



Trail Markings

GVTA newsletter

Winter 2021

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Update from the Board

by Annie Côté-Kennedy

Happy holiday season!

Earlier this month, we received a donation accompanied by a hand-written letter with the following simple and touching message, "I spent a lot of time on the trail this

summer. It helped a lot. I hope this helps some.” I share this message with you and extend a sincere thank you to all our members who contribute in so many different ways to the safety and maintenance of our trails. Know that your contribution is very much valued.

Like this generous donor, many of us have found solace in nature this year. The never-ending pandemic has also made us realize more than ever the importance of social interactions with people. This point was really brought home when I attended the early December members-only hike. It was truly a fun event! The group was diverse: one of the hikers had joined the club the week before while another was a lifetime member who had not been on an organized hike for years. We had millennials and we had baby-boomers. John and Lisa, two of the hikers, discovered they were actually neighbours, living on the same street, two houses apart! This eclectic group was led by Didier Thevenard, one of our most active certified hike leader. Didier deserves to be recognized for his relentless efforts in offering regular, varied and interesting hikes. I would encourage you to check out the hike calendar and consider joining an upcoming hike. You'll be pleasantly surprised!

Elora Gorge Update

I am also happy to share some good news regarding the Grand Valley Trail in the Elora Gorge. You will recall that last spring we announced that the Grand River Conservation Authority had requested that we redirect the trail outside the park. After a number of presentations to the GRCA board and discussions with the management of the GRCA, we are happy to announce that we will be signing an access agreement with the GRCA that will allow the trail to continue in the park. The trail will be accessed via one of the official park entrances. As well, we will be provided with entry passes that will allow members free entry to the park when presented at the gate with proof of GVTA membership. We will be announcing in January in a separate communication how to obtain an Elora Gorge park pass.



Finally, the anniversary events are starting in January with a bird photo contest! *Photo by Pat Bigelow was taken from <https://waterlooregionnature.ca/event/kitchener-christmas-bird-count-2021/>. Pat is a member of Waterloo Region Nature.*

Do you have your own coveted bird photo?

Here's your chance to share it! Any bird photo taken after July 19 of this year, either on the trail or off the trail, can be submitted to our bird photo contest! If you have no recent bird photo, and would like to participate in the contest, there is still time to take your picture! Check out these [tips](#) for taking photos of birds. Full GVTA photo contest details are provided in the article below.

With our best wishes for the holiday season! Happy hiking in 2022!

GVTA – Celebrating our 50th Anniversary!

By Mary-Ellen Currie

The Grand Valley Trails Association is proud to celebrate our 50th Anniversary in 2022. We've been busy planning special events, hikes, contests and more to celebrate this significant milestone.

Here's a preview of some of the exciting events coming your way soon:

- Bird Photo Contest in January (see details in this Newsletter)
- Family Day Hike in February
- 50 Years of GVTA Trivia

- Earth Day events in April
- Scavenger Hunt in May
- And much more!

You'll see further updates in our Spring Newsletter and our gvta.on.ca website. Are you interested in a volunteer opportunity to help with these events? Please send a note to volunteerng@gvta.on.ca

Photo contest – National Bird Day (kicks off Jan 5th)

We're excited to announce a special photo contest as the first event in 2022 for the GVTA's 50th anniversary year! GVTA members are invited to submit their best photos in honour of National Bird Day on January 5th.

Contest rules

Up to two photos (one per category) taken over a six-month period between July 19th 2021 to January 19th 2022 may be submitted in this contest.

Note: these photos will become part of the GVTA archives and may be used for promotional purposes.

Contest categories

Category 1 – On the Trail

Photo MUST have been taken on the Grand Valley Trail. Photo depicting a bird taken on the Grand Valley Trail. Photo does not need to be taken at a GVTA hike/activity.

Category 2 – Off the Trail

Photo depicting a bird taken off the Grand Valley Trail. Photo does not need to be taken at a GVTA hike/activity.

How to submit photos

1. Photos need to be submitted digitally. On January 5th, we will email the link to all members to submit your photos via a Google Drive.

2. Alternatively, photos can be emailed to laura.e.anders@gmail.com. Please indicate whether the photo was taken on the Grand Valley Trail as well as the date.
3. Photos must be submitted on or before January 19th.

By submitting photographs, you are confirming that:

- You are the sole owner of copyright on this photograph, and you understand that you are granting the GVTA the nonexclusive right to use it in any way that the GVTA sees fit.
- Participants who have modeled or posed in the photo have assigned all relevant rights to you.

Contest winners and Judges

Three exciting judges will be selecting three finalists from each category:

- Bird experts: Catherine Hale and Peter Rasberry, Wild Birds Unlimited - Kitchener
- Environmental expert: Gavan Watson, PhD, Memorial University of Newfoundland
- Photography expert: Brian Dernesch, KW Telescope

Members will then have the opportunity to vote on the three finalists in each category from January 25th to February 1st, via a SurveyMonkey poll. One winner will be chosen from each category, and each of the two winners will receive a prize.

