

INSIDE: VOLUNTEER AWARDS 2024

VOL. 62, NO.1, WINTER 2024/2025

Bruce Trail

C O N S E R V A N C Y

MAGAZINE

Beyond the Bucket List



Our Mission

Preserving a ribbon of wilderness,
for everyone, forever.



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY



Photo: Kevin Dribneck

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- Fill out the request form at brucetrail.org (About Us > Stay Informed > Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine)
- Call 1-800-665-4453, or
- Email info@brucetrail.org



Photo: c/o Prab Hunshin

Cover photo: Winter reflection of a Bruce Trail blaze, by Bill Murray

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Chief Executive Officer's Message



With over 900 kilometers to explore along the Niagara Escarpment, the Bruce Trail offers countless opportunities to those with a bucket list.

For many, hiking the entire Trail becomes a significant life goal, a physical and mental challenge that symbolizes perseverance and fosters a deep connection with nature. One of the greatest joys of being Chief Executive Officer of the Bruce Trail Conservancy is signing the official End-to-End letters and certificates. I know that many of these people are ticking off an item on their bucket list, and I share their excitement and happiness in achieving such an ambitious goal.

Hiking the whole Trail is an incredible feat, but it's not the only Bruce Trail-related goal someone can have. Completing long sections of the Trail, conquering challenging ascents, or discovering hidden waterfalls can all become cherished checkmarks on a hiker's bucket list.

Beyond the physical achievement, the Bruce Trail offers pivotal experiences that resonate on a deeper level. Whether it's the tranquility of a forest path, the panoramic views from a rocky cliff, or the camaraderie of fellow hikers, the Bruce Trail provides opportunities for community, introspection and connection with nature. After all, a bucket list is so much more than places we want to go and things we want to do; it's about the feelings we want to feel; that sense of accomplishment that enriches the soul and inspires the pursuit of a life well-lived.

In this issue of the magazine, we share how the BTC is working to improve the Bruce Trail thru-hiking experience, and cover other bucket list items, such as tracking observations of birds, plants and species at risk. In the feature, "The First Drop in the Bucket", we highlight some of the ways young people are getting to know the Trail, either with their families or local groups, and (hopefully) beginning a life-long connection to our ribbon of wilderness.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine*, and that next time you are out on the Trail, you cross a few things off your bucket list. •

Michael McDonald,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



Photo: Michael McDonald

Shoreline at Hope Bay

IROQUOIA

iroquoia.on.ca

First Day Hike – January 1, 2025

Please join the Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club for the annual 2025 First Day Hike to be held at Mount Nemo. Check the Bruce Trail Hike Schedule (hikes.brucetrail.org) for all the details and to make your reservation. A new badge will be available for purchase and there will be a prize draw. Hope to see you there.



CALEDON HILLS

caledonbrucetrail.ca

The Caledon Crusher Run – April 12, 2025

Choose between a 25 km, 50 km or 72 km (End-to-End) run. You will receive a custom Bruce Trail Crusher Badge. A portion of each registration will go directly towards the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club. This event is a collaboration of Crazy Cat Adventures, Happy Trails Racing and the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club. Space is limited to 150 spots total. Early bird rates until December 31. For details visit: <https://raceroster.com/events/2025/96685/the-caledon-crusher>

DUFFERIN HI-LAND

dufferinbrucetrailclub.org

Winter Series – January 11 & 25, February 1 & 8, 2025

Dufferin Hi-Land Bruce Trail Club will again be offering four winter hikes required to earn our Winter Series badge. Hikes are leisurely and moderate paces in some of Dufferin's most beautiful areas. Our popular moonlight hikes will be held on January 11 and February 8, 2025. Daytime hikes are scheduled for January 25 and February 1, 2025. Snowshoes or icers are strongly recommended for all hikes. Full details are posted at hikes.brucetrail.org, where you can also register for each hike.



Content deadline for Blazes for the spring 2025 issue is February 1, 2025.

Send content to: Laura Tuohy, BTC Manager of Community Engagement, at ltuohy@brucetrail.org

BLUE MOUNTAINS

bmbtc.org

Blue Mountains End-to-End – May 24-26, 2025

Join us this spring for the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club 2-Day or 3-Day End-to-End hike event. Both hikes will wind their way through the beautiful and varied terrain of the Blue Mountains Club trails. Enjoy the early signs of nature awakening, the beautiful vistas and the rugged escarpment.

Whether you choose the 2-Day or 3-Day option, both hikes will cover the 69 km distance of our section which runs from Lavender to Swiss Meadows. Checkpoint stations will be offered approximately every 10 km offering snacks, water refill and assistance along the way. The 2-Day hike fee for members is \$70 and \$80 for non-members and includes bus transportation to the start point each day, refreshments, a Saturday end of hike BBQ, online registration fees and the E2E badge. The price for the 3-Day hike is \$80 for members and \$90 for non-members, and includes all of the same benefits of the 2-Day, and the added cost of busing the extra day.

Registration opens on March 4, 2025.

Details will be emailed to participants once registration is received. Note, these are longer distances and generally not suitable for beginning hikers.

BEAVER VALLEY

beavervalleybrucetrail.org

Beaver Valley Snowshoe Adventure – January 11 & 25, 2025

Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club invites you to join us this winter in our beautiful Beaver Valley for the Snowshoe

Adventure Badge excursions.

Enjoy a sparkling winter afternoon in the snow and, if you haven't experienced the Trail on a moonlit evening, now's your chance! We will be leading a moonlight snowshoe hike on January 11 and a daytime snowshoe hike on January 25.

Participants completing both hikes will receive the Beaver Valley Snowshoe Adventure Badge - affectionately known as the "berserk beaver". Please bring \$10 (members), \$12 (non-members) for the badge to the second outing.

Registration opens December 9, 2024 at hikes.brucetrail.org.

Beaver Valley Annual Falling Water Event – May 31, 2025

Come and test your mettle! This is an approximately 30 km hike that traverses the beautiful, rugged upper Beaver Valley. It's a challenging hike during which you'll experience all that spring has to offer, including cascading creeks and

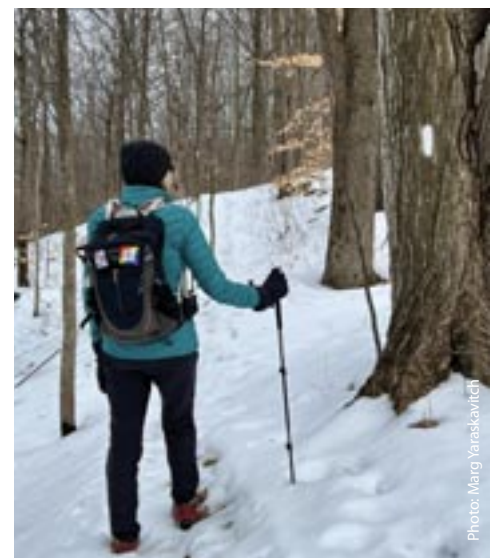


Photo: Marg Yeraskavich

The long-distance hikes in these listings are challenging and not recommended for new hikers. Instead, check out the wide range of regular group hikes offered by Bruce Trail Clubs throughout the year at hikes.brucetrail.org.



waterfalls. Registrants should have experience with hiking long distances over strenuous terrain. The \$40 registration fee covers the cost of the online registration, refreshments and the badge.

Registration opens March 3, 2025, 8:30 am at hikes.brucetrail.org, so mark your calendar to secure your spot. Details of the event will be emailed to participants once registration is received. For more information contact beavervalleytrailactivities@gmail.com.

Beaver Valley Annual End-to-End Event – August 23, 24, 30, 31 & Sept. 1, 2025



Hike the 117.3 km Beaver Valley section over five challenging days and experience the beauty the valley has to offer. Registrants should have experience with hiking long distances over strenuous terrain.

The \$120 registration fee includes the online registration, bus shuttle transportation, refreshments and the End-to-End badge.

Registration opens March 3, 2025 at 8:30 am at hikes.brucetrail.org, so mark your calendar to secure your spot. Registration is limited to 50 hikers. When registration is full, there will be an option offered online to be added to a wait list. Details of the event will be emailed to participants once registration is received. For more information contact beavervalleytrailactivities@gmail.com.

Visit Club websites for more news, events and hikes.

SYDENHAM
sydenhambrucetrail.ca

Sydenham End-to-End 2025 – May 3-4, June 7-8, September 13-14, October 4-5, 2025

Save the dates for the bi-annual Sydenham Bruce Trail Club self-guided End-to-End event to be held in 2025 over 4 weekends between Spring and Fall. Due to parking restrictions in the section, registration will be limited to 48 hikers.

Registration opens March 3, 2025 at hikes.brucetrail.org.

More information will be posted to our website and announced on social media as it becomes available.

SBTC Youth Hiking Program

The Sydenham Bruce Trail Club is pleased to announce the launch of its Youth Hiking Program, made possible by a grant through Community Foundation Grey Bruce. The program officially launched on Bruce Trail Day and has four badges as its core: Boots on the Trail, By the Seasons, Junior Naturalist and

Junior Hiker. For more information see article on pages 14-15 of this issue, visit sydenhambrucetrail.ca/hiking/youth-hiking-program or email Jeannine Kralt, SBTC Youth Hiking Coordinator, at YouthHikingCoordinator@sydenhambrucetrail.ca.

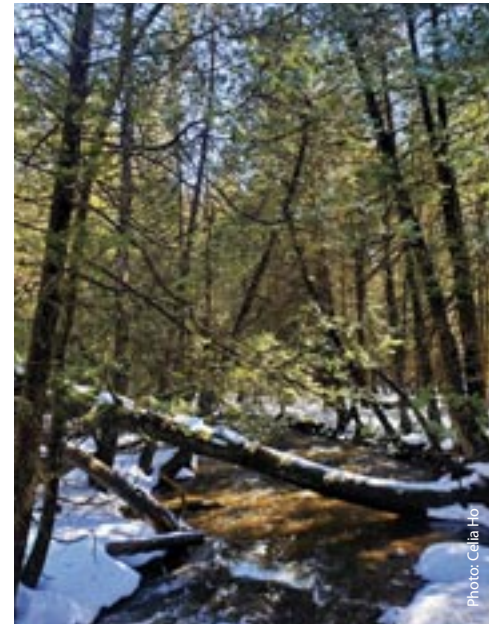


Photo: Celia Ho

Friends of Wayne

Toronto Bruce Trail Club members, family and friends gathered in High Park in memory of hike leader Wayne Crockett on September 25. Wayne was a one-of-a-kind friend and respected hike leader who wore many 'hats' including: Toronto Club Hike Director, mentor, guide, snowshoe instructor, historian, social convenor and planner. The "Friends of Wayne" fondly reminisced.



Photo: Nijole Mockevicius

For Our Members: Winter Webinars

Make the most of your membership this winter and learn a little something new in our free webinars offered by Bruce Trail Conservancy staff, volunteers and guests.

This winter's lineup includes:

- **BTC's Approach to Trail Building and Management** with Adam Brylowski, BTC Manager of Conservation and Trail
- **Prescribing Nature with PaRx: What the Outdoors Can Do for Your Health** with Laura Hergott, PaRx Coordinator, BC Parks Foundation
- **Bruce Trail End-to-End through SON Territory** with Bagida'waad Alliance

For dates and details visit: brucetrail.org/events/#webinars



Photo: Bagida'waad Alliance

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: 2026 Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar

Help us celebrate the seasons along the Bruce Trail by submitting your original artwork for the 2026 Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar.

Since its first publication in 1969, the Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar has showcased the work of artists in our community and celebrated the beauty of the Bruce Trail. As we continue this tradition, we invite submissions in a variety of artistic mediums that show us the unique landscapes, animals, plants, and places of cultural and natural heritage found along the Trail from Niagara to Tobermory.

All entrants will receive a complimentary 2026 Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar. Thirteen artworks will be chosen by our panel of judges for inclusion. Those artists whose work is selected will receive five complimentary copies of the calendar and a free one-year BTC membership for themselves or to give as a gift.

