

TRAIL TALK



Oak Ridges Trail Association Quarterly

ISSN 1481-5982

Fall 2020

Top 2 pictures Photo Credit: Lori Waring

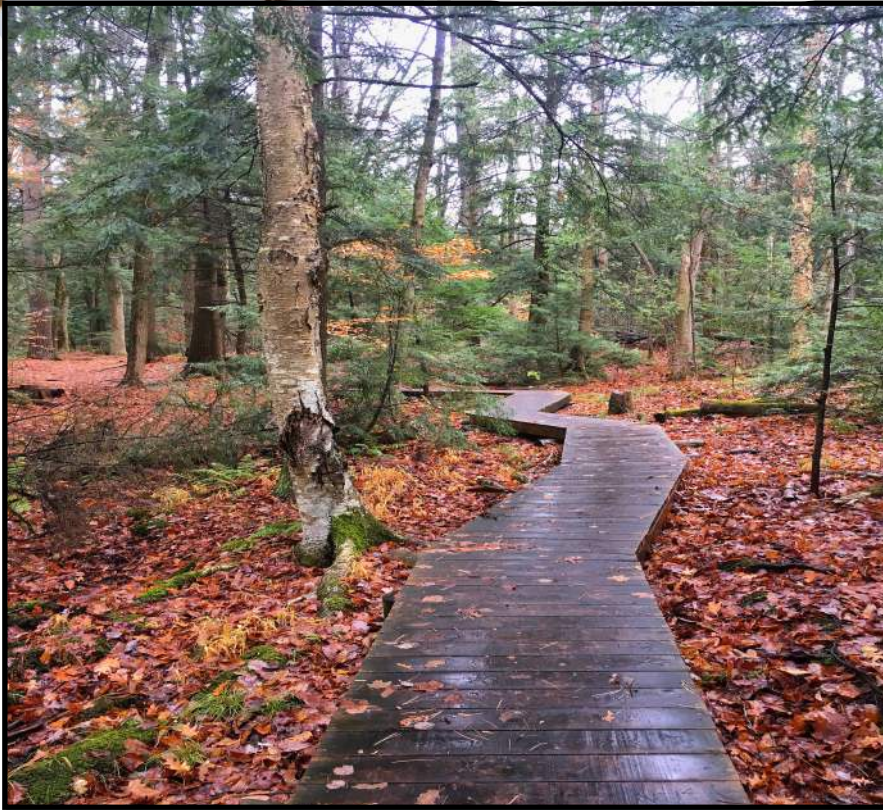


Photo Credit: Cathy Brown Nov/19

Photo Credit: David Francis—Oct /19
Dingle hike near eastern terminus

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Building Pathways to an Active Lifestyle

PRESIDENTS REPORT FALL 2020



Our newly restarted group hike system is functioning very well with over 30 hikes offered in July and August. More hikes are being added regularly so check those listings offered to see if there are some that appeal to you. Hikes continue to be listed with a maximum number of 15 hikers and restricted to members only who preregister for hikes. This is to ensure that the required social distance can be maintained on all hikes. Preregistering also saves the need to complete waiver forms at the trailhead, minimizing contact. The system will also notify you by email confirming your attendance and should you be wait listed for a spot, will notify you should a cancellation occur.

Your board met by Zoom Saturday Sept 12th and has decided to stay with this system for the time being. Should we feel a need for a change you will be notified. We also considered our finances. With the loss of the Adventure relay funds we will run a deficit of about \$10,000 for this fiscal year. We have been able to access some federal stimulus funds and have adequate reserves to weather the loss.

If you were thinking of a donation to help ORTA, now is a good time to do so. Donations are tax deductible and will help ensure that we can keep operating, maintaining the trails and offering guided hikes.

One wonders what the arrival of Covid 19 might do to membership and what impact it may have. People seem to want to get out in the fresh air. To illustrate in 2019 July through September preCovid we had 23 new members join. For the same period in 2020 we have had 30 new members join. This of course is good for ORTA.

