

2023-2024

Annual Impact Report

*Protecting Nature Today for the
Generations of Tomorrow*



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY

BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is one of Ontario's largest land trusts and the steward of Canada's longest marked footpath.

We actively preserve and care for land within the UNESCO designated Niagara Escarpment Biosphere to protect its ecosystems for the benefit of all. We connect people to nature through the Bruce Trail and our protected natural areas.

We are a member-driven, volunteer-based, charitable organization, governed by a 19-member Board of Directors. Working with each of the nine Bruce Trail Clubs, we are committed to caring for the Bruce Trail and to preserving land along its route.

MISSION

Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.

VISION

The Bruce Trail secured within a permanently protected natural corridor along the Niagara Escarpment.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy wishes to acknowledge and honour the lands of the Niagara Escarpment as the traditional territory of Indigenous peoples. In both spirit and partnership, we recognize and thank the Anishinaabek, Huron-Wendat, Tionontati, Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee, Métis, and all who provided stewardship of these lands over millennia.

Recognition of the contributions of Indigenous peoples is consistent with our commitment to making the promise of truth and reconciliation real in our communities. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and play here and thank all those who have served and continue to serve as caretakers of this special place.

We are also mindful of broken covenants and the need to reconcile with all our allies and relations. Together, may we care for this land and each other, drawing upon the strength of our mutual history through peace and friendship, to create a lasting legacy of conservation for generations to come.

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OUR IMPACT



71.9% of the Bruce Trail now on permanently protected land

10.5 km of the Bruce Trail's Optimum Route was secured this year, and 1.1 km was removed from roads.



1,379 km of trail maintained and ready to be explored

Our world-class trail network continues to provide safe, sustainable, and environmentally responsible public access to nature.



17 new protected areas established within our conservation corridor

These Niagara Escarpment lands add 942.2 acres to the permanent protection of our ribbon of wilderness.



91 species of conservation concern recorded on BTC-managed land

BTC Ecologists made 34 observations of 15 rare and at risk species this year.

OUR GROWTH



1,251 new Canadians became BTC Members with the Canoo app

Our partnership with Canoo continues to provide interested newcomers to Canada with a free one-year membership to the BTC.



1,761 hikes led by BTC Clubs across our trail system

Our hike leaders brought 19,418 people into greater connection with nature by trekking with them across the Bruce Trail network.



12,573 members across our nine Bruce Trail Clubs

Membership provides support for trail maintenance and conservation while fostering an engaged community through special events and communications.



63 legacy gifts confirmed

We are sincerely grateful for the thoughtful commitment of those who have chosen to include a gift to the Bruce Trail Conservancy in their will.



11,214 unique donations were received from our community of donors

With the outstanding support of 5,149 unique donors, this was our most successful year for fundraising in BTC history.

Board Chair's Message



Today, tomorrow, and always.

When the idea of the Bruce Trail took root, it was first and foremost an invitation.

In the early 1960's, a group of concerned naturalists recognized that the Niagara

Escarpment and its fascinating geology, rich biodiversity and beautiful vistas, were under threat of development. As they mapped the Bruce Trail, they believed that if people in communities along its route were invited to have meaningful connections to this irreplaceable natural corridor, they would work to protect it.

They were right. Over two generations of members, volunteers, and nature enthusiasts – myself included – have responded to the call of preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.

With every passing year, the Bruce Trail Conservancy builds on a legacy of conserving Niagara Escarpment lands and bringing people into greater connection with nature through free public access to a world class footpath. We are guided in this work by the five strategic priorities set out in our *2030 Strategy: Urgently Protect Land, Restore and Care for Niagara Escarpment Lands, Enhance the Bruce Trail Experience, Support People and Culture, and Inspire Generosity*.

This year was an exceptional one in advancing our mission: we preserved more than 942 acres, secured over 10 km of the Bruce Trail Optimum Route, and strengthened our conservation community with the inclusion of diverse voices. As we share some of the many highlights from the past year in this report, we do so with sincere gratitude to our members, volunteers, donors, landowners, and staff.

Under the thoughtful direction of our Chief Executive Officer, Michael McDonald, the Bruce Trail Conservancy continues to distinguish itself as a leader in conservation and trail building both provincially and nationally. Supported by our nine Club Presidents and the tremendous commitment of our volunteers, we are realizing our goal of preserving sensitive Escarpment ecosystems for the next generation of Ontarians to explore.

The progress made this past year has been the result of bold action, creative collaboration, and skilled attention to an often-challenging real estate market. Through it all, our Board of Directors have given their time and energies to help ensure the good governance of our organization and make these successes possible. I am grateful to each of my Board colleagues for sharing their passion, talents, and skills in service of our mission.

Reflecting on an extraordinary year, I am very proud to be part of the Bruce Trail community and have the opportunity to contribute to a legacy of conservation which began those decades ago in service of the generations to come.

Leah Myers
BOARD CHAIR

Chief Executive Officer's Message



The Bruce Trail is for everyone, forever.

As Chief Executive Officer of the Bruce Trail Conservancy, I am honoured to lead what has become one of Canada's foremost environmental charities, protecting a cherished natural treasure.

Winding its way along the sensitive ecosystems of the Niagara Escarpment, the Bruce Trail is so much more than a footpath; it is a testament to the enduring power of nature, a Canadian conservation success story, and a source of inspiration for countless individuals. Together, we act today to preserve the vital biodiversity within this corridor, and the Trail that connects us all to it, for future generations.

As you will learn in this report, one of our most significant accomplishments this year was adding 17 new properties to the Bruce Trail corridor. This level of conservation is only possible because of the efforts of dedicated volunteers, the expertise of our staff, and the exceptional support of our Board of Directors and donors. As we secure more of our ribbon of wilderness, we invite more life into it: we restore diminishing habitats with expert stewardship so wildlife can thrive while offering more ways for people to responsibly explore the Niagara Escarpment. This and many more of the successes highlighted in this report are strong evidence of our fundamental belief that when people are connected to nature, better conservation outcomes can be achieved.

The Bruce Trail is a free public recreational resource; a place where people of all ages, interests and backgrounds can find solace, inspiration, and a sense of belonging. While ensuring our footpath remains safe, navigable, and enjoyable, it has been just as important to make sure all feel welcome out on the Trail, in our Clubs, and as part of our wider community. I am so proud of the support our members, volunteers, donors, partners and staff have shared for this aspect of our mission. The Bruce Trail truly is for everyone.

