



In every walk with nature one  
receives far more than he seeks.

- John Muir

# Annual Report



2011 - 2012

**Get Outside. Get Healthy. Hike.**

Hike Ontario

**Annual Report 2011-2012**

[www.hikeontario.com](http://www.hikeontario.com)

Trails provide meaningful and satisfying outdoor experiences for many users. These experiences reaffirm a sense of connection with the natural environment and provide opportunities for an appreciation of Ontario's natural heritage. With a trails system that traverses many of Ontario's natural regions, trails play an important role in supporting environmental education and building a public commitment to environmental conservation.

*Active2010: Ontario Trails Strategy, 2005*

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## HIKE ONTARIO GOVERNANCE

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Throughout the years Hike Ontario has had one goal – to encourage walking, hiking and trail development in Ontario.

Established in 1974, Hike Ontario is a non-profit, charitable organization governed and operated by volunteers. We are the sole provider of province-wide hiking information and services. Hike Ontario is also unique amongst Canada's provinces and territories in many of the services it provides to this province's hiking associations and citizens. Eighty-five percent of Canadians walk for leisure and recreation. Thus, Hike Ontario acts as the voice for over 10 million hikers and walkers in Ontario.

Hike Ontario recognizes and supports trails throughout Ontario and appreciates that every trail is unique. Every trail can't be all things to all people but all trails can play beneficial roles. Trails play roles in the economy, play roles in the environment and perhaps most importantly, play roles in our health.

While Hike Ontario recognizes the diversity of trails and trail uses, our focus is on the representation and promotion of pedestrian based trails and their benefits, focusing specifically on connectivity, economics, education, environmental, health, heritage, recreation and transportation.

Hike Ontario does not make or maintain trails, nor does it offer organized hiking/walking events, except through its member associations. Hike Ontario is the umbrella organization that provides these province-wide associations with resources and services to build on these long-established local and regional initiatives in a way in which complements and enhances them.

### **Our Core Objectives:**

- To encourage walking for recreation, transportation and health
- To encourage and facilitate trail development for walking and hiking throughout Ontario
- To encourage good trail maintenance and hiking practices and the enhancement and quality of the walking experience
- To encourage and facilitate the development of trail building hiking clubs in Ontario
- To act as an advocate for a club or clubs when requested or when an initiative is deemed necessary
- To encourage education and research into the health benefits and other aspects of recreational walking
- To encourage conservation and appreciation of the natural environment
- To maintain and disseminate information on hiking and hiking trails

## **Our Core Programs:**

- Advocacy and Government Relations
- Ambassador Program
- Best Practices for Increasing Trail Usage by Hikers and Walkers
- Hike Leader Certification Program
- Insurance Provision and Risk Management
- Young Hikers Program
- Safe Hikers Program
- Long Distance Awards Program
- Annual Hike Ontario Summit
- Sponsor of Ontario Hiking Week
- Partnerships and Linkages

## ***Program Descriptions***

**Advocacy and Government Relations:** Hike Ontario is an active voice and resource to our government partners in the Ontario trails community. We play a lead role in promoting, educating about and advocating pedestrian trail experiences through an active presence at local, regional, provincial and national trail events. We do this through strategic planning processes, active communications, conference and workshop participation, information distribution, special events and educational campaigns.

**Ambassador Program:** Hike Ontario Ambassadors provide information on hiking and hiking trails across Ontario by promoting Hike Ontario and our member clubs to new and novice hikers across the province. As the number one source of province-wide information and resources about hiking, walking and pedestrian based trail development and management in Ontario, our Ambassadors provide this resource by doing presentations to clubs and community groups, training individuals and providing materials.

**Best Practices for Increasing Trail Usage by Hikers and Walkers:** Hike Ontario engaged in researching and collecting data on the strategies, methods and opportunities for increasing use of trails by walkers and hikers and was able to then publish a comprehensive manual of Best Practices. This manual is most useful for Hiking and Walking organizations, Parks and Recreation staff, Conservation Area & Parks staff, Municipalities and a broad range of Special Interest groups (Health Units, Resorts, private landowners, trail builders etc.)

**Hike Leader Certification Program:** Hike Ontario has developed standards and training programs for Hike Leaders that are used by our member clubs, community colleges, universities, activity clubs and outdoor training organizations for course delivery. Currently, Hike Ontario offers Standard Hike Leader, Youth Hike Leader and Wilderness Day Hike Leader certification courses.

**Insurance Provision and Risk Management:** Hike Ontario works diligently with its trail partners and insurance providers to provide the best possible policy conditions to suit the needs of its trail clubs. This in turn is working towards managing for safe and sustainable trails systems throughout Ontario for the pleasure of walkers and hikers. Hike Ontario plays a key role in risk management through our dedication to pursuing best practices, sound advice and proactively engaging in and encouraging safe practices and education.

**Young Hikers Program:** The Young Hikers Program aspires to introduce youth to the joys and benefits of hiking, through a variety of mediums such as Activity Resource Kit, Provincial Youth Advisory Committee, Youth Hike Leader Certification, Youth Risk Management Training and youth volunteer opportunities.

**Safe Hikers Program:** This one day course introduces the new or novice hiker to the joys and benefits of hiking, walking and the trails of Ontario. Special focus is placed on safety, sustainability and enjoyment. Upon completion, participants are armed with the knowledge necessary to keep themselves safe while hiking; how to ensure their hikes are environmentally and socially sustainable and will help them develop the confidence necessary to join hiking groups and/or go on their own hikes.

**Long Distance Awards Program:** Hike Ontario has a mandate to encourage hiking for all ages and all athletic levels throughout Ontario. The Long Distance Hiker Awards celebrate dedicated hikers who have logged long distances on multiple Ontario trails. Hike Ontario offers three long distance hiking awards; the Red Pine Award for 550 kms, the Trillium Award for 900 kms and the Tamarack Award for 1500 kms.

**Annual Hike Ontario Summit:** Held annually in October, our Summit is a weekend long event that features timely workshops, presentations, award presentations, guest speakers, and a full schedule of invigorating hikes.

**Sponsor of Ontario Hiking Week:** Every year from October 1-7, Hike Ontario sponsors Ontario Hiking Week, encouraging people of all ages to get out and hike the many trails of this beautiful province. Ontario Hiking Week demonstrates the many faces of hiking and walking - as a recreational activity that's low impact, affordable to all, and promotes environmental sustainability and ecological awareness.

**Partnerships and Linkages:** Hike Ontario has formed and sustains strong ties with both government and nongovernmental partners related to pedestrian trails. We strive to represent the interests of all hikers and walkers, trail clubs and all pedestrian based trail interests throughout Ontario. Hike Ontario represents the interests of hikers and walkers on the Ontario Trails Council (OTC) Board of Directors and the through a nominated representative to the Hike Canada En Marche Board of Directors.

## **Mission**

To encourage walking, hiking and trail development in Ontario.

## **Vision**

Hike Ontario seeks to maintain and develop its unique position as the number one source of province-wide information and resources about hiking, walking and pedestrian based trail development and management in Ontario.

## **Governance Structure**

Hike Ontario is governed by a board of directors that meets four times per year at various locations across Ontario. Our board consists of approx. 35 people.

80% of the board members are appointed to represent their member club (i.e. the Bruce Trail) with the remaining members being elected at our Annual General Meetings.

The executive committee of the board additionally meets once a month. The executive consists of President, Vice President, Past President, Treasurer and Secretary. Additionally, the Chairs of each standing committee hold a position on the executive committee.

## ***Executive Committee 2011 –2012***

Bill Wilson	President
Ron Scanlan	Vice President (effective until Oct. 31, 2012)
Asvin Parsad	Treasurer
Fran Rawlings	Secretary
Frieda Balwin	Ontario Trails Council Representative
Brendan Zamojc	Hike Canada Representative

## ***Standing Committees 2011-2012***

Lesley Blackmore	Certification Committee (May 2012-Sept 2012)
Daniela Godoy Jameson	Public Education Committee
Ron Scanlan	Issues, Policy & Advocacy Committee
Vacant	Fund Raising Committee
Brendan Zamojc	Planning and Development Committee



## ***Board Members – as appointed by our Member Clubs***

Fred Witwoet	4 Day Evening Walk Committee
Lisa Venier	Algoma Highlands Conservancy
Karen Hill	Avon Trail
Ken Magee	Bayfield River Valley Trail
Ron Knight	Bighead River Heritage Association (Trout Hollow Trail)
Ron Scanlan	Bruce Trail Association
Murray Skan	Durham Outdoors Club
Bill Clifford	Elgin Hiking Trail Club
Raymond Soucy	Elora Cataract Trailway Association
Bill Gray	Friends of the Trail Inc (Quinte)
Jeremy Bonnar	Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association
Nick Dinka	Grand Valley Trails Association
Mike Curtis	Guelph Hiking Trail Club
Jerry Gorman	Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association (Bolton)
Roland Gatti	Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association (Kleinburg)
Leanne Dunne	Huron Trails & Greenways & North Simcoe Rail Trail
Shachindra Tripathi	Lost River Walks, North Toronto Green Community
Bruce Lamb	Lucan Area Trails Association
Mava Holland	Maitland Trail Association
Jim Hasler	Nastawgan Trails
Frieda Baldwin	North Simcoe Rail Trail
Peter Schaefer	Oak Ridges Trail Association
Barbara Burrows	Palmerston Trail Association Inc
David Armitage	Rideau Trail Association
Diana Smyth	Rouge Park Trail Club
Mike Erison	South Common B T Hikers Club
Paul Mackle	Street To Trail Association
Ruth Hoch	Thames Valley Trail Association
Cathy Matthews	Thunder Bay Hiking Association
Carole Blaquiére	Voyageur Trail Association
Raymond Ramshaw	Waterloo 55+ Seniors' Hiking Club

## COMPASS 2015

Hike Ontario is the province's most valuable support resource for hiking and walking groups and users.

### **Strategic Themes**

The strategic plan outlines the strategic goals and objectives that will guide Hike Ontario from 2010 to 2015 and prioritizes them as follows:

1. Build a sustainable organization
2. Promote hiking and walking, and pedestrian trails
3. a. Create value for members and non-members alike  
b. Develop and deliver programs for all stakeholders
4. Develop an effective organization and systems.

### **Products and Services**

Hike Ontario offers the following products and services:

Hike leader certification\* Advocacy

Insurance program\* Annual summit

Risk management program\* Best practices report

Safe hiking program\* Long distance awards

Website\* Young hikers program

*\*Services identified as most important to member associations and clubs*

### **Goals and Objectives**

Compass 2015 goals and objectives are two-tiered:

- i) Achieve short to medium-term goals related to strategic theme No. 1 between 2010 and 2012 (prepares for issues 2, 3a, 3b and 4.
- ii) Develop a road map that addresses all of the strategic themes and provides guidance on where Hike Ontario will be in 2015 and how it will get there.

