

VOL. 63, NO.1, WINTER 2025/2026

Bruce Trail

C O N S E R V A N C Y

MAGAZINE

A woman with long blonde braids, wearing a white winter jacket, dark pants, and blue snowshoes, is smiling and hugging a large tree trunk in a snowy forest. The tree trunk is covered in snow. The background shows a dense forest of trees covered in snow under a bright sky.

Found on the
Bruce Trail

Our Mission

Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY



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Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine is available digitally.

To receive your magazine by email:

- 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



Cover photo: Tree Hug, by Ruth Moffat

BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY

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Chief Executive Officer's Message

The Niagara Escarpment is one of the most biodiverse regions in North America, which means that every hike on the Bruce Trail is an opportunity for discovery.

I have found so many amazing things on my many adventures through our ribbon of wilderness: Walking Fern, Jack in the Pulpit, rare birds, incredible fossils, and breathtaking lookouts to take in Ontario's beauty.

While there is an abundance of fascinating species and stunning views to be found across our Trail, people also find special relationships; making friends, deepening their appreciation of the natural world, learning about themselves, and even finding love. I am aware of many dates and even marriage proposals that have happened on the Bruce Trail.

I, too, have found friendship along our footpath, and a deep and meaningful purpose in protecting this iconic part of our natural heritage. I have also found joy. Joy in my early explorations growing up in Hamilton; joy in the work of the BTC and the community that supports our mission; and immense joy in helping people fall in love with nature. Our founders always knew that if people fell in love with nature, they would want to protect it. Finding a love for nature is the real power of the Bruce Trail.

In this issue you will learn about some of the many things people find along the Bruce Trail. From the observations of our summer Conservation Ambassadors, to the sightings of citizen scientists, to seldom-witnessed wildlife behaviour captured by a trail cam – the Bruce Trail is a living museum that holds wonders for all.

As the year draws to a close, I want to thank our amazing BTC team who work hard every day to protect vulnerable Niagara Escarpment lands, care for sensitive ecosystems, and help people access the benefits of spending time in nature. I am so grateful that each of them found their way to the BTC and have chosen to help protect this special place.

On behalf of the entire BTC team, I wish you a lifetime of discovery along the Bruce Trail. •

Michael McDonald,
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER



BTC Staff on the Bruce Trail at Dundas Valley Conservation Area

Photo: Michael McDonald

BLAZES

News and Events from the Bruce Trail Clubs

END TO END & CHALLENGE HIKES 2026

Visit brucetrail.org/end-to-end-2026 to see all Club End-to-End and Challenge Hikes as they are confirmed.

DUFFERIN HI-LAND

dufferinbrucetrailclub.org

Winter Series –

January 3, 17, 31 and February 21, 2026

The Dufferin Hi-Land Bruce Trail Club will again be offering the four winter hikes required to earn our Winter Series badge. Hikes include both leisurely and moderate pace options in some of Dufferin's most beautiful areas. Our popular moonlight hikes will be held on January 3 and 31. Daytime hikes are scheduled for January 17 and February 21. 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 2026 issue is February 1, 2026.

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

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 29, 30 & Sept. 5, 6, 7, 2026

Hike the entire 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 \$130 registration fee includes the online



registration, bus shuttle transportation, refreshments and the End-to-End badge.

Registration opens March 2, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. on the BTC hike schedule 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.

BEAVER VALLEY

beavervalleybrucetrail.org

Beaver Valley Annual Falling Water Event – May 30, 2026

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 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 2, 2026 at 8:30 a.m. on the BTC hike schedule at hikes.brucetrail.org, so mark your calendar to secure your spot. Details of



Photo: Pamela Richardson

Visit Club websites for more news, events and hikes.

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.

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:

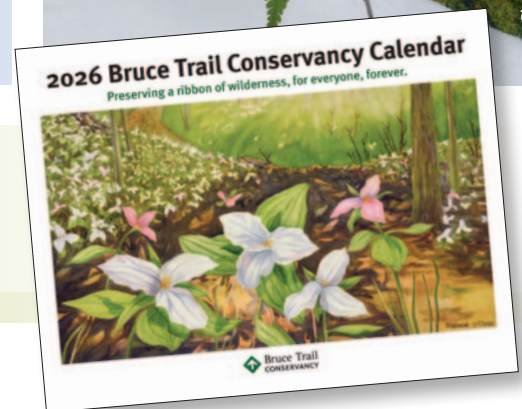
- **Low-Barrier Trails** with with Ali Schofield, BTC Manager of Communications, January 8, 2026
- **The Fascinating World of Ferns** with Rhiannon Carruthers, BTC Volunteer Coordinator, February 12, 2026
- **Spring Raptor Migration at Beamer Memorial Conservation Area** with Keith Dieroff, Niagara Peninsula Hawkwatch President, March 12, 2026

All webinars are at 12 noon and recordings will be available.

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



Photo: Brian Popelier



CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS: 2027 Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar

Help us celebrate the seasons along the Bruce Trail by submitting your original artwork for the 2027 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 2027 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. Work depicting recognizable locations not near the Bruce Trail (e.g. Flowerpot Island) will not be chosen. 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 20, 2026 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

Membership Survey 2025



Photo: Jeff Giller

Thank you to all members who took time to respond to the 2025 Membership Survey (May 31-July 15, 2025). Your feedback will help the Bruce Trail Conservancy and its Clubs as we work towards achieving the goals in our *2030 Strategy*. Results will help the BTC improve our membership program and grow our base of support.

In total 2,878 members responded to the survey – roughly 24% of members – with representation from across all nine Clubs.

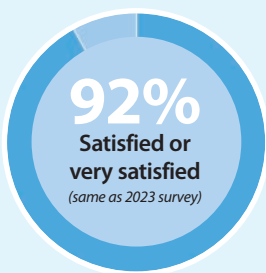
The last BTC Membership Survey took place in 2023. Despite the slight

difference in response rate (24% of membership in 2025 vs. 30% in 2023), results this year were similar to the 2023 survey in all survey areas: membership satisfaction, motivations for joining or

renewing, trail usage, communication tools and demographics.

Here's a snapshot of the results.

MEMBER SATISFACTION



MEMBERSHIP MOTIVATORS

Top 3 reasons for joining the BTC as a member:

1. Connect with nature/the outdoors (67%)
2. Support the maintenance of the Bruce Trail (55%)
3. Support the BTC's conservation work (53%)

(#1 and 2 swapped places from 2023 survey)

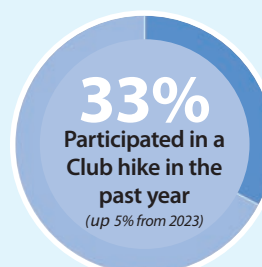
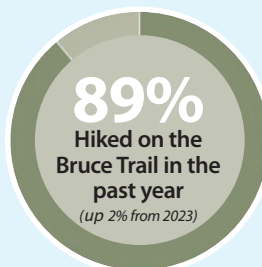
MEMBERSHIP MOTIVATORS

Top 3 reasons for renewing membership:

1. Support the mission of the BTC (78%)
2. Support the maintenance of the Bruce Trail (73%)
3. Maintain a healthy lifestyle (29%)

(Same ranking as 2023)

HIKING & PROGRAM PARTICIPATION



HIKING & PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Most common reasons for not participating:

- Not interested in participating in group activities
- Days or times are not convenient
- Lack of time to participate
- Health constraints
- Distance or transportation barriers

COMMUNICATION & PUBLICATIONS

- Respondents value BTC's core publications, with high ratings ("very good" or "good") given to Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine (95%), Club Newsletters (86%), and the Bruce Trail Reference Guide (83%).
- The Reference Guide remains a key tool for planning and navigating hikes (used by 71% of respondents, down from 75% in 2023), while reported usage of the Bruce Trail App has increased modestly since 2023 (31% in 2023 vs 38% in 2025).

Top content interests include:

- Places to visit along the Trail
- Niagara Escarpment flora, fauna, history, and geology
- Conservation issues
- Most respondents (89%) have visited the BTC website in the past year, though typically infrequently (51% visited no more than 5 times).
- Only 44% of respondents follow the Bruce Trail Conservancy or a Bruce Trail Club on social media (though, this is up 5% from 2023).

DEMOGRAPHICS

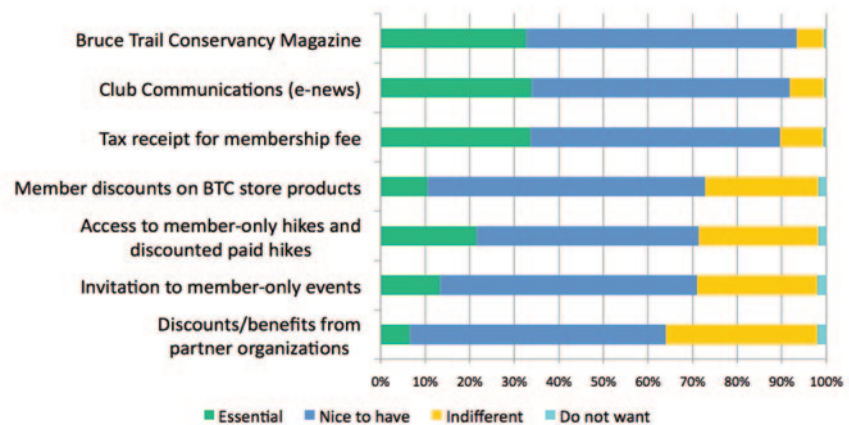
- Most respondents (65%) have been members for 5 years or more.
- Survey responses reflect a predominantly older and English-speaking membership, with 85% over age 50, 96% speaking English at home, and 89% identifying as White.
- While most respondents (90%) do not identify as having a disability, mobility and dexterity challenges were noted by

Membership Exit Survey: Understanding why members leave

We're sorry to see members go, but know that we can learn from the experience of lapsing members too. So, we've created a specific membership exit survey, available on emailed renewal notices. If someone you know has decided to not renew their membership, please encourage them to fill out a very short, anonymous survey at www.surveymonkey.com/r/btc-member-exit.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Tell us how you feel about the following membership benefits:



Note: 17% of respondents suggested additional benefits for members (down 9% from 2023). The most frequent suggestions involved the Bruce Trail App or Maps (19%), parking and transportation (16%), hike programming (15%), and discounts from retailers or accommodation providers (11%).

over half of those who do, highlighting the importance of accessible programming.

SUGGESTIONS FROM MEMBERS

While only 30% of respondents chose to leave additional comments, the overwhelming majority (78%) used the space to express appreciation for the Bruce Trail's existence, the dedication of volunteers and staff, and the ongoing mission to secure and protect land for the Trail. Many simply stated they had no further feedback, reinforcing the positive sentiment shared throughout the survey.

Suggestions fell into a few categories, with these being the top three:

- Hike Program & Club Events (7%): Calls for more diverse hike offerings, including training opportunities and hikes tailored to different age groups and schedules.
- Technology (5%): Comments here centered on the Bruce Trail App and website, with repeated interest in app access as a membership benefit, alongside feedback on usability issues.
- Club-Related Feedback (1%): Focused on local Club activities and engagement. (Each Club has received results of the survey specific to the Club as well as the combined results for all Clubs.)

Your feedback helps us better direct the efforts of the BTC's membership program.

For more information or to share ideas, contact membership@brucetrail.org •

We're listening...

Based on your feedback, we have introduced initiatives including:

- Regular articles in the Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine highlighting local restaurants/businesses along the Trail that hikers can visit before/after their hike.
- A series of welcome emails to introduce new members to the BTC and help them learn more about their membership.

We'll be working collaboratively with Clubs to explore opportunities such as:

- Enhancing the hiking program to offer hikes that accommodate a range of abilities, interests, and levels of familiarity with the Club.
- Continuing to highlight local places of interest in Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine and Club newsletters.
- Partnering with local businesses and organizations to support cross-promotion and develop meaningful membership benefits.
- Improving the clarity and detail of hike and event descriptions to help participants know what to expect and encourage greater participation.