To me, the Bruce Trail is a symbol of hope, resilience, and the enduring power of collective action. It is a testament to what we can achieve when we come together to protect something we love for generations and beyond.

Michael McDonald
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Urgently Protect Land

As one of Ontario's largest land trusts, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is dedicated to the preservation of Niagara Escarpment lands and the protection of the Bruce Trail. This year, with the outstanding support of our community, we greatly increased our impact, adding 17 properties and over 942 acres to our conservation corridor.

As we secure these and future lands, we create stable habitat for flora and fauna to flourish. Connected natural corridors such as this support wildlife migration, the protection of species at risk, and the restoration of native ecosystems. By preserving the Niagara Escarpment, we also protect the connectivity of the iconic Bruce Trail, ensuring future generations can build a relationship with our natural heritage and continue our legacy of critical conservation.

Over the past year we preserved the last remaining vulnerable section of the Bruce Trail along Georgian Bay with the creation of Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve on the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula. Over 600 metres of beautiful shoreline is now protected forever, completing a 560-acre conservation corridor that will help wildlife thrive.



Photo: Brian Popallier



Photo: Nature Conservancy of Canada

This spring, the BTC once again went to Ottawa to attend Nature on the Hill, an annual three-day advocacy initiative that brings together conservation organizations from across the country. We were grateful to meet with policy advisors and Members of Parliament about making a commitment to protecting the biodiversity of the Niagara Escarpment.

BTC Chief Executive Officer Michael McDonald was invited by the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, Andrea Khanjin, to participate in the Roundtable for Greenlands funding where he spoke about the value the Bruce Trail brings to communities across the Niagara Escarpment and the urgent need to protect near-urban nature.



Photo:

CONSERVATION CORRIDOR GROWTH	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Acres of Niagara Escarpment preserved in the year	942 acres	445 acres	1,039 acres
Number of new protected natural areas established	17	6	14
Total acres stewarded by the Bruce Trail Conservancy	15,212 acres	14,304 acres	13,932 acres
Total acres the Bruce Trail Conservancy has been involved in preserving	20,460 acres	19,637 acres	18,889 acres
Length of Bruce Trail's Optimum Route secured in the year	10.5 km	3.59 km	10.9 km
Percentage of Bruce Trail's Optimum Route on permanently protected land	71.9%	70.6%	70.2%

URGENTLY PROTECT LAND

Our Newly Protected Natural Areas 2023-2024



SUNRISE SHORES NATURE RESERVE
64 acres | 621 m of trail



MAPLECROSS NATURE RESERVE AT HOPE BAY
463.5 acres | 2,475 m of trail



THE BILL & CECILIE MOSES FAMILY PROPERTY
35 acres | 945 m of trail



WOODFORD KARST NATURE RESERVE
40 acres | 700 m of trail



MOSSY GORGE NATURE RESERVE
50 acres | 408 m of trail



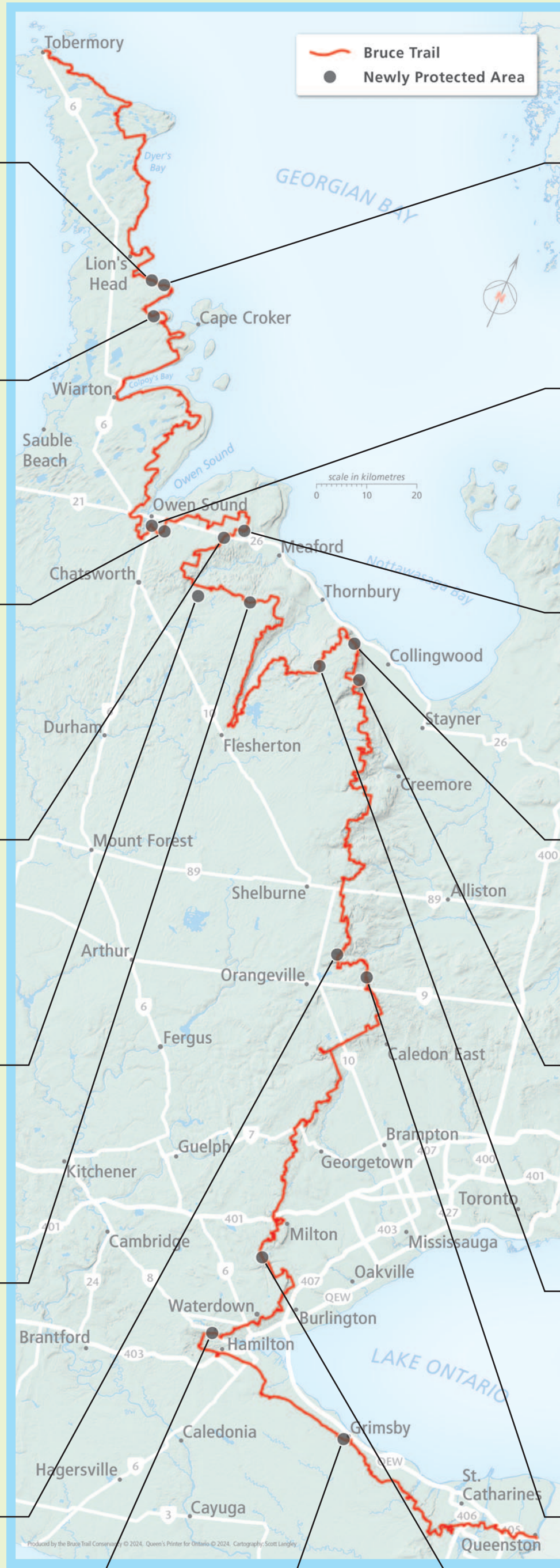
BLANTYRE SPRINGS NATURE RESERVE (EXPANSION)
12.6 acres | 635 m of trail



