



Geohike Group, Louth Conservation Area. See story Page 5

Photo credit: Julie Hannah

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Save These Dates!

NBTC LANDOWNER APPRECIATION CELEBRATION September 20, 2026

Location & Time: Ball's Falls Centre for Conservation, September 20, 2:00-5:00p.m.

We will host a drop-in social event between 2:00pm and 5:00pm, with catered appetizers, a cash bar, plus short nature hikes at 3:00pm (weather permitting). This event will feature informative displays highlighting our work on biodiversity, the land stewardship programs available to all our landowners, and, of course, the prize draw. See [The Grapevine](#), Summer issue, Page 7 for full write-up. Registration to attend the event is via the hike schedule. Please sign up at <https://hikes.bruceclub.org/event/200-pm-nbtc-landowner-appreciation-celebration-2026/2026-09-20/>

BRUCE TRAIL DAY, October 4, 2026

Bruce Trail Day is an annual celebration of the incredible Bruce Trail and the wonders of the Niagara Escarpment, hosted by each of the nine clubs of the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Here in Niagara, we will be celebrating at Brock University on Sunday, October 4th. This is a wonderful opportunity for members to introduce friends, family, and neighbors to all that we love about the Bruce Trail.

Join us for free guided hikes and family activities to help you explore the Bruce Trail and discover the amazing variety of life along the Niagara Escarpment. Come and learn about our year-round hiking programs, volunteer opportunities, and what we are doing to preserve a ribbon of wilderness in southern Ontario from Niagara to Tobermory.

Everyone is welcome! We invite nature lovers, hikers of all levels, and anyone wanting to venture onto the Bruce Trail for the first time, or the hundredth time, to join us. On Bruce Trail Day we celebrate belonging and highlight that everyone of us belongs in this space, no matter our age, race or ethnicity, gender identity or sexual orientation, or economic or social circumstances.

Watch for hikes to be added on social media and please register for them using our hike calendar: hikes.bruceclub.org/niagara ◀

NBTC VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION EVENT October 17, 2026

The Niagara Bruce Trail Club will be hosting a Volunteer Appreciation Event again this year to recognize and appreciate active club volunteers. Invitations will be emailed in September – keep an eye on your inbox! **Please save the date! Saturday, October 17. 6:30pm.** Location: Bella Terra Vineyards in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Bella Terra will host a wine tasting. Guest author Jill Troyer will be on hand to discuss her latest book, [The Winemaker's Gamble](#), an exciting account of one of Niagara's wine pioneers, Paul Bosc. ◀

President's Message

Ellen Savoia

Happy Summer Everyone!

We have had some unusual weather patterns this year with significant rainfall recently. Many of our members and volunteers have experienced flooded basements. Our thoughts go out to everyone dealing with flooding.

Short Hills Park and a portion of the Twenty Valley Side Trail are closed indefinitely due to storm damage. Trail Updates are posted on NBTC's website at <https://niagara.brucetrail.org/>.

Our volunteers have been working hard to clear downed trees. See Page 4 for timely photos on Trail Maintenance.

We have two vacant board positions. The Director of Trail Development and Maintenance and Director at Large positions need to be filled. Please reach out if you are interested in either of those positions.

- Trail Development and Maintenance Director: Responsible for the planning, maintenance, and overall quality of the Bruce Trail in the Niagara section, and for the overall organization and operation of the Club's trail work.
- Director-at Large: participates in the Board's deliberations and decisions in matters of policy, finance, programs, and advocacy.
- Role descriptions are posted at <https://niagara.brucetrail.org/volunteer/>

Hope to see you out on the trail!

Merritthon (45km)

November 7, 2026

A hike to honour William Hamilton Merritt, the creator of the Welland Canal.

The Merritthon is 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. You can expect to keep pace with giant laker ships, see industrial remnants, murals and enjoy woods and streets along the way.

Registration Fee: NBTC members, \$50 for members. Non-members, \$60. The fee covers bus transfers, water and snacks at checkpoints, and a badge. For more info and to register, see:

<https://hikes.brucetrail.org/event/merritthon/2026-11-07/> ◀

Hiking 101

Hiking 101 is an introductory course for novice hikers, members, and non-members alike.

If you want some guidance on where to begin, what to wear and what to take along, this is the course for you.

The course consists of three afternoon sessions with a combination of workshop/Q & A, followed by short hikes along the trail. Dress in weather appropriate clothing and wear good walking shoes.