### **Strategy and Action Plan**

Short-term strategy and goals:

#### **1. BUILD A SUSTAINABLE ORGANIZATION**

Short-term goals:

- Get paid staff
  - Define a job description for the paid staff person
  - Estimate hours and funding requirements

- Focus on improving the delivery of priority services
  - Concerted and planned rollout of services
- Improve volunteer development and recognition activities
  - Develop a volunteer manual
  - Develop volunteer-recognition policies
  - Enhance recognition activities.

Long-term strategies and goals:

**2. PROMOTE HIKING AND WALKING AND PEDESTRIAN TRAILS**

**3A. CREATE VALUE FOR MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS ALIKE**

**B. DEVELOP AND DELIVER PROGRAMS FOR ALL STAKEHOLDERS**

**4. DEVELOP EFFECTIVE ORGANIZATION AND SYSTEMS.  
EXPERIENCE IT...ONE STEP AT A TIME...**

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Submitted by Bill Wilson

Hike Ontario has had several challenges during 2011. Our multi-talented all-volunteer Executive nevertheless succeeded in rising to these challenges very well.

I am pleased to offer congratulations to the Grand Valley Trails Association on their 40 years of serving the hiking public in Kitchener- Waterloo and Region. GVTA's long standing commitment to safe and enjoyable trails epitomizes a unique and valuable brand of trails stewardship. Moreover, the GVTA is an enduring example of how well volunteers can take on a significant public commitment over the years free of tax payer cost.

This last year of 2012 for Hike Ontario has seen involvement of several new talented volunteer members of our executive team.

Daniela Jamieson as Public Education Chair has, with our webmaster Artur Shamsi, updated our website face to the world very well.

Zoriana Priadka has ably assumed responsibilities for the Issues, Policy and Advocacy Committee from Ron Scanlan.

Ron Scanlan has stepped up to the Vice President position with great efficiency and infinite discretion.

Mita Mahendren has recently taken the role of Volunteer Coordinator.

Godwin Abaahom today takes on the role of Hike Ontario Treasurer from Asvin Parsad.

Asvin, who is stepping down today from Hike Ontario, has capably tracked our financial affairs. He has noted a promising increase in training revenues and has encouraged us to hire a part-time paid Office Administrator. Please welcome David Rosenblun-Bourdieu.

Brendan Zamojc has continued in the Planning, Development and Insurance role and has succeeded in extending our insurance program to our clubs at the same low cost as in 2011.

Tom Friesen, with his broad understanding of all aspects of Hike Ontario, has continued to be a strong unifying force for all of us during this last year. Tom has carried the Certification program for a good part of this year and offered excellent advice for our recent volunteer interviews.

## VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

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Submitted by Ron Scanlan

Last fall, just weeks after the annual summit in Elliot Lake, the new executive came together for a half-day retreat at Mountain Equipment Co-op in Burlington, Ontario. Twelve new and returning members of the executive, including two guests, were in attendance. This was an opportunity to orient the new executive to their respective roles, to sensitize participants to the issues currently facing Hike Ontario and to become familiar with the tools available to help them better achieve their tasks.

During 2011–2012, Hike Ontario took steps to ensure its website responded to the needs of its members. The website was updated to accurately reflect the new membership of the board and executive. This fall, the organization's new employee began to provide website update support for the work of the volunteer webmaster. This was particularly helpful as it ensured that certification course information was being kept up to date. This has given the website a much needed sense of immediacy.

The summer edition of the Hike Ontario Resource List was updated and sent out to the board and the executive. This task has now been transferred to the office administrator.

Over the course of the past year, I coordinated incoming emails to the Hike Ontario webmail inbox. This task has now been transferred to the office administrator.

Late this summer, during the competition process for the position of office administrator, I participated (by Skype), along with two members of the recruiting committee, in an interview with one of the candidates.

This fall, I attended the Bruce Trail Conservancy Annual General Meeting hosted this year by the Blue Mountains club. This year's gathering, held in Collingwood, Ontario, was notable because, beginning in 2012, the Bruce Trail Conservancy is celebrating, over the next five years, several milestones marking its fiftieth anniversary. Also, the BTC's land acquisition program has succeeded, for the first time, in protecting more than 50 percent of the Bruce Trail's optimum route from development.

This summer, the Survey Monkey application was revived. This was done mainly to respond to volunteer and sponsorship applications that continue to be submitted through the Hike Ontario website. Over the past several months, 12 volunteers have submitted applications to volunteer with Hike Ontario. This fall, the volunteers were contacted when we were looking for a note taker for a monthly meeting of the executive. Two volunteers responded and both of them attended the online meeting through GoTo Meeting in early September. One of the new volunteers subsequently attended the September 29 meeting of the board in Erin, Ontario as a notetaker.

Over the summer, I reviewed several of the executive positions to give incumbents a better idea of what was expected of them in their respective roles.

## STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

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### ***Certification Committee***

Submitted by Tom Friesen

Under the leadership of Lesley Blackmore, the certification committee has met and discussed a number of issues.

Hike Ontario instructors were invited to participate on the committee.

We prioritized steps to take as a Certification committee

We decided to abandon Google docs as a tool for registering and reporting courses.

We decided to remove the requirement that ten participants take the course for the course to go ahead. Instead we discussed a formula for paying an honorarium with less than 10 participants. Basically the \$175 honorarium applies if there are 10 or more participants and this amount is reduced by \$10 for every person below 10. (10 = \$175, 9 = \$165, 8 = \$155, 7 = \$145 ...). We found that we were cancelling courses with less than 10 people frequently and felt this system may offer courses that we feel the clubs and trail associations need.

A Certified Hike Leader Instructor's guide has been created with input from Tom Friesen, Wendy Hoernig and Clint Monaghan. We have created a couple of new activities as part of this training around Risk Management and Leadership.

A list of Instructors, their areas, their qualifications and contact info is being created.

New instructors have been trained in Ottawa and (Sept 30) in a training held in London.

Lesley Blackmore has tendered her resignation as Certification Chair on Thursday, Sept 27th citing work responsibilities. Therefore we are back to looking for a Certification chair for the 2012 – 2013 executive.

Providing certification is one of Hike Ontario's key roles, so this is not only an important position, it is also an interesting and rewarding one. Moreover, now that we have the support of David Rosenblun-Bourdieu at the HO office, this committee should be one of the most dynamic and exciting areas of Hike Ontario endeavour over the next few years.

### ***Issues, Policy and Advocacy Committee***

Submitted by Zoriana Priadka

Since I have started this position in June of 2012, this committee has dealt with four issues – the first of which regarded wheelchair accessibility on Avon trails. Until the Accessibility

Standards for Customer Service (of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) legislation changes in 2025, a hike leader has two options in such a case: (1) refuse to take the wheelchair user on the hike; (2) accommodate for a short length of the trail while they have assistance to help them (no lifting) once the group progresses further.

Secondly, regarding the issue of the individual charging money to take people to the Avon trail for foraging, the landowner of the private property (Avon trail) should be made aware of the foragers. The landowner will handle the situation as they see fit; however, if the forager is an Avon Trail Club member they should be requested to cease and desist if their membership will be rescinded.

Thirdly, when facing a liability issue such as when a landowner's dog or livestock charge injure a hiker, it was determined that Avon trail liability insurance covers only the hiker injuring themselves. The Landowner Occupancy Act provides considerable protection for landowners who allow the use of their property to the public without financial fees being charged. The first course of action would be against the landowner & therefore the landowner's liability policy would respond. If however, the injured party was able to prove that the member club or Hike Ontario were negligent, then Hike Ontario's Liability Policy would step in. The committee will need to clarify this with Hike Ontario's insurer.

The last pertinent issue this committee received was regarding an invitation from the Ministry of Natural Resources to publicly comment on a proposal to issue a licence to stock fish to the Whitestone Fish and Gun Club. A comment was not sent after assessing that no new trail developments would be required (whether the fish stocking was approved or not), because the local snowmobile trail provides access to the lakes during winter.

Also, after receiving a request for event listings in winter issue of "Get Out There Magazine" and 2013 Race & Event Guide, ads for 2012 Hike Leader Courses and the Hike Ontario Annual Summit were submitted.

### ***Public Education Committee***

Submitted by Daniela Godoy Jameson

The Hike Ontario group are committed to keeping the Public Education Committee thriving by collectively working diligently to promote hiking across the province. One way to keep active and spread awareness in the public sphere is through our website. In the past year we have made essential changes and updates to our website to reflect our message in a concise and consistent manner. Although significant progress has been made, it is an undisputable fact that

we still have a long way to go towards working to improve Hike Ontario's public face to the world.

As the Chair of Public Education, my duties revolve around managing the changes that come through various clubs and instructors, ensuring that it is anchored and aligned with the goals of Hike Ontario and reflected on our website. It is imperative to note that these tasks are shared among a group of highly dedicated volunteers who without them Hike Ontario would not be possible.

To efficiently improve our operations, Hike Ontario has hired an office administrator to work on several tasks that would take our operations systems and structure to the next level. I invite you to join me in welcoming David Rosenblun into this new role. Over the past few weeks, David and I have discussed the goal for Hike Ontario's Public education committee in 2013 will be to communicate with the public through "Social Media". Hike Ontario will be undergoing web portal and interface changes as well as actively posting news feeds and courses through social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter.

Our goal through this implementation is to reach out and encourage our youth to join the hike with us. Green theme projects as well as environmental conservation issues are becoming highly popular throughout the country and across the world. This shows that there is no better time than now for Hike Ontario to engage through social media and promote the benefits of hiking.

We see great potential in Social Media for Hike Ontario and we welcome your comments, suggestions and ideas for engaging and raising awareness of Hike Ontario and its vital role in our province and throughout Canada.

Certification  
Hike Ontario 2013  
Green Adventure  
Social Media Outreach Project  
Public Education  
Twitter Facebook  
Hikes Vision



## ***Planning and Development Committee***

Submitted by Brendan Zamojc

### **Go To Meeting**

Go To Meeting continues to be a valuable asset to Hike Ontario and is now in regular use by the executive. We would like to encourage more club use of the software license in order to increase the value this already valuable tool affords Hike Ontario. Recently we have made use of GoToMeeting in one latest board of directors meeting, to bring in one of our directors from the Ottawa area who could not attend the meeting in person. If you have any questions about obtaining access to and creating meetings using this powerful tool, please forward a request for info to [info@hikeontario.ca](mailto:info@hikeontario.ca).

### **Insurance**

Insurance is always a big topic for many of our member clubs. At present, Hike Ontario insures twenty one of our member clubs for either General Liability Insurance or Director & Officer Insurance. This year also marked a change in the billing procedure that Hike Ontario uses to calculate the premiums that each club is required to pay. Now, instead of clubs paying a base rate added to a membership and trail length rates, clubs are billed directly. This means you pay what Hike Ontario is charged for insurance. This move was made to increase the transparency of the billing procedure and assure clubs that Hike Ontario is getting you the best rates for the best insurance service possible.