COLDWATER RAVINE NATURE RESERVE
20 acres | 196 m of trail



BIRDIE'S PATH
2.3 acres | 832 m of trail



LICHEN GROVE NATURE RESERVE
24 acres | 1,300 m of trail



SUMAC LANDING
16.5 acres | 398 m of trail



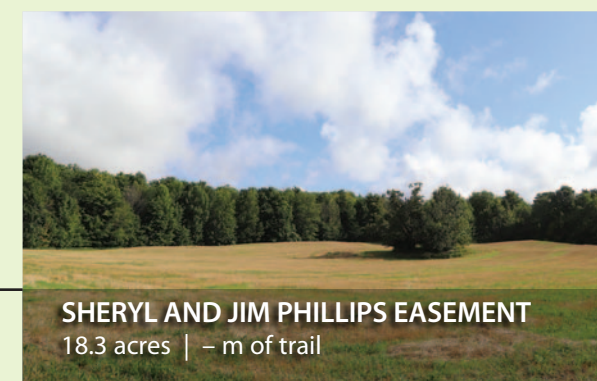
CATTAIL MARSH NATURE RESERVE
153 acres | 820 m of trail



CROAKS HOLLOW
44 acres | 600 m of trail



OSLER BLUFF SKI CLUB EASEMENT
0.2 acres | 33 m of trail



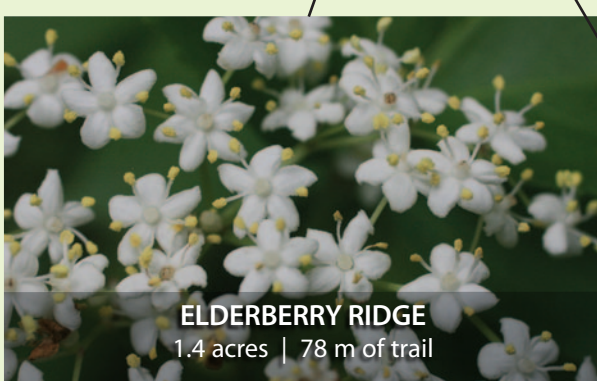
SHERYL AND JIM PHILLIPS EASEMENT
18.3 acres | - m of trail



TWIN WATERS NATURE RESERVE
15 acres | 650 m of trail



KILBRIDE PASS
1.5 acres | 319 m of trail



ELDERBERRY RIDGE
1.4 acres | 78 m of trail

Produced by the Bruce Trail Conservancy © 2024, Queen's Printer for Ontario © 2024. Cartography: Scott Langley

URGENTLY PROTECT LAND

Establishing New Protected Areas

AREAS PROTECTED BY THE BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY IN 2023-2024

PROTECTED NATURAL AREA	CLUB SECTION	AREA PRESERVED	OPTIMUM ROUTE SECURED	FUNDING (See Legend)
Mossy Gorge Nature Reserve	Sydenham	50	408	1, 3, 4
MapleCross Nature Reserve at Hope Bay	Peninsula	463.5	2,475	1, 4
Kilbride Pass	Iroquoia	1.5	319	1
Lichen Grove Nature Reserve	Peninsula	24	1,300	1, 4
Blantyre Springs Nature Reserve (expansion)	Beaver Valley	12.6	635	1, 4
Osler Bluff Ski Club Easement	Blue Mountains	0.2	33	5
Birdie's Path	Iroquoia	2.3	832	1
Cattail Marsh Nature Reserve	Sydenham	153	820	1, 3, 4
Twin Waters Nature Reserve	Caledon	15	650	1
Elderberry Ridge	Iroquoia	1.4	78	1
Woodford Karst Nature Reserve	Sydenham	40	700	1, 4
Sumac Landing	Sydenham	16.5	398	1
Coldwater Ravine Nature Reserve	Caledon	20	196	1
Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve	Peninsula	64	621	1, 4
The Bill & Cecilie Moses Family Property	Sydenham	35	945	2
Croaks Hollow	Beaver Valley	44	600	1
Sheryl and Jim Phillips Easement	Beaver Valley	18.3	-	5
TOTAL 17 Protected Natural Areas		942.2 acres	10,500 m	

LEGEND FOR FUNDING
 1-BTC donors 2-Donation of Land 3-Ontario Land Trust Alliance and Government of Ontario 4-Environment and Climate Change Canada 5-Land Easement



Restore and Care for Escarpment Lands

The Niagara Escarpment is one of the most biodiverse regions on earth and the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is proud to work together with hundreds of volunteers to protect and preserve the species who make it their home. Over the last year, the BTC's Land Stewardship team and Club volunteers have helped bring the lands in our ribbon of wilderness back to their natural state through careful stewardship, sustainably planting native species, and restoring rare and declining ecosystems.

Together with community partners and allied organizations, we are working to bring species at risk back from the brink while improving the ecological health of this UNESCO World Biosphere. In addition to supporting all life within our conservation corridor, this important work also provides natural methods of climate change mitigation, supporting a vibrant future for plants, animals and people in Escarpment communities.

BTC staff and volunteers from our nine Bruce Trail Clubs planted 4,749 trees across our trail system in the last year. An additional 525 native wildflower and grass plugs were also planted to help restore native species at Fisher's Pond in the Iroquoia section and Woodend Meadow in the Niagara section.



Photo: All Schofield

At our newly created Mossy Gorge Nature Reserve, a BTC staff ecologist was fortunate to have a rare sighting of a Barred Owl. As these birds need large, unfragmented blocks of mature forest, they are not common in southern Ontario, though we are encouraged by this sighting that these and other species are finding suitable habitat within our protected lands.



Photo: Brian Bellier

TRAIL WORK BY THE NUMBERS

	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022	2020-2021
Trail maintained	1,379 km	1,375 km	1,377 km	1,366 km
Trail created or rerouted	32 km	35 km	26.5 km	42 km
Trail removed from roads	1.1 km	7.9 km	4.6 km	4.0 km

Sowing The Seeds of Tomorrow

Seed Orchards are helping native species make a comeback.

Following the creation of the McNally Seed Orchard in the Iroquoia section in the fall of 2022, our sustainable seed program has expanded over the last year with the addition of two new orchards that will help us restore a wide range of native species across our trail network.



Niagara Seed Orchard

Located in the St. Paul Nature Reserve west of Queenston Heights, the Niagara Seed Orchard opened in the fall of 2023. It features a variety of plants, including Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Mayapple, Common Snowberry, Pawpaw, Coralberry, and Elderberry. This orchard, planted at a site that was previously overrun with invasive species, supports Carolinian forest species, in contrast to the prairie and meadow plants grown in the Caledon Hills and McNally orchards. By diversifying these orchards, we can enhance biodiversity with native species across BTC natural areas.

