



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
May—June 2024 • Vol. 28 No. 3

## Salamander Rescue at Thacher 2024



The Yellow Spotted Salamanders at Thacher State Park once again migrated late at night on April 2<sup>nd</sup> this year. While this is wonderful for reducing road mortality from passing vehicles, it does not enable interested volunteers to participate in salamander rescue.

Monitoring the forecast

for the perfect conditions is often a hit or miss, and I often drive along the roads 5 or 6 times on wet nights to check if the salamanders are moving. This year, the migration across the road near Hop Field started after 11 pm, and I caught and released 37 Yellow Spotted Salamanders. With heavy fog and limited traffic (only two vehicles passed by), along with a change from rain to mist, I did not stay for the heavier rain which occurred hours later. It is during this wetter period starting after 2 am when the bulk of the crossings likely occurred.

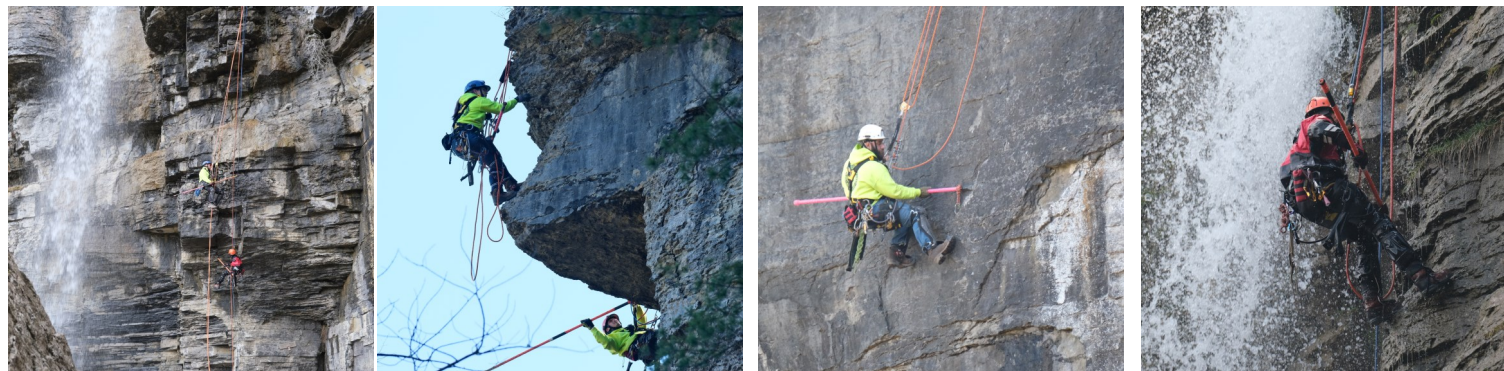
Generally, most of the Yellow Spotted Salamanders migrate across the road in one night after waiting for the right temperature and rainfall. This main migration of the

Yellow Spotted is sometimes referred to as the "Big Night". Both male and females make this annual journey, often to the same vernal pond.

To our prospective volunteers on the Salamander Rescue list, thank you for your interest! Next year, weather and time of night permitting, we will ask for your help in collecting the salamanders that must cross the road. It is truly a rewarding experience to help reduce amphibian mortality caused by vehicles at the park and I hope you get the chance next year. I especially wish to thank the two volunteers I called at the last minute to drive up on a wet night, but the temperature dropped lower than forecasted so no salamander were seen. All enjoyed being out in the rain that night and we took a short walk to the vernal pond to check on activity. We were rewarded with the presence of salamander and frog egg masses visible from the shore, even with the rain drops making ripples in the water.

For other opportunities to get involved or to learn more about amphibians and road crossings rescue locations in our area, please visit the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) - Annual Amphibian Migrations and Road Crossings Project: <https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/oceans-estuaries/hudson-river-estuary-program/conservation-and-land-use-program/amphibian-migrations-and-road-crossings>

- by Bert Schou



Many thanks to the NYS Parks Scaling crew for keeping the Indian Ladder Trail safe for Park Visitors by removing loose debris and rocks from the cliff face each year! Photos by Bert Schou.

## Upcoming Events

Celebrate the **100 - Year Anniversary of New York State Parks and Historic Sites** by visiting one or more of our wonderful State Parks. Of course, that John Boyd Thacher State Park should be on top of your list goes without saying. Consider entering the **Centennial Challenge** by completing at least 24 of 100 activities for a chance to win an Empire Pass, or **Share** your favorite story of a State Park or Historic Site. I am sure there are many to be told about Thacher Park. Contact the Park at (518) 872-1237, or visit <https://parks.ny.gov/100/default.aspx> for more information.

**I Love My Park Day, Saturday May 4** - A wonderful opportunity to join other volunteers to work on various projects throughout the park. Contact [ilovemypark@ptny.org](mailto:ilovemypark@ptny.org) for more information or register online at <https://www.ptny.org/events/i-love-my-park-day>.

**Native Plant Sale, Saturday May 18** - see next page!

**Storytelling Series** - John Boyd Thacher State Park will be hosting several Storytelling events this year. Dates and selected storytellers will be announced in the next newsletter.

