



Trail Markings

GVTA newsletter

Winter 2020

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Message from the President

by Annie Côté-Kennedy

**“Feeling gratitude and not expressing it,
is like wrapping a present and not giving it.”**

As we prepare to end this tumultuous year, we have many things to be thankful for and we want to take the time to express gratitude to our many members who volunteer

countless hours to contribute to the viability of our association. About one-third of our members give their time to the association in some way: from cleaning the trail to building bridges, from leading organized hikes to mailing store items, from preparing this newsletter to updating maps.

This year, since organized hikes were deferred, we placed particular emphasis on trail maintenance. We extend a very special thank you to all who contributed to the betterment of the trail and the future of our organized hikes:



Trail audit volunteers

Jan Hember and Jane Kenyon undertook a mammoth project this year and organized an audit of the entire trail. Jan and Jane organized the work from A to Z, including creating an itemized list of things to watch for, providing detailed instructions to document interactions with landowners and to record existing structures requiring repair or replacement. They developed an audit data tracking form, recruited volunteers, coordinated the responses and lastly, they disseminated detailed lists of the repair work to be done on the trail to the respective trail directors! Thank you to Jan and Jane and the 24 volunteers who helped with this work and who collectively donated some 240 hours to the project. As a result of this work, the trail directors now have a good picture of the work that needs to be done on each segment of the trail. Watch for details in the spring as we will be looking for people to participate in the work parties to help with the maintenance of the trail.



Left to right: Jan Hember and Jane Kenyon sporting the new GVTA tuques, coordinated a complete audit of the trail this fall, enlisting the help of 24 volunteers who walked the length of the trail tracking every sign, plant overgrowth, fallen tree, structure, and general obstruction on the path.



Our hike leaders

While hikes had to be cancelled in the spring because of the pandemic, we are still preparing for the time when we will be able to resume offering organized hikes. Welcome to five new hike leaders who are joining the club's dozen or so certified hike leaders. The new hike leaders completed their training in the fall and are now awaiting the time when the pandemic will be under better control to complete their hike leader certification and begin offering hikes.



Clockwise from left: Charles Whitlock (Hike Ontario instructor), Kevin Kennedy, Brenda Wiegard, Theresa Markus and Joanna Mazur completed the first of Hike Ontario's online course for hike leaders in October. Missing from the picture is Hannah Enns. Thank you to these members for volunteering as hike leaders and to the hike leaders who have so kindly offered to mentor them through their last assignment: Charles Whitlock, Didier Thevenard, Georgia Mulholland and Petra Suffling.



Trail maintenance workers

Over the course of the summer and fall, close to 50 volunteers participated in several trail maintenance parties organized for parts of the Carolinian Crest, the Woolwich Township project and ongoing maintenance of the Black Walnut, with many of the volunteers participating in more than one work party. Maintenance volunteers were recently presented with a GVTA-branded tuque in appreciation for their extensive work on trail maintenance. Angele Barker, a volunteer from Brantford, participated in the Carolinian Crest work party.



Long-term volunteers

One of the structures that needed work on the Black Walnut trail was the Rutherford bridge. The bridge was originally build in 1997 and is unusually long at 192 feet. Located on the Black Walnut segment of the trail in an area that is usually flooded, the bridge has undergone major repairs several times over the years under the direction of Nick Kuret. Nick, who is the former Black Walnut Trail Director, has retired this year from major trail work. However, in true Nick form, he has ensured that all structures and facets of his trail segment were in good repair for his successor Ryan Wicks.



Left to right: Will Lennon, Jennifer Lennon, Nick Kuret, Jan Hember, Anita Kuret, Jamie Hember and Russ Brown. The Rutherford boardwalk, which was originally built in 1997, was rebuilt in 2011, under the direction of Nick Kuret, with the help of crew members seen here. When the bridge was in need of repair in 2020, Nick reassembled many of his old crew members.



Left to right: Anita Kuret, Jan and Jamie Hember, Mackenzie (Nick and Anita's grandson and very abled trail maintenance worker!), Ryan Wicks (new Trail Director for Black Walnut), Russ Brown and Nick Kuret.

