



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
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Summer Fun with Friends of Thacher Park



Friends of Thacher and Thompsons Lake State Park, together with Park Staff, are proud to sponsor another summer of Storytelling on the beach at Thompsons Lake Campground.

While most of the attendees are campers, many listeners also come from throughout our region, thanks to the eye-catching and widely distributed posters created by Park staff, and social media advertisements. This summer, the June downpours required postponing storytelling events several times. When they could finally occur, the first two storytelling events were relocated up the hill since very little of the beach was showing.

This year's summer storytelling series started off with Sandy Shuman, whose stories and guitar playing had to compete with heavy winds. Nancy Marie Payne was our second teller; her nature tales and long-time experience working at Five Rivers Environmental Education Center captured the attention of even the youngest children.

On July 4th, Perry Ground, an Onondaga Indian storyteller and educator who performs throughout the Northeast, delighted a very large crowd gathered for both storytelling and fireworks. And although performing for years in full Native regalia, it was Perry's first experience

performing on a sandy beach. With his theatrical style, he convinced both children and adults to join him in his performance, bringing out laughter and smiles from all. Soon afterward, fireworks burst all around the lake, reflecting off an almost mirror-like surface and topping off a hot July 4th celebration at the Park.

The fourth teller of the season was Claire Nolan, whose spooky stories coincided with the campground's annual "Halloween in August". Most of the campsites were decorated with witches, goblins, skeletons and pumpkins, and Park staff did a wonderful job putting up displays near the entrance. It is definitely worth a trip to view all the Halloween decorations – just a bit early.

As with all outdoor storytelling in the Park, the S'mores table was a big hit, and we are grateful to the Park staff for helping out, especially to our little helper, 10-year-old Cece, who volunteered to manage the S'mores table and taste-testing during the Spooky Stories event.

The sound at this summer's events was greatly improved by a new PA system purchased by Friends to share with the Park for these and other major Park events. Designed for large outdoor events, it allowed even listeners on a row of party barges parked off the beach to hear clearly. Adding to the experience was the regular

Continued on the next page

Continued from the previous page

appearance of our resident eagles, and at Perry Ground's event, a beaver was visible swimming behind him while he was telling stories.

Also, after Park staff started off the 2025 New York State Parks Wellness Challenge with Sound Baths in the new Warming Hut and a Luminary Walk with hundreds of lights along the escarpment for mental awareness (Suicide Prevention), Friends of Thacher joined together with Park staff for additional Wellness programming - Yoga Hikes on the escarpment. All three events were led by Friends of Thacher with instruction by Jennifer Newman of JAI Yoga, whose love and experience conducting outdoor yoga made each class so much fun.



The first session started at the Carrick Road Trailhead and continued to Hang Glider Point for a full hour of yoga. The second was a hike from the Hailes Cave area along the escarpment edge to the Visitor Center, a wonderful spot for a yoga session. Turkey vultures swooped over our heads for much of the time, adding to the experience. This hike continued down the Indian Ladder Trail for a few poses at the base of the bone-dry waterfall - though just a few weeks earlier during the Luminary Walk it was raging, soaking

anyone hiking the Indian Ladder Trail. The final outdoor yoga event was also held on the escarpment edge in front of the Visitor Center, but did not include a hike. The searing 90-plus degree heat during all three yoga events did not deter turnout for this unique experience - yoga with a view!

Additionally, this year's summertime fun also included a Paddle Board Yoga class with Park staff, a wonderful way to enjoy their company while not working. They were pretty good at it too!



Follow the Park's social media and events calendar for upcoming Wellness 2025 events. These will include another Sound Bath inside the new Warming Hut at Hop Field, Forest Bathing walks with a trained guide, as well as additional Storytelling events on Saturday August 30th (Fran Berger), and October 10th. We will also be scheduling Dawn Standing Woman and her husband Eric, who weaves sounds from his own handmade Native American flutes into her stories about nature and Native American culture. Also in the works are plans to bring back Perry Ground, Onondaga (Turtle Clan), later this year for his family-friendly Long House educational program - an event not to be missed. And if you would like to be involved in these programs, or come up with ideas for new ones, please consider joining the Friends of Thacher Board. Hundreds of park visitors attended these programs this summer and volunteers to help with these events are always welcome.

- by Bert Schou

Photos by Bert Schou: Storytelling at the beach with Perry Ground on previous page, Yoga at Hang Glider Point (this page, left side), and Paddleboard Yoga with Park staff (this page, right side).

