



THE RATTLER

The newsletter of the



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY

PENINSULA CLUB

2024 #3

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Tamara Wilson

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



What a fantastic year it has been for the Peninsula Club and the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC)! So far in 2024, an impressive 1,200 kilometers have been hiked on the Peninsula Section alone through the 130 PBTC-organized hikes scheduled. And that's just the organized hikes—the many individual hikers, clubs, and organizations also contribute to the remarkable use of the trail. The work behind the scenes to maintain and enhance these trails is nothing short of inspiring. Thanks to the dedication of the club's incredible volunteer Trail Captains, over 1,600 hours of trail maintenance have been logged so far this year. These efforts ensure that the Peninsula Club trails remain in spectacular condition, allowing hikers to enjoy the beauty of nature safely.

New hikes, new badges, and new BTC land acquisitions kept the club on its toes. This year, the BTC added two significant land acquisitions to its conservation efforts on the Peninsula: Sunrise Shores Nature Reserve at Barrow Bay (463 acres, securing 621 meters of the optimum route) and Maple Cross Nature Reserve at Hope Bay (463.5 acres, securing 2.475 kilometers of the optimum route). These two

purchases alone made up more than half of the BTC's total 2024 acquisitions for the entire trail, helping preserve the beauty and integrity of the Peninsula for both wildlife and future generations of hikers.

Community engagement has also been a major theme this year. Continuing with the theme of outstanding generosity, the club experienced heartfelt local engagement through events such as community-driven fundraisers, the annual Hiking Festival hosted at Celtic Camp in Stokes Bay, Hike It! Love It! Keep It Clean!, Highway 6 roadside litter pickups, and record participation in Land Stewardship and tree-planting events at Vanishing Stream.

A heartfelt thank-you to all of the volunteers, members, donors, and supporters whose contributions have made the Peninsula Club the exceptional community, hiking, and conservation champion that it is. Here's to even more success in the year ahead!

Tamara Wilson
Peninsula Bruce Trail Club President

THE RATTLER



Bruce Trail
CONSERVANCY
PENINSULA CLUB

2024, ISSUE 3

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ARTICLE SUBMISSION

If you have a story that might be of interest to Rattler readers, please send it to pbtc.hikes@gmail.com.

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SAUGEEN (BRUCE) PENINSULA LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge the Traditional Territory of the Anishinabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations. And further give thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen, and the Chippewas of Nawash, now known as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, as the traditional keepers of this land.

The 2024 Festival brought nearly 100 visitors to the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula



A highlight for participants was the “Beer and Bees” experience at Tagwerk Brewery in Cape Chin

2024 Peninsula Hiking Festival – Listen to the Land!

MARGARET O’DELL
2024 PBTC HIKING FESTIVAL
COMMITTEE

The Peninsula Bruce Trail Club (PBTC) hosted the Peninsula Hiking Festival on October 4th and 5th at Camp Celtic in Stokes Bay on the Saugeen (Bruce)

over a dozen subject-matter experts, and supported by upwards of 30 volunteers, this year’s PBTC signature event highlighted the theme of Listen to the Land.

Participants from across Ontario came to the festival to deepen their connection with the land and with each other as they explored the biodiversity of the natural wonders of the Niagara Escarpment through a variety of programs over the two-day event.

Festival programs took participants on a walk through 450 million years of the formation of the Niagara Escarpment, while other participants learned about tree identification, astrophotography, local bird species, macro photography, conservation efforts, and the interconnection of healthy pollinators and production of food products such as honey and beer. Another important aspect of the Festival included learning about local First Nations stories, medicinal plants and the importance of understanding different world views.

Special thanks to subject experts who deepened our understanding of - and connection with the land - Adam MacLaren, Barbara von der Heide, Beth Gilhespy, Brian Popelier, Bob Knapp, Chantelle Burbridge, Christian Riemerschmidt von der Heide, Esme Batten, Ethan Meleg, Janna Chegahno, Jenna McGuire, Madeline Sanagan, Margaret O'Dell, Miptoon, Peter Raspberry, Tainin Hopkinson, and Tyler Miller.

In addition to the intensive two-day programming, participants were treated to delightful social evening including Tagwerk's oven-fired pizza and beer, musical performances, bon-fire, yoga, polar bear dip and story-telling. Participants and volunteers alike were able to connect and relax in the spacious outdoor setting at Camp Celtic with perfect weather the entire weekend.

The event concluded with a camp-style dinner, prepared by the local SWANS group, and a visually enchanting photographic tour of the Escarpment presented by renowned author and photographer Mark Zelinski.



SHAHAB AND AROOJ TRAVELLED FROM TORONTO FOR THE HIKING FESTIVAL, TAKING PART IN THEIR FIRST EVER HIKE ON THE BRUCE TRAIL.

The extraordinary support from event sponsors and local businesses enhanced the event, with affordable ticket prices, accommodation discounts, food and beverage, and an awesome selection of Silent Auction items for additional fund-raising efforts -which raised over \$3500. These funds will support PBTC hiking programs and the 2025 Peninsula Hiking Festival.

The many volunteers were truly the heart and soul of the 2024 Peninsula Hiking Festival. Many months of planning and preparation, countless hours were devoted to making this festival the best ever! And indeed it was - Congratulations to the Peninsula Hiking Festival Committee and to the PBTC Club. If you are interested in joining the 2025 Festival Committee, please contact Marg at pbtcoutreach@gmail.com or Randy at hikewithpbtc@gmail.com.



VOLUNTEERS PREPARE FOR PLANTING

A Fall Tree Planting Success!

BY LAURA PISKO
 DIRECTOR OF
 CONSERVATION & LAND
 STEWARDSHIP

This past September, the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club hosted a successful tree-planting event at its Vanishing Stream property near Colpoy's Bay. Despite the unusually hot weather, 54 volunteers

turned out to plant almost 500 native trees. The volunteers worked tirelessly, planting, clearing grass, watering, and placing protectors on some of the trees.

One-quarter of the field was planted with various native trees, including sugar maple, bur oak, white oak, hackberry, nannyberry, black cherry, American hazelnut, American elm, and American Chestnut. The elms were grown and donated by a local resident, and 116 endangered American Chestnuts were donated by the Canadian Chestnut Council. The other seedling trees were purchased through a local nursery.