All profits from the sale of the Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar support our mission of *preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.*

THE DETAILS

Subject matter: Must depict or be related to the Bruce Trail or Niagara Escarpment – scenery, flora, fauna, people, historic sites, etc. Artwork is chosen for each month to reflect the appropriate season.

Formatting: LANDSCAPE ORIENTATION, dimensions no smaller than 7½" x 10½" (the finished size of the calendar).

Medium: Original paintings, drawings, textiles, or other 2D media, excluding photographs (for consistency and style, photographs are not included in the calendar).

Submitting your artwork: Mail or deliver your artwork to the Bruce Trail Conservancy office, or email a high-resolution, high-quality photo of your piece (addresses below). If a digital copy is sent and your piece is chosen, arrangements will be made to ensure quality reproduction. All submitted artwork remains the property of the artist and will be returned as soon as possible.

You may submit as many pieces as you like, but only one piece per artist will be chosen. We may receive more



submissions for some seasons than others, making them more competitive. If you choose to send in multiple pieces, we suggest including those that showcase different seasons for a greater chance of being selected.

Please include the following information with your submission:

- Your name, address & phone number
- Medium used
- Title of the piece of work
- Location along the Bruce Trail

If dating work on the front, please omit the month.

Deadline: March 21, 2025 at 4:30 pm

Physical/courier address: 55 Head Street, Suite 101, Dundas, ON L9H 3H8
Canada Post address: PO Box 857, Hamilton, ON L8N 3N9

For more information or to submit digitally, contact Julia Perna at jperna@brucetrail.org or 1-800-665-4453 ext. 221

BOOK CORNER

40 Days & 40 Hikes:

Loving the Bruce Trail One Loop at a Time

Available now at bruce-trail.org/store

In *40 Days & 40 Hikes* Nicola Ross takes us on a unique end-to-end journey of the Bruce Trail, interspersed with illustrated stories of the Trail's flora, fauna, geology and history.

Known for her popular *Loops & Lattes* hiking guides, Nicola Ross has ventured into the personal sphere with this book, writing what she describes as “Cheryl Strayed’s *Wild* without the drama.” It’s part memoir, part hiking guide, and part ode to the Niagara Escarpment and the Bruce Trail.

After exploring many parts of the Bruce Trail for years, Nicola decided to embark on an end-to-end of the entire Trail, but in her own unique way. Preferring to explore without a heavy backpack and without camping, she created what she calls a “loopy end-to-end”. Instead of following the main Bruce Trail from Niagara to Tobermory, Nicola hiked the same distance by combining parts of the main Bruce Trail with side trails, forming loops. With this imaginative approach, Nicola was able to explore and capture the beautiful features and stories of the Bruce Trail’s side trails.

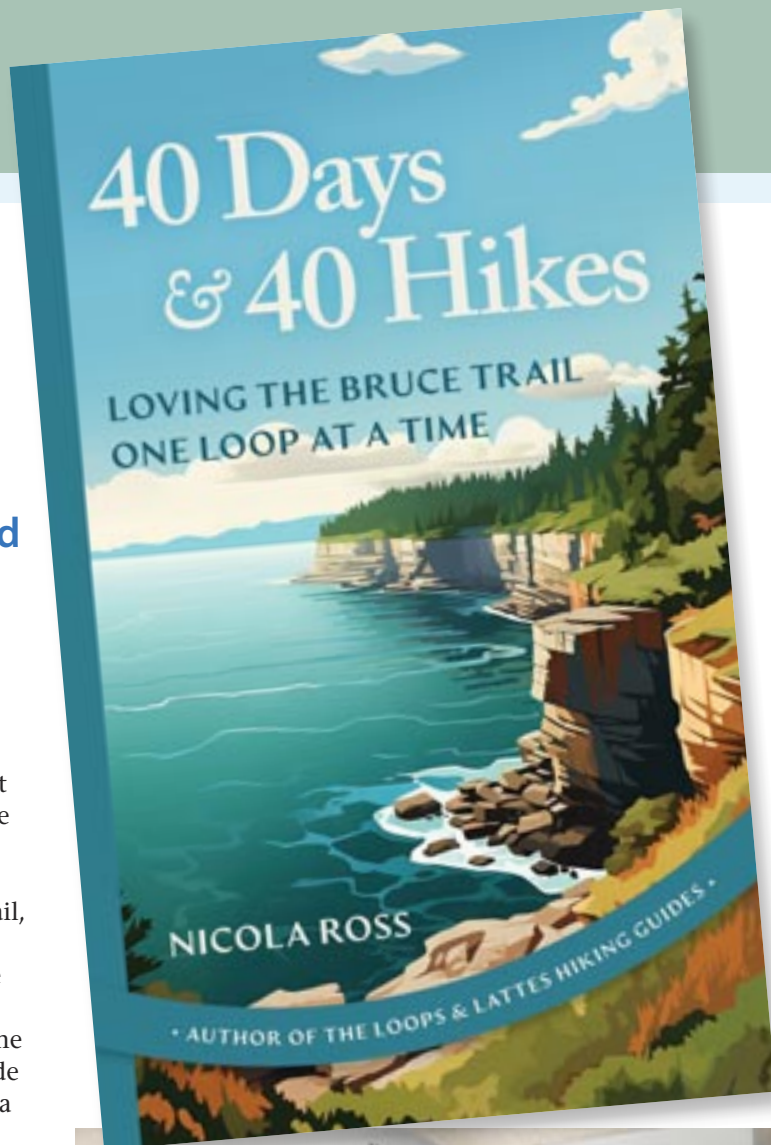
In the book we follow the author’s journey through 42 looping hikes across nine chapters – one for each section of the Bruce Trail. Through creative storytelling, Nicola includes insights about the Trail, stories about its inception, and nuggets of ecology and geology that reveal the importance of the Niagara Escarpment. Small sketches illuminate her writing, and personal musings provide a more intimate take on the hiking experience.



Nicola Ross

To help readers who might like to follow in her footsteps, Nicola provides notes and helpful information on each hike. Her hand-drawn maps and descriptions capture the flavour of her popular *Loops & Lattes* guides, while her introspective writing encourages a more reflective approach to each journey.

Nicola has an obvious passion for conservation and for exploration which permeates her writing. In *40 Days & 40 Hikes* she invites us to think beyond the end-to-end, reminds



us of the many things that make the Bruce Trail special, and encourages us all to explore and to stand up for the Niagara Escarpment.

About the Author

An avid hiker, paddler and cyclist, Nicola is the winner of numerous writing honours including a National Magazine Award. She is the author of 12 books, including the bestselling *Loops & Lattes* series of hiking guides. Nicola’s articles have been published in *The Walrus*, *The Globe and Mail*, *Explore* magazine, *Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine*, *Mountain Life*, *Avenue*, *Ontario Nature* and more. Nicola resides atop the Niagara Escarpment in Caledon, Ontario.

Bruce Trail Day 2024

A Trail-wide Celebration



Laughter, music and a touch of rain filled the air on Bruce Trail Day, October 6, as hundreds of participants joined our biggest outreach event of the year.

Volunteers in each Bruce Trail Club organized free guided hikes and family activities at nine locations along the Bruce Trail, showcasing the beauty and diversity of the Trail, welcoming and involving communities, and encouraging people to get involved.

Creativity abounded this year with a variety of ways that participants could connect with nature and each other along the Bruce Trail. Both the Dufferin Hi-Land Club and Blue Mountains Club hosted live music experiences on the Trail, inviting walkers to take in performances from local musicians while they explored.

The Sydenham Club launched its Youth Hiking Program (see pages 16-17) and the Caledon Hills Club launched the first Founder's Footpath (see page 11).

The Iroquoia Club had the young and young-at-heart painting blaze boards while the Toronto Club extended the celebration by offering an urban hike in addition to their event in rural Limehouse. A brief hailstorm didn't deter the Beaver Valley Club from introducing hikers to the history, geology and ecology of Eugenia Falls.

The Niagara Club partnered with Niagara College to welcome dozens of new hikers and conservation enthusiasts. The Peninsula Club, fresh off its successful Hiking Festival, partnered with Anishinaabe Cultural Experiences to combine an interpretive walk with demonstrations and Three Sisters Soup at the Cape Croker Park pavilion.

This is just a glimpse into the many activities, hikes and community-building initiatives that surrounded Bruce Trail Day 2024.

Thank you to everyone who attended and to our amazing volunteers who made this trail-wide event possible. Looking forward to celebrating with you again next year!



Photo: Caledon Hills Club



Photo: Peninsula Club



Photo: Beaver Valley Club



Photo: Beaver Valley Club



Photo: Blue Mountains Club



Photo: Peninsula Club

SAVE THE DATE:

Next year's Bruce Trail Day will be on October 5, 2025.

Bruce Trail Day was the perfect occasion to celebrate the opening of the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club's Founders' Footpath.

While exploring our world-class Trail, one might take a moment to wonder how it came to be.

Over 60 years ago, a small group took on a 900-km project to protect nature along the Niagara Escarpment. The Founders' Footpath, an initiative of the last living founder and original Trailblazer of the Bruce Trail, Dr. Philip Gosling, invites us to take a moment to pause and consider their tenacious work, and the responsibility we all hold to continue this legacy of conservation and connection to nature.



Opening the Founders' Footpath

Photo: Simon Arndt

The Founders' Footpath project aims to engage members in identifying areas along the Bruce Trail where nature is at its best, representing the vision the founders had for conservation, biodiversity, and an inspiring hiking experience along the Niagara Escarpment. As Dr. Gosling was also the first President of the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club (CHBTC), this section felt like the perfect place to dedicate this inaugural footpath.

The process to determine the CHBTC Founders' Footpath began with three primary criteria: the area needed to be located on BTC-owned land, be away from roadsides, and have escarpment features. The Club's membership was asked for suggestions about where the footpath should be dedicated, and from these recommendations five areas were

chosen for consideration. The Club then organized special 'contender hikes' throughout the summer months to introduce the membership to these spaces before voting to determine where the Founders' Footpath should be located.

The portion of Trail chosen by the members is a 4.5-km loop at Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods, a former Scout camp that was secured by the BTC in 2023 and has become a CHBTC hub. This hike showcases incredible biodiversity, including ten vegetation communities ranging from deciduous, coniferous and mixed forests; white and red pine plantations; meadow marsh; and a vernal pond. This area is also home to species at risk, such as the Grasshopper Sparrow, Wood Thrush, Monarch, Eastern Wood Pewee, Western Chorus Frog, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Meadowlark, and Bobolink.

On Bruce Trail Day, October 6, dozens of members, volunteers and Bruce Trail explorers joined the CHBTC for the Founders' Footpath dedication. Among the attendees was a very special guest, Dr. Gosling himself, who shared his excitement and gratitude to all who were gathered. "Birds of a feather flock together," Dr. Gosling said, noting the power of collective action and shared love for the Bruce Trail.

During the dedication ceremony, CHBTC President Sandra Green shared remarks about the area chosen for their Founders' Footpath. "This huge 214-acre BTC-owned property, with its diverse vegetation communities and potential for habitat restoration, will serve as an excellent example and reminder of the nature we continue to conserve as we follow in the footsteps of those who came before us.

"Thank you, Philip for your ongoing inspiration," Sandra said. "We will continue to connect people with nature, love and care for this land, and lead by example to inspire future generations to responsibly do the same."

We look forward to sharing further updates as more Bruce Trail Clubs select and dedicate Founders' Footpaths. •



Dr. Philip Gosling (seated in centre) with CHBTC Bruce Trail Day participants.

Photo: Simon Arndt



End-to-End all at Once: Bringing the Thru-Hiking Dream Closer to Reality

By Laura Tuohy

Photo: Brett Hodnett

Hiking all 900 km of the Bruce Trail in a single go – a thru-hike of 30-45 days – is a remarkable undertaking. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is working to help people take on this epic adventure more easily.

