



THE RATTLER

The newsletter of the



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY

PENINSULA CLUB

2023 #1



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Tamara Wilson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

In days gone by, the arrival of winter on the Peninsula essentially meant the winding down of the “hiking season” and only a few dedicated trail users would be left slogging through the snow along the blazed corridor. The National Park main entrance was closed and intrepid visitors would have to complete their own paperwork as they headed into it.

Today, hiking and trail use on the Peninsula continue as an all-season adventure. The Saugeen Bruce Peninsula National Park welcomes visitors with its staffed operations at the Cyprus Lake main entrance, greeting those who are up for some winter fun. The more remote and treacherous locations are avoided but there remain many kilometers of main and side trails from Wiarton to Tobermory where winter hikes, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are eagerly embraced activities.

At the club level, winter is the time for building relationships and exploring collaborations; for prioritizing resources and projects;

and for planning celebrations, recognitions, festivals and trail development.

There is early warning that 2023 is going to be a big maintenance year. Winter trail users are reporting an abundance of downed trees, likely resulting from a combination of big snowstorms, several high-wind events and the impacts of aggressive forest pests like the emerald ash borer. Please continue to report downed trees and bear with us as we wait to safely clear the trails. Our trained sawyers and volunteers will return to action as soon as it is safe to do so!

In the meantime, enjoy the trails, earn a badge, learn a new skill like snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, and join us as we celebrate the winter wonderland that currently awaits us along the Bruce Trail. Come March, signs of spring will slowly start appearing and a new season of wonder will begin.

Tamara

P.S. Did you know you can report trail issues using the BTC mobile app by “Dropping a Pin” and “Reporting a Trail Issue.”

THE RATTLER



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY
PENINSULA CLUB

2023, ISSUE 1

PENINSULA BRUCE TRAIL CLUB

PO BOX 1096

LIONS HEAD, ON N0H 1W0

WWW.PBTC.CA

PBTCTHERATTLER@GMAIL.COM

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION

If you have a story that might be of interest to Rattler readers, please send it to pbtctherattler@gmail.com.

Deadline for submissions for the next edition is August 7, 2023

Editors: Shanna Reid & Laurie Chan
Layout: Leslie McBeth

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SAUGEEN (BRUCE) PENINSULA LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Traditional Territory of the Anishinabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations. And further give thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen, and the Chippewas of Nawash, now known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, as the traditional keepers of this land.

Personal satisfaction, a sense of achievement, team building, working in the outdoors, creating a legacy, protecting and stewarding resources, meeting a challenge, and blisters and sore muscles are just a few of the benefits of being involved.



Why Volunteer?

BY DOUG HILL

My first volunteer experience with the Bruce Trail was in June 1966, one year before the official opening. The trail between White Bluff and Cape Chin South had been axe-blazed by then. I was 13 years old and in Grade 8, and the senior room of Lion's Head Public School (led by teacher Dave Caudle) was cleaning debris and adding blazes on a class trip near the end of the school year.

One of the features our teacher pointed out to us on that outing was the large stumps cut about three feet above the forest floor. He posed the question: "Why did they cut the trees so high off the ground?" Keep reading for the answer. The stumps, located between Reed's Dump and Smokey Head, can still be seen today, although they are hollow. They are cedar, and the logs may have been taken to Rouse's shingle mill located three kilometres away on Ackerman Lane, at the eastern end of Lindsay Road 5.

My family moved to Lion's Head in 1958, where my father was the pastor of what is now Bethel Church. I saw lots of volunteering first-hand in that setting.

Like many people who have grown up on the Peninsula, I have enjoyed the benefits of the activities provided by the Bruce Trail without actually participating in any efforts to maintain or enhance it.

Basically, I took a 45-year "leave of absence."

I realized the economic benefits of the trail when we became involved in the accommodation business in 2009. Prior to that we were in the construction sector.

I wanted to "give back" to the Bruce Trail and so initially took on the role of a "trail captain" for the Cape Dundas section. Subsequently, I took the chainsaw safety course and have cut the occasional "leaner."



A number of years ago I built a home for Grant Ehrhardt and family. I watched as Grant gave of his time, energy and "skill set" to improving the trail. His enthusiasm and dedication to the trail has been an inspiration.

Grant put my name forward as someone that might be able to help with the building of the stairs at Barrow Bay. My experience as a bricklayer and carpenter had allowed me to travel to other countries for volunteer projects, so why not do something close to home? Thus, it has been my great privilege to work with other volunteers on both sets of stairs

between Barrow Bay and Rush Cove. The lead-up, implementation, and clean-up aspects of these projects is illustrative of the varied abilities and talents required. Vision, planning, administration, and execution necessitate and give opportunity for a whole host of interests.

Personal satisfaction, a sense of achievement, team building, working in the outdoors, creating a legacy, protecting and stewarding resources, meeting a challenge, and blisters and sore muscles are just a few of the benefits of being involved. In addition, we gain knowledge as we interact with those who share common goals.

Being outside was a definite draw for us. We have always loved getting out, and specifically enjoy hiking. The challenge of the projects was another reason to volunteer - the coming together with others with different skills to solve the problem at hand. We are able to use our skills and experience so others can enjoy the trail, and get to enjoy the satisfaction of a job well done.



We have also met amazing people through volunteering, and the camaraderie has kept us coming back. Try it and see how you like it - you won't be disappointed.

The logo for Suntrail Source for Adventure features a stylized mountain peak in blue and green. Below the logo, the text reads: "Whether you're a backpacker, canoeist, kayaker or cross-country skier, Suntrail has the merchandise and advice you need to take your passion to the next level." At the bottom, it provides the address "Hwy #6 Hepworth ON", social media icons for Instagram and Facebook, and the email "info@suntrail.ca" and phone number "519-935-2478".

info@suntrail.ca

The advertisement for Miller's Family Camp has a yellow background with a dark border. It features the title "Miller's Family Camp" in large, bold, black letters. Below the title, it says "Enjoy our Relaxed Family Atmosphere". A list of services includes "Cottages • Camping" and "Boat Rentals". At the bottom, it provides the website "www.millersfamilycamp.com", the email "info@millersfamilycamp.com", and the address "108 Miller Lake Shore Rd. Miller Lake, ON N0H 1Z0" with the phone number "519-795-7750".

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Profile: Lloyd Hayward, Peninsula Bruce Trail Club Volunteer

BY TAMARA WILSON
CLUB PRESIDENT

I was born in Bonavista, Newfoundland and after high school graduation came to Toronto, joining Bank of Montreal in July 1963. After retiring in 2000, I started part-time with the bank in Owen Sound, retiring again in 2007. I married Mary in 1966 and we have two children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Besides Toronto, we have lived in Galt, Waterloo, Drumbo, Hespeler, Windsor, Ingersoll, London, Barrie, Clinton, and Mississauga. We built our cottage in 1979 in Oliphant, renovating it in 1999 to become our permanent residence in 2000.

