

# The Trail Times

## Oxford County Trails Council

Fall/Winter 2022

### Oxford Thames River Trail.

Regular trail users will have noticed several improvements this year resulting from donations and membership income and hard work by trail volunteers. All bird nesting boxes were occupied well into the summer with a good crop of fledglings that have mostly headed south with their parents. As summer gave way to fall it was an absolute delight to see a burst of colour with bird life enjoying prolific diet of berries, seeds and bugs along the trail.

Our thanks go to all trail users who took their litter home and maintained control of their dogs including the removal of poop. Graffiti in the culvert car park continues to be a problem as does illegal dumping. Garbage removal uses trail funds that can otherwise be put to more beneficial use. Volunteer and trail user diligence are the only ways of controlling these nuisances.

It's encouraging to see many visitors using the benches to take in the sights and sounds of the trail. Quiet observation reveals many wonders of nature unique to this complex ecosystem. In this troubled world it's therapeutic to see the local flora and fauna going about its business and that it's worth our understanding and active protection.



***Your memberships and donations at work!***

Trail volunteer, Glen, works to cut brush back from the trail using a new heavy-duty, battery powered Stihl trimmer. It was purchased using donations and membership income to reduce the time and effort needed for trailside maintenance. It's emissions-free, quiet in operation and can do all required trimming on a single battery charge.



***An UTRCA technician helps prepare the pollinator gardens at the east end of the Oxford Thames River Trail***

### Why isn't the trail maintained during winter?

While our volunteers do regular winter inspections, we do not plow or groom the trails. Put simply, it would cost too much. The trails are available for winter sports at the user's risk. Use proper footwear for snow and ice.

***Please join or renew your membership soon!***

***See our web site for the various membership levels and payment options.***

***All memberships and donations are used to maintain and improve our trails.***

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

## **Please keep off the railway tracks!!**

While it may be tempting to cross the CN tracks to access the Oxford Thames River Trail, please don't do it. CN has now increased the trespassing fine to \$600 per person and it could cost you your life.

Winter trail users, deterred by ice and water in the culvert access tunnel, have frequently gained access by crossing the tracks. We are working on making winter access through the culvert safer using a grant from **Oxford Community Foundation**. More information in the next newsletter.

## **A New Year resolution?**

### **Qualify for and claim your trails badge!**

2022 has been a busy year for our badge program as hikers have taken advantage of the dry weather to accumulate kilometers on local trails. Check our website on how to qualify for and claim your badge in 2023. It's a resolution with healthy rewards



## **Getting a grip....**

Hiking a snow-covered trail on a fine winter day can be exhilarating. Adding icers or crampons to your insulated footwear will provide an extra level of comfort and safety. Many sports and hardware retailers offer them in a variety of sizes. Perhaps a good festive gift for yourself and family members?



## **Hodges Pond Open Day.**

October 15th saw excellent attendance at this event to showcase the new footbridge and trail features.

The **Canadian Raptor Conservancy**, a non-profit based near Port Dover, offered visitors the opportunity to get up close and personal with several of the raptor species they care for.

Seen here is the **Great Horned Owl** that's endemic to sub-Arctic North America. Although considerable diligence is required to observe them in the wild, the opportunity to see this beautiful bird and hear about its diet and habitat needs thrilled trail visitors of all ages.



Image courtesy of Ken Thompson

*The **American Gold Finch** is a common sight on Oxford County trails due to the abundance of seeds that are the primary diet of this species. The male (left) has brighter summer plumage than the female (right).*

## **Want to reduce your 2022 taxes?**

Renew your membership or make a donation to Oxford County Trails Council before December 31st 2022 and we'll issue you with a tax receipt for amounts \$25 and over. Making a positive financial gesture to local trails allows us to maintain them for your enjoyment and affirms your appreciation of the work of our volunteers.

# *Oxford County Trails Council*

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