Caledon Hills Seed Orchard

The Caledon Hills Seed Orchard is in its initial stages on grounds of the Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods. This seed orchard, growing mainly prairie species, occupies a former sports field, making it notably larger than the other orchards. By monitoring the plants and removing weeds and invasive species, the hope is that this orchard will have produced its first significant batch of seeds by harvest season next year, which will be collected and planted on other properties along the Bruce Trail.



McNally Seed Orchard Update

Now well established, the McNally Seed Orchard is thriving, with plants yielding millions – yes, millions – of seeds, including Evening Primrose, Butterfly Weed, Spicebush, Lance Leaf Coreopsis, Side Oats Gamma and Black-eyed Susans.

Thanks to dedicated volunteers who maintain and steward the properties, these orchards are flourishing and contributing significantly to the preservation and restoration of the Niagara Escarpment's unique biodiversity.



A Future Meadow Created by Fire

Transforming former agricultural land into an important habitat.

In the spring of 2023, Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) ecologists worked with specialists to support the restoration of tallgrass prairie habitat through our first controlled burn at Fisher's Pond in the Iroquoia section. Following the success of this burn, our Land Stewardship team decided to use this method again in November at the Vanishing Stream Nature Reserve near Colpoys Bay in the Peninsula section.

Also known as a prescribed burn, a controlled burn is a carefully planned and controlled fire that is deliberately set to consume ground-level woody debris, dried leaves, and grasses. The aim of this controlled burn was to restore meadow habitat by eliminating the non-native species on former agricultural land to make way for native grasses and wildflowers.

Following the burn, the area was seeded with a diverse mix of plants including Aster, Evening Primrose, and Wild Bergamot, and grasses like Big Bluestem, Switchgrass and Canada Wild Rye. Monitoring will continue, and in 2025, additional seeds will be sown to promote further growth.

In the coming years, another controlled burn may be needed to further reduce or eliminate non-native species. The deep root systems of the native plants will help them survive future burns and the fire will open the soil allowing these plants to flourish. The result will be a lively and resilient meadow ecosystem, which will support species at risk, such as Eastern Meadowlark and Bobolink.



RESTORE AND CARE FOR NIAGARA ESCARPMENT LANDS

A New Generation of American Chestnut Trees

Bringing a species back from the brink.

A century ago, American Chestnut trees thrived in Southern Ontario, lining town roads and abundant in local forests. Unfortunately, those days are in the past. In the late 1800s, the Chestnut Blight, a fungus that originated in Asia, was introduced to the area. By the 1940s, this blight had wiped out 99 percent of the American Chestnut population, reducing them from 25 percent of Southern Ontario's forests to an endangered species.

To combat this decline, prevent extinction, and reintroduce the American Chestnut, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) has partnered with the Canadian Chestnut Council to plant hundreds of blight-resistant American Chestnut trees on BTC properties along the Niagara Escarpment. These trees have been selectively bred using pollen and seeds from individual trees with higher resistance to the blight, with the aim of creating a new generation that can withstand potential outbreaks.

In the last year, the BTC and volunteers from Bruce Trail Clubs have planted over 1,000 American Chestnut trees on BTC properties. Ecologists monitor these plantings and, so far, there have been promising results with hundreds of trees thriving. The trees on the Palmer property in the Peninsula section have proven to be especially successful, with over 90 percent surviving after last year's planting. This fall, the project continues with the planting of 240 more American Chestnuts in the Dufferin Hi-Land and the Peninsula sections.

Although restoring this once-significant species will take time, the hope is that these efforts will produce new generations of trees and eventually lead to the American Chestnut being removed from the endangered species list in Ontario.



RESTORE AND CARE FOR NIAGARA ESCARPMENT LANDS

Brush It Off

Preventing the spread of invasive species with Baffin.

One of the most important considerations in restoring Niagara Escarpment lands is managing the spread of invasive plants. Left unattended, species such as Garlic Mustard, Dog Strangling Vine, Periwinkle, Common Buckhorn, Knapweed and others pose a major threat to the unique biodiversity of the Niagara Escarpment.

Managing non-native plants is a challenge that keeps our dedicated volunteers, trail ambassadors, and Land Stewardship team busy. While we work hard to remove invasive plants to make way for native species, we can also work together to help prevent their spread.

Boot brushes are a valuable tool that everyone can use to help mitigate the spread of invasive species. Located at access points across our corridor, these wooden structures offer sturdy brushes to dislodge seeds from boots and prevent non-native plants from being tracked onto the Trail. They are quick and easy to use and offer pictures of invasive species that are prevalent in the area.

In 2023, the BTC began a three-year partnership with Baffin Ltd., an outerwear company based in Stoney Creek with a focus on footwear and high-performance apparel, to build 100 boot brush stations. The opportunity to encourage Trail users to brush off their boots and help prevent the spread of invasive species felt like a natural fit.

The team at Baffin is very hands-on: in addition to providing the funding to create 100 boot brush stations, Baffin staff volunteer their time to help build these structures. For the second year in a row, Baffin celebrated Earth Day by inviting BTC staff and volunteers to their warehouse in Stoney Creek to spend a day together building boot brush stations and talking about the Trail.

These steadfast champions have become involved with the BTC and our work on many levels. In addition to selecting the BTC as a charity of choice, Baffin's Testing Team Director Mark Hubner completed an end-to-end hike of the Bruce Trail through the fall of



2023 and winter of 2024 while conducting Real World Testing™ on their boots. Mark documented his journey over social media, often with special guests, including Tom Green and Elvis Stojko, in tow. Baffin's support of our efforts has grown steadily over several years, and we are very grateful to be partners in protecting the Niagara Escarpment and the Bruce Trail.

We encourage all hikers to help prevent the spread of invasive species by brushing off your boots. Together, we can help preserve the incredible biodiversity that can only be found in our ribbon of wilderness.



Enhance the Bruce Trail Experience

It takes hundreds of volunteers and expert staff to make the Bruce Trail a safe and dynamic place to explore nature. From blazing new side trails to building important infrastructure that helps us move lightly on the land, enhancing the Bruce Trail experience means contributing to a legacy that prioritizes the protection of Niagara Escarpment lands while encouraging people to develop a personal relationship with the natural world.

As the Bruce Trail community continues to grow, we want to ensure it is a welcoming place for all. Whether visitors enjoy birding, nature photography, or having a peaceful place to reflect, when we come together to improve the Bruce Trail experience for others, we invest in a future where everyone belongs.