A virtual event will be held on the evening of February 2nd to introduce the judges and announce the winners. More details to follow.

GVTA Hiking Program Update

By Petra Suffling

New GVTA Hike Leaders:

Welcome to our two excellent new hike leaders, and congratulations on completing the Hike Ontario training and GVTA requirements! Brenda Wiegand (*below left*) and Michele Martin (*below right*) have both led successful and enjoyable family hikes for GVTA, and we look forward to their future hikes.



Join our team of hike leaders! We need new leaders as some have retired. Please contact Petra Suffling at hikes@gvta.on.ca for more information on becoming a hike leader.

GVTA Hikes and postings:

Upcoming hikes are shown on the GVTA calendar, with full details and online registration links added as soon as these are finalized. Further details and new hikes are added continuously, so keep checking for updates: <https://www.gvta.on.ca/HikesEvents.htm>

Our hikes will continue to be varied in distance, speed and landscape to suit a diversity of interests among our members.

We have a lineup of monthly Family Hikes extending well into 2022. This is a great way to introduce youngsters to the fun of exploring trails and enjoying nature.

Hikes coming soon include:

December 26th 7:30pm: Boxing day - Lights of Old Westmount. Enjoy a leisurely evening walkabout while viewing festive lights on older homes. Details on the GVTA calendar.

[Trail Maintenance Log Dec 2021](#)

Meet some of our trail maintenance ambassadors

By Jason Thompson

As VP Trail Maintenance, I would like to thank ALL the trail maintenance volunteers! We could not do the work we do without you! Thank you!

Trail Maintenance this year focused on addressing the issues that were identified in the 2020 Trail Audit, including basic trail clearing, increased and refreshed blazing, removal of winter tree fall and rebuilding and repairing some structures. We still have some 2020 Audit items to deal with but have made a terrific start in addressing many of the issues. 2021 was also a year of adding to our GVTA trail maintenance leadership team. Following my appointment in the spring as VP, Trail Maintenance, several new Trail Captains joined the team taking charge of various sections. From time to time, it is important to highlight a few key people that have been doing stellar work for the trail and this year I wanted to mention a few of our newer trail maintenance leadership:



Here we see Trial Captain Rosemary Zehr (above) prepping cut boards for stairway rebuild on Pinnacle section

Rosemary Zehr is a new trail captain of not one but two sections: km 0 – km 3 of Pinnacle and km 37.2 – km 39.9, through the Natchez woods of Black Walnut. Rosemary has a keen eye for trailblazing and has been updating both of her sections in between her busy personal commitments which included a few long hikes in other parts of the province this fall.

You'll notice a new stairway in the Pinnacle section (km 0.3) that Rosemary, Doug (her husband), Ben Scholz (Trail director of Pinnacle), and I have built in the summer.

Thank you, Rosemary, for your attention to detail, unwavering commitment, and perseverance in making the GVT an enjoyable hiking experience for all that hike it.

Ryan Wicks realized early on that he has big shoes to fill as the Trail Director for Black Walnut, having taken over from GVTA lifetime honorary member Nick Kuret just last year...and fill them he has!

Aside from organizing ongoing maintenance of Black Walnut and recruiting Trail Captains, Ryan in consultation with Nick and working with Woolwich Township planned, organized, and implemented a 26-foot span bridge along a Middlebrook portion of his section. The work party was well organized and within the day the bridge was built.

Thank you, Ryan, for always responding promptly to trail concerns and for consistently providing your honest and timely perspective to emerging issues. We look forward to continuing working with you!

Below we see Trail Director Ryan Wick (red shirt) with Nick Kuret, doing the final touches on getting the handrail up for the newly built 26-foot span bridge on a Middlebrook section of Black Walnut.



Tony Kelly joined as a new Trail Captain in Carolinian Crest in Spring 2021. Tony has already organized several small work parties to do trail repair, tree removal, water control and extensive blazing.

Tony, Fred Standeven (Trail Director for Carolinian Crest), Annie Côté-Kennedy (GVTA President), and I met with the City of Brantford staff to build a working relationship as we co-maintain different sections of the trail in and around Brantford. Tony has been maintaining the relationship well and the city is pleased with the direction and new relationship we now have. Additionally, Tony has been providing many ideas and suggestions to help make trail maintenance easier and better across the trail.

Thank you, Tony for your enthusiasm, steadfast determination, and dedication in all that you do for the Grand Valley Trail!



Trail Captain Tony Kelly (brown hat, dark coat) chatting with Graham Pluck, Parks Supervisor City of Brantford, with Trial Director Fred Standeven (grey hat, white coat) and Bob Marshall, Parks Maintenance City of Brantford listening in. VP Trial Maintenance Jason Thompson is in the foreground.

There's just something beautiful about walking on snow that no one else has stepped on.

Carol Rifka Brunt





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