Hiking 101 Fall 2026 Dates:

- Sunday, October 18
- Sunday October 25
- Sunday November 1

Time:

- 11:00am-2:00pm.

Contact:

Margaret Northfield
margaret.northfield@gmail.com

See:

<https://niagara.brucetrail.org/hiking-101/>

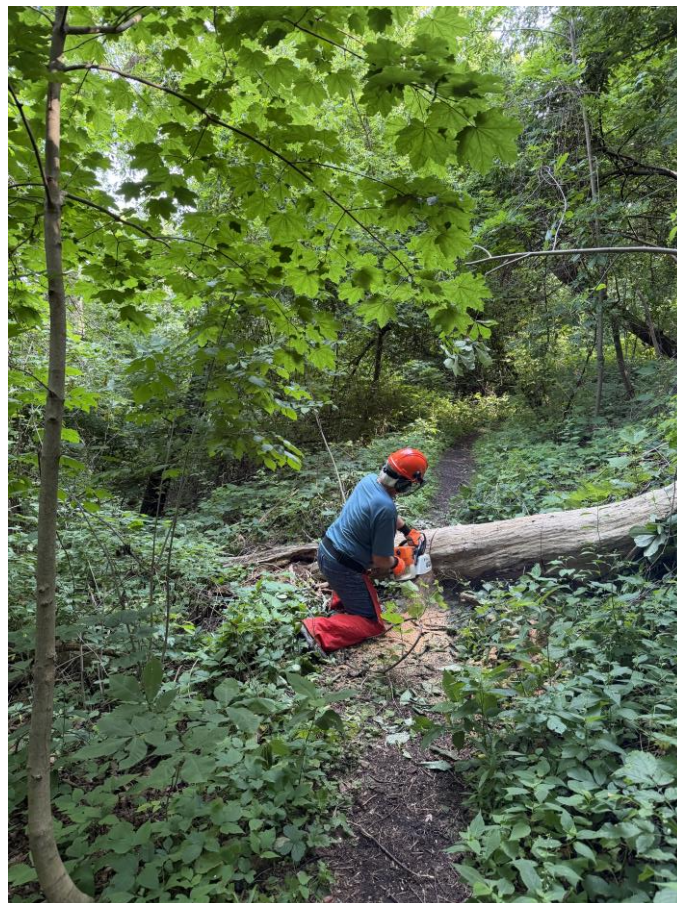
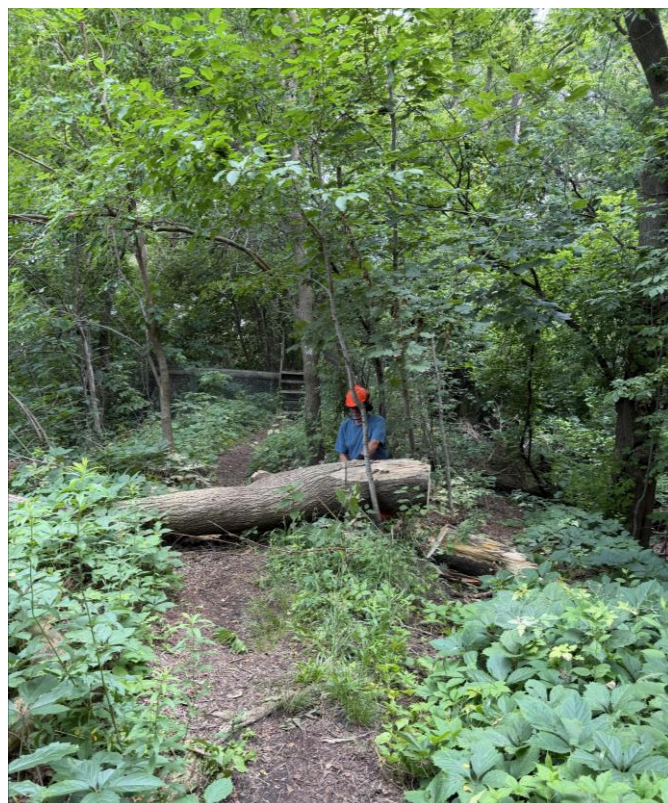
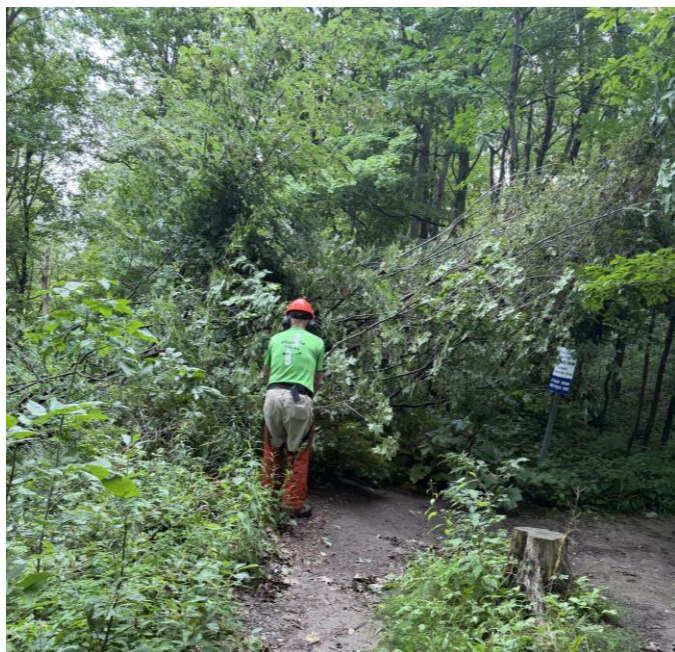