My wife, Mary, has been hiking the Bruce Trail for some time, completing her first end-to-end (E2E) in 2009. She and her friend always did this together, but for one weekend in August 2006, her friend was not able to go, and Mary talked me into going on a “short” hike with her. I had not hiked any distance before this and did not have hiking boots. So, off to Suntrail



for a new pair of boots – and I wanted a pair that did not need a break-in period. Kathy Orr was most accommodating. In any event, the short hike ended up being about 26 kilometres due to a reroute around construction on Highway 6 near Hamilton. It was also 26 to 30 degrees!

Undaunted by the foregoing experience, in 2008 I signed up for a Peninsula E2E lead by Marlene Rothenbury. On one of these hikes, John Greenhouse suggested I should get more involved with Peninsula Bruce Trail Club (PBTC), and I mentioned that perhaps I could help occasionally. He said he was looking for more than that and only later did I learn that he was recruiting for board members!

It was not long after that when I met John Appleton, who was trail maintenance director for PBTC, and I became trail captain of the McIver Side Trail.



I guess I must have done a reasonable job because shortly after that I became trail maintenance director for the southern sections.

At the PBTC E2E, I met Nick Torra, Jeannie McKeoun, Carolyn Williams and Barb Chester and we decided to continue the trail. In 2009 we completed the Sydenham E2E, and in 2012 reached the cairn in Queenston.

After my term as trail maintenance director south, I became an assistant to the new trail maintenance director, John Van Bastelaar. When John left, I helped Walter with trail issues and worked on the audit. Eventually I again accepted the role of trail maintenance director south which I still hold.

Through my involvement with Rotary Winterama as secretary for over 10 years, I met Henry Weickert and around 2012 he asked if I would consider being PBTC treasurer. He said it was “easy,” so I accepted that role for six years.

The proudest moment was when I became trail captain of McIver Side Trail on the newly acquired Glassford property. It is a wonderful, diverse section of the trail and came to be one that our grandchildren loved.

While there are many satisfying moments, I would say that the acceptance of the idea for a staircase at Barrow Bay was the most exciting, culminating in the completion of not just one, but two staircases masterfully engineered by Doug Hill.

While not necessarily due to my board involvement, I feel good about distributing E2E badges; receiving the Porcupine award in 2011 and Volunteer Service Award from the Province of Ontario in 2014 (for my involvement with PBTC); and being on the 2018 AGM committee lead by Brenda Langlois.

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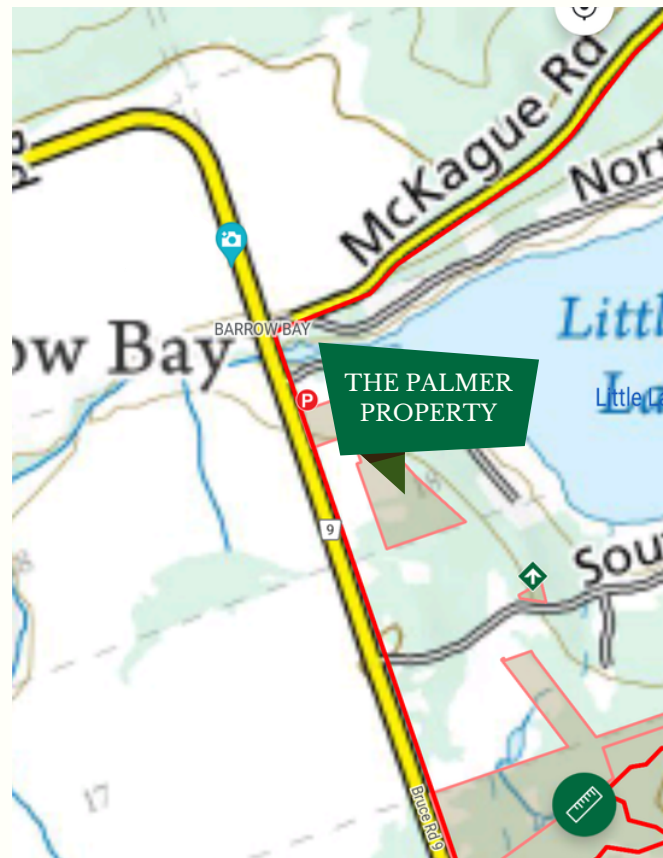
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Calling all aspiring tree planters! We need you!

Reforestation of The Palmer Property in Barrow Bay May 26, 27, 28

LAURA PISKO
DIRECTOR OF CONSERVATION
& LAND STEWARDSHIP

The Peninsula Bruce Trail Club is thrilled to announce Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) approval for the restoration of the old Palmer property. This 5.6-acre property is located west of the village of Barrow Bay on Bruce Road 9. It consists mainly of a meadow with apple and hawthorn trees due to extensive logging of its woodlands in the late 1800s and the 1900s.



MAP OF THE PALMER PROPERTY

The property's woodland habitat will be revitalized by planting over 600 native fruit and nut bearing trees and shrubs (all small saplings). Over a dozen species of native plants will add valuable biodiversity to provide sustenance and shelter to many species of birds, wildlife and pollinators found on the peninsula. The fruit and nut bearing trees and shrubs include red oak, hickory, elderberry, serviceberry, chokecherry and winterberry.

Some of the trees are being donated by Tom Gehrels, a local travel agent with Adventure Coordinators. He hopes to help address climate change through carbon sequestration by the trees. In general, carbon sequestration will be provided in greater amounts each year until the trees and shrubs reach maturity.

The endangered American chestnut comprises 200 of the trees. It was considered the "granddaddy of the forest" before a deadly blight hit in the 20th century. The American chestnuts are being generously donated by the Canadian Chestnut Council - a-not-for-profit group dedicated to reintroducing healthy American chestnuts (American chestnuts will be planted on Labour Day weekend with details to follow).

We need volunteers for tree-planting for one or more of May 26, 27 and 28th. If you've got a shovel, a strong back, and a desire to help restore this beautiful piece of the peninsula near Barrow Bay please contact:

Laura Pisko, Director, Conservation & Land Stewardship, Peninsula Bruce Trail Club at pbtc.dir.conservation@gmail.com. More details will be provided.