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!

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



Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2025
Wednesdays, September 10, and November 12.
7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center. Come join us!

A Closer Look at Bee Vision

Honeybees have hairy eyeballs. When you come to Thacher, see if you can capture a photograph of a honeybee visiting a native plant at the Nature Center, or out in a meadow. Expand the photograph to look at the big compound eyes.

Better yet, come into the Nature Center to see the bees in their glass-sided hive. Ask to borrow the magnifying glass, and look carefully. See if you can see the fuzzy aspect of their eyes.

Worker honeybees have compound eyes, made up of hexagonal facets. Short hairs grow from between the facets like weeds in a crack in the sidewalk. These hairs (setae) respond to changes in air movement and help the bee to navigate in windy weather.

Unlike native bees who forage within a few hundred yards of their nests, honeybees can fly for several miles in search of good nectar and pollen flowers. They need a reliable way of finding their way back home, in spite of changes in wind speed and direction.

Hairy eyeballs are only one part of a complex navigational system. Honeybees have three small eyes on top of their heads known as ocelli. These, rather than forming images, are sensitive to ultraviolet (UV) light. This light is an essential part of the honeybee's navigational toolkit. We humans cannot see the sun on a

cloudy day, but UV light penetrates clouds, so bees are always aware of the sun's location.

When worker bees return to the hive, they do a waggle dance to inform the other honeybees the location of the source of food. This information is based on the position of the sun in the sky.



The amazing thing is that, once having internalized the sun's location information, the worker bees are able to recalculate the sun's position as the day wears on. Thus they can find their way for a second trip later the same day, or find their way home at the end of the long day of foraging.

The sun's position is useful for distance flying, but when leaving and returning to the hive, honeybees use visual landmarks. They note the positions of trees, hedgerows and the like. At Thacher Nature Center, they are likely to use the position of

Thompson's Lake and the deck to find their way back to the entrance of the hive.

This is but a brief introduction to the fascinating study of bee vision and navigation. On a rainy day when you can't see the sun, go to the web and search on 'bee vision' to see false color images of what flowers look like to bees. Then on a sunny day, come up to the park to watch bees forage in our extensive native meadows.

- by *Sigrin Newell*

Photo of Western honey bee by Ricks (cropped): https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Western_honey_bee.jpg

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 Bert Schou and Sigrin Newell for their contributions to this newsletter.

— Christine Gervasi (Editor)

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

Wednesday, September 10, 2025

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

Hawk Watch at Thacher Park!



As autumn nears, the skies above John Boyd Thacher State Park fill with majestic winged travelers. These soaring birds, known collectively as raptors, include vultures, broad-winged, sharp-shinned, red-tailed and cooper's

hawks, ospreys, bald eagles, and more. The towering cliffs of the Helderberg Escarpment create rising thermals—warm updrafts of air—that birds of prey exploit to glide effortlessly on their southbound journey. Because the escarpment runs north–south, it naturally funnels their migration path.

This raptor migration unfolds between September and November, with peak migration days at Thacher Park historically falling between September 12 and 22. In past years, counts by park visitors have contributed to the data collection for the Hawk Migration Association of North America. As many as 2,000 birds of prey may be seen migrating south past the escarpment during peak migration times. You may also see Monarch butterflies migrate past.

Why do raptors migrate? Well, escaping winter's cold is part of it, but a more pressing reason is dwindling food supplies. As insect and small mammal populations dip with the shortening days and cooling temperatures, raptors head south to find sustenance as well as shelter from the cold. In spring, they will make their journey back and return to their northern breeding grounds.

If you haven't yet experienced it, watching this natural phenomenon is both thrilling and educational. The park's cliff-top overlooks let viewers look both up at and down on raptors riding the thermals, creating a unique vantage point.

Join us at the **Overlook on Saturday, September 13th**, from **10 AM to 3 PM**, for an unforgettable day of fall migration. In addition to migrating raptors, you will have the opportunity to witness live birds of prey up close, enjoy face-painting, crafts, and family activities, and grab delicious bites from the Buena Comida and Gino's Italian Ice food trucks.

There's truly nothing like seeing a broad-winged or red-tailed hawk cruising the sky against the escarpment's backdrop—nature's free, live performance this fall at Thacher Park.

- by Christine Gervasi

Photo of migrating red-tailed hawks by Will Pollard. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/billmiky/16790163086>

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