



Friends of Thacher State Park

Emma T Thacher Nature Center • 87 Nature Center Way • Voorheesville, NY 12186
May—June 2025 • Vol. 29 No. 3

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 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 an engaging and accessible experience for all visitors. In the last newsletter we explored the reimagined lake habitat exhibit; this article focuses on the final habitat featured in the design, the Devonian Sea.



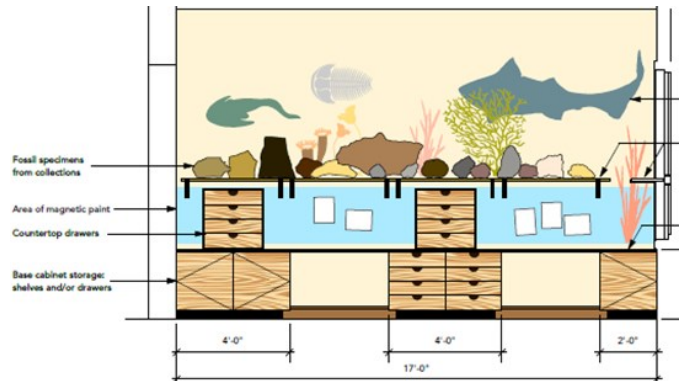
View looking east from room entry

Stepping through the front door of the Nature Center you'll enter the meadow habitat which highlights the importance of pollinators and the vital ecological role of meadows. As you move further into the exhibit, the meadow transitions to the forest habitat, reflecting the natural succession from meadow to forest in the outside landscape. What once was the gift shop is transformed into the lake habitat room, which will be enjoyed by the 3,000+ school field trip attendees that explore aquatic life in and around Thompson's Lake with Nature Center educators each year. The final habitat featured in the design is the Devonian Sea.

In the middle of the Devonian room, a raised table gives visitors the opportunity to



imagine themselves as a paleontologist, unearthing fossils from New York's ancient sea. The layout of the room provides adequate wheelchair turning area, and the fossil table allows for a forward approach for wheelchair users. The sand or gravel used in the fossil table add a sensory element to this engaging exhibit.



The meadow table, the entry to the pond area and the ancient sea exhibits are designed for flexible use, featuring panels on the wall for interpretive signage, and interactive magnet activities which require low physical effort. Silhouettes of ancient Devonian creatures bring this ancient habitat to life, inviting visitors to imagine life in New York 419 million years ago. The cabinets along the wall feature a variety of geology activities, puzzles, interactives, and specimens that visitors can sit down and spend an afternoon exploring.

- by Becky Schneider

If you would like to support these exciting changes, you can mail a check made out to Natural Heritage Trust 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!)



I Love My Park Day Saturday, May 3rd



Do you love Thacher State Park? Are you a gardener, good with your hands, or just looking for a way to give back to the

community? We need you help on **Saturday, May 3**. Come join us at **Pear Orchard Pavilion**. Check-in starts at **9am** and the event will run until 12pm. We'll need your help picking up trash, tending to gardens, spreading mulch, removing invasive species, and planting trees. After we finish our workday there will be a volunteer appreciation lunch from 12pm - 1pm back at the Pear Orchard Pavilion.

If you plan on volunteering, please fill out the following registration link: [I Love My Park Day Volunteer Registration 2025](#) or search "I Love my Park Day 2025" in your preferred search engine. Don't forget to bring your refillable water bottle and to dress appropriately for the weather.

- by Ian Evans

Thacher Park Luminary Walk Saturday, June 7th

Thacher State Park is collaborating with the Capital Region's Chapter of the **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention** to put on our first Luminary Walk on **June 7**. We ask that participants arrive at the **Visitor Center** at **7pm** to sign in and get shuttled to the Overlook for the start of the hike. At the Overlook you can decorate a luminary bag to commemorate a loved one, engage with community partners at their informational tables, and enjoy food and beverages from A&S Spice on Wheels. The opening remarks will begin at 8:15pm. The hike will start at 8:30pm as the sun starts to set. You can add your luminary along the Escarpment trail, as we hike back towards the Visitor Center. At the Visitor Center you are welcome to stay at the campfire to enjoy s'mores and good company until 10:30pm. Events like this are only made possible by community partners and volunteers like you. If you would like to volunteer for this event, please contact the (518) 872-0800, email thachervolunteer@parks.ny.gov, or register for the Thacher Hike at afsp.org/crny.