In conjunction with the insurance initiative and with the President of Hike Ontario, Bill Wilson, a current and updated Risk Management document was created last year. Under the purview of Planning & Development a Risk Management program has also been created in order to help clubs become well informed regarding matters of both insurance as well as understanding clearly the suggestions outlined in the Risk Management Document. This program is in the form of a presentation that can be delivered upon club request. Please email [info@hikeontario.ca](mailto:info@hikeontario.ca) for more info regarding arrangements to have the presentation included in one of your executive meetings.

As part of Hike Ontario's continued succession planning, a document outlining the steps required to renew the insurance policy from start to finish with timelines incorporated to ensure that the entire process is completed on time. As an accompanying document, a living spreadsheet of club contact info as well as all pertinent insurance information has also been created in order to consolidate several insurance collection documents into one.

### **Application Based Trail Guides**

This initiative has been on hold for some time now, due to difficulties in procuring funding. However, some new tactics are making this project viable once again. It should be noted that the Ontario Trails Council has created a mobile application for locating trails and works well, but the Hike Ontario application is designed to offer a much more interactive experience for the hikers and is a distinct product entirely. If you have any questions about this project, please email [bzamojc@gmail.com](mailto:bzamojc@gmail.com) for more information.

## HIKE ONTARIO MEMBER CLUB REPORTS

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Hike Ontario's member clubs and associations fall into three categories:

**Hiking Clubs:** are predominantly urban and offer organized events and excursions to member trails, rail trails, Conservation Authority, Ontario Parks or municipal trails. Membership varies but can be quite large.

**Trail Building Clubs:** are associations who build and maintain recreational hiking trails in various parts of the province. They provide the full range of trail management services, including trail development, maps and guidebooks, maintenance, landowner relations, events, membership and newsletters, as well as promotion and publicity for their particular trails. There are approximately 3500 km of such trails in the province

**Affiliate Members:** are corporations, government agencies and organizations other than non-profit hiking or trail building organizations (commercial or non-profit) that support our mission, vision and values.

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### ***4 Day Walk***

Submitted by Fred Witvoet

We have just completed our 22nd annual 4 day evening walk but of course it is the 1st walk in the new venue, the Dundas Valley Conservation Authority.

We have moved from the RBG to the DVCA. You may wonder why this move was necessary. In a nutshell the new requirements by the RBG made it difficult for us to stay within our budget and we wanted to continue offering the Dutch delicacies to maintain a certain cultural flavor.

Having said that, you have noticed and commented on the absence of the "Fish Wagon". Regrettably circumstances beyond our control caused what we hope is a 1 year hiatus.

Pre-Registrations are at 142 which compares to 186 last year. Walk-ups for the first night bring our total to 220 approx. This brings a net change of 44 walkers fewer for the first night. Unfortunately the trend is heading in the wrong direction. The new location has something to do with this no doubt and perhaps the number should not be surprising and even acceptable given this change.

We had a lot of positive feedback from you folks regarding the beauty of this setting and you probably have forgotten the "little hills" in the valley already. Please let us know how we can improve and we are always looking for more volunteers.

For more information, visit: [www.4dew.com](http://www.4dew.com)

## ***Algoma Highlands Conservancy***

Submitted by Jennifer Cross

It's now been three years since the 2009 milestone King Mountain property purchase that made the Algoma Highlands Conservancy (AHC) a very significant conservation property in the Algoma Region. The Conservancy encompasses more than 1200 hectares that extends east behind Stokely Creek Lodge, across to Stokely Lake, and south to the three peaks of King Mountain and the scenic Robertson Lake Cliffs. Most importantly, the land harbours delicate ecosystems, old growth forests, rare flora and fauna, and a world class silent-sport recreation resource in the Sault Ste. Marie area! During the 2012 calendar year, our dedicated volunteer AHC Board members, friends, and staff have been working hard on several new initiatives relating to our core values – proving that we are a true, working Conservancy.

Thanks to a grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, the Algoma Highlands Conservancy was able to hire its first Environmental Education Coordinator, who developed, promoted and delivered environmental education programs to over 300 participants in the first year and raise over \$1500 in revenue that will be used to further enhance the program in its coming years. Community members benefited by having access to otherwise rare or non-existent Environmental Education programs geared at increasing their awareness of human impact on the environment and understanding of natural ecosystems and the need for conservation.

An ambitious survey of our conservation property in early summer confirmed that rare plants, Braun's Holly Fern (*Polystichum braunii*) and Oval-leaved Bilberry (*Vaccinium ovalifolium*) are maintaining populations in protected habitat zones within the Conservancy. These species join the rare birds, Canada Warbler (*Wilsonia canadensis*) and Peregrine Falcon (*Falco peregrinus*), which have been identified as using the Conservancy during their critical breeding periods.

Following-up on last year's research activities, Executive Director, Jennifer Cross has continued to extend the AHC's commitment to Environmental Research, under the capable direction of Natural Resources Canada Researcher and Board Member, Dean Thompson. We are now leading a multi-agency, collaborative project involving the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, the Canadian Forest Service, and local power distribution and transmission companies – Hydro One, Great Lakes Power, and Algoma Power Inc., for the protection of wood turtles (*Glyptemys insculpta*) and their habitat. The wood turtle is the most terrestrial of Ontario's turtles and is currently listed as endangered. Data collected is now being examined and will be used to develop scientifically based risk-mitigation and recovery strategies for this rare and mysterious species.

We are pleased to announce that thanks to Mountain Equipment Co-op's Activity & Access Fund, and a partnership with the Voyageur Trail Association, we finally have a trailhead sign welcoming visitors to the popular Robertson Cliffs trail. The multi-stage project also included blazing a scenic new loop trail that travels along the backside of the cliffs, and creating directional signage for Robertson Lake Road and Highway 17.

Our second annual Bike and Hike Day was a great success thanks to all of the wonderful outdoor enthusiasts and volunteers who joined us on a beautiful sunny Sunday September 16th. Hikers participated in advanced and beginner walks, which included rewarding views from King Mountain and Upper Stokely Falls, while mountain bikers challenged our 10km single track route. We had approximately 130 people from babies to grandparents come and explore our forest and relax afterwards for a well-deserved BBQ and a chance to swap trail stories.

## ***Avon Trail***

Submitted by Karen Hill

Our hiking Association led many hikes this year including a Trails Open event. But our biggest news was the publication of our New Guidebook featuring accurate and colour maps. Our thanks go to Jamie and Jan Hember (and their son Rob) for the GPS and GIS work. We have also been emphasizing the List of Shorter Hikes aimed at the Hiking Tourist, and have included a list of these special hike locations on our web site as well as in the guidebook. New locations are always being sought.

We continue to enjoy new memberships from the freshly retired and thus eager volunteers to provide trail maintenance services and chats along the hiking trail.

Another success story is the lending of our trail development services to the Township of Wilmot, including assisting with the development of the Friend of Walker's Woods and the trail through that property. It was a pleasure to work with such a positive group of volunteers, plus all the volunteers that came out with tools and enthusiasm from the Avon Trail membership.

Our Trail continues in its efforts to network with other organizations, including the Ontario Trails Council, Oxford Trail Strategy committee, the Waterloo, Wellington, Dufferin Trails committee, the Perth Active Transportation committee, Tourism Stratford, Perth Visitors Association and our Region 4 Tourism sector, and of course, Hike Ontario.

Our Volunteers are our back bone. How many ways can we thank them for all the work they do, including maintenance or Board work, leading hikes or doing trail promotion? There is a place for everyone and we are happy to see new faces to share new experiences.

We continue to feel the privilege of hiking across private property- and our thankfulness to our Landowners fills our hearts to overflowing. We cherish this privilege. Not many of us suffer from Nature Deficient Disorder when we can hike along cropped lands, meandering creeks and through bush with friends.

We called on Hike ON a few times this year, and can only praise the faithful and dedicated Volunteers operating at the Provincial level and supporting Hike Ontario as it leads the way to becoming recognized as the Voice of Walkers and Hikers in our beautiful Province.

## ***Bayfield River Valley Trail***

Submitted by Dave Gillians

Bayfield area trails are being heralded by walkers, cross country runners and those who enjoy snowshoeing from all over the province, for their variety and natural beauty during all four seasons of the year.

This scenic and historic village on the eastern shore of Lake Huron has long been a summer haven for visitors who love the tranquil tree lined streets with their heritage buildings, the shops, the restaurants, the wonderful beaches and the boats that reside in Ontario's most picturesque harbour. Bayfield evokes the atmosphere of an old English country village.

Everyone who enjoys the adventure of walking in natural surroundings with their families can savour the beauty of the Bayfield River Valley, and the many varied hiking trails that can be found in and around the village. There are well marked and maintained trails for all skill and fitness levels that encourage family day hikes of varying lengths from 1 to 5 kilometres.

## ***Bighead River Heritage Association (Trout Hollow Trail)***

Submitted by Ron Knight

The Bighead River Heritage Association manages the Trout Hollow Trail in Meaford, on Georgian Bay. Our Mission is to raise the level of environmental awareness concerning the Bighead River Watershed and promote the wise use of our water resource. The trail is located on the Bighead River which is named after Chief Bighead of the Pottawatami tribe of First Nations people, or so the story goes. Apparently he has signed several treaties so it must be true.

Our association is involved in tree planting to encourage riverbank stabilization, as well as improve fish spawning areas of the river. We also produce educational materials to promote and inform about the Bighead River and water conservation. In addition, we support the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority projects in the Bighead River Watershed. As always, we are appreciative of the support we get from Hike Ontario regarding training and trail management.

For more information, go to [www.bigheadriver.org](http://www.bigheadriver.org)

## ***Bruce Trail Conservancy***

Submitted by Ron Scanlan

In 2012, the Bruce Trail Conservancy began five years of celebrations to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Bruce Trail. In 2012, the organization is celebrating year one, dubbed Trailblazers of 1962, the first of several milestones marking the first five years of the Bruce Trail. Trail blazers celebrations marked the planning and trail building that took place during those first years. The celebrations will culminate with a celebration in 2017 of the official opening of

the Bruce Trail in 1967. In the spring, the Bruce Trail Conservancy held a special gathering of 400 volunteers to recognize the importance and value of its many volunteers.

This year, the Bruce Trail Conservancy annual general meeting, hosted by the Blue Mountains club, was held in Collingwood. Huge posters representing each of the five decades of the Bruce Trail were hung in the meeting hall and volunteers in attendance were invited to sign the posters for the decade (or decades) in which they volunteered. As is the tradition at the Bruce Trail AGM, several activities including cycling, walking tours of the town, special nature hikes among other activities were held after the meeting and on Sunday morning, participants were invited to join in one of three hikes of varying length.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy continues its ambitious program of land acquisition along the Niagara Escarpment. This year, more than 530 acres was added to the lands of the Bruce Trail including the 63 acres of Splitrock Narrows in the Dufferin Hi-Land section of the trail. This year, four of the 10 properties, with a total of 120 acres were generously donated.