Beyond the physical and mental challenge of a thru-hike on the Bruce Trail, finding a place to lay your head each night of the journey is an additional logistic concern. Along the Bruce Trail, camping is only permitted in 21 designated camping areas, mostly a short distance from the Trail. But these camping areas are too few and far between to pursue a thru-hike by camping only. So, thru-hikers combine camping with staying in local accommodations in nearby communities, but finding and coordinating these overnight options can be one of the largest challenges in a thru-hike.

Within the Bruce Trail Conservancy's *2030 Strategy* is a priority to “deliver a plan that allows people to thru-hike the entire Bruce Trail more easily”, one of many actions supporting the BTC's goal to “enhance the Bruce Trail experience”. Part of this plan is the creation of safe and environmentally responsible camping opportunities at reasonable

distances from each other on the Trail. Another key element is working with communities and tourism providers along the Trail to connect users more easily with roofed accommodation, particularly in our southern sections.

Why aren't there more campsites?

Offering low-impact camping options for long-distance hikers was part of the original vision of the Bruce Trail, but building and maintaining such sites has been challenging over the years. The intention of the early founders was to create a thru-hikeable trail, and they even struck a “Campsite Committee”. By the mid-70s, twenty or more shelters and campsites had been developed, some by the Bruce Trail Clubs and others by the Ministry of Natural Resources or private landowners. Unfortunately, many were misused or damaged and eventually were decommissioned. In the intervening years, the landscape

around the Trail changed, and the priorities of building and securing the Trail, and conserving the Niagara Escarpment, took precedence.

With more land now owned by the Bruce Trail Conservancy, and more protected natural areas coming into our care each year, we have the opportunity to reconsider providing low-impact camping options.

However, adding more campsites is not a simple proposition. It is crucial to keep in mind that the Bruce Trail is not within a single park or protected area. It runs through land that is owned by over 700 private and public landowners, thanks to generous agreements with those partners. Camping cannot just happen anywhere, and the establishment and maintenance of campsites must take landowners into account.

Creating any campsite must also take into consideration the sensitive ecosystems through which the Trail passes. As natural spaces become ever

more fragmented and biodiversity loss escalates, campsites must be planned and used so as to minimize impact on the surrounding environment.

Stealth Camping = Road Walking

Some thru-hikers, with good intentions, believe they can camp where they wish along the Trail so long as they are inconspicuous and leave no trace. But it's about more than leave-no-trace concerns. Stealth camping can lead to the Trail being re-routed onto roads.

Access for the Trail on private or public properties is jeopardized when the Trail is not used appropriately. If landowners discover stealth camping or damage done by campers or hikers, they may revoke permission for the Trail. This applies to public landowners as well; remember that permission to camp freely on Crown land in Ontario does not apply to southern Ontario or to any areas along the Niagara Escarpment. When permission for the Trail is lost, it ends up being re-routed, usually along roads, ruining the experience for those who follow.

Overnight Rest Areas

So how do we provide the opportunity for responsible camping for those who wish to hike the entire Trail, or major portions of it, and find suitable places to camp at reasonable intervals? Enter Overnight Rest Areas (ORAs). ORAs are simple, unserviced outdoor sites which allow thru-hikers to camp overnight in a

designated area along the Bruce Trail. An ORA is not a "destination campsite." Instead, it's a stopover that people can use to stitch together two days of hiking without travelling off the Trail. Each ORA includes space for up to two tents and an outdoor latrine or "thunderbox". Fires are not permitted and hikers are responsible for bringing their own water. There are currently nine ORAs among the 21 permitted camping areas along or near the Trail.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is planning to establish more ORAs, where appropriate, on BTC-owned land to facilitate the thru-hiking experience in a safe and environmentally responsible manner. In collaboration with each of the Bruce Trail Clubs, the BTC is seeking opportunities for ORAs on BTC-owned land, as conditions allow. Sites will be chosen where the environmental impact of overnight stays can be mitigated.

Careful Planning and Collaboration

BTC Manager of Conservation and Trail, Adam Brylowski reminds us that there are many considerations involved in developing new ORAs including location, logistics, implementation, maintenance and cost, and we must see them as only one tool in improving the thru-hike experience.

"We're incredibly excited to be looking at thru-hiking options for Bruce Trail users and we want to make sure we do it right," explains Adam. "It's important to us that the system we set up sits lightly



Thunderbox at Silver Creek ORA

on the land and also respects and incorporates the feedback of the countless volunteers who care for and maintain the Bruce Trail and the BTC's protected natural areas."

Adam reminds us, "Each section of the Bruce Trail has its own opportunities and challenges to offer when it comes to thru-hiking and we'll be consulting extensively with our Clubs and other hiking organizations to land on a system that works best for everyone."

Will the Trail be Thru-Hikable by 2030?

Through the *2030 Strategy*, the BTC has made it a priority to deliver a plan to make thru-hiking easier by 2030. This does not necessarily mean that the Trail will be entirely thru-hikeable by camping by 2030. For that to happen, an estimated 40-60 ORAs would need to be established, as well as a process to manage their use and maintenance. So, improving connections to local accommodation and transportation will be another key element of the thru-hiking plan, as will developing resources that will help would-be thru-hikers plan their journey. As the BTC strives to honor the original thru-hike experience intended by Bruce Trail founders, we do so while addressing current environmental, financial, volunteer and trail user realities.

Though a thru-hike of the Bruce Trail is not on everyone's bucket list, it is a dream for many who wish to challenge themselves with a fully self-sustained long-distance journey on foot while connecting with the wonders of the Niagara Escarpment. With the creation of ORAs and working more closely with accommodation and transportation providers, the Bruce Trail Conservancy will be making it possible for more Bruce Trail adventurers to have this once-in-a-lifetime experience. •





Photo: Mitchell Clark

New Year, New Sightings: Setting Species-spotting Goals Brings us Closer to Nature

By Brooke Henry

Brooke on the Bruce Trail

Ah, the New Year - a time to reflect, set intentions, and make meaningful plans for the months ahead.

While health and fitness can often be a focus at this time of year, it's important to consider our other passions to ensure a well-rounded list of achievable goals. This year, I'm focusing on deepening my connection with nature by learning more about bird and plant species along the Niagara Escarpment. I've decided to use helpful mobile apps such as Merlin, eBird, Seek and iNaturalist to do just that.

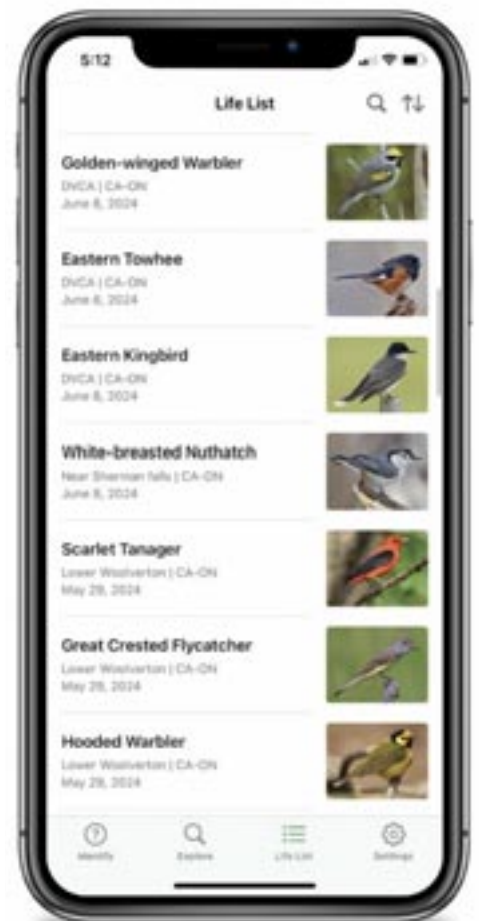
Since childhood, I've loved plants and animals, yet as a Humanities major, I've often leaned on my Land Stewardship colleagues (thanks Brian and Mara!) to answer some of my flora and fauna questions, but not everyone has an ecologist they can call up. Thanks to digital apps that I can download to my phone, I can explore this passion independently, transforming each hike into a chance to deepen my understanding of the natural world. As I've taken the time to get to know different species, I've gained new insights into the ecosystems around me, and I've developed an even stronger commitment to conservation.

Why Set Observation-focused Nature Goals?

For me, setting goals focussed on spotting and identifying my floral and faunal neighbors is great motivation to get outside and explore new areas, instead of returning to the same haunts. These goals also encourage me to explore through different seasons, even in the wintertime when it can be challenging to do so. Whether your interest is in birds, plants or fungi, having a goal can give each outing special purpose, making each hike a chance to learn something new.

Using Merlin for Bird Identification

I've enjoyed birdwatching casually for years but working for the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) increased my curiosity. After becoming familiar with our common local birds, I found myself wanting to know more about what other feathered friends were joining me on hikes. I found it so fascinating that some people could identify a bird by its call, or know what bird flew by even though we



Save a "Life List" of bird sightings on Merlin



Add sightings to the BTC project on iNaturalist

only saw a flash in the woods.

Then I discovered Merlin. The Merlin mobile app has made it easier for me to identify birds in real-time and it has added a new layer of adventure as my birdwatching has been gamified. It becomes truly exciting to identify birds with sound, a photo, or a step-by-step descriptor and add them to a "Life List" to track what birds I have encountered. Plus, by connecting my Merlin app to eBird, a global database that collects information from citizen scientists, I feel like I am making valuable contributions as my sightings are assisting with research around the world.

Engaging with iNaturalist and Seek

Though I did not study ecology, I did work at a nursery for many years and gained an understanding of popular garden plants such as daylilies, pachysandra, periwinkle, honeysuckle and more. Since working in conservation, I've learned that many of the plants commonly sold at our local nurseries are invasive and can disrupt our ecosystems along the Bruce Trail. Learning more about the plants and animals along the Trail has encouraged me to plant in my own garden more mindfully. Apps such as Seek and iNaturalist have helped me expand my plant knowledge, allowing me to identify plants in real time and determine whether they are native or invasive. Connecting Seek with iNaturalist also supports ecological research as every observation is added to a global database.

Setting Goals

Here are a few ways to approach your species-spotting goals this year:

- Aim to identify a certain number of species in a week, month, year, or even single day.
- Participate in a bioblitz or other nature spotting event day (e.g. World Migratory Bird Day).
- Focus on native species.
- Target specific groups. Choose a category, whether it be mushrooms, wildflowers, trees, waterfowl, or warblers, and set a goal to find a number of species within that category.
- Create a list of your favourite Escarpment birds or plants etc. and aim to find them all in one year.
- Use Merlin to learn bird calls and songs. Aim to learn a certain number by the end of the year. Test yourself by trying to identify the song before confirming the answer with Merlin.
- Use Seek to earn badges through their many built-in challenges.
- Add a certain number of observations to a project on iNaturalist such as the Bruce Trail Conservancy Project.
- Confirm observations in iNaturalist from other users, if you are experienced at identifying certain species.

When setting your goals, keep in mind that as seasons change so too do the flora and fauna. To keep your goals realistic,

consider starting with winter-specific goals and reevaluate as the seasons transition. Remember that these goals should be fun. Be flexible and you never know what you might come across.

