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## Spring 2024

Welcome to our spring edition. Thank you for sharing your love of nature with us and for all you do to care for this beautiful place.

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## Letter from the President - Celebrating Bruce Trail Volunteers

Dear Members of the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club,

As spring blossoms around us, I hope this message finds you well and feeling appreciated for contributing to the Bruce Trail community.

Whether you're a seasoned hike leader, land steward, trail captain, or just getting started as a volunteer with the Bruce Trail, you are helping preserve Canada's oldest and longest marked hiking trail.

We all have the chance to recognize those who dedicate their time and passion to preserving the treasured Bruce Trail.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) is calling for two prestigious volunteer awards nominations.



First, we have the Ross McLean Volunteer of the Year Award for a volunteer who has demonstrated extraordinary dedication and made significant contributions to BTC in the past year. This isn't about a lifetime of work; it's about impactful action now. Whether a volunteer has been with us for a decade or just a few months, every effort counts.

Next, we have the Honorary Membership Award. This award is given to someone whose long-term commitment has profoundly influenced our mission to preserve a ribbon of wilderness for everyone, forever. It celebrates a member whose leadership and innovation have not only been evident at their local club level but have also made lasting impacts at the BTC.

Participating in these nominations does more than honour individuals; it acknowledges that every one of us has the power to make a difference.

So, consider who among your peers has inspired you, driven change, and dedicated themselves to the trail we all cherish. Go online, [fill out the nomination form](#) by June 30, 2024, and let's give our most passionate and innovative volunteers the recognition they deserve.

Thank you,

Julie Scott

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## A Little Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club History

By Richard Edwards

Recently, someone in our hiking group wondered, "When did our local Blue Mountains Club start?" Someone else suggested that I may know the answer. Having been involved with the Club since the 90s, I know bits of history but not the whole picture. The question was intriguing, and so did some sleuthing.

My first research stop was Google to review the basics of the genesis of the BTC. In 1959, Ray Lowes, concerned about the loss of the natural environment, proposed a footpath along the Niagara Escarpment. In 1960, the "founding four" of Ray Lowes, Philip Gosling, Norman Pearson, and Robert MacLaren met and began planning the Bruce Trail. In 1962 and 1963, Mr. Gosling left his job and, with the aid of an Atkinson grant, began planning the route and forming regional clubs, including ours, in the Blue Mountains.

In his book, "Bruce Trail Stories, 1962- 1967 Memoirs/Vignettes" published in 2022, Mr. Gosling relates the following: "The city hall in Collingwood was the only place I could find to host the potential members of the Blue Mountains Club. I met with George Willis, a friendly man who was interested and learned about local history. He helped me contact a dozen or so locals who were invited to a meeting to start a trail club." This event occurred at exactly "8:00 pm on Thursday, July 5th, 1962", as noted by George and June Willis\* in a 1991 issue of the Blueprint, in an article entitled "25 years of the Bruce Trail".

So, it seems to me the evidence is strong that each July 5th, we should be singing "Happy Birthday" to the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club. It's a celebratory time of the year, just after the Solstice and close to Canada Day. It's a good time for a birthday bash! Perhaps it could be combined with our "Cakewalk Hike," which began as a memorial to former volunteers and thus would fit with the theme. Whatever we decide, 62 candles are needed for this year's cake!

A week after Mr. Gosling's meeting, a club executive was formed, and the nitty-gritty of trail building began. The Willis article names the initial members\*\* and pays special tribute to Walter and Edna Blacklock, "who laid out much of the trail between 1963 and 1969" and were among the first to be recognized as "Honorable Members of the Bruce Trail Association."

