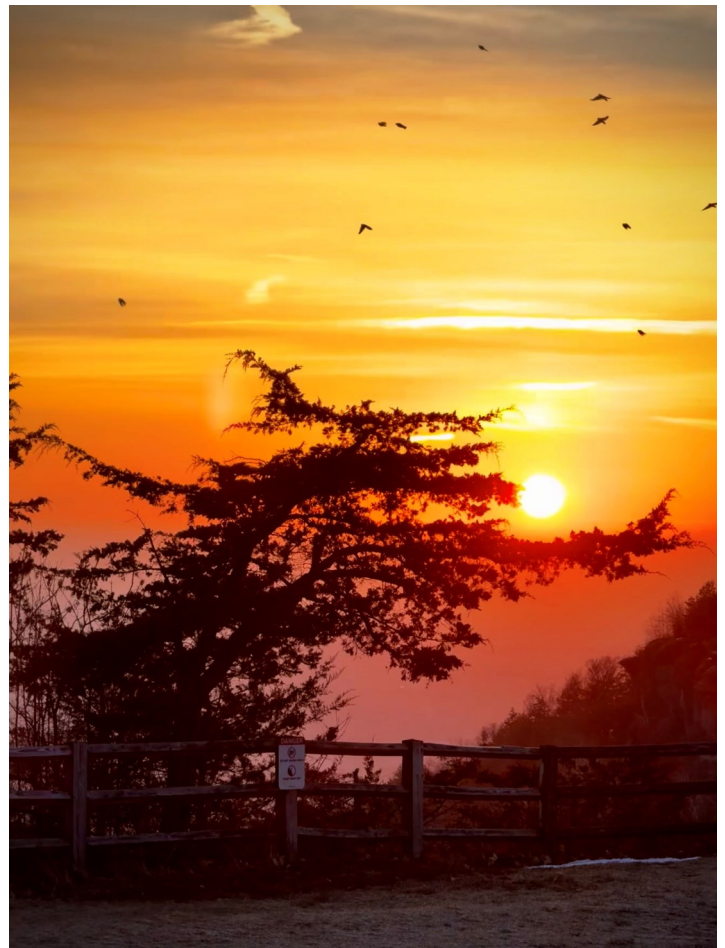
However, when the sun is low on the horizon, as it is during sunrise and sunset, the light must pass through more of the atmosphere before it reaches us, compared to midday when it's more or less directly overhead. In addition to the longer path, there are also more obstacles for the light to run into (tall mountains, distant storms, etc.) so most of the blue scatters out before the light reaches our eyes. As a result, we are left with a disproportionate amount of red and orange wavelengths in the sky.

On a clear evening, we can watch the sun drop below the horizon and get a wonderful light before darkness settles in. More often than not though, we have clouds to account for. While a heavy, low-sitting ceiling composed of stratus and cumulus clouds has the same overcast, gray effect we see on a rainy day, there are many higher

sitting cloud types that can make for incredibly dramatic colors. The mid-level altocumulus clouds floating above 6500ft are typically flatter, may align in rows, and are full of liquid and super-cooled water droplets that reflect the red and orange light waves. Even higher up, above 20,000ft, are the wispy cirrus clouds. They are almost exclusively composed of ice crystals, and may either refract the sunlight, or function like a prism.

There are many factors at play every night when the sun goes down, and infinite combinations that can result in a beautiful sunset, or sunrise! And while the science of light-scattering is interesting and exciting, it doesn't take a scientist to appreciate beautiful things.

-by Victoria Gellatly



Thacher Park is a great place to catch sunrises. Here is a magic sunrise caught by Michelle Johnston.

Check for updates at www.friendsofthacherpark.org

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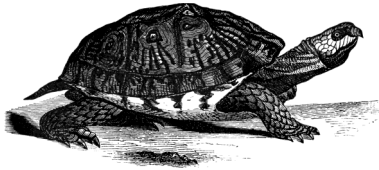
As always, call (518) 872-0800 or (518) 872-1237 to verify activity times and dates.

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

Many thanks to Rebecca Schneider, Victoria Gellatly, Jill Harbeck and Michelle Johnston for their contributions to this newsletter.

— Christine Gervasi (Editor)

**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, March 13, 2024

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

Musings on Winter

When will winter end? When will warm weather arrive? That's a topic of conversation for many people this time of year as they eagerly turn their thoughts to the coming spring. Many, but not all.

There is a small a contingent of us who delight in winter's penchant to linger, for whom brighter longer days, budding trees and sprouting plants, and warmer weather bring on a bit of melancholy. For us winter lovers it means three more seasons before we again delight in the sound of boots crunching on snow, the feel of flakes on our faces, the aroma of burning fireplaces, and the comfort of curling up with a cup of cocoa and a good book or movie while the outside world turns into a life-sized snow globe.

We'll miss the season that, with the outdoors quieted by a white muffler, is a time for reexamination and contemplation, for taking stock, making stock, and feeling more of an ease and a sense of belonging in the world than any other time of year.

While spring or fall takes the lead in polls on favorite seasons, and summer trails in third place, usually winter is dead last.

Nevertheless, here's a toast to winter, least popular perhaps but no less well-loved by a few of us.

-by Jill Harbeck



Winter in Thacher Park. Photo by Michelle Johnston.

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