



# TRAIL TALK

Oak Ridges Trail Association Quarterly

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SPRING 2024



Photo Credits: Top left Greg Jaski, from Russ Burtons Ballyduff hike.

Top right: Cita Wong, Seaton Hiking Trail in Whitevale

Bottom: Vadimas Geguzinskis, Marylake in March—Trilliums in May



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## Annual General Meeting

### THURSDAY APRIL 25, 2024 7:00 pm



All members of the Oak Ridges Trail Association are invited to attend the Annual General Meeting of the Association to be held at Ballantrae Community Centre 5592 Aurora Rd. Stouffville. Come make your vote count.

Open to members and the general public. Cost: \$2 at the door helps to defray the cost of the hall and refreshments. Lug your own mug and bring a friend. Everyone is welcome. Members

please sign up [here](#) so we know to expect you. Non members or guests can just show up, we will be happy to see you.

#### Agenda:

**6:30pm Refreshments (desserts, coffee tea)**

**7:00pm Business part of meeting.**

**8:00pm Guest Speaker Liz Calvin, Director Green Durham Association -**  
Liz will talk about Green Durham Association, the new provincial park and their role in the project.

*Liz Calvin is a long time Uxbridge resident and worked in Durham Region as a public health nurse for more than 30 years. During those decades she enjoyed working with families, and with communities on many locally-driven projects. Her work with communities has continued since she retired from the Health Department in 2013. She completed a Masters in Public Health in 2015, using her studies as an opportunity to explore the role that nature and access to green space play in our health. Liz has chaired GDA since 2015.*



For more information on this years meeting please visit [AGM 2024](#)

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## *Supporting our Hike Leaders*

By Derek Cowbourne and Karen Graham

Firstly, a big thank you to our hike leaders for volunteering their time to lead hikes. So far, 73 hikes have been offered this year. That is an increase of 55 per cent since last year. We are excited to see this increase in hikes.

Our hike leaders have completed the Hike Ontario Hike Leader course or the equivalent from another recognized Canadian organization. Leaders are also required to have first aid training.

For the enjoyment of every participant on your hike, hikers are encouraged to:

- ⇒ Read all of the details of the hike e.g. the pace, duration, terrain etc. and select hikes that match your fitness abilities. If you are unsure of the pace, contact the hike leader in advance
- ⇒ Arrive prepared
- ⇒ Look at the weather forecast and wear or carry appropriate clothing. Sun, cold and waterproof protection need to be taken into consideration
- ⇒ Safety is important and if icers/crampons are required, test them out before hand to ensure they are the correct size for your boots
- ⇒ Carry enough water and consider having electrolytes on hand. A high protein snack is another good choice
- ⇒ Pack a small first aid kit such as a waterproof baggie with bandaids, moleskin, etc.

### **Nature hikes**

Many of our hike leaders are avid nature enthusiasts and will consider offering slower pace hikes that focus on bird watching, plants, forest bathing etc. Additionally, there have been some requests for 60-90 minute hikes/walks.

Please forward any hike suggestions to [publicity@oakridgestrail.org](mailto:publicity@oakridgestrail.org). We will share the suggestions with our hike leaders for their consideration.

### **The benefits of being a hike leader include:**

- Health benefits.
- You pick the location, time, duration etc. that works for you.
- The social aspect of hiking with great ORTA member.
- No obligation for hike leaders to offer a certain number of hikes. Our volunteer hike leaders select the frequency that works for them.

### **What is involved in becoming a hike leader?**

All hike leaders must take the hike leader certification course before leading hikes and complete first aid training within the first two months that they begin to lead hikes, if they have not already completed one.

ORTA will reimburse leaders for both courses after they have led six hikes within the 12 months period of completing their leader training.

If you are interested in becoming a hike leader, please contact Derek Cowbourne. [hikes@oakridgestrail.org](mailto:hikes@oakridgestrail.org)

## HIKING IN THE ITALIAN DOLOMITES

by Teri Tworzyanski

In July of 2023, my daughter and I set out to share a mountain adventure together. It was a trip

we have been planning since 2020, when our original plans were cancelled due to Covid. We both enjoy big mountain views and challenging climbs. Our trip to the Italian Dolomites did not disappoint.