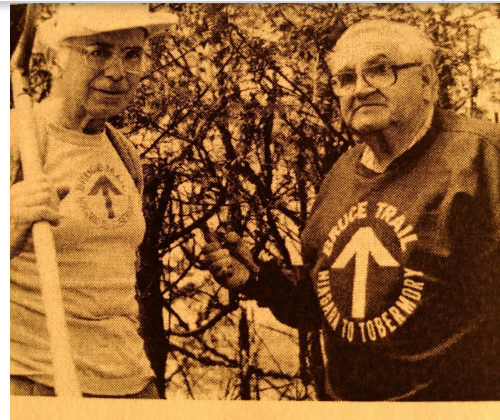
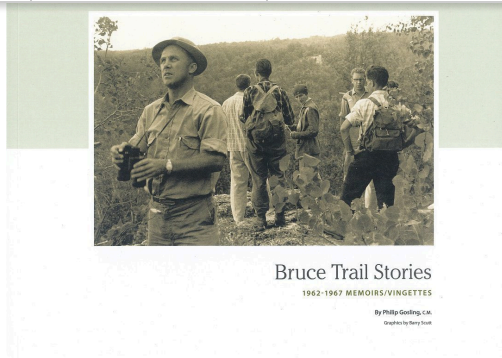
Mr. Gosling also mentions Mr. Blacklock in an interesting anecdote: "After my practiced and rousing talk, one man, Walter Blacklock, took me aside and in his Northern English accent told me he was not a joiner, but he would blaze a trail with his wife and others above the Blue Mountains ski hills and be gone. And that is exactly what happened. Then I heard he had left his job and retired to Scotland. I never met or spoke to him again, which I most regret, but his astonishing contribution lives on."

The trail certainly "lives on". George Willis, Walter Blacklock, and many others, most of whose names are now unknown, have made Ray Lowes' dream possible. On July 5th, we should toast them.

*\* June and George Willis are no longer with us but are recognized by the name "June and George Willis Side Trail."*

*\*\* The article Willis names the 1962 inaugural executive as Les Vipond (chair), George Willis (secretary-treasurer), Len Wambold, John Prentice, Walter Blacklock, J. Allan Blair, Robert Knox, Alf Michener.*

***Want to learn more? You can buy a copy of Philip Gosling's book of memoirs at [the BTC online store](#).***

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## 2024 AGM Summary

It was wonderful to hold our Annual General Meeting in person once again. This year's was held Saturday, April 20th, at All Saints Anglican Church in Collingwood. The event was well attended and included a potluck where Club members could mingle and socialize over some tasty treats.

In attendance was Bob Crossan, who has been a member from the Club's inception in the 1960s to the present. He also participated in a hike from Burlington to Collingwood in 1962, which was sponsored by the Toronto Telegram. On that hike were Ray Lowes, the visionary founder of the Bruce Trail, and notable artist Robert Bateman. That hike was crucial to the founding of the Bruce Trail as it raised awareness of the project to the public and government. Club members enjoyed talking to Bob and gaining more knowledge of the founding of our Club.

Vice President/Secretary Jim Lewis outlined the Club's challenges and successes over the past year and some of its plans for the upcoming year. Successes included the annual End-to-End and Music Hikes, the planting of 120 American Chestnut trees, and the installation of Bluebird boxes. The upcoming year includes an expanded 3-Day Hike with the End to End, a combined Music Hike and Bruce Trail Day, and the establishment of a Seed Orchard.

The many volunteers who make the functioning of the Club possible were thanked. The efforts of Trail Captains, Hike Leaders, Trail Angels, Land Stewards, Board Members, and Committee, Event, and Work Party Volunteers have led the Bruce Trail to be acknowledged as one of the top ten hiking destinations in the world - quite an achievement to be proud of.

Special thanks were given to Jill Doble, who was an integral part of the club while she was alive and continues to support it through Jill's Journey, a trust fund she established to support various charities.

The following slate of directors for the upcoming year was proposed and approved:

Vera Cvetkovic - President

Jim Lewis - Vice President/Secretary

Arie Van Walraven - Treasurer

Michelle McKenna - Volunteer Engagement Director

Linda Finley - Trail Director

Bev Matthews - Land Owner Relations

Dave Matthews - Land Owner Relations

Annette Sandberg - Hike Director



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Linda Hartley - Membership Director  
 Michael Treuman - Acting Event Director  
 Dick Edwards - Director at Large  
 Helen Stukator - Director at Large  
 Doug Kube - Director at Large  
 Sally Taylor - Director at Large

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## Thank you landowners

The Bruce Trail provides an opportunity for people to step away from their busy lives and head outdoors to exercise, connect with nature, and enjoy the scenic beauty of the Niagara Escarpment.