Trail Maintenance

Rick Waters

TRAIL MAINTENANCE DIRECTOR

Ed Froese (blue shirt) and Vince Zvonar (green shirt) clearing trees on the Main Bruce Trail at St David's. Photos: Rick Waters.



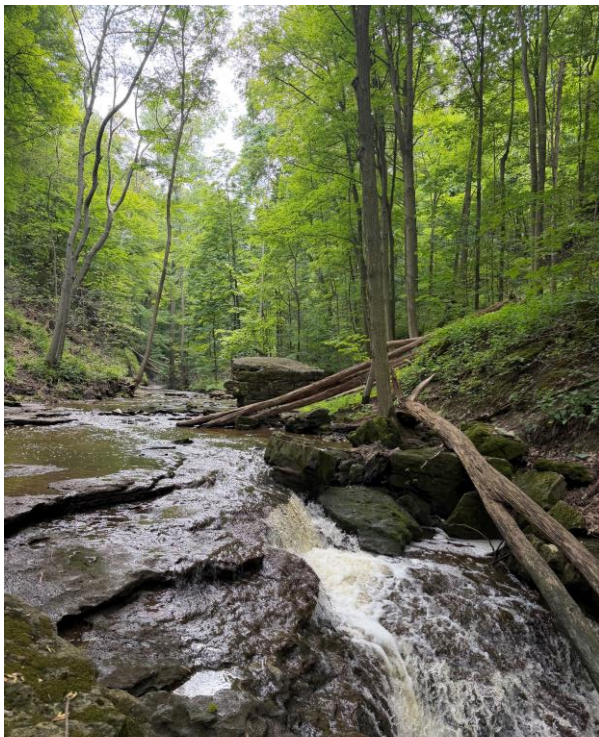
BTC's Passport to Nature Kicks off in Niagara with a Louth GeoHike

Submitted by Kristin Hanson

Niagara kicked off the Bruce Trail Conservancy's Passport to Nature Program in July with a GeoHike at Louth Conservation Area. The GeoHike was fun and educational, and introduced six new hikers to our club.

Kristin Hanson, retired geoscientist, led a hike exploring the geology of the Louth Conservation Area. She talked about how that contributes to the terroir of the Vinemount Ridge wine region, pointed out some interesting erosional and glacial features, and, of course, the spectacular upper and lower falls.

The Louth GeoHike is based on a published hike that anyone can access and explore independently. Details on GeoHikes can be found at [GeoscienceINFO.com](https://www.geoscienceinfo.com) under the Niagara GEOPARK Hub. If you'd like to join a guided GeoHike, watch the hike schedule for more hikes to be posted soon.



Upper Falls area

Photo credit: Julie Hannah

Passport to Nature is a new program of free or low-cost events open year-round to the public to help folks connect with nature, learn about our conservation efforts, and explore the beauty and diversity of the Niagara Escarpment.

Hikers can pick up a passport and collect stickers when they participate in qualifying events from now until Spring 2027. The program was developed by the BTC, and all nine Bruce Trail clubs are participating. Details on the Passport to Nature program can be found at <https://brucetrail.org/passport-to-nature/>.

The next Passport to Nature event in Niagara is a Welland Canal History hike in the fall.