For the first time this year, the Optimum Route surpassed 50 percent. In effect, 50.5 percent of the Optimum Trail is now protected from development. This accomplishment was received with enthusiastic applause from the packed hall.

Over the past year, 10 properties were secured; land worth more than \$390,000 was donated to the Bruce Trail Conservancy and almost \$2.8 million was received in donations, grants and sponsorships. Some 8,226 acres of the Escarpment are now protected. In 2011–2012, membership reached 8,799 which is in stark contrast with the 60 members who joined the club in 1962–1963.

It is worth noting that the Bruce Trail Conservancy has a fiftieth anniversary goal of securing and making available to the public 5,000 acres of Niagara Escarpment landscape containing the Bruce Trail.

### ***Durham Outdoors Club***

Submitted by Murray Skan

The Durham Outdoors Club is a member driven organization. The type, number and scope of activities is determined by the will of the members. The club has an elected executive that consists of a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, membership, website administrator and newsletter editor. The executive committee also includes event coordinators for hiking, canoeing, cycling, skiing and urban events. The event coordinators are appointed and their need is determined by the membership.

The Durham Outdoors Club holds monthly meetings on the last Tuesday of each month except July and December when no meeting is scheduled. The club meets at Cana Hall, Faith

Place, on William Street in Oshawa. Meetings start at 7:30 pm and usually last till about 9:30 pm. Our meetings give members a chance to share experiences on club events as well as the opportunity to listen to presentations on outdoor related activities by club members and invited speakers such as Kevin Callan. The club also produces an events newsletter 4 times a year and maintains a website at [www.durhamoutdoorsclub.ca](http://www.durhamoutdoorsclub.ca).

The Durham Outdoors Club Executive solicit nominees from amongst the membership for executive positions at the March Meeting with elections held at the April Meeting. Positions are for a one year period with no limitation on the number of consecutive years an officer can serve.

#### **The Current Executive:**

President: Susan MacMillan

Vice-President: Irene Pidruczny

Secretary: Murray Skan

Treasurer: Kaya Batinic

Membership: Maryjean Shanks

Website Administrator: Jane Bainton

Newsletter Editor: Robb Duncan

The club currently holds insurance through Hike Ontario and conforms to their Risk Management mandate as well as ensuring all hikes have a Hike Ontario Certified Leader on the hike.

#### **Club Statistics:**

2012 Membership: 142

Annual Membership Fees : \$20 per person

Funds : sufficient to operate and meet insurance requirements

Website: [www.durhamoutdoorsclub.ca](http://www.durhamoutdoorsclub.ca)

Newsletters: Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter

#### **Selection of Events held in 2012:**

##### **Hikes / Walks:**

- Various locations ranging from local Wednesday Night Nosey Neighbor Walks to Hiking numerous trails in Durham -Walker Tract, Sections of the Waterfront Trail, Sections of the Oak Ridges Trail, Ganaraska Forest Trails, etc

##### **Cycling Events:**

- Rides on the Waterfront Trail, Ride from Port Perry to Uxbridge and back, Ride on Trans-Canada Trail from Blackwater to Lindsay

**Canoe Outings:**

- Annual Moose on the Loose Trip into Algonquin over the May Long Weekend, A number of weekend trips in the Kawartha Area, Weeklong trip to Wabakimi

**Urban Events:**

- Trip to Kingston, Ontario, Bowling, Night at a Play, Orono Crown Lands Fund Raising Picnic
- Backpacking : Highland Backpacking Trail to Provoking Lake

***Elgin Hiking Trail Club***

Submitted by Brian Wilsdon

The Elgin Hiking Trail Club maintains a 41 Km trail from Port Stanley to Southdel Bourne where it connects to the Thames Valley Trail.

Since our annual meeting April 12, we have had a good year. It was a drier summer and there was no more serious erosion on the slopes of the Kettle Creek clay banks. July was too hot to do much, but in August we cleared the summer overgrowth, in time for a group from the Boy's and Girl's Club in London who called to say how much they enjoyed the experience, especially the scenic view from the sand dunes.

For the second straight spring we closed the trail from Southdale road to John Wise Line due to the proximity of an eagles nest. This may be an annual event. End to end hikers can take an alternative route on the roads of the west side of the Kettle Creek spillway valley.

We held our first ever June BBQ and look forward to our Christmas party at the Wayside Inn, Talbotville on December 8.

Six members will have completed the Grand Valley Trail End-To-End by the end of October. Jim Vanderlip and Diane Gasner will have lead a two day end-to-end of the Elgin Trail October 27 and 28, and a one day end to end of the Dutton/Dunwich Trans Canada Trail on October 29.

We look forward to the annual Candlelit Christmas Spirit Walk on Saturday, December 1, at Springwater. Tours begin at 6:00 p.m. and run until 8:00 p.m. Last year we had 800 people go through. It is a valuable partnership with Catfish Creek Conservation Authority which brings together over 30 volunteers from the club, plus performing groups to put the event on. It raises money for trail maintenance for both partners.

Visit our website at [www.elginhikingtrailclub.org](http://www.elginhikingtrailclub.org).



## ***Elora Cataract Trailway Association***

Submitted by Raymond Soucy

The Elora Cataract Trailway is a 47-km (29-mile) trail that links parks, watersheds and Communities in south-central Ontario. The trail is routed along the abandoned railway corridor of the 1879 Credit Valley Railway and runs from Elora to Cataract, passing through the Communities of Elora, Fergus, Belwood, Orton, Hillsburgh, Erin and Cataract.

The Elora Cataract Trailway Association (ECTA) focuses on Promoting, Enhancing and Protecting the Elora Cataract Trailway.

2012 was another good year for Project B.O.O.T. (Benches on our Trailway) which was launched in 2009 in conjunction with the Belwood, Elora, Fergus, Marsville, Hillsburgh, and Erin LIONS clubs. A total of 14 benches have been installed to date. Project B.O.O.T was developed to install commemorative benches along the Trailway. Anyone can purchase a commemorative bench for \$450 from the above mentioned LIONS clubs. The purchase price includes the bench along with the installation and future maintenance. See [www.trailway.org](http://www.trailway.org) for more details.

A membership drive was launched which included two 8' x 2' banners placed at various places along the Trailway for several days at a time. The purpose is to raise the awareness and support of the Trailway and the association.

Due to the weather, it was a bad year for planting trees along the Trailway which is part of our 5 year plan. Over the years, we've had many requests from trail users for portable washroom along the trailway. This year we again installed a portable washroom in the Beatty Line Trailhead parking lot. This washroom was in place for the summer and fall seasons.

Development continues to be a challenge facing the trail. In particular, the development of the Wellington Place/ Trask Land in Aboyne (Between Fergus and Elora) & two new large residential developments. One of the proposed plans has a major road cutting across the trail. ECTA has been working with other groups and the township to recommend several alternatives. We want to protect the Trailway and also promote its use with easy accept from new developments.

The 2012 AGM was held on Sunday March 25th at the Elora Centre for the Arts. Our Guest speaker this year was Beth Kummling – Executive Director of The Bruce Trail Conservancy. Beth showcases the history and work of the Bruce Trail Conservancy against a backdrop of images of the Niagara Escarpment. Attendees learn about the origins of the BTC as a conservation organization, its role in Escarpment land protection, and were treated to a virtual hike of the Bruce Trail from Niagara to Tobermory. It was followed by a lively Q&A.

A big challenge and focus going into 2013 will be board renewal. Anyone interested can email [info@trailway.org](mailto:info@trailway.org) for more details.

## ***Friends of the Trail***

Submitted by Bill Gray

The Lower Trent Trail is now 98% complete and the Friends of the Trail have shifted from a trail development group to a trail maintenance group in search of a Hiking Club to call us home. Well not entirely true because we have just gone in search of funding to develop a new 2 kilometre trail along the Trent River, everyone loves a challenge.

The year has been busy with the development of Station Park as our main staging area This is a project that has grabbed the attention of Frankford residents and provided us with new volunteers who have designed, built and will maintain the flower beds within the park.

We have replaced our vehicle deterrents with functional gates and purchased another 9 benches to place along the 17 kilometres of trail. In addition new information signage has been placed along the to assist users in determining their position and direction of travel.

We will start the last 800 meter link this spring this construction has been delayed as we had to seek an alternate route around a commercial property. Our Membership remains steady around 100 but as with a lot of organizations we have become a year older. We have now extended our lease with Infrastructure Ontario until 2018, this has meant we will be redoing our strategic plan this fall and looking at our new long range plans, a pleasant way to end a year.

Email: [friendsofthetrail@yahoo.com](mailto:friendsofthetrail@yahoo.com)

Website: [www.friendsofthetrail.ca](http://www.friendsofthetrail.ca)

## ***Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association***

Submitted by Jeremy Bonnar

### **Membership**

Total membership of the nine clubs that make up the Ganaraska Hiking Trail Association (GHTA) is 596, which includes 52 life members, which is consistent with previous years.

### **Activities**

**Annual Meetings:** The GHTA held our Board of Directors Meeting on 28 April 2012 and our 2011 Annual General Meeting on 29 October 2011 at Regent United Church in Orillia.

**OXFAM:** This past summer, the GHTA hosted the OXFAM Trailwalker Challenge for the fourth straight year.

**Landowner Signs:** The GHTA has purchased landowner signs and have posted them at the trail heads of our privately owned land. The signs identify that the Ganaraska Trail as traversing over privately owned land and includes the GHTA web-site address.

**Hikes and individual Club Activities:** The GHATA nine member clubs host numerous guided hikes throughout the year. Hikes are posted in our newsletter distributed in the Fall, Winter and Spring, as well as on our webpage (<http://www.ganaraska-hiking-trail.ca/>)

- **Barrie (40 active members):** The club is being managed by committee. Couchiching Conservancy has received a Trillium grant to survey the natural features of the forest and the club directors are worried by the appearance of signs in the forest saying “no more development of trails.”
- **Kawartha (71 active members):** The club continues to grow. They had a good season and held several evenings of travel talks. The forest management board in conjunction with the Kawartha Club is trying to control use/access of the forest by establishing and marking trails. Kawartha Club plans to plant trees around the concrete gate blocks to help ‘soften’ them.
- **Mad River (20 active members):** Over the past year several members have qualified on the Hike Ontario Hike Leaders course and they are already seeing the benefits of the course with several end-to-end hikes conducted and more planned in the future. The Mad River Club is actively coordinating with Municipal agencies to advocate rail-to-trail campaign and conservancy.
- **Midland (45 active members):** Offer great day-hikes on Saturday’s and Sunday’s and snowshoeing, when the weather cooperates. They have held several trail maintenance days, in preparation for this past summer's OXFAM Trailwalker event.
- **Orillia (56 active members):** The club holds hikes every Tuesday night with between 15 – 30 hikers attending and a long or short hike on Saturdays. They hold lots of social events / potlucks as well.
- **Oro-Medonte (52 active members):** The club is doing very well. The last several years they have held waterfall tours which have proved popular.
- **Pine Ridge (97 active members):** Membership very still strong. Trail maintenance proves to be costly for this club who struggle to keep up with the demands of their trail. The club provided comment on the City of Port Hope’s plan for Active Trails for Transportation. They plan on backpacking trips to Westport, Newfoundland and Killarney. The club now has an archivist to deal with material donated by Jack Goering.
- **Wasaga (103 active members):** Have 20 – 30 hikers each week plus 8 – 10 in their ‘amblers’ group. The City of Wasaga Beach during their “Recognition Day” honoured 3 members of the Wasaga Beach Club for their longtime service.