Much of the Bruce Trail is accessible to us only through the generosity of landowners, both public and private.



In our Blue Mountains Bruce Trail section, much of the trail is on public lands, such as Ontario Parks, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority, the Town of the Blue Mountains, and Clearview Township. We very much appreciate their ongoing support and cooperation.

Several landowners deserve special recognition for allowing hikers to walk on their private lands through voluntary "handshake" agreements. Those landowners include The Osler Bluff Ski Club Ltd, Devil's Glen Country Club, Scenic Caves Nature Adventures, Hamilton Brothers Farm Supplies Limited, Walker Aggregates Inc., Blue Mountain Resorts, and several individuals and families.

We sincerely thank all landowners in the Blue Mountains section for their incredible generosity and support of the Bruce Trail.

Bev Matthews, BMBTC Landowner Relations Director

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## Photo Contest Winner - Dr. Kelly-Leigh Thomas

We are delighted to announce the winner of this issue's photo contest: Dr. Kelly-Leigh Thomas. Kelly-Leigh took this photo of a day hunter, a brown-eyed Barred Owl while hiking along the horseshoe bend in the Nottawasaga River with a dozen happy spiked hikers at the Wasaga Dunes. While they enjoyed the view from above, they saw the mallards floating with the current and the brave buffleheads that had wintered on the Bay instead of heading south. Eagle-eyed Bert spotted the owl which had flown past and settled on a nearby branch.



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## Volunteer Spotlight - David Little



I have lived in Collingwood for most of my life. I started working at the Collingwood Shipyards in 1974 and have lived here ever since.

After retiring, I came across an advertisement in the Enterprise Bulletin newspaper for a Bruce Trail hike called "Harts Triple Hell." I decided to join in even though I wasn't very familiar with hiking. Since it was springtime, I wore my rubber boots for this 18 km hike that had three ups and three downs in the Pretty River area. I had so much fun hiking with the group and met such interesting people that I was hooked. I soon joined the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club and participated in almost every hike from then on.

Later, Tom Wilson, our Hike Director at the time, asked me if I wanted to lead hikes. At first, I was apprehensive, but when I learned that I would have lots of help learning the ropes, I agreed. I really enjoy being a hike leader.

I also enjoy helping the other volunteers who organize building bridges and new trails and going out with the chainsaw crew.

I admire all our volunteers at our Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club, and I'm happy to help them as much as possible.

*Are you interested in Volunteering with our Club? Volunteer applications can be submitted online through our website at [Get Involved](#). BMBTC is currently recruiting for an Events Director and team members for events, trail maintenance, communications, and advertising. [Learn more about these roles here](#).*

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## Discovering the Keyhole

By: Richard Edwards



Recently, I took some out-of-town family members on a hike through my favourite Side Trail, "The Keyhole." It got me thinking about the origin of that unique "hole in the wall" and who discovered it: the late Glen Best.

Glen was born, raised, and made a living on the family farm, which abutted the Escarpment below what is now the Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation Area.

As a youth, he spent countless hours exploring the cliffs, cracks, and crevices that abound in the area. Not surprisingly, being so close to nature, Glen became a naturalist keenly aware of the birds and plants of the region. During his youthful wanderings, as he once told me, he found a small opening between two crevices through which he could crawl on hands and knees. This became a hideaway for him and a few

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When the Bruce Trail became part of the local scene in the 70s, Glen got involved in the Club and, at one point, revealed his secret. In the memoir entitled “Scarp, Bay and Sky,” Jack Poste (a former trail pioneer himself), in a chapter devoted to the Bruce Trail, mentions the following: “Glen Best has played a dual role as a landowner and as a working member of the Club. Long before the Bruce Trail existed, he established trails on the part of the escarpment on his father’s farm.



“One day, during a rainstorm, Glen, a Nottawasaga Conservation Authority staff member, and I established the Keyhole Trail. This is still a very popular trail, especially with children, because of the challenge of scrambling into a cave and squeezing through a hole in the rock face. Anyone a little squeamish about the ‘squeeze’ can detour around. It is so cool down there in the summer that when I took my grandson, he declared to his mother that he had been in a refrigerator.”