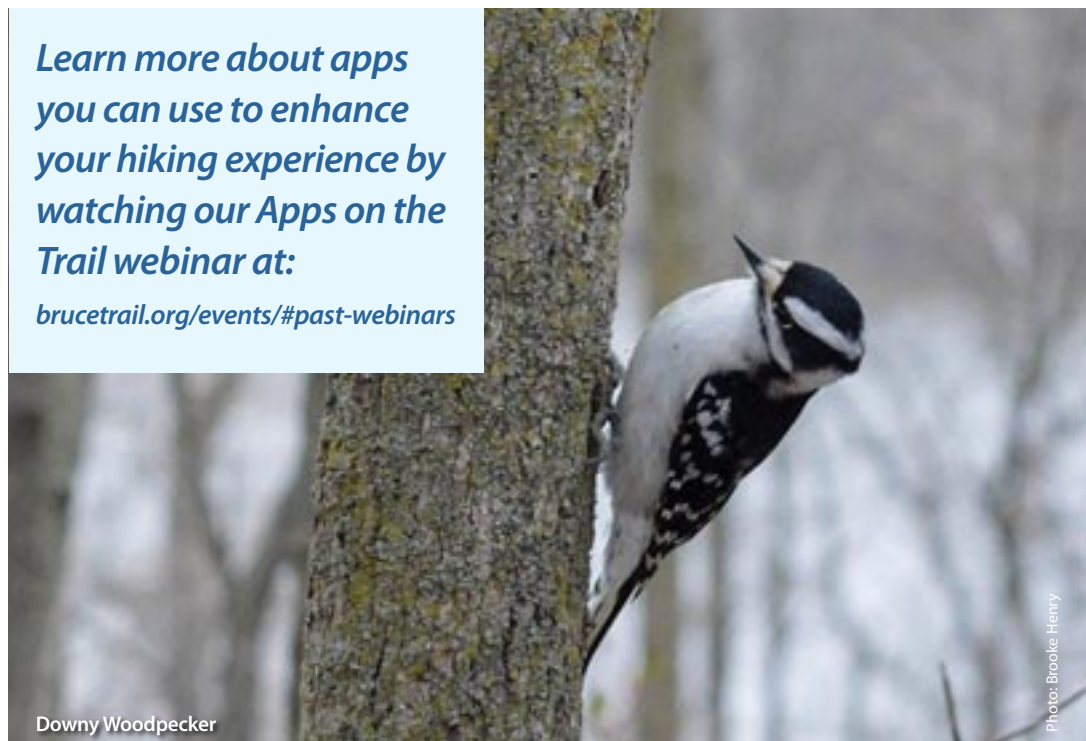
No matter your goal, taking the time to seek out and get to know the species who share the natural world with us encourages us to explore new areas or connect with familiar places in new ways. Learning about the world around us can be enlightening and bring a lot of joy, and what better reason to set a resolution. •



Complete challenges on Seek

Learn more about apps you can use to enhance your hiking experience by watching our Apps on the Trail webinar at:

brucetrail.org/events/#past-webinars



Downy Woodpecker

Photo: Brooke Henry



The First Drop in the Bucket: *Inspiring Youth to Discover the Bruce Trail*

By Brooke Henry

Photo: c/o Sydenham Bruce Trail Club

Not everyone remembers their first hike on the Bruce Trail. For some, it's a childhood memory blurred by time, or subsequent visits that meld together in their recollection.

For others, the memory is vivid and transformative: catching the smell of fresh pines, climbing over rugged Escarpment rocks, spotting bright mushrooms, or hearing birdsong in a new landscape. The Bruce Trail often introduces people to the natural world and can foster a connection with nature they've never had before.

Introducing people to the Trail at a young age is a powerful way to instill a lifelong love of the outdoors. As screens increasingly occupy our lives, hiking offers a place to reset, reflect, and exercise, improving both mental and physical health. Fortunately, volunteers in our Bruce Trail Clubs are taking steps to help youth gain these crucial early

experiences in nature. Here are just a few of the many ways this is happening across the Bruce Trail.

Outdoor adventure can be a family affair
Having moved to Canada from India 25 years ago, Prab Hungin had not been exposed to hiking culture. It was only when her teenage daughter Anisha needed volunteer hours for a high school graduation requirement that Prab found herself exploring opportunities through the WILD Outside program of the Canadian Wildlife Federation. Through the program, Anisha signed up for tree planting events in the Dufferin area. The events were a drive from home, so Prab decided that she would join her daughter and volunteer as well.

This experience opened the family up to other outdoor activities. Through WILD Outside, Prab and her family met Sandy Green, President of the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club, who introduced them to the Club's organized hikes. They took up the invitation, and with the encouragement and support of hike leaders, the family enjoyed learning about



Prab and Anisha with their My First Bruce Trail Hike badges

Photo: c/o Prab Hunshin

nature and connecting with the world around them. Prab appreciated that her children were getting out of the house, away from their screens and enjoying the sights along the Trail.

Nature has since become an escape for the whole family. Prab describes their hikes as a sort of meditation, a way to mentally reset and find peace away from daily routines. What began as volunteer work has turned into a family ritual, one they hope to share with friends and extended family as they deepen their connection to the Bruce Trail.

Setting challenges and providing motivation

We all know that a little motivation can go a long way to encourage us to try something new. In that spirit the Sydenham Bruce Trail Club has created a Youth Hiking Program (YHP) with a series of four badges at its core to encourage exploration and discovery in nature.



Photo: Kelly Donner

Koah enjoying the Bruce Trail

Launched on Bruce Trail Day this year, the YHP is accessible to youth under the age of 18, and available as both a self-led program as well as a partnership with other youth-serving organizations within the community. It is also supported by occasional family-friendly discovery hikes led by Sydenham Club volunteers. This program was made possible by a grant through Community Foundation Grey Bruce.

The four badges include Boots on the Trail, By the Seasons, Junior Naturalist and Junior Hiker – each offering different challenges. And by working together



Project Canoe participants on hike with Toronto Bruce Trail Club

Photo: C/o Toronto Bruce Trail Club

with other organizations, the Club is able to build on these creative incentives to offer programming that reaches more youth.

Introducing youth in urban areas to the Bruce Trail

While families are building personal connections with the Trail, or participating in Club programming, youth in urban settings often face unique barriers to accessing these experiences. To increase opportunities for youth to connect with nature, the Toronto Bruce Trail Club has teamed up with Project Canoe, a not-for-profit organization that has been running outdoor programs since 1977 for young people facing financial, social, or behavioural challenges. Through this partnership, young people are offered a new perspective through an introduction to the Bruce Trail.

By partnering with Project Canoe, which has established relationships with local communities, the Toronto Bruce Trail Club found a pathway to reach youth and offer them these experiences. Project Canoe connected the Club with the YMCA, who helped organize an outing on the Bruce Trail for a group of youths new to Canada.

The collaboration led to a day trip to the Bruce Trail at Terra Cotta Conservation Area for 50 young people. The participants, many of whom have limited access to green spaces in the city, were captivated by nature's beauty during the two-hour hike. Club volunteers guided the group and pointed out plants, wildlife, and other natural features along the way. Hiking activities like nature bingo kept them engaged as they explored the forest filled with fall

colours. For one student originally from Barbados, the open space reminded him of home. For others, it offered a peacefulness they couldn't easily find in the city. With the success of this first outing, the Toronto Bruce Trail Club is looking forward to partnering with Project Canoe again as well as with a group through Scouts Canada to provide more opportunities to get youth outside.

Sparking a lifelong love

Whether it's a family exploring the Niagara Escarpment together, a young person going for a badge, or an individual discovering the Trail through a community organization, taking those first steps on the Bruce Trail can be life-changing. As David Rowney from the Toronto Bruce Trail Club observed, "One trip can be all it takes." For these young hikers, time on the Trail might be the catalyst for a lifelong love of nature. Establishing this connection is crucial: as kids are our future, this can be the beginning of a journey that will ultimately shape their families, our communities, and the future of conservation across Ontario. •

"There was so much great scenery, just like something out of a movie set. It made me feel like I want to come back here again. I learned a lot from the hike leaders. They answered all our questions. The bingo card helped me find nature along the trail."

– Jaheim Allwood, Project Canoe participant

Conservation in Action: New Protected Areas

Four new protected natural areas have come into the care of the Bruce Trail Conservancy in recent months, through bold yet considered purchases and a generous donation of land. With the support of hardworking volunteers and committed donors, the Bruce Trail Conservancy continues to protect diverse Niagara Escarpment ecosystems and secure a permanent home for the Bruce Trail.

Shagbark Haven – Iroquoia Section

Map 9, Waterdown

15 acres | 470 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route

The creation of Shagbark Haven is a win for near-urban nature. In the rapidly growing Burlington/Hamilton area, this property protects 14.6 acres within the Sassafras-Waterdown Woods Provincially Significant Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI) (Life Science). Named for the numerous Shagbark Hickories that grace its verdant woods, this area represents an important link connecting and protecting Escarpment forest habitats. Sitting between Kerncliff Park in Burlington and Conservation Halton's Waterdown Woods in Hamilton, this property brings the Bruce Trail Conservancy closer to completing a continuous 10-kilometre long conservation corridor in the area.



Webster – Iroquoia Section

Map 9, Waterdown

3.2 acres | 0 metres of Trail

Adjacent to Shagbark Haven (see above left) sits the Webster property. This lovely, forested land was generously donated to the Bruce Trail Conservancy by Robert G. Webster and the Estate of John R. Webster. The Webster family stewarded the property for a generation while enjoying the nearby Bruce Trail and all it has to offer. This newly protected area extends Shagbark Haven by 3.2 acres and provides an alternative route option for the Trail. It features dense hardwood forest as well as existing trails created by the Webster family which may offer new side trails to explore in the coming years.



Hollow Oak Nature Reserve – Iroquoia Section

Map 10, Mount Nemo

18 acres | 475 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route

For years Bruce Trail hikers have explored this property and been pleasantly surprised by a charismatic, trailside Red Oak – its aging hollow trunk and Bruce Trail blaze forming the perfect ‘frame’ for memorable photos. Now this oak and its forest and meadow neighbors are forever protected within the new Hollow Oak Nature Reserve. The tree itself may not stand in perpetuity, but the habitats of which it is part will be protected and stewarded to ensure their ecological health into the future.

Hollow Oak Nature Reserve sits north of the BTC’s Fisher’s Pond property and preserves 18 acres of Niagara Escarpment land near the growing city of Burlington. The Bruce Trail has been hosted on this property with a handshake agreement for many years. Securing Hollow Oak Nature Reserve is a win for Trail continuity as over 3.5 km of reroutes onto busy roads in the Guelph Line area would have been necessary without it.

Fieldview Connection – Sydenham Section

Map 30, Bayview Nature Reserve

78 acres | 336 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route

Located in the Municipality of Meaford west of Bayview Escarpment Provincial Nature Reserve, Fieldview Connection features deciduous forest, Escarpment outcrops, and a small area of agricultural land (which may be leased for farming). From its forested heights, Bruce Trail hikers will be able to look northwest from the Escarpment ridge over the fields east of Owen Sound.



Fieldview Connection – Sydenham Section

Photo: Brian Popelier

Fieldview Connection plays a critical role in removing the Bruce Trail from roads. No trail is currently on the property but Fieldview Connection secures 336 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route. Together with handshake agreements with four generous neighbouring landowners, this newly protected area unlocks a reroute that will remove 2.5 km of Main Trail from Concession Road 2N and Sideroad 24. •



Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club End-to-End Hikers at Hollow Oak Nature Reserve – Iroquoia Section

Conservation Opportunity: Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve

Donate today to protect vital habitats and your gift will be matched!

Imagine what the soaring eagle sees. From its vantage point high above the Niagara Escarpment, it flies over a patchwork of natural spaces, roads, and built-up or disturbed areas. With development pressures and habitat loss escalating, preserving and connecting our natural landscapes along the Niagara Escarpment has never been more important.

With your help, we can create Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve, adding 123 acres of Niagara Escarpment land to our conservation corridor and safeguarding 733 metres of Bruce Trail for future generations.

