

TRAIL TALK

Oak Ridges Trail Association Quarterly

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Photo Credit:

Top and middle
Karen Graham

Bottom

Harvey J. Smith

"Lots to croak
about in this issue
of Trail Talk!"



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Every year the Levi Strauss & Co. (Canada) gives back to the community as their workforce spreads out to help various organizations. ORTA has much appreciated the continued offer of assistance for a day on the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail.

This spring, twenty-five Levi Strauss volunteers met ORTA trail captains in the Secord parking lot south of Goodwood bringing their enthusiasm and cheer to a series of work projects. After a wet few weeks several trails were in desperate need of new or improved boardwalks. ORTA volunteers; Martin Earle, Len May, Bruce Cohen and I cut the treads in advance and Len transported them to the two build sites - Secord and Goodwood Tracts. The strong and decidedly younger arms of the Levi group grabbed the wheelbarrows and moved the lumber along the trails, then started assembling the boardwalks. Bob, Noel, Scott and Craig provided assistance and direction. Some of them had never handled a screw gun before but were soon handling them with ease- well done!

While that construction was underway, Anna and Judy led one group, and Wilma led a second, as they refreshed blazes, trimmed branches and resigned parts of the Trans Canada Trail. My only regret is that we were so busy that we forgot to take pix of the activity but the group photo at the end, with smiles, says all ended well. One of the volunteers indicated she first joined us on a work day TEN years ago!

Many thanks Levi Strauss & Co. from ORTA, and your unexpected \$4000 donation will be put to good use. The offer still stands- join us for a hike anytime.

More pictures can be found on page 5.

Brian Millage
ORTA-Regional Director

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Nesting Snapping Turtles! - Hike Leader, Victor Szabo

I was delighted to discover Secord Pond last year on an ORTA hike. What a great place for wild life! I've since been back regularly mostly for birding, but chanced across a pair of snapping turtles nesting there in mid-June of this year. I led an ORTA hike there the day after and the interest from that spurred me on with my turtle adventure.



There were two turtles nesting in the lane way running along the south end of the pond. The one at the bottom left of the picture was laying her eggs in the mud just to the side of the lane, and the other that's hard to see in the top right was trying to lay hers in the packed gravel.

I knew turtle eggs were vulnerable, so I found instructions on the Ontario Turtle Conservation Centre (OTCC) website (<https://ontarioturtle.ca/>) to make nest protection boxes. Fortunately, they are within the range of my carpentry skills, i.e. slapping together 2x4s and stapling some screening over top. I built them quickly enough and placed them over the two nests that day.

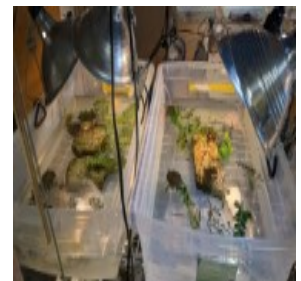


With that, hopefully the first turtle's covered eggs have a reasonable chance of not being dug up and hatching roughly in the September time frame. As per the Wikipedia article, they take 9 - 18 weeks to hatch depending on temperature. Interestingly, the sex of the turtles is also temperature dependent. Above about 28 C they become mostly female, below that male.



The problem was that the second turtle's eggs were exposed - the lane way was too hard - and wouldn't survive unless covered.

When I called the OTCC they said to bring in the eggs. I gathered 11 intact eggs and took them to their wild turtle hospital in Peterborough. Quite the place, dedicated entirely to nurturing/mending native wild turtles! They incubate some 5,000 native turtle eggs a year and release the hatchlings back into the watershed where they were found. If all goes well they will call back in the fall that the hatchlings were released somewhere in the Secord Pond watershed. The pictures show a couple of their incubators and rearing ponds.



New Signs on the TCT

Yes, it is officially the Trans Canada Trail again. The previous name change to The Great Trail was expected to generate renewed interest in donations and participation on the Trail, but proud Canadian hikers resented the loss of the Canadian identity in the name. The original name has been reinstated-"The Trans Canada Trail" is back, from coast to coast to coast.

Whether you hike, bike, ski, paddle or other, you will recognize the TCT signs across the country. To save on costs for sign replacement, vinyl decals were produced to resurface existing signs. ORTA members and Levi Strauss volunteers recently completed the updates across our Uxbridge trails. Wherever possible the TCT uses existing trails, such as the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, across the country.