In the book, Jack doesn’t indicate the date of the keyhole trail opening, but he was active with the BTA during the 70s and 80s so it likely occurred then.

As a contemporary youth might say, “It’s a cool spot for a hike.” The terrain is rough, so care is needed, but once you get through the keyhole, go with your imagination.

*Born in 1939, Glen’s childhood explorations must have been in the 1940s and 50s. Glen was in his 86th year when he passed away on February 21, 2015. His farm was sold when he and his sister entered BayHaven nursing home in Collingwood.*

*The Keyhole Side Trail is marked on Map 22, near km 18.7 of the Bruce Trail Guidebook.*

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## Club Biodiversity Projects



### Bluebird Nesting Boxes Project

The BTC has identified habitat loss as one reason for the decline in the Bluebird population. Additionally, due to competition from the introduction of non-native species (House Sparrows and European Starlings), Bluebirds have a difficult time finding a natural place to nest.

Nesting boxes are designed to give Bluebirds a safe place to nest and raise their young, which will help increase the Bluebird population.

In the spring of 2023, six nesting boxes were installed on BTC-managed lands: three on the Gardner property and three on the Dunedin property. The installations were a little on the late

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wrens. We shall see what occupies the nests this year.

In early March 2024, six additional nesting boxes were installed on the McLeod property to ensure we were not too late in the season to attract Bluebirds. Each installation was provided with predator protection using an inverted plastic bucket. All boxes were numbered for identification purposes to facilitate monitoring. One of our Club's Trail Captains, Andrew Turnbull, was a great help with constructing and installing the nesting boxes.



### The BMBTC Biodiversity Committee is looking for volunteers!

The purpose of the recently formed Biodiversity Committee is to protect and enhance the biodiversity along the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club's managed lands and promote environmentally responsible public access.

The committee is looking for people with organizational skills who would be interested in:

- Invasive species management for the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club's Managed Lands. This is a challenging position as it would involve working with the Land Stewards to identify priority areas and organize work parties to combat the invasive species.
- Performing bird breeding surveys on Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club's Managed Lands in accordance with established guidelines and recruiting fellow birders.
- Developing and maintaining a Seed Orchard (on an as-yet-to-be-determined location) and recruiting a team of like-minded gardeners to bring the project to fruition.

If you are interested in getting involved with our Biodiversity Committee, please send an email to [landsteward@bmbtc.org](mailto:landsteward@bmbtc.org)

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## Secrets of the Trail

By: Kate Jaczko

In some ways, I've been a birder all my life. My mother and grandmother both are avid birders and always had a dog-eared copy of Peterson's Guide to Eastern North American Birds available (there was always one copy in the car and another in the house because "you never know when you'll need it!"). As a small child, I enjoyed looking at the pictures - owls being my favourite - these older copies my family still owns naturally flip open to the owl spread from overuse during my early birding years.





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animals for which Ontario is known (moose, bear, wolves, beaver, otters, etc). One May long weekend, I was at a cottage and noticed a small bird outside the window. Curious, I grabbed a dusty and neglected pair of binoculars that were lying around, fitted them to my eyes, and managed to focus on the tiny creature. I took note of the distinctive orange head and black and white markings. Searching around the cottage, I found a field guide (an ancient edition), where I managed to identify the bird as a beautiful male Blackburnian Warbler (I would later learn that this is what birders call a “spark” bird). Thrilled with my discovery and curiosity peaked, I started looking for other birds around the area and managed to identify over 30 distinct species over the weekend. I was shocked to discover these jewel-bright beauties with abundant colours and patterns. They looked tropical, not something you would expect to see in the Canadian Boreal Forest. It was then I realized I had always been surrounded by abundant wildlife - I just needed to learn to look.