Delivery of the trees was supported by a local resident who brought their tractor with a bucket to transport the trees across the 105-acre property to the planting site. This tree-planting site is one of several that will be planted over the next few years. Restoration of the property will contribute to developing a biodiverse wildlife corridor along the Peninsula. Not only will it be beneficial to wildlife and pollinators, but it will also enhance the Bruce Trail hiker experience.

The next tree planting at Vanishing Stream is planned for May 24, 2025. More details to follow.



The Peninsula Bruce Trail Club is recruiting tree monitor volunteers for these and the other 2,000 trees planted in the past few years.

Please get in touch with Laura Pisko, Director, Conservation & Land Stewardship, at PBTC.dir.conservation@gmail.com if you're interested in volunteering for this important role.



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The group started their started their hike on April 9th near Orangeville and hiked regularly throughout the spring, summer, and fall.



Aki Guardians Complete Bruce Trail Hike

Congratulations to the Bagida-waad Alliance Aki Guardians, Chris, Owen, and Ethan, for completing their 600+km hike of the Main Bruce Trail! The Aki Guardians hiked through the traditional territory of Saugeen Ojibway Nation, starting near Hockley Valley and ending at the cairn in Tobermory. They hiked for six days a month, tackling segments along the edge of the Niagara Escarpment.

The Aki Guardians faced challenges like heat and difficult terrain. They described the temperatures as "heating up" and feeling "a bit like walking through a sauna." They also had to be resourceful, sometimes leaving caches of water off-road due to limited access to drinking water in certain areas. Despite these obstacles, they persevered and completed their journey in every type of weather, including snow squalls as they reached Tobermory.

Along the way, the Aki Guardians encountered a variety of animals, including deer, snapping turtles, and birds like the Indigo Bunting and the Wood



Peewee. They also observed several threatened species, such as Butternut and Black Ash trees. One of their memorable experiences was hiking the Keyhole side trail, navigating a crevice and a small cave with their hiking bags.

The Aki Guardians started their hike on April 9th near Orangeville and hiked regularly throughout the spring, summer, and fall. They expressed gratitude for the support of volunteers who helped them along the way.

The Bagida'waad Alliance, led by Chippewas of Nawash Fishing Families, is a not-for-profit corporation that does climate research on the waters of Lake Huron and Georgian Bay, encourages youth to hear the stories of the Elders about the fish, and actively stewards the lands and waters.

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An advertisement for Suntrail. The logo features a stylized mountain and the text "SUNTRAIL SOURCE FOR adventure". Below the logo, the text reads: "Whether you're a backpacker, canoeist, kayaker or cross-country skier, Suntrail has the merchandise and advice you need to take your passion to the next level." At the bottom, it provides contact information: "Hwy #6 Hepworth ON", "info@suntrail.ca", and "519-935-2478". There are also social media icons for Instagram and Facebook.

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The more a person spends time on the Bruce Trail hiking, the higher the probability that, at some point, they will have a new or unexpected encounter with nature.

Trouble on the Trail – Forces of Nature

BY TAMARA WILSON
PBTC PRESIDENT

Hiking on the Bruce Trail often exposes us to new experiences that we would not typically encounter in our everyday lives or even on trails in more urban centers. Ninety-eight percent of the time, our experience meets or exceeds our expectations and our hikes go off without a hitch. But the other two percent of the time, we encounter situations that may be startling, scary, or may fall under the category of unplanned incidents.



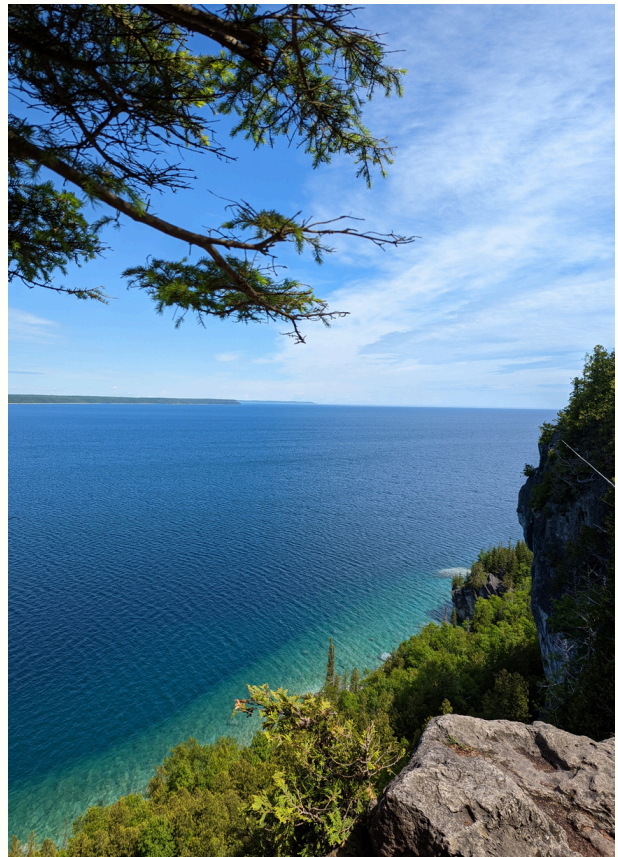
MAMMATUS CLOUDS

Some of these stories you may have heard from fellow hikers, experienced yourselves, or shared over a beverage after a great day on the Trails. The fact is, the more you spend on the Trails, the greater the chances are you will encounter something unexpected. In the last Rattler, we discussed encounters with Nature and the elements. In this edition, we are talking about interactions with people.

Recall from the last Rattler edition, regardless of the source of an emergency situation, it is important to have the “What3 Words” App on your phone, if not

for you, to help others in distress. It is nearly impossible to clearly rhyme off the string of GPS coordinates to a dispatcher in an emotionally charged situation, over sketchy cell service. What3 Words facilitates location sharing immensely. Also, don't assume that someone else will call the situation in. EMS services will never be angry at you for calling in what you think is a genuine issue. If someone else has called it in, the dispatcher will often let you know that they are already aware of the situation and they may also give you an update on the status (i.e., "an officer has been dispatched and is investigating the situation"). No one will think worse of you or that you were "pranking" the cops for a genuine concern. If you aren't sure, let the EMS or hike group expert make the call as to whether an EMS call is warranted.

Another great safety device to carry on hikes is a Garmin InReach Mini or a similar satellite safety device, which allows you to send and receive text messages from anyone, can provide localized weather reports, and can send out an SOS to Garmin's emergency response center via satellite from anywhere in the world. This is a particularly great device to carry if you do a lot of solo hiking, but also good to carry in groups as well. It is important to keep the device charged before you head out. The device is also a great addition to kayaking and boating trips.