In the beautiful Beaver Valley, just north of Kimberley, this sanctuary features:

- Mature Sugar Maple forests
- Vast meadows
- Iconic scarp edges
- Groves of Apple and Hawthorn trees
- Seasonal water courses
- Panoramic views across the Beaver Valley



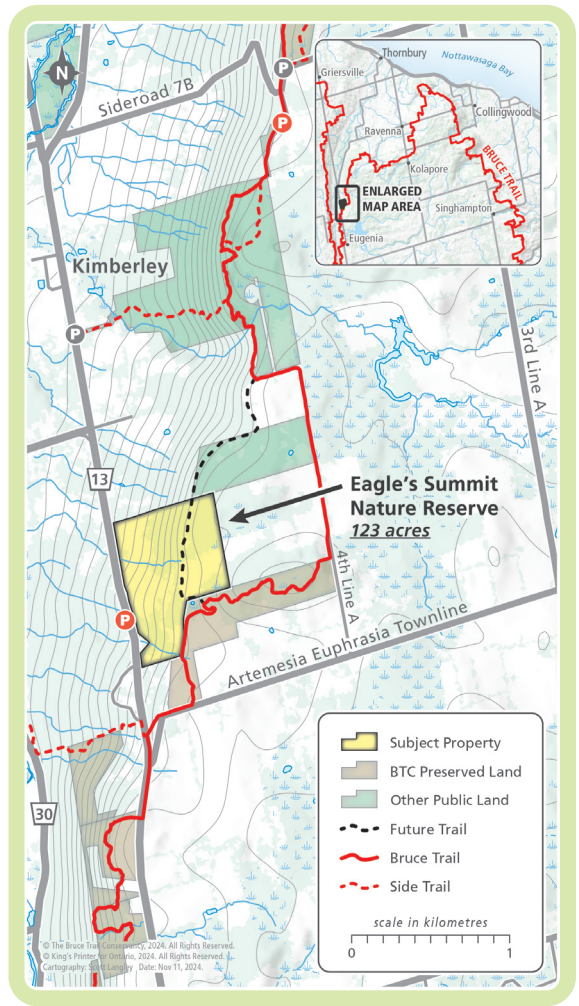
Photo: Brooke Henry



CREATING CONNECTIONS

Ecological connectivity is essential to sustain biodiversity in a changing climate.

Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve connects several large ecological corridors in the region. Linking these natural areas will form a woodland of over 2,400 acres, including two Areas of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSIs).



Protecting these lands will not only preserve Niagara Escarpment biodiversity, it will offer generations to come the chance to connect with nature's wonders and create cherished memories that last a lifetime.

The cost to forever preserve Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve and steward these lands into the future is \$2,825,000. Your thoughtful gift to nature today can protect this irreplaceable land and the unforgettable experiences it provides.

Act today and your gift will be matched!

Environment and Climate Change Canada, through the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, will match your donation \$1 for \$1 – doubling the impact of your generosity.

Together we can add this incredible natural sanctuary to our ribbon of wilderness.



OVENBIRD



Photo: Brooke Henry

Donate today at brucetrail.org

or by phone at 1-800-665-4453 ext. 0

Mail Disruption: With the current Canada Post strike, we are not receiving mail. To ensure your donation is received and processed in time for a 2024 tax receipt, please donate online or by phone.

Yes, I want to preserve Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve!

Mailing Address:
Bruce Trail Conservancy
PO Box 857, Hamilton, ON L8N 3N9

Enclosed is my: Monthly Gift: \$ _____ / month
 One-time Gift: \$250 \$100 \$50 \$ _____ other

Payment by: Cheque (payable to The Bruce Trail Conservancy or marked "Void" if setting up a monthly donation) Mastercard Visa

Card #: _____ Expiry Date: _____ Signature: _____

Name: _____ Member# _____ Email: _____

Your email is confidential and will not be shared with 3rd parties.

I am interested in learning more about making a gift to the Bruce Trail Conservancy in my will. I have included the Bruce Trail Conservancy in my will.

JOIN US ON A GUIDED HIKE FOR DONORS: Yes, I am interested in a guided hike of Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve in May. Please send me details by email.

If donations to the profiled property exceeds the required funds, your donation will be used to secure and steward other lands within the Bruce Trail's conservation corridor.



Photo: Ian Coburn

Announcing a new \$60 million fundraising challenge to protect the Bruce Trail

Each year, we make meaningful progress in securing the entire Bruce Trail. Now, an extraordinary funding challenge is aiming to help us get there faster.

Currently, 71.9% of the Bruce Trail is on permanently protected land, which means almost 30% remains unsecured. We are moving as quickly as we can to protect Niagara Escarpment lands and ensure the continuity of the Trail, and our remarkable community of donors is helping us increase our pace.

We are pleased to announce a new opportunity that will help us protect the remaining vulnerable lands that the Bruce Trail crosses. An anonymous couple who are Lifetime Members of the Bruce Trail Conservancy have given us a challenge to raise \$15 million annually, totaling \$45 million over the next three years. Once this annual milestone is reached, our anonymous donors will invest another \$5 million to get us closer to a completed conservation corridor, protecting thousands of acres and ensuring permanence for the Trail that connects us to the wonders of the Niagara Escarpment.

The Challenge:

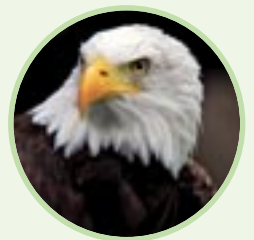
When the BTC raises \$15 million designated for land securement by June 30, 2025, our anonymous donors will invest \$5 million to support these efforts. If successful, this challenge could continue annually until 2027, raising a total of \$60 million which is 55% of the \$109 million forecasted to complete the Trail. This landmark contribution will accelerate our ability to secure and protect the Bruce Trail and its surrounding habitats much sooner than we ever anticipated.

To maximize this incredible opportunity, we will need the continued support of our community. **All gifts designated for land securement will support this goal**, from

major and legacy gifts to land donations to Environment and Climate Change Canada matching funds (see pages 20-21 for our latest matching opportunity to secure Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve).

If you would like to learn more about how you can make a contribution that can support this goal, please reach out to info@brucetrail.org.

We look forward to sharing further updates and working with you to secure the Bruce Trail quicker than we ever could have imagined.



"We are grateful to our anonymous donors for this pace-setting challenge and their commitment to protecting our conservation corridor. We are excited to engage our community of donors and others that will consider joining the challenge to help us maximize this opportunity and to realize a secured Bruce Trail sooner than we could have imagined," said Marsha Russell, Vice President of Fund Development at the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2024



Photo: Meagan Hayward

On November 16, 2024, Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) members came together to celebrate another remarkable year at the 2024 Annual General Meeting held virtually over Zoom.

BTC Board Chair Leah Myers began the meeting with a warm welcome to the 69 members who joined us from across the Bruce Trail Clubs. The Chair shared updates from the Board's four Standing Committees: Finance and Risk, Governance, Human Resources and Land Securement. The Board, supported by these committees, ensured the good governance of the organization while working with the Chief Executive Officer and the team to advance the BTC's ambitious conservation goals.

Chief Executive Officer Michael McDonald thanked the many members, volunteers, donors, landowners and partners who make the BTC's work possible. He gave an overview of the financial health of the organization and shared that the BTC has once again been named one of Canada's Top 100 Charities by the non-profit reporting organization Charity Intelligence.

Michael presented several highlights from our 2023-2024 Annual Impact Report (see box to the right), which celebrated a year of outstanding progress that will contribute to a legacy of conservation and exploration for generations to come.

At the meeting, each of the nine Bruce Trail Club Presidents provided updates on the activities of their Clubs over the last year, highlighting the extensive trail stewardship, infrastructure projects and community engagement initiatives carried out by over 1,400 volunteers.

The Chair thanked retiring Board member Brian Johnson for his nine years of service, particularly in the area of land securement. Following the election of new directors by the Members participating in the meeting, the vacancy created by Brian's departure was filled by Stephen Morson, who brings significant experience in property securement and

finance. Current BTC Board member Graham Allen was also elected to a second three-year term, following his nomination by the Toronto Bruce Trail Club. In addition to the election of these Board directors, the business of the meeting included routine items such as approval of the appointment of the BTC's auditors and their remuneration.

The meeting concluded with the presentation of awards to some of the many outstanding volunteers and Clubs, whose

hard work, ingenuity and dedication have improved the Bruce Trail experience while protecting the sensitive ecosystems that make our ribbon of wilderness so special. Visit pages 24-26 to learn more about this year's honourees.

Special thanks to Jackie Randle, Vice President of Operations; Ryan Mickeloff, Member Engagement Coordinator; and Ali Schofield, Manager of Communications, who all provided support to the meeting.

A full-length recording of the 2024 Annual General Meeting and a digital version of the 2023-2024 Annual Impact Report can be found on our website at brucetrail.org/annual-general-meeting-2024/ •

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2023-24 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

Photo: Jeff Dawsett

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.

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.

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.

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.

Volunteer Awards 2024

Presented at the 2024 Annual General Meeting

Each year at our Annual General Meeting, we recognize a selection of volunteers for their outstanding contributions to the mission of the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC).

Before the meeting this year we visited volunteers up and down the trail to present their awards and created a video to share their accomplishments.

Watch the video and meet our volunteer and trail award winners at brucetrail.org/annual-meeting-2024

Thank you to all our volunteers for giving your time and talents in support of our mission to *preserve a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.*

Ross McLean Volunteer of the Year Award: Leslie McBeth

For extraordinary contributions to the Bruce Trail Conservancy within a single year.

Leslie (Les) McBeth receives this award in recognition of her remarkable commitment as a volunteer with the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club (PBTC). Though she has been volunteering for a few years as a Trail Captain, and behind the scenes on the PBTC Board, it's during this last year that Les' efforts have really shone.

In her capacity as Communications Director, Les has taken initiative to

modernize the communications practices within the Club, and these changes have been felt in many ways. The PBTC newsletter, *The Rattler*, has seen major revamping thanks to Leslie. Her professional layout of the relevant and inspiring articles have helped to connect members more closely to the Club, and the newsletter has introduced ideas adopted by other Clubs.

Leslie was also instrumental in reviving the Peninsula Hiking Festival – a popular multi-day event and community gathering which has sold out for the past two years. Les' knowledge and skills were key to ensuring smooth and effective

promotion, online registration, and follow-up communication for the festival. She has also introduced online ecommerce tools to streamline and promote two popular fundraisers for the Club. Les has recently created a local history hike and taken on an additional role as a Land Steward of a BTC property just steps from her summer home.

Leslie is described by her fellow Board members and volunteers as hard working, enthusiastic, with a can-do attitude, and an ability to inspire other volunteers. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is grateful that Les has chosen to dedicate her time and energy to the organization and is pleased to honour her with this award.



Leslie McBeth

Susan Oleskevich Award: Don Cangiano

For outstanding long-term commitment to the construction and maintenance of the Bruce Trail.

In over 27 years of volunteer service, Don Cangiano has left his mark on the Bruce Trail and the Bruce Trail community. Don has served in several leadership roles within the Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club including as Publicity Director and Landowner Relations Director. However, it is his skill and dedication to trail maintenance that is



Don Cangiano

Photo: Meghan Croll

being particularly honoured with this award. Don's extensive and long-term commitment as a volunteer is highly admirable and fellow Iroquoia Club trail maintenance volunteers are immensely grateful for his knowledge, time and friendship. Involved in many trail projects over the years, Don became particularly known for his skill in rock work, especially in step and wall building.

Off the trail and beyond the Iroquoia Club, Don may be best known for this work as editor of the *Treadway* newsletter for BTC Trail Development and Maintenance (TD&M) volunteers, a publication which he produced for 22 years. Through *Treadway* Don helped to connect TD&M volunteers across the nine Clubs with trail stories, tips and news. Recognition of Don's longstanding commitment through this award caps off a wonderful volunteer career as Don retires from volunteering this year.

Calypso Orchid Environmental Award: Baffin

For significant contribution to the restoration and preservation of the Bruce Trail and/or Niagara Escarpment Biosphere, or for significantly enhancing the education of users or potential users of the Trail.

Baffin has been a longtime supporter of the Bruce Trail Conservancy through financial contributions and in-kind gifts. In recent years, however, their support has grown as the Stoney Creek-based footwear and apparel company has actively supported the BTC's mission by creating opportunities for employees to spend time on the Bruce Trail and participate in volunteering, by committing to long term projects, and by sharing the Bruce Trail with the public. Baffin has integrated support for the BTC and our conservation efforts into the very fabric of their corporate ethos, instilling a passion for getting involved in the preservation of biodiversity on an organizational level.

Baffin has made a particular impact through their boot brush building pledge, a three-year commitment to finance and build 100 boot brush stations that can then be used by hikers along the Bruce Trail as a tool to minimize the spread of invasive species. These boot brush stations are an important tool, not only in protecting the biodiversity of native species, but also in educating Trail users.

