

The Trail Times

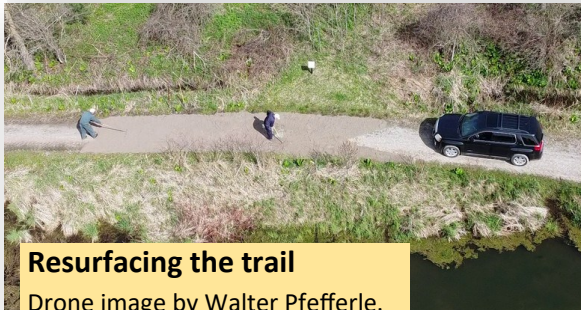
Oxford County Trails Council

Summer 2022

Continued progress on Oxford Thames River Trail.

Ongoing member support and donors have helped us make many improvements to the trail this year. Come check out the new signage, resurfacing of the 45th Line car park and trail sections and improved drainage to make the trail safe and accessible soon after the annual Spring thaw. We've also installed larger directional signs in Beachville to guide new visitors to the trail entrance. Into the Fall you will see additional signage and solid progress on the pollinator garden on the sand hills section. Our volunteer group works tirelessly to improve your trail experience while preserving natural habitat for plants and animals.

You can do your bit by supporting Oxford County Trails Council financially, either by becoming a member or making a tax receiptable donation. Consider offering a few hours of your time to help with maintenance. See our website for more details.



Resurfacing the trail

Drone image by Walter Pfefferle.

Muskrats move in!

While bank beavers can be seen along the Oxford Thames River Trail, the arrival of muskrats in the western pond signals a healthy eco-system. Relax quietly on the pondside bench and watch for them as they feed in the reed beds and go about their business.



Now seating for 12 at the picnic pavilion!



Photographed by Richard Skevington

The **Eastern Bluebird**, a member of the thrush family, is a Spring/Summer breeder in Oxford County. It is a cavity nester and often competes with other species seeking similar nesting accommodation. It was a bird of concern several years ago, but with help from conservationists, the population is now stable. Suitable nest boxes installed in a variety of appropriate habitats throughout Ontario must be maintained yearly. Cleaning in early March removes old nests, especially those of other birds such as House Sparrows, Black-capped Chickadees, Tree Swallows and House Wrens. Dusting the boxes with Diatomaceous Earth does no harm to the birds and their young, but destroys mites that infect the birds.

Eastern Bluebirds migrate south in flocks in late September and return in early March. Some birds do overwinter in Southern Ontario, as long as a good food source of berries can be found. Food during the breeding season is mainly insects and berries.

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



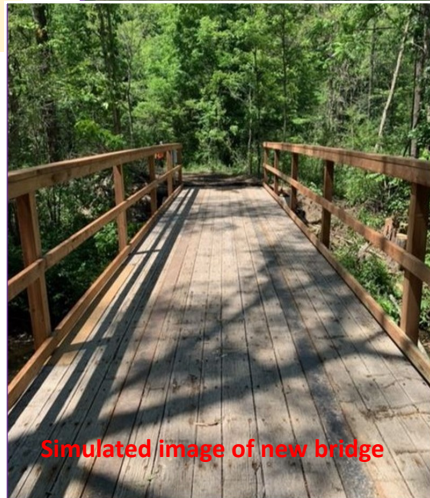
Image by Bill Hughes

The **Belted Kingfisher** is easy to spot along the Oxford Thames River Trail with its assertive flight and staccato call. A kamikaze-like dive for small fish and amphibians is often rewarded by a fresh meal. The trail has become a magnet for birds with a vast array of migratory species in the spring and summer months. The best times to spot birds is in the early morning when their symphony of song delights the ears. The evening can also be rewarding when the light can be almost perfect for photography and bugs make a tasty, pre-roosting meal.

The changed climate means that the variety of migratory birds is likely to increase. Don't forget to look up and watch for bald eagles and osprey as they patrol the Thames River and adjacent wetlands. Bring your camera and binoculars!

New bridge installation at Hodges Pond.

A substantial grant from the federal Healthy Communities Fund has financed the purchase and installation of a new bridge spanning Cedar Creek at the north end of the Hodges Pond Trail. Installed by Ingersoll-based Paul Brown & Son Exc. Ltd., under the supervision of Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, it provides access to a new eastern trail that will eventually form a complete loop to improve user's experience of this unique habitat. Bird and aquatic life continues to thrive. Watch for new signage soon.



Simulated image of new bridge

The plight of the Monarch

The monarch butterfly fluttered a step closer to extinction in July, as scientists put the iconic orange-and-black insect on the endangered list because of its fast dwindling numbers.

“It’s just a devastating decline,” said Stuart Pimm, an ecologist at Duke University who was not involved in the new listing. “This is one of the most recognizable butterflies in the world.”

The International Union for the Conservation of Nature added the migrating monarch butterfly for the first time to its “red list” of threatened species and categorized it as “endangered” — two steps from extinct.

The eastern end of the Oxford Thames River Trail has extensive plantations of milkweed, a plant favoured by monarchs for laying eggs and producing a new generation of these iconic butterflies, so we are doing our best to help them survive and prosper. The planned pollinator garden will help, too.

So, if you see a monarch on the trail please savor the experience. The use of agricultural pesticides, habitat destruction for short-term profits and a changed climate mean future generations of people may only see their pictures.

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