And as always, we'll continue to invest your membership support in furthering the mission of the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Conservation in Action: New Protected Areas

The Bruce Trail Conservancy's newest protected areas provide crucial ecological linkages and will help secure the continuity of the Bruce Trail.

Forgotten Fields Nature Reserve – Sydenham section

Map 30, Bayview Nature Reserve

100 acres | 170 metres of Bruce Trail

Forgotten Fields Nature Reserve is located in Meaford between Woodford and the Bayview Escarpment Provincial Nature Reserve. It sits just south of the BTC's Fieldview Connection property which was secured earlier this year.

At 100 acres, the nature reserve is mostly forested with small pockets of meadow. The forest types vary from a small conifer plantation, to a young Sugar Maple forest, to a more mature Sugar Maple - Ash forest. The Green Ash swamp at the eastern end is particularly lush. Endangered Butternut trees have already been identified on the property.

Preserving Forgotten Fields also secures 170 metres of the Bruce Trail's Optimum Route and will be key to removing the Trail from 2nd Concession North and rerouting it onto a more natural and protected route.

Forgotten Fields Nature Reserve was secured with generous financial support from the Ontario Land Trust Alliance and the Government of Ontario through the Greenlands Conservation Partnership program.



Forgotten Fields Nature Reserve – Sydenham section

Photo: Brian Popellier



Cedar Cliffs – Peninsula section

Photo: Brian Popellier

Cedar Cliffs – Peninsula section

Map 37, Hope Bay

0.7 acres | 30 metres of Bruce Trail

Cedar Cliffs surpasses expectations for its small size with its natural beauty and ecological importance. Its mature Sugar Maple forest is considered interior forest as it sits deep within a larger wooded area, at least 100 metres from the forest 'edge'. This increasingly rare habitat in southern Ontario is critical for many species dependent on undisturbed, intact forests. The entire property lies within the Cape Dundas Regionally Significant Life Science Area of Natural and Scientific Interest (ANSI).

At the eastern end of the property is a cliff edge with great views of Georgian Bay. There the topography drops down to the east with cliff and treed talus, both rare ecosites in Ontario.

Cedar Cliffs is one of several small properties that sit between two BTC protected natural areas – Cape Dundas Nature Reserve (secured in 2017) and the Mackie property (secured in 1991) – making it an important step towards creating a continuous conservation corridor and protecting Trail continuity through this area. •



Photo: Bottled Media

Bruce Trail Conservancy preserves over 120 acres with purchase of former Talisman Mountain Resort

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is excited to celebrate the creation of its latest protected natural area through the purchase of the former Talisman Mountain Resort lands in the Beaver Valley.

This landmark acquisition permanently protects over 120 acres of sensitive Niagara Escarpment land from development pressures, provides opportunities for ambitious ecological restoration, and ensures continued public access to greenspace along the iconic Bruce Trail.

“After more than a decade of development speculation on the former Talisman resort property, we took the opportunity to step in to protect the Bruce Trail and more than 100 acres of vulnerable Niagara Escarpment lands beloved by the community,” said Michael McDonald, Chief Executive Officer of the Bruce Trail Conservancy. “The securing of this property is a win for nature that relies on us to protect it, for the community in the Beaver Valley, and for Canada’s most iconic footpath.”

Protection after years of uncertainty

Located near Kimberley, Ontario, in the heart of the Beaver Valley, the former ski area and resort have sat dormant for over a decade. Proposals for large-scale development of the property over the years were met with significant community resistance, as residents and visitors voiced deep concerns about potential environmental impacts and the precedent such projects could set for other Niagara Escarpment lands.

Drawing on our expertise as one of Canada’s most active land trusts, the Bruce Trail Conservancy stepped forward

to purchase the property, which contains 885 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route. Under the Bruce Trail Conservancy’s care, the Niagara Escarpment habitats of the former Talisman lands will be permanently protected, restored, and made available for generations of hikers to connect with nature along the Bruce Trail.

The purchase includes the Escarpment brow, the former ski slopes and former resort buildings at the base of the hill. The future of the existing buildings has yet to be decided, and the Bruce Trail Conservancy is carefully evaluating potential options.

Ambitious restoration opportunities

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is considering extensive restoration efforts to bring lands on the property back to peak ecological health. This includes large-scale reforestation and habitat remediation for the many threatened species noted in the area, including Bobolink, Eastern Meadowlark, Least Bittern, Louisiana Waterthrush, and more.

“We are thrilled to start planning what will be one of the most ambitious conservation projects the BTC has undertaken in our 60-year history,” said Adam Brylowski, Director of Conservation and Trail with the Bruce Trail Conservancy. “What we know for certain is that reforestation will be a key priority as the former ski slopes are currently the only significant break in a

forest canopy that stretches 10 kilometres across the western Beaver Valley.”

Community support

The Bruce Trail Conservancy recognizes the remarkable community support that led to this historic purchase. In particular, local conservation group Escarpment Corridor Alliance (ECA) was instrumental in drawing public attention to the property’s conservation importance, commissioning ecological and land use studies, facilitating early conversations with the landowners, and contributing significantly to the appraisal process.

How to support this landmark acquisition

As we determine the best path forward for conservation of the former Talisman resort lands, we know we will need the support of our donors. The protection of this property, its restoration and long-term stewardship will be one of the most visionary projects in Bruce Trail Conservancy history. Together with our supporters, we are embarking on a once-in-a-generation journey to preserve and transform these vulnerable Niagara Escarpment lands. We look forward to keeping you updated and sharing opportunities for getting involved in the months to come.

For more information and to contribute to the project, visit brucetrail.org/talisman •

MATCHING GIFT OPPORTUNITY

Four properties. Endless opportunities to spend time in nature.



Exploring the Bruce Trail has been a cherished way for people to spend time in nature since it's inception in the 1960s.

In 2024 alone, hikers and nature lovers spent an estimated 1.4 million hours along the 1,375 kilometres of the Bruce Trail and its side trails. That's 1.4 million hours connecting with the natural world and each other.

Not only does the Bruce Trail offer these essential connections, it provides the means to protect the very natural spaces it winds through. The Bruce Trail's conservation corridor safeguards vulnerable Niagara Escarpment ecosystems, builds climate-change resilience, and protects biodiversity.

Today, you can help secure four new natural areas that will provide a

permanent home for the Bruce Trail and expand and enhance this vital conservation corridor.

Your year-end donation to the Bruce Trail Conservancy will:

- Add four natural areas located in three Bruce Trail sections to our conservation corridor
- Forever secure 123 acres of Niagara Escarpment land
- Protect 3.2 km of Bruce Trail, keeping it off busy roads

- Support stewardship activities to ensure the long-term ecological health of the properties
- Create countless opportunities for people to make cherished memories in nature

Plus, your gift will be matched thanks to support from Environment and Climate Change Canada (up to \$500,000).

With your help, these four natural areas will be permanently protected:

Stillwater Nature Reserve

Toronto section

38 acres | 1.2 km of Bruce Trail Optimum Route



Photo: Brooke Henry

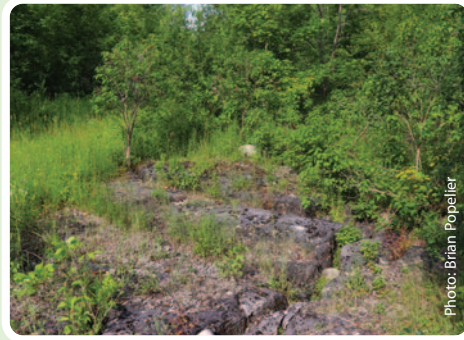


Photo: Brian Popelier

Fieldview Connection (expansion)

Sydenham section

26 acres | 600 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route

Greenrise Run (expansion)

Blue Mountains section

22 acres | 604 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route



Photo: Brian Popelier



Photo: Brooke Henry

Flyby Timbers

Sydenham section

37 acres | 843 metres of Bruce Trail Optimum Route

Learn more about these important areas

and see maps at brucetrail.org/year-end-appeal-2025

The total cost to preserve and care for these lands is \$1.8 million. Thanks to the generosity of Bruce Trail Conservancy donors, we are well on our way to raising the funds needed, but we still have \$1.3 million to go.

Act today and your gift will be matched!

Environment and Climate Change Canada will match donations (up to \$500,000) to protect these irreplaceable Escarpment lands – meaning your donation will go twice as far.

Make a gift today to preserve places where future generations can spend time in nature.

Donate today at brucetrail.org

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

Mail disruption: With the uncertainty around the Canada Post strike, please donate online or by phone to ensure your contribution reaches us in time for you to receive a 2025 tax receipt.
Bruce Trail Conservancy, PO Box 857, Hamilton, ON L8N 3N9

Yes, please match my gift to preserve 123 acres and secure over 3 km of Trail!

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 third 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 a BTC Nature Reserve in the spring. Send me details by email in February.

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

What's in Your Pack?

With iNaturalist volunteer Monica P.

For over four years, biology teacher and Hike Leader Monica P. has been finding and documenting plant, bird, and fungi species along the Bruce Trail using iNaturalist.

iNaturalist is a website and app where people around the world share their nature sightings and observations, building a global database that supports scientific research. Contributors are known as *citizen scientists*. They come from all different backgrounds and knowledge levels but share an interest in learning more about biodiversity and the species around us. It's free and available for anyone to join and learn from.

Monica discovered the Bruce Trail Conservancy Project on iNaturalist in 2021. Feeling cooped up during the pandemic, she wanted to get outside while contributing to the BTC's mission and thought this was a great way to do so independently. Since joining, Monica has submitted over 1,800 observations

and identified nearly 1,000 species using iNaturalist.

We asked Monica what she takes with her when she heads out to the Bruce Trail as a citizen scientist. Here's what she had to say:

Digital Camera

While the iNaturalist app (which can be downloaded to your phone) allows you to take photos and submit observations to a project in real time, Monica prefers to use a digital camera. As she doesn't have mobile data, Monica uploads the photos to iNaturalist.ca from her computer. Reviewing her photos gives her the chance to relive her hike and do more in depth research on each species. She often later shares this knowledge



Photo: Monica P.



Photo: Monica P.

with the folks who join the hikes she leads. This method is a great option for those exploring rural areas with little to no reception or who are looking to unplug while exploring nature.

Bruce Trail Reference Guide

Monica always brings pages from the Reference Guide with her using the Guide's plastic sleeve to track where she's made her observations. She also keeps the full Guide in her vehicle for backup parking options and onward exploration. It's a dependable source for wayfinding without relying on batteries.

Nature Guides

Monica often carries field guides to identify plants and animals in real time, especially when working towards earning badges offered by the Bruce Trail Clubs, like the Peninsula's Fern Finder badge or Toronto's Biodiversity Naturalist badge. When weight is a consideration on longer hikes, she may leave these at home but take plenty of photos for reference later.

Binoculars

On shorter hikes, especially in prime bird habitat, Monica will carry binoculars to help identify species from a distance while staying on the Trail.

Phone

Monica recently purchased a new pouch for her phone that attaches to her pack for easy access. This has made it easier for her to quickly open Merlin, a bird identification app, and record bird calls. This has helped Monica learn more about the species around her and improved her bird knowledge.

Winter essentials

During the winter, there are some things that Monica won't hike without. These include her icers or crampons for those slippery sections, extra layers to stay warm and dry, and an insulated water bottle to prevent her drinking water from freezing.

Final tip

Monica's final item to include? "The most important things for iNaturalist volunteers to 'pack' is their patience and skills of observation." You never know what you might find when you take the time to look around you.



Photo: Monica P.

Bracket fungus (*Daedaleopsis* sp.)

Interested in becoming an iNaturalist volunteer with the BTC? It's easy! Just download the iNaturalist app or create an account at inaturalist.ca and search for Bruce Trail Conservancy under

Projects. Join the Project and start adding your observations. Visit our page at <https://inaturalist.ca/projects/bruce-trail-conservancy>. •



Photo: Monica P.

White-tailed Deer

Found Along the Footpath

BTC Conservation Ambassadors share what they found on the Bruce Trail this summer.



