



# Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186  
January - February 2025 • Vol. 29 No. 1

## Centennial Fireside Storytelling Series



As part of the 2024 NYS Parks and Historic Sites Centennial, The Friends of Thacher, together with Park Staff, held a number of fireside storytelling events on the beach at Thompsons Lake Campground, and at the Nature Center. A special thanks to Friend of Thacher Claire Nolan, who donated her time to tell stories outside the Visitor Center while it snowed at the Annual Holiday Bazaar. Also a big thank you to the Park Staff who helped set up these storytelling events, including setting up an ADA-accessible mat and providing a fire pit and supplies for S'mores, which were a big hit with both children and adults. But the most special treat on the beach was seeing the eagles flying overhead during each performance.

The storytelling series began with Dawn Standing Woman and her husband, Eric Marczak, whose almost

magical flute music seemed to dance across the water. Other tellers included Fran Berger, Mary Murphy, Claire Nolan, Julia Bianculli and Stefanie Badosic. It was wonderful to watch the joy on listeners' faces as they were held in rapture by stories ranging on topics ranging from Native American, Family, Nature, to—of course—Ghost stories at the annual 'Halloween in August' event at the Campground.

The Centennial fireside storytelling events will continue with a portrayal of Jean Roberts Foster by Eileen Egan Mack featuring stories, readings and songs of the Adirondacks. This event will be held at the Visitor Center on **January 18<sup>th</sup>, from 1-2:30 pm**. We hope to see you there!

- by Bert Schou



Photos top: from left to right, storytelling time at Thompsons Lake beach, storytellers Stefanie Badosic and Claire Nolan. Photos bottom: from left to right, Dawn Standing Woman and Eric Marczak, Fran Berger, Mary Murphy, and Julia Bianculli. Photos by Bert Schou.

## Thacher Park - 2024 in Review

2024 was a memorable and consequential year at Thacher State Park. Several park-wide events and initiatives made local headlines over the past twelve months. On Earth Day, the park unveiled a new plaque at the Visitor Center to commemorate its 2023 designation as a National Natural Landmark by the National Parks Service (NPS). The accompanying ceremony was attended by several notable individuals, including OPRHP Commissioner *Pro Tempore* Randy Simons, New York Lieutenant Governor Antonio Delgado, and several NPS representatives. In December, Thacher celebrated the opening of the new Hop Field Warming Hut with a ribbon cutting ceremony attended by Albany County Executive Dan McCoy, State Senator Neil Breslin, and many members of the local community.

In addition to receiving state and national recognition, Thacher continued to invest in its partnerships with local community organizations. To assist in this process, the park hired Ian Evans as its new Volunteer Coordinator this past August. Together, Ian and Park Manager Carley Kiernan have collaborated with local organizations on several key initiatives throughout the year. Carley recruited Jason Middendorf of Boy Scout Troop 75 (Delmar) to rebuild the Schoolhouse Trail kiosk as part of his Eagle Scout project. Both Ian and Carley have worked with the local disc golf community to refurbish tee pads and signage on the park's 18-hole course. Looking ahead, Ian and Carley are in conversation with the Capital Trail Alliance to help formalize several social trails in the park's southern property.

Within the park, each department has been busy working toward several goals. The maintenance team welcomed stone mason Justin Ratoon into its ranks earlier this year, who has been busy historically preserving and repairing stone structures at the Overlook, on the Indian Ladder Trail, and at several other locations across the park. Additionally, maintenance has continued to remove hazardous dead trees that have fallen victim to invasive emerald ash borer (EAB). In December, Maintenance Supervisor John Wager was honored by the Saratoga-Capital District Commission with a certificate celebrating ten years of exemplary service at the park.

Thompson's Lake Campground also had a successful year. Campers enjoyed an increase in the amount and variety of activities offered, including butterfly crafts, pumpkin carving, and movies on Saturday nights. The campground also partnered with the Friends of Thacher State Park to introduce the Centennial Storytelling Series, which gave campers the opportunity to listen to local storytellers on the beach while making s'mores over a campfire. As part of Governor Hochul's statewide Learn-to-Swim initiative, campground lifeguards taught several swimming classes to children from the campground and local community alike.

Because of its central location within the park and breathtaking views of the Hudson Valley, the Visitor Center was once again a center of activity in 2024. Staff members welcomed and skillfully accommodated large crowds at several events this year, including the First Day Hike, Solar Eclipse, and Winter Bazaar. In addition, the Visitor Center also welcomed nearly 800 individuals from the Nature Bus from May to October. Visitor Center staff worked with educators from the Nature Center to provide free programming each day the Nature Bus visited the park. In addition to the Nature Bus, educators from the Nature Center provided programming to nearly 10,000 individuals across all field trips, public programs, and events this year, with a focus on accessible programming. This feat would not have been possible without Annika Dahlin and Valerie Lewis, Thacher's SCA AmeriCorps members for 2024, and Audrey Trossen, who was hired as a new educator this fall.

Thanks to all staff and volunteers who helped to make 2024 a success! Keep an eye on the Friend's newsletter, Park's website, and Thacher Facebook Page to see what the park has in store for 2025.