We partnered with the Association of Professional Geoscientists of Ontario (APGO) Education Foundation and McMaster University to create GeoTrails to help people learn about the geological significance of areas within our trail network. Available virtually or as a companion while exploring the Trail in person, GeoTrails help deepen our understanding and appreciation of the ancient history of the Niagara Escarpment.



With the support of Opensource, we conducted an on-Trail survey to receive feedback about Trail quality and suggestions for improvements. Using QR codes posted at trailheads, hundreds of hikers provided valuable input on their Bruce Trail experience, which is directly informing Trail work and maintenance.



Working Together: Landowners and Partners

The continuity of Canada's longest marked footpath relies on the cooperation of allied organizations, agencies, and landholders who share our vision of a healthy Niagara Escarpment. We are grateful for the opportunity to work together to restore and preserve sensitive ecosystems, while providing a safe and enjoyable experience for all via the Bruce Trail.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is honoured to work in the territories of the Anishinaabek, Huron-Wendat, Tionontati, Attawandaron, Haudenosaunee, and Métis, and on land held and cared for by:

- 23 municipalities
- Seven Conservation Authorities (representing 46 conservation areas along the Bruce Trail)
- Six Nations of the Grand River
- Mississaugas of the Credit
- Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation
- Saugeen Ojibway Nation
- Parks Canada
- Ontario Parks
- Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry
- Ontario Ministry of Northern Development
- Ontario Heritage Trust
- Royal Botanical Gardens
- Private landowners of over 600 properties

We are deeply grateful to all our landholding partners who graciously allow the Bruce Trail to cross their land. Their support protects Trail continuity and helps provide a safe and dynamic experience for hundreds of thousands of trail users each year.

ENHANCE THE BRUCE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

It Takes Vision

Trailblazing at the new Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods.

Thanks to the hard work of a dozen Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club volunteers, there are now two beautiful side trails among the 238 acres of the Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods.

Secured in early 2023, this former Scout camp in the heart of Hockley Valley features undulating hills, dense pine and hardwood forests, and various habitats including open meadow and a freshwater pond, which is home to spring peepers and other amphibians. As the weather started to warm, Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club volunteers were eager to survey the property and imagine the possible trails that could be built.

When spring came around, Trail Development Coordinator Dave Moule set out to get familiar with the property. Moule and volunteers immediately saw an opportunity to revitalize attractive and usable existing trails with a few modifications. These included loops connected to a parking lot that could be created right away, establishing another major access point to the Bruce Trail.

“The skill of selecting trail routes is seeing the land without obstructions.”

– David Moule



Volunteers also identified existing trails that were overgrown and sought alternate routes to paths in wet areas. By the summer, Trail Development and Maintenance volunteers had cleared a trail loop and started minor infrastructure repairs and replacements. In the following months, a 30-metre boardwalk was installed through a wet area and work began on the Goodyear Memorial Side Trail, named to honour the Scouting history of the property. This side trail dips into the valley, offering a hilly and challenging hike that leads to a serene spot near the Nottawasaga River.

The Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club followed this project with the development of the Upland Side Trail, which opened in November 2023. This mostly flat grassland trail passes meadows, the new native seed garden, and the edge of a pine plantation which provides a view into the natural hardwood bush below.

Now Riverside Woods is home to over three kilometres of side trails, which offer options for both leisurely walks and challenging hikes. Along these new side trails, visitors may see Piliated Woodpeckers, Treefrogs, Monarch Butterflies, and a variety of Dragonflies.

In addition to trail building, BTC staff and Club volunteers have been working with partners at the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority on stewardship efforts that will restore the dwindling tallgrass prairie habitat, reduce invasive species, and bring new life to the meadows.

Next up at Riverside Woods: volunteers are in the process of clearing invasive species with the aim of creating a backcountry ski trail. We are excited to share updates about these and other projects across our trail system in the years to come.

ENHANCE THE BRUCE TRAIL EXPERIENCE

Crossing the Creek

Toronto Bruce Trail Club volunteers bring expertise and collaboration to bridge-building.

In addition to the regular work of clearing brush, fallen trees and weeds to keep the Bruce Trail clear and safe, our Trail Development and Maintenance volunteers are occasionally challenged to build structures like bridges over the many creeks and rivers the Trail crosses.

One such project was undertaken this summer by the Toronto Bruce Trail Club. South of the historic Scotsdale Farm property, a bridge along the Main Trail was in need of replacing. After some consideration, it became clear that the only way to maintain the Trail in that spot was to build a new bridge parallel to the old one.

Master builder and long-time volunteer Paul Vanhanen developed a plan for the bridge, including the design, calculations and procurement of materials. The primary



Photo: Laurent Thibault

challenge was that some very heavy 10.3 metre long beams were needed to span the creek, and, as with most locations on the trails, heavy machinery could not be used to bring these supplies to the work site.

These intrepid volunteers devised a plan to have the large beams delivered by the supplier to Scotsdale Farm where volunteer Hugh Hyndman was ready with his tractor to bring them within 100 metres of the creek. Since the beams were much too heavy to lift, a series of round logs were laid out so the beams could be pulled and rolled to the stream. Cribs were built on each side of the creek to receive the beams, and a roller stand was installed in the middle to support the weight while the beam was brought across. Over several work parties, volunteer Neal Stein organized logistics to ensure the volunteers and tools were in place to get the work done.

It took a great deal of effort, but the beams were finally put into place. With the most challenging part of the project now complete, the team began affixing the deck boards and building the railings using pressure treated wood that will help the new structure last for decades to come. The last step was the removal of the old bridge, several parts of which were salvaged and repurposed on the Trail above other wet areas.

This beautiful structure is just one example of the dedication and ingenuity of the volunteers who work to keep the Bruce Trail safe and enjoyable for hikers. The Toronto Bruce Trail Club thanks the volunteers who worked on this project: Paul Vanhanen, Neal Stein, Peter Pritchard, Hugh Hyndman, Marlis Butcher, David Paape, Laurent Thibault, Ian Grindall, and Tim Reedman.