BTC Conservation Ambassadors 2025

Photo: Lynsey Wilkerson

Each spring, as forests leaf out and meadows burst with new life along the Niagara Escarpment, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) welcomes a new team of Conservation Ambassadors.

These passionate young naturalists spend their summer immersed in stewardship work across the Trail: removing invasive species, planting native plants, monitoring restoration progress, documenting species diversity, and helping Bruce Trail Clubs with trail maintenance and biodiversity projects.

The work can be physical and challenging – ask anyone who has wrestled with invasive Buckthorn – but it also offers countless moments of connection with the land. Stepping onto the Trail each morning means stepping into a living, changing landscape where something new can be discovered every day.

This summer we asked our Conservation Ambassadors to share some of the remarkable things they found while caring for the Bruce Trail, and what those moments meant to them.

'X' Marks the Spot

While removing invasive species from Fishers Pond in the Iroquoia section, Kat stumbled upon something unexpected: a message in a bottle. "I found it on a pond edge after removing some Honeysuckle and Phragmites that had been covering it," she told us. A reverse image search of the lid revealed that the mystery item was a 1970s-era Mountain

Dew bottle. Inside was a hand-drawn map dated "'86", with illustrated fictional landmarks, along with a warning in Spanish, "I will give you advice, do not take this map lightly, fear and death to anyone who doesn't understand." A curious find indeed.

Unearthed from beneath decades of plant growth, the bottle was a reminder



Photo: Kat Forbes

Message in a bottle

that the Bruce Trail's history is layered with generations of human stories, adventures and the occasional oddity. While Conservation Ambassadors removed quite a lot of litter from BTC protected natural areas this year, this was undoubtedly one of the most unusual finds.

The Circle of Life

Sometimes what we find on the Trail is not an object at all, but an event we witness. Nolan captured nature in action when he snapped this photo of a Common Garter Snake mid-meal. "I



Photo: Nolan Responses

Common Garter Snake eating American Toad

found a snake eating a toad ... right on the Trail," Nolan shared. Later, he happened upon another sign of the life cycle – a remnant of a mammal skull. Though it's unclear what kind of mammal it once was, the skull's edges show signs of being gnawed by rodents,



Photo: Nolan Responses

Mammal skull remnant

pointing to its importance to other creatures even after death.

These encounters offer a vivid glimpse into the ecological relationships that keep the Escarpment's ecosystems functioning. For Conservation Ambassadors working closely with the land each day, witnessing these moments firsthand deepens their understanding of how interconnected these natural communities are.

Friendly Faces

Rhiannon seemed to find smiles everywhere they looked – and not just among their teammates. “I found this rock at Devil’s Monument that looks so much like a face,” they laughed. This is just one of several cheerful images they collected over the summer: grinning stones, faces in wood, and patterns in nature that seemed to smile back.



These whimsical discoveries illustrate how the forests along the Bruce Trail reward those who slow down, look closely, and allow themselves to see the unexpected. For anyone working in conservation, this sense of curiosity is as essential as any field tool.

Blast from the Past

Kayla and her teammates uncovered a piece of Bruce Trail history when they found an old Bruce Trail Association sign depicting permitted uses of the Trail: hiking, cross-country skiing and running. As part of their work, Conservation Ambassadors replace old or damaged signage to keep our footpath safe and well-marked, and to remind users about appropriate activities on the lands they explore. In the picture, Kayla holds the weathered original next to its recently installed replacement.

Pieces like this are echoes from the past that remind us of the ongoing work

on the Trail. Every sign replaced, blaze refreshed, and boardwalk repaired adds to a legacy of care that spans generations of volunteers and staff.



Summer Becomes Fall

As his summer as a Conservation Ambassador was coming to a close, Mitch noticed the subtle changing of the seasons. He photographed a single Tulip Tree leaf which had fallen while its colour was transforming from green to yellow and brown. He also documented a Giant Puffball Fungus emerging from the soil – a mushroom which only appears as the temperature cools in that window between summer and autumn.



These small transitions reflect the broader natural rhythms at play along the Escarpment. They are signs of the seasonal cycles Conservation Ambassadors and volunteers come to know intimately during their months of stewarding the land and Trail.



Finding Moments

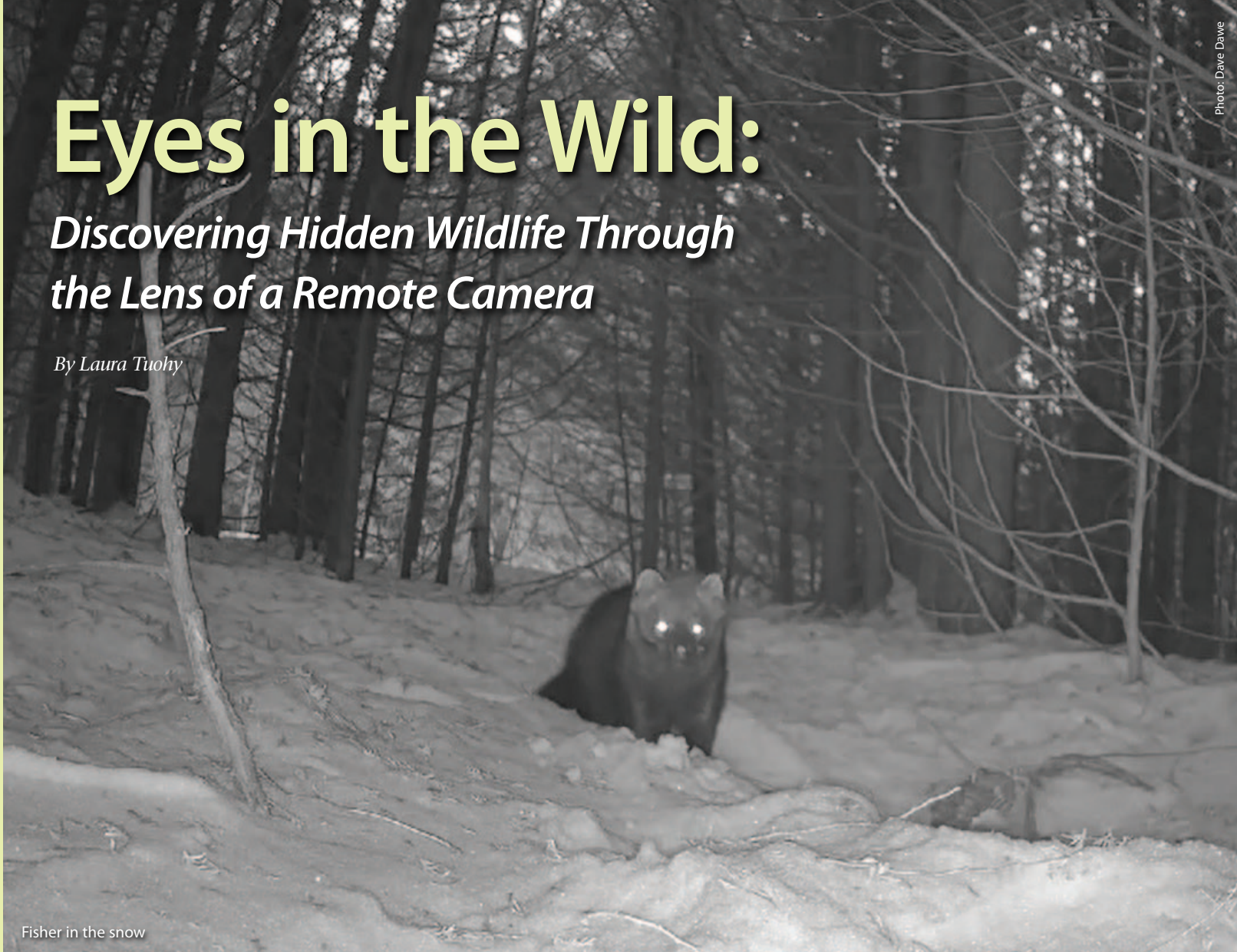
From curious artifacts to fleeting wildlife encounters, from grinning stones to the first hints of fall, the discoveries shared by this year's Conservation Ambassadors reveal how alive and storied the Bruce Trail is. Each find, whether a relic from decades past or a moment of ecological wonder, offered a chance to learn from the land they work so hard to protect.

Together, these experiences show us that stewardship is more than completing tasks on a checklist; it is a practice of attention, care, and connection. Our Conservation Ambassadors have left the Trail even better than they found it. And thanks to their care, our Bruce Trail journeys, too, may be enriched by moments of discovery along the way. •

Eyes in the Wild:

Discovering Hidden Wildlife Through the Lens of a Remote Camera

By Laura Tuohy



Fisher in the snow

Photo: Dave Dawe

When volunteer Land Steward Dave Dawe first retrieved remote camera footage from BTC's Whitetail Refuge Nature Reserve, he expected he might catch a glimpse of one of the reserve's namesake deer.

What he didn't expect was a window into Escarpment diversity and animal behaviour that would capture his curiosity, deepen his connection to the land, and inspire others to learn more through fascinating footage.

Since installing the remote camera on the property in November 2023, Dave has reviewed hundreds of images and dozens of hours of video. The work can be time-consuming, but to Dave it is inherently compelling, and the discoveries are worth every minute. As the camera has captured elusive moments and many species moving through the landscape, Dave has found himself drawn further into the hidden life at Whitetail Refuge.

"Whenever I go out to check the camera it's like opening a present," he beams. "You never know what's going to be in there!"

Over the past two years the camera has documented wonderful moments: families of deer at the forest edge, a shy Fisher digging in the snow, a Great Blue Heron strutting

slowly along a stream, and even a three-legged Coyote navigating the forest. Dave reviews it all and shares some of the best footage on Facebook with the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club and through Bruce Trail Conservancy's #TrailCamTuesdays.

Location, location, location

Living near Whitetail Refuge Nature Reserve, Dave tries to check the camera four times a week. He uses his knowledge of the property and his reading of wildlife tracks and signs to choose the best locations to set up the camera.

Whitetail Refuge has a variety of habitats across its 123 acres. Dave finds that 'transition zones' are the best place for the camera to document that diversity. "Areas that are a transition between water and land. Forest and field. Coniferous forest and deciduous forest," he explains, "With all the habitat variety at Whitetail Refuge, there are lots of these zones."



Dave mounts the camera a few feet off the ground on a sturdy trunk, taking care to avoid sun glare or nearby branches that might inadvertently trigger false photos. He chooses locations well off the Trail to avoid photographs of humans, reduce vandalism to the camera, and to have the best chance of capturing natural wildlife behaviours.

Capturing the unseen

Triggered by motion detected by passive infrared sensors, the camera is ready to record day and night. Each time it's activated, it takes a still photo and then records 10 seconds of video. "I have found 95% of the time the picture is kind of crummy," Dave admits. But it's the video that reveals so

much more and helps to bring the moment to life.

Video captures subtle behaviours: the way an animal moves, hesitates, listens, or interacts with other creatures or its surroundings. "On video," Dave says, "You can observe their natural behavior. They're living their own life, under their own terms." It's an opportunity to witness wildlife without the influence of human presence.

Nighttime and winter images are particularly intriguing as they bring us into a world we don't inhabit often. Infrared LEDs help illuminate nighttime scenes without creating bright flashes that would otherwise disturb the wildlife. The captured audio, like the snuffling of a porcupine or the yips of a coyote, can add depth to each moment.

Sharing the space

Dave prefers to leave the camera in one location for a few weeks to get a good sense of who is sharing that space. At a small stream, the camera captured ten species passing through the frame over only a few weeks in May – including Cottontail Rabbit, Weasel, Raccoon and Red Fox. At another location the camera captured a doe at dusk, then three hours later a small group of coyotes passed through the same spot. "It gets you wondering," Dave says. "What stories are unfolding there? Do they sense each other's presence?"

Beyond documenting wildlife presence, the footage offers insight into ecosystem health. For example, for Dave, capturing elusive species like a pair of Fishers on the property, signals that the habitat is robust enough to support higher level carnivores. It is both a celebration and a reminder of the importance of preserving connected landscapes that allow species like these to thrive.