*May 26, 27, 28:
Barrow Bay Tree Planting*

CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS WANTED

*Contact Laura Pisko, Director of
Conservation and Land Stewardship, at
pbtc.dir.conservation@gmail.com.*



Junior Birders in Action

BY MARG GLENDON
PBTC OUTREACH AND
MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

25 Students in Grades 3 and 4 at Bruce Peninsula District School earned their Junior Birder Badges this February.

Following student presentations to Brian Popelier and Marg on Thursday, Feb. 23, Marg was happy to award their badges.

Engaging students in observation of wildlife at a young age helps to foster a care for the environment and interest in nature. Thanks to the teachers at BDPS for coordinating this effort!





Group Hiking – A How-to Guide

BY HIKE LEADERS RUTH MOFFATT & MARGARET O'DELL & GROUP HIKER KAREN ADAMS

This list is intended as a common-sense guide for group hikers whether you are participating in a day hike or a multi-day hike. Many of the points apply to hiking in general. Your hike leader has taken time to plan and organize the hike and lead the group. As a volunteer in this role, your hike leader will always appreciate hikers who step up to assist — and there are many opportunities to do so.

1. Select a hike from the hike schedule based on your schedule, and on the length and pace of the hike. Choosing one that is beyond your ability could lead to injury or, if you are unable to keep pace, it may disappoint you and others in the group. Be honest about your physical ability. There are hikes on the schedule to suit everyone.

2. Arrive at the meeting place at least 15 minutes before you are due to depart or shuttle to the starting place. This will allow the hike leader enough time for introductions and to share information and concerns about the trail. Being early will also allow you time to convey any concerns or questions you may have.

3. A good rule of thumb is to always prepare before you go. Check the route and the weather, and plan your backpack.

4. If it is a car shuttle hike, be prepared to drive to the starting point of the hike or to drive the drivers back at the end of the day. If it is a multi-day hike, do not arrive at the hike with a two-seater vehicle or with three other people in your car unless you have okayed it with the hike leader ahead of time. In other words, try not to make your cost savings the burden of everyone else because you cannot share in the shuttling. Shuttling responsibility should be shared amongst the group in a fair manner.

5. If a hike involves parking fees, you are expected to share the cost, even if someone has a pass. At the very least, a nominal contribution is appreciated so be sure to carry some loonies or toonies.



6. Offer to sweep the hike. This means you hike as the last person in the group and wait for anyone who steps off the trail. Additionally, you should communicate any concerns to the hike leader. All other participants should hike comfortably between the hike leader and the sweep (unless the leader is comfortable with hikers in front) and be sure to express any difficulties you might have to the hike leader.

7. A rule of thumb about hiking in a group: Everyone monitors the line. You should always see the person in front of you, and also check frequently for the person behind you. The objective is to avoid having the line become a Slinky (the Slinky effect). Keeping a comfortable pace in a line requires giving room to people in front or behind, but not losing sight of them. (See point no. 11)

Love hiking?

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8. Offer to post during the hike. This means you offer to stand at the side of a trail that has a fork or two directions of travel. You will direct everyone on which way to go.

9. Offer to report trail issues if you have the Bruce Trail app. This includes describing the issue, taking a photo and submitting via the app. It can be a report of a fallen tree, flooding, litter, signage/blazing, overgrown vegetation or other issue. It is also a good idea to indicate a parking area that is nearest to the issue you are describing. Trail maintenance volunteers are most appreciative of these reports.

10. All hikes are Leave No Trace, which essentially means that we don't leave anything behind and, where possible, leave the trail cleaner than we found it. Whether it's moving small branches off the path or collecting litter left behind by others, it's our collective responsibility to Leave No Trace. Offer to carry a bag and collect any litter. (There's a badge for that!) It is never okay to toss refuse into the woods. This includes any organics such as apple cores, egg shells, banana or other peels, Kleenex or other tissues. If it didn't grow there, do not throw it there.

11. Keep pace with the person in front of you as much as possible. Pace is always indicated on the hike schedule. If too much space occurs, the people up front will wait for the people in the back. Often these "breaks" are only for the people up front while they wait for the others to re-join. Again, if you are having difficulty, please communicate with the sweep or the hike leader. It's not a good idea to continue on a hike beyond your abilities. The earlier you let someone else know, the quicker a solution can be found.

12. When you reach the parking location at the end of the hike, it's important that the second-to-last person to leave ensures that the last person is able to start their car. Never leave anyone behind.

13. Bring the "10 Essentials" in your backpack and always carry more than enough water than you feel you need. Snacks, too. Fill those pockets with extras, just in case.

14. Be sure to check the weather forecast and dress appropriately for any possible weather. Expect the unexpected.

15. Stay on the trail; avoid the braiding effect and erosion caused by creating ancillary trails alongside existing trails which are muddy or wet. Wear gaiters for expected muddy conditions.

Take only photos, leave only footprints, kill nothing but time.

16. Take only photos, leave only footprints, kill nothing but time. Do not forage, pick, or dig up anything you may find. Leave everything as you see it.

17. Yield to larger groups, up-hill hikers and horses. This means to step aside and let them pass. If dogs are allowed on the hike, hike where the hike leader asks you to (usually at the back of the pack), keep your dog leashed at all times, and carry out all dog waste.

18. Mind your poles. If you are not using them, hold them with the points facing forward and down, or parallel to your body. Likewise, if you are hiking behind someone using poles, leave enough space – poles can slip backwards.

19. Be prepared for last-minute changes and even cancellations. The hike leader will communicate all changes via email or text, so be sure to check your email in-box prior to leaving for the hike. Likewise, if you are not able to attend the hike, please cancel in the “Your Hikes” section of your Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) account as soon as possible. There are often people on the waitlist hoping for a spot. If it is last minute cancellation, be sure to email or phone the hike leader so the group is not held up at the meeting spot waiting for you. Your commitment to hikes and your hike schedule is your responsibility.

20. Lastly, have fun. Group hikes are a great way to meet other people and share common interests while enjoying nature at its finest.

The bulk of this list was discussed while on a hike and is by no means exhaustive. For the next issue of the Rattler, we hope to provide a list for group hike leaders.

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The Rural Rocks Side Trail

BY ROSS MCLEAN & JOHN APPLETON

Degree of Difficulty: strenuous for the first kilometre; then easy.

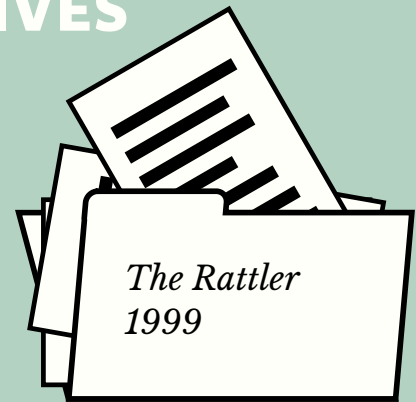
Access: From highway 6 at the north end of Wiarton, turn west on Bruce road 13 for exactly two kilometres; then turn north (right) on Northacres Road.

