

# THE Grapevine

Newsletter

of the Bruce Trail Conservancy Niagara Club



FALL 2023



Rob Stevens clearing an obstruction on the main Bruce Trail Queenston

## President's Message

### **Janet Davey**

It is about nine years since I moved to the Niagara region. I was looking for activities in the area and noticed that the Bruce Trail was almost right in our backyard. I signed up for the club's Thursday morning Jordan Hollow hike and I was hooked - even after climbing all those stairs!

I'm always amazed at how different the same trail can look depending on the time of year. Hiking has brought me great physical benefits, but also the mental benefits of getting outside, surrounded by nature, have helped me through some difficult times in my life these past few years.

*(Continued on Page 2)*



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### NIAGARA BRUCE TRAIL CLUB

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### President's Message *From Page 1*

However, our club is about more than just hiking. It's a great way to meet new people and make friends. Led by Alicia Aitchison, our club has been working to conserve this wonderful trail by removing invasive species, planting native trees, and educating us about the ecosystems that share this trail. Through our hiking program, you can learn about nature, our area's history and introduce children, newcomers, and young adults to the trail.

You can also give back. I decided that I was going to give back to the club since it has given so much to me. I became a club member, hike leader, land steward and joined the Board of Directors. I am always in awe of the support of our volunteers. It's a great group of people who always manage to have fun while working hard for the club. If you're interested in becoming a volunteer, just email us at [niagarabrucetrailclub@gmail.com](mailto:niagarabrucetrailclub@gmail.com).

And be sure to mark your calendars for our Landowner Appreciation Event coming up at the end of October. You'll find more details below. This is a great way to say "thank you" to the landowners who allow the trail to cross their land.

*See you on the trail! ▶*

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### *On the trail ... with Marinus & Friends*

From: An email from Ross Estrela  
Date: Sun, Jul 2, 2023 at 2:11 PM  
Subject: thank you  
To: <[niagarabrucetrailclub@gmail.com](mailto:niagarabrucetrailclub@gmail.com)>  
Cc: Marinus Koole email

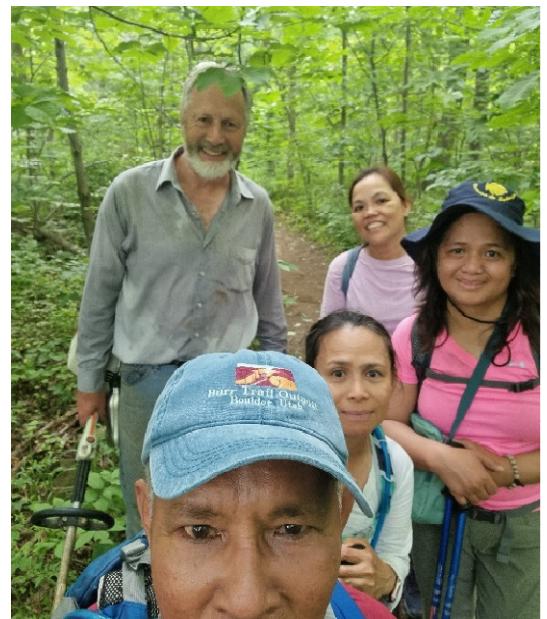
NBTC,

Meet this very friendly and helpful (Marinus Koole) while clearing the trail during our hike (June 25, 2023) from Grimsby Mountain to Ball Falls.

Unselfish dedication keeping our Eco-Friendly Greenbelt clean and safe. I would like to express our gratitude and appreciation.

Truly,

Ross Estrella





2023/2024 NBTC Board of Directors - From left: Alan Laver, Vince Zvonar, Corrie Kellestine, Janet Davey, Ellen Savoia, Dave Kelly, Marion Hanover, Marinus Koole, Sam Rutherford, Tammy Morris, Faye Perkins, Alicia Aitchison, Jessica Ranalli. Absent: Diane Marlatt, Kathleen Orth, Rick Waters.