Photo: Dave Dawe

Flying Squirrel

Using cameras to learn more

Endlessly inspired by what he notices on the nature reserve and the questions those observations can prompt, Dave has used the camera to learn more. If he notices tracks along a log or finds a deer skeleton, he may reposition the camera there to understand what's happening. Or, after placing a predator-exclusion protector over a Snapping Turtle nest, he may set up the camera to see which animals might investigate, or to witness the hatchlings emerging.

Dave's experience will be valuable as the Bruce Trail Conservancy trials cameras on other BTC Nature Reserves. The BTC has invested in 18 remote cameras for the Stewardship program, with plans to install cameras on two BTC nature reserves in each of the nine Club sections. This will give staff and volunteers the opportunity to deepen observations, monitor wildlife, and build a broader picture of our protected natural areas.



Photo: Dave Dawe

White-tailed Deer leaping

What began with one Land Steward's curiosity, supported by the Club through the purchase of a remote camera, will help to enhance our understanding of the biodiversity across the Niagara Escarpment.

Sharing with others

After a career in outdoor education, including 17 years teaching at the nearby Mono Cliffs Outdoor Education Centre, Dave is naturally inclined to share what he learns about the natural world with others. These remote camera observations have given him another way to do just that. Whether sharing the images and stories through social media posts, or on guided hikes on Whitetail Refuge Nature Reserve, Dave hopes to help people see the land and the Bruce Trail with fresh eyes.

"The camera images excite and surprise people," shares Dave. "They get people asking questions and hopefully interested and inspired enough to take positive action."

What's next?

For Dave the adventure is far from over. He hopes to experiment with seasonal placements, seek out unique behaviours, explore other corners of the nature reserve, and continue documenting the wildlife stories that unfold when no one is watching.

These cameras remind us that even when we're not looking, the Escarpment is alive. Through patient eyes and quiet technology, we catch only a glimpse, but what we see calls us to care for the wild places that make these moments possible. •

Captured on Camera at Whitetail Refuge

White-tailed Deer ~ Eastern Coyote
North American Porcupine ~ Great Blue Heron ~ Fisher
Wild Turkey ~ Yellow Garden Spider ~ Chickadee ~ Blue Jay
Long-tailed Weasel ~ Ruffed Grouse ~ Cottontail Rabbit
Striped Skunk ~ Flying Squirrel ~ and more!



Photo: Jeremy Vander Munnik



Photo: Brooke Henry

Explore Like a Local

While many see winter as a time for hibernation, seasoned hikers know that it can be one of the best times to visit the Bruce Trail and local destinations along its route.

With fewer crowds, serene frozen waterways, and foliage-free views, there are many benefits to hiking in the quiet of winter. If you're planning on braving the cold, consider warming up by checking out some local businesses recommended by our Bruce Trail Clubs.

In this instalment of our *Explore Like a Local* series, we've asked volunteers from two popular wintertime sections, the Niagara Bruce Trail Club and the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club, to share some recommendations so you can shop, eat and drink like a local.

BLUE MOUNTAINS BRUCE TRAIL CLUB

Mylar and Loreta's

Grey County Road 124, Singhampton
Recommended by Vera C., BMBTC President and Hike Leader

Vera calls this gem "the perfect spot to visit before or after hiking around Singhampton." She loves the friendly staff and welcoming atmosphere, great for groups of all sizes. Plus, parking is free! Vera can tell the superb food is made with care. Her favourite dishes are the eggs benedict and the fish and chips. The menu includes vegetarian and gluten-free options, with generous portions and fair prices for the quality.

Ravenna Country Market

495972 Grey Road 2, Ravenna
Recommended by Helen S., BMBTC Director, Events

Helen suggests stopping at Ravenna Country Market to grab a picnic lunch before a hike, or to refuel afterward. As you walk in the door, it's very likely you will be greeted by the aroma of freshly baked pastries and treats. Helen especially recommends their made-to-order sandwiches on fresh bread baked in-house, or their famous butter tarts. She



Photo: Ravenna Country Market

also notes that their freezers are filled with take-home meals and desserts to enjoy after a day on the Trail.

Endswell Beer & Later Pizza

26 Elm St, Collingwood

Recommended by Jim L., BMBTC Secretary and Vice President

Jim recommends Endswell Beer for its laid-back atmosphere and friendly owners. They offer a great selection of rotating craft beers – Jim enjoys the small-batch lagers and ales the best. They also have a nice house red and white wine as well as a selection of non-alcoholic beverages. Endswell has partnered with Later Pizza, located inside the taproom, which provides what Jim calls “the best pizza in town.”

NIAGARA BRUCE TRAIL CLUB

Sweets and Swirls Café

Niagara-on-the-Lake Community Centre, 14 Anderson Lane, Niagara-on-the-Lake

Recommended by Rick W., NBTC Trail Development and Maintenance volunteer

Every Friday morning, Rick and his fellow hikers head to Sweets and Swirls for hot coffee and delicious baked treats prepared by Erin and her team. It's a great place to continue socializing as “Erin always has something fresh out of

the oven as we arrive,” Rick says. His favourites are the warm scones, often topped with whipped cream but he also enjoys the muffins, cookies and sandwiches. It's the perfect spot after a morning on the Trail.

Station 1 Coffeehouse

28 Main Street East, Grimsby

Recommended by Kristin H., NBTC Vice President

Just half a kilometre from the Bruce Trail, Station 1 has transformed an old firehall into a lively community hub. Known for house-made food and locally-sourced ingredients, it's a welcoming stop for hikers and dogs alike. Kristin's top pick is the Green Eggs & Ham Salad, though the coffee, baked goods, and local wines and beers are all worth a try.

Tay's Treats

3350 King St, Vineland

Recommended by Janet D., NBTC Past President

Located in a quaint pink house in Vineland, Tay's Treats is one of Janet's go-to stops. She recommends this café for the delicious baked goods and wonderful soups. Though it's hard to pick, the muffins are her personal favourite as they are always fresh and



Photo: Station 1 Coffeehouse

made with seasonal flavours. The owner and staff have been so welcoming to hikers, even reserving a table for the Thursday morning hiking group that visits regularly.

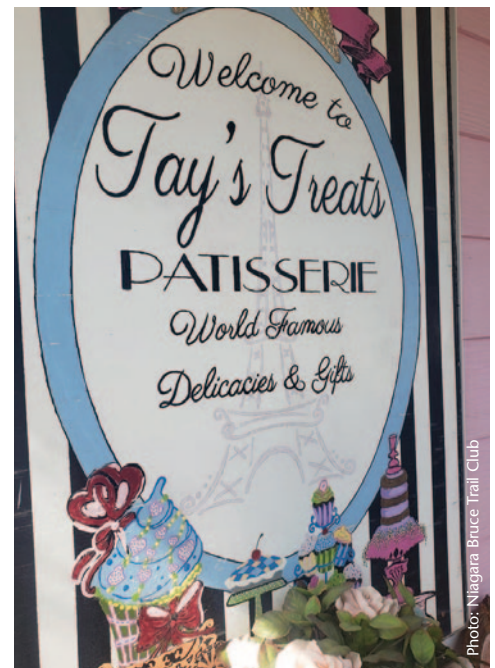


Photo: Niagara Bruce Trail Club



Photo: Niagara Bruce Trail Club

LOTS TO BE FOUND

Whether sipping a coffee in Grimsby or ordering a pizza in Collingwood, we hope you have a chance to enjoy these local establishments and the many others dotted along the Bruce Trail.

Please note that these suggestions are based on the experiences of our volunteers, who did not receive anything in exchange for their recommendation. They are not official endorsements from the Bruce Trail Conservancy, nor paid advertisements from the businesses. Think of this like printed word-of-mouth from your fellow hikers. Enjoy exploring like a local! •



All photos on this page: Brooke Henry

Celebrating Our Donors

In October, the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) hosted two Donor Appreciation events, one in Jordan at Inn-on-the-Twenty and the other north of Caledon at Hockley Valley Resort.

While the BTC has been hosting these annual gatherings for many years, growing enthusiasm and an expanding donor community led to the addition of a second, northern event in 2023.

These celebrations are an opportunity to reflect on the successes of the past year, share insights into ongoing BTC activities, and recognize donors who have reached a new level in their cumulative giving.

This year, both events reached capacity, with monthly donors, legacy donors, lifetime members, and supporters celebrating new giving levels in attendance. Guests were greeted by

BTC staff before enjoying time to connect with fellow supporters.

The program featured presentations from CEO Michael McDonald, who shared highlights from this year's Annual Impact Report, and from Director of Conservation and Trail, Adam Brylowski, who shared the story behind the recently secured Eagle's Summit Nature Reserve.

The events concluded with the awards celebrating donors who have reached a new level of giving, presented by Vice President of Fund Development, Marsha Russell, with support from Board members Jaclyn Moody, Graham Allen and Michael Treuman.



The BTC would like to thank everyone who attended this year's events. These gatherings are truly joyous occasions and a highlight of the year for all involved. •



ANNUAL MEETING 2025



Photo: Katie Gordon

Another outstanding year of progress towards our mission was celebrated on Saturday, November 1, 2025 when Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) members joined the 2025 Annual Meeting held virtually over Zoom.

BTC Board Chair Jaelyn Moody opened the meeting by welcoming the 90 members in attendance from our nine Bruce Trail Clubs. (Two members were represented by proxy.) Updates from the Board's four subcommittees – Finance and Risk, Governance, Human Resources and Land Securement – were shared by the Chair, outlining the support and good governance the Board has provided to all of the BTC's efforts over the last year.

Chief Executive Officer Michael McDonald provided highlights, including an overview of the financial health of the organization after the most successful year for fundraising in the BTC's history. He expressed sincere gratitude to the many members, volunteers, donors, landowners and partners who contributed to this success and whose meaningful commitments to the BTC bolster our efforts.

Michael shared several stories from our 2024-2025 Annual Impact Report which chronicled another remarkable year for the BTC. He also introduced a brand-new metric that demonstrates the impact of the Bruce Trail on the lives of people from Niagara Escarpment communities and beyond: time in nature.

Updates from eight Bruce Trail Club Presidents were provided. (Technical difficulties prevented an in-meeting report from the Blue Mountains Club, but that report followed in writing and is available with the recording at brucetrail.org/annual-meeting-2025). These reports highlighted important infrastructure projects, biodiversity initiatives, outreach events and critical trail work supported by 1,500 volunteers.

Board member Heidi Bischof, who retired from her position after six years of service, and former Chair Leah Myers, who served on the Board for nine years, were thanked for their dedication to the BTC and for all of their efforts in support of our mission. Filling these positions are two new Board members who each bring

expertise to their roles. Liz Yeigh was elected to represent the Caledon Hills Club, bringing experience in government relations, and Brendan Larson, whose background as associate professor, Department of Environment and Resource Studies, University of Waterloo will support our conservation efforts.

Board members Gail Di Cintio, Tim Johnson, Jaelyn Moody, Bonni Titgemeyer, and Wendy Thompson were all re-elected to At-Large positions. The following Board members were re-elected to positions representing the Bruce Trail Clubs: Nadia Dubyk (Beaver Valley Club), Robin Garrett (Niagara Club), and John Whitworth (Peninsula 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.

A presentation of awards closed the meeting, which recognized some of the many dedicated volunteers and Clubs who have improved the Bruce Trail experience and brought more people into closer connection with nature. Visit pages 26-30 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 provided support to the meeting.

A full-length recording of the 2025 Annual Meeting and a digital version of the 2024-2025 Annual Impact Report can be found on our website at brucetrail.org/annual-general-meeting-2025 •

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2024-25 ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

OUR GROWTH

1,541 hikes led by BTC Clubs across our trail system

Whether on guided hikes or exploring on their own, over 1 million people visited the Bruce Trail in 2024.

11,830 unique donations received from our community of donors

With over \$29.85 million in donations and grants, this was our most successful year for fundraising in BTC history.