This past year Mark Hubner, Baffin's Testing Team Director, completed an End-to-End of the Bruce Trail, conducting Real World Testing™ of their products. In doing so, he shared his journey on the Trail with Baffin's supporters, influencers, and celebrities who joined him on his trek, which in turn amplified the profile of the BTC and the importance of our shared commitment to conservation and biodiversity.

Baffin is an example of a truly active, supportive partner for the Bruce Trail Conservancy and we are thrilled to honour the company with this award.



Baffin employees with BTC staff and volunteers at boot brush station building event

Volunteer Awards – Trail Project Awards 2024

Tom East Award: Caledon Hills Club

For the year's most significant trail project which places the Bruce Trail on the Optimum Route or adds a worthwhile new side trail.

The Caledon Hills Club receives this award for their superb trail work at the BTC's Akela & Scouters Heather & Ross Hamlin Nature Reserve at Riverside Woods, which has included three new side trails.

The trails showcase the diverse beauty of the property. The Goodyear Memorial Side Trail, named to honour

the former Scout camp on the property, undulates through the forests and wetlands for a challenging hike. The Upland Side Trail is a mostly flat grassland trail which passes meadows, the new native seed garden, and the edge of a pine plantation which provides a view into the deciduous forest below. The Rushing River Side Trail connects these loops to a serene spot next to the Nottawasaga River.

The loops are accessible via a new 50-car parking area providing an important access point for the Bruce Trail.

The Caledon Hills Club worked diligently and with impressive teamwork and planning from the time the property was secured in early 2023, to the completion of the last side trail. Boardwalks traverse wet sections, and carefully routed trails through the hardwood forests include well-crafted side logging. In total 3.6 km of new trail were created, 900 m of which will eventually become Main Trail.

Read more about this remarkable project in the Bruce Trail Conservancy Annual Impact Report 2023-24 (visit brucetrail.org > About Us > Annual Impact Report).

Philip and Jean Gosling Award: Iroquoia Club

For the year's most significant trail project which improves or protects the environment.

The Iroquoia Club receives this award for the replacement and improvements to the stairways and treadway along the Bruce Trail at Grindstone Creek in Waterdown.



Iroquoia Club Trail Zone Coordinator Art Johnston (l) accepts the Philip & Jean Gosling Award 2024 from BTC Trail Director Dave Moule (r).

Grindstone Creek is a very popular area with high volumes of hiker traffic. The steep creekside slopes have traditionally seen a lot of wear and tear, and erosion and trail widening are common.

Dozens of volunteers worked to replace stairs and railings, improve treadways, and build retaining walls. This provided stability to slopes, reduced erosion and helped to offer a safe and clear route for hikers making it easier to stay on the Trail.

Completing trail work while this popular section of trail remained open is particularly impressive. Special acknowledgement is given to Art Johnston for skillfully managing this complex project.



New Boardwalk at Riverside Woods

Photo: c/o Dave Moule



BTC Trail Director Dave Moule presents the Tom East Award 2024 to Caledon Hills Club Trail Director Heather Murch, President Sandy Green and other volunteers of the Club

Photo: Meghan Croll



Photo: c/o Dave Moule

New stairway and retaining wall at Grindstone Creek

Photo: Meghan Croll

Volunteer Awards – New Awards Launched for 2025

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is pleased to announce the introduction of two new volunteer awards which will reflect excellence in land securement and in hike leading.

These awards will be presented annually beginning at the BTC Annual General Meeting 2025.

Jack Morgan Award

This award will be presented annually to an individual volunteer or group who has made a significant contribution to the land securement efforts of the Bruce Trail Conservancy in the past year, showcasing hard work and dedication to the BTC's mission and land securement goals. Award recipients may be involved in any aspect of the land securement process, from nurturing positive relationships with important stakeholders to advancing complex securement endeavors with creative thinking or action.

This award honours Jack Morgan, a long-serving BTC volunteer and member who passed away in 2024. Jack played an

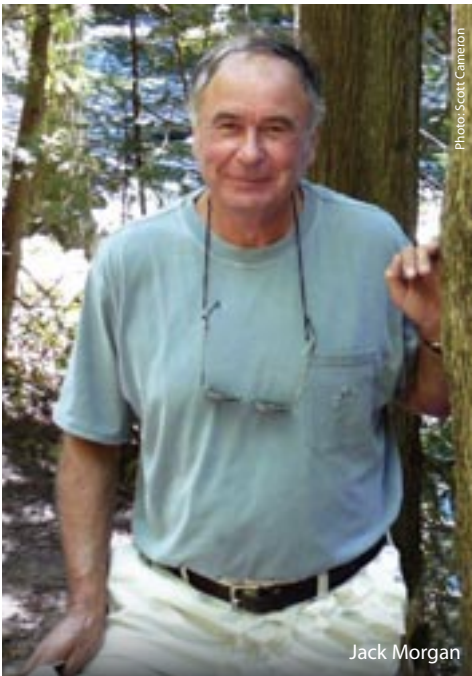
integral role in the land securement efforts of the BTC over his decades of volunteering while serving in many positions. In the Beaver Valley, Jack led the charge on numerous land securement initiatives. Notable among these was a string of five adjacent properties in Fairmount which ultimately preserved a

corridor of 229 acres and secured 3.4 km of the Bruce Trail's Optimum Route. But perhaps his most memorable accomplishment was the establishment of the Falling Water Trail, a 30-kilometre looping route on the Bruce Trail traversing both sides of the Beaver Valley. Jack's skills in landowner relations, land securement and trail development all came together to make this a permanent route for the Bruce Trail and a popular hike where one is never far from the sight or the sound of falling water.

Leaders in Hiking Award

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is pleased to honour Jack with the establishment of this award and looks forward to recognizing the excellence in land securement that he embodied.

This award will be presented annually in recognition of an outstanding Hike Leader, Hike Director or other BTC volunteer or individual who has shown exceptional leadership within the BTC hiking program. Through thousands of hikes offered and coordinated entirely by volunteers every year, the hiking program brings tens of thousands of people into closer connection with nature along the Bruce Trail and brings people together in shared outdoor experiences. The Bruce Trail Conservancy looks forward to honoring volunteers who make this possible, and to recognizing creativity, excellence and leadership in the program.



Jack Morgan

Photo: Scott Cameron



Photo: Maria Perocho

To nominate a volunteer for a BTC award visit: brucetrail.org/award-nominations

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS JUNE 30.

Trail Changes & Notices

SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER 2024, POST EDITION 31

FOR THE LATEST TRAIL CHANGE AND NOTICES, VISIT BRUCETRAIL.ORG/TRAIL_CHANGES

Trail Changes & Notices are online and in the Bruce Trail App




Visit brucetrail.org/trail_changes for the latest changes, searchable by Map Number, Club Section, and even by text in the description.

Download the Bruce Trail App to have the most up-to-date trail data on your mobile device.

PARKING IN THE WINTER

Remember: Some parking areas are closed in the winter. Other parking areas may not be plowed. Roadside parking may be limited by snow windrows. Scouting out your options in advance, or having an alternative in mind, can make for a smoother and safer outing.

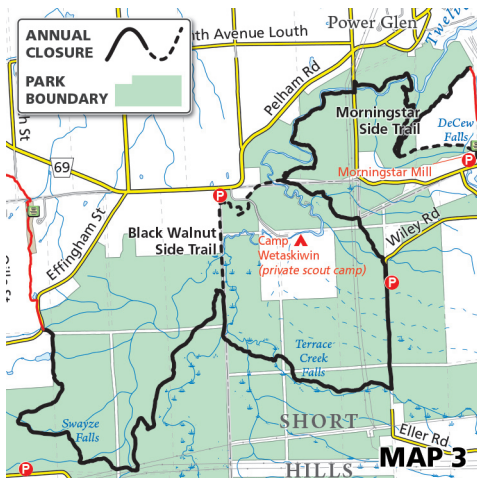
Hint: In The Bruce Trail Reference Edition 31, look for these new symbols in the parking descriptions:

Recommended Parking Information	
	Expect to pay a parking fee
	Accessible in winter
	Not accessible in winter

NIAGARA

Map 3 – Short Hills Provincial Park, Temporary closures

Short Hills Provincial Park will be closed on December 14 and 18 to honour treaty rights with a First Nation deer harvest. The park will re-open at 8 a.m. the following morning of each of these dates. For more details visit: www.ontarioparks.com/park/shorthills/alerts



IROQUOIA

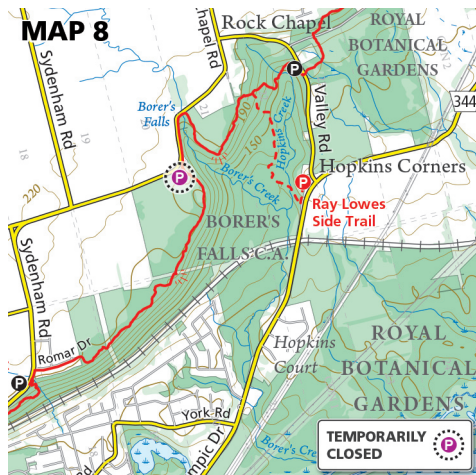
Map 8 – Filman Road Parking Prohibited

Parking is prohibited on Filman Road in Hamilton, off Wilson St E, where Filman Road meets the Filman Road Side Trail. This is no longer a BTC-recommended parking location. (Note: Roadside parking for maximum 5 cars is still permitted at the end of the “upper” portion of Filman Road, which can be accessed from Mohawk Road. Coordinates: 43.239382, -79.949355)



Map 8 – Rock Chapel Parking, Annual Closure

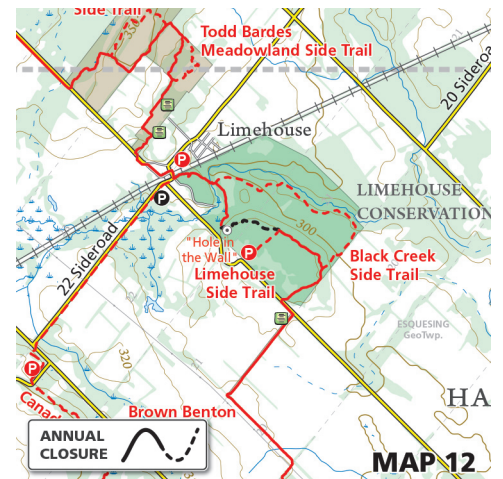
Royal Botanical Garden’s Rock Chapel parking area will close during the winter season beginning on December 23 (unless a major snowstorm occurs prior to this) and will reopen on March 21, 2025.



TORONTO

Map 12 – Limehouse Conservation Area, Winter Closure

A portion of the main Bruce Trail within Limehouse Conservation Area is closed by Credit Valley Conservation throughout the winter months due to potential icy conditions. Closure dates are dependent on conditions and are unknown at time of printing.



Map 13 – Duff Pit and North Rim Side Trails

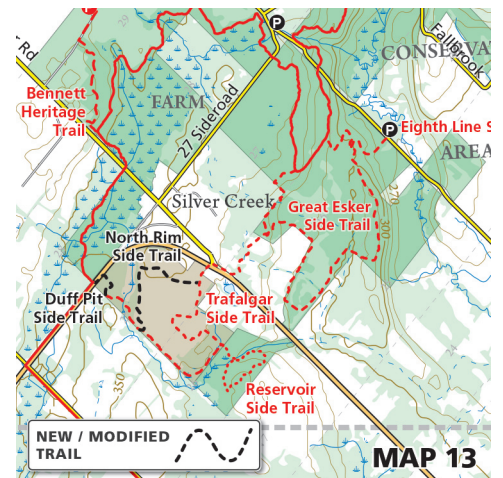
Two trail changes have taken place on the BTC’s Silver Creek property:

New Side Trail: North Rim Side Trail = 900 m

This new side trail passes through an open regenerating area which was once a quarry site.

