

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF TREADWAY 1989-2009

BRUCE TRAIL

TREADWAY

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Hikers give a 'thumbs up' To metal blazes

I'm sure there's more than one club experimenting with metal blazes. Painting and maintaining blazes has proven to be an enormous task. On the Bruce Trail's main trail alone there could be upwards to 25000 blazes that require touch-ups perhaps as frequently as once per year.



There are many advantages to the painted blaze and understandably remain the official marking of the Bruce Trail. When properly applied - "straight edges and square corners" they provide the hiker with trouble-free route finding. But what happens when blazes are neglected; they reflect

negatively on the high standard otherwise set by our trail maintenance volunteers, perception is everything. They also pose a hindrance to weary hikers who loose their way. There's also the issue of the tree itself; some argue that painting is the least harmful application of a blaze, although scraping the bark to prepare the tree for a blaze - sometimes entering the phloem and even the cambium - is just as harmful as the puncture of two small nails. Nails don't seem to be an issue with the Conservation Authorities who have been installing blazes in this manner for as long as I have been a Bruce Trail volunteer (15 years). They also claim that vandalism has never been an issue. One Conservation Authority that I spoke with told me they still have the original supply of plastic trail markers that they purchased 10 years ago in the event they had to replace vandalized blazes.

So what is an alternative to the painted blaze? A metal blaze, cut from a pre painted sheet of aluminum, 2 inches by 6 inches and predrilled at both ends for ease of nailing. The nails are galvanized steel that won't rust. The heads are touched up with white paint to render the nail heads almost invisible. They're professional looking - sharp and distinctive, and there's little or no maintenance. Would the tree eventually push against the nail and would this do the tree any harm? Blazes should be applied to mature trees and if there isn't a mature tree close by, use a blaze board.



One club has already put a section of trail to the test. It's a 2k stretch that runs from King Road to Kerns Road in Burlington. The Trail Captain blazed this section with metal blazes in about 3 hours. He also took the time to talk to passing hikers and asked them what they thought of the blazing. They were impressed - "they're clear and easy to follow". And as we say in the retail business, the customer is always right. What do you think? Pictures by Graham McCallum

Recruiting New Members and Volunteers

The 'Open House' is one of the best ways to tell the public about the Bruce Trail - what it has to offer and how to enjoy the great outdoors. Also, it's a chance to tell everyone interested, how they can volunteer to help build and maintain the Bruce Trail.

One of our clubs has perfected this strategy over the years but continues to seek ways to improve. Last year for example the club moved its 'Open House' from indoors to outdoors. The new location selected was Battlefield Park in Stoney Creek, a high-traffic location and one very familiar to the community. It's where local people tend to congregate on sunny days, enjoy a family picnic and roam freely over acres of grass. There's plenty of parking too and a shelter in case of inclement weather. It was a good choice - except for the city work crew who decided to tear up the road in front of the Park entrance the day of the 'Open House'. But with quick signage posted along the road, visitors found their way to the Club's greeters and

displays. The event was publicized in local newspapers free of charge.

The day's event started at 11 a.m. and ran through to 3 p.m. Greeters welcomed visitors and talked about what the Bruce Trail was all about. Tools of the trade were on display - all cleaned and freshly painted, and a guided tour to a nearby bridge that had just recently been built by BT volunteers was also part of the day's programme.



This year the club is constructing 'information boards'; 1/2 inch plywood sheets, 33 x 48 inches attached to easel-like frames and painted BT green.



Pictures by Richard Pomeroy

A work party (committee) of 10 purchased the materials at a nearby Home Depot, agreed on a design, built and painted the boards, set them out to dry then congratulated each other over a cup of coffee at Tim Hortons. Pictures and commentary will be posted on the boards showing all major projects undertaken over the past year so everyone can see what it means to be a BT volunteer. Who said that a horse designed by a committee has to end up looking like a camel?