## *Landowner Appreciation Celebration*

### **Sam Rutherford**

Landowner Relations Director

After a three-year hiatus due to pandemic restrictions, we are pleased to announce the return of our **Landowner Appreciation Celebration** to be held at Ball's Falls Conservation Area on Sunday, October 29, 2023. A recent survey of our Niagara Bruce Trail Club landowners indicated a desire to have an event which would include interpretive information regarding the Bruce Trail Conservancy's approach to land stewardship and biodiversity. Ball's Falls Conservation Area is an ideal spot to showcase the BTC mission of preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.

In response to the landowners' desires, this year's event will take on a different format from the past. We will host a drop-in event between 2:00 pm and 5:00 pm with appetizers and cash bar, plus short hikes at 3:00 pm and 3:30 pm (weather permitting) and informative displays, highlighting our work on biodiversity and land stewardship programs available to all our landowners.

We will be looking for volunteers to provide a selection of sweets. Members and volunteers who sign up to attend will be through the club's hike calendar.

We look forward to taking this opportunity to collectively thank all our generous landowners for allowing the Bruce Trail to pass through their private property. Clearly, our NBTC landowners are concerned about the environment and climate change. They love hiking for their health and family and community connections and want to give back. Bruce Trail hikers respect the privacy of people living along the trail and owe a debt of gratitude to all landowners. A free native tree takeaway will be offered to all attending landowners.

We invite our landowners to drop into the Glen Elgin Room, in the LEED certified Centre for Conservation at Ball's Falls Conservation Area. Our landowner ambassador volunteers will be personally delivering invitations and encouraging each landowner along their routes to join us on October 29. We look forward to celebrating with our landowners and expressing our appreciation by saying thank you for sharing our mission. ◀

# Trail Maintenance

RICK WATERS

## TRAIL MAINTENANCE AND DEVELOPMENT

NBTC has rerouted the main Bruce Trail in Kinsmen Park and has used an existing bridge built by the Town of Lincoln for the new trail. Before we could use an existing bridge for the main Bruce Trail, we needed to install handrails with the permission of the Town of Lincoln. The BTC requires two handrails when a structure is eight feet off the ground.



A crew of eight NBTC volunteers spent the morning installing handrails on the bridge. The project manager, Vince Zvonar, had the job well organized and it was completed without any issues.

Trail Captains Dave and Sue Burch looking after their section of main Bruce Trail. July 1, 2023



# Hiking Update + a new Niagara End-to-End Hike

## Alan Laver

### HIKE COORDINATOR

Where does time go? Already we are heading to the backend of Summer, and it feels as though it has only just begun. We have had an awful lot of rain this year and the trails have not had too much time to dry out. The upside is the lush green foliage and flowing water that we are blessed with, and the downside is lots of Mosquitoes.

Our hiking program continues to be active with lots of hikes led by our wonderful volunteers and a diversified program catering for all levels and interests. Our regular Tuesday and Thursday hikes offer a longer, faster paced hike, as well as a shorter moderate hike. Don't be put off by the faster pace as we are only as fast as the slowest hiker, so come out and give it a try.

We are offering a new hike series for the Niagara End-to-End which can be completed in seven hikes and allows hikers who perhaps are unable to cope with the longer distances an achievable goal. Watch out for it on the schedule. Also on offer are the international hikes which take us across the border, biodiversity, and night hikes, as well as many more. Make sure you keep an eye on the schedule and if you don't see what you like let me know and we'll see what we can arrange. ▲

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**The Niagara Benchlands Badge** introduces hikers to the historical significance and variety of activities near and around the Beamsville Bench area of Niagara.