Trail reroute: Duff Pit Side Trail = 1.6 km

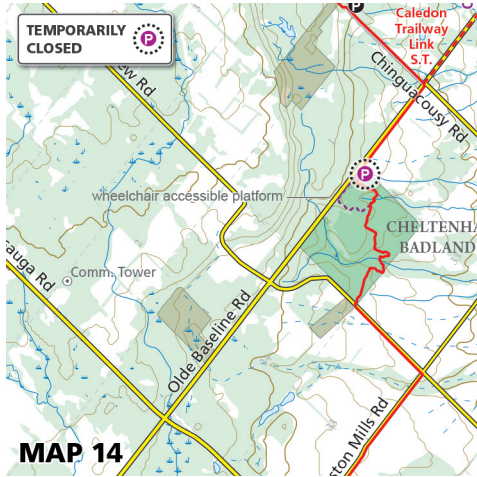
The entry point for the Duff Pit Side Trail has been moved further east to avoid a wet area, slightly increasing the overall side trail length.



CALEDON HILLS

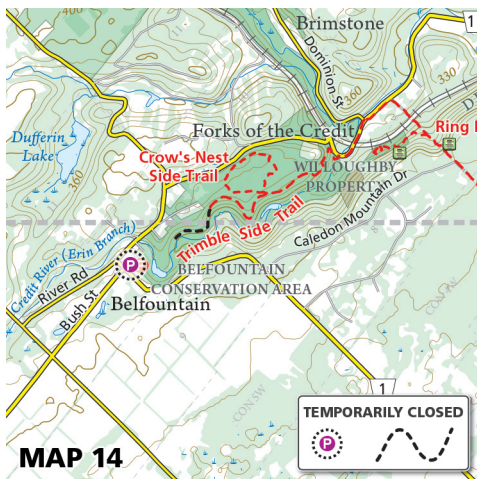
Map 14 – Cheltenham Badlands, Winter Closure of Parking

The Ontario Heritage Trust parking lot at Cheltenham Badlands is closed for the winter (as of November 20). The Bruce Trail on the Badlands property remains open for hiking.



Map 14 – Belfountain Conservation Area, Winter Closure

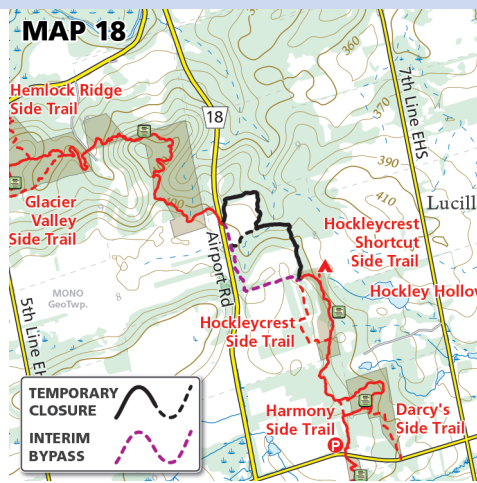
The Belfountain Conservation Area, including the parking lot and a short portion of the Trimble Side Trail on the property is closed for the winter and will reopen May 2025.



Map 18 – Near Airport Road, Temporary Closure

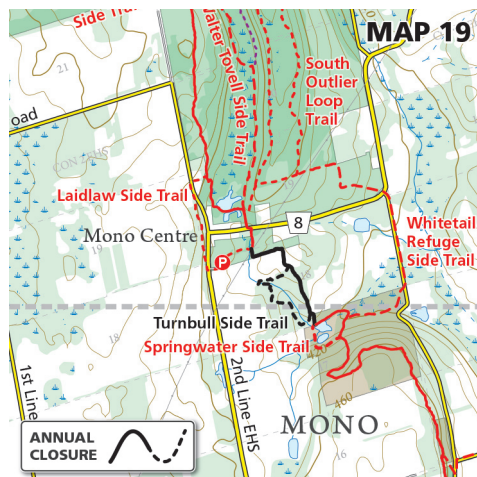
A landowner has requested temporary closure of a portion of the main Bruce Trail and a portion of Hockleycrest Side Trail on their property to accommodate timber harvesting. Closure begins Nov. 18 and is anticipated to end Jan. 1, depending on conditions.

During the closure, hikers can use an interim bypass which includes Hockleycrest Shortcut Side Trail, a section of Hockleycrest Side Trail and a temporary 185 m side trail extension parallel to Airport Road.



Map 19 – Turnbull Side Trail, Annual Closure

A landowner has requested temporary closure of the Turnbull Side Trail, and a portion of the main Bruce Trail, to accommodate hunting season on their property (Oct. 15 - Dec. 31). Please respect the landowner's wishes. The Whitetail Refuge Side Trail (1.9 km) can be used as an alternative thoroughfare while the closure is in place.

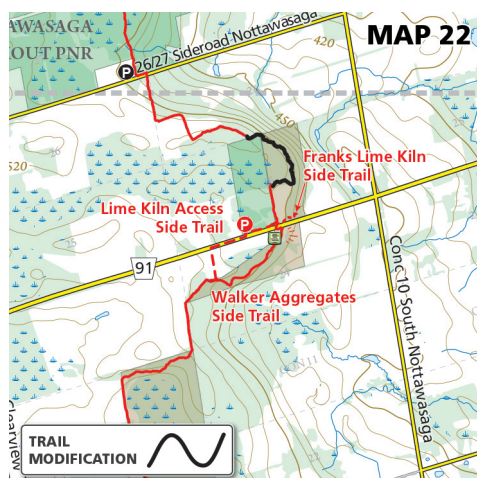


BLUE MOUNTAINS

Map 22 – Lime Kiln Bluffs, Reroute

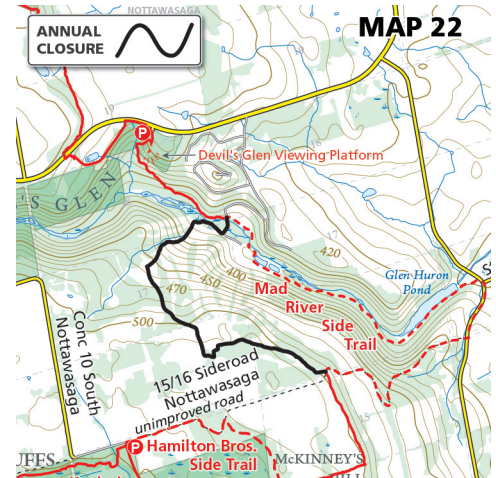
The main Bruce Trail on the northern end of the BTC's Lime Kiln Bluffs property has been moved onto the Optimum Route.

Old Route = 510 metres New Route = 728 metres



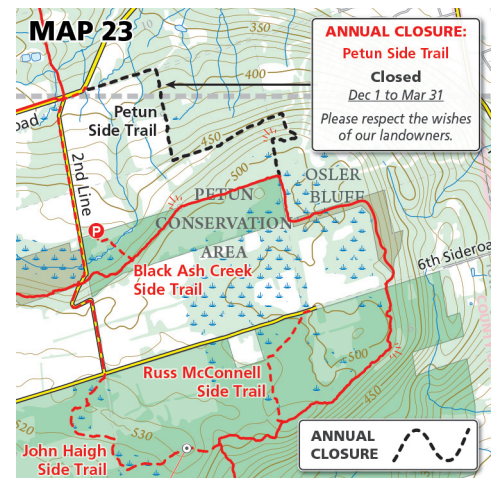
Map 22 – Devil's Glen, Annual Closure

At the request of the landowner, a portion of the main Bruce Trail is closed annually from November 30 to May 1. The alternative thoroughfare for thru-hiking during these months is the Mad River Side Trail.



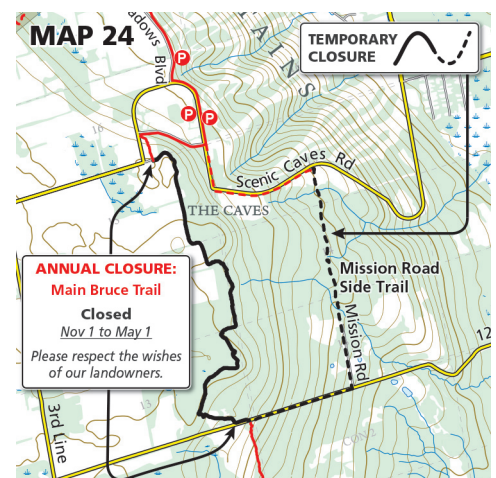
Map 23 – Petun Side Trail, Annual Closure

Part of the Petun Side Trail, between Petun Conservation Area and County Road 19, is closed annually from December 1 to March 31 at the request of the landowners.



Map 24 – Scenic Caves area, Annual Closure

The main Bruce Trail between 12th Sideroad and 15th Sideroad, is closed annually November 1- May 1, at the





Inglis Falls, Sydenham section

Trail Changes & Notices

request of the landowners. The detour around this closure is via 12th Sideroad, Third Line and 15th Sideroad. This alternate route is not blazed and is approximately 4.2 km.

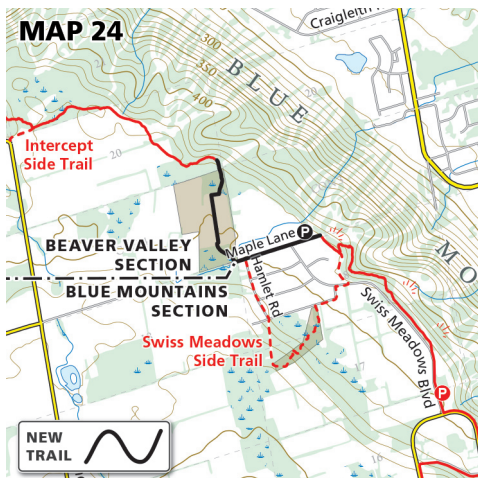
BEAVER VALLEY

Map 24 – Croaks Hollow, reroute and new section boundary

Following the successful securing of Croak's Hollow protected natural area earlier this year, the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club has rerouted the main Bruce Trail onto the property and the nearby Maple Lane. Swiss Meadows Side Trail, which intersects the Main Trail near this reroute, has been shortened to 2 km.

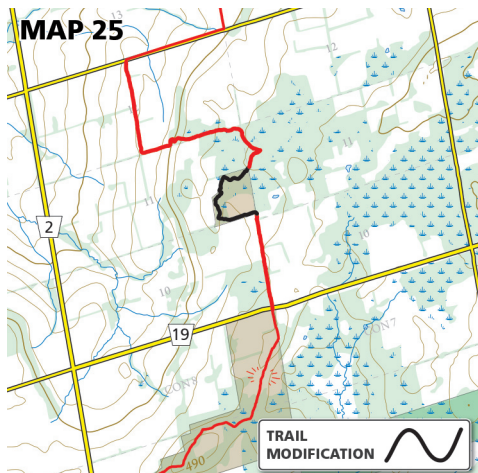
As a result of this reroute, the boundary between the Blue Mountains and Beaver Valley sections has shifted slightly west of its former location.

New coordinates of the Blue Mountains/Beaver Valley section boundary: 44.503461, -80.338745



Map 25 – Sheryl and Jim Phillips Easement, reroute

Following the securing of the Sheryl & Jim Phillips Easement earlier this summer,

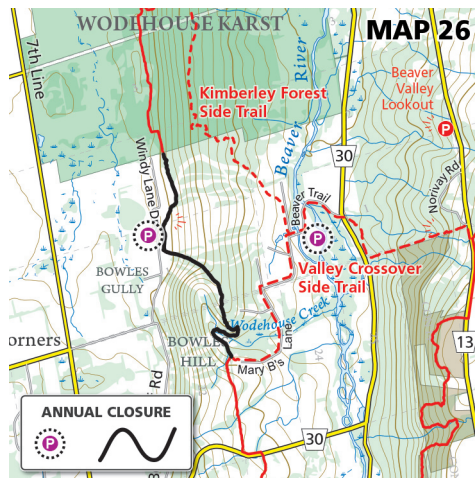


the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club has rerouted the main Bruce Trail between County Rd 19 and 12th Sideroad onto the property for a scenic 800 metres. This new route adds 460 metres to the length of the Mail Trail in this area.