- **Wilderness (45 active members):** The club is working on a GPS survey of the trail. They ran the Wilderness President's Challenge in June.

### **Risk Management**

GHTA acknowledges that accidents and misadventures can and will happen; people can be injured, property can be damaged, and injured persons can launch a lawsuit against GHTA and/or its individual hiking clubs. To this end, the GHTA has developed a comprehensive Risk Management plan which was based off of the framework provided in Hike Ontario's document "The Key Elements of Risk Management for Ontario Hiking Clubs and Associations." The GHTA Risk Management Protocol, was presented at our 2011 AGM and was endorsed at our Spring Directors Meeting in 2012, and will be voted on at our next AGM in October 2012. A copy of this Draft GHTA Risk Management Protocol has been submitted to Hike Ontario for review and comment.

### **Challenges**

**Vacant Positions:** Two executive member positions remain vacant in the GHTA. We are looking for volunteers to fill the duties as Trail Director and Landowners Relations. Anyone that is interested in helping out is encouraged to advise the executive.

**Increased Costs:** The GHTA is finding it increasingly difficult to operate within existing fiscal constraints. In particular, we are finding it increasingly difficult to offer same-price mailing charges to all our membership, which in turn effects the mailing of membership renewals, guidebooks, newsletters and clothing. The GHTA is also finding it difficult to operate effectively with our numerous partnerships without suffering some fiscal stressors. As a result, the Directors of the GHTA will be presenting to our membership at our Annual General Meeting, a proposal to increase GHTA Annual Membership fees to \$25.00 to cover increasing costs.

## ***Georgian Bay Coast Trail***

Submitted by Laura Peddie

Our mandate is to develop a 200 kilometer rugged hiking trail alongside the east coast of Georgian Bay from Bayfield Inlet to Point Grondine as part of a shared vision of sustainable ecotourism within the UNESCO Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve. The trail would link the First Nations communities along the coast of Georgian Bay and be a community development project that would lead to job creation, natural and cultural heritage interpretation opportunities, economic development, and environmental conservation.

For the past two years our Partnership Coordinator has been working with our four First Nation partners - Magnetawan First Nation, Shawanaga First Nation , Henvey Inlet First Nation, and Wikwemikong Unceded Indian Reserve to develop trail.

Together with Magnetawan First Nation (MFN) in the summer of 2011 we completed a

mapping and species at risk project in preparation for trail development. We collected species at risk information along the coast of Georgian Bay from Bayfield Inlet to Byng Inlet and mapped out a trail route on foot (approximately 30-kilometers).

Due to the success of this project GBCT and MFN decided to undertake another mapping and species at risk project together in 2012 which will result in another species at risk report produced and another viable trail route and map covering the area north from Byng Inlet to the Key River. Henvey Inlet First Nation (HIFN) and Shawanaga First Nation (SFN) also contributed to this project.

At present we are also engaged in developing sustainable, hand-built trail with our partner Wikwemikong at Point Grondine (located between French River and Killarney Provincial Parks). The route was mapped and species at risk information collected several years ago. This is the Northern Terminus of the trail and will be a 60-km loop system expected to be completed and open to hikers in fall 2013. It will eventually connect to trail further South.

### ***Grand Valley Trails Association***

Submitted by Charles Whitlock

The Grand Valley Trails Association is a volunteer organization committed to establishing footpaths within Ontario's Grand River Watershed in order to promote the protection and public enjoyment of the natural environment and human history of this Canadian Heritage River. During the 2011-12 year the association and its members thoroughly enjoyed the Grand River and its environment.

GVTA members and hike leaders organized over 180 events and hikes during the year ranging from early morning "breakfast hikes" to end-to-end trail hiking series. GVTA continued to collaborate with other hiking and sports clubs to offer bus outings. A day of cross-country skiing, fun and camaraderie took place in January and members of the GVTA and the Waterloo Nordic Sports Club found they were pleasantly worn out after a day of skiing at Highlands Nordic Cross-Country Skiing Centre. Another bus outing in September saw the Thames Valley, Avon and Guelph hiking associations join with the GVTA for adventurous 10km or 20km hikes in the beautiful Blue Mountain area. Thanks to GVTA's wonderful volunteer hike leaders for organizing these diverse activities at numerous venues throughout the year. GVTA hikers joined the Kitchener Waterloo Walking Classic in September in support of the Waterloo Regional Homes for Mental Health. Hikers participated in 10km and half marathon categories with some hikers even placing top in their category. A door prize enabled several GVTA participants to join together to create a great take home ready to cook gourmet dinner. In September GVTA was also represented at the Region of Waterloo Trails, Tourism & Technology Forum 2011. The Forum focused on a deliberate connection between tourism, trails and technology in order to enable people to use trails.

Amidst all the hiking activity many GVTA volunteers still found time to maintain the trail. The Black Walnut section reported 22 trail maintenance work parties with 329 hours of volunteer

labour for the year 2011-12. In April GVTA and Kiwanis Waterloo North partnered together for a second annual trail clean up where 21 bags of garbage were collected and disposed of. A GVTA annual trail maintenance day was held in May where 22 GVTA volunteers removed two stiles and built a small bridge. A Fall trail maintenance day was held in the Pinnacle section and concentrated on brush clearing and posting trail markers.

GVTA will celebrate its 40th anniversary in 2012. Planning for the celebration began with a February GVTA event planning meeting held at the Laurel Creek Nature Centre. The celebrations for the year will include a series of hikes on the Grand Valley Trail, a Founder's Tea, a silent auction and a formal dinner celebration with guest speaker Kevin Callan. The celebration will be held in conjunction with Hike Ontario's annual Hike Summit. The GVTA wishes to thank all the volunteers involved in the celebration and especially the 40th Anniversary Committee who have been so busy during the past year planning a great celebration for us! Many thanks Jan Hember, Andrew Bingeman, Asvin Parsad, Bob Taylor, Charles Whitlock, Gail Reid, Jane Kenyon, Nick Dinka, Pat Aplevich and Tom Friesen.

### ***Guelph Hiking Trail Club***

Submitted by Mike Curtis

The Guelph Hiking Trail Club finished its financial year (Aug. 31st) with an enrolment of 240 members. Once again, we participated in Trails Open Ontario, featuring our Smith Side Trail, a loop trail off our Radial Line Trail. We featured guided hikes with over a hundred participants on a cool, breezy spring day, with fortunately, no rain.

Our children's hikes are still very popular and involve over thirty children, who bring along parents or grandparents for ninety minute hikes along relatively easy trails, close to Guelph. In 2013, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of our Speed River Trail, which links Guelph with Cambridge and a link to the Grand Valley Trail. As well as our Speed River Trail, we will celebrate the 40th anniversary of our Starkey Trail which we operate in conjunction with the Grand River Conservation Authority. On this trail, we have developed qr codes to guide hikers on an interpretive walk, with the assistance of their cell phones.

We conducted a hike leaders training course through Hike Ontario in the winter and certified over a dozen new hike leaders.

In the spring, we were able to reroute over two kilometers of trail from roadways (since 1973) to meadow and bush.

Revisions to our website now include the opportunity for electronic payments for both members and non-members to purchase or renew memberships, gift memberships and buy our Handbook (maps).

Several of our members conducted one hour group hikes in conjunction with the Homewood Health Centre for their Habits 4 Health Programme. These hikes involved identifying various flora and fauna, and a history and geology of the various areas around Guelph where the walks were conducted.

New events for this year included a skating party, summer picnic, and theatre hikes (a short hike combined with a matinee performance of a live play at a local amateur theatre group).

## ***Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association***

Submitted by Jerry Gorman

### **Membership**

Roland Gatti, president of the Kleinberg Chapter of the HVHTA, has accepted the position of Director with Hike Ontario, to represent the HVHTA for the coming year. Bolton and Kleinberg chapters now have a combined membership of approximately 79 which we can credit in part to our successful calendar project. We recently sent out a request to members to submit photographs for our 2013 calendar.

### **Recent Developments**

HVHTA has run a successful monthly schedule of hikes this year, with the dates listed in our 2012 calendar. The Bolton Chapter ran several special additional trail hikes on behalf of our Bolton Councillors. They asked to sponsor a walk in June and again in October on our trail which they also promoted. The Councillors intend these walks to become an annual event in order to promote our unique trail to a wider constituency. The Bolton Chapter has been working on a Risk Management Plan which will be ready to share with the Kleinberg Chapter for their comments next month. It is our HVHTA intention to implement a common plan.

### **Current Challenges**

It is with regret that I must state the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, our landlord, has taking over a section comprising approximately 25% of our existing trail, to implemented their multi use / cycling initiative in the Humber River watershed. HVHTA will relinquish responsibility and maintenance for this section of the trail to TRCA. The good news is that the TRCA has agreed to give HVHTA access to build pedestrian only trails in their newly acquired Bolton Camp property. This is a 106 hectare ( 254 A ) property adjacent to Bolton. The new trails will be integrated as a major loop into our existing pedestrian only trail system.

## ***Huronia Trails & Greenways***

Submitted by Frieda Baldwin

Huronia Trails and Greenways ([www.simcoecountytrails.net](http://www.simcoecountytrails.net)) mission statement is to promote and enable the development of a sustainable network of trails and greenways in Simcoe County. In the past year, our activities included:

### **1. Healthy Communities Grant**

Huronia Trails and Greenways fulfilled a \$45K Healthy Communities grant from the Government of Ontario, Ministry of Health Promotion and Sports, to undertake 4 initiatives:

#### **Green Exercise on Trails – take mental health patients out on trails.**

Waypoint Centre for Mental Health in Penetanguishene, and a few other mental health organizations, were provided with a certified hike leader to take “community ready” patients out hiking, snowshoeing, geocaching and urban poling (aka nordic walking). This proved to be a very successful program, as patients were exposed to new activities **in nature**. From a hike leader perspective, this was also an extremely rewarding and interesting experience.