The Alta Via 1 is a very popular, end to end, multi day hike located in north-eastern Italy, just west of Cortina d'Ampezzo. It extends 120 km beginning in Lago Di Braies in the north and ending near Belluno in the south. Over the course of the journey we crossed a number of high mountain passes from one beautiful valley to another. We couldn't get enough of the views. The pale jagged peaks of the mountains, the turquoise alpine lakes, the green meadows and the beautiful wildflowers



Lago di Braies

were awe inspiring. Although no climbing gear was required on the hike, some stages were challenging. We crossed quite a few scree fields, climbed and descended a few very steep slopes, and crossed a potentially dangerous exposed ridge. In all, our elevation

gain over the course of the 11 days was about 6700m. Along the way, we frequently saw marmots poking their heads out of their burrows. On one occasion on a particularly foggy morning, we heard rocks falling along a rocky ridge flanking the narrow valley we were headed towards. We spent about an hour, waiting for the fog to clear enough to identify the source of the noise. We were amazed to observe a herd of chamois.



For the duration of the trip, we never left the mountains. We travelled from rifugio to rifugio carrying what needed on our backs. Most rifugios are family run enterprises. The ones to the north tended to be of higher standard than those on the more remote southern half of the trail.

German was also much more prevalent in the north. Occasionally this was confusing as some places had multiple names - German and Italian. For instance Lago di Braies, our starting point, is also know as Pragser Wildsee. I wish I had known that when I was trying to purchase our bus tickets

before we left. it may have saved me a headache.

For anyone who has ever hiked in the mountains, you always hear the warning that the weather can change in an instant. That warning rang true for us. Afternoon storms are common in the Dolomites and tend to roll in just as fast as they roll out. We did experience not one, but two, hail storms. Fortunately for us, on both occasions we had set off early and finished our day before they arrived. After dinner in the rifugios, it was common to see various hiking parties compare weather apps. Why is it that no two apps ever have the same forecast? Our biggest concern was always exposure, particularly on the higher mountain passes.



(crossed quite a few scree fields, climbed and descended

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One of our favourite spots along the Alta Via One was the highest point, Mount Lagazuoi (elevation 2752m). The views were spectacular and the atmosphere was serene. It was hard to imagine the fierce battles that took place here between the Italian and the Austro-Hungarian armies during WW1. The Austro-Hungarian army positioned themselves at the summit of Piccolo Lagazuoi on the north side of the valley. The Italians artillery headquarters was situated on the opposite side of the valley along the ridge of Cinque Torri. Given the limited options to attack, the Italians blasted tunnels beneath their enemies position, with the intention of blowing them up from below. As we hiked along old military roads, we observed many remnants from the war; everything from old trenches, bunkers, warehouses and tunnels. Although we opted not to, it is possible to descend 1000m through one of these tunnels (Galleria Lagazuoi) to the valley. The tunnel is technically classified as a via



Entrance to the Galleria Lagazuoi tunnel

ferrata, or iron way. A ferrata is a series of steel cables, rungs or ladders drilled into rocks to decrease the technical challenge to allow soldiers to move in mountainous terrain without actually having to rock climb. Via ferratas are very common today in the Dolomites and require helmets and harnesses. In the case of the tunnel, a harness is not considered necessary but a helmet and headlamp are advised. In addition to the relics we observed along the trail, there is also an open air museum at the foot of Cinque Torri. For those history buffs out there, this area is a definite must see.

- ⇒ Donate to ORTA
- ⇒ Celebrate life's milestones
- ⇒ In memory of a loved one
- ⇒ In honour of a friend or volunteer

*In Memory of ORTA member  
Elinor Allison  
Member 1999 – 2023*

~

*In Memory of  
Dennis Trowse  
Volunteer and Supporter*

~

*Kit Chapman Fund  
at  
Toronto Foundation  
“We thank you for your kind donation”*

~



*Neil Runnalls*

Neil has been hiking for many years, gaining a passion for the trails as child while joining his parents on hikes along the Niagara Bruce Trail. Neil has been an Ontario Certified Hike Leader since 2020 and has enjoyed leading hikes in the Queen Elizabeth Wildlands Provincial Park as a part of the Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association, Wilderness Club.