- by Peter Farquharson



The new Warming Hut at Hop Field is open. Photos of ribbon cutting ceremony by Bert Schou.



# Reimagining Thacher Nature Center

The Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center was established in 2001 thanks to the remarkable generosity of Fred and Martha Schroeder. Since its opening, the center has provided a space where people of all ages can explore and deepen their connection to nature, fostering a lifelong appreciation and commitment to preserving the natural world.

While the Nature Center still features its original exhibits from 2001, plans are underway for an exciting transformation in honor of its 25th anniversary. The proposed updates aim to create a more engaging and accessible experience for visitors. In the last newsletter we explored the reimagined meadow exhibit. Here we'll focus on the forest habitat.

As you step through the front door into the Nature Center you'll enter the meadow habitat which focuses on the importance of pollinators and the essential ecological roles that meadows play. As you move further into the exhibit, the meadow gradually gives way to the forest habitat, reflecting the natural progression from meadow to forest in the outside landscape.

interconnectivity of flora and fauna across habitats. From using bark and leaves to identify trees, to learning about invasive species and adaptations to change visitors will gain knowledge they can then take to the trails and use to contribute to ongoing Citizen Science initiatives in the park like iNaturalist.

At the heart of the forest exhibit stands a towering snag—a dead or dying tree that plays a vital role in the ecosystem. Reaching from floor to ceiling, this element features a hollow large enough for a



wheelchair to enter. The interior and exterior of this exhibit will house interpretive signage and activities while the most energetic visitors can use hand and foot holds to climb part of the outside of this tree. Snags serve as habitat for many reptiles, amphibians, birds, mammals, and fungi. To highlight this, the forest habitat features a raptor enclosure which will house an ambassador owl! Ambassador animals are one of the most popular attractions at the Nature Center, and a non-releasable owl acquired from local wildlife rehabilitators will be an exciting addition to the Nature Center's programming and exhibits.

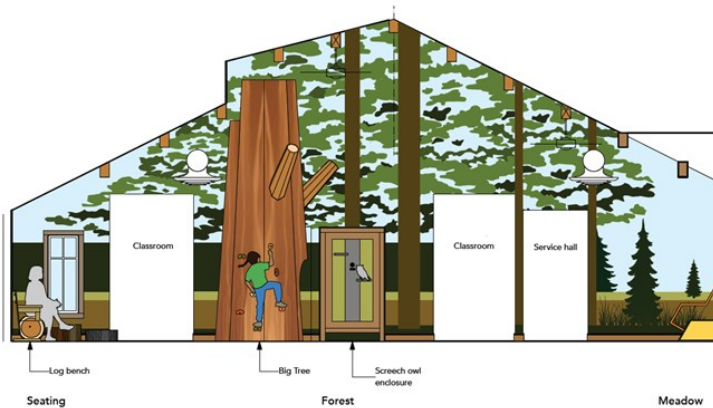
To support these exciting updates to the Nature Center exhibits, checks made out to Natural Heritage Trust can be mailed to:

Thacher Nature Center  
87 Nature Center Way  
Voorheesville, NY, 12186



Or scan the QR code to donate online (select Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center as the site!)

- by Becky Schneider



The forest habitat offers many hands-on opportunities to engage visitors of all ages with the important ways that people depend on forests, and the

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

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

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Many thanks to Bert Schou, Peter Farquharson, Becky Schneider, and Sigrin Newell 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, January 8, 2025

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

## Delighting in Ice



Behind the Thacher Nature Center is a place of winter magic. Part of the magic is serendipity; you must be there on just the right day to see it. Choose a day when it has been cold enough to freeze the ice on Thompson's Lake but there is no snow covering. From the back door of the Nature Center take the path down to the lake. On different days,

patterns on the ice will be different. What might you discover?

Ice spiders, also known as ice stars or ice octopuses have dark centers with arms stretching out like branches. How they form is a mystery, though it appears that it has to do with water welling up through a weak spot in the ice.

Very clear ice forms when there is a protracted time of very cold weather. Sometimes it's so clear that the light passes right through, rather than being reflected back to the eye. This is known as black ice. Occasionally black ice is filled with tiny silver bubbles, a spectacular sight if you chance to see it.

There are many different forms of bubbles in lake ice depending on how fast it froze and whether there was snow or slush involved. Sometimes a bubble will have very thin ice on top which reflects rainbow colors. Now and then a series of big bubble discs freeze in a stack, looking like a visitation of extraterrestrials.

If rain falls on a slushy surface, it makes pock marks. When cold follows rapidly, these marks remain as circles embedded in the ice. Intermittent periods of freezing and thawing including snow and wind can result in piles of icy snow with the charming name of "bergy bits".

Whatever you happen to see, patterns in the ice are magical. It is great fun to speculate about what combination of weather events created the patterns that you find.

There is always something intriguing to see at Thacher Park. Even in a winter with no snow, and thus no cross-country skiing, there still is a reason to come up to Thacher Park. What magical patterns will you find?

Please remember to only step on ice if it is safe to do so!

- by Sigrin Newell



Photos of wintry Thompson's Lake and wetlands off Perimeter Road by Christine Gervasi

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