Parking: Park beside the sign on the west side of Northacres Road, about 30 metres from Bruce road 13.

The constant sound of the quarry equipment, operating six days a week, reminds you of why we must preserve the Niagara Escarpment. Except for public awareness of its importance, a result of publicity begun in the 1960's and 70's, much of its treasures would have been trucked away by now as building materials.

The Bruce Trail introduced many Ontarians to the beauty of the escarpment, and it has played a key role in building a mandate for its preservation. The Rural Rocks loop is a "satellite side trail", not connected to the main trail. The land on which it sits is ironically not even within the Escarpment Plan, having been eliminated as a result of political pressure to allow unfettered development of the area. Yet its geology and vegetation make it classic escarpment country.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



Learn how Rural Rocks came to be one of the only sections of the Bruce Trail separated from the main trail in this article from 1999.

In 1998, local landowners Tom and Dee Cherrie-Ashman approached the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club. Landowners for a quarter century, they fervently opposed the consumption of their neighbouring land by the quarry companies. Instead they wanted to preserve what they had and to share its beauty with like-minded individuals. Dr. Ken Ingham has been a long-time friend of the Ashmans. Formerly he was the trail captain for the 40 kilometres of the main trail from Wiarton to Hope Bay, and during this time built a strong relationship with the Chippewas of Nawash at Cape Croker. Ken for his years of service was the first recipient of the Susan Oleskevich Award. He introduced the possibility of the new trail to the Peninsula Club and did much of the initial construction himself.

The trail is a four kilometre loop, connected by a short 100 metre access trail from the parking area. The loop itself traverses a fascinating variety of ecosystems, and as such is an excellent

introduction to the wonders of the escarpment. It is recommended that the loop be hiked in a clockwise direction. In this way you will see the most dramatic section first: the Wonderland of Rocks.

At the end of the last period of glaciation, the melting glaciers flooded the land; only a few small islands stood out above the water. The waves beat ceaselessly on the rock, and carved the limestone into the fascinating shapes around which this trail now winds.

The first kilometre of the trail is perhaps the most concentrated example of wave-action erosion on the entire Bruce. The crevices, caves, tunnels and overhangs invite exploration, and children of all ages will enjoy playing in the rocks.

This section is not one to be hiked quickly. Also, it is the most strenuous part, and hikers will want to have both hands free to maintain their balance. At times it seems like a labyrinth, and at every turn are new shapes to stimulate the imagination.

Next, the trail wanders through a succession forest, a maple-birch woodland with an understory of young balsam. Here you pass a huge glacial erratic, carried by the moving ice from far to the north. On its face are vibrant green mosses and ferns.

The trail then follows alongside a wetland where you are invited to sit and observe the action of the beavers and the bird life - a naturalist's paradise. After crossing a bridge, the trail then wanders along old logging tracks before circling back to cross another wetland atop an old beaver dam.

Finally it climbs east to the property boundary where the view from the top of the hill illustrates the height of the land: you can see over Wiarton to the heights of Skinner's Bluff in the distance above

Colpoys Bay. Soon you are at the junction of the access trail, leading back to your parked car.

Credit for this attractive new addition to our trail network must go to the landowners for their generosity in sharing it with us, to Ken Ingham for his vision of a hiking route, and to the volunteer trail builders of the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club.

Take a hike to discover for yourself the beauties of this new route.

Submitted by Ross McLean and John Appleton

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This little gem of a hike is tucked off of Highway 13 just outside Wiarnton. It has been said that this hike has all of the Bruce Trail attributes in one little hike, and it surely doesn't disappoint.

Rural Rocks, Rocking the Pen

BY SHANNA REID
RATTLER EDITOR

This little gem of a hike is tucked off of Highway 13 just outside Wiarnton. It has been said that this hike has all of the Bruce Trail attributes in one little hike, and it surely doesn't disappoint.



RURAL ROCKS SIDE TRAIL

It is going to take you two hours to complete as it has some challenging bits and a variety of features: rocks to climb (hence rural "rocks"); marshlands; a "magical" forest (an eerie deciduous forest that is so quiet that you can hear your heart beat); a beautiful little pond where you can enjoy ducks and geese going about their day; and huge boulders sitting out in the middle of nowhere.

There is also a side trail to this side trail that you can't miss out on. It is called Obese and this short trail will have you climbing on all fours and squeezing through small crevices. This little adventure trail is great for kids who love to climb and explore. (Not so great for Newfoundland dogs.)

The first kilometre is up and down the rocks, in and out of small spaces. You will see some awesome rock faces and crevices. There is an open area with a teepee made out of trees just perfect to take a selfie or group shot.

At approximately the one-half kilometre mark is the aforementioned Obese trail -- 220 metres of fun not to be missed. Once you get up and over the rocks you now are into a mixed forest of evergreens and deciduous trees. This is where you will find the first big rock just hanging out - I call this the turtle rock.

You are now on an open straightaway heading to the pond. (Make sure you veer off the trail for a bit to the view point, a great spot for a quick snack and to look for otters or other wildlife.) Follow the pond for a bit and then head to the marshland, which has a few boardwalks. The second boardwalk has a lovely sit-and-ponder spot that was built in 2022.

At the three-kilometre mark you will find yourself in the magical forest - don't be surprised if you see wild turkeys or hear a pheasant startled by your presence (a little startling for you as well).

There's a second big rock, and you will then head out of the forest onto hydro easement land. You'll get to a road, but your hike is not done yet; make sure you go back into the forest (look for the blaze just left of the road), then back into the rocks.

Soon you will be back where you started, having just done the full Bruce Trail in one small hike! Enjoy!



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The otters remind us that securing corridors is key to promoting diversity as well as protecting the natural habitats along the way.



OTTER DRAWING BY JACQUELINE WILSON

Otter Encounters

BY TAMARA WILSON
PBTC PRESIDENT &
JACQUELINE WILSON
ARTIST

My friend arrives at our door with a strange look on his face. “I had to slow down on your road to let an otter cross!” he shares excitedly. The road that he is referring to is both Borchardt Road and the main Bruce Trail (around km 110 in the 3th Ed. Ref. Manual – just north of Otter Lake). My immediate response is disbelief. I had lived in the area for over three years and even with regular hiking, I had never seen an otter. But my friend is an expert outdoors person and if he says he saw an otter — then he saw an otter. My next thought is, maybe the otter was lost. This was back in 2020.