Living in the Blue Mountains area of the Bruce Trail, we are lucky to be surrounded by amazing landscapes with excellent and varied bird-viewing opportunities. What you will see along our trails varies with the seasons. Spring is the best time for birding due to the large number of migrants on the wing coupled with the lack of full leaves on the trees, making it easier to spot our fine feathered friends, many of whom are simply passing through on their way further north. For spring warblers, the trails through the forest along the edges of the escarpment, such as within the Nottawasaga Bluffs Conservation area, are excellent. If you decide to do the larger loop within the Bluffs through the western fields of this Conservation area, keep an eye out for Indigo Buntings, which tend to stick to the edges of forests. For interesting field birds, I recommend the section of trail from Concession 10 South Nottawasaga to the McLeod property. You’ll likely spot Bobolinks, Eastern Meadowlarks, and Bluebirds in the fields on either side of the trail. Lastly, if you are interested in waterfowl such as the Blue Winged Teal or Hooded Mergansers, the millpond along the Mad River Side Trail between Devil’s Glen Country Club and Glen Huron is a great place to see these early spring migrants. In the evening, you may also see (or hear) an Eastern Screech Owl or Barred Owl - I’ve seen both within this section of the trail.

Virtually every section of our beloved Bruce Trail contains these secret wonders of the tree tops. Each new species that returns to us in the spring gives me a jolt of excitement, and I feel as if I’m welcoming back an old friend. Nowadays, with excellent free tools like [Merlin](#) and [eBird](#), you can have a field guide on your phone and even use the audio SoundID function to help you identify what you are seeing and hearing. I highly recommend a quiet walk in the early morning or about an hour before sunset - you never know what you might see, and you just might get hooked!

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## Places to visit on the Bruce Trail in the Blue Mountains section: Keyhole Side Trail

[Map 22 Bruce Trail Reference Guide Edition 31](#)

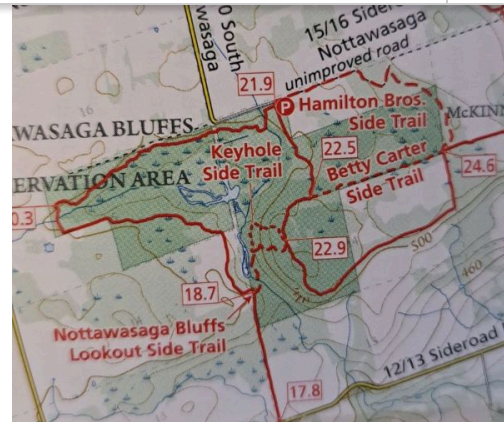
**Description:** The Keyhole Side Trail leaves the main trail at km 22.9, heads through mixed hardwoods, and then turns down the slope through large blocks of dolostone that have separated from the main Escarpment face. To rejoin the Main Trail, you have two options. The shorter route is to turn left and travel uphill about 290m. The longer route is to turn right and travel downhill until you reach the Main Trail at the junction. Another option is to complete the Singhampton Keyhole Loop 9.7km - shown in red on the map.

**Getting there:** Online mapping system may try to end you along 15/16 Sideroad. Don't go that way. From Hwy 124 near Singhampton, turn onto Mill Town Road, then immediately onto Ewing Road,

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**Parking:** There is a new NVCA parking lot. The daily fee is \$10 + HST per vehicle, or the annual fee is \$70 + HST per vehicle.

**Terrain:** The Trail passes through small crevices and narrow openings in the rock.

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## New Stained Glass End-to-End Badge



The Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club will now join seven other BTC clubs in offering a special fundraising Stained Glass End-to-End badge to raise money for our section to preserve and maintain trails. The End-to-End Stained Glass badge is awarded to registered participants who complete the six guided multi-day hikes offered by the club throughout the spring, summer or fall as listed in the [BTC Hike Schedule starting in June](#).

This badge was specially designed by Joe Borges for all participating clubs. Each club has a symbol related to their section overlayed on a stained glass design. Our badge depicts beautiful birch trees in nature with vivid colours and a graphic stained glass background.

Participants must register online for the series of multi-day hikes, led by a BTC Hike Leader, in which the entire Blue Mountains section of the Bruce Trail is completed. This is a paid event with a non-refundable payment required at registration. Due to scheduling challenges, one hike may be completed as an individual. Please try to ensure you are available for all hikes in the schedule prior to registering. You cannot earn this badge by hiking on your own.