Watch the NBTC hike schedule to register if you'd like to participate (https://hikes.brucetrail.org/ecwd_calendar/niagara/). ◀



Kristin with a big rock.

Photo credit: Julie Hannah



Laura Secord Hike, June 13, 2026

Submitted by Lynskie Mitchell

On June 13th, 49 incredible hikers took on the sometimes muddy, often uneven trail conditions, for our 33rd Annual Laura Secord Hike.

Yes, we have been welcoming and cheering on hikers to this event for 33 years! Many of our hikers have completed this hike multiple times!

Early birds caught the bus at 5:45 a.m. from St Catharines to the Laura Secord Homestead where they began a challenging 32-kilometre trek along the Bruce Trail all the way to Decew House.



Our hikers' spirits—and the incredible dedication of our volunteers—never wavered!

A massive THANK YOU to the wonderful volunteers who made this day possible.

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Laura Secord Hike

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The Trail Maintenance Crew: For trimming paths and ensuring the blazes were perfectly clear.



Checkpoint Champions & Supporters: Jas Dano, Janet Knoop, Diane Marlatt, Lynn Menger, Charo Cuervo, Fran Mortiboys, and Sharon Summerhayes.



This year we added two water stations, and we can thank Joan Worthington and Jacques Boilard for staffing them.



Shuttle Drivers: Peter Maciag, Jennifer Dinning, Karen Couch and Janet Davey made sure the hikers were delivered back to their vehicles after this long hike.



Photographer: Lynskie, for capturing all the memories.



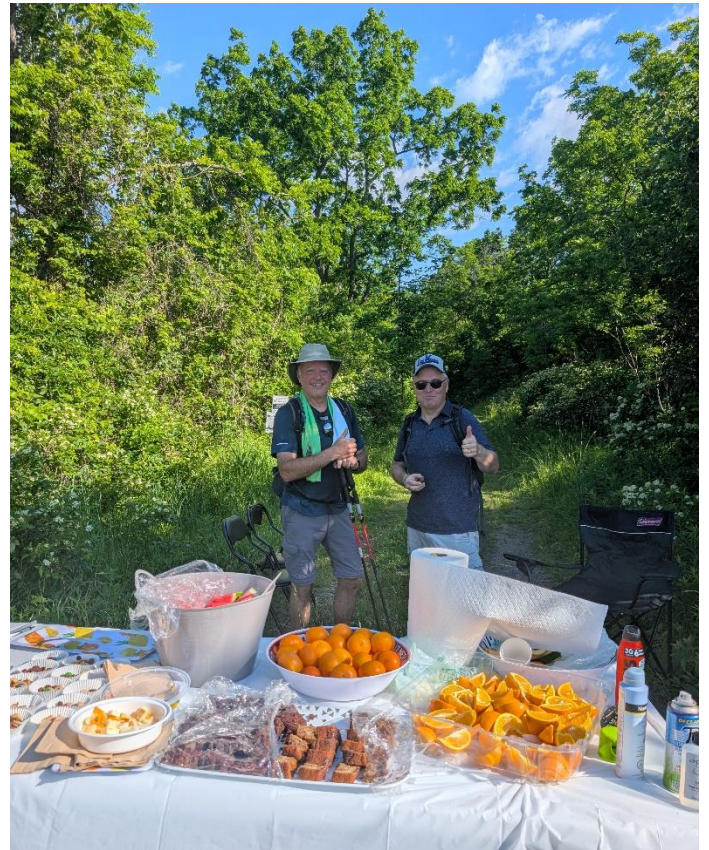
Logistics Lifesaver: Jacques Boilard for setting up the tent (and then rushing to his water station).



History Brought to Life: Our amazing Laura Secord herself, Sharon Summerhayes!

We couldn't do this without our community.

See you all on the trails next year! ♡





May 2026 End to End Final Checkpoint

More Than a Hike: Niagara's May End-to-End Continues a Proud Tradition

Submitted by Vince P. Mayne & Mary Ann Enns

When the final hikers reached the Queenston Heights Cairn, weary legs gave way to smiles, high-fives, and well-earned refreshments. For every participant, completing the Niagara Bruce Trail Club's annual May End-to-End represented a personal achievement. For one veteran Claude, however, it marked another chapter in a remarkable hiking journey that has now spanned more than half a century.