In the winter of 2022, I started noticing strange tracks in the snow along the Minhinnick Side Trail. Some four-legged animal would occasionally bound off the trail with big leaps and then rejoin it again further along. When I snowshoed out to the icy shores of Cottrill Lake, the mystery was solved! Along the slopes leading to the frozen lake were three well-used otter slides. The otters were having fun and they were using the Bruce Trail to get around.

I excitedly shared my news on local social media. A friend in Dyers Bay said that he had observed otters along Cabot Head Road, swimming and hunting along the Georgian Bay shoreline. We had otters in the area!

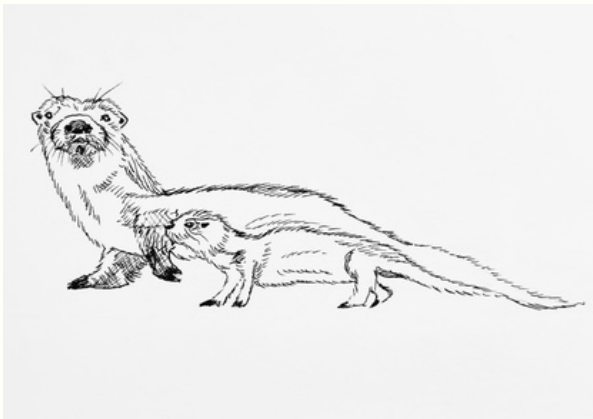
Even with the hours spent birdwatching on the shores of Otter Lake, we had never observed otter activity. I was beginning to believe the name “Otter Lake” was an historical artifact from early settlement days before otter populations were reduced due to hunting and trapping for

heir pelts. As well, it is not a leap to think that otters, being sensitive to environmental pollution, had not fared well through the catastrophic events of days gone by such as the Peninsula's clear-cut logging operations and the ensuing devastating Peninsula-wide fires.

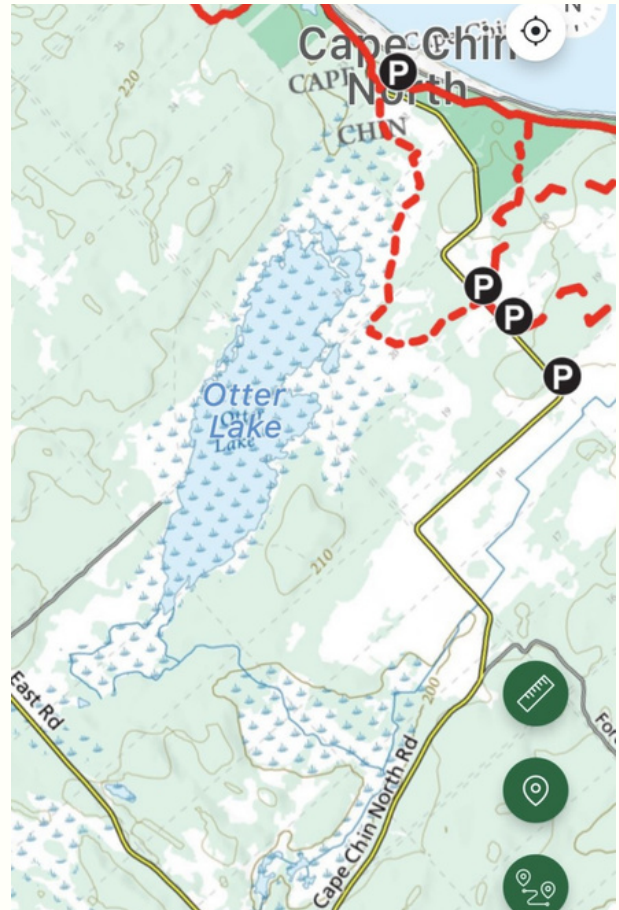
The local otters belong to *Lontra canadensis*, where the genus *Lontra* includes all of the New World river otters. Otters are members of the subfamily Lutrinae of the weasel family (Mustelidae). They maneuver on land as easily as in water and can weigh between five and 14 kilograms.

My next encounter with an otter happened while biking along Cape Chin Road N.. About 500 metres prior to reaching East Road, I heard what sounded like children quietly talking in the thick cedar forest to my left.

Perhaps some kids were quietly walking along the private ATV trails in the adjacent property? I turned around at East Road and headed back towards home. When I crested the small hill, there was a large dark animal in front of me about 100 meters ahead. I stopped,



OTTER DRAWING BY JACQUELINE WILSON



OTTER LAKE NATURE RESERVE

confused. What was I looking at? I ran down the possibilities: the fisher? (no bushy tail); bear? (too small); racoon? (too big). My mind settled on otter!

The next thing I wondered was why was it pausing in the middle of the road? Did otters bite? Why was it turning back and curled around itself? Maybe it was eating something dead on the road (afterwards, I learned that otters don't eat carrion). The otter and I eyed one another briefly before it bounded into the wetlands on the north side of the road. I had missed my photo opportunity. I biked past and wondered if the otter would come back to continue eating whatever was on the road. I went a bit further and turned around to quietly wait.



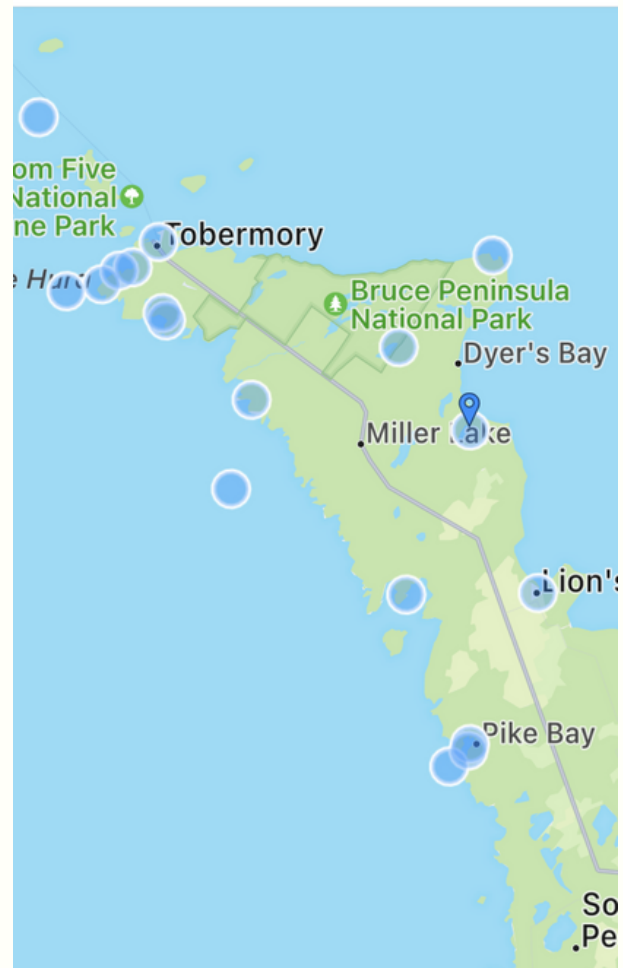
OTTER DRAWING BY JACQUELINE WILSON

I had no sooner steered my bike around when the otter appeared again but this time facing the opposite side of the road. Suddenly, to my surprise, a much smaller otter emerged, bounding from the edge of the cedars. Parent and baby united on the road and proceeded together to the Otter Lake wetlands on the north side of the road. Of course, once again, I did not have time for a photo. I wondered if the “children” I had heard talking in the forest had in fact been the otters quietly chattering with one another.