Map 26 – Beaver Valley Ski Club, Annual Closure

The Bruce Trail is closed annually on the Beaver Valley Ski Club property during ski season beginning in November and ending in April (depending on conditions). The Valley Crossover Side Trail and Kimberley Side Trail serve as the seasonal thoroughfare for hikers.

Valley Crossover Side Trail (southern portion) = 1.5 km
Kimberly Side Trail = 2.5 km



Map 26 – Eugenia Falls Parking, Winter Closure

The parking lot at Eugenia Falls Conservation Area is closed for the winter (November 11 - April 30), but the area remains open for hiking.

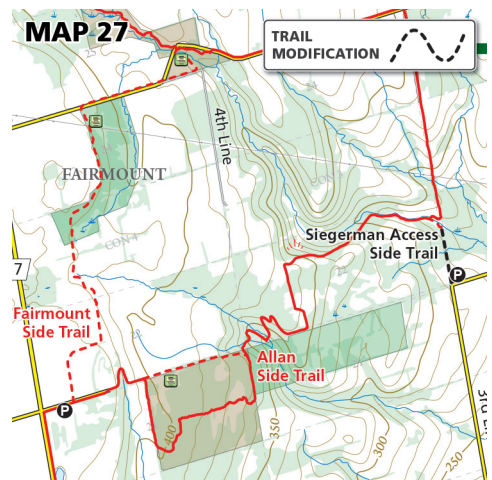


Photo: Christine Hudbeck

Map 27 – Siegerman Access Side Trail

The Siegerman Access Side Trail has been extended south along the road allowance to reach the corner of 3rd Line C and Sideroad 22C.

New Side Trail Length = 490 metres



Map 28 – Blantyre, new parking area

A new BTC parking area has been completed on Blantyre Springs Nature Reserve, on the east side of Grey Road 12 where the trail crosses the road.

Capacity: 15 cars

Coordinates:

N 44.500537°, W 80.632902°

44.500537, -80.632902

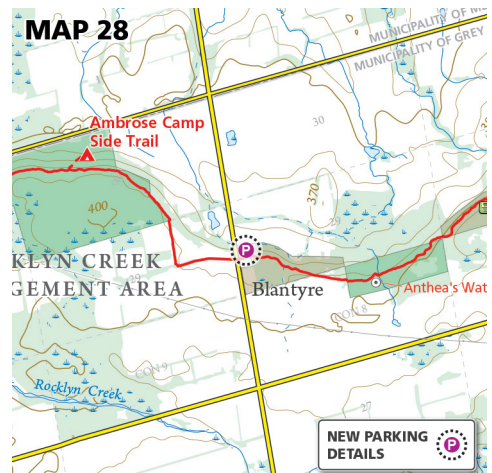


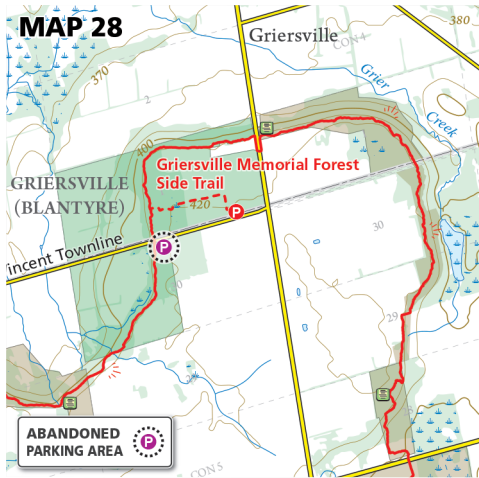


Photo: Albert Wiebenga

Trail Changes & Notices

Map 28 – Griersville, abandoned roadside parking

With the creation of the new parking lot on Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA) land, the roadside parking on Euphrasia-St Vincent Townline in Griersville is no longer a BTC-recommended parking location. Do not use this abandoned location, use the official parking that has been constructed on GSCA land instead.

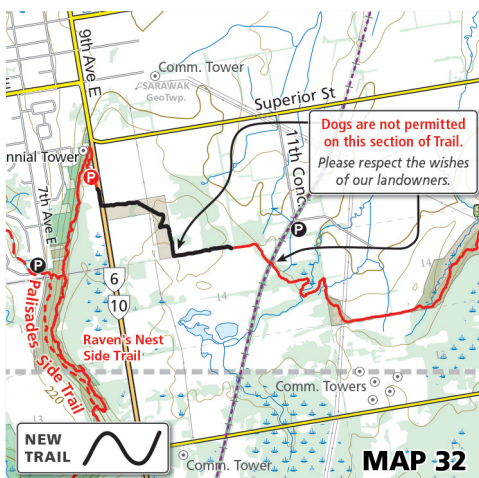


SYDENHAM

Map 32 – Sumac Landing, reroute

Following the Bruce Trail Conservancy's securement of the Sumac Landing property earlier this year, the Sydenham Bruce Trail Club has removed the main Bruce Trail from 9th Ave E and Superior Street in Owen Sound and rerouted it through the Sumac Landing property. This reroute removes 1 km of road walking and places the trail on permanently protected natural land.

Old route = 2.1 km
New route = 1.3 km



PENINSULA

Map 37 – Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve, new trail configuration

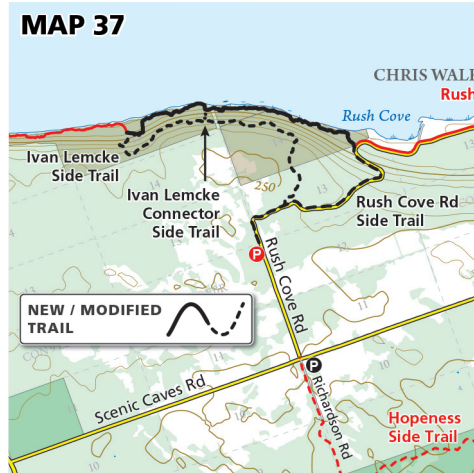
Following the BTC's successful securement of Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve at Rush Cove this summer, the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club has reconfigured the main Bruce Trail and side trails in the area.

The main Trail has been removed from Rush Cove Road and now runs along its Optimum Route through Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve near the shoreline. A reconfigured Rush Cove Rd Side Trail provides access to the parking on Rush Cove Road. The Ivan Lemcke Side Trail and Ivan Lemcke Connector Side Trail provide options for loops through Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve and the neighbouring BTC Deal property (secured in 1989).

Trail Lengths:

- New Main Trail (in black on the map) = 1.9 km**
- Rush Cove Rd Side Trail = 1.5 km**
- Ivan Lemcke Side Trail* = 2.1 km**
- Ivan Lemcke Connector Side Trail* = 130 m**
- Loop: Main Trail & Ivan Lemcke Side Trail = 5 km**
- Return trip from Rush Cove Road parking area via above noted loop = 6 km**

*Named after Ivan Lemcke, a Peninsula Bruce Trail Club volunteer who built the Bruce Trail terminus cairns in Tobermory (1967) and Queenston (1970).



Map 40 – Laird Side Trail and parking decommissioned

The Laird Side Trail and the associated roadside parking where the Laird Side Trail meets Dyer's Bay Road have both been closed and decommissioned.



Map 42 – Fairway Meadows Side Trail

The Peninsula Bruce Trail Club has blazed a new side trail at the invitation of private landowners near Little Cove. The Fairway Meadows Side Trail is 4.1 km and creates a 6 km loop with the main Bruce Trail. It connects with the Main Trail at the BTC's Dolostone Arch Nature Reserve at one end and at Little Cove Provincial Nature Reserve at the other.

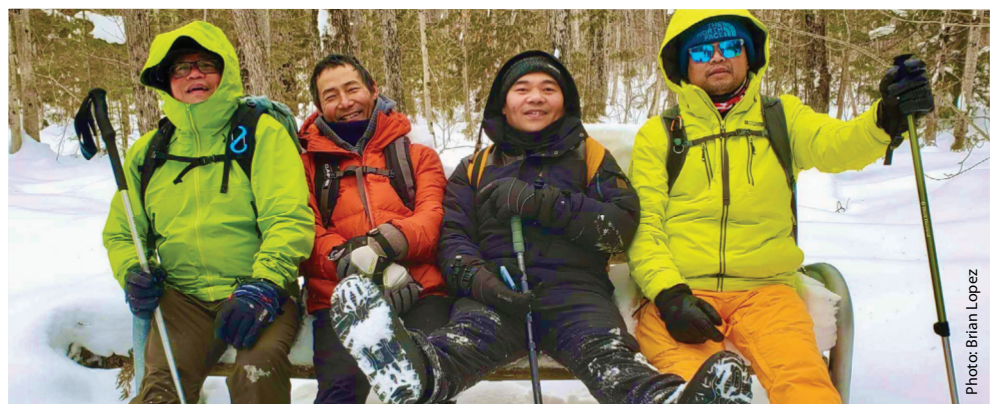
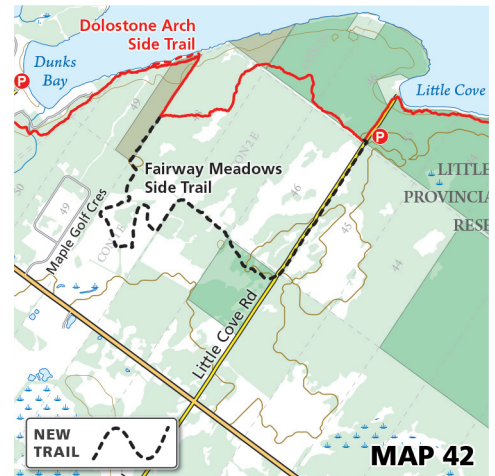


Photo: Brian Lopez

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Special thanks to the following donors who made a gift of \$10,000 or more during this time:

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Photo: Brian Popeliter

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Hogg's Falls

Photo: Albert Wiebenga

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The following donors reached \$10,000 in cumulative giving to the Bruce Trail Conservancy in 2023-24. A special pollinator planting will be made at McNally Nature Reserve in their honour.

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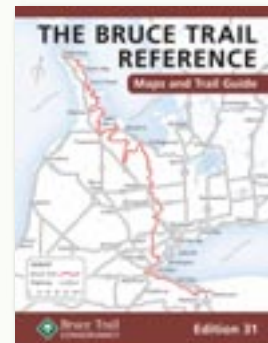
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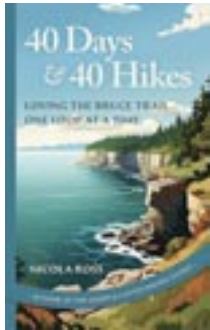
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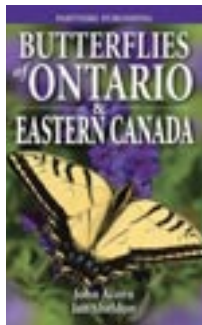
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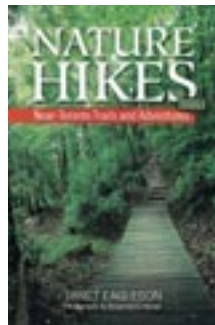
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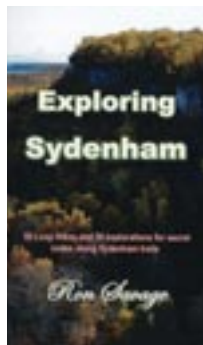


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At time of publication, Canada Post is experiencing a strike. BTC Store orders, memberships, and donations by mail are affected. The BTC Store at 55 Head Street in Dundas remains open and items purchased online or by phone can be picked up Monday to Friday 9:00 am – 4:00 pm, until our seasonal closure, December 24 - January 6.

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For all the ways you support trails and protected natural spaces every day, we're deeply thankful.

You – our growing community of Bruce Trail Conservancy members, volunteers and donors – make the Bruce Trail possible. Your collective passion, dedication and generosity is a powerful and positive force for conservation.

Thanks to you, each year we are preserving and caring for more vulnerable Niagara Escarpment land and connecting people to the wonders of nature through our beloved Bruce Trail.



Photo: Graham Hill

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See pages 20-21 for more on how to make the most of this opportunity.



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