Welcome to our new members!

The oncoming fall weather will see more hikers out on the trail either in groups of their own choosing or taking part in our guided hike program. I look forward to seeing you out and about on the wonderful trails of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

Kevin Lowe

Kevin Lowe
President Oak Ridges Trail Association



Photo Credit: Lori Waring

MEET YOUR NEW HIKE LEADER – Michele Donnelly

Many of you will recognize Michele Donnelly already. She's the ORTA Office Manager and in August celebrated her 10th anniversary with the trail association. Congratulations Michele! Having taken the Hike Ontario hike leader course in October 2018 under the direction of Kevin Lowe, she was looking to offer more slow hikes for smaller groups of members. She has started leading hikes in the King/Caledon/Vaughan area. "Hope to see you out on the trails soon."



Photo Credit: Ellaha Rezai

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DREAMING OF 2021

We are optimistic that we can return to offering you exciting hiking adventures in 2021!

If you have your heart set on a particular destination and want to book it immediately when it becomes available and safe to do so, ask to be put on our [INTERESTED LIST](#).

We will notify you as soon as we are ready to accept reservations for that particular trip. There is no obligation on your part, nor does it guarantee your spot(s). We will still be taking reservations on a first-come, first-served basis as we always have. However, it means that you will be notified right away that we are ready to begin taking reservations, and then you can decide if you wish to book or not.

We are working on modified terms & conditions in the short term to allow for more flexibility, so that you can confidently book a holiday.

**Dominica * Portugal * Japan * Ireland
Amalfi Coast (Italy) * Corfu (Greece)
Kenya * Provence & Cote d'Azur (France)
Tour du Mont Blanc
Galapagos Islands * Slovenia**

IN THE MEANTIME...

We would love to keep you engaged until we can travel again. Here are 3 easy ways to keep in touch that would benefit us both:

1. Follow us on Facebook.

We post daily on topics such as hiking tips & tricks, travel information, gear reviews, trip announcements and so much more. Plus we're pretty entertaining 😊

2. Please tell your friends about us!

You can even earn travel rewards.

3. Sign up for our monthly e-newsletter.

Email us at info@letshike.com and ask to be put on our mailing list. You can unsubscribe any time and we will never share your information with anyone.

Be safe. Be kind. Stay hopeful.
And we look forward to hiking with you
all again soon!

Secord Forest and Uxbridge Work Party—June 2020



One of our favourite loops on the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail is also the most challenging. The Secord Forest, with its pond, streams and pet cemetery (cover pic-map 5) is a great walk about 10 months a year- the other two are mosquito heaven. The main trail is easy going from the 3rd to 4th concession, with only one moderate hill, as you pass a farm field, walk through a cedar bush (my favourite winter walk), then a stand of maple where a sugar shack once stood. A side trail loop named after the first settlers, the White Family, takes you to a hilltop, and a second sidetrail diverges to the main parking lot. As you continue eastwards on the main trail, you again pass through several meadows, perhaps looking for monarch butterflies, then a mixed but mainly cedar bush with two small stream flows where you might see a few small trout. The streams never freeze here as they form part of the headwaters of the West Duffin's Creek and still retain some of the underground heat. As you approach the final kilometre of the main trail segment, a blue sidetrail exits to the left- and the challenge begins as you enter a boggy cedar forest.

Half of this trail passes through a mainly cedar wetland- you would be forgiven for imagining you were in a section of Algonquin Park far to the north- and to create a walkable trail ORTA undertook the construction of multiple boardwalk sections. The first segment was assisted by a British trail group lending their expertise in the mid 1990's. In 2002 an ORTA group under the direction of Tom Rance and Garry Collins redirected the route and built a lengthy boardwalk- a second reroute was precipitated several years later by the arrival of an industrious beaver family. As increasing numbers of individual and family hikers started using this special loop, more boardwalk sections were added, often through a very challenging terrain of tree roots and boggy wetland. Regular maintenance was conducted by ORTA trail captain Martin Earle, assisted by Vicky, Jerry, Len and Roy over the years. Many thanks go to neighbouring farm owner Murray Wilson for his permission to transport the needed lumber for one major trail build across his frozen fields closer to the build sites. Len May and his son moved the lumber on site.