#### **Trail maps**

We created 5 new trails, which were mapped and included in the 2012 mapbook, printed with funding from Tourism Simcoe County. A total of 34 maps are also available on <http://www.simcoecountytrails.net/trails/trails.htm>

#### **Be Seen Be Safe Tips for Trails users during Hunting Seasons**

In partnership with the County of Simcoe, the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters, and a few others, we developed the “Be Safe Be Seen” campaign for trail users during hunting season. We produced 10,000 brochures with Tips for Trail Users, and handed out 1000 bright orange bandanas with the key messages:

- Know the seasons and locations
- Wear bright clothing
- Keep dogs on a leash
- Stay on established trails and skip bushwhacking
- Respect other users and the land we share.

The [beseenbesafe.simcoecountytrails.net](http://beseenbesafe.simcoecountytrails.net) mini-website provides more details.

#### **Social Media Strategy**

We developed a Social Media Strategy, which will be implemented following a branding exercise, which may see a name change for HTG.

### **2. Trillium Foundation grant**

Huronia Trails and Greenways received a 2 year grant from the Trillium Foundation to: develop an interactive Trail Planning Tool



- create a number of Pilgrim Routes leading from the borders of Simcoe County to the Martyr's Shrine in Midland
- host a number of training courses
- develop strategies to become self-sustaining
- organize trail events
- be the voice of all trail users in Simcoe County, including motorized users

All of the above are well underway, including the co-hosting of a Hike Leader Certification course for Ganaraska Trail members, and a First Aid course for volunteers.

### **3. Other**

- Township of Severn developed a railtrail between Coldwater and Waubauskene, thus linking the Tay Shore Trail and the Uhthoff Trail. This almost completes a 170 km circle of shared use trails in Simcoe County.
- Huronia Trails and Greenways has been hired by the Trans Canada Trail to close the remaining trail gaps in the Trans Canada Trail in Simcoe County. In working with the Town of New Tecumseth, we wrote a Concept Plan and so far raised \$105,000 for the development of Phase 1 in New Tecumseth, a municipality which for the longest while did not embrace the idea of the Trans Canada Trail through their municipality, due to opposition from the agricultural community.
- Huronia Trails and Greenways is also helping other municipalities with raising funds or provides consulting for trail development.
- Huronia Trails and Greenways sits as a technical advisor on the Copeland Forest Stewardship Council with the goal to provide stewardship recommendations to the MNR.

## ***Lost River Walks, North Toronto Green Community***

Submitted by Helen Mills

Lost Rivers coordinates guided walks that tell the fascinating story of Toronto's past and present landscapes, people, buried creeks and neighbourhoods. Since 1995 over 20,000 people have participated in Lost River Walks.

Lost River Walks are a great way to:

- *Discover the secret life of water in the city: find out about the amazing human and natural water systems that form our urban life support system*
- *Take a fascinating journey into the history of your neighbourhood*
- *Get connected with your watershed and take action for a restored ecosystem*
- *Enjoy an interesting, relaxing and healthy outing in your neighbourhood*

Lost Rivers is a program of the Toronto Green Community in partnership with Toronto Field Naturalists and many others including Hike Ontario, Evergreen, Riversides, Human River, TRCA Don Council, LEAF, Humber Heritage, Youth for Water, Highland Community Stewardship Program, and others.

#### **Walks:**

From September 1 2011 to August 31 2012 there were 34 walks with 1030 attendees. There were 23 volunteer walk leaders, and an extra 10 volunteers for the Human River Walk. We held special walks for Heschel School, Toronto Student School, Central Technical School, History Teachers Association, "Approaching the Past", Thorncliffe Park Women's Committee, Withrow Farmers Market, Evergreen. We also held a poetry walk and a literary "Reading the Ravines" walk with Evergreen and Toronto Public Library. Very positive feedback on both.

The big event for the year was our partnership with Human River on a Jane's Walk that was filmed for a documentary on explorers and restorers of lost rivers throughout the world. The world premiere of "Lost Rivers" was on October 10, 2012 for the Planet in Focus Film Festival.

#### **Education, Workshops and Presentation:**

##### **November 20, 2011 St Aidan's Church. Rohan Walters for World Toilet Day,**

Presentation on the recent City of Toronto report on composting toilets and other new approaches to sanitation. Part of the Toilet to Tap Walk

##### **May 9th, 2012. Historical Landscapes and Hauntings: Connecting Place to the History and Social Studies Curriculum.**

Helen Mills and others presenting to newly graduated history teachers.

##### **September 6, 1 pm, 2012: Teaching the Secret Life of Water in the City.**

Toronto Region Conservation Association, Educators Professional Development Day . Helen and John presented at a professional development day at Kortright Conservation Centre for TRCA staff and partner educators, environmental teachers and program developers.

##### **September 25, 2012, 7 pm. East York Historical Society.**

John Wilson on the Lost Rivers of East York.

##### **October 29 2012, Riverdale Historical Society (upcoming).**

Helen Mills and John Wilson will present on Lost Rivers of Riverdale.

Collaboration with Central Technical School to develop Lost Rivers Curriculum for Grades 9 and 10 Geography and Environmental Studies

#### **Websites:**

[www.lostrivers.ca](http://www.lostrivers.ca):

Developed and launched in 2002 by Peter Hare, the Lost Rivers Website is a virtual tour of the lost rivers which form the main matrix of buried creeks between the Don and Humber Rivers. On this site you can find detailed maps of Burke Brook, Mud Creek, Yellow Creek, Castle Frank Brook, Walmsley Brook, Cudmore Creek, Taddle Creek, Russell Creek, Garrison Creek, the Market Creeks, and the Lower Don along with links that tell the story of the geological and human history of each creek and its watershed.

[www.thirstycitywalks.ca](http://www.thirstycitywalks.ca):

Self guided walking tours that can be downloaded and printed

#### **Media:**

Now Magazine

CBC Metro Morning

**Strategic Planning:**

Besides all this we have been developing a strategic plan, with lots of interesting possibilities emerging.

**Lost Rivers Committee:**

Helen Mills, John Wilson, Emily Alfred, Justyna Braithwaite, Richard Anderson, Georgia Ydreos, Ian Wheal, Annie Macleod, Paula Messina, Wai Yee Chou, Ping Ya Lee, Madeleine McDowell, Lacey Williams

**Volunteer Opportunities:**

Lost Rivers is looking for enthusiastic volunteers with energy and ideas:

**Responsibilities can include all or some of the tasks below:**

- Developing and leading walks
- **Maintaining and updating the website**
- **Website development, and fundraising for this project**
- Help with publicity (writing emails, events listings, press releases, articles, distributing flyers, contacting community groups, maintaining lists, hosting a table for an event, creating a listserve)
- Help during walks (ex: welcome participants, help with getting walkers signed up, feedback forms)
- Research and mapping of lost watersheds for development of walks and website content
- Depending on interest other tasks/responsibilities may also be created
- Attending meetings and possibly keeping minutes, with the Lost Rivers committee

Work will take place at various locations. Work will occur on weekdays. Some weekend and evening work might be required.

**Application Process:**

Please email a resume and covering letter outlining your interest in this position to Paula Messina: [paula@torontogreen.ca](mailto:paula@torontogreen.ca)

***Lucan Area Trails Association***

Submitted by Bruce Lamb

**Trail Inventory - Start of 2012**

We finished a 1.5 km trail (The Martens Trail) at the end of 2011, which we officially opened to the public in May 2012. This trail gives us a total of 2 km of trails in addition to approximately 3 km of trails previously in existence and maintained by a private landowner.

**Trails Built in 2012**

Before the official opening of The Martens Trail, we had a quick work session to add a 1 km trail (which involved zero tree clearing) to the trail cleared in 2011.

**Communications**

In addition to the website [www.LucanTrails.ca](http://www.LucanTrails.ca), the Association has a Facebook page at [www.Facebook.com/LucanTrails](http://www.Facebook.com/LucanTrails) with 108 people who have "liked" the page thus far.

## **Financial**

The initial funding for this project was provided by the Lucan District Lions Club and we know that they are supportive of the initiative. We are confident that if we request more funds from the Lions that they'll be more than willing to write a cheque to allow us to keep this initiative going.

We still have approximately \$7,500 of the initial \$10,000 donated by the Lions in the bank.

## **Fall 2012 / Spring 2013**

The key challenge for 2012 was in ongoing maintenance of the trails. With Lucan Area Trails Association members busy with raising families and various other work and leisure activities, it is felt that simply finding a contractor to do periodic maintenance (primarily grass mowing) in 2013 should be a priority.

In addition, there is still time in 2012 to at least get the wheels in motion to build a connecting trail from the Lucan Memorial Community centre to the entrance of the Martens Trail if we can get landowner approval for this initiative.

## ***Maitland Trail Association***

Submitted by Mava Holland

The Maitland Trail consists of approximately 47.4 kilometers of trail running alongside the Maitland River from the town of Goderich, on Lake Huron's west coast to the village of Auburn. In addition to this trail the Maitland Trail Association maintains another 37.3 kilometers of trail both in the town of Goderich and in the area surrounding the town.

Our membership for the year 2012 is at 159 members – more than half of which are family memberships. We have a trail work crew of 12 volunteers and a full slate of 30 Trail Rangers who each patrol a section of one of our trail and report to the trail work crew. In addition to these two groups the Goderich Boy Scout troop maintains the Millenium Trail and the employees of Cargill, Canada with operations in Clinton, Ontario maintain a section of the Maitland Trail. 24 of our members are certified hike leaders leading hikes offered by the Maitland Trail Association and hikes offered by nearby hiking groups.

Our big challenge over the last 12 months has been the cleanup of the trail after the tornado which hit the area in August of 2011. Our trails have been cleared and reopened except for a small length of trail in the hamlet of Benmiller. There we closed a portion of the trail and diverted it to an existing blue trail in the area. The work of cleaning up after the tornado was very extensive and could not have been done without the help of other trail crews and individuals in the area. The Maitland Trail Board thanks everyone who gave their time and effort to help us in this massive cleanup.

In addition to our regular weekend and weekday hikes some special outings we sponsored this year were:

February: ● Candlelight Walk and Lantern Making Workshop

April: ● the Family Scavenger Hunt along the Easter Bunny trail

May: ● a Plant & Compost Sale and Afternoon Spring Walk  
● Senior Games Walking Event

July: ● our Annual Canada Day Sunrise Walk  
● “The Thirsty Games” scavenger hunt – there were 14 teams with a total of 63 participants.

Our hikes are supplemented each winter by snowshoe and cross-country ski outings and, in spring and summer, by cycling. Our Tuesday Tromper group continues to grow - up to 30 at some times during this summer.

In May 2012 the Board of the Maitland Trail Association finalized a Risk Management Document. A Hike Ontario template was used as a resource for each trail association to create their own risk management plan. Each Trail Association that accepted this document has agreed that they will do their best to create a risk management procedures and protocols document for their club. The MTA Risk Management Plan has been completed and approved by the Board. The MTA is now working on the implementation of the Plan.

