



Trail Talk

Oak Ridges Trail Association

FALL 2026 EDITION



ORTA News Briefing

The summer has started off well with ORTA volunteers supporting the Adventure Relay Event in large numbers. Hikes continue through the summer with new hike leaders enriching our weekly offerings. Why not try out a new hike with a new hike leader?

Looking to get involved in shaping our organization? Why not try out one of our new committees. These groups will be providing input into the direction of the new ORTA Board - you are welcome and encouraged to contribute to YOUR club!

PRESIDENT WELCOME

Greenbelt Consultations

Have your say on the future of hiking in the Greenbelt - complete the survey, and join the information meetings

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Welcome to New Hike Leader Stephanie

Stephanie lead her first hike in the Richmond Hill area in August

SPECIAL RECOGNITIONS

Volunteer Recognitions

Trail Builder Award

Member of the Year Award

President's Message

Oak Ridges Trail Association



Neil Runnalls - ORTA President

Volunteer Opportunities

Throughout the summer teams of volunteers have been out working to ensure that trails are accessible all season long. If you are interested in volunteering for trail maintenance please reach out directly to:

pres@oakridgestrail.org

Trail maintenance includes: trimming branches, cutting back tall grasses, occasional trail blazing, and removal of dead tree branches on the trail.

Enjoy your fall hiking!

Dear ORTA Club Members,

I hope that your summer has been filled with lots of great outdoor activities with friends and family. Perhaps you have taken to the trails close to home, or maybe you have had the opportunity to travel and experience new trails in other provinces or countries. Wherever you may have been, I hope that this season has been full of adventure.

Over the past few months our club has been very active with hiking, and a great deal of maintenance of the trails. Thank you to our hike leaders and to the many volunteers who showed up to keep our trail looking beautiful.

As you begin to think about the fall, I would encourage you to take part in the public engagement process that ORTA and the Greenbelt have initiated to strengthen the future of our fantastic trail. There is an online survey that allows users to point out features of the trail that might need improvement, and there have been public meetings in Uxbridge, Richmond Hill, and Port Hope.

See the Greenbelt feature in this newsletter for more information.

Best regards, Neil Runnalls

Hiking News from Derek Cowbourne

Enjoy your fall hikes, but be prepared for winter hiking...

Hike News and Information—Derek Cowbourne

At the time I write this, 2026 has seen 198 hikes scheduled to the end of September and I expect there will be a few more offered. Last year the number was 191. My thanks to our hike leaders for making this happen and to all of you who are enjoying the range of locations, speeds, and distances that are on offer.

I'm pleased to note that experienced leader Stephanie Corvese has joined ORTA's hike leader team. She and Barb Anderson are scheduling Moderate hikes on weekends, so please show your welcome by registering for their hikes.

Leading hikes is very rewarding, a lot of fun, and expands the hiking experience. ORTA can always benefit from having more active hike leaders, which enables us to offer hikes with a wider variety of locations, speeds, distances and difficulties. While we're always seeking additional active hike leaders, at the moment, there is a particular need