In September, Neil completed the full Ganaraska Hiking Trail leading an End-to-End Team for just over 2 years. He enjoys hiking towards a goal and is currently building a new hiking team to do an end-to-end hike of the Oak Ridges Trail. Neil encourages you to join the team and experience the feeling of accomplishment that comes with an E2E adventure.

Neil lives on a small farm in Uxbridge with his family where they manage a small horse boarding facility. He enjoys hiking, horseback riding, and making new friends on the trail. Join him on his next hike.



*Nancy Hogue*

Nancy loves doing anything outdoors especially if it includes exercise and talking to people. She prefers to challenge her own abilities rather than compete against others in a sport. Nancy became a hike leader to help continue the Sunday hikes that Josie led and to have a few more hikes west of the 404 which is where she lives. She prefers moderate to fast hikes with hills, water crossings and interesting history or landmarks. Any place she has never been before.

Nancy completed the Camino de Costa Rica, a 270 km hike over 16 days in February 2023 with three other ORTA hikers and the Oak Ridges Trail end-to-end in November 2023. Prior to this she hiked the Inca Trail to Machu Picchu in 2011 and the trek to Everest Base Camp in Nepal in 2013. These adventures were with her husband and daughters.

Retiring in 2022, provides Nancy the time to hike during the day. Hiking was a natural extension of the walking, running and camping/cottaging that she had always done. Hiking with ORTA has given Nancy an incredible and supportive network of like minded men and women who are not deterred (very often) by weather or terrain. She believes in and will hike any distance and at any speed if that is what the person can manage. And have found most people are surprised by what they can accomplish.

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## Case Woodlot Trail Survey—Help us with our 5 year strategic plan.

The Case Woodlot Guardians are a neighbourhood group that manages the stewardship of Case Woodlot, the only forest in Aurora listed as an Oak Ridges Moraine Core Area. With the help of volunteers, they are implementing a forest revitalization project that addresses the impacts of invasive species through education and active restoration.

The questions in this survey will be used to understand who visit the forest, how they use the trails, and provide an opportunity for people to make their interests and concerns known. The survey is 22 questions long and should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

👉 <https://forms.gle/8U46p7djZXmevZ6F7>

**Take the path less travelled.**

Use code **OAKRIDGE** and for each tour booked by your club for 2024, we will donate \$25 to the Oakridge Trail Association.

Image courtesy of Tourism PEI/Nick Jay

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W.R. Bob Dengler—Lead Pilot

Steven Dengler- Pilot and Navigator

R. Dugal MacDuff Safety Pilot

Come hear about this exciting adventure from Bob Dengler himself. This all Canadian crew flew a Bell 429 helicopter eastwards around the globe visiting every Canadian province and territory as well as landmarks across the world. More details [HERE:](#)

It is also an opportunity to get together with your ORTA friends to catch up on what is happening in our organization. Come along and bring a friend to enjoy these pleasant evenings.

Presentations take place in the Ballantrae Community Centre, 5592 Aurora Rd.,

\$10 at the door helps defray our costs.

Lug a mug!

**Date: Thursday May 30th Time: 7-9 p.m.**

## Oak Ridges Moraine Trail End-to-End Reflection By Scott Cecchin

In the spring of 2021, I unwittingly started my ORTA end-to-end. Me and a friend were hiking in the Northumberland Forest area at Peter's Woods Provincial Park. We still had some hiking in us, so we decided to drive down McDonald Rd to see what we could find. We drove around a bend and saw a trail crossing the road. Then I saw it: a white rectangular trail blaze – the same kind I recognized from other trails systems around Ontario. I slammed on my brakes (there was no one behind me, thankfully), and yelled “Did you see that?!” Needless to say, we pulled over and started following the blazes east. This gave me one of my first tastes for the hilly texture of the moraine, the pine planted regenerating forests, sandy soils, and at our farthest point, we came to a restored prairie. I was hooked!