93 Species of Conservation Concern

recorded on BTC-managed land.

1.4 million hours in nature

spent along the Bruce Trail in 2024.

OUR IMPACT

72.1% of the Bruce Trail is now on permanently protected land

4.7 km of the Bruce Trail's Optimum Route was secured last year, and 1,395 km of trail were maintained and ready to explore.

11 new protected areas established within our conservation corridor

These Niagara Escarpment lands add 613.5 acres to the permanent protection of our ribbon of wilderness.

Volunteer Awards 2025

Presented at the 2025 Annual General Meeting

Each year at our Annual 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-2025

Thank you to these award winners and 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: Ruth Moffatt

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

Ruth Moffatt receives this award for an exceptional year of service defined by energy, creativity, and genuine care for the Bruce Trail and its community. These are characteristics Ruth has displayed since she began volunteering in 2016, which have truly shone through this year. Her work has introduced hundreds of people to the Bruce Trail and the BTC, supported volunteers in their programs, and raised funds in support of the BTC's mission.

Over the past year, Ruth delivered presentations, contributed to learning sessions, and volunteered at countless outreach events with enthusiasm and energy. Inspired to welcome newcomers

to the Trail, Ruth created the Let's Hike! program, securing a Municipal Grant from the Town of Grimsby to help launch it. She also facilitated CPR and First Aid training for Iroquoia hike leaders and trail maintenance volunteers, and led Certified Hike Leader courses supporting the Iroquoia and Peninsula Clubs.

Perhaps her most impactful recent contribution has been spearheading the Stained Glass fundraiser hikes, an innovative idea that united volunteers across Clubs, supported aspiring End-to-Enders, and raised more than \$30,000. This year, Ruth also became the BTC's top Hike-a-Thon fundraiser, encouraging \$6,000 in donations to the BTC.

Ruth's generosity of spirit and tireless dedication made a remarkable difference this year.



Ruth Moffatt

Photo: Rhiannon Carruthers

Honorary Lifetime Membership: Dick Edwards

For making lasting, significant volunteer contributions to the organization at both the Bruce Trail Club and Bruce Trail Conservancy levels.

Since joining the Bruce Trail in 1994, Dick Edwards has been a steady, guiding presence whose leadership and stewardship have shaped the Blue Mountains Club for decades. Elected Club President just two years after



Photo: Jim Davis

Dick Edwards with BMBTC President Vera Cvetovich

joining – and serving nearly ten years over several terms – Dick brought vision and determination to Trail creation, infrastructure improvements, and environmental protection. During his tenure as President and beyond, Dick has earned a reputation for bringing people together, managing projects with care, working thoughtfully with landowners, and getting his hands dirty.

Dick has consistently had a role in almost every project that involved new trail in the section from 1996 to the present – from design to completion. His project leadership and hands-on work have included routing and blazing new trail, designing structures, building bridges, installing fencing, and removing invasive species. He continues to be a very active trail maintenance volunteer, notably playing a critical role on the team clearing 95 km of trail after the March 2025 ice storm.

As Landowner Relations Director over several years in the early 2000s, Dick

fostered important relationships and worked with Directors from other Clubs to share ideas and build best practices for working with landowners.

After 29 years of service, Dick stepped down from the Blue Mountains Club Board in 2025, leaving an extraordinary legacy. He continues to serve as a hike leader, trail captain, and core trail maintenance volunteer. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is pleased to honour Dick's longstanding contribution with an Honorary Membership.

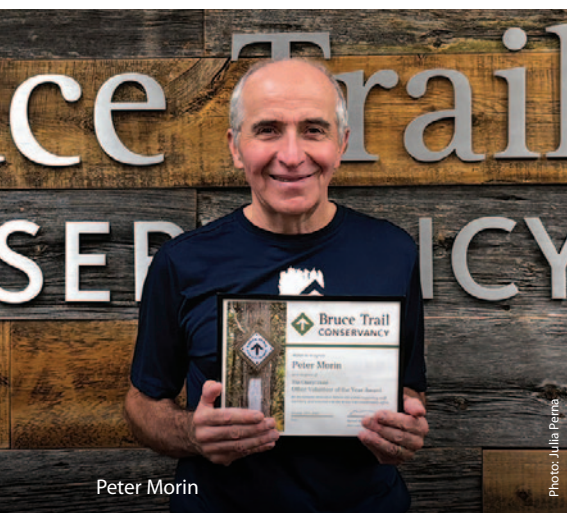
Cheryl Duke Office Volunteer of the Year Award: Peter Morin

For exceptional dedication behind the scenes supporting staff, members and volunteers at the Bruce Trail Conservancy head office.

Exemplifying teamwork, dedication, flexibility and care, Peter Morin provides indispensable support at the Bruce Trail Conservancy's head office. His gentle manner and strong support of the BTC mission buoy staff, volunteers and visitors alike.

Peter brings positivity, skill and patience to every task, no matter how routine. He truly helps the operation run efficiently and his calm problem-solving is especially valued when unexpected challenges arise.

Engaged and interested in all aspects of the BTC's work, Peter offers



Peter Morin

Photo: Julia Perma

thoughtful insights to staff across departments. His genuine check-ins with team members foster a sense of cohesion and care that is felt widely.

Peter has also become an important touchpoint for new volunteers in the office and on the Trail. His dedication to connecting people to the Trail is inspiring, as is the personal approach he

takes when welcoming and onboarding prospective volunteers. Many volunteers credit their start at the BTC to Peter's encouragement and support.

Peter embodies the spirit of service that sustains the BTC. We are profoundly grateful for his kindness, commitment, and behind-the-scenes leadership.

Susan Oleskevich Award: Paul Vanhanen

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



Paul Vanhanen

Photo: Toronto Bruce Trail Club

Paul receives this year's Susan Oleskevich Award in recognition of his remarkable, decades-long dedication to designing, building, maintaining, and strengthening the Bruce Trail. Paul will celebrate 50 years as a BTC member in 2026, and he has volunteered for nearly that entire time—first with the Blue Mountains Club for more than a decade before being recruited to the Toronto Club by Maureen Smith.

A founding member of both the Land Management Committee and the Halton Hills Chapter of the Toronto Club, Paul has served as Trail Maintenance Director, Landowner Relations Director, and in numerous other leadership roles across boards and committees. He has generously shared his expertise as a long-standing trail captain, land steward, hike leader, and

club ambassador at countless community events.

Paul's legacy on the Trail is extraordinary. He has directed the construction of more than 30 structures in the Toronto section, including extensive boardwalks, two parking lots, and over a dozen major bridges (many over 36 feet long, including two completed in the past year alone). He also designed and built the Bruce Trail information pavilion at Pear Tree, a much-loved landmark for hikers.

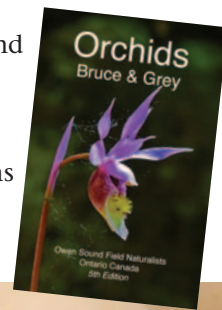
Hard-working, generous, and encouraging, Paul has lifted up fellow volunteers and hikers for decades. You may say that the Trail's strength quite literally stands on the foundations he has helped build.

Calypso Orchid Environmental Award: Owen Sound Field Naturalists

For significant contribution to the restoration, preservation or environmental education along the Bruce Trail.

Through this award, the Bruce Trail Conservancy recognizes and celebrates Owen Sound Field Naturalists' (OSFN) outstanding dedication to nurturing the appreciation and conservation of our natural world. OSFN's educational activities, Young Naturalist program and newly revised guidebooks are stellar examples of how OSFN promotes understanding and inspires action for the protection of nature.

For more than 35 years, OSFN have been champions of conservation education in the Bruce Grey region.



Barbara Palmer of OSFN (left) with BTC Volunteer Coordinator Rhiannon Carruthers

Photo: Rhiannon Carruthers

Volunteer Awards 2025

Through hikes, seminars, and webinars, OSFN helps thousands deepen their understanding of the ecosystems that make the Niagara Escarpment so extraordinary. Their publications – including guidebooks on vascular plants, ferns, and appropriately orchids – are valued resources used by Bruce Trail hikers, conservation leaders, and educators alike. The OSFN Young Naturalist program engages children and youth in exploring, identifying, and caring for the natural world, helping foster the next generation of conservationists.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy honours OSFN's tremendous volunteer efforts to increase public awareness on environmental issues affecting the Niagara Escarpment, boost understanding and appreciation of Escarpment biodiversity, and contribute to the preservation of the Bruce Trail's conservation corridor.

Jack Morgan Award: Carl Alexander

For significant contribution to the land securement efforts of the Bruce Trail Conservancy. (New in 2025)

As the first recipient of this new award, Carl Alexander exemplifies the spirit, dedication and hard work of the award's namesake Jack Morgan.

For more than two decades as the Landowner Relations Director for the Dufferin Hi-Land Club, Carl Alexander has built the strong, trusting relationships that make a secured Trail and lasting conservation possible. With creativity, diplomacy, and patience, Carl has helped navigate many complex securement projects.

Recently, Carl was instrumental in securing the Pine River Nature Reserve – where two of the three properties were generously donated – and played a central role in acquiring a series of adjacent properties at Honeywood Ridge. Carl also planned and coordinated the fencing and stiles at Honeywood Ridge needed to ensure that hikers and grazing cattle could safely share the landscape.



Carl Alexander

Photo: Rhiannon Caruthers

Beyond these achievements, Carl has been a steady source of advice and encouragement for countless securement efforts in the Dufferin Hi-Land section and beyond. The Bruce Trail Conservancy is grateful to Carl for his outstanding work building these crucial relationships and furthering the securement of our ribbon of wilderness.

Leaders in Hiking Award

In recognition of an outstanding Hike Leader, Hike Director or other individual who has shown exceptional leadership within the BTC hiking program. (New in 2025)

Sandra Green

Sandra (Sandy) brings boundless enthusiasm and heart to everything she touches as Hike Leader, Caledon Hills



Sandra Green with Michael McDonald
Leaders in Hiking Award

Photo: Brooke Henry

Club President, Sawyer, Land Steward, and End-to-End Coordinator. Her passion for the Bruce Trail is contagious. She inspires others to hike, volunteer, join or donate, helping to strengthen every part of the BTC community. Over the past three years, Sandra has led nearly 100 hikes, including specialized outings designed to connect youth with nature. Her background in education shines through as she introduces army cadets, Big Brothers Big Sisters participants, school groups, and Scouts to the wonders of the Escarpment. Sandra's leadership is generous, joyful, and deeply impactful.

Saabir Sohrab

As Hike Director of the Peninsula Club, Saabir has transformed and expanded the Club's hiking program with creativity and thoughtful leadership.



Saabir Sohrab
Leaders in Hiking Award

Photo: Rhiannon Caruthers

Under his guidance, the program now includes additional end-to-end series, make-up hikes, themed badge hikes, sunrise and sunset outings, full-moon hikes, winter adventures, and in 2025 the Club's first trail-running end-to-end.

Saabir's encouragement has inspired many hikers to become leaders themselves, growing the Peninsula's cadre to 25 active hike leaders. Always reliable and quick to step in when needed, he also supports trail captains with maintenance and reporting. Saabir leads with kindness, integrity, a commitment to safety, and a love of the Trail.

Doug O'Neill

Doug has brought fresh ideas and energy to the Iroquoia Club hike program. Last November, he introduced a series of Rainbow Hikes and Public Transportation Hikes to create inclusive and accessible opportunities for



participation. Doug also introduced the idea of optional exit points, making longer outings less intimidating especially for first time participants. Pairing the hikes with sustainable and 2SLGBTQ+ friendly dining options has helped to foster a sense of belonging.

Doug is sharing the lessons he has learned from leading these hikes with volunteers in other Clubs and with staff to help us authentically practice inclusivity.

A gifted storyteller, Doug has written articles for Hamilton City Magazine and Explore Magazine that have brought invaluable positive attention to the Bruce Trail. His creativity, advocacy, and passion for people make him an exceptional ambassador.

