



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
November—December, 2025 • Vol. 29 No. 6



## Keeping an Eye on Eagles

Visitors to Thacher Park will no longer have to choose between standing or chancing a rickety metal chair to catch a glimpse of the Park's mating bald eagles. In late August two sturdy log benches, purchased by the Friends of Thacher Park, were installed at the nest viewing site along the Nature Center Trail northeast of the Nature Center.

An article in the Friends' May-June 2018 newsletter (available at <https://www.friendsofthacherpark.org/newsletters/>) reported that a bald eagle pair had set up housekeeping atop an aspen tree, affording them an eagle's eye view (!) of Thompsons Lake.

According to the [U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service](#) (FWS), when the United States adopted the bald eagle as its national symbol in 1782 there may have been as many as 100,000 nesting eagles. In the mid- to late-1800's eagles were considered a marauder and shot in an effort to eliminate them, contributing to their decline. In 1940 Congress passed the Bald Eagle Protection Act to prohibit killing, selling, or possessing them. Then along came the pesticide DDT, which weakened bald eagle eggshells, causing them to break or fail to hatch. By 1963 there were only 417 nesting pairs of bald eagles known to exist.

Four years later bald eagles were listed as endangered in 43 of the lower 48 states and threatened in the other five. Due in large part to Rachel Carson's 1962 book *Silent Spring*, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) banned DDT and other related pesticides in 1972.

Twenty-three years later the EPA reclassified the bald eagle from endangered to threatened and in 2007 it was removed from the list of threatened and endangered species. The most recent published data from the FWS for the period 2018-2019 estimated there were 316,700 individual and 71,467 breeding pairs of bald eagles in the lower 48 states. That's four times the estimate in 2009. As the FWS notes, this is one of the most well-known conservation success stories of all time.

Right in our own backyard, bald eagles have continued to re-use the nest begun in 2018, adding twigs, feathers, and moss year after year until it has almost doubled in size. Spring is the best time to watch for hatchlings, and now there is comfortable seating to do just that.

If you or someone you know would like to sponsor one of the benches and dedicate it with an etched plate, further information is available by calling Laure-Jeanne Davignon at (518) 578-4718.

- by Jill Harbeck



From left to right: photo of the newly purchased park benches at the Eagle's nest by Jill Harbeck; photo of the Eagle's nest at Thompsons Lake as it looked in 2018 (by Bert Schou), and as it looks today for size comparison (photo by Shae Paradise).

# Campaign in Support of a Re-envisioned Nature Center



**The Friends** are excited to announce a Campaign in support of exhibit updates at Emma Treadwell Nature Center and [invite your participation and feedback](#) about the project.

We've shared in recent newsletters that the Emma Treadwell Nature Center is slated for a much needed update of the 25-year-old exhibits you know and love. The project will lead to a more interactive and visitor-focused experience, while providing better access for children and others with different abilities and with diverse perspectives.

This project is a true private-public partnership, supported not only by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), but also by community members and organizations like you who love Thacher and recognize the Nature Center's critical role in education and outreach about the natural world and outdoor recreation. "Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center is a precious and unique resource, introducing generations of children from a range of communities and backgrounds to the wonders of the outdoors." says Laure-Jeanne Davignon, Interim President for the Friends.

*Graphics courtesy of Becky Schneider*

Since last year, the Friends have led a fundraising Campaign in support of the updates, raising \$117,000 from individuals and organizations out of the \$400,000+ total funding needed. While the State and grants will cover a portion of the balance, Friends can participate in the Campaign by giving or encouraging your local businesses or clubs to do so. All donors will be recognized in the updated space, and specific naming opportunities are under development.

In addition to financial support, we invite your input on the project through submission of comments or participation in a listening session, to be held if there is sufficient interest.

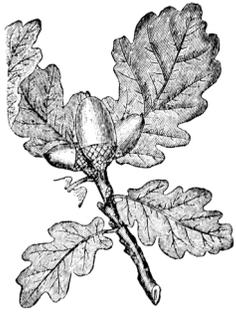
We are excited about this new chapter as the Nature Center reaches a milestone 25th year. "This project recognizes the rich history of the Nature Center while bringing our exhibits into a new century and attracting expanded audiences." relates John Anderson, Chair of the Campaign. We hope you can join us in realizing this vision!

**Review information about the ETTNC Exhibits Updates and let us know of your interest in donating or providing feedback here:** <https://forms.gle/VbkqGfGtRU45LRNo8>



**Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2025**  
Wednesday, November 12.  
7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center. Come join us!