Dave Paape, Peter Pritchard, Paul Vanhanen, Ian Grindall and Tim Reedman

Photo: Laurent Thibault



Fundraising Success: Trail Development and Maintenance Endowment

Thanks to a generous \$500,000 matching opportunity from an anonymous donor, our Trail Development and Maintenance (TD&M) Endowment reached \$1 million this year. This endowment supports projects that help us enhance the Bruce Trail experience, such as the creation of infrastructure like boardwalks and bridges that are critical to ensuring the health and integrity of our Bruce Trail lands. We are pleased to share that these donors have launched a new \$500,000 matching program. All donations to the Endowment will be matched until we reach our \$2 million goal.

Photo: Genevieve Anisovsky

Support People and Culture

This spring, the Aki Guardians, a group of environmentally connected Indigenous youth, began an intermittent thru-hike of the Bruce Trail guided by the Bagida'waad Alliance, which is led by the Chippewas of Nawash fishing families. The BTC and the Caledon Hills, Dufferin Hi-land, Blue Mountains, Beaver Valley, Sydenham, and Peninsula Bruce Trail Clubs aided with aspects of the planning and logistics as these youths traversed the traditional territory of the Saugeen Ojibway Nation.



The BTC was present at 21 festivals and shows this year, introducing diverse communities to our work and our world-class wilderness trail. From Pride events and local festivals to adventure shows and holiday markets, we were grateful to connect with people from across southern Ontario and invite them to explore the Bruce Trail.



Photo: Cary Hall

BTC hike leaders and other volunteers participated in Gender Equity Training with trans-inclusion trainer Cole Gately from Intersecting as part of our ongoing efforts to ensure the support and positive experience of all people who visit the Bruce Trail. #BruceTrailForAll



Photo: Brooke Henry

Our community of hikers, members, volunteers, and partners are a big part of what makes the Bruce Trail so special. Stretching 900 km from Queenston to Tobermory, the Main Trail weaves through communities across Ontario providing free public access to the wonders of the Niagara Escarpment and inviting all to take advantage of the mental and physical health benefits that come with spending time in nature. We also invite our neighbours to make a personal connection with the natural world – and each other – with the hope that coming generations will continue working together to protect, preserve and restore our conservation corridor for the good of all.

Photo: May Zhou

Total Eclipse of the Trail

A once-in-a-lifetime celestial event witnessed in the skies of southern Ontario.

On April 8, 2024, southern Ontario experienced a rare total solar eclipse, which cast the Niagara and Iroquoia sections of the Bruce Trail into three minutes of mid-day darkness.

This total solar eclipse was the first in this region for more than a century. Recognizing this as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity, many moved south to be in the path of totality, which is the area where the moon's shadow completely blocks the sun on the earth's surface. The Niagara Bruce Trail Club hosted four hikes that afternoon to experience the eclipse from the Trail and Queenston area. While clouds obscured the view for some, at the appointed time darkness came; birds, crickets and frogs sang; and millions of people looked up to the sky in wonder.

North of Iroquoia, those on the Trail and the surrounding area experienced a partial eclipse where the sun was 92-99% covered by the moon. While these sections did not experience complete darkness during this eclipse, they were still offered an opportunity to come together and view a spectacular celestial event.

In the weeks leading up to the eclipse, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) partnered with McMaster University to provide 5,000 pairs of eclipse glasses to members of the public to safely view the total solar eclipse. The BTC also offered exclusive programming for members, including four presentations at the W. J. McCallion Planetarium at McMaster University where PhD candidates in astronomy explained how and why eclipses happen and created a simulation of a total solar eclipse. For those unable to attend a presentation in person, the BTC invited Blake Ledger, Manager of the W. J. McCallion Planetarium, to host a webinar recorded live and shared on the BTC website. Attendees had the opportunity to ask questions about how to safely view the eclipse, how best to prepare, and general questions about our solar system.

It will be more than 120 years before another total solar eclipse will cast the Bruce Trail into momentary darkness. While we may not be here to experience it, the Bruce Trail will be, offering future generations a special place to look up and consider the vastness of the universe.



Photo: Niagara Bruce Trail Club



Bruce Trail for All

What we have in common is more important than what sets us apart.

Taking place on the first Sunday in October, Bruce Trail Day is an annual outreach event that invites the public to explore the Bruce Trail and get to know the natural wonder that is the Niagara Escarpment.

At 12 events across our trail network on Sunday, October 1, 2023, Bruce Trail Clubs welcomed one and all to celebrate the path that traverses our ribbon of wilderness. Every section of the Bruce Trail has something special to offer and Club volunteers highlighted the unique features of the area and introduced people to the incredible biodiversity found along the Escarpment through free guided hikes. Many Bruce Trail Day events also included family-friendly activities such as scavenger hunts, blaze painting and tutorials on how to use iNaturalist to learn more about the life around them.

This Bruce Trail Day was also an opportunity introduce our community to one of our newly protected areas - the Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods - and meet other nature enthusiasts who share their interests. Attendees also learned about volunteer opportunities and Club programming that helps connect members of our community to each other and the Trail.

Most important was the message that we shared with our local communities this Bruce Trail Day: the Bruce Trail is for everyone. The BTC is dedicated to fostering an inclusive environment both on the Trail and in our BTC community. Just as natural systems are more resilient and better able to adapt to changing conditions when they are biologically diverse, so too does our culture benefit from diverse experiences and perspectives.



Photo: Brooke Henry

Together, we celebrated belonging and shared our commitment to inclusion. No matter our age, ability, race or ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, or economic or social circumstances – everyone is welcome on the Bruce Trail.



Photo: Sydenham Bruce Trail



Photo: Brooke Henry

Inspire Generosity

Every year we are awe-struck by the generosity of our community of individual donors, foundation supporters, monthly givers, corporate partners and legacy donors. These dedicated champions know that if we are going to protect the Niagara Escarpment and the iconic Bruce Trail, we need to make meaningful investments in securing and stewarding its irreplaceable land. As a result, this year has been the most successful year for fundraising in the history of the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC). We are forever grateful for these incredible contributions which are already working to create and maintain a sustainable and lively natural corridor where people can experience the joy and wonder of nature.

Over the last year, Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) generously provided more than \$2.1 million in matching opportunities through the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund. Our donors responded to our appeals with enthusiastic support, doubling their impact and helping us achieve more significant conservation outcomes. Together, ECCC and our generous donors helped us secure 353 acres on eight properties.