Just around the corner from the otter crossing area are several turtle boxes lining East Road, where the wetlands cross beneath the road and continue their journey to Lake Huron. It made sense that otters would like this wetland area, as small turtles are one of their sources of food, as are fish (suckers and catfish), amphibians (salamanders and frogs), freshwater clams, mussels, snails and crayfish. Female otters have litters of one to six young, so it seems I had observed the smallest litter of one baby.

My last otter encounter took place in January of 2023. My husband Tim and I were hiking out to the Otter Lake birding platform and I noticed what appeared to be a large dark branch out in an open stretch of water in front of the platform. I knew from our many trips out to Otter Lake, that the branch was something new to the lake view. As we approached, I could make out a long body and a head pointing into the sun. It was an otter – floating on its back, looking over its belly, basking in the sunshine.

< North American River Otter



INATURALIST OTTER OBSERVATIONS ON THE NORTHERN PENINSULA

As soon as we stepped on the crunchy snow close to shore, the body disappeared and just a head observed us from the water. Within seconds, the head disappeared as well. We waited a minute or so for the otter to reappear but it did not. We continued on our way. Where did the otter go, we wondered? Would it drown under the ice? With some research, we learned that otters make their burrows close to the waters edge in shorelines or estuary ecosystems.

The den typically has many tunnel openings, one of which generally allows the otter to enter and exit the body of water in different locations. We surmised that the burrow and its many openings could be in several island areas to the right or left of the birding platform. The otter was likely tucked away, safely out of sight.

In light of the range of the Dyers Bay area otter population, I think that the otters would chuckle that we humans called Otter Lake, "Otter Lake." They would not limit their domain to such a singular location. Instead, otters would consider all of the small inland lakes, wetlands and Georgian Bay shoreline, the "Otter Home Network" or the "Otter Wetland Ecosystem." It is wonderful that some of the pathways and wetlands that the otters use to travel around their region are protected by the Bruce Trail Conservancy. The otters remind us that securing corridors is key to promoting diversity as well as protecting the natural habitats along the way.

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- Newfoundland Hiking East
8 Days – August 9
- Newfoundland Hiking West
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A Hiking We Will Go!

The next few stories come from avid hikers who have experienced the Bruce Trail Peninsula section. These are their experiences and thoughts as they walked through a portion of the Bruce

Trail that we as “Rattlers” know and love dearly. It is always great to hear how others view the trails that we hike regularly. I encourage all our members to write in and share their best, scariest, or most inspiring hikes.

pbtctherattler@gmail.com

Crazy Trail Down the Escarpment

BY KAREN BERGMAN
HIKER

In October 2022, three friends and I hiked 15 kilometres around the Lion’s Head loop, which was great! The next day, we hiked from Rush Cove Road to Lion’s Head (my friend was working on her E2E of this section). We started out hiking through a beautiful, lush forest from Rush Cove Road. There were lots of ferns and mushrooms, and it was so peaceful!

Then we came to a spot where I couldn’t see the trail, although the white blaze was in front of me on a tree. I took a couple of steps forward and looked way down the escarpment and stepped back and said, “Whoa! I’m not going down there!” My friends had a similar reaction. There was a plastic covered chain on the right hand side but it was not easy to get over to it as the trail was eroded. And taking a step to the left would take me over the edge.

So I thought about it and realized this was a “butt” job. So I got down and shimmied over to the chain and made it about halfway down the hill and then stood up and went the rest of the way on foot. Looking back up the steep hill, I saw my friends carefully making their way down and we all made it safely.



RUSH COVE RAMBLE

This took us along the “new” main trail close to the water’s edge, through a gorgeous forest and up to the new stairs at the Barrow Bay end of the trail. Which meant we had to scramble up more crazy rocks to grab onto a chain to get to the new staircase which took us to the top of the escarpment and onward. Phew! But totally worth it all!

Within about a month, a new staircase was built on that crazy escarpment downhill by Rush Cove Road, by the amazing volunteers of the Peninsula section. I look forward to doing this piece again soon and using those new stairs.

Memoirs from an End-to-End – The Peninsula Section

BY CINDY LASTIWKA-PACZKOWSKI
HIKER

Back in 2021, I was finishing up my end-to-end (E2E). I had to make a huge push through the peninsula and I was hiking solo. It was a super warm November. I decided to book a few nights in Lion’s Head at Lionheart B & B, and finish what I had to do, which was the section from

Hope Bay to Jackson’s Cove, the newest Cape Chin North section, the section from Dyer’s Bay to Crane Lake, and the Barrow Bay section. I would park my car then ride my bike to the start of my section.

Next to birthing my babies, hiking those sections solo was the most powerful thing I’ve ever done. It was serene, beautiful and scenic, but sometimes scary (especially when I saw all the bear scat at Cape Chin)! There was no sign of the actual bear (thank goodness) but it was a bit unnerving nonetheless. I walked a little louder, sung a few tunes and cleared my throat a few times.

We live in a beautiful province and the Bruce Trail is an absolute gem! I am thankful and will be back to the Peninsula section soon.

Peninsula End-to-End
2023 Hike Series

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Join hike leaders Saabir and Randy to hike the entire Peninsula section in 18 hikes. Hikes take place on Thursdays and Fridays and average 10km per day.

Dates: May 4, 5, 18, 19, June 1, 2, 15, 16, 29, 30, Sept 7, 8, 21, 22, Oct 5, 6, 19, 20

A few spaces are available:
contact pbtc.hikes@gmail.com

* This series is open to BTC members only

Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY PENINSULA CLUB

Bruce Trail CONSERVANCY PENINSULA CLUB

PENINSULA END-TO-END EVENTS

LIMITED SPACES AVAILABLE

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PENINSULA CLUB

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BORCHARDT/COTRILL LK LOOP

04/09 MIGRATION MONITOR HIKE
OTTER LAKE/CAPE CHIN LOOP

04/16 MIGRATION MONITOR HIKE
BORCHARDT/COTRILL LK LOOP

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06/21 BTC ECOLOGY HIKE

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Family Fun Day – Winter Celebration!