# Autumn Leaves



Every year, usually starting somewhere between September and October, we get to watch the leaves journey through the rainbow before making their way to the ground. Some years this seems to happen in the blink of an eye, courtesy of a wind- or rainstorm (let's not think about

early snow) that strips fragile leaves from the branches. Other years we are treated to spectacular displays of vibrant color that have surely inspired hikers, artists, and poets alike. During the spring and summer months leaves are dominated by chlorophyll. Not only is this compound responsible for their countless shades of green, but it is also the key to converting sunlight and carbon dioxide into sugar for the trees and oxygen for the rest of us. As autumn moves in, the days grow shorter and colder, triggering the biochemical processes responsible for leafy color changes.

In addition to chlorophyll, many plants produce other pigments to aid in photosynthesis by absorbing other wavelengths of light. When chlorophyll begins to break down in aging leaves, these other pigments become visible. In the early stages, carotenoids remain inside the chloroplasts longer than chlorophyll, which we see as they change from green to yellow. For the birches and poplars, this is the end of the line. The leaves shrivel up and come down without much fanfare. For others, like the oaks and maples, the journey continues with the production of anthocya-

nins, resulting in brilliant shades of orange and red. Colors often vary between neighbors, different parts of the same tree, and even within a single leaf. Amongst other things, the differences in timing and distribution depend on moisture levels, changes in air temperature, and elevation. In other words, the colors may be the same, but every autumn is unique.

Though we do not know for sure why deciduous trees, and other plants, shed their leaves in the fall, several theories exist. They range from balancing energy demands under low light and low temperature conditions, to serving as warning signals and protecting against parasitic insects, to aiding in interspecific competition. Whatever the evolutionary reasons, we are lucky to enjoy Nature's annual show.

- by Victoria Gellatly

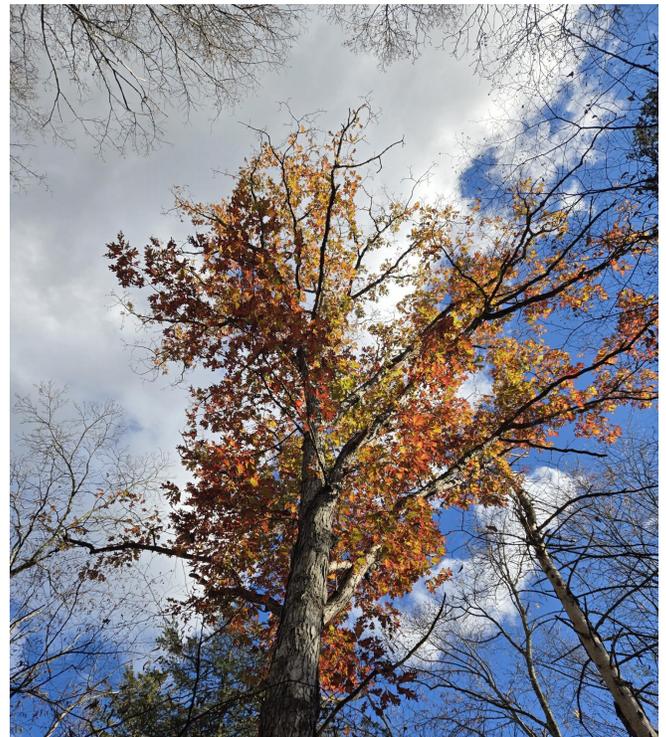


Photo of autumn foliage by Christine Gervasi

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

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Interim President:	Laure-Jeanne Davignon	(518) 578-4718
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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 Jill Harbeck, Laure-Jeanne Davignon, Becky Schneider, Victoria Gellatly and Betsey Miller 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, November 12, 2025

Next:

**Board Meeting**

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

## *Native Plants and their Seeds*

Come to the

### **Wild Ones' Native Plant Celebration & Seed Swap**

Saturday, **November 15, 2025**

from **11 am to 2 pm**

**Helderberg Room, John Boyd Thacher State Park Visitor Center**



This is an opportunity to share any seeds you may have of native plants and to gather new seeds for your gardens. You do not have to bring any seeds to collect new seeds, there are plenty for everyone who wants them. This is an opportunity to learn how to germinate these seeds and about winter sowing, and to participate in nature based Arts and Crafts. All adults and children are welcome! In addition, you can sign up to help with the annual native plant sale at Thacher Park. Hope to see you there!

- by *Betsey Miller*

## *Join board meetings virtually!*

The Friends Board meets every second Wednesday of every second month. Anybody is welcome at our board meetings and we'd love to have you there! Can't join us in person? Join our Webex meetings virtually using this link/QR code!

<https://meetny-gov.webex.com/meetny-gov/j.php?MTID=mb4509c267a4cf81609c3ead02331ca1f>



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