The Iroquoia Bruce Trail Club member touched the cairn to complete the End-to-End, adding to a lifetime of hiking that began in the mid-1970s. As a young Montreal resident, he regularly boarded buses bound for the northeastern United States to explore the trails of New England. More than 50 years later, his passion for hiking remains undiminished and focused on trails local to his Burlington base.

That cross-border connection was reflected once again this year. Gill, a hiker from the Finger Lakes region of New York, completed the entire 85-kilometre Niagara section in an impressive combined time of just under 21 hours. She was among a large contingent of participants who travelled to Niagara for the event, with hikers from outside the region accounting for an impressive 68 percent of registrations. Event organizer Mary Ann Enns attributes the boost in out-of-region trekkers to a more robust social media campaign that

advertised the event throughout the Bruce Trail Conservancy in the preceding months.

Almost 110 hikers signed up for the first day, and over the three days, an average of 70 hikers completed the distance. Heavy rains on the first day sidelined approximately a quarter of the hikers.

The feedback we received from the hikers about the checkpoints was excellent. They appreciated the nourishment and encouragement at the checkpoints, a hallmark of the Niagara Bruce Trail hospitality.

The team at the Queenston Heights Cairn did an outstanding job welcoming the weary hikers to the finish line with an excellent range of food choices, refreshing drinks, and a cheering squad.

The annual May End-to-End hike commenced over 40 years ago with a modest 25 hikers, according to Margaret Northfield's research of the Bruce Trail Archives. She reports that by 2008, organizer Fred Azzopardi foresaw the day when there would be nearly 100 hikers participating. That milestone was achieved more than two years ago.

Margaret also notes that the End-to-End hikes in the early days were not as disciplined, and hikers could complete the Niagara section in multiple days and still earn a badge for successful completion. ◀

See photo next page >>>



*Our thanks to **de la terre Bakery + Café** for their generous support for the Niagara End-to-End, May 16 to 18, 2026. The delicious bread and buns for the celebratory lunch at Queenston on May 18th were much appreciated by all the hikers!*



May 2026 End-to-End. Photos courtesy of Karen Couch

Poison Ivy – It’s “for the Birds”

Submitted by Helen Hermansen

The phrase “for the birds” is an idiom that means something is worthless, trivial, or pointless ... something that has no real value to humans. A discussion about Poison Ivy brings an entirely different meaning to the phrase “for the birds.”

Identifying Poison Ivy

If you can’t identify poison ivy even after several people have pointed it out to you, well, you’re not alone...this lovely native plant is quite variable. Poison ivy leaves have three leaflets that can have smooth, or notched or lobed edges. Furthermore, the leaves may be at first reddish in the spring, and dark shiny green in the summer; and finally, beautiful autumn colours appear in hues of yellow to bright red to deep burgundy. Look at the centre leaflet to notice that it has a longer petiole - the little stem on the leaflet - than the two side leaflets. That’s the best ID feature for this leaf. The plants can grow in several forms ranging from a low plant or woody shrub to a large climbing vine that reaches the treetops. *It’s like a box of chocolates...you never know what you’re going to get.*

In Niagara, vigorously growing vines often cling to dead ash trees, their side shoots easily mistaken for small branches. I once grabbed one of these “branches” and pulled it close to my face as I wondered

what this mystery tree could be. What could it be? My curiosity was replaced with a slow realization of what I was holding.

Urushiol (YOO-roo-shee-ol)

Now, it is the chemical, urushiol, that is our problem. This oily substance is in every part of the plant, and can trigger an irritating, itchy, and sometimes blistering rash. In medical talk, this is contact dermatitis: basically, a rash caused by touching something irritating or to which you are allergic. So, a poison ivy rash is an allergic reaction to urushiol. The good news is that about 10-15% of people are not allergic to it - or perhaps they just think that they are not allergic to it! The bad news is that this allergy can change over time - with people often becoming more sensitive to it.

So, we have a variable-looking plant that grows every which way all over the place and may or may not cause a rash.

No, you can’t eat it – It really is “for the birds.”

If only there was some redeeming quality to this plant, like yummy edible berries. There are no yummy edible berries. *Unless you are a bird.* The waxy, whitish berries of poison ivy are a vital food source for birds, especially during the challenging months of fall and winter.

Continued Page 10



Poison Ivy showing (unripe) berries, leaves of various shapes and colours, and even pretending to be a tree!