UNIQUE PERSPECTIVES ON THE WATER

Without further ado, here are some situations a hiker could encounter on the trails:

DISTRESS ON THE WATER

One of the fabulous features of the Peninsula Section is the endless views of Georgian Bay. The cliffs also provide a perspective of the big picture: the expanse of water, the capes, heads, and bays of the sprawling shoreline.

On my first trip to Lions Head Lookout, on the Peninsula Club's E2E back in 2009, we popped out onto the escarpment clifftop to catch a look at the azure waters of Georgian Bay. Looking immediately below the cliff, the hike group noticed a family standing on various rocks offshore, around a sail in the water with the boat hull up on the rocks.



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Not being a sailor, I thought it was an odd place for the family to park their boat for a shore picnic. We pointed it out to our Hike Leader, John Whitworth, who immediately recognized the situation as a shipwreck and called it in to 911. The Coast Guard was alerted, and a rescue ensued (John stayed on the cliff until the Coast Guard appeared and caught up with the hike group later). In this case, John was the Hike Leader and reassigned the lead to another Hike Leader in the group to carry on with our organized hike. Our group was well cared for, and the family was rescued; the day had a happy ending except for possible damage to the sailboat.


A couple of years ago, another hiker on Cape Chin called in some kayakers in distress on the water, which she observed from the cliffs. Though the shore water can be calm and inviting, the predominant westerlies blowing off the escarpment hit the water below the cliffs in powerful gusts.



CANOEISTS ALONG THE SHORES OF BARROW BAY


These powerful winds have been known to take unsuspecting kayakers, sailors, and SUPs out into Georgian Bay with little hope of returning to shore until the winds change. Many of the long-time residents on Georgian Bay have their own stories about getting blown out, being unable to return to shore, and needing assistance. If you see someone waving frantically on the water, they are likely asking for help and not saying hello. Call 911 and ask for emergency assistance. If you explain what you think you are seeing, dispatch can make the call as to next steps. Often along the cliffs of the escarpment, you can get cell reception, but you must be on the cliffs, not below them. If you cannot get cell service and do not have a Garmin on which you can send an SOS, and if you are close to a resident's home or cottage, you can approach and explain the situation. They may know of the local cell spot, or they may drive you to where you can reach help.

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Similarly, if you see someone in the water below the cliff who appears as if they could be in trouble, call 911. This includes situations where non-EMS people are working to recover the person in the water. The dispatcher will likely let you know if the incident has been called in. It is a good assumption that the people below the cliff may not have the cell service available that you have on top of the cliff. Even in summer months, people regularly run into issues with hypothermia if capsized or swimming too far out on Georgian Bay. People get in trouble even very close to shore every year, which, sadly, sometimes results in deaths. It is better to call it in to 911 if you see a situation from the top of the cliff. You could save someone's life!

PARKED CARS

On occasion, hikers will access a remote area and find someone sleeping in a parked car or encounter an abandoned car that looks suspicious. If the car is full of garbage, someone may be living in it. In one situation, we were on a group hike before a big snowstorm approached the area. As the cars pulled into the remote parking lot at the very end of Scenic Caves Road, we found someone sleeping in their car. We did a quick wellness check to make sure the person was OK (they were), and the vehicle was gone by the end of our hike. But we were concerned that if the car had still been in the parking lot, the car camper would have been snowed in for several days if they decided to stay, as the area was not serviced with a plow. If the car had still been there, our next step would have been to notify the OPP and make them aware of the situation.

Another hike group recently encountered a car with its doors fully open and full of garbage in a small hiking parking lot. They wondered if someone had wandered off or become lost. The hike leader contacted the OPP for investigation. When they returned to the

parking lot, the OPP had towed the car. The hike leader later found that the car had been reported as stolen and returned to its owner.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE..

New hikers on the Peninsula may fail to bring enough water, underestimating the physical demands of wilderness trails, their slower-than-anticipated speed, or their own hydration needs, and consequently run into trouble. If you encounter someone in distress due to lack of water, you can share your own to a certain extent, ensuring you have enough for yourself. If you are familiar with the many side trails that access water, you can either top up at the bay (ideally using a LifeStraw or filter to avoid waterborne illness), or make your way to the closest residential area, where there is often a small general store, campground, or cluster of cottages you can approach. Some locals do not welcome hikers on their property and have signs indicating as such. If it is not an emergency, it is best to respect these boundaries. If the person is experiencing advanced stages of heat exhaustion or dehydration (see the full list of symptoms and recommended actions here: [Heat-Related Emergencies: Staying Cool and Hydrated in Canadian Summers - Canadian Red Cross](#)), move them to a shady area if possible, follow the suggestions in the link, and immediately call 911. Some sections of the Peninsula,



ALWAYS FILTER WATER BEFORE DRINKING



OFF LEASH DOGS SHOULD BE APPROACHED WITH CAUTION

such as Dyers Bay to High Dump, have no water refill opportunities, so it's crucial to carry enough water and plan your hike distances accordingly. Always keep spare water in your vehicle or leave a hidden water container at your endpoint for the day's end.

Aggressive Domestic Dogs

During one stage in my End to End journey, I was finding it challenging to find organized hikes or friends who were available to hike with me that fit in with my busy work and family schedule. On one of my group hikes, I had the pleasure of hiking with the late Doug Sloan, one of the great end-to-end hikers of the entire Bruce Trail. Rumor had it that Doug had unofficially completed over 50 end-to-end hikes of the entire Trail. Doug logged this impressive number through his out-and-back solo hiking and, to that end, was a strong proponent of solo hiking. While I myself was considering solo hiking, admittedly, my biggest concern was bears. When I shared my solo hiking thoughts with Doug, I asked him about what animals I should be most careful of when solo hiking. Instead of mentioning bears, however, Doug said that the greatest threat to solo hikers was aggressive, off-leash domestic dogs. Doug shared that in his fifty-plus hikes of the Bruce Trail, he had never been attacked by a bear or a rattlesnake or

any other wild animal, but he had been attacked about half a dozen times by off-leash dogs—twice requiring numerous stitches (in the most severe case, the dog owner grabbed the dog and fled the scene). With this in mind, I always hike with poles and bear spray—not so much for bears but for a possible dog attack, which, for me, thankfully, has not happened yet.

