

CELEBRATING 20 YEARS OF TREADWAY 1989-2009

BRUCE TRAIL

TREADWAY

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Here are a few reasons why the Bruce Trail is one of Canada's most cherished works of nature and humankind. Ross McLean tells us about our volunteers and the work they have done to help preserve the escarpment and yet allow thousands of people to enjoy this part of our heritage. We can all take pride in this great achievement but a special congratulation goes to this year's award winners.

RECOGNIZING OUR VOLUNTEERS

by Ross McLean

The essence of the Bruce Trail is the commitment of its volunteers. I am always amazed at the story of the Trail being built so quickly between 1962 and 1967. It was done without government funding or paid staff, and was the product of a group of individuals who gave freely of their time to achieve the dream of a continuous footpath from Queenston to Tobermory. That tradition of volunteerism continues strong to this day.

Each year at the Annual General Meeting of the Bruce Trail Conservancy, a number of awards are presented in recognition of outstanding volunteer accomplishments, especially in trail development and maintenance. At this September's AGM, hosted by the Iroquoia Club, several clubs and key volunteers were recognized for their enormous contributions.

The Tom East Award recognizes a club which has made the most significant gain in achieving the Optimum Route in the past year. (Tom is a Bruce Trail pioneer and an early president of the BTA.)

The 2010 award was presented to the Caledon Hills Club for its reroute at the southeast corner of the Hockley Valley. The attempt to cut off the long and dusty road walking on the 5th Line and 5th SR had taken 30 years of effort, and it was finally achieved, primarily because of the efforts of Dave and Sally Moule who as "white knights" purchased the key property in the missing link. A number of work parties were organized to cut open the new Trail, including a full three days on the Victoria Day weekend of 2009 where close to 40 volunteers participated. 3.7 km of road walking was eliminated and replaced by 5.3 km of new trail on the Optimum Route. Last fall, the Club celebrated its achievement with a party at Dave and Sally's farm, and at the September 2010 BTC AGM, Jean Kerins accepted the Tom East Award on behalf of the Caledon Club.

The Susan Oleskevich Award is named for a former BTA Trail Director who was also a Trail Director for both the Toronto and Caledon Hills clubs. When she died suddenly in the mid-1990's, a group of her close friends arranged for this award to be given annually to an "unsung hero", a volunteer who quietly and faithfully works on trail maintenance and trail development.

The 2010 recipient is Dennis Gallant. I first met Dennis several years ago when he helped on a major trail remediation project at The Badlands at

the southern end of the Caledon section. Although not large in stature, Dennis is a force with a sledge hammer, driving in steel stakes to anchor side logs or steps. Very quickly, Dennis got “hooked” on the satisfactions of building quality trail, and regularly he undertakes major projects.

In the spring of 2010, for example, Dennis helped with the building of a lengthy boardwalk on the Palgrave Side Trail. One task was the laying of the “sleepers” in the ankle-deep mud. When Dennis because of personal commitments discovered that he could not join the scheduled final work party, he came in on his own for two full days to complete the boardwalk’s foundation.

As well, Dennis has enjoyed trail work so much that he has assisted other clubs. He has been a great help to the Toronto BTC with both its Canada Goose Side Trail near the recently acquired Speyside Sanctuary property and remediation work on the Credit Valley Footpath. Also, Dennis worked on the Sydenham Club’s Crevice Springs Side Trail, the first step in a major achievement this summer of the optimum route just south of Woodford.

The Philip and Jean Gosling Award

recognizes trail improvements, including structures, which help to minimize the environmental impact of the trail. Six clubs had projects which were nominated, and the clear winner was Iroquoia for the complete replacement of the boardwalk on the Leech-Porter Side Trail in Nassagaweya Canyon and their significant extension to the bridge over Grindstone Creek. The Iroquoia Trail Director Ken Lawday accepted the award, and paid tribute to his predecessor Klau Truderung who had skilfully directed both projects. (Earlier issues of *Treadway* have featured this work.)

Volunteer of the Year Award

About five years ago, the BTC instituted its “Volunteer of the Year” Award. The intent is to recognize a volunteer who has made a significant contribution to the Trail in the past twelve months. This year, three individuals were recognized for their major roles with their clubs.

Don McIlraith retired to the Bruce Peninsula close to a decade ago and quickly became a pillar for the

Bruce Trail Club. Currently he is their President, has headed their Land Stewardship program and was their BTC Board representative. He has established very positive relationships with the local political forces whose support is needed if we are to see really major gains.

Jack Morgan is head of Trail Development for the Beaver Valley club. A former club president, he was responsible for putting together the Falling Water extension to the Trail. An inspiring leader, he continues his involvement; in 2009 he was able to complete a reroute north of Old Baldy, linking a BTC property first acquired over 30 years ago. Since the September AGM, Jack has already organized another trail building team to create the Len Gertler Side Trail.

The third winner is Fred Nix. This spring Caledon Hills discovered that it would lose access to a key property in the Hockley Valley; the land had been sold and the new owner had several large dogs that would be running free. For a brief period of time the Trail had to be rerouted onto the highly travelled Hockley Road. Caledon’s landowner relations director arranged a new handshake agreement, but what was needed right away was someone to take charge of the trail building, and into this role stepped Fred Nix. As Caledon’s president Jean Kerins reported, “Fred’s incredibly dogged determination in seeing through [this reroute] (in less than ideal conditions) makes him the perfect choice.”

The first Trail Director for the Bruce Trail was Philip Gosling, and today he is the Honorary President. In 1962-63 Philip directed the initial teams of volunteers to lay out and build the Trail..

Now almost fifty years later, the role of the volunteer remains primary within the Conservancy. It is pleasing to see the “new” volunteers step forth and make their own contributions that will keep the organization vibrant.

To all BTC 2010 award winners, congratulations and a sincere thank you. [The health of the Trail will remain strong as others step forward to emulate your contribution. You are role models for all of us.