Our thanks to the Trans Canada Trail folks for their recent \$1200 grant to ORTA for our maintenance and upgrades of the shared trails.



Left: Trans Canada Trail Decals

Stay Tuned for the Fall Rendezvous Hike Day

If you are new to ORTA, you may not be aware of this annual event. As ORTA's guided hikes include slow-moderate-fast designations, many of the hikers don't cross paths on weekly hikes- perhaps at Discovery Nights or the AGM.

Inspired by the fur trade tradition of holding a Rendezvous, or Meeting, at the west end of Lake Superior to exchange furs and trade goods, tales of the season and have a good party, ORTA decided to hold our own fall celebration- thus the ORTA Fall Rendezvous was born. Slow, moderate and fast hikes are held in the morning, led by ORTA hike leaders, and scheduled to end about the same time. Then the various groups meet for a pot luck lunch, usually with delicious personal favourite dishes, and we share tales of our hiking outings and catch up on general ORTA news, and perhaps a few awards.

Stay tuned for more specific details in the fall Trail Talk, but plan to join us in late October. (ps- if you can't hike, you can still join in the fun at the lunch and party, or even help set up the food and drinks.)

Brian Millage, ORTA Regional Director

Below:
Before and after pictures of the trail mowing





Latest news re TICKS ["ETICK.CA"](http://ETICK.CA)

Health Canada is getting serious about TICKS and associated disease prevention. Warmer winters in North America have led to greater numbers of tick surviving. Not all ticks carry LYME disease, but now there are three other diseases associated with tick bites. After being overwhelmed by requests for identification and analysis, Health Canada has created a website and free downloadable app to identify the "wee little beastie" you may have found hiding behind your knee or in other hidden parts after a hike or gardening or walking your dog in the park. They can be anywhere.

The focus is on data accumulation re tick locations and tick ID. Via the website or app, you can take a photo of the tick and send it to them. They will then tell you if it is a "black legged tick", which is the main culprit that MAY be carrying LYME disease. If you have located the tick within the first 36-48 hours there is little chance of having possibly contracted LYME disease, but if later and the tick is now almost buried under your skin- as was mine on two occasions- it would be wise to consult a doctor who will likely prescribe an antibiotic as a preventative measure. If the LYME virus is present, a red ring or "bullseye" may form around the bite site, but not always.

According to the Canadian Press, a new regulation has taken effect recently requiring healthcare providers in Ontario to report cases of anaplasmosis, babesiosis and Powassan virus to their local medical officers of health. These will allow health officials to track and count the tick related diseases that are migrating northwards along the Atlantic seaboard. These three are not yet found in large numbers in Ontario, but cases of LYME have increased considerably in recent years.

Suggestions to help avoid tick bites of any kind:

- wear long, light coloured pants, preferably tucked into socks or with elasticized cuffs. You can more easily see ticks on the white or light coloured material. You may also want to spray ankles with tick repellent.
- stay on well maintained paths away from tall grasses if possible. Ticks can't fly or jump, but ticks transfer through close contact, assisted by your natural static electric field. ORTA MAINTENANCE TEAMS WORK HARD TO KEEP TALL GRASSES BACK FROM TRAILS ALONG "THE OAK RIDGES MORaine TRAIL" TO KEEP YOU SAFE.
- after a day of hiking enjoy a good shower and check all those possible hiding spots for a very small insect.
- also check your canine companion as we know they are constantly sniffing close to the ground (even though we know you are keeping rover on the trail where he/she won't disturb ground nesting birds).

Lastly-DON'T PANIC. THE BENEFITS OF HIKING AND OUTDOOR EXPERIENCES FAR OUTWEIGH THESE CONCERNS. YOU MAY NEVER ENCOUNTER A TICK, BUT BE AWARE.

Keep on Trekking,

Brian Millage

Hike Leader Training—Derek Cowbourne

It is good to see the number of hikes being posted by leaders who took the hike leader training course in April – my thanks to them. The greater the diversity of hikes that ORTA offers, be it day of the week, location, distance, or speed, then the stronger ORTA will be.