Random Acts of Kindness

For demonstrating values essential to the Bruce Trail experience: showing kindness, demonstrating consideration, and sharing compassion for others. (New in 2025)

Karen Bergmann

For compassionately helping hikers who needed to leave a challenge hike early, providing goodies, extra water and a ride back to their vehicle, turning a difficult moment into a positive memory.



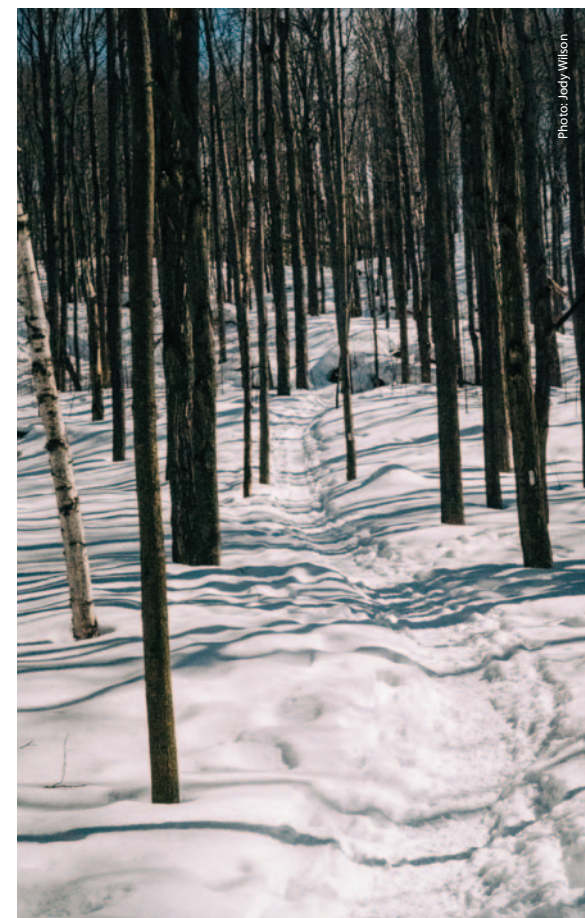
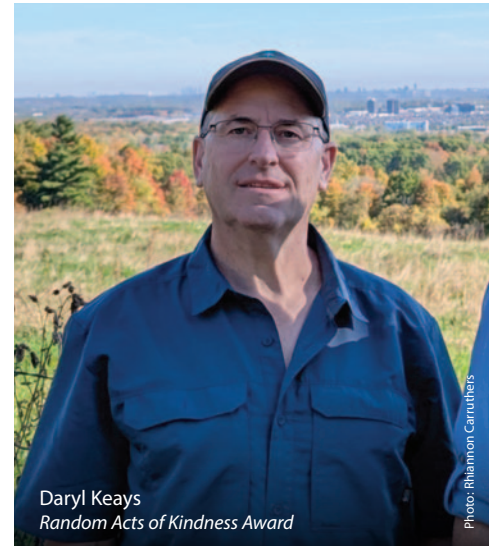
Mary-Ellen Cole

For helping to install a Wind Phone at a serene stop on the Trail to support those who may be grieving the loss of a loved one. For consistently encouraging and supporting hikers at End-to-End events, through Trail Angel rides, and outreach booths.



Daryl Keays

For thoughtfully responding to the needs of struggling hikers on a hot and humid day of the Iroquoia End-to-End by catching up with them at a later checkpoint with ice-cold water and genuine enthusiasm. His instinctive generosity made all the difference.



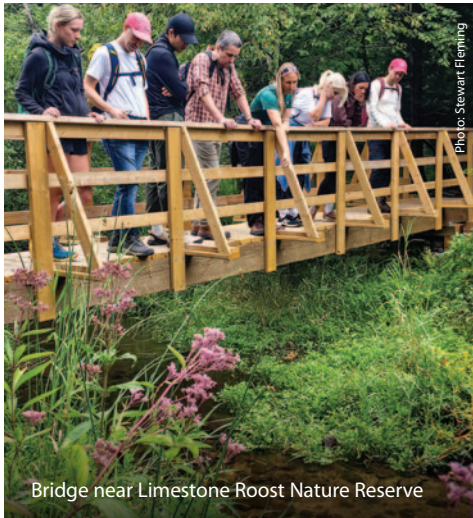
Volunteer Awards 2025

Trail Project Awards 2025

Tom East Award: Toronto 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 Toronto Club is recognized this year for a major reroute north of Limehouse that significantly improves the Bruce Trail experience. Following the successful securement of Limestone Roost Nature Reserve, the project removed a remarkable 900 metres of Bruce Trail from 5th Line and built 1.5 kilometres of Trail along the Optimum Route. The main Bruce Trail has been rerouted to a natural environment, and sections of the old route have become



Bridge near Limestone Roost Nature Reserve

new side trails, providing additional access between the main Bruce Trail and roadside parking. One of the most striking achievements in the stretch is a new 36-foot bridge over Beeney Creek.

This project completed a 30-year program of land acquisition and trail building between the 5th and 6th Lines in Halton Hills—a true final piece of the puzzle. It stands as a powerful example of how strategic long-term planning, perseverance, and dedication are improving the Trail and preserving a ribbon of wilderness.

Philip and Jean Gosling Award: Peninsula Club

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

In a year of exceptional Trail projects from several Clubs, the Peninsula Club's new stairway south of Hope Bay shone brightly. The scale of the project, the thoughtful planning and engineering, and the craftsmanship evident in every detail combine to make this an outstanding example of trail building that protects both hikers and the environment.

This beautiful staircase replaces a ladder, making a safer option for hikers and reduces damage to the surrounding environment created by those who may have left the Trail and looked for an alternate route.

To accommodate the work while maintaining Trail access, the Club worked with a nearby landowner and, through a new handshake agreement, created a temporary trail detour on neighboring land. After all the planning

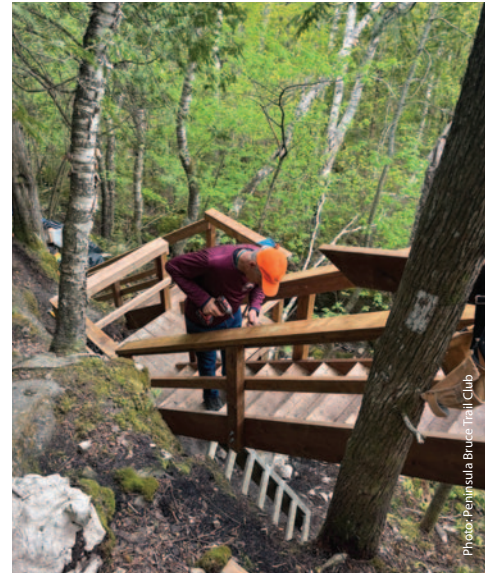


Photo: Peninsula Bruce Trail Club

and designing, five volunteers spent six full days, contributing 228 hours to the construction.

The Peninsula Club's commitment to excellence ensures that this rugged Escarpment landscape can be enjoyed safely and sustainably for years to come.



Photo: Peninsula Bruce Trail Club

Team of Peninsula Club volunteers who built Hope Bay staircase.

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

DEADLINE FOR NOMINATIONS IS JUNE 30, 2026.

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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.

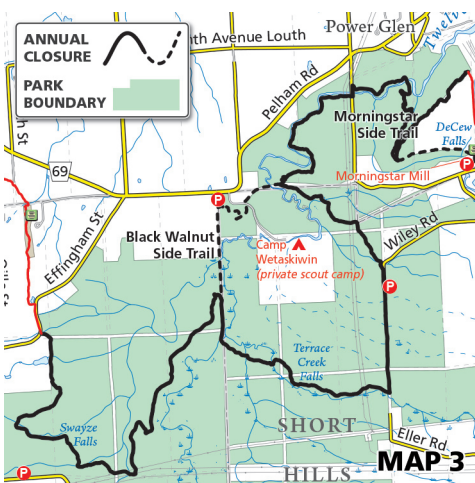
Hint: In The Bruce Trail Reference Edition 31, look for these new symbols in the parking descriptions:

-  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 13 and 14 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

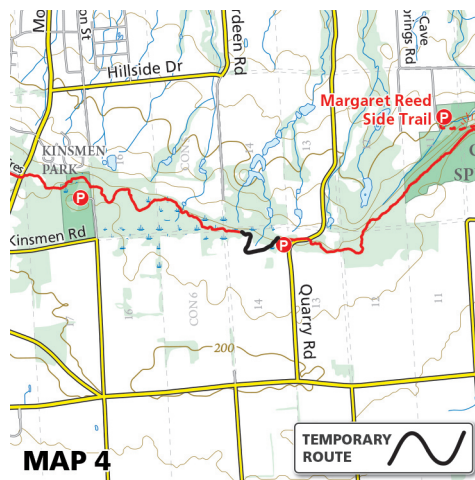


Map 4 – Niagara – Quarry Road area, Temporary Reroute

A section of the main Bruce Trail just west of Quarry Road in Beamsville has been rerouted to accommodate construction at the nearby closed landfill site. The reroute is expected to be in place until May 2026. For more information visit <https://www.niagararegion.ca/news/notices/notice.aspx?q=929>

Closed Trail = 363 metres

Reroute length = 433 metres

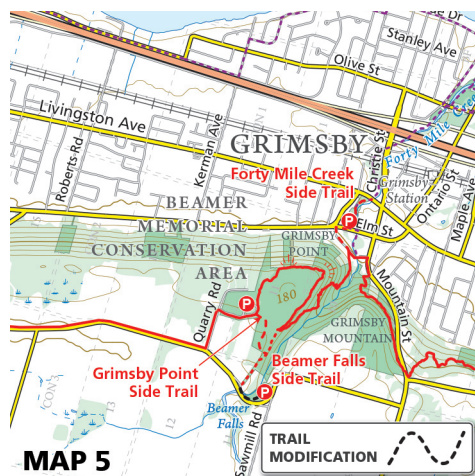


IROQUOIA

Map 5 – Beamer Falls Side Trail extension

The Beamer Falls Side Trail has been extended to reach the parking lot on Ridge Road West.

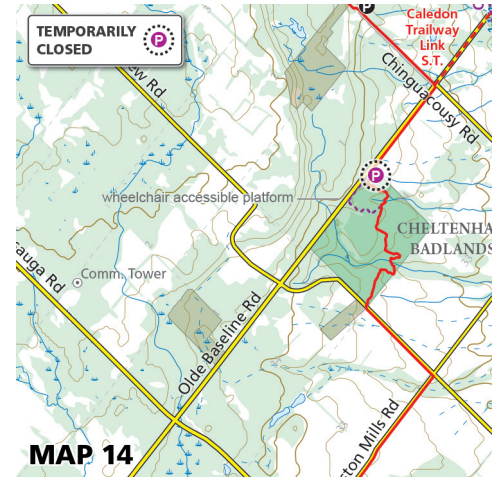
New length of Beamer Falls Side Trail = 770 metres



CALEDON HILLS

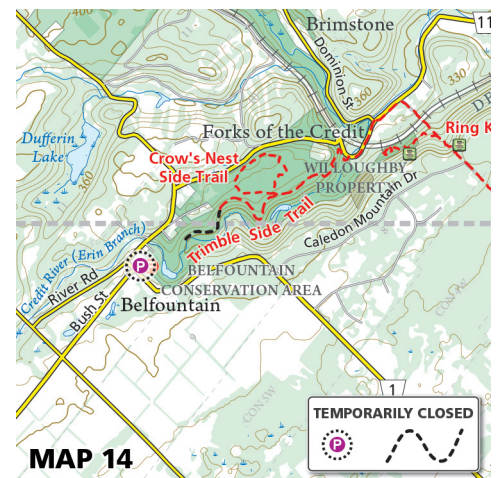
Map 14 – Cheltenham Badlands, Winter Closure of Parking

The Ontario Heritage Trust parking lot at Cheltenham Badlands is closed for the winter (as of November 17). 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 2026.