There are a few sections of the Bruce Trail with well-known aggressive dogs that are often shared on social media. Why, you may ask, would the Bruce Trail tolerate these aggressive dogs along the route? In some cases, the owner is allowing the Trail to cross their private property, and the landowner also owns the dog. Hikers have had good luck dealing with the Peninsula's known barking dog(s) by standing still, letting the dog size the hiker up (usually the dog stops a distance away and barks from "safety") and calmly continuing on their hike. It is important to remain calm even though the barking can be quite intimidating and, frankly, can ruin the vibe of a great hike. The hiker should calmly continue on their hike, keeping an eye on the location of the dog(s).

The hiker could also get their bear spray in hand, ready to use if necessary (I don't pull the pin, but I am ready). Hikers should consider basically ignoring the dog—don't speak nicely to the dog; don't try to pet or befriend the dog; don't extend your hand to let it sniff; don't escalate the situation by waving arms or a hiking stick. Some hikers with booming voices have had good luck yelling at the dogs to go away and successfully scaring them back, but not all of us are blessed with good booming voices. If the dog should continue to approach, a hiker may sternly tell the dog to stop with their palm facing it. If the dog continues to get closer within lunging distance, using bear spray is an option, but take note



SERGE, THE 2023 “ROXY AWARD” WINNER FOR CANINE ETIQUETTE, REMINDS EVERYONE TO ALWAYS KEEP YOUR DOG ON A LEASH WHILE HIKING

of wind direction so as not to get sprayed as well. Using a hiking pole or swinging a pack around to protect your body may be beneficial. If the dog should attack, the Humane Society recommends pushing into any bite, knocking the dog off balance, versus retracting to try to pull out, which may be the natural reaction. In the case of an attack, self-preservation is key, and the hiker should protect themselves in any way possible, including the use of bear spray and calling for help, which may draw the owner’s attention. For this reason, it is important to keep dogs on leashes and controlled if they are on the Trail.

Even big friendly dogs may not be scary to the owner, but they could be very scary to other people, especially if they have been victims of previous dog altercations.

PEOPLE IN DISTRESS ON THE TRAIL

In all cases, when encountering people in distress, hikers should try contacting 911 emergency services immediately. On the Peninsula, depending on the location, EMS may be hours away from reaching a hiker on the Trail. Sometimes, distress is not an obvious situation.

For example, on one November hike, we encountered an open backpack with a string of clothes strewn out in different locations along the trail. When we looked at the backpack, there were syringe wrappers and other items tossed around. Our immediate concern was that someone had had a diabetic episode and maybe didn’t get their insulin fast enough. At first, we dismissed our concerns as overreacting but decided to contact the police to get a second opinion. The OPP contacted us, and we took them to the scene. The OPP then brought in a sniffer dog to see if they could locate the person (they did not locate a person). The police shared that often people who are very high remove their clothing because they feel hot – even if it is very cold out. People under the influence run the risk of passing out from hypothermia when they remove their clothes. This can happen quickly in cold weather. We were told we did the right thing in calling the OPP, and in our case, the police believed that the person may have made their way to their vehicle or contacted someone for assistance to pick them up. The police collected the belongings and left.

Another situation you may encounter is a person who approaches stating they are lost. It is not uncommon for hikers to ask for confirmation that they are headed in the right direction, towards a certain parking lot, or verify the area they are in. It is always good to provide that information if you know it, share maps and information available on the App. People are often better with visual explanations versus verbal. When encountering fellow hikers, I will often ask



**SOME HIKERS MIGHT UNDERESTIMATE
HOW QUICKLY THE TRAILS CAN BECOME
CHALLENGING**

about their hike plan in a casual, conversational way to double-check if they have a good idea as to where they want to go, have a reasonable number of kilometers planned for their day based on their current situation, and also in case there is a report later on of a missing person. I will have a general idea as to the area they may be in and possible hazards that they could have encountered.

It is a common problem for enthusiastic hikers to underestimate the physicality required to hike the Trail on the Peninsula, but in most of these cases, the person ends the day without incident, merely being very happy to get to their cars.

There may be other times, however, when people are truly disoriented and may be suffering from cognitive decline or impairment. Sometimes it is difficult for friends and families to judge the progress of the disease, especially if the person was previously very familiar with the area

and its wilderness Trails. There may come a time when the hiker simply doesn't recall where they are. They are disoriented and may share that they are lost. Ideally, the person is not far from home, and you can walk with them to their home or cottage, rejoining them with their friends and/or family. If the person isn't sure which direction is home, doesn't know their address, or shares an address that doesn't fit the area, you should call 911 for assistance. If you encounter a person who is disoriented and has removed clothing, call 911. It is particularly important to keep the person warm and in place in cold weather until help arrives. Assure them that help is on the way.

INJURED HIKER

In the case of an injured hiker, it is important to apply first aid if you have been trained and get the help that is needed by calling 911. If you are not sure, call 911 and have the dispatcher assess the person. Contacting through a Garmin or satellite device is a good option if there is no cell service. It is important to note that while you may think you only need a first aid kit or a headlamp for your own hike, you may encounter someone in need in a more remote section of the trail. It is always good to pack safety supplies, a little extra water, and a headlamp. If a rescue situation is encountered where you are helping someone out of the wilderness and dark is setting in, you will need the headlamp to assist in the effort, particularly if the injured person has not brought their own equipment. A rescue in very remote regions along the trail, such as Gunn Point or along the shore in the National Park, could take six hours or more. It is also important to note that your own hike plans for that day may not come to fruition, and you should contact your own friends and family to apprise them of the situation if you can (a Garmin is good for sending these canned text messages with updates).



HAVING A WELL STOCKED FIRST AID KIT IS ALWAYS A GOOD IDEA

UNAUTHORIZED USE OF THE TRAIL

Over the last year, the Peninsula Club has had two major incidents of camping with fires on the Trail. We have also encountered remnants of old fires in the middle of the trail, which are reported on the Trail Captains' reports. This summer, the Club had to contact the fire department at Cape Chin South when a campfire went into the ground, taking hours to dig out and extinguish. In the second case, people were still at their fire on the Trail north of Warton. These people were removed by the OPP, and their fire was extinguished by fire services. If you encounter a fire on the Trails or anywhere on the Peninsula, never hesitate to call 911. Fires are extremely treacherous on the escarpment and can result in extreme damage to nature and the local communities.