The Niagara Benchlands badge is awarded to hikers who complete the following three hikes:

1. Jordan Historical Hike
2. Ball's Falls Hike
3. Wineries of the Beamsville Bench:

For complete details on the hikes, see:

<http://niagarabrucetrail.club/wp/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Niagara-Benchlands-Badge-1.pdf>



# Bruce Trail Day

## Sunday, October 1, 2023

### *"Bruce Trail For All"*

## Faye Perkins

### Public & Media Relations

For the past few months, I have been observing and wondering how I can best serve the Niagara Bruce Trail club as your communications representative on the Board of the Directors. While it was love at first sight when I first encountered the different members and club leaders, following the footsteps of Margaret Northfield is a challenge. She set the bar very high, and because of her longstanding commitment to the club, she made it look easy to achieve great results.

Being part of the planning for the Bruce Trail Day, and reflecting upon the words, "Bruce Trail for All" has given me the opportunity to get to work with more people in the club and to gain a better sense of all the riches that the club has to offer. If Peter Drucker were to ask me what 'business' I think we are in, I would say: ***We hike. We preserve and share nature. We welcome everyone to join us.***

I hope to see everyone on Sunday October 1, 2023, for Bruce Trail Day at the Niagara College Greenhouses. More formal announcements will be sent early in September, but Alan Laver and his team have scheduled the hikes. There will be food, drinks, and many people from the club to welcome new, current, and former members. You are encouraged to sign up for the hikes at your earliest convenience, and you are welcome to share your ideas and concerns about Bruce Trail Day with me personally at [btcniagaramedia@gmail.com](mailto:btcniagaramedia@gmail.com).

### Bruce Trail Day Hikes

The following hikes are now online, under October 1, 2023, at <http://niagarabrucetrail.club/wp/scheduled-hikes/>

1. Fitness Hikes starting at 9:00 a.m.  
– led by Alan Laver
2. Nature Hikes beginning at 10:30 a.m.  
– led by Alicia Aitchison
3. Welcome Hikes beginning at 11:00 a.m.  
– led by Angela Lytle

Please keep sharing your stories and photos on Facebook and through other networks. I look forward to meeting you on a trail or at **Bruce Trail Day** ▲

# ***Happy 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Laura Secord!***

Submitted by Janet Davey

We had another great day for our 30<sup>th</sup> Laura Secord hike, held on June 10<sup>th</sup>. Sixty-two hikers boarded the buses at 5:45 a.m. to take them to the Laura Secord homestead. From there, hikers walked 32 kilometres along the Bruce Trail to DeCew House. Once again, our wonderful volunteers were there to support the hikers along the way. We always receive glowing feedback from hikers for our volunteers who make these events so special. They give so willingly of their time to support our club. *A big Thank You to all of you!*

The hikers emerged from the Screaming Tunnel and were greeted by our long-time checkpoint volunteers Kathy and Doug Thoms, supported by Judy Socha.



The next checkpoint was manned by checkpoint volunteers Mary Ann Fischer and Jane Gun-Munro who welcomed hikers with snacks and beverages.



The first hiker arrived at 11:25 a.m. at DeCew House and was greeted by our new Trail Ambassadors, Kayla and Megan. Hikers received their badge and had their

picture taken with Laura Secord (aka Jennifer Gladding). Hikers then had the opportunity to rest and eat after their long journey. Charo Cuervo, Joanna Hutchinson, Norma Riddle and Joan Worthington volunteered their time to provide food and drinks for the weary hikers. Faye Perkins was on hand to sell our club merchandise.



Trail Ambassadors Megan and Kayla



Joanna, Norma, and Joan

**More on Page 7**

## Laura Secord 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Hike

From page 6

Once hikers were ready to head back to their cars, volunteers Debbie Earle, Annette Homewood and Howard Levine drove them to the Niagara Region office.



### NBTC Event Hike: Merritthon, 45km

Saturday, November 11, 2023

William Hamilton Merritt was the creator of the Welland Canal. The Merritthon is a trek approximately 45km along the historic first canal route. The hike begins at Port Colborne, follows the Welland Canal, and moves onto the Merritt Trail in St. Catharines to finish in Port Dalhousie.

Registration Fee of **\$50 for members, \$60 for non-members** covers bus transfers, snacks, water check points and a badge.

See <http://niagarabrucetrail.club/wp/event-hikes/> ◀

## Trail Ambassador – *a day in the life*

Submitted by Megan Colombe and Kayla Jakobszen  
Niagara Trail Ambassadors 2023

We had an amazing day of hiking today!

As Trail Ambassadors for the Niagara portion of the Bruce Trail, we always have many exciting adventures and stunning hikes on our schedule.

We started by checking the weather forecast in the hiking location for the day, then packed all the gear for the hike; plenty of water, snacks, sunscreen, and bug spray. Safety is always a top priority, so we make sure to have a phone with the Bruce Trail app and offline maps downloaded, a power bank, as well as a first aid kit and tick key every time we hike the trails.



Trail Ambassador  
Kayla Jakobszen



Trail Ambassador  
Megan Colombe

Once we arrived at the trailhead, we stretched, warmed up, and applied copious amounts of bug spray and sunscreen before starting the hike. One of us keeps a bottle of each in their pack because it's important to reapply if on a long hike! The trail was challenging but rewarding, with breathtaking views of the surrounding escarpment and forests.

As we hiked, we noted invasive, native, or at-risk species and uploaded them to the Bruce Trail Conservancy project on iNaturalist.

We also frequently took breaks to hydrate and avoid exhaustion and dehydration. Along the trails, we collected any garbage we found to dispose of properly at the next garbage station.

The best part of any of our hikes are when we get the opportunity to speak with trail users!

*Continued Page 8*

## Trail Ambassadors – a day in the life

From Page 7

It is such a joy to be able to inspire people to reconnect with nature and learn more about the environments they are living in. Giving directions, advice, and information about the Bruce Trail Conservancy is the best part of the job. Not only does being a Trail Ambassador benefit the public but also provides us with new knowledge and skills.

After completing the hike, we took some time to rest and enjoy the scenery before heading back to our cars. Hiking is not only great exercise, but it's also a wonderful way to connect with nature and clear your mind. As we sat and enjoyed the view, we felt grateful for the opportunity to experience the beauty of the Niagara Escarpment. By the end of the day, we had completed a challenging and rewarding hike and felt fulfilled. As a trail ambassador and an avid hiker, every day on the trail is unique, but we always strive to be prepared, safe and enjoy the beauty of nature. ◀

**Elevate your adventure!**

NIAGARA ST. LAWRENCE RIVER

Use code  
NIAGARA21  
and for each tour booked by  
your club, 2% of total tour price will be donated  
to the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

**SNEAK PEEK FOR 2024:**

**Alaska Hiking**  
11 Days: June 7, 2024

**Newfoundland Coast-to-Coast**  
11 Days: August 1, 2024

**French Alps**  
11 Days: August 15, 2024

Be sure to join our e-newsletter  
and stay up-to-date on  
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## “Three’s Company”

Submitted by Bill Russell

July 27<sup>t</sup> – All set for the Thursday short hike in Jordan but with only three of us - all from Beamsville. Bad weather had been forecast, but it didn't happen. I guess that was what scared the other usual hikers away.

The hike started off with Bala Tharmabala and me. We decided to climb the stairs to Balls Falls. A few minutes after we started, Amina Deen caught up to us, so we climbed as a threesome. We roamed the Balls Falls mills and took in the history. The buildings were all open, presumably expecting a tour group, so we enjoyed the historical artifacts. I stood on a grinding wheel of the grist mill while Bala and Nina took pictures of the two that are left. It brought back memories of an old pic of me and Martin Vanderberg from a few years ago. ◀



## NBTC Biodiversity Committee –

## Fall Work Parties

Submitted by Alicia Aitchison

This spring we hosted many work parties for garlic mustard and greater celandine removal at several of our nature reserves in the Grimsby area, as well as our St Paul's Nature Reserve in Niagara Falls. Thank you to all the members as well as the high school students who came out to help. What an impact we had! The properties are starting to look so great that we were able to push further and get started on invasive removal at more nature reserves!

