

# A PUBLICATION FOR TRAIL WORKERS

BRUCE TRAIL

# TREADWAY

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UPDATES  
EVENTS  
IDEAS  
NEWS

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## WINTER CAN BE TOUGH ON THE BRUCE TRAIL



As a matter of fact, it can be downright destructive. There's a group of hikers that I know who are presently plodding their way through sections of the BT as part of their end to end hike.

April may not be the best time of the year to be on the trail - the weather is unpredictable and too many footsteps can have a negative impact on the treadway. There are sections of the trail where hiking should be discouraged or even prohibited this time of year, if that's even possible. A lot of damage can be done to both trail and hiker. Snow drifts are still prevalent, footing is unstable, cold and damp weather can take the joy out of the outing, mud is everywhere and there's even the odd bridge that's been washed away. There are days when gentle streams become raging torrents and crevasses that are still filled with ice and snow. Stiles are slippery, trees and branches are strewn across the trail. So why is this group hiking?

Have you ever heard of cabin fever? Well, these hikers don't live in cabins but they definitely have the fever. And besides, there have been a few encouraging sun-filled days when the birds have been birding; flowers have been flowering and buds have been budding. And we all know that sandwiches taste better in the woods and people just seem nicer when they're hiking. Going out for dinner after a day's hike is fun too; eating establishments don't seem as busy and the prices are right; you can buy spaghetti with meat sauce in the town's family restaurant for \$7.50 - all you can eat, garlic bread included. And if that's not enough, accommodations are readily available whether you're staying at a B&B or at a lodge.



But there are other advantages to hiking in the spring; especially if you're a trail maintenance volunteer. It's a great time to evaluate trail work. For example; if we had built the trail on higher ground could we have avoided all of this mud? A high trail is a dry trail. Should we really have built the trail through a marsh? Does it make sense to run the trail between two rock walls knowing that it will, in all likelihood, be filled with snow until at least early May? Is the bridge we've built strong enough to endure flood waters? Are the steps that we have built safe when covered with slushy snow, are they slanted properly? Are the spaces between the boards on our boardwalk too wide? Have we benched the trail wide enough so that we're not slipping and sliding off the trail? Have we cut the brush back far enough so that branches aren't smacking us in the face or poking us in the eye? Would it make it easier for our hikers to confirm their location if we had signs identifying roads at each entrance to the trail? Has the winter freeze effected the level of our bridge? Has the frost pushed T-bars upwards posing a tripping hazard?

Spring is a good time to put together a work plan for the months ahead. It can't be done all at once and no one expects that. So we make a list, set priorities, organize work parties and we're off.

*Article by Don Cangiano*

*Photos by Jana Krejcova & Richard Pomeroy*

## **AN OPINION : INPUT FROM THE FIELD**

In the "old days" when I was Trail Director for the Peninsula Club, I remember once when checking trail: I had hiked in 2.5 km only to discover a major deadfall blocking the trail. It was apparent that hikers had been walking around it through the bush, but what annoyed me was that no one had reported the problem. If they had, I would have carried in a chain saw; as it was, I had to retreat to my car, thus necessitating another 5 km to my day. If only someone had spoken up...

This spring, Dave Moule as "Quadrant Leader" with the Caledon Hills Club asked me to check on his section; he has about 25 km to supervise. It gave me a good excuse for some early spring hiking, and I hope that my input allowed Dave to help with his planning for work crews.

A year ago a group of veteran hikers from Caledon Hills hiked Sydenham, and as requested at the end of their odyssey reported back on three areas which they felt needed attention. That then became a focus for Ron Savage's work parties and each was quickly remedied.

I know that some veteran hikers refuse to submit such reports because they feel their advice is not welcomed. I have received thank-you's, but I have also been told, "mind your own business."

But such problems are everyone's business; the Trail is only "as good as its weakest link." The most recent *Treadway* listed all contact information for our Trail Directors, so communication is no longer an onerous task. In many places along the Trail we lack enough volunteer resources, but we have plenty of hikers. If experienced trail workers would give each club an objective analysis of trail quality, we would have a greater knowledge base from which to plan work parties. Obviously the individual club will have to decide its own priorities, but such input would give a broader perspective on trail needs. *By Ross McLean*