HIKING 101 CHECKLIST SHORT DAY HIKE

- Footwear
[Boots/icers/dry or waterproof]
- Water [1-2 litres]
- Snacks [1/hour]
- Map(s)/Route information
- Hat/Sunscreen
- Bug repellent
[Icaridin/DEET]
- ID/Money/Emergency contact
- Watch
- Cellphone [100% charged]
- Warm/dry layer
- Raingear
[jacket/pants/pocket poncho]
- Handkerchief
- First Aid [EpiPen, meds, tick tool]
- Poles

<https://niagara.bruce-trail.org/hiking-101/>

Poison Ivy – It's “for the birds”

From Page 9

These high-fat berries provide essential energy for woodpeckers, vireos, warblers, robins, crows, bluebirds, cedar waxwings, cardinals, and wild turkeys as they embark on their migratory journeys or endure the cold months.

So, while poison ivy lacks the allure of sweet, edible berries for humans, it proves its worth by nourishing the wonderful birds around us.

For further reading, I recommended the follow sources:

- From NPR: Don't Touch! A Scientist's Advice For Spotting Poison Ivy Before It Ruins Your Summer
<https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2018/06/08/616595496/dont-touch-a-scientist-s-advice-for-spotting-poison-ivy-before-it-ruins-your-sum>
- From Our Fine Feathered Friends: Yellow-rumped warblers are wild about poison ivy berries
<https://ourfinefeatheredfriends.com/2018/12/24/yellow-rumped-warblers-are-wild-about-poison-ivy-berries/>
- From Ontario Nature: Demystifying Poison Ivy
<https://ontarionature.org/demystifying-poison-ivy-blog/> ◀

BTC Introduces two new ways to become a member

Young adults and long-time supporters now have new options for membership!

Both offerings support the Trail and conservation work of the Bruce Trail

Conservancy and our nine Clubs. We look forward to growing our membership community with these two new options below:

1-Year Youth (18-29) Membership - \$30

- For young adults 18-29 years old
- A great choice for a young person wanting to get involved with the BTC.

10-Year Membership - \$650

- You'll save \$100, avoiding any future increases in membership fees.
- Convenience of a membership that doesn't need renewing for ten years.

Note:

If BTC has your birth date on file and you are not 18-29 years old, you will not see this membership option online.

See:

<https://brucetrail.org/become-a-member/#membership-options> ◀

Use code **NIAGARABTC** and for each tour booked by your club for 2026, we will donate \$25 to the Bruce Trail Conservancy.



Explore more. Experience more.

NEW: Hiking in Gatineau	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
4 Days: October 18*, 2026 – <i>Limited Space</i>	\$2,095	\$2,595
Portugal Hiking	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
9 Days: April 2, 2027	\$6,795 [†]	\$8,195 [†]
NEW: Sacred Trails of Haida Gwaii	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
7 Days: May 1, 2027 – <i>Waitlist</i>	\$8,695 [†]	\$9,795 [†]
NEW: Japan's Golden Route	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
16 Days: May 12, 2027	\$13,995 [†]	\$17,795 [†]
Saskatchewan Hiking	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
10 Days: June 6, 2027	\$5,695 [†]	\$6,795 [†]
Yukon Hiking	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
12 Days: June 18, 2027	\$9,995 [†]	\$11,695 [†]
Newfoundland Coast-to-Coast	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
12 Days: July 24, 2027	\$8,995 [†]	\$10,595 [†]
P.E.I. Hiking	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
8 Days: July 11, August 29, 2027	\$5,895 [†]	\$7,095 [†]
NEW: Camino Francés Walk	<u>DOUBLE</u>	<u>SINGLE</u>
14 Days: September 30, 2027	\$8,895 [†]	\$9,695 [†]

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To order, see <https://brucetrail.org/product-category/gift-items/> ◀

The 2027 Bruce Trail Conservancy Calendar features original artwork inspired by the Bruce Trail and the magnificent Niagara Escarpment. The artwork was selected from over 100 submissions to reflect the variety and beauty of our growing conservation corridor. All proceeds go towards preserving a ribbon of wilderness for everyone, forever.



Enjoy Nature

NBTC Volunteers work to preserve & maintain the trail for everyone, forever. You can support the TRAIL by donating at <http://niagarabruceclub.club/wp/donate/>

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THE Grapevine

Newsletter of the Bruce Trail Conservancy Niagara Club

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 submit stories and photos.

Copy due date for the 2026 issue is October 31st.

For editorial guides and for rates to advertise, contact btcgrapevine@gmail.com

BRUCE TRAIL CONSERVANCY MISSION

Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever.