



Winter 2024

Welcome to our winter edition. We hope that a hike on the Bruce Trail made it into your top ten New Year's Resolutions list, especially now that the days are officially getting longer.

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Letter from the President - Building the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club Community

Dear Members and Friends,

While it's still early in the new year, now is a good time for the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club (BMBTC) to see how our community of members and volunteers are doing.

Thankfully, BTC members helped us with their responses to the 2023 BTC Membership Survey, the results of which can be found in the latest [Bruce Trail Conservancy Magazine on page 10](#). A record number of members replied to the survey, and an overwhelming 92% of respondents said they were 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied' with their BTC membership. Most members – 63% of respondents – feel like they are “part of the Bruce Trail community.”

This is all good stuff. But as president of your Club, my question is, what about the other 37% of members? How do we help them feel like they belong to the Bruce Trail Community? And are our plans for the coming year going help build the BMBTC community?

This year, our Club plans to build on past successes. We are including favourites like the end-to-end hike in May and the Music Hike in October in the [2024 hiking schedule](#).

We will also work hand-in-hand with the BTC on local projects to help achieve the [Bruce Trail Conservancy Strategy 2030 goals](#). Among other things, we plan to learn more about seed gardens by attending the member webinar on February 8 on [BTC Seed Orchards](#).

Given that BMBTC members are the heart and soul of this club, I'd love to know if our Club is on track to help make the 37% of BTC members who may not feel a part of the community feel more a part of the community by the end of the year. Rather than wait a year for the 2024 BTC Membership Survey results, please contact me at president@bmbtc.org with any suggestions for building the BTC community in the Blue Mountains.

With gratitude,

Julie Scott



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Mud, Mosquitoes and Memories

By Sylvie Potje

The first time my parents took me camping, I slept in a baby cradle.

Actually, I'm not sure any of us got much sleep that warm July night at Earl Rowe Provincial Park. I cried so much that my mom eventually moved me into the backseat of the van and stayed up all night watching over me. For an infant accustomed to the still and sensible suburbs, it must have been strange to hear the cawing birds and the swishing of trees instead of the relative silence of the brick house in Barrie.

My nights spent under the mesh netting of the portable crib were short-lived, though. I had a younger sister, who soon replaced me in the bassinet as I nestled between my parents' sleeping bags in the tent, bringing with me the sand and leaves of a well-spent day.

With my parents' jobs, we were fortunate enough to have the whole summer at our disposal, just waiting to be filled with adventures. We'd take road trips across the province, spending our weeknights at provincial parks while the weekend crowd was gone. From Algonquin and Killbear, to Bon Echo and Grundy, we took advantage of the bountiful Canadian wilderness that stretched beyond the city.

Like most children, my sister and I possessed an ever-expanding array of small toys. Our collection was impressively homemade: full of button furniture, seashell bowls, animal figurines, and wooden blocks. Every trip, after packing our Disney sleeping bags and polka-dot rain boots, we would fill a small box with our favourite toys. As soon as we got the chance, we'd clear a space in the dirt to construct houses of twigs and leaves for our little figurines. Acorns became cakes, sticks became walls, and pinecones became Christmas trees. A simple log was more than an obstacle; it was the gateway to our kingdom. To any passersby, it might appear strange to see two children lying flat on the dusty campsite, hands sticky with sap and surrounded by piles of twigs. We didn't care; we were locked in a game that was equal parts dramatic roleplay and model-building.

Of course, at our parents' insistence, we did eventually leave the campsite. The family took guided tours, balanced on rocks along the shoreline, and paddled in our kayaks around the lake. We took pictures of pretty rocks and trees, we cycled up and down the dirt trails, and we sang proudly as my dad strummed a guitar around the campfire.

Often, we'd take group camping trips with family friends, sparking several yearly traditions. One heavily anticipated event was a large group trip to Mara Provincial Park with six other families. As the parents sat around a seemingly undying campfire, dozens of children would assume their roles as fort-builders, fire-makers, leaf-collectors, and pretend-players. Once per trip, we'd engage in an elaborate "Amazing Race" style scavenger hunt, sending us running around the campground to uncover clues.

Another tradition was our annual October camping trip with two friends from school and their families. We'd book adjoining sites at Awenda Provincial Park every October when the leaves had started to turn red, and the wind grew colder. After the mosquitoes and the summertime crowds retreated for the winter, we'd enjoy a more peaceful weekend getaway. The six children would take on the six parents in an annual soccer baseball tournament on a diamond marked out by sandals in a clearing in the woods. Every game was a blur of wild kicks and heroic slides in the mud. The kids would tell you that they win every year, but the parents would disagree. Years later, they're still demanding a rematch.

After we'd recovered from our tournament, we would allocate one afternoon to taking a long hike. A dozen bug-sprayed and sun-screened campers would bike to the trailhead and begin our 5-8km journey. Yes, some of us would complain about the heat and the exercise, but we all secretly enjoyed the experience. We'd sing repetitive camp songs until our parents' ears bled and play Alphabetical Improv as we nimbly balanced on rocks and stumps.

As we grew older, our summers were filled with extra courses, day camps, and part-time jobs. It has become harder to find the time to get out into the wilderness, but I can still remember the sticky sap and mud under my nails, reminding me of those childhood summer days in the woods. I am grateful for the

experiences I had as a child roaming the great outdoors, and I hope that this wonder and curiosity for the world will stay with me throughout my life.



Sylvie Potje is a youth writer from Barrie, Ontario. She is the winner of the 2023 Stephen Leacock Student Humorous Short Story Contest and a runner-up in the Barrie Art Awards for "Most Promising Youth." She enjoys theatre, music, and environmental activism. She currently studies English, Theatre, and Knowledge Integration at the University of Waterloo.

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Welcome to the Board - Linda Hartley

We are delighted to introduce Linda Hartley as our new Membership Director and to take the opportunity to thank Dave Cole for holding down the role for over two decades and for continuing as a Trail Captain.

Linda is a business professional with a career spanning over 20 years, mainly spent on the cash management side of the banking industry and as a sales director committed to growing and maintaining a strong client base. She has worked in various corporate areas, including Investor Relations, Office of Strategic Management, and Commercial Banking. She has extensive experience in global banking technology, building and leading teams, and bringing value to her clients through thought leadership and providing solutions. She has a successful track record of partnering with stakeholders from Toronto to Wall Street to Silicon Valley. Linda has attended Queen's University, studying Business Management, Marketing, and related support services.



Linda is a worldwide avid hiker who enjoys 'hiking across countries', including England, Spain, Italy, France, Chile, Switzerland, Canada, and Scotland. Hiking is her passion. She completed the Blue Mountains End-to-End in 2022 and is contemplating embarking on a South-to-North journey along the entire Bruce Trail. She genuinely relishes the well-maintained trails, the forest surrounding the trail, and the thoughtfully placed trail markers, which serve as invaluable guides for hikers. Recently, meeting trail maintenance volunteers and experiencing their pride in maintaining their section of the trail, Linda was inspired to do more with the club.

She is committed to helping to make the Bruce Trail known and enjoyed by all.

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Volunteer Spotlight - Steve Hammond



The BMBTC has fantastic volunteers. Steve Hammond has been a long-time member of the BTC and recently became a volunteer. Here, he shares his story about how he became a volunteer.

I emigrated to Canada in the 1970s and decided to stay because I met my wife Kathy in Toronto. (That's the romantic version, which is not entirely true. In fact, I had decided to stay and bought a house in Toronto before I met Kathy, and I think it was because of my house ownership that Kathy agreed to a date!)

"After retiring, we began spending most of our time in the Blue Mountains and decided to become members of the Bruce Trail Conservancy. Our home is close to the Blue Mountains and Beaver Valley sections, enabling us to do shorter afternoon hikes using both the main and side trails.

I recently volunteered to provide transportation to hikers so they do not need to backtrack or use two cars as they complete sections of the trail, which really helps hikers, particularly those doing a Bruce Trail end-to-end. Our official name is Trail Angels - although most of us do not look like angels! It usually only takes me an hour or two in the early morning to provide such help, and it is also an opportunity to give advice on that part of the Trail.

When I started as an Angel, my Bruce Trail Reference Guide was outdated, so I relied on the information supplied by our Angel leader and my local knowledge to navigate. But after a few months of feeling guilty for not contributing financially, I bought an up-to-date Guide and the e-version. Much better and so much more additional information!

One of the more memorable trips this year was providing transport to a couple with strong opinions. After a detour due to a road closure, they decided I was going in the wrong direction. The car had to be stopped, and phones consulted, resulting in them disagreeing between themselves. I resumed driving in my direction and quickly arrived at the drop-off point. By that time, everyone saw the funny side of the situation! Did I mention that they were brother and sister?

The Bruce Trail is an excellent way of protecting this 900 km strip of natural beauty for us and future generations. For me, volunteering is a way of giving back and has its own rewards in contact with like-minded people."

Are you interested in Volunteering with our club? Volunteer applications can be submitted online through the BTC website at [Apply Online To Volunteer | Bruce Trail Conservancy](#). BMBTC is currently recruiting for an Events Director, Hike Team Member, Trail Maintenance Team Member, Communications Team Member and Advertising Coordinator. [Learn more about these roles here.](#)

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Member Story - Sheila Stewart

At the Mayor's New Year's Levee, our BMBTC long-time member Sheila Stewart, a 2013 recipient of the Order of Collingwood, was awarded a Companion to the Order of Collingwood award for her continuing volunteer contributions since receiving the order.

The Order of Collingwood is presented annually to people who volunteer in the community and, therefore, "enrich the social, well-being, natural or cultural environment, or recreational character of the town," states a news release from the Town of Collingwood.

The Companion to the Order is given to former Order of Collingwood recipients who continue volunteering to improve the community.



Sheila's volunteer work is in the field of music. Since 2000, she has volunteered as a founding member, teacher, and Pipe Major of the local pipe band, The Beinn Gorm Highlanders. She also volunteers with the Toronto Band Services, playing at memorials and community service gigs.

She spends 3 hours every Tuesday night giving free instruction to all ages in the art of playing bagpipes. Currently, 23 of her students, aged 12-84, are playing in pipe bands. They volunteer time to play at nursing homes, schools, churches, hospitals, Highland Games, local parades, and veteran's events.

In 2022, the Beinn Gorm Highlanders represented Collingwood and the South Georgian Bay Area at the World Pipe Band Championships in Glasgow, Scotland! With enormous pride, they marched onto a field of 10,000 international pipers and drummers with "Collingwood Ontario" emblazoned on their bagpipes and drums.

The last 24 years have been a labour of love for Sheila, watching the band's evolution. Sheila looks forward to continuing to share the music of our heritage with our community for as long as she can.

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What is the iNaturalist App?

[iNaturalist Canada](#) is an application where you can record and share what you see in nature, meet other nature watchers, and learn about wildlife. Through connecting different perceptions and expertise of the natural world, iNaturalist hopes to create extensive community awareness of local biodiversity. Every piece of information on a species, combined with the vast network of citizen scientists, can give a big picture of our natural history and be key contributions for conservation decisions.

iNaturalist is free and works on Android or iPhones. Download to your mobile devices from the App Store or Google Play.

[Visit the BTC's website to learn more about how you can join the BTC's iNaturalist Project.](#)

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Club Biodiversity Projects



Eastern Blue Bird Boxes Project: In spring 2023, Club volunteers on the Biodiversity Committee built 12 Eastern Blue Bird nesting boxes. Three were installed on the Gardner property, and three were installed on the Dunedin property; both found in the Blue Mountains section of the Bruce Trail. Six boxes are in storage for installation in spring 2024. The boxes were monitored and likely used by wrens instead of blue birds this year. The boxes have since been cleaned out and are ready for new birds next year.

