

The Trail Times

Oxford County Trails Council

Winter 2020 –2021

Cardinals

A welcome part of our all-season trails experience

Bird images courtesy of Sharron and Richard Skevington



New OTRT entrance signs talk of community and commitment.



If you frequent the Oxford Thames River Trail you may have noticed our gorgeous new culvert entrance sign that talks about OCTC philosophy We are very grateful to the people involved with this project. In the spring the roof will be shingled and sealant applied to exposed wood. A similar sign will then be installed at the Beachville entrance.

Bird boxes.

13 new bird boxes have been installed at the west end of the Oxford Thames River Trail. Built and located by volunteers they follow best practice by facing in a south-easterly direction, have rodent and raptor entrance protection rings and have been dusted inside with diatomaceous earth to discourage insect infestation.

Winter Walking:

Clearly we have had some decent snow and ice these past few weeks. Don't let that deter your fun on the trails. It is always a good idea to invest in crampons or icers that can attach to the bottom of your footwear to help keep you upright! There are many on the market to choose from depending on your needs. We recommend keeping them either in your car to have handy at any given time or with your walking gear. Another option to use, in addition to icers or on their own, are hiking poles. Poles normally come with a boot that you would remove for winter walking, a steel spike bottom for use on ice and a basket foot that is useful in snowy conditions. Hiking poles provide an amazing additional workout all year round. There are countless videos online to watch for proper form.





Trails cred – earn yours!

Our badge program is in full swing and we have awarded a number of certificates and badges in all our levels....bronze, silver and gold. If you find yourself on our trails why not join the program and be rewarded for logging your kilometers. All the details are on our website. It's easy to do and so much fun.

Where your memberships and donations go.

After paying for mandated professional services, necessary for our charitable status, all of your memberships and donations are used for trail construction and maintenance. Other than employing hired-in contractors for heavy tasks we are reliant on our dedicated volunteers who work on the trail and behind the scenes to make your trails experience safe and enjoyable

Hickson trailhead changes.

Trail users starting their hike or biking from Hickson will need to access the Hickson Trail from a new entrance in the recreational park immediately east of the current one. Heavy vehicles using the East Zorra-Tavistock (EZ-T) township utility yard, the location of the original trailhead, are not compatible with trail users so the change is being made for safety reasons. The cost of this work, including the relocation of trail signs, is being met by the Township. Oxford County Trails Council expresses their sincere appreciation for the Township's continued support of the Hickson Trail.



Black capped chickadee



The Hickson Trail

This 9km hiking and cycling trail runs from Pittock Park Rd. to the recreational park in Hickson. It was originally part of the CP rail line between Woodstock and Stratford. Users enjoy woodlands, the meandering, pristine Mud Creek, the remains of a railway bridge and excellent birding opportunities. Trailside flora adds to its appeal during spring, summer and fall. A dedicated group of Hickson area volunteers built and continue to maintain the trail.

Homework opportunities to improve your trail experience.

Like most of us that love our outdoor hikes you may enjoy the birds, bees and fauna that surround us. We wanted to bring your attention to a couple of programs. These have nothing to do with your Trails Council but may be of interest to you.

*One is **David Suzuki's Bee-bnb** program where you can be hosts for some of the 800 species of wild bees by providing essential amenities such as gardens with native flowers and water sources among other things.*

***Project FeederWatch** is an education program through Birds Canada and Cornell Lab of Ornithology asking for members to track and count birds at their backyard feeders through the winter months.*

*Lastly an app worth noting is called **iNaturalist** that allows all citizens to become global armchair scientists. You simply take a picture of plants or animals and submit it. It will then contribute to a database of biodiversity information. They will also answer any question you may have regarding your photo.*

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www.oxfordcountyrailscouncil.ca