As the decade passed, several sections of boardwalk were showing their age under the damp conditions of the wetland and another ORTA trail rebuild was launched this past June- with reasonable covid precautions. Many of the Uxbridge volunteer team assembled on two days to rebuild walks and replace broken treads and reblaze the trails. We were able to bypass one long deteriorating TRCA boardwalk by again, obtaining permission from landowner Murray Wilson to move the trail to higher ground on a corner of his farm. Many thanks Murray! While much has been accomplished to make this trail experience accessible, more work will be needed to maintain and improve the challenging route. Special recognition goes to these dedicated ORTA volunteers, Martin, Bob and Judy, Noel and Judy, Bill, Wilma, and Ryan who all contributed to the recent projects, and many of them for the past 15 years or more-Well Done!

Brian Millage, Uxbridge Chair and Regional Director.

Volunteers Keep the ORTA Trail Open

This year has been most challenging with the arrival of the covid pandemic, the forced shutdown of organized hikes and group activities and many of the experiences that allow us to socialize with friends and family. Initially many trails and parking lots were closed to the public as authorities grappled with the best means of controlling the spread as scientists learned more about the rate of infection around the world. Then it was realized that outdoor activities posed much less threat of covid transmission and trails were reopened. I was amazed at the number of families I saw on our trails and somewhat fearful of the overcrowded parking lots as people were desperate to escape small apartments and to get some fresh air and exercise when there were few other options available. Soon families discovered the wide variety of beautiful trails available in and around the GTA and the crowds spread out.

That was all well and good in the spring before our lush greenery started to sprout along the trails- and what about fallen trees and branches on the trails after the winter storms? No group outings were encouraged during the March/April/May periods to assess and maintain trails. Meadow grasses quickly took advantage of increasingly warm spring and summer weather and started to close off some routes. Action was needed. Some ORTA trails have dedicated trail captains or adjacent landowners who take on the task of monitoring the trails and mowing weeds and grasses and cutting back early sapling growth. Many other areas would soon become unusable without fighting your way through tall grasses and raspberry canes without intervention.

Of the forested sections of trail, Uxbridge and Whitchurch/Stouffville are fortunate to have many dedicated trail volunteers monitoring and maintaining open trails. King (Seneca, Mary Lake and Happy Valley) is maintained mostly by one Chapter Chair, and the east from Scugog to Northumberland is maintained by our Trail Director and one or two volunteers willing to travel a distance. Cale-

don Chapter, from Hwy 27 west through Palgrave to Glen Haffy where we meet the Bruce Trail, is similarly maintained by one Chapter Chair and several long distance "flying squads" willing to travel a distance several times each year to keep those trails open. This past spring, Bill McCullough, Bob Comfort, Jon McPhee and Rodney Harrison, along with Wilma and myself, made multiple trips to the Caledon Chapter. My special thanks to Bill and Bob for taking the ORTA mower over in their trucks, and Rodney, a non ORTA member, for joining Wilma and me on 8 separate occasions, from Mississauga, to lop branches and vines, and remove fallen trees from the wonderful Caledon trails. We all have received effusive thanks from trail users, but more is needed. Several Chapter Chairs have been organizing individual volunteers for trail maintenance outings- for 15 to 20 years. Some Trail Captains have likewise spent many years maintaining their favourite routes.