This fall our club's efforts will be focused on removal of invasive honeysuckle and common buckthorn at two of our NBTC nature reserves. We are planning one big workday for each property:

- Saturday September 9<sup>th</sup> – invasive honeysuckle removal at our Thirty Road Nature Reserve, Grimsby
  - Saturday October 28<sup>th</sup>, common buckthorn removal at our St Paul's Nature Reserve, Niagara Falls.

*Details & sign up are on the NBTC hike calendar. Please plan to come out and join us for a couple of hours or for the day and help us remove these invasive species and help to foster growth of the native biodiversity at these important nature reserves. Many hands make light work – volunteer & make a difference!*

Read on for some more detail on these invaders (*provided by Klari Kalkman's "Niagara's Most Unwanted" series*).

## INVASIVE HONEYSUCKLE:

Non-native honeysuckles were imported as early as the 18th century to serve as garden ornamentals, stabilize soils, and provide wildlife habitat. Unfortunately, these species have naturalized and spread well beyond their original plantings to fields, pastures, and forests, where they cause problems for native flora and fauna. These invasive honeysuckles enjoy a variety of soil conditions and are often found along forest edges. Infestations of non-native honeysuckle occur across southern Ontario.



### *Photo credits:*

*Lonicera*: red berries  
Kate Pearson

*Lonicera*: orange berries  
Claire Estey

## *Lonicera*: flowers Brian Popelier

Non-native honeysuckles generate rapidly and profusely to dominate forest understories and outcompete native honeysuckles and other native forest shrubs. They grow in thick patches, producing dense shade and exuding a chemical that inhibits native plants from growing under or near them. These changes to local vegetation also threaten a number of at-risk plant species. Lastly, non-native honeysuckles negatively affect forest wildlife in a variety of ways. For instance, they lower the nutrition and nesting success of songbirds, as their berries are less nutritious and predation rates are higher for birds nesting in them.

## Control

Non-native honeysuckle, while fast-growing and pernicious in its invasiveness, can be manually controlled. Ideally, these species are removed when the plants are young (before they bear fruit): young shrubs can be readily pulled by hand. As their root systems are shallow, even large specimens of invasive honeysuckle can be pulled out with the help of digging tools. Autumn is the best season for invasive honeysuckle control, as it avoids disturbing springtime plants.

Restoration is best considered at the time the soil has been disturbed by control efforts. Seeding or mulching sites immediately afterwards can help native species to re-establish while preventing other invaders. Or larger specimens of native species can be planted later.

### INVASIVE COMMON BUCKTHORN

Common Buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*) is Old World in origin. It is thought to have been introduced from Europe in the late 1800s, after settler deforestation, or use in windbreaks, erosion control, and stream bank stabilization. Planted in many locations across Canada, it can now be found from Nova Scotia to Saskatchewan, including throughout southern Ontario.

The Common Buckthorn tolerates shade and drought, and grows well in a variety of habitats, especially along edges of roadsides, fence lines, woodlands, pastures, and unused fields. As an invasive species, its presence has proven troublesome for native plants and animals, as well as agricultural crops.



**Buckthorn mature bark**

### Impact

Common Buckthorn creates a variety of problems for natural settings around Ontario. Its prolific, rapid, and dense growth outcompetes native plant species. More destructively, it alters the nitrogen composition of the soil, with long-lasting inhibitory effects on the growth of surrounding understory plants, also changing earthworm populations in ways that prematurely destroy forest leaf layers. The laxative quality of Common Buckthorn berries, while ensuring its own seed spread, negatively impacts wildlife nutrition. Similar to non-native honeysuckles, Common Buckthorn also increases songbird susceptibility to predation.

