

A PUBLICATION FOR TRAIL WORKERS

BRUCE TRAIL

TREADWAY

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UPDATES
EVENTS
IDEAS
NEWS

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DO YOU KNOW WHAT ELSE I LIKE ABOUT BEING A BT TRAIL MAINTENANCE VOLUNTEER? It's that warm fuzzy feeling one gets when in the company of friends.



It's a ritual; after every work party the crew heads for Tim Hortons. Work parties wouldn't be the same without it. It's here where the crew reduces world problems to triviality with simple solutions that even politicians can understand.

Take Greece for example; all that's needed here is for everyone to pay their fair share of taxes and stop spending more than they earn. And what's the big kaffuffle about the Mayor of Toronto wanting to close some of Toronto's libraries? Eighty percent of what you find in a library is available on the internet and the rest is fiction so who cares?

But Timmy isn't the only host that welcomes trail workers. There's Nicol, who up until a year ago was an active trail maintenance volunteer, that's until baby Gwyneth arrived. So what does Nicol do for excitement now - as if a new baby isn't exciting enough - she invites the trail maintenance crew over for coffee after a work party. And what's sitting on the kitchen table when the crew arrives? A double-layered carrot cake covered with thick creamy icing and crunchy walnuts. Then there's a large platter of cookies -

two kinds, homemade bread with honey and coffee brewing on the kitchen stove. The crew takes turns holding baby Gwyneth, who incidentally is already a BT hiker - with a little help from mom.

Another thing I like about being a BT trail maintenance volunteer is the conversation that abounds on the way to the work site - the crew carools to help reduce pollution and ease traffic congestion. At times there are as many as 5 volunteers in a car. The debates are lively. Do you really have to pay \$50-60 for a Christmas tree? There are 2 Christmas tree lots on the route travelled by our volunteers - lots to choose from. Did you know that you can buy a 5-foot spruce Christmas tree for as low as \$14.95? You don't have to buy the imported ones from BC. After all a tree is a tree. It's what you put on the tree that's important; the ornaments that your kids made at school, or the souvenir decorations that you picked up at the airport - like the silver cowboy boot from Calgary with 'Merry Christmas' written on the side.... really sharp.

The crew is getting together in early December for the annual Christmas party. This time the large room is reserved at East Side Mario's. The organizers are expecting 50-60 volunteers to attend. One can hardly wait to hear the stories; a lot of them are true, some are repeats from last year. But they're all happy stories. There's only one 'downer' at the moment, there's not a flake of snow on the ground. But it's still early. We're all dreaming of a white Christmas, (just like the ones we used to know). Merry Christmas my good friends, and Happy New Year.

A Report from John Grandy

Director, Trail Development & Maintenance

The semi-annual meeting of the Trail Development & Maintenance committee was held in November at the BTC's "Working Together" conference. This event gave us all a great opportunity to chat with volunteers involved in other activities, from membership to stewardship to land acquisition.

Your hard-working trail directors worked without a break in the morning, getting through a full day's worth of issues in under three hours.

A good part of our discussion focussed on signage. How often do we need to put up warning signs for poison ivy, for hazardous trail conditions, for hunting, or for challenging climbs and descents? We will be seeking guidance from our legal counsel regarding our responsibilities; however, none of us felt that we had the perfect answer to these questions. As always, we welcome views from all our trail workers out in the field. Please let your club TD know what you think!

Continuing on with signage, we had a good debate over how many signs are the right number to have at entrance points to the trail. Can we develop "one sign fits all" that would help us avoid sign pollution? Or do we still need to put up signs saying "no bicycles", "no ATV's" and so forth? Several TD's feel that unless we have large and strongly-worded signs prohibiting these activities, our standard signs saying "for hiking only" will be ignored.

One thing we all agreed on is that our standard signs explaining what our blazes mean are valuable. We should try to get these up in as many trail entrance places as possible. We also decided to start erecting signs telling hikers which way they are going – Tobermory or Niagara direction. This may help reduce the number of lost hikers!

Our trail auditor, John Cunningham, is looking for help with his challenging but interesting work. If you are interested in learning more about trail issues with him, please let your club TD or Eric Best know.

Many especially younger hikers are interested in camping on their hikes. We agreed to develop more information on overnight rest areas on and near the trail for our guidebook and our website.

Finally, we all agreed that it's beneficial for our trail captains and land stewards for BTC properties to spend time together and learn about each other's activities and issues. If you are a trail captain on a BTC owned or managed property, please ask your TD to introduce you to the land steward.

All in all, another well worthwhile get-together. We will be meeting again next March.

With all best wishes for the holiday season,

John Grandy

A TRAIL TIP FOR THE DAY

Given the typography and climate of the Niagara Escarpment, waterbars play a significant role in retarding erosion of the Trail. It was the gravedigger in *Hamlet* who said the water is a "whoreson decayer of dead flesh.". He as a wise man would have known that this principle also applies to trails.

How does a waterbar work? First of all, as an obstruction across the Trail, it slows the flow of run-off, and then deflects the water off the Trail so that it does not dig channels in the Trail below it.

The problem: As the flow slows, sediment drops out and builds up against the waterbar. For it to work as designed, there needs to be a trough to catch the water above the waterbar and then to carry it off the Trail. But if the trough is filled with sediment, the water is hardly even slowed down; it simply continues to cascade down the trail, carving a channel in the treadway

The solution: Each waterbar should be cleaned out once a year. Make sure that both the trough and the "exit channel" heading off the Trail are cleared of debris.

Tools: I suggest using the end corner of a garden rake or a small shovel. What work best for me is a garden hoe. But even a hiking stick can be useful, especially if the sediment has not hardened.

It is not a tough chore and can be completed quickly. The alternative is to wait until a run-off channel has been eroded into the Trail below, and then you have major rehabilitation work. As the commercials say with car repairs, "Pay me now or pay me later." I would much rather take the "easy route."

Ross McLean