Bee Houses: In spring 2023, Club volunteers on the Biodiversity Committee conducted an analysis of bee houses and determined that they are not needed on the BMBTC properties. Bee houses are used by mason bees and solitary wasps. Some scientists believe concentrating the bees in one place could lead to the spread of disease and parasites. Bee houses could also attract predators due to the concentration of insects. No evidence bee houses aid in bee conservation, especially in the wild, where they can nest in their natural habitat. Bee houses may be useful in urban areas or heavily farmed rural areas where their natural habitat is diminished. Habitat in the Blue Mountains section is abundant.

Seed Orchard: The BTC has targeted 2024 for the establishment of a Seed Orchard in the Blue Mountains section. The Biodiversity Committee is currently investigating potential locations and looking for volunteers who might be interested in helping set up or maintain the gardens/orchard.

A seed orchard is a managed plantation of specifically selected plants to be used for the mass production of genetically verified seeds to provide seeds or plants to be used in for future restoration projects.

A seed orchard is a long-term project and should be expected to remain on the site for 30-45 years. The initial work for setting up a seed orchard includes but is not limited to:

- Choosing an appropriate site, ideally on underutilized BTC lands
- Preparing the site (rototilling, weeding, edging)
- Planting appropriate plugs and/or sowing seeds
- Ongoing monitoring and replanting where necessary

If you are interested in getting involved with our Biodiversity Committee, please send an email to: landsteward@bmbtc.org

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Upcoming BTC Webinars

Club Members are invited to join in the [upcoming BTC webinars](#):

- [BTC Seed Orchards](#) with Lyndsey Wilkerson - Feb 8, 2024 at 7 pm
- [Apps on the Trail](#) with Brooke Henry - March 14, 2024 at 12 pm

You can also watch [previously recorded webinars](#) on a variety of topics, such as ecology and geology, planned giving, hiking and exploring, and volunteer resources.

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Places to Visit on the Bruce Trail in the Blue Mountains section: Nottawasaga Lookout

(Map 23 Bruce Trail Reference Guide Edition 31).

Description: This 6 km hike should take roughly 2 hours to complete (highlighted in blue on the map below). It starts at kilometre 42.4 of the trail and goes through the woods to kilometre 39.3 and then retrace your steps back to the car. It is popular for hiking and snowshoeing. Bring a snack and water. Dogs are welcome on leash. Cleats are recommended in winter, especially at the top end of the side trail. For the more adventurous, you could add a loop through the caves (as shown in yellow, Standing Rock and Caves Side Trail).

Getting there: Use an online mapping system for directions to Nottawasaga Lookout Provincial Nature Reserve or to the roadside parking coordinates: 44.404107, -80.263577

Parking: On the roadside of Eagle Crescent (no charge).

Terrain: Moderate with some hills and/or some poor footing.



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Pretty River Access Side Trail

A new 510 metre side trail has been established linking the parking area on Pretty River Road to the main Bruce Trail within the Provincial Park.

Be aware, this access trail intersects with a snowmobile trail. Use caution crossing this intersection during the winter months.



Trail Changes and Notices

Re-routes, temporary closures, parking changes and other notices happen regularly along the Bruce Trail. Before heading out, always check for the latest trail changes or notices.

Need a Trail Angel?

Email: trailangels@bmbtc.org



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Club Events

Potluck

In preparation for the holiday season, the BMBTC event committee organized a potluck party on Saturday, November 25th, at the All Saints' Anglican Church in Collingwood. Everyone enjoyed the great food, holiday music, raffles and mingling with other BMBTC members. The vibrant and festive gathering reminded us about the importance of giving back to the community, spending time together hiking and socializing, celebrating the holiday spirit, and how grateful we are all living in Canada.