### ***Nastawgan Trails Inc.***

Submitted by Jim Hasler

NTI is an all-volunteer charitable corporation which has established and maintains a 94 kilometre trail, mainly in a Conservation Reserve along the Ottawa River/Lake Temiskaming, which has attracted hikers from Russia to New Zealand. It offers many viewpoints from heights of land which look over the water to Quebec or over wooded valleys. NTI also maintains a number of other shorter trails in the Temiskaming area.

We have also submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Parks Ontario for a 23 kilometre trail through a proposed park from Ottetail Creek to the village of Thorne (where Hwy 63 ends at the Ottawa River). Ottetail Creek can be crossed on foot in the summer and we have proposed a bridge for safer crossing all year. This would join it to the Ottawa Temiskaming Highland Trail and provide a highway access point at the north and south ends.

Learn more at: [www.nastawgantrails.com](http://www.nastawgantrails.com)

## ***North Simcoe Rail Trail***

Submitted by Frieda Baldwin

This 30 km long railtrail just north west of Barrie is a multi-use trail, that is managed by the North Simcoe Railtrail Inc. board of management. Following major surface upgrades in 2009 and 2010, the organization has maintained the trail by cutting the grass, and spraying for poison ivy. In partnership with the County of Simcoe and the Township of Springwater, the board is looking into rerouting the trail north of Elmvale, and extending it at the south end, to connect it with the recently abandoned Barrie to Collingwood railway.

For a map, go to [simcoecountytrails.net/nsrt/map.html](http://simcoecountytrails.net/nsrt/map.html)

## ***Oak Ridges Trail Association***

Submitted by Peter Schaefer

**This year, the Oak Ridges Trail Association is celebrating its 20th Anniversary and the membership has recognized this special occasion at our AGM in April of this year.**

The vision of the Oak Ridges Trail Association is to develop and secure a trail along the full length of the Oak Ridges Moraine. We now have reached a significant milestone on the road to fulfilling our vision by linking up to the Bruce Trail in Mono Township in the West, and by hiking through the Northumberland County Forest to arrive at the two Eastern trail keys in Warkworth and Castleton. The total length of the trail is now 273 km, with another 76 km of side trails.

Over the last six years, the trail system has been increased from about 200 km by implementing our Oak Ridges Trail Strategic Plan. This plan defines an Optimal Trail Corridor and proposes strategies to sustain the trail club and to preserve the trail and its environmental integrity for future generations.

**We are justifiably proud of our nearly 350 km of managed trail, our growing number of hike leaders and organized group hikes (over 400 in the past year), and our relative stable membership, counting around 650.**

**The length of our trail creates great challenges for our Association.** Our membership is concentrated in the centre of the trail, around the Yonge Street corridor. In the far western and eastern sections of the trail, the population is small and, therefore, the membership is not large enough to look after the great lengths of beautiful trail located in these townships.

**We will need to form work crews made up of volunteers from all our Chapters** of the Association to regularly tackle the maintenance needs of these remote sections of trail. This has already been successfully started in this past year under the leadership of very dedicated volunteers.

**We will need to actively seek the assistance from Land Trusts and Conservation Authorities in order to continue to move the trail to public lands.** This will assure that our trail is protected for the enjoyment of future generations, and to eventually find our optimal route across the Oak Ridges Moraine in more serene and scenic areas.

We need to entice many more people to stop and enjoy the trail by **us providing improved parking, frequent directional signage along intercepting highways and side roads, as well as with good signage on the trail.**

**We would like to erect more information kiosks,** such as we have now at the Western and Eastern gateways and in the Yonge Street corridor. Locating kiosks in major access areas to our trail, they could educate people not only about ORTA, but also about the significance of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

To further ensure our financial stability, **we need to increase our membership and find more sponsors, preferably corporate sponsors.**

**As well, we will continue our very successful Adventure Relay,** not only for its financial rewards, but also to assist in creating awareness in the public of our trail and of the Moraine. The Relay, held each year the day before Father's Day , attracts over 500 competitors on over 30 teams which canoe, bike and run in 15 stages the 160 km from Gores Landing on the Rice Lake to the Seneca Campus in King City. The Relay also provides fun and a sense of belonging for over 100 ORTA volunteers.

**Lastly, we need to find many more volunteers at all levels of the Association,** especially on the local basis within Chapters.

### ***Palmerston Trail Association***

Submitted by Barbara Burrows

The Palmerston Trail Association continues to own and maintain approximately 8km of trail in the Town of Minto. In the spring, the County of Wellington Green Legacy programme planted another 3,000 trees along our trail. Many school children participated in this very worthwhile programme.

We continue to enjoy good working partnerships with the local elementary and secondary schools, boy scouts, the County of Wellington and the Town of Minto. The only event we hosted this year was our annual Earth Day walk and tree planting in April. Twenty people enjoyed an afternoon on the trail and some clean up was accomplished along with the plantings. We took part in a very successful fund-raiser in April and will be using the proceeds for trail upgrades next year.

Our membership is not growing very quickly so we hope to increase numbers in the upcoming year.

### ***Rideau Trail Association***

Submitted by Robert Groves

The Rideau Trail Association has about 800 members as it progresses in its march into the 21st Century. We completed our celebrations of the 40th Anniversary in 2011 with several hundred relayers carrying the “President’s Stick” from Kingston to Ottawa. In March 2012 updating of all maps with GPS co-ordinates was completed and posted on the RTA website ([www.rideautrail.org](http://www.rideautrail.org)) with an index and trail notes. They can be downloaded FREE by members and the general public. Printed map packages will be available early in 2013. The Trail has grown a little with new “trail ends” established in Ottawa near the Rideau Canal locks and in front of city hall in Kingston.

The AGM in June, 2012 was better attended than usual. The geological features of the Rideau Trail were the subject of a fascinating and entertaining after dinner address by retired Queen’s University Professor Dugald Carmichael, an iconic metamorphic petrology expert (and RTA member). His stories and slides changed forever the way we will think about rocks, crystals, and fossils, in the bedrock and outcroppings on the Rideau Trail. This October a retired Ottawa policeman and cancer survivor, Bruce Watts, is completing a solo end-to-end trek (Oktoberquest) from Kingston to Ottawa. Each night an edited video diary is uploaded to [YouTube](https://www.youtube.com), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com), [Twitter](https://twitter.com) and at [campology.ca](http://campology.ca). Hopefully, the profile of the Rideau Trail will be raised and others will venture into hiking the Trail.

It is our intention to develop the interest of younger hikers through cooperation with outdoor educators in schools along the trail. Our demographic is tilted in the direction of an aging band of stalwart hikers and former hikers and we need to replace ourselves. As is so often the experience of volunteer organizations, we have difficulty maintaining full executive slates in the three clubs that comprise the association, and in the association itself. After several years of seeking a volunteer Marketing and Communications person from our general membership we have decided to recruit an appropriately qualified person and pay them. Now, the next hurdle is to find such a person!

### ***Rouge Park Trail Club***

Submitted by Diana Smyth

#### **Overview of the program:**

Rouge Park’s trail program supports the Rouge Park Heritage Appreciation and Visitor Experience program. It is volunteer-driven under the supervision of the park’s Trail Coordinator. We offer natural and cultural heritage interpretation, visitor greeting and navigation as well as education on trail etiquette, best practices and safety in an area of conservation. Volunteers act as walk leaders, ambassadors and photographers. The program started in January 2010 and



we are happy to celebrate 3 years of adventures in our near-urban wilderness, 30 minutes from downtown Toronto.

Our volunteers aim to imbue in Rouge Park visitors a sense of pride in and care for the park through positive words and actions, and being a role model of stewardship. This includes explaining to self-guided and guided walkers the Park's code of conduct, and responding accordingly to actions that are not in keeping with that code, i.e. dogs off leash, walking off trail. We train our volunteer ambassadors and walk leaders toward achieving Certified Hike Leader certification plus Standard First Aid Level C.

### **What's Been Happening:**

The trail volunteer program continues to flourish. We completed a 1 year grant from Mountain Equipment Co-op in June with the addition of 11 new volunteer ambassadors/walk leaders. We also added 3 photo volunteers to help us augment and improve the image bank of our guided walks and visitor encounters, our public events and activities as well as the landscapes, flora and fauna of the park. A grant from TD Friends of the Environment Foundation Scarborough chapter enabled us to bring 7 more volunteers on the team in August. We now have approximately 45 active volunteers. Another application to TD FEF's Markham chapter was also accepted to bring 40 new volunteers on board between in 2013.

Ontario Power Generation renewed its support of Rouge Park's Guided Walks, and from September 16 to November 11 the walks are under the banner of OPG Biodiversity Walks. During this period we focus more closely on a specific set of walk themes as well as invite guest experts from many fields and organizations to help delve deeper into those themes, thereby giving our visitors even more exposure to key conservation messages, plus give our volunteers an 'on the job' development opportunity.

The private walks program is thriving, with walks throughout the year giving us extra revenue to support the volunteer program with non-restricted funds.

At the end of September, and based on hike reports received, Rouge Park's public has welcomed almost 1600 walkers on 274 public walks and 625 private walkers on 16 walks in 2012.

Our Trails Master Plan was completed and approved by the Rouge Park Alliance in April. The plan is a 25 year vision of trail expansion and enhancement throughout the Park as we try to balance the needs of the communities living around the Park and the Park's overall objectives for natural heritage, cultural heritage, land use, management, interpretation, passive recreation and agricultural protection.

Rouge Park is now in transition to become Canada's first National Urban Park. This will take some time, so the trail volunteers and I remain 'business as usual' in our work for the park, while helping visitors understand the timeline of transition and how they can stay connected to updates. The extra visibility of the park to the public because of this has helped increase our

general visitor-ship and walk attendance, which has made our team an essential 'on the ground' asset to our visitors than ever before.

## ***Street To Trail Association***

Submitted by Paul Mackle

Street to Trail is a non-profit organization that helps people living on the streets of Toronto rediscover their inner sense of worth using the healing power of the natural world. Street to Trail organizes wilderness hikes and other outdoor excursions including canoe trips that help homeless people experience the beauty and therapeutic calmness of nature.

Here at Street to Trail, we believe that by getting troubled people away from the city to participate in a wilderness trip they can benefit positively by increasing their self-confidence, enjoying a positive environment to support overcome addictions, find new, meaningful relationships and rediscovering lost feelings of peace and hope.

In addition to skilled leadership interaction with clients, certain elements of infrastructure are essential on any excursion to ensure a positive experience for the clients. Without many exceptions, virtually all elements that support the client on the outing must be provided by Street to Trail including transportation, camping gear and food.