During hunting season, always wear orange, even in areas where hunting is not permitted. In remote areas, hunters are not always aware of property boundaries and may venture onto conservation lands, especially if the lands are recent conservation acquisitions. It is better to be safe than to have a mishap with an errant hunter. Bright orange is your friend!

CLOSING THOUGHTS

Society encourages us to get out in nature and improve our mental health as part of our wellness journeys. While we are all in different places on our individual health plans, it is important to feel protected and enjoy our time on the Trail without fear or threat of harm. If you ever find yourself in an unsettling situation with someone you encounter on the Trail, never hesitate to reach out for help by calling 911, communicating with friends and family on your Garmin or calling in an SOS, talking to another fellow hiker, redirecting your hike to a road and flagging down a vehicle, or going to a local residence for assistance. Consider hiking with poles, bear spray, or other items that help you feel more secure—even your favorite stuffy! Sometimes it's not so much what we pack but our confident energy that deters both people and wild animals from approaching to check us out too closely. Do what you need to do to possess that "take charge" energy on the Trail.

At the same time, hiking is often a social undertaking. Solo and group hikers check in on one another, get tips from other hikers on good lookouts, hazards, or animals up ahead—generally sharing their Trail experiences. There are those of us who swear, similar to many international Trails, that there is such a thing as "Bruce Trail Magic"—those amazing coincidences and encounters with both people and nature that can only happen if you, as a hiker, get out there and engage, immerse, and enjoy the amazing experiences that the Saugeen Bruce Peninsula offers. A good hiking friend of mine often says, "If it's not a good time, it's a good story." Here's to raising a mug of hot chocolate to you, your good times, and your good stories on the Trail.

If you have an interesting story and/or example of "Bruce Trail Magic" to share regarding a unique or unusual encounter on the Trail, please share at pbtc.funclubpres@gmail.com. Stay safe and Happy Hiking!

Before You Hike

RESOURCES



WILD LIFE

- [Bear Wise Website](#)
- [Sick or Injured Animals](#)
- [Tick Information](#)
- [Bruce Trail Conservancy Tick Kits](#)
- [Environment Canada South Bruce Peninsula](#)



WEATHER

- [Environment Canada Tobermory](#)
- [Environment Canada Northern Lake Huron](#)
- [Environment Canada Wiarton](#)
- [Parks Canada weather page](#)
- Face mist to stay hydrated Insect repellent



RADIO FREQUENCIES:

- Parks Canada Weather and Activities
- Information channel is 90.7 FM.
- Other channels include:
- C.B.C. (Toronto) : 98.7 FM
- CFOS (Owen Sound) : 560 AM
- CIXK (Owen Sound) : 106.5 FM



MEDICAL FACILITIES

- [Grey Bruce Health Services - Tobermory](#)
7275 Hwy 6, Tobermory (519) 596-2305
- [Grey Bruce Health Services - Lions Head](#)
22 Moore St, Lions Head (519) 793-3424
- [Grey Bruce Health Services - Wiarton](#)
369 Mary St, Wiarton ON (519) 534-1260



OTHER TIPS

- During your National park visit, tune to local weather radio: 90.7FM
- Lake Huron and Georgian Bay have a moderating effect on local climate
- Summer temperatures can be cool, especially near the water or at night. Pack a light jacket or windbreaker
- Waves and storms can develop quickly. Boaters and swimmers should use caution and monitor weather forecasts. If camping, bring a tarp in case of rain.
- Early spring, late autumn and winter weather can be highly variable. Contact the park for specific advice if planning trips at these times of year.
- Trees or Trail maintenance issues, email: trailreportsbptc@gmail.com.

The Person Behind the Side Trail: Ilse Hanel

BY BRENDA STEWART
PBTC ARCHIVIST

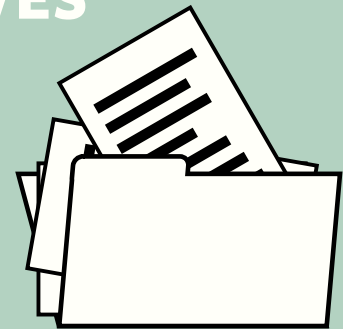


ILSE HANEL BURIAL, EASTNOR TOWNSHIP

This month's Full Moon Hike, the third in the ongoing series, took place on December 15 on the Ilse Hanel Side Trail.

Many who hike this trail may have never heard of Ilse Hanel or are aware of the significant contribution she made to keep the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club alive during the difficult years for the club in the mid 70's. "Her efforts earned her a Bruce Trail Association honorary life membership. Ilse was secretary of the Lion's Head Bruce Trail Club, which later merged with two other clubs to form the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club. For at least three years Ilse ran things single-handedly, the club being without a president or other directors. When she died in 1991, she also bequeathed a part of her estate to the Bruce Trail Association." (BTN, Winter 1992) Ilse is buried in the Eastnor Township Cemetery. (Credit and thanks to Lynn Allen for providing her background research on Ilse Hanel.)

FROM THE ARCHIVES



The following article about Ilse Hanel was written by Ross McLean for the Rattler newsletter in Spring 2004:

One name that keeps reoccurring in the history of the Bruce Trail in the Lion's Head area is Ilse Hanel. Ilse immigrated to Canada from Germany and worked in Toronto as a secretary. She fell in love with the Lion's Head area and in the early '60's retired with a pension which she felt would sustain her. She bought a small home on William Street, between the water and the hospital.

Ilse was a great outdoors person and joined the Lion's Head Bruce Trail Club. Alan Fowler had been the catalyst to get the Bruce Trail organized in the area, but he became sick and died in 1972. Bill Cannon remembers with Ray Lowes going to her cottage about 1970 and asking her to take over the Club.

Live greatly, in paradise.

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The Club had never been large, and with Alan's death, the numbers began to dwindle. By the late 1970s, Ilse was the only local resident still active. For several years she was virtually the President, Secretary and Treasurer, and for her efforts, she was awarded a BTA Life Membership. It was in 1978 that the Caledon Hills Club took over the maintenance tasks of the local club.

In 1985 Ilse had to move to a seniors' apartment in Warton because of rising costs and living on what had become a meager pension due to inflation. She died in the late 1980s, but unfortunately, no Bruce Trail member learned of her death until after the funeral. Later it was discovered that she had left a substantial legacy to the B.T.A.

According to Lion's Head residents who remember her, Ilse was very friendly and willing to share what she knew.