Photo: Brian Popelier

DONATIONS

	2023-2024	2022-2023	2021-2022
Number of unique donations	11,214	11,015	10,890
Total dollars donated	\$18.58 M	\$15.87 M	\$15.62 M

ESTATE GIFTS (RECEIVED IN 2023-2024)

Mira Adler	Agnes Heringer
Edward Borowski	Ronald Kay
Kenneth Corfield	Akira Omatsu
Winnifred Curry	Norman Opperman
Donald J. Duggan	Brian E. Pittman
Sharron L. Fitzgerald	Doug G. Sloan
Lynn M. Glover	Katherine L. Turner
Cornelia Groep	

The BTC was grateful to receive a donation of land and two easements, adding 43.5 acres to the permanent protection of our conservation corridor. These land donations were extremely thoughtful and personal gifts that will support local wildlife and the experience of Bruce Trail users in perpetuity.



Photo: Brian Popelier

Photo: Eihana Dyck

Thank you to our 2023-2024 Bruce Trail Conservancy Donors

The future of the Niagara Escarpment is a bright one because of the commitment of our generous community of donors. The impact of their generosity will be deeply felt for generations to come.

We are grateful to the following donors who made gifts between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024.

\$5 M – \$9.99 M

Anonymous (1)

\$1 M – \$4.99 M

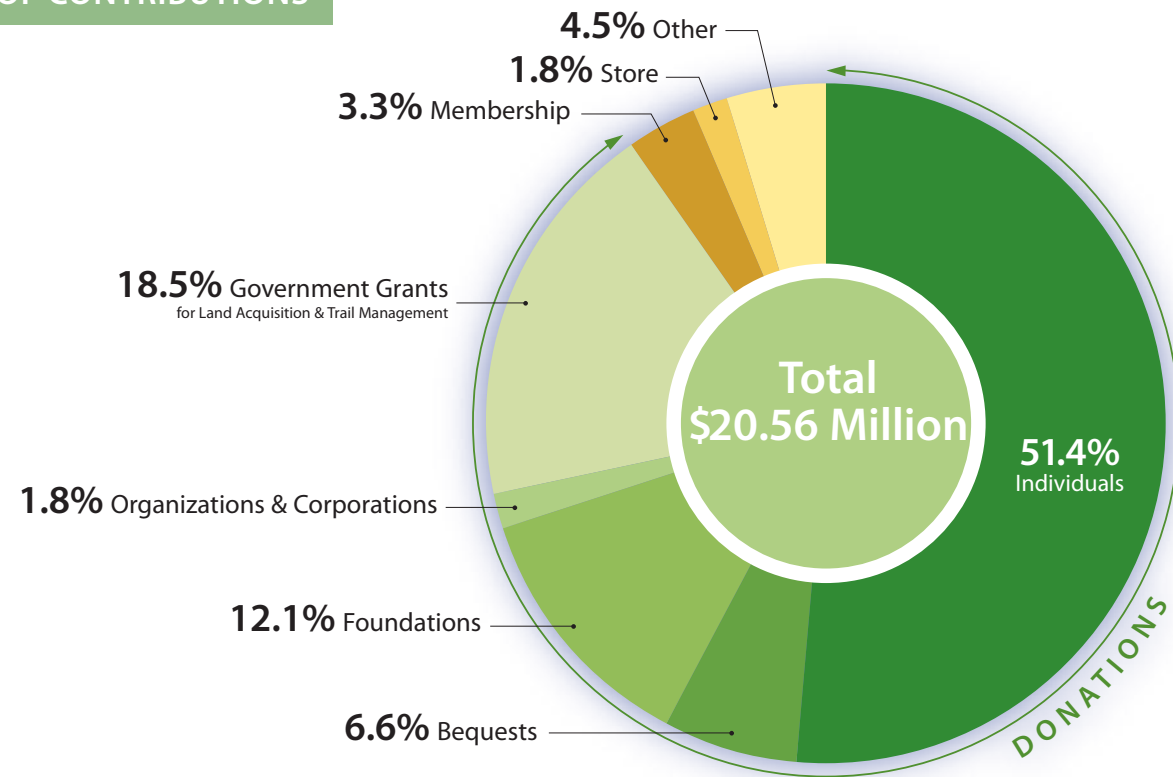
The MapleCross Fund

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Cordelia Tzaferis ***\$100,000 – \$499,999**Estate of Edward Borowski
In memory of Robin Fancott
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Anonymous (14)**DONATIONS OF LAND**

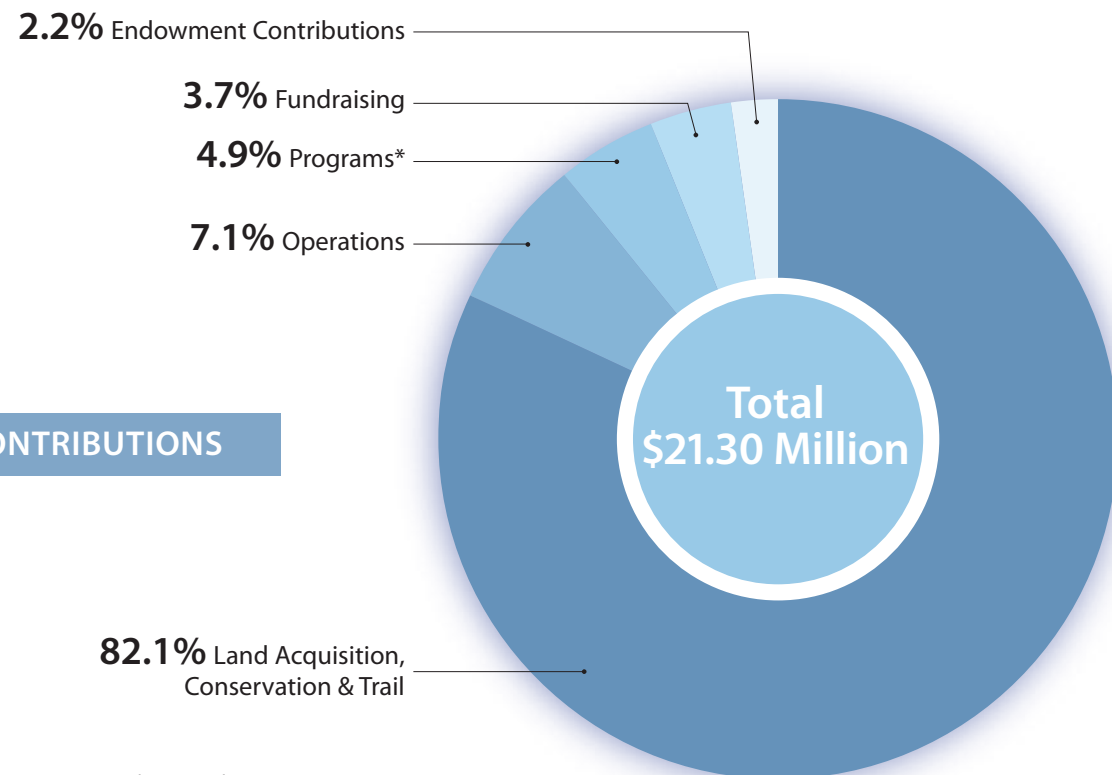
We'd like to thank the following individuals for outright donations of land.
The Bill & Cecilie Moses Family