Brian Millage and I are planning to run another course in early November this year and we already have six members who have confirmed their interest in taking it. Ideally, we'd like 10-12 persons on the course, so please consider it and let us know if you are interested. In April the course was conducted on a Saturday, with morning and early afternoon "classroom" sessions, followed by a couple of hours putting the lessons into practice on a nearby trail. I expect the November format will be very similar.

At its June meeting, the ORTA Board approved an updated Hike Leader Training Statement. The ORTA website has the updated statement at <https://www.oakridgestrail.org/library/documents/> and it is shown below:

"ORTA encourages members to become hike leaders in order to have a good selection of different hikes and involvement in our organization. In order to lead hikes, all hike leaders must take the hike leader training authorized by Hike Ontario or other accredited Canadian organization, e.g., Bruce Trail Conservancy, Outdoor Council of Canada. If they are not a qualified medical professional, e.g., MD, RN, ORTA requires that they attend a recognized first aid training course within the first two months that they begin to lead hikes, if they have not already completed one.

ORTA will reimburse leaders for both courses after they have scheduled six hikes within the 12 months period after completing their leader training. ORTA will also reimburse active leaders 50% of recertification first aid courses, if they are required. For active leaders, ORTA will also cover the cost (\$5) of the five (5) year Hike Ontario leader certification renewal.

ORTA hike leaders must have access to a phone while leading hikes and must carry a basic first aid kit."

To repeat myself, please let Brian or myself know if you are interested in taking the hike leader training course in November.

Derek Cowbourne—Hike Co-ordinator



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NEW P.E.I. Hiking 8 Days: September 9, 2023	DOUBLE \$4,095	SINGLE \$4,895	<div style="background-color: black; color: white; border-radius: 50%; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> FLIGHTS INCLUDED </div>
NEW Québec Eastern Townships 7 Days: September 24, 2023	DOUBLE \$3,795	SINGLE \$4,595	
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PRICE INCLUDES: Accommodation, meals and highlights as listed on website, all entry fees and passes, local guides and Tour Director. Prices are in Canadian dollars, are per person and include HST.

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Meet Your New Hike Leaders



Victor Szabo:

I'm fairly new to organized hiking, having just joined ORTA last year. I've always loved the outdoors and have spent lots of time over the years doing canoe trips throughout Ontario, enjoying trails on my own or with family whether hiking, running, or cross-country skiing. With previous volunteer experience in a variety of roles with the Stouffville Soccer Club, it was easy enough to volunteer with ORTA and I signed up as a hike leader this year.

My working career was in software development. Upon retirement in 2019, my retirement "project" was to trade the virtual world of programming for exploring the natural world. Along with enjoying the active and social aspects of hikes, I'm very interested in learning about plants, animals, and the natural history of the region.

As a hike leader my hikes are typically mod-fast to fast, 10-12 km, 2 to 2 1/2 hrs, and mostly around Stouffville (so far). Having lived in Stouffville for 26 years I've come to appreciate how lucky we are to have so many wonderful natural areas right nearby. See you on the trails!

Karen Graham:

I'm a certified hike leader through Hike Ontario and the Outdoor Council of Canada. I have a long list of things I would like to learn and do in my retirement. Becoming more active and focussing on my health is at the top of my list.

I was an executive assistant in the post-secondary sector for 30 years and I'm not sure how I sat at a desk all day. I'm now addicted to hiking and love to be in the forest. I live in Clarington and belong to three hike clubs. I'm thankful to have group hikes available several times a week within 30-40 minutes from home.

I can tell that I've become even stronger in the past couple of months from regular hikes with ORTA, pushing my distance and speed. I've participated in several of the hikes at varying speeds/distances and I'm enjoying getting to know the great hikers with ORTA!

A special thank you to Anna, Derek and Brian for their support in helping me get started as a hike leader with ORTA.



Scott Cecchin:

Hello hikers! I'm looking forward to leading hikes on the eastern half of the trail. I've been an ORTA member for a couple years now, and I've been enjoying getting to know the trail (and the moraine) during that time.

I wanted to give back somehow, and leading hikes felt like a great fit for me. I'm an avid hiker, I enjoy exploring, and have fun getting to know the land around me.

There are two main types of hikes I hope to lead: shorter, easier-paced hikes (<10km) that focus on appreciating the ecosystems around us; and more moderate hikes (>10km) that focus on exploring a longer section of trail.