**Yoga Hikes** - Join a Friend of Thacher State Park on a Yoga/Meditation/Forest Bathing hike. Dates are to be

announced and will depend on weather. What is Forest Bathing? According to an article in National Geographic from October 18, 2019, "the term emerged in Japan in the 1980's as a physiological and psychological exercise called Shinrin-yoku (Forest Bathing, or taking in the forest atmosphere).... Forest Bathing is not just for the wilderness lover; the practice can be as simple as walking in any natural environment and consciously connecting with what is around you." Yoga hikes at Thacher will not have a formal yoga practice by an instructor; participants are simply asked to bring a yoga mat and bottle of water and join a Friend of Thacher on a quiet hike with stops to immerse themselves in the sounds, sights, smells and feel of the natural surroundings. Participants may choose to join in a Yoga Flow, or simply meditate to absorb the healing effects of Nature at each stop. Participants will also be asked to close their eyes and imagine that the fossil rock they are sitting on was once south of the Equator and an ocean floor teeming with sea life (evidenced by the abundance of fossils at the park). At High Point and Hang Glider stops, you will be asked to imagine a towering glacier in front of you which turned into an enormous body of water after melting - Glacial Lake Albany!

- by Bert Schou

## Thacher Park's National Natural Landmark Plaque Unveiled



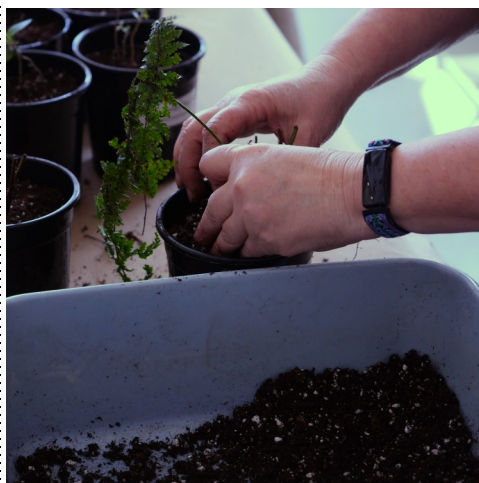
Earth Day, April 22, saw the unveiling of the official plaque designating John Boyd Thacher State Park as a National Natural Landmark. Thacher Park received this designation by the Secretary of the Interior on December 11, 2023, because of its well preserved and fossil rich geological record and its biodiversity. *Photos by Bert Schou.*

### Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2024

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

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





## Native Plant Sale

*Saturday May 18, 10am-3pm, at Thacher Overlook*

Come up to Thacher Overlook on Saturday, May 18, for our annual native plant sale and browse our selection of native perennials, shrubs and trees! This year's sale (Saturday only), is a joint venture between Wild Ones, Thacher Park and Friends of Thacher. Many thanks to everybody who worked hard to make this sale happen, including all the volunteers who helped pot up seedlings and take care of them until the sale!

*Photos by Bert Schou.*



## Musings on Mud

I love to hike and will go out on the trails in almost any weather – hot, cold, humid, windy, icy – with one exception. I will not go out when it's raining because of the mud.

Mud is annoying. It's slippery to walk on. It makes a mess of one's hiking shoes. It fills the treads of the shoes, which then leave tracks wherever you walk. After the shoes dry, the mud falls off in small cakes all over the floor, unless you take the time to scrape something between the treads to remove the clumps. What a bother!

On the other hand, mud reportedly contains a high concentration of minerals, holds heat for a long time, and been found useful in healing wounds, reducing skin inflammation, stimulating blood flow, relaxing sore muscles and joints, and cleansing the skin. When I was a child, we applied mud to bee stings to draw out the stinger.

So mud, in the right places, can be a good thing. Just not on the trails or on my hiking shoes.

*-by Jill Harbeck*

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

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

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	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	John Kilroy	(518) 872 -1501
Chuck Ver Straeten	(518) 872-2223	Jill Harbeck	
Bert Schou	(518) 221-8693	Margaret Naughton	(518) 391-0261

Many thanks to Bert Schou, Jill Harbeck and Sigrin Newell for their contributions to this newsletter.

— Christine Gervasi (Editor)

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87 Nature Center Way  
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<https://etc.usf.edu/clipart/>

Wednesday, May 8, 2024

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

## Visit the 'bog in a box'

Bogs are strange and fascinating places. The sun-drenched open expanse looks like land, but in fact it is water. The water is covered with floating mats of sphagnum moss. If you step on the deceptive bog mat you could sink into water up to your waist. Botanists are willing to get their feet wet because they are intrigued by the strange plants that grow in this nutrient-poor environment.

You can enjoy looking at these unusual plants without so much as a wet ankle. Go behind the Thacher Nature Center. There, Nan Wilson and friends have built a "bog in a box". In a rectangular waist-high box they have created the conditions necessary for a miniature bog. In among the lovely rose sphagnum mosses and their green counterparts, you can find Venus Fly Trap, Sundews, and the most unusual plant of the Capital Region.

Pitcher Plants have evolved with leaves that fold around like a vase. The attractive purple veining on the leaves entices insects and other small creatures to explore. Once they tumble into the pitcher, they're trapped. Downward facing hairs and a slippery surface keep them from escape. At the bottom of the Pitcher they drown in water laden with enzymes and bacteria. The hapless critters are dissolved, thus releasing the nitrogen the plant needs to thrive in the bog's nutrient barren environment, even in a box.

But pollinators could be trapped too. To avoid this, Pitcher flowers are on a stalk held high above the Pitchers. They look

like magenta umbrellas. In the fall the whole plant turns a beautiful russet color.

Pitchers which gather nutrients are a successful environmental strategy. In the forests of Southeast Asia there are more than 150 different species of Pitcher Plants. *Napenthes lowii* attracts the Borneo Tree Shrew with fatty nutritious nectar. The shrew sits atop the pitcher as it nibbles. While there, it releases its nitrogen-rich droppings into the "toilet". Others species have evolved to attract birds and bats with their "toilets".

Our local "bog in the box" can open the door of wonder to a world of evolutionary adaptations. Start by seeing our Pitcher Plants and their beautiful companions!

- by Sigrin Newell



Photo of purple pitcher plant, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/incidencematrix/>

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