Registration is \$30 for members and \$40 for non-members, which helps the Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club support the Bruce Trail Conservancy's Mission of "Preserving a ribbon of wilderness, for everyone, forever."

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## Trail Changes and Notices

Re-routes, temporary closures, parking changes and other notices happen regularly along the Bruce Trail. Before heading out, [always check for the latest trail changes or notices](#).

- [Scenic Cave Reroute \(Mar 25, 2024\)](#)



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## Club Events

Our group hikes this winter were exceptional in beauty. Haven't joined one yet? [Come on out to see the sights and enjoy some wonderful hike comradery.](#)



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All members, whether or not they are participating in the End-to-End are invited to the BBQ social celebrations on Saturday, May 25, at the Highlands Nordic. The BBQ will start at 1 pm to welcome our hikers at the end of day one and socialize with members. The BBQ will run until 4 pm. The BBQ-only fee is \$10 for members.

Please [register in our hike calendar to join us at the BBQ!](#)

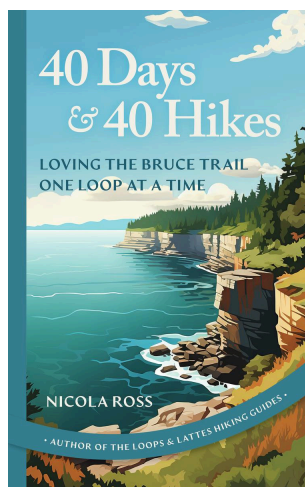
## Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club Annual End-to-End - May 25, 26, 27, 2024

The Blue Mountains Bruce Trail Club **3-Day** End-to-End Hike Event is already **SOLD OUT** with a waitlist. The [2-day hike](#) has ~40 spots remaining at the time of this newsletter publishing. Both hikes will wind their way through the 69km distance of the beautiful and varied terrain of the Blue Mountains section from Lavender to Swiss Meadows. Checkpoint stations will be approximately every 10 km, offering snacks, water refills, and assistance along the way.

The hike fee includes bus transportation to the start point each day, refreshments, a Saturday end-of-hike BBQ, online registration fees, and the End-to-End badge. Details are emailed to participants once registered. Note that these are longer distances and generally not suitable for beginner hikers. For more information, please contact [btcbblueevents@gmail.com](mailto:btcbblueevents@gmail.com)

## Save the date: Bruce Trail Day - October 6, 2024

## New Book Launch Event: 40 Days and 40 Hikes: Loving the Bruce Trail one Loop at a Time - May 23, 2024 - 6:30 to 8:30 pm



Curiosity House Books ([122 Mill Street, Creemore](#)) is hosting a Beer and Book Event with a Q & A and slideshow presentation with bestselling author, journalist, and hiker extraordinaire Nicola Ross as she discusses her new book, 40 Days & 40 Hikes: Loving the Bruce Trail One Loop at a Time.

Tickets are \$25 and include a pint and refreshments. Tickets can be purchased in-store or online [here](#). \*Curiosity House Books Members: Tickets are \$20.

40 Days & 40 Hikes, which was released in early April, is in stock at the store and will be available for the author's signature the night of the event.

## Summer Solstice Potluck - June 21, 2024

Hikers will meet at [49 Silver Creek Dr, Collingwood](#), for a potluck dish drop and then head out to hike. Bring your own plate, glass and cutlery, chair and beverages. We will return to Silver Creek Drive for the potluck following the hike. [Pre-register on the BTC Hike Schedule](#) by Thursday, June 15, 2024.



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## Hike Schedule - June to October 2024

Two ways to explore upcoming hikes:

1. [Detailed Hike Schedule Jun to Oct 2024 \[pdf\]](#)
2. [Online Bruce Trail Conservancy Hike Calendar \(Blue Mountains Club Hikes\)](#)

Always check the [online BTC calendar](#) for the most up-to-date changes for our hikes.



Reconnect with Club members and join us on our Picnic Party hikes to celebrate the coming of summer and the Club's birthday at the [BMBTC Cake Walk on June 8](#).

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**Look for our summer issue on July 26, 2024.  
Happy Trails!**

**Questions or comments?** Email us at [blueprint@bmbtc.org](mailto:blueprint@bmbtc.org)

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