She was an avid fitness buff long before it was fashionable! She loved canoeing and walking, was an avid gardener, and a member of the Lion's Head horticultural group. She tended the town gardens, in particular, a water garden with a little spring where the Trailer Park now stands. (This area, now owned by the township, was once owned by the Horticultural Society.)

Ilse was an accomplished seamstress and sewed for some local people. She spent much of her time alone with her little dog as a companion. Dr. Norma Hopkinson, the now-retired Lion's Head doctor, remembers her as a very energetic person who loved skiing and the Bruce Trail, but she felt that "the Lion's Head women were not active enough!"

Ilse's daughter was killed when her parachute failed to open during a dive at an air show on the American side of Lake Erie. She was heartbroken at the loss of

her only child.

In recognition of her years of service, the former main trail south of Lion's Head was named the Ilse Hanel Side Trail. It completes the loop around Gun Point and today is one of the most popular hikes along the entire Trail. From what I have heard, Ilse Hanel would be proud of this remembrance.

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 Courtesy: Benjamin Hutton Photography

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Newfoundland Coast-to-Coast 10 Days: July 25, 2025	\$7,595	\$8,595
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UPCOMING HIKES

01/10	Fun Friday Hike – Tobermory
01/13	Moonlit Hike Series – Wolf (or Spirit) Moon (Hike 4 of a 6 part series)
01/17	Fun Friday Hike – Dunks Bay
01/24	Fun Friday Hike – Wiarton/Colpoys Bay
01/31	Fun Friday Hike – Cape Chin South
02/12	Moonlit Hike Series – Snow (or Bear) Moon
04/4	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Wiarton to Jones Bluff ST parking area
04/5	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Jones Bluff ST to Hope Bay
04/6	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Hope Bay to Hawthorn ST Parking
04/12	Peninsula BTC Trail Running E2E
04/19	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Hawthorn ST to Richardson ST
04/20	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Richardson ST to Cape Chin North
04/21	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Chin North Rd. to Crane Lake Gate
05/1	Peninsula End2End in 18 Series
05/3	Peninsula End2End in 8 Series
05/10	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Crane Lake to Cyprus Lake, Marr Lake Trail
05/11	End-to-End Makeup Hike in 8: Cyprus Lake, Marr Lake Trail to Tobermory

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Reflecting on 15 years of volunteering with the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club



JOHN WHITWORTH

15 Year Peninsula Volunteer- John Whitworth

BRENDA STEWART
PBTC ARCHIVIST

John first started volunteering with the PBTC when he became a member-at-large in 2008. In an article for the Rattler newsletter in 2018, he recalls that he first hiked the Bruce Trail in his university years. “I was an avid scuba diver. That’s

what first brought me to the Bruce (despite the frigid waters). We hiked some of the Bruce Trail while we camped in the area.”

He recalls that though the scenery was spectacular, “the trail was, sadly, in very bad shape. This was in the 1970’s when the club was more or less dormant”.

So what finally brought him to volunteer for the PBTC? He recounts that, “I completed the end-to-end of the entire BT just before my 50th birthday. Then, having great appreciation for the good condition of the trail-and the volunteer work that had gone into it, I decided to give a bit back- starting with the Spruce up the Bruce.”

In the more than 15 years since that time, John has done far more than “given a bit back”!



BARROW BAY CLIFFS NATURE RESERVE

After joining as member at large in 2008, he became hike coordinator and representative to the BTC board. Then in 2012 he became President for 2 years. Of those years, he stated that his proudest accomplishment as a club “are the positive relationships we developed with our Landowners (such as the Lillie family, the Peases, the Michiganders) which led to a series of property acquisitions.”

This fostering of relationships served well to lead him next into his role as Land Securement Director, a role which he continues to hold to this day. In an article he wrote for the Rattler in November 2018, he describes his role as Land Securement Director.

“The Land Securement role is two-fold: first as club appointee to the Bruce Trail Conservancy’s securement process; secondly, to progress the Peninsula’s portion of the BTC mission of securing a conservation corridor containing the Bruce Trail’s Optimum (practical) Route (OR).”

In the years that John has been Land Securement Director for the Peninsula

Bruce Trail Club, there have been several large land securements, averaging 2-3 properties per year. At the PBTC AGM in May 2024, John highlighted that only 950 acres of a total 40,000 acres of the Peninsula conservation corridor remain to be secured. This is a remarkable achievement demonstrating the amazing commitment from the donor base and the Peninsula volunteers, in support of the BTC mission!

John has also been active on other conservation fronts. In 2018 he proposed a project to plant 100 trees for the BTC’s 100th anniversary. In this proposal, every year, the PBTC would plant 1 or 2 native species (mostly hardwoods) nursery raised to a height of 6-8 ft. This initiative was to be differentiated from the reforestation work completed by BTC on some lands, where mass planting of seedlings is used. (see “Specimen Trees, 100 Trees for our 100th Anniversary”, Rattler, 2018) The first four trees, 10-12 foot Sugar Maples, were planted on the Bull Homestead and Vanishing Streams properties in November 2018.

PBTC Positions Held:

- Member-at-Large: 2008-09
- Hike Coordinator: 2009-10, 2010-11
- Representative to BTC Board: 2009-14, 2019- 25
- PBTC President: 2012-13 to 2013-14
- Past President: 2014-15 to 2019-20
- Land Securement Director: 2017-18 to Present

Some of the significant acquisitions during John's tenure as Land Securement Director include these Nature Reserves:

1 Cape Dundas

231 acres and 5.7km of trail located on the shores of Georgian Bay within the Cape Dundas Area of Natural and Scientific Interest. The property is an integral part of a long, woodland corridor stretching from Lion's Head to Warton and from Georgian Bay to the shores of Lake Huron.



2 Driftwood Cove

In partnership with Parks Canada, 3,272 acres and 8km of trail. The property is home to a globally rare ancient cliff-edge ecosystem with the oldest trees in eastern North America, 10 federally listed species at risk, including the Massasauga rattlesnake and ecologically, geologically and culturally significant cave systems.

3 Barrow Bay Cliffs

The MapleCross Barrow Bay Cliffs Nature reserve is 363 acres and 1.4 km of trail (removing 8 km of trail from busy roads). Much of its expansive acreage is pristine interior forest habitat - "deep woods" which are increasingly rare in southern Ontario where roads and development fragment large tracts into smaller stands.