Bruce Trail Volunteer Appreciation Party

By Annette Sandberg

On December 6, I was pleased to attend the Bruce Trail Conservancy's annual Volunteer Holiday Party at

the historic Shawn and Ed Brewing Company in Dundas to celebrate another phenomenal year of volunteering with the Bruce Trail Conservancy. The beautiful building was built by Richard Todd Wilson in the 1860s. It was restored in 2013 by two university friends, Shawn Till and Ed Madronich, who had a dream of owning a brewery one day. For them, opening a brewery was not only a passion project but also the pinnacle of their friendship, which is why their motto is "Beer Forged in Friendship".

The Bruce Trail Conservancy had a similar beginning. On September 23rd, 1960, the first BTC meeting was held with four friends who had a vision of creating a public footpath spanning the entire Niagara Escarpment. Today, there are 900 km of the main trail and over 400 km of side trails being visited by more than 400,000 hikers a year, with over ten thousand members. I call that a dream come true!

The Volunteer Holiday Party made me think about the many old and new friendships I have made as a volunteer with the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club. In roles from hike leader to trail maintenance to behind-the-scenes positions, I've forged friendships while working with other volunteers to provide valuable nature experiences for our members. To me, this is a labor of love, an expression of gratitude to the natural world and all the beauty and uniqueness it provides for us all. And this should indeed be celebrated.



Save the Date: BMBTC Annual General Meeting - April 20, 2024 at 3:00 pm

Meeting details coming soon.

Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club Annual End-to-End - May 25, 26, 27, 2024

Join us this spring for the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club 2 or 3-Day End-to-End Hike Event. The 2-day hike is for those looking for a big challenge, and the 3-day hike is for those who want to spread the challenge across three days. Both hikes will wind their way through the beautiful and varied terrain of the Blue Mountains section. Enjoy the early signs of nature awakening, the beautiful vistas, and the rugged escarpment.

Whether you choose the 2 or 3-day option, both hikes will cover the 69 km distance of our section, which runs from Lavender to Swiss Meadows. Checkpoint stations will be offered approximately every 10 km, offering snacks, water refills, and assistance along the way.

The 2-day hike fee for members is \$70 and \$80 for non-members and includes bus transportation to the start point each day, refreshments, a Saturday end-of-hike BBQ, online registration fees, and the End-to-

End badge. The price for the 3-day hike is \$80 for members and \$90 for non-members and includes all of the same benefits of the 2-day and the added cost of busing the extra day.

Registration opens on March 1, 2024. Details will be emailed to participants once registration is received. Note that these are longer distances and generally not suitable for beginner hikers. For more information, please contact btcbbluevents@gmail.com

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Hike Schedule - Feb to May 2024

Two ways to explore upcoming hikes:

1. [Detailed Hike Schedule Feb - May 2024 \[pdf\]](#)
2. [Online Bruce Trail Conservancy Hike Calendar \(Blue Mountains Club Hikes\)](#)

Always check the [online BTC calendar](#) for the most up-to-date changes for our hikes.



Interested in badges? Why not try this hike?
[Full Moon Hike on Feb 24, 2024.](#)

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Tips for Safe Hiking During the Winter

- Hike with a buddy and avoid hiking alone. Have the what3words app downloaded on your phone ahead of time and check the weather and trail conditions before heading out.
- Dress in quick-drying layers but "be bold - start cold." Sweat is not your friend in the winter. Bring extra layers including socks and gloves in case yours get wet.
- Pack the essentials. Bring a map, a fully charged headlamp, waterproof matches, a first aid kit, a foil emergency blanket, sunscreen, a knife, and a whistle.
- Bring extra food and ensure your snacks don't freeze.
- Bring snowshoes, microspikes (crampons), trekking poles, gaiters, and sunglasses or goggles.
- Avoid dehydration and keep your water from freezing.
- Bring your cell phone and keep it warm to save battery life.
- Know the warning signs of hypothermia including shivering, memory loss, fatigue, confusion, fumbling hands, and slurred speech.
- Start small, start early, and know when to quit.



**Look for our spring issue on April 26, 2024.
Happy Hiking!**

Questions or comments? Email us at blueprint@bmbtc.org.

You are receiving this email because you are a current member of the Bruce Trail Conservancy and the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club

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