The Common Buckthorn is included as a noxious weed under the province's Weed Control Act; it hosts Oat Crown Rust and the Soybean Aphid, damaging oat, soybean, and other vegetable crops.



**Common Buckthorn: Photos Kate Pearson**

**UNRIPE BERRIES**

**RIPE BERRIES**

**LEAVES**

### Control

Control of Common Buckthorn is aided by the fact that its leaves can remain green into November, well after most other plants' leaves have turned colour, lending to easier identification of sites of infestation.

In moist soil conditions, plants up to one-metre high can be pulled. Larger plants require tools for digging out their deep roots. Cutting or girdling larger plants, with application of herbicide to stumps or girdled areas to deter re-sprouting, is another option. PLEASE NOTE: Anyone using an herbicide must comply with herbicide legislation and follow the label.

Restoration plantings may be carried out most effectively in phases, with monitoring over time to identify and remove future seedlings, as these seeds can germinate for up to five years.

*If you have any questions or would like to be added to our Biodiversity Volunteer list, please email [aliciaaitchison1@gmail.com](mailto:aliciaaitchison1@gmail.com).*

- Niagara's Most Unwanted: Most Unwanted #1: Non-native Honeysuckles The Grapevine Fall 2021
- Niagara's Most Unwanted: Most Unwanted #2: Common Buckthorn The Grapevine Winter 2021/2022
- Niagara's Most Unwanted: Most Unwanted #3: Garlic Mustard The Grapevine, Spring 2022
- Niagara's Most Unwanted: Most Unwanted #4: Japanese Stiltgrass The Grapevine, Summer 2022



Garlic Mustard Crib, photo from Summer 2002. See Niagara's Most Unwanted #3: Garlic Mustard, Spring 2022, for story.

## Noticing the Natural World Around Us

Submitted by Helen Hermansen



If you have ever attended one of my nature hikes, you'll remember the strong emphasis I put on observation, curiosity, and wonder. So, this month I bring to you my on-going fascination with the biggest slug I have ever seen, *Limax maximus*.

The leopard slug or great grey slug (*Limax maximus*) can grow 15 cm long, and often has a beautiful leopard-spotted pattern. It is especially slimy, even for a slug.

**Habitat:** This big slug frequents gardens, damp hedgerows and woods; often resting during the day in cool shady places beneath stones, flowerpots, fallen logs, and

leaves. Look for them when out hiking through Short Hills Park or Louth Conservation Area.

**Food:** The leopard slug eats a wide variety of foods, foraging on carrion, fungi, lichens, animal excrement and dead plants. It is also a tenacious hunter that pursues other slugs and snails at impressive speeds.

**Where to find:** First described in Great Britain in the 1600s, the leopard slug is considered native to Europe and parts of northern Africa. However, this worldwide traveler can now be found just about everywhere (South Africa, North America, South America, Asia, and Oceania).

**Introduced:** Not native, sometimes invasive, but generally not considered a pest or invasive in its native range, or in Ontario, because it may help to clean up dead matter and keep the other slugs and snails in-check. However, it is invasive in some parts of the world where it damages agricultural crops, and in ecosystems where it hurts the native snail and slug populations.

In case you were wondering - DO NOT EAT THEM!! Although they are not poisonous or toxic, they often carry nasty parasites.

For more information, and some interesting details on this slug's fantastic mating behaviours, check out:

- <https://www.slughelp.com/leopard-slug/>
- <https://www.inaturalist.org/taxa/62470-Limax-maximus>
- <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/24/nyregion/the-double-life-of-the-slimy-acrobatic-leopard-slug.html>



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**The Grapevine** is the  
newsletter of the Niagara  
Bruce Club, one of the nine  
member clubs of the Bruce  
Trail Conservancy.

**The Grapevine** appears four  
times a year.

NBTC Members are invited to  
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Copy due date for the Winter  
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