Report a Trail Issue

You can help the Bruce Trail Conservancy maintain over 1,300 km of trail by using the “Report Trail Issue” feature in the Bruce Trail App.

Thousands of volunteers care for the Bruce Trail and its many side trails: painting blazes, maintaining a clear treadway, building boardwalks and more. Though volunteers regularly monitor and care for the trail, conditions can change quickly and it can help to have issues reported by hikers.

If you notice something that needs attention on the Trail, you can send a report directly to the appropriate Trail volunteers using the “Report Trail Issue” function found in the Pin tool of the app. The reporting function lets you send a location (with GPS coordinates), a description and even a photo to the Trail volunteers in the Bruce Trail Club responsible for that area. You don’t need

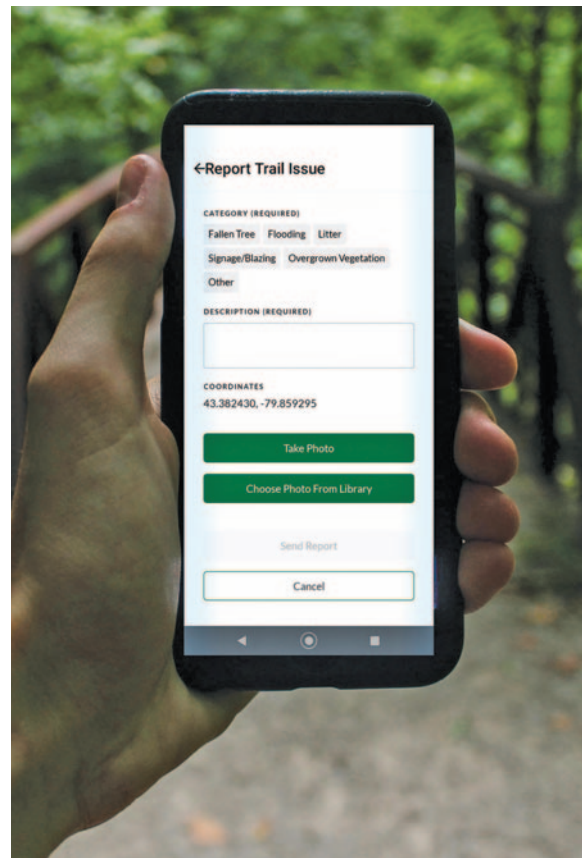
to know what section you are in or who to contact. The app takes care of that and sends your report to the right Club.

With these reports our trail crew will have the details they need and you will have helped keep the Trail safe and navigable for future hikers.

For more information visit brucetrail.org/bruce-trail-app or visit the “News” section of the Bruce Trail App

685 Trail Issue Reports


were sent via the Bruce Trail App in 2024-25. Thank you to all the app users who have shared what they’ve found.



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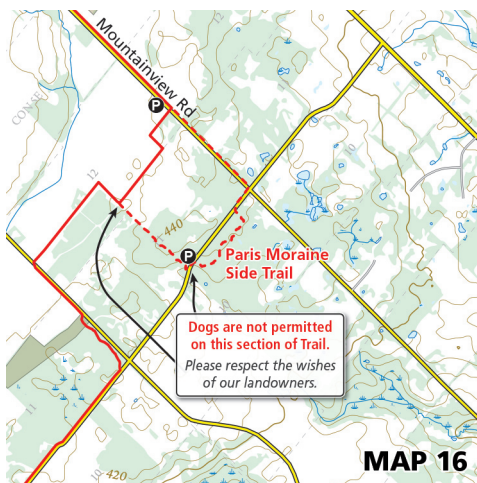



Trail Changes & Notices

CALEDON HILLS

Map 16 – Escarpment Sideroad, No Dog Zone

Following a reroute earlier this year, the area where dogs are not permitted has been reduced to the section of the Paris Moraine Side Trail between Escarpment Sideroad and the main Bruce Trail. Dogs are not permitted on the section shown. Please respect the wishes of our landowners. Visit brucetrail.org/dogs-on-the-trail for more information.



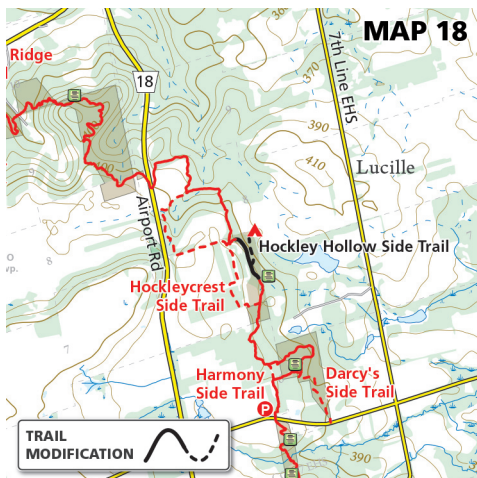
Map 18 – Hockley Hollow, Reroute

The main Bruce Trail in Hockley Hollow has been rerouted slightly onto seasonally dryer terrain. As a result, the Hockley Hollow Side Trail has been slightly extended.

Old Route = 305 metres

New Route = 280 metres

Hockley Hollow Side Trail = 170 metres



Map 18 – Hockley Hollow, Winter Reroute

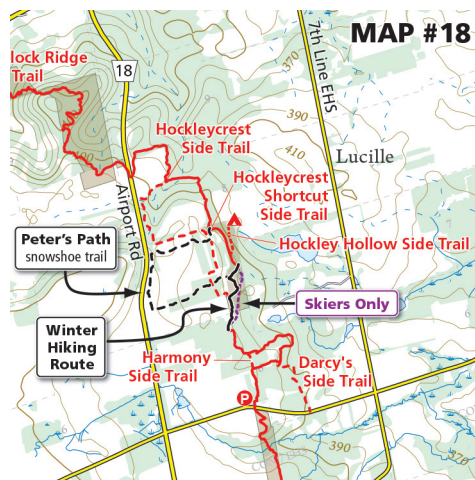
To accommodate the winter network of cross-country ski trails maintained by the Caledon Hills Bruce Trail Club, a portion of the main Bruce Trail in the Hockleycrest area is seasonally closed to

hikers and snowshoers, but remains open for the exclusive use of cross-country skiers. This route is denoted as a purple dashed line on the map. A 500-metre alternate route accommodates hiking and snowshoeing only; skiing is not allowed on this section. In addition, a loop trail named Peter's Path has been created exclusively for snowshoeing.

This trail change is in effect seasonally, December 1 – April 1 (conditions permitting). For more on the cross-country ski trails in this area, visit brucetrail.org/map-18-caledon-hills-hockleycrest-ski-trails.

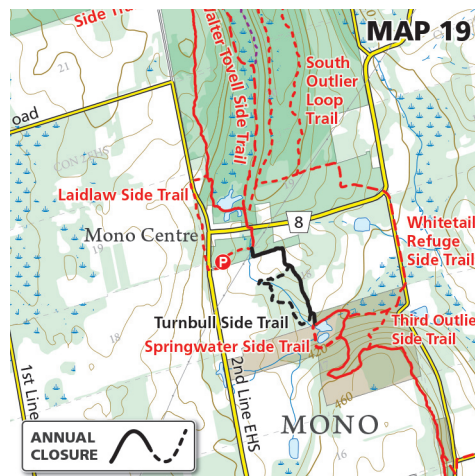
Length of Winter Hiking Route = 500 metres

Length of Peter's Path = 1.5 km



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.



DUFFERIN HI-LAND

Map 20 – Dufferin Hi-Land – New Parking Lot at Pine River Nature Reserve

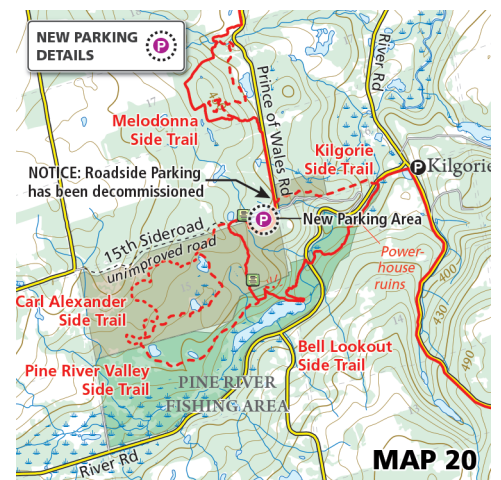
A new parking lot has been created at the BTC's Pine River Nature Reserve. The lot is off 15th Sideroad, 40 metres west of the stop sign at the intersection of Prince of Wales and 15th Sideroad.

Coordinates: 44.171886, -80.158251.

Capacity: 20 cars. Accessible in winter.

No fee.

NOTICE: Not shown on the map, the previously recommended roadside parking found on 15th Sideroad and Prince of Wales Rd has been decommissioned and is no longer a BTC recommended parking area.

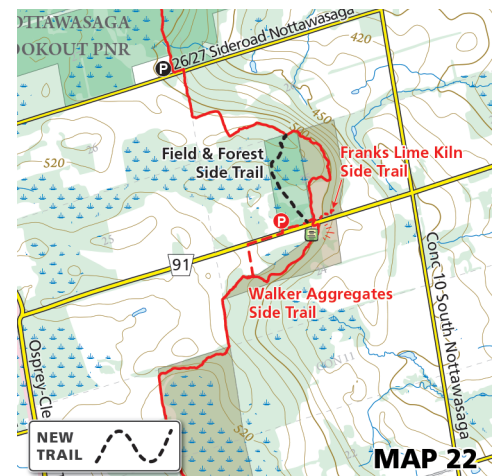


BLUE MOUNTAINS

Map 22 – Blue Mountains – Field & Forest Side Trail

In collaboration with the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC), the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club has opened a new side trail on EBC property just off County Road 91.

The Field & Forest Side Trail winds through the EBC property and creates a



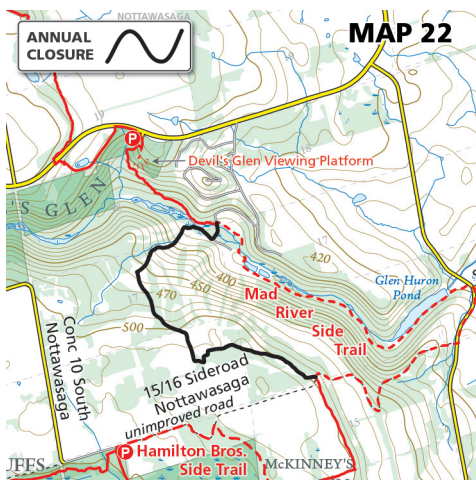
short 1.7 km loop with the main Bruce Trail on the adjacent BTC Lime Kiln Bluffs Nature Reserve, and with a short portion of the the Walker Aggregates Side Trail.

The most direct access to this side trail is from the BTC parking lot on County Road 91 (just west of Concession 10 South Nottawasaga).

Field & Forest Side Trail = 720 metres

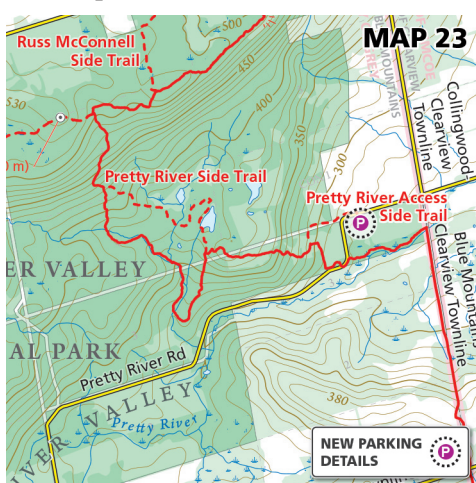
Map 22 – Devil’s Glen, Annual Closure

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 – Pretty River Valley Provincial Park, Parking

The parking lot at Pretty River Road has been expanded to accommodate 40 cars.



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 request of the landowners. Additionally,

the Mission Road Side Trail remains closed and cannot be used as an alternate route. 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 26 – Beaver Valley – Eagle’s Summit Trail Network

Following the BTC’s securing of Eagle’s Summit Nature Reserve (earlier this year) and a major reroute of the main Bruce Trail on the property, a new network of seven scenic side trails has been created.