We Need You- if you hike a favourite trail, even just several times a year, you can adopt it- it doesn't take a lot of work for a small section. Tools such as loppers or string trimmers can be provided. Taking the initiative and responsibility of looking after a small section of trail takes a huge load off a Chapter Chair who has to invite and request volunteers for many sections of the trail. Many thanks to those of you who do respond to those requests for individual outings and trail builds or who have taken on a trail section. If you hike Caledon and want to adopt a concession or two, e-mail brianmillage@yahoo.ca. For other areas, contact Michele at the ORTA office- info@oakridgestrail.org .

See You on the Trail and Keep on Trekking, Brian Millage, Uxbridge Chair and Regional Director (Caledon).



MEANINGFUL ALTERNATIVES

As part of ORTA's program to Celebrate Life's Milestones or in Memory of friends or family, gifts were received.

In Memory of
Lorne Miller

A celebration of Lorne's life and a retrospective of his art will be held at a future date when this becomes possible. See lornejaymiller.com

In Honour of Friendship
A donation has been received from
Susan Diefenbaker



Photo Credit: Lori Waring

NEW MEMBERS

ORTA welcomed the following individual, family and lifetime memberships during our last quarter April 1, 2020—June 30, 2020

Andrew Big Canoe, Lana Donaldson & Mike Mackay, Angus, Lochlan and Nora Nash, Cynthia & Don and William Duncan, Ahren Estabrooks, Scott Faichnie & Ralph Williams, Dianne Gartley, Patricia Greene, Mahdiah Hajighazi & Mohsen Eslaminazary, Nancy Leveille, Susan Lloyd Swail & Ron Swail, Johann & Jeanett and Paul Nishikawa, Mark Schemeit, Amarjeet Singh Sehmbey, Adrienne Sequeira, Kerry Watson, Marjorie Willoughby

CHAMPIONS

April 1, 2020—June 30, 2020 In recognition of donors who have made donations of \$10 or more. Thank YOU!

East Gwillimbury Professional Firefighters Association, Johnson & Johnson, Trans Canada Trail, Kim Aagaard, Marilyn Bardeau, Jim Baston, Mike Bender, Angela Bender, Jayne Dawson, Michael & Patricia Descent, Lissa Dwyer, Martin & Vicky Earle, Elizabeth Elliot, Reza Farmand, Barbara Francey, Juergen Friedrich, Gillian Harding, Rick Hay, Jean Heys, J.A. Kennedy, Richard & Anne Kinch, Sig Langhammer, Susan Liver, Susan Lloyd Swail, David Love, Kevin Lowe, Nancy Marr, Gaye Mas, Bill McCullough, Barrie Moir, Barbara Muirhead, William & Kathleen Patterson, David Rawcliffe, Peter Rivington, Imelda Santiago, Tessa Shelvey, Keith Smith, Millie Wan, Gayle Whitehead, Peggy Wrightson

If you would like to make a donation to ORTA, call 905 833-6600
Or visit ORTA's website www.oakridgestrai.org/donate for more information

MEET YOUR NEW MEMBERSHIP CO-ORDINATOR—VERONIQUE GRANDIOUX

With ongoing challenges of business and family, Bridget Butt had to resign as our volunteer for this position. But lucky for ORTA Veronique was already on the membership team welcoming new members to ORTA since January of 2020. Veronique helped clean up the back log of calls and has enjoyed connecting with fellow hike enthusiasts.

"Despite the ongoing situation with Covid many Ontarians are rediscovering their own backyards and it's a pleasure to be able to share my own personal experience with the trail as well as learn from their hiking stories".

Veronique recently completed an end to end with her hiking partner Michael Hook and loves the trails. "We set out to explore the trail in all seasons and were rewarded with some very unique moments. The clouds of moths hovering all around us in the Ganaraska on a cool sunny morning was one of a kind. The winter did not disappoint either, while hiking Happy Valley we just stopped and soaked in the stillness of it all. These are the moments that make me look forward to the next hike"

Welcome Veronique and best wishes to Bridget! Thank you for your support to our members over the past year



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Photo Credit: Rob Robotham

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Hike: Pukaskwa & Lake Superior Park

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FOR THIS EDITION

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