4 Cape Chin

The MapleCross Nature Reserve at Cape Chin is 533 acres of unique ecological and geological landscape, providing habitat for exceptional biodiversity and a high concentration of species at risk.



5 Hope Bay

The MapleCross Nature Reserve at Hope Bay, home to a vast amount of interior forest, is 463.5 acres and 2.5 km of trail. The entire property sits on a karst foundation, which contains natural sinks for carbon dioxide and plays an important role in water purification.

6 Sunrise Shores

This 64 acre property was the longest remaining section of shoreline Bruce Trail that needed to be secured, allowing hikers for generations come to explore its beauty, and variety of habitats to flourish.



In 2021 and 2022, he wrote a series of articles for the Rattler Newsletter titled, “Conservation Matters”, featuring stories of conservation successes and challenges with invasive species on the Peninsula.

Currently, John’s also serves on the PBTC Board as the Club Representative to the BTC. He describes his role as follows:

“Your duty on the BTC Board of Directors is to listen, learn, consider and ultimately vote on issues in the best interest of the BTC. Of course, one’s position is shaped in part by the issues & concerns expressed by the club members through its Board. There are opportunities to formally and informally raise or escalate matters that are of interest to the club. I think over the last 5 years, communications from BTC through the CEO, Board Chair and staff have greatly improved, leaving the club reps less need to directly intercede.”

Highlights of the 15 Years volunteering for PBTC?

“For me the highlight has to be our success in Land Securement. It started

with the Barrow Bay Cliffs Nature Reserve - which resolved a real problem in our trail corridor. After this, came the opportunity to secure Cape Chin Nature Reserve -- a chance in a lifetime to open 2.5km of main trail overlooking Georgian Bay on 520 acres of conservation land. The property was for sale - but at twice the cost of anything BTC had ever previously done - so it took time to carefully build support for this proposal. Of course this didn’t happen in a vacuum - the Boards commitment to ‘be bold’; staff vision & success in raising funds, from more Conservation-minded donors. On a personal level, the many lasting friendships made with like-minded volunteers is important.

Future Challenges?

“Overall, I think the club is in great shape. One challenge may be to recruit the next generation of volunteers - for the Board and for our important boots on the ground work.”

Awards

2015 - Phillip Gosling award- John was part of the team from the Peninsula Club that received the Phillip Gosling award this year for the Snake Boardwalk Cape Croker Rebuild and Restoration. (Rattler 2015, Issue #3)



Transportation for hikers in the Peninsula

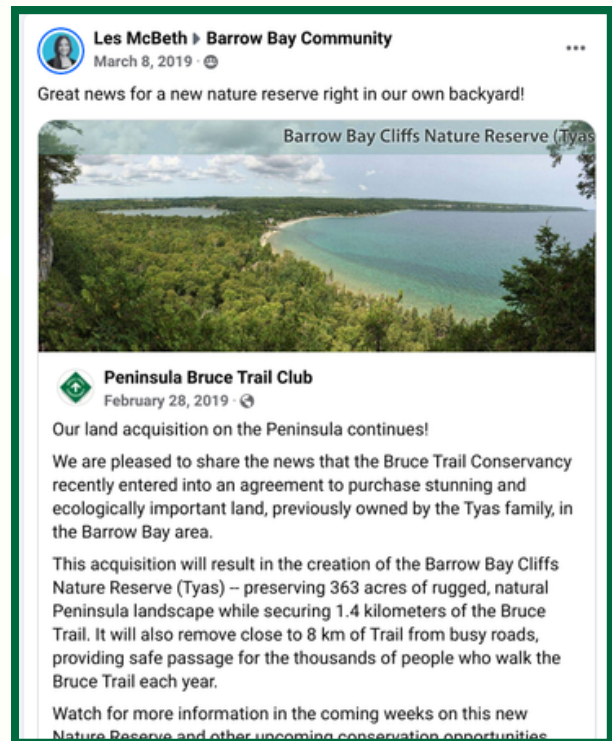
They keys to aging well:

- *Social Connection*
- *Contribution to a Greater Good*
- *Time Outdoors*
- *Physical Activity*

Volunteering: The Fountain of Youth?

BY LES MCBETH
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR

In 2019, the Bruce Trail Conservancy announced the purchase of 363 acres of land to become the Barrow Bay Cliffs Nature Reserve. As a lifelong cottager in Barrow Bay who enjoyed running on the trails, I was thrilled. I assumed that my neighbors would be as well, so I posted the news on our neighborhood Facebook group. Most of my neighbors saw what an incredible and rare gift it was for the land all around our cottages to be protected forever and for everyone.



THE FACEBOOK POST THAT STARTED MY VOLUNTEER JOURNEY

However, there were a couple of naysayers in the group, and I wound up in an online debate about the value of land conservation. As part of my research for the debate, I began reading a little more about the Bruce Trail Conservancy, particularly their work on the Saugeen (Bruce) Peninsula. The more I read, the more impressed I was with the organization as a whole and what seemed to be a very active volunteer community. So, to punctuate my response to this NIMBYer (and put my money where my mouth was, so to speak), I signed up to volunteer for the Peninsula Bruce Trail Club and began making a monthly donation to the BTC.

At the time, I didn't know much about the coordinated efforts of more than 1500 volunteers to keep the trail maintained, accessible and safe, and who provide countless opportunities to conserve and



MY FIRST VOLUNTEER TRAIL MAINTENANCE HIKE WITH KENN

educate others on the importance of the rare ecosystem on the Niagara Escarpment.

Tom Hall, Director of Trail Maintenance for the PBTC, responded to my volunteer inquiry letting me know that a section of the trail on Gunn Point, from the Inland Side Trail to McKay's Harbour, was in need of a Trail Captain to take care of maintenance. This was my favourite section to hike, so I jumped at the chance.

Starting as a trail maintenance volunteer, the first person I encountered was a fellow named Kenn Lundrum, who was passing over Trail Captain duties for this section. He volunteered to show me the ropes of trail maintenance and so one day in late July, we set out together on the 13km long trek.

Kenn was an inspiration. He had been maintaining this section for many years, having brought along friends and family on the hike. This was my first hike with a

total stranger and I enjoyed the ease of the conversation while enjoying the scenery (I now know, from going on organized PBTC hikes, that walking and chatting with strangers is always a pleasure). As we were chatting and hiking, I learned that his wife, Bonnie, was a gerontologist and that her research showed her that people need four primary things to age well:

1. Social Connection
2. Contribution to a Greater Good
3. Time Outdoors
4. Physical Activity

* I'm recalling these from memory, forgive me Bonnie if those are not quite right!