Being a bit of a trail junky, I did my research when I got home and discovered that I'd been on a trail that traversed something called the Oak Ridges Moraine from Northumberland to the Niagara Escarpment. I knew about the escarpment from hiking on it when I was younger, but what was this moraine? Increasingly, I found myself driving south from my home in Peterborough, seeking out more and more sections of the trail. It felt like I was discovering my home from an angle I hadn't known about before. I don't remember when it happened, but at some point, I knew I'd try to walk the

whole thing.

I love hiking, so at first, that's all it was. But the more I walked the trail, the more I learned about the moraine itself: how it formed during the glacial melts, its unique soil and hydrogeology features, the failed agricultural history, the reforestation projects, and more recently, the conservation activism. The more I walked, the more I learned, the more the moraine became an essential feature for understanding the land here and its history. As my feet walked over the moraine, it became more and more storied in my mind.

I have a lot of great memories from walking the trail. One of my favorite things about completing an end-to-end is the quiet, out-of-the-way spots you get to experience. I remember during one of my last days hiking, me and a new friend were walking near the eastern end of the trail. It was a hot, August day; we'd climbed a long hill in the sun, and had emerged into a deciduous forest on the hilltop. We both needed a rest, so we sat with our backs against maple trees, and were quiet. Where we were wasn't a well-known conservation area or park. It wasn't a place that would be labelled on a map, at all. But the place was perfect, and peaceful, and I didn't want to get up and leave it. While the more popular places we visit during day hikes are lovely, too, it's the quiet beauty of these lesser-known places that make an end-to-end special for me (and no: I'm not going to tell you where this was; you'll just have to walk the trail and discover it for yourself). I am guilty of having walked far and fast on some hikes. But it's these slower, quieter moments that stick out to me when I think back on the experience.

In the summer of 2023, I finished walking across the moraine. I went from knowing nothing about it, to loving it. But I connected with more than just the land during those two years. I also made many memories with different sorts of people along the way. I brought friends to the trail, and I also met a lot of new people. I became a hike leader, and met folks from other parts of the moraine. The club helps us to connect with people from across the region who we might never have met otherwise.

Cont'd next page

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## Enjoy the outdoors without a tick

The Public Health Agency of Canada has an online pamphlet available to help you [enjoy the outdoors without a tick](#). The pamphlet includes the following tips:

### PREVENT

- Wear light coloured long-sleeved shirts and pants.
- Tuck your shirt into your pants, and your pants into your socks.
- Wear closed-toe shoes.
- Use bug spray with DEET or Icaridin (always follow label directions).
- Walk on cleared paths or walkways.
- You can also wear permethrin-treated clothing, now

### CHECK

- Shower or bathe as soon as possible after being outdoors.
- Do a daily full body tick check on yourself, your children, your pets and your gear.
- Put your clothes in a dryer on high heat for at

## Oak Ridges Moraine Trail End-to-End Reflection Cont'd..

In a time when our society is so disconnected from the land, it's beautiful to see (and be part of) a community emerging out of this connection to a landform. Whether we acknowledge it or not, the land is a part of the community we are forming.

On the last day of my end-to-end, a mere few kilometers to the 'finish line', thunder started roaring and the sky opened up: it was the kind of rain that soaks you to the bone in two breaths. I laughed: of course. Our trail angel came and rescued us, and as we sat indoors watching the storm pass, I wondered if I wasn't meant to finish the trail, yet. So it was surreal when, later that afternoon with very sore ankles, I walked my last section of the Oak Ridges Trail. It's hard to put words to the sense of accomplishment. Despite the pain, I was happy, and feeling very humbled. I didn't accomplish anything alone. Many sorts of relationships were built during my walk, and it's those relationships that got me to where I was going. I carry those relationships (and they carry me) beyond my end-to-end.

Scott Cecchin

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## THROW BACK THURSDAY

The photo of Noel Bain's first hike as a leader!! (2017)

Photo Credit Sharon Bradley

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