BY MARG GLENDON
PBTC OUTREACH & MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Peninsula Bruce Trail Club (PBTC) volunteers welcomed the community and PBTC members to the Rotary Hall in Lion’s Head on Saturday, Feb. 18 to celebrate Family Day weekend and banish the winter blahs!

From 12:30-4 p.m., we hiked, played board games and enjoyed the live music provided by local musicians, Market Band. East Coast melodies and songs by Gordon Lightfoot and Neil Young lifted our spirits and got our toes tapping and hands clapping. Three young minstrels dropped in to share their live music too.

Tamara Wilson led a longer hike at Warder Side Trail while Leslie McBeth guided the family hike to Bannister’s Hill. Hikers had to adjust their pace and sometimes strapped on their Icer’s to help them along the icy patches of hard snow on the trail.

Families were able to scout out nature items on the scavenger hunt, returning to show us their photos from the event.

Thank you to all the PBTC volunteers for the hot chocolate, arranging the room, leading hikes and welcoming everyone as they came through the door. What a pleasure it is to work with volunteers dedicated to having fun together – whether on the Bruce Trail or at a winter party!

Special thanks to Brian Taylor and the Market Band as well as minstrels Arwen Robinson, Jackson Harvey and Makenzy Williamson. Your music was an essential component to creating a sense of community and camaraderie for the afternoon.



BEATRICE IS GOING TO PUT HER “TAKE A HIKE” STICKER ON HER WATER BOTTLE. FREDDY IS GOING TO PUT HIS STICKER ON HIS DIRT BIKE. WELL DONE!



ROUNDING OUT THE FAMILY DAY FESTIVITIES IS THE MARKET BAND



ISLA IS TELLING HER HIKING STORY WITH A DRAWING. HER BOAT IS YELLOW!

Winter Scavenger Hunt

BY MARG GLENDON
PBTC OUTREACH AND
MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

Bundle up and get outside!

Take a photo of this scavenger hunt page, and as you hike on the Bruce Trail with your child, or even take a walk around the block or to and from school, challenge them to find all of these items. When they find one, they can take a picture of it. You can show them how to take a photo with your cell phone, or help them use a simple “point and shoot” camera.

When you have photos of all the items, celebrate the completion of your scavenger hunt with a cup of hot chocolate – or maybe make a photo album of all the seasonal nature scavenger hunts you do together.

Below is a winter scavenger hunt page – but you can change it according to the season. Get creative and help your child notice the seasonal changes around them. Include these items on a new seasonal scavenger hunt page. Spring will be here before you know it!

For older children: begin teaching them about how to wait and observe nature as they begin to learn how to use a simple camera. Make a photo-art show at home with all the photos they have taken.

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Kids Corner

WINTER SCAVENGER HUNT



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BROWN LEAF	EVERGREEN BRANCH	GLOVES
RED BERRIES	BOOTS	BARE TREE
ACORN	SQUIRREL	NEST

Minesing Grandmother and Blossom (her Standard Poodle) Challenge the Bruce Trail

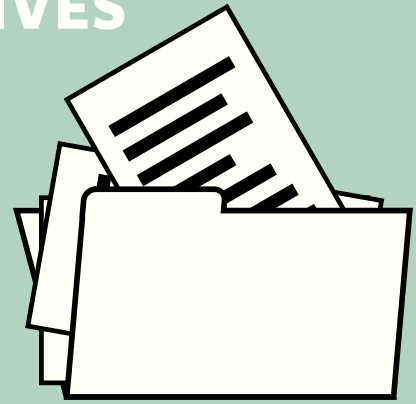
FROM RATTLER ISSUE #3 2015

Below are portions of an article a local paper published. The reporter did a great job stating the facts and quoting me quite literally. She keep looking for more drama, wasn't it all for a good cause, wasn't I trying to prove something, wasn't I trying to overcome some hurdle, depression, personal battle, medical condition. I really am a bit boring :) Just hiking for the sheer pleasure and fun of it :) Life is simple: hike, sleep, garden a bit and repeat.

An avid long-distance trail hiker, Ani van Dyk said it wasn't a stretch to challenge herself to make it through the 894 kilometre trail.

"It's a personal thing," she said from her Minesing home. "I have no idea why I put this challenge to myself." The woman behind The Dutch Gardener business said she's been fortunate to plan her hikes around her work week. She started in Niagara Falls May 4, walking the Niagara Escarpment — which is an UNESCO World Biosphere Reserve. She walks an average of about 20 km a day, depending on weather and terrain.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



An entertaining excerpt from avid long-distance trail hiker Ani van Dyk's end-to-end adventure

"What I am surprised about is I haven't seen a lot of people on the trail. There were (people) in the conservation areas or near swimming and waterfalls. While people have been sparse, the ticks and mosquitoes have been plentiful. "I was pulling three or four off of Blossom and two or three off me. The first few had me in tears," she said. "I'll deal with bears any day."

Blossom carried her own backpack, with lots of water and an extra lunch. In van Dyk's backpack are supplies including a first aid kit, rain and mosquito jackets, water and a cell phone.



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The following are excerpts from Ani's diary:

February 2015 - Greetings to my favorite hiking/ outdoorsy people. Some of you I see more often than others but you all still rock my world. Hoping to make this summer one that includes all of you and then some. I am embarking on another adventure. Yahoo!

First off it is not a fund raiser or pledged event whatsoever, just a personal quest that I am hoping you'll share. Planning on hiking the Bruce Trail from Niagara on the Lake to Tobermory, a wee walk along the top of the escarpment.

So I am looking for hiking buddies for any or all of the trip. A day, a week, a couple of hours would be fun. It will be a walk through kind of tour, meaning fast paced and goal oriented.

Time to explore side trails, etc. will be minimal. And I am hoping some of you will be support team. Put me/us for a night or two; pick us up off the trail; pack me into a box and ship me home if need be :). Deliver food drops and/or band aids and just general support crew stuff. Hoping most will be prearranged but on call is always a possibility.



ANI AND BLOSSOM AT THE CAIRN

An extra plea goes out to those of you that live close to the trail. Would love to have you on board for this journey. I am so excited to start the planning which is always just as much fun as the adventure itself. Blossom got a back pack for Christmas and so far has not eaten it (joking)



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Cheers to the summer of 2015 - Ani & friends on the Bruce

May 9th - The first leg of our adventure is behind us :) Blossom and I have completed the Niagara section (Niagara Falls to Grimsby) of the Bruce trail in fine form! With amazing help from Irene & Larkin we completed 80 kms in 4 days. The journey was good for the body and soul.