- by Ian Evans

Friends Volunteers to be Honored during I Love My Park Day

Volunteerism is at the heart of the Friends of Thacher mission. Our members offer an extra pair of helping hands, whether for trail work, through advocacy in Albany for Parks funding, or for many tasks that would go undone if it were not for our volunteers. As Friends of the Park you donate hundreds of hours a year in labor just because you love Thacher and think it is important. You do this without expectation of reward or recognition, but we'd like to do a better job recognizing those that give.

As a preface to I Love My Park Day on May 3 (see related article for registration information), the Friends Board will honor long-time volunteers as part of our first possibly annual volunteer recognition program. We will recognize a group of wonderful volunteers promptly at 9am. After the day's work we hope you can join the Friends and our honorees for a picnic lunch sponsored and served by the Friends.

- by Laure-Jeanne Davignon

Friends of Thacher Park Meeting Dates for 2025
Wednesdays, May 14, July 9, September 10, and November 12.
7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center. Come join us!

Spring Ephemerals

As the ground thaws, the air warms and the sun climbs higher in the sky, the brief, but glorious season of spring ephemerals begins. These delicate beauties take advantage of the short time between snowmelt and the leafing out of trees to grow, flower, and set seed. Once the majestic green canopy shades the forest floor again, they die back.

Many spring ephemerals are perennials and store nutrients in underground organs (bulbs, rhizomes or tubers). Most depend on ants for seed dispersal and have evolved special fat- and protein rich structures on their seeds (called elaiosomes). Ants are attracted to these elaiosomes and take the seeds back to their nests, thereby not only dispersing seeds, but also effectively planting them—how neat!

Spring ephemerals do more than charm us with their elegance, they also play vital roles in the forest ecosystem: They provide some of the earliest nectar and pollen to emerging pollinators such as native bees and flies. They contribute to the cycling of nutrients in the forest floor, absorbing nutrients from the soil during growth and returning them when they die back. They also increase biodiversity, help stabilize the soil and reduce water runoff.

Next time you are out in the woods, keep an eye out for *Red Trillium*, with its dark red, three-petaled flowers, and the delicate white petals of *Bloodroot*. You might spot *Dutchman’s breeches*, with their whimsical upside-down pants dangling on thin stalks, or *Jack-in-the-pulpit*, which often hides in plain sight with its striped, hooded spathe, as well as many other spring beauties. Enjoy while they last!

- by Christine Gervasi

“The earth laughs in flowers.” – Ralph Waldo Emerson

Photos of the spring ephemerals named in the article by Caroline Cartier



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 Becky Schneider, Ian Evans, Laure-Jeanne Davignon, Betsey Miller and Caroline Cartier 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, May 14, 2025

Next:

Board Meeting

7:00 pm at Thacher Visitor Center

Native Plant Sale May 17



Mark your calendars for the annual Thacher Native Plant Sale coming up on May 17, just in time to enhance your garden with beneficial native plants. With nearly 75 varieties on offer this year, the native plant sale can help you build your backyard ecosystem into a welcoming environment for birds, moths, butterflies and

a multitude of creatures native to upstate New York.

This year's theme is "Supporting the Lifecycle of Birds" with a focus on plants that provide the food, shelter, and habitat that our native bird populations desperately need. The plants on sale will benefit our feathered friends in many ways by providing direct food benefit (berries, seeds, fruit, nectar), indirect food benefit, cover, and nesting material.

Date: Saturday, May 17

Time: 10am until sold out

Location: Pear Orchard Pavilion, John Boyd Thacher State Park, Thacher Park Road, Voorheesville, NY 12186

Every plant at the sale will be native to New York. All will be straight species that have grown here for centuries, rather than nativars or cultivars. Prices will range from \$5 for a small pot to \$75 for a more established specimen. Expert gardeners and volunteers will help answer any questions. There will also be tables with community partners and educational information about how you can turn your backyard into an oasis for local birds.

This annual event is a co-presentation of Wild Ones Capital Region NY, Friends of Thacher State Park, and the Emma Treadwell Thacher Nature Center, with proceeds benefiting Wild Ones and the Friends of Thacher.

- by *Betsey Miller*

Photo of Robin on Staghorn Sumac by Christine Gervasi

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