Ken and Bonnie started volunteering for the BTC when they retired because it was something that hit all four things. The logic seemed sound to me!

I was 39 at the time and learned that very morning that I was pregnant with my first child. I thought to myself: "I hope when I'm in my 70's like Kenn, I'll be able to hike from Barrow Bay to Lion's Head with my kids."

Not to mention that Kenn seemed like a genuinely kind and generous person who was willing to give his time to ensure that the trail was in the best shape possible



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ISLA'S FIRST TRAIL MAINTENANCE HIKE AT 3 MONTHS OLD

for hikers, and if he was any indication of the type of person I'd meet through volunteering, I'd be in good company.

During that time warp of the pandemic that followed, my love of the Bruce Trail grew as my daughter, Isla, my husband and I hiked more than 200km on the trail together before she was a year old. She accompanied me on several of those trail maintenance trips during those years, her first one at the age of 13 weeks.

In the early winter of 2022, I was pregnant with my second child when I received an email indicating that the PBTC was looking for board members.

Simultaneously, my husband and I were in the process of building our own home in Barrow Bay. So, I thought that joining the

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board might also give me the opportunity to meet other like minded folks in the community and I applied.

Little did I know that I would be connected to this incredible community of the most generous, dedicated and kind group of people you could imagine.

Individuals like Marg Glendon, the driving force behind many impactful initiatives, including the Hiking Festival, DEIB committee, Hike It, Love It, Keep It Clean Citizen Science initiative, and fundraising events.



MARG GLENDON

Tamara Plant Wilson, PBTC President, encourages us to consider sustainable tourism while fostering community and contributes to many aspects of the club's work, from trail maintenance to land stewardship and everything in between.



TAMARA PLANT WILSON

Then there are the tireless labourers: Tom Hall, Laura Browne, Owen Glendon, Tim Wilson, Lloyd Hayward, and others, who dedicate countless hours annually to trail maintenance and coordinating maintenance volunteers. John Grandy and John Whitworth, our strategists, facilitate new land acquisitions in the Peninsula and communicate with key stakeholders.




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SAABIR, PRAVEEN. CALEY, JULIE AND NATHAN

Among our most recognizable volunteers, Saabir Sohrab and Randy Vanderlaan, have intrepidly led countless people through thousands of kilometers of hikes, recruiting a team of hike leaders and revitalizing the hike program post-pandemic. Laura Pisko, our Director of Conservation and Land Stewardship, relentlessly mitigates invasive species and reforests large areas across the Peninsula, engaging an entire community of conservationists and an incredible team of volunteer Land Stewards. Julie Bennett and Marie-Jose Van Der Zande inspire us to hike farther, learn more, and appreciate the beauty around us.

Longtime volunteers, Darci Lombard, Caley Patrick Nadjiwon Doran, and Janna Chegahno, forge strong relationships with stakeholders and community partners. Mark Thompson (treasurer), Ron MacDonald (past treasurer), and Jeannine Guindon Kralt (secretary), ensure our organization runs smoothly (Jeannine also organized a new youth hiking program this year in the Sydenham section). Finally, let's not forget Brenda Stewart (archivist), whose passion for bringing history to life honors those who came before us in this work.

And that's just the board of directors!!



BRENDA STEWART

I jokingly say that my job as Communications Director is to keep up with these leaders' innovative ideas for engaging the community with the Bruce Trail. So, while it is a distinct honour to have received the Ross McLean Volunteer of the Year award recently, the entire PBTC board deserves this recognition!

And while I started volunteering because a neighbour didn't see the magic in his own backyard, I kept volunteering because of the people I've met and the impact that I've seen those people create.

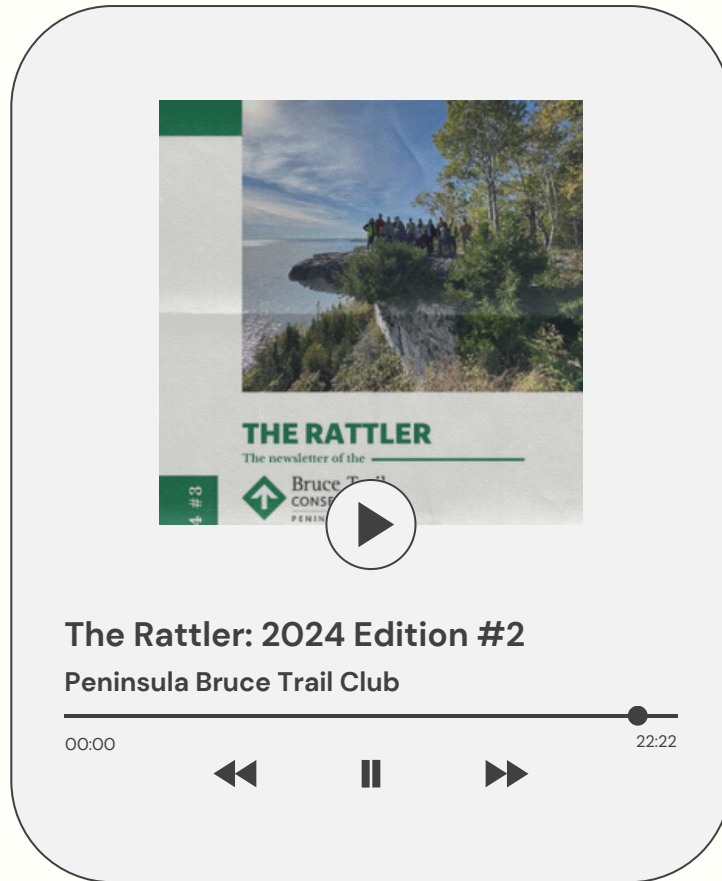
With so many challenges in the world today, from climate change, to increasing divisions between people, to decreasing mental physical health in the general public, the Bruce Trail offers an antidote. Here, I found a diverse community of people coming together for the common good, taking action to protect our precious nature, provide opportunities for people to be active, and to meaningfully connect with others and the environment around them.

If you're looking for a sign to volunteer, this is it. We welcome volunteers of all ages, abilities and interests for a multitude of roles and activities. Reach out to pbtccgeneralinfo@gmail.com today.

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*note that the podcast is AI generated