Hope to meet you on the trail!



MEANINGFUL ALTERNATIVES

As part of ORTA's program to Celebrate Life's Milestones
or in Memory of friends or family,
gifts were received.

Levi Strauss Corporate
donation via
Benevity Fund.

Celebrating over 30
years of ORTA.

Anonymous

In honour of Chitu,

Thanks for all the work
you do, Celebrating over
30 years of ORTA. E.C.

Tahir & Fazyah Mohammed



After the AGM in April, Wilma Millage
was able to track down and personally
deliver the much deserved awards to:

Kevin Lowe—Lifetime Achievement

and

Gail Dutchak—
Commendation
Award.

Congratulations to
you both!

Please look back at
the Spring 2023
issue for more
information and
awards presented.



Lake Superior

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National Hiker Award - A challenge for Canadian Hikers

Imagine being a trailblazer, one of the first hikers in Canada to obtain your National Hiker Award and being connected to other hikers across the 5,500 km breadth of our great nation from the Atlantic to the Pacific to the Arctic. Imagine being part of an elite and prestigious group of hikers bonded in knowledge and achievement, climbing the hiking ladder as you progress from National, to Advanced, and to the ultimate Distinguished level with all its accolades and privileges.

So, what is the National Hiker Award? It has been created by Hike Canada en Marche with a number of goals and exams for each level. The Award Program is due to launch in November 2023, then the race will be on to see who will obtain the coveted #1 award position. There will be no disgrace in being in the top 100, forever locked into the historic founding members of the National Hiker Award Program.

There will be two award sections, one for youth under 21, which will be shorter and less demanding, and one for adults which is described below.

Each Award level will have its unique numbering up to the elite Distinguished Hiker Level top #100. There will be several steps for each level, with greater challenges as you work up to the Advanced, then Distinguished Hiker Levels.



These will include some physical hiking challenges, documented trail maintenance and online multi choice exam questions testing your knowledge of long-distance hiking trails in Canada, historic trails, values, safety, first aid, weather, natural history and Indigenous trail connections. We are working hard to set up the online registration process and multi choice exam questions. Progress reports will be posted on our Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/hikeacrosscanada> and on our website: <https://nationalhikingtrail.org/>

What will be the process to get started?

The first thing will be to register online starting in November 2023 and paying a \$20 registration fee for adults, and \$10 for youth, which will pay for the National Hiker Award website portal, the award badges and towards the cost of the program coordinator. Once registered, you can access the program content and your personal log. These will be set out as a physical component and an online hiking skills component with multi-choice questions.

The physical component will consist of a hike, trail maintenance work and working at a community hiking event.

The online skills section demonstrates your knowledge of Indigenous communities and recognizing their importance for wilderness trails, the names and locations of many of our long distance hiking trails across Canada, the history of the National Hiking Trail and how it differs from the Trans Canada Trail, the historic trails such as the Klondike Trail and its importance in Canadian history, the core values of Hike Canada En Marche and their importance to the hiking community, demonstrate basic safety considerations when venturing out onto a wilderness hiking trail and finally, demonstrate knowledge of our natural history and how this can be appreciated and protected.

Each award level will add to the depth and range of questions as well as requiring more physical challenges as you progress to the Advanced and Distinguished levels.

Be ready to challenge yourself to be a knowledgeable and proficient hiker as you proceed from level to level, and be recognized by your hiking peers across Canada.

For details and more information, contact David Francis at david.francis.trails@gmail.com



Bob Comfort

**“All Trails are Open at Long Sault
Conservation Area.”**

Long Sault is completely open to users. I will get at installing new signs soon. I have been in touch with Dan Hope of CLOCA and Murphy Tract is now closed to all users. It will be allowed to regenerate naturally.

There was a lot of damage during Storm of May 2022. The temporary reroute along Concession 10 and Manvers/Darlington townline is now permanent. See map top left. Also our reroute through Purple Woods has been approved. It has yet to be signed. See map left.

Please visit our website www.oakridgestrail.org periodically to check for Route Changes and Trail Conditions. (in the Hiking folder)

Update your guidebook map(s) before you venture out on the moraine trails.

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FOR THIS EDITION

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