Financial Summary 2023-2024

SOURCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS



USE OF CONTRIBUTIONS



* Includes: Membership, Communications and Bruce Trail Enterprises

Thanks to the generosity and commitment of our members, donors and other supporters, the Bruce Trail Conservancy ended Fiscal Year 2024 in a financially healthy position.

CONNECTING TO OUR FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Here's how to find information from our Annual Report Financial Summary in our audited financial statements:

SOURCE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Total Revenue	Operations	10.12
Interest/investment income in reserves	Operations	-0.28
Restricted Donations	Changes in Fund Balances	10.19
Net Change in working capital	Cash Flows	
Deferred membership revenue		0.02
Deferred contribution		0.01
Endowment contribution and grants		0.48
Accounts Receivable*		0.02
TOTAL		20.56

* Excluding Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) grant received July 22, 2024.

DONATIONS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Donations of Cash and Securities	Operations	7.79
Donations and Grants Restricted	Changes in Fund Balances	9.32
Donations of Land (in-kind)	Changes in Fund Balances	0.87
Donations Contributed to Endowment	Cash Flows	0.48
Grants	Operations	0.12
TOTAL		18.58

OTHER SOURCES OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Membership Dues – Conservancy	Operations	0.56
Membership Dues – Club	Operations	0.11
Deferred Membership Revenue	Cash Flows	0.01
Bruce Trail Enterprises (Store)	Operations	0.38
Interest and Realized Investment Income	Operations	1.07
Interest and Realized Investment Income (Reserves)	Operations	-0.28
Rental Income	Operations	0.06
Gains on Sale of Land (capital assets)	Cash Flows	0.07
Accounts receivable (excludes ECCC Grant)	Cash Flows	0.02
Recognition of Deferred Contributions	Cash Flows	-0.04
Deferred Contributions and Grants	Cash Flows	0.01
Misc Income	Cash Flows	0.01
TOTAL		1.98

USE OF CONTRIBUTIONS

Comprised of:	Found in Statement of:	\$ in millions
Total Expenses	Operations	5.10
Less: Amortization		-0.11
Insurance premiums		-0.02
Purchase of land and easements	Cash Flows	13.06
Less: Proceeds on sale of land assets		-1.97
Add: Donation of land		0.87
Interfund Transfer: Internal restriction to Land Stewardship	Changes in Fund Balances	0.99
Interfund Transfer: Internal restriction to other reserves	Changes in Fund Balances	0.22
Endowment contributions	Cash Flows	0.48
Net Change in working capital	Cash Flows	
Delayed ECCC grant		2.42
Purchase of other capital assets		0.11
Merchandise Inventory		0.08
Prepaid Expenses and Deposits		0.05
Accounts Payable and Accrued Liabilities		0.02
TOTAL		21.30

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

Fiscal Year 2024

Opening cash position:	\$13.45 M
Funds Received:	\$20.56 M
Funds Used and Endowed:	\$21.30 M
Closing Cash Position:	\$12.71 M

The Bruce Trail Conservancy audited financial statements are available online at bruce-trail.org (About Us > Financial Statements)

Board of Directors 2023-2024

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Chair



Graham
Allen



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Bischof



Gail
Di Cintio



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Dubyk



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Duron



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Jesse Elders
Tim Johnson
Brian Johnston
Together with one representative from each of the nine Bruce Trail Clubs.

For more about our Board of Directors visit brucetrail.org (About Us > Board of Directors).

Looking Ahead

As much as the work we are doing today is for the benefit and enjoyment of our current communities, it is also a gift to those of the future. We secure land to protect the Bruce Trail, mitigate the impact of development and the proliferation of invasive plants, and give threatened species a stable environment to support their survival and succession. Looking to the future, we know that it is up to us to do everything we can to protect the land the Bruce Trail crosses and restore ecosystems that have dwindled over decades without human investment.

At the heart of conservation is a partnership between people and nature. In the coming year, we will continue to forge relationships with those who will help us bring the Bruce Trail under permanent protection and work together with organizations to restore these lands to their natural state. We know that by continuing this important work together, we are creating a future where people we will never meet will be able to appreciate the unique magic of the Niagara Escarpment just as we do today.

In 2025 and beyond, we look forward to sharing the progress happening within our conservation corridor, for our success is shared with our community. Only together are we capable of achieving our mission of *preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.*



Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY

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Dr. Philip R. Gosling

Bruce Trail Founders

Raymond Lowes, Dr. Philip R. Gosling,
Dr. Norman Pearson, Dr. Robert McLaren

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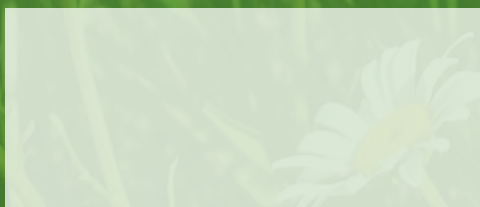
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Meghan Croll
Ryan Mickeloff

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55 Head Street, Suite 101, Dundas, ON L9H 3H8

905-529-6821 or 1-800-665-4453

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TheBruceTrailConservancy @BruceTrail_BTC @BruceTrail_BTC

MAILING ADDRESS:

P.O. Box 857, Hamilton, ON L8N 3N9



Photo: Justin Aubin

Our work is possible thanks to the generous support of members, donors, and volunteers. Their contributions provide permanence for the Bruce Trail and critical momentum for greater conservation impact across the Niagara Escarpment. We are truly grateful for all the ways these champions support our conservation corridor and growing community.