The new side trails, together with the Main Trail, offer a multitude of loop hike options ranging in length from less than 0.4 kilometres to more than 4 kilometres, and provide hikers with responsible access to forests, meadows, rock faces, gorges, ponds, and spectacular views.

This wonderful new network is made possible through the work of the Beaver Valley Bruce Trail Club together with local landowners and the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority.



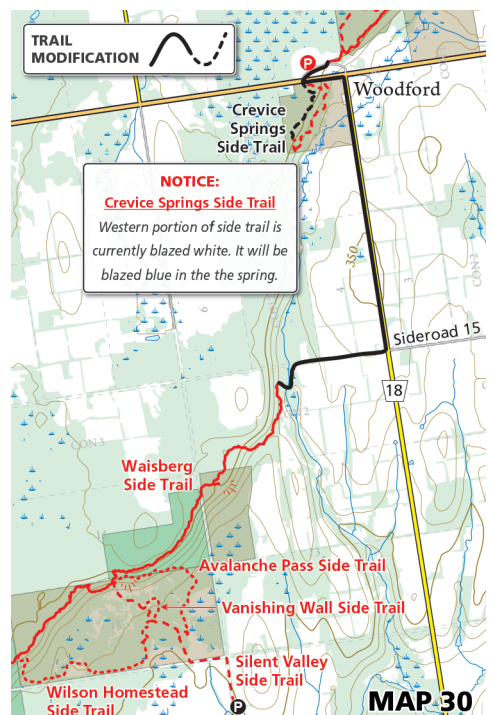
- New Main Trail (in solid black on map) = 2.4 km
- East Mountain Side Trail = 3.2 km
- Cascades Side Trail = 560 metres
- Valley Vistas Side Trail = 710 metres
- Rockface Side Trail = 510 metres
- East Eagle’s Summit Side Trail = 480 metres
- Pond View Side Trail = 170 metres
- Erratic View Side Trail = 70 metres

SYDENHAM

Map 30 – Woodford area reroute shortened

Sydenham Bruce Trail Club trail crews have cleared trail along the unopened road allowance by Sideroad 15 in Woodford, creating a reroute substantially shorter than what was created in June 2025. This latest reroute removes 6.5 km of Trail from the road, returning it to its original route.

The new Main Trail route shown in black is 3.2 km. The Crevice Springs Side Trail is 1.5 km. (The western portion of



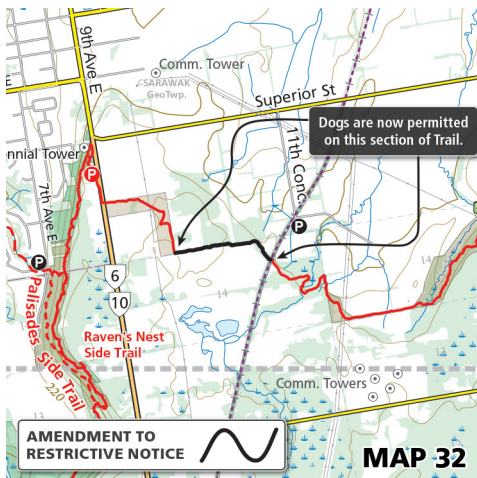


Trail Changes & Notices

this side trail is currently blazed in white. It will be blazed in blue in spring 2026).

Map 32 – Sydenham – Owen Sound East, Dog Restriction Lifted

Dogs are now permitted on the section of Bruce Trail between Owen Sound (Grey County CP) Rail Trail and the BTC's Sumac Landing property. Dogs must be leashed and all waste must be packed out. Visit brucetrail.org/dogs-on-the-trail for more information.



Map 33 – Sydenham – New recommended parking on Gordon Sutherland Parkway

Off-road parking has been established on the east shoulder of Gordon Sutherland Parkway, 75 metres south of the Indian Acres Road West intersection, north of Owen Sound. Coordinates: 44.630321, -80.972699. Capacity: 15 cars. Not accessible in winter.

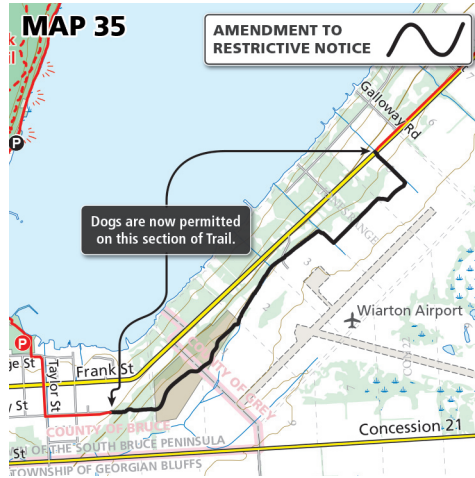
Parking on Indian Acres Road West or on Gordon Sutherland Parkway north of the intersection is no longer recommended or advised.



Map 35 – Sydenham – Warton, Dog Restriction Lifted

Dogs are now permitted on the section of Bruce Trail along the Warton Airport property. Dogs must be leashed and all waste must be packed out.

Visit brucetrail.org/dogs-on-the-trail for more information.



PENINSULA

Map 39 – Peninsula – New Parking Lot at Cape Chin

A new parking lot has been created at the BTC's MapleCross Nature Reserve at Cape Chin, off Cape Chin North Road. Coordinates: 45.109554, -81.312063. Capacity: 20 cars. Not accessible in winter. No fee.

NOTICE: As illustrated, the previously recommended roadside parking on Cape Chin North Road has been decommissioned and is no longer a BTC recommended parking area. •



Photo: Anne Armstrong

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The Bruce Trail Conservancy extends deepest gratitude to all our donors whose generous support we rely on to protect, steward and connect people to the Niagara Escarpment.

While gifts of \$250 or more receive recognition in Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine, every gift, regardless of the amount, makes an impact. Together we are preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.

Sincere thanks to the following donors whose support was received July 1 to September 30, 2025.

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We've partnered with **Epilogue**, Canada's only online Will platform founded by experienced estate planning lawyers, to help you get the Will you need and leave a lasting charitable legacy with a gift to the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

BTC members receive a 50% discount when they write their Will online using Epilogue Wills. Non-member supporters receive a 20% discount. (Get your 50% promo code by logging in to brucetrail.org and looking at "Member Discounts" on your account page.)

Visit <http://epiloguewills.com/give/btc> to get started.



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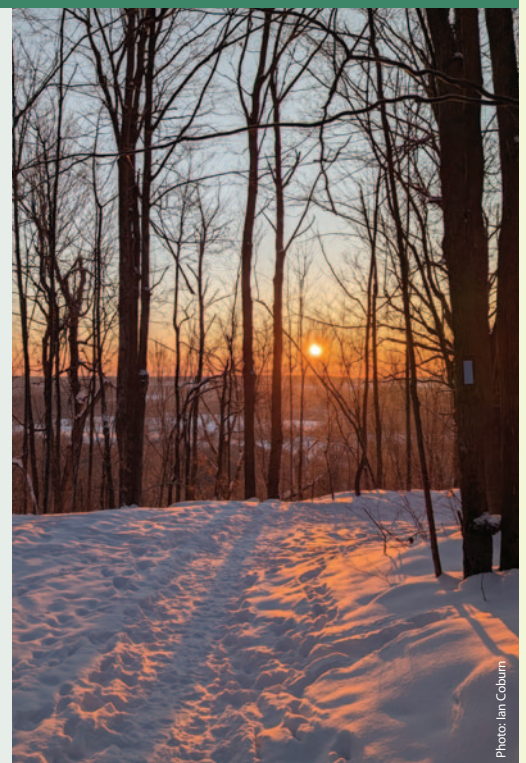


Photo: Ian Coburn

JULY 1 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2025

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Gifts were received to honour these special people:

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Special Thanks

The following donors reached \$10,000 in cumulative giving to the Bruce Trail Conservancy in 2024-25. A special pollinator planting will be made at the Fisher's Pond Nature Reserve in their honour.

Johanna Boffa

Gary & Sheilagh Hall

JoAnn & Michael Heale

Jeanne Keldson

Cindy Khoo



Bruce Trail Conservancy General Store

See our full selection of products and shop online at brucetrail.org

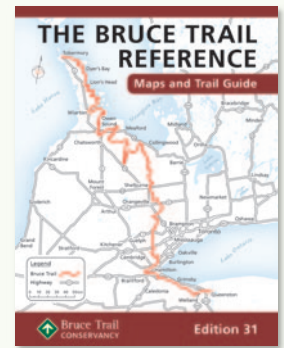


Bruce Trail Poster Map

Printed on heavy stock, this beautiful poster map is perfect for hanging at home or at the cottage – maybe it will inspire your next Bruce Trail adventure! Poster Size: 23.94" x 35.94" \$8.85

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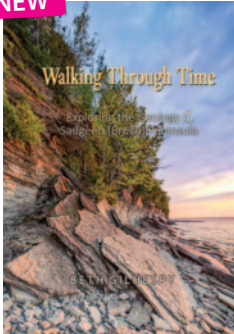
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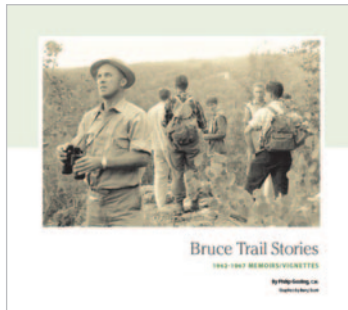
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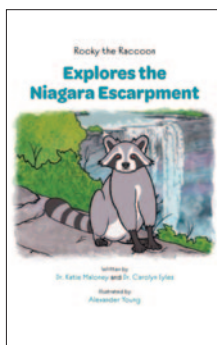
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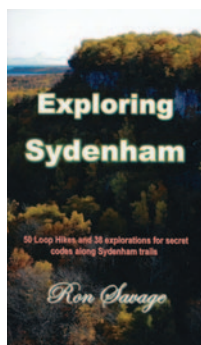
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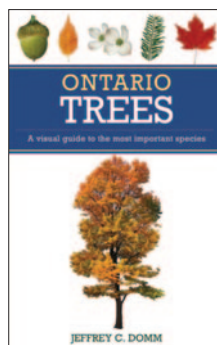
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Includes all 9 of Bruce Trail Club End-to-End badges, plus the official End-to-End badge, chevron and a certificate to recognize that you have completed the entire Bruce Trail.

\$90



Learn more about these and all our badges at brucetrail.org/badges

CANADA POST SERVICE DISRUPTION:

At time of publication, Canada Post is experiencing rotating strikes resulting in unreliable mail delivery. BTC store orders, membership and donations by mail are affected.

4 Ways You Can Help During the Strike

- **Donate or renew your membership online** (brucetrail.org) or by phone (1-800-665-4453 ext. 0). Your tax receipt will be sent to you by email.
- **Consider opting for an automatically renewing membership** to provide steady support and reduce mailed reminders.
- **Shop or pick up online orders in person** at 55 Head St, Dundas
- **Purchase BTC Gift Cards** for last minute gift-giving (BTC Gift Cards for Membership or Store products are sent via email on the date you choose).

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 am – 4 pm, until our seasonal closure, December 24 – January 5.

Thank You!

FOR GIVING THE GIFT OF TIME IN NATURE.



As members, volunteers, landowners and generous donors, you make it possible for thousands of people to experience meaningful connections with nature along the Bruce Trail.

Your collective support enables the Bruce Trail Conservancy to safeguard more of the Niagara Escarpment's remarkable landscapes and

biodiversity each year, while welcoming people to explore them responsibly.

Together, your actions offer an irreplaceable gift to future generations – the gift of healthy, connected Escarpment ecosystems, woven through by a path where people can continue to spend cherished time in nature.



2x
THE IMPACT

Your continued support with a special donation this winter can have **DOUBLE** the impact thanks to a generous matching grant from Environment and Climate Change Canada.

See pages 12-13 for more on how to make the most of this opportunity.



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