With my trusty poodle, charged up smart phone, and constant wild flora and fauna the solo trip was a great get away holiday.

The trail, as always, was spectacular, the ticks not so much ... I am always open to joiners and supporters and I am smitten. Let the adventure continue.

June 6th - Greetings from the top of the Niagara Escarpment. Summer is in full bloom, hope you are out and about, getting your paddles wet, wearing out the hikers, sleeping under the stars or just soaking up the sun.

What I thought was going to be tough urban trekking, turned out to be fine & dandy. The worst of the roads, bridges & tunnels almost behind me.

I am becoming more comfortable with the tick situation. Blossom and I both get de-ticked every evening. I'm just glad that they are mostly wood ticks not deer ticks. July 9th - Blossom and I are 334 km from Niagara and only 559.7 km from Tobermory! I'd best keep this tour rolling if I'm to get to Tobermory before the snow flies. The tick situation has settled down considerably, hope it stays that way.

Move'n on up through Dufferin-Hi-Lands (my home turf) with a hop, skip and a jump through the Blue Mountains and I'll be half way. Hooray!

I find myself forever in awe of the Bruce Trail and forever in debt to the scores of volunteers that maintain and keep it such a vibrant, accessible and safe trail. It and the province it runs through are so beautiful. I will never bore of the wonders and pleasures that continue to present themselves.

Enough gushing ...

Aug 2nd - Greetings summer folk! Doing the hiker happy dance! We have passed the half way point! It's all downhill from here baby. Hiking the whole Beaver Valley section with organized Bruce Trail Club hikes. As well as a weekend around Owen Sound. Lizzie and Lena are getting me 100 km closer to Tobermory this coming week. Many thanks in advance for taking such good care of Blossom and I. Sons, Scottie & hopefully Silas, and grandson Rowyn will be in town at the end of August :))). A day or two on the trail with them; hopefully Liza, maybe Meaghan; possibly Selena and Sara and I might just get to Tobermory before the snow flies.

We are getting into much more isolated countryside and up the beautiful coast of Georgian Bay. I have hiked parts of it with some of you, it really is the best part of the trail. Very rugged and wild and it's bear country but as Selena suggests we'll deal with bears over ticks anytime :)

August 23rd - Greetings from the Bruce Trail! A huge thank you to all of you that have gotten me this far. My crazy dream to make it to Tobermory is within sight.

I really am over the top excited and pleased with the whole journey. Celebrating the road less traveled has been just a joy. A rare pleasure beyond my humble expression. Happiness soars through life without pavement. Sometimes I feel like I could just trek on forever, just me my poodle and Mother Earth beneath my feet. Only 321.1 kms to go!

As I head up the coast of the Bruce Peninsula, you are all invited as always to join in. If I make it, the finale will be the weekend of Oct 4th in downtown Tobermory. Pot luck picnic, I'll bring trail snacks from my backpack, they've only been there for a few months :)

Sept 9th - And the summer on the trail just keeps getting better. After the fun of being in the local paper I was reminded of the turtle & the hare story. Yup turtle, Ani will win the race but not in record time.

I joined the Bruce Trail Club - Beaver Valley End to End hikes. A fabulous group of runners disguised as hikers. Boy what a fit, fast, hard core group. A challenge which would have been easier to handle had it not been 30 kms each day in 30 degree temps. But I finished each day in fine form. Each day holding the coveted sweep (last one in) position. It was encouraging if not humbling to meet so many like-minded people as crazed as me about long distance trekking.

Many thanks to hiking buddy & kindred spirit Sylvie for being who you are.

Watching the sun rise two mornings in a row from the top of the escarpment was breathtaking. Truly a life is good moment. Can't wait to return to the "falling waters" section of the Beaver Valley.

For about 20 km you can either see or hear water falling. It is an unbelievable sensation to hike through.

I am also reminded that being ill is out of my control and bed is the best place to ride it out. Sorry all those that I shared the bug with :(

Final Thoughts

I finished my hike on the Bruce just after Thanksgiving. It truly was an awesome summer.

The Buckingham's were so very gracious to go out of their way to congratulate me. They helped add to the glory of my final day. I met lots of Bruce Trail folks and like minded people this summer; many more on the last half than the first half. I would like to keep in touch with them all but life's not like that is it. So I will wrap them all into one glorious memory and cherish it forever

As a professional gardener I have had to work really hard to catch up and wrap up my season so I have not done any writing or organized my photos. Reality is sometimes a bit harsh after such an enjoyable experience and opportunity on the trail. I will forever remember my 'walk in the park' along the Niagara Escarpment.

I have received all my badges and even my certificate from the head office. And am feeling a bit smug :) As you know hiking is addictive, I will forever return to the Bruce Trail.

Happy Trails - Ani and Blossom

Volunteering is easy...

BY SHANNA REID

As I look out onto this very wintery day, snug and cozy in my kitchen, drinking a cup of coffee, I ponder what to do today. I haven't been to "my" trail for a while and the dog needs a hike.

"My" trail is Rural Rocks. It's a pretty, little, somewhat difficult four-kilometre trail that I look after. The requirements for looking after it are simple - to clear, cut and maintain the trail so all can enjoy. I must also submit a report in the fall and spring. I don't have to maintain the trail in the winter, but since it is now "my" trail, I go regularly with clippers in hand.

So out I go with the dog to see what damage the past couple of days of wind have caused. The dog is happy and so am I to have a reason to get out in our Canadian winter.

How I got involved...

As an avid hiker and outdoors person, I wanted to join the Bruce Trail

Want to get involved? There is probably something that you would enjoy doing for the club while meeting some great people, getting outside, and learning a bunch about the Bruce Trail.

*To volunteer, contact
pbtgeneralinfo@gmail.com*

Conservancy. The application asked for a home club and since I had spent a lot of time on the Bruce Peninsula, that's what I checked off. I also indicated I would be interested in volunteering and helping with trail maintenance. Well, that's all it took - I got a call from Marg, an avid volunteer and long-time PBTC board member, and we got to talking. She said that the club required a trail ambassador for the Rural Rocks trail, and I thought, "how hard can it be?" Well, that little side trail has kept me happily busy.

I also found myself saying yes to other opportunities such as tree planting, trail blazing, hauling materials and more. Saying yes was easy.

See page 18 in this newsletter for "Rural Rocks Rocking the Peninsula" for a history of this trail.