We extend a special shout-out to all the long-time members for their ongoing commitment of time and effort to the Grand Valley trails.

We look forward to the New Year and to returning to a more normal lifestyle with organized hikes, social events and no fear of visiting family and hugging a friend!

Happy Holiday Season and a Healthy and Happy New Year!

Trail Maintenance Work Parties - Woolwich Project

by Emily Bennett

In this issue of Trail Markings, I wanted to share a work party experience from this fall. The Grand Valley trail follows the Grand River, and many of our trails provide beautiful vistas of the river and surrounding area. Like many of you, I prefer to hike in forests and natural areas, rather than the road. When the GVTA has the opportunity to take our trail from the road and move it through the woods, it's a golden opportunity to improve our trail system.

In 2018 the GVTA board partnered with Woolwich Township to develop the Walter Bean Trail in Woolwich along existing sections of the GVT. In early 2020, board members approved improvements to a 1 km footpath taking our trail off a section of Middlebrook Road. Funding for the lumber and materials was provided from donations raised for the Walter Bean Trail in Woolwich.

Nick Kuret, former Trail Director for Black Walnut section, was assigned as the Project Manager and the planning began. Ann Roberts, Environmental Coordinator with the Township of Woolwich, met with the landowners and obtained the necessary agreements. We are grateful for permission from the three landowners to develop this new section of trail. A preliminary trail was roughed out through the woods. The work to build this trail would be large enough to warrant three work parties to handle the tree cutting, path leveling, bridge building, stile installation and many other tasks. One of the

landowners provided several loads of rocks and stones directly to the bridge site making it easier to fill up the rock cribs.



Once the lumber was available at local suppliers, we could schedule the work parties. A call went out to GVTA members who volunteer for Trail Maintenance to help over 3 Saturdays in early fall. Volunteers from the Woolwich Trails group also participated in the work parties. The response from the volunteers was amazing and more than enough

workers turned out for COVID-19-safe trail maintenance work.

To ensure everyone felt safe working outdoors, Covid-19 protocols were implemented and adhered to. On the day of each event, COVID screening forms were completed, hand sanitizer was readily available, tools were sanitized between use (many participants brought their own tools), gloves were worn and work was spaced out appropriately. In a short time, the trail was marked, cleared and brushed. Side logging to stabilize the path was completed at the second work party. The final work party handled the building of the two bridges.



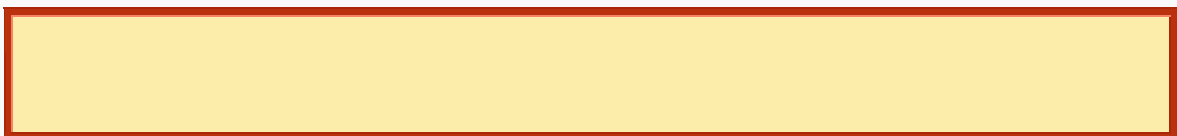


The construction of a third footbridge and a box culvert, along with blazing and light cleanup, are planned for 2021. Once complete, the trail will open.

I spoke to many of the volunteers and all commented on how nice it was to participate in the event. Many of us learned new skills and it was great to see volunteers coming together to build the trail.

We agreed that our members will enjoy this new footpath.

To sign up as a Trail Maintenance volunteer, send an email to volunteering@gvta.on.ca



Attention to all members

Proposed change to the Grand Valley Trail

At its November meeting the Board of Directors approved, in principle, a recommendation to end the Grand Valley Trail at the village of Belwood, at km 30.4.

The rationale for this recommendation is the following:

- The maintenance of the section from Belwood to Alton has been problematic for many years.
- Most of that section is on road.
- We continue to have difficulty recruiting trail captains for the Pinnacle trail (currently we have no trail captains).
- Parts of that section of the trail are not within the Grand River watershed.
- The proposed end of the trail (km 30.4) could connect to the Elora Cataract Trailway, allowing hikers to continue further if they wish to connect with the Bruce Trail.

This is an important change and we invite members' comments before continuing with plans to implement this change. Please forward your comments and any concerns you may have, before the end of January, to president@gvta.on.ca.

*If we are facing in the right direction,
all we have to do is keep on walking.
-Zen proverb*