### **Street to Trail Programs**

- Day Hike
- Breakfast Program
- Canoe Trip
- New Years Camp
- Winter Camp
- Land Stewardship
- Volunteer Workshop
- Equipment Repair
- Trail Maintains (New This Year)

### **Land Acquisition**

This year island property is valued at \$132,750 were obtain in 2007. Along with adjacent property a 1.5 km. hike trail including base camp Island Programs Canoe Trip, Land Stewardship, Volunteer Workshop, Equipment Repair, and Trail Maintains. The land's name is Snowshoe Island.

## ***Thames Valley Trail Association***

Submitted by Ruth Hoch

Our current membership remains stable at 350.

The trail is in the best shape it has been for some years thanks to the trail maintenance volunteers who have done extensive work in the north and south ends. Our trail has been enhanced with the addition of a rest stop with benches, a fire pit and an inushuk, provided by one of our generous property owners. A risk management plan was prepared and implemented early this year. Our president and other members of the group are working with the city planning department to preserve several environmentally sensitive areas and prevent them from being closed to hiking.

We continued to offer over 300 guided hikes this year. One new venture this summer was to offer open hikes Wednesday evenings in July and August and one Sunday morning a month for the last 6 months. At least 4-6 new hikers participated in each hike and several new members joined as a result. We plan to continue these next year. An end to end hike was completed in October, as well as an interclub hike to Balls Falls in September.

Our website continues to develop with 30% of our members registering and receiving the newsletter online. We plan to expand the scope of the website to include details of open hikes, hike cancellations and more links to related websites.

Our major challenge is that we do not have a vice president or a candidate for president. Our current president has graciously extended his term to provide our club with stable leadership this year, and other board members have assisted with his duties. We hope that new leaders will step forward.

## ***Thunder Bay Hiking Association***

Submitted by Boris Modrian

Our club remains active with 155 paid memberships. 104 of these are individual with 51 family memberships giving us a total of 266 members. We aren't like your typical club in Southern Ontario in that we don't just look after one section of trail. We hike all over a region of hundred of miles including hikes out of country. We do maintain several sections of trail on crown land but don't claim any ownership of these trails.

We provide an important service to the community because we not only promote healthy activities but also volunteer our time to maintain trails in local parks. In the past we have published trail guides and are in the process of producing our third edition.

Last year we led 67 different outings comprised of 44 hikes, 15 ski/snowshoes, 5 paddles, 2 skates and 1 bike. Even though we enjoy much support from the community we still rely on Hike Ontario for insurance coverage without which we could not afford to operate.

For more information, [www.tbha.ca](http://www.tbha.ca)

## ***Voyageur Trail Association***

Submitted by Carole Blaquiere

It has been a busy spring and summer in the north. Our partners in Thunder Bay, have been revitalizing the western end of the trail system and new trail is being developed in conjunction with the Trans Canada Trail Association. The potential Kinghorn Rail Trail project would create a 110km multi-use four season trail linking the communities of Nipigon, Red Rock, Dorion, Shuniah and Thunder Bay. These five communities have initiated an initial Feasibility Study which is now underway, as well as an engineering study to assess the existing bridges along the route.

A new VTA website was launched with many new features such as a updatable calendar and easy to navigate tabs. This was created in conjunction with a Facebook page to bring us into the social media age. Check us out at [www.voyageurtrail.ca](http://www.voyageurtrail.ca) and on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/voyageurtrailassociation](http://www.facebook.com/voyageurtrailassociation)

The Visioning process has been on hold as we wait for news of funding from Ministry of Northern Development Mines and Forestry, Tourism Development Grant. We are hoping to hear back prior to the Annual General Meeting at the end of October. In the meantime a committee has been put together to develop some suggestions for the VTAs 40th anniversary.

We have also been involved in a number of events this summer including a War of 1812 re-enactment event. In keeping with the Voyageur name, a number of VTA members joined in a canoe paddle from Sault Ste. Marie to Fort St. Joseph to commemorate the attack and capture of Fort Mackinac at the start of the War of 1812. Two "Montreal canoes" and two "Northwest canoes" as well as a double kayak left the Sault on Sunday, July 15, under sunny skies to the cheers of onlookers at Bellevue Park. All along the way, paddlers were greeted by homeowners and cottagers on shore, as well as boaters.

Work is ongoing for new signage in both Elliot Lake and Goulais River areas. Local hikers now have another reason to visit the Cobre Lake Trail north of Elliot Lake. Through the efforts of Alan Day there now is an attractive sign at the trail head. It has photos of plant and animal life found along the trail. It also has a map of the 11 km trail. The signage for the Roberston Cliffs trail is currently in the works and will hopefully be in place before the AGM as this will be the featured hike for the event.

Membership remains stable with total 222 and 153 mailing addresses. The breakdown is 68 family, 83 individuals and 2 students.

## **VIRGINIA JOHNSON AWARD**

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Virginia Johnson was a much beloved Hike Ontario Volunteer and office administrator. She had a generous “Can do” Spirit and advanced the goals of Hike Ontario tremendously during her lifetime.

Ron Scanlan is the worthy winner of this award which the Hike Ontario Executive presents annually. Ron came to the Hike Ontario board table as the Bruce Trail Conservancy representative. He assisted us in writing a summary of the Compass 2015 document and accepted an executive position as chair of the Issues Policy and Advocacy Committee. He began to answer and direct the Hike Ontario e-mail and kept our public face current. Ron organized a very successful retreat for executive members following last year and accepted a position as Hike Ontario Vice President this year. He has been notable for his energy, organization and commitment to the goals of Hike Ontario.

The executive of Hike Ontario is pleased to congratulate Ron Scanlan, the 2011 – 2012 winner of the Virginia Johnson Award.

## **VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS**

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Each year, countless Ontarians volunteer their time, energy, creative and professional talents to enhance Ontario’s hiking and walking opportunities. These individuals devote endless hours to serve on committees, champion important issues and causes, coordinate events and/or donate their business expertise and resources to further the positive growth and development of Ontario’s pedestrian based trail network.

Annually, Hike Ontario recognizes four individuals who have contributed significantly to the success of a club program or project in one or more of the following areas: Advocacy, Marketing, Public Relations, Governance, Trail Development, Events, Risk Management, Land Securement or Landowner Relations, Fundraising and/or Hike Leadership.

### **RECIPIENTS OF THE 2011-2012 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR AWARDS ARE:**

#### **Stan and Janna Stanek, Guelph Hiking Trail Club**

Stan and Janna are long time trail captains who have built and maintained a challenging and heavily used section of the Speed River Trail on the edge of Guelph. This trail links Guelph with Cambridge.

The Staneks were obliged to leave their native Czechoslovakia in 1968 during the Soviet crackdown on the “Prague Spring”. Fortunately, they brought their love of hiking in the hills and mountains with them to Canada. They also may be the most traveled hikers in the club, bringing back insights about trails from all over the world.

Their trail section includes challenges from floods, erosion, tall weeds, deadfall, trailhead dumping, creek crossings, and even debris left by homeless persons living along the trail. All these issues have been managed away through the Staneks' diligent efforts in maintaining the trail for the dozens of runners and walkers that frequent it every day of the year.

The Staneks have also been key in working with the landowners to improve the route of the trail and to create a new series of sidetrail loops, such that their section is now truly "optimized." They even drafted their house guests from Quebec to brush out kilometers of new sidetrails!

The GHTC considers itself fortunate that the Staneks have devoted so much of their spare time to the trail and also to leading hikes for the Club and the local Czech community.

### **Dave Potten, Thames Valley Trail Association**

Dave has been president of TVTA for the past three years, graciously agreeing to extend his term beyond two years, until a successor can be found. He has acted as trail advocate, hike leader, and trail maintenance worker.

As president, he chairs board and annual meetings, and communicates with landowners, other trail associations, club members, and members of the public. He has been active in advocating for the trail in meeting with city staff, and he successfully persuaded city hall to give TVTA representation on the ESA trails committee. He is a hike leader for Tuesday and Thursday Rambler hikes and Saturday hikes. He has also participated in training hike leaders. He is a dedicated trail maintenance worker who shows up in all kinds of weather and he has organized training events and work teams for chainsaw and brush cutting tasks. His organization enabled TVTA to be first responders in clearing the Maitland trail after the Goderich tornado so that the trail could be reopened within a few weeks.

Dave's energy and hard work have made TVTA an active and vibrant group that we are proud of and glad to be a part of. Thanks Dave.

### **Jamie and Jan Hember, The Avon Trail**

Jamie and Jan Hember have acted as Hike Leaders for many years with the Grand Valley Trail as well as with the Avon Trail. Their work as web developers and web masters for currently 4 Trail associations, sets a high standard for volunteerism. In addition, it was the GPS work and GIS work done by Jamie and Jan in collaboration with Rob Hember that allowed the Avon Trail to publish the new guidebook with up to date coloured maps. Jamie and especially Jan have been active Board volunteers with the Grand Valley Trail. Jamie also has past ties with the Thames Valley Trail with their web page development.

The Avon Trail believes that Jamie and Jan are worthy candidates for this Hike Ontario Provincial award as Jamie and Jan exemplify the desired code of conduct as hikers, hike leaders and hiking advocates for this province.

## FRIENDS OF HIKE ONTARIO

Hike Ontario relies on donations and the efforts of our volunteers to sustain and further our programs. Invaluable programs such as:

- Young Hikers Program
- Hike Leader Certification
- Safe Hikers Program
- Best Practices Research
- Volunteer of the Year Awards
- Ontario Hiking Week
- Annual Hiking Summit & Conference
- Helping local hiking and trail clubs with organizational and complex liability and insurance issues.

When you make a donation of \$25.00 or more to Hike Ontario, you automatically become a Friend of Hike Ontario and you join a network of people, from Ontario and beyond, who are committed to protecting, restoring, enjoying and sharing the joys and beauty of hiking and walking in Ontario.

### **Friends of Hike Ontario help us:**

- Protect the precious hiking trails and foot paths of Ontario
- Advocate for the responsible management of Ontario's public lands and the creation of more hiking and foot paths
- Encourage conservation and appreciation of the natural environment by connecting Ontarians to the nature around them
- Educate adults and youth and provide them with the resources to inform and motivate them to conserve Ontario's trails
- Encourage walking for recreation, transportation and health
- Encourage good trail maintenance and hiking practices
- Encourage and facilitate the development of trail building and hiking clubs in Ontario
- Maintain and disseminate information on hiking and hiking trails

We graciously accept donations of any amount and our Friends are recognized for the cumulative donations they make over the years.

Charitable tax receipts will be issued for all donations and special events and recognition gifts have also been planned for each category.

**Hike Ontario wishes to thank the many individuals and organizations that have made donations in support of our programs and services.**

**The longest journey begins with a single step, not with a turn of the ignition key. That's the best thing about a walking, the journey itself. It doesn't much matter whether you get where you're going or not. You'll get there anyway. Every good hike brings you eventually back home.**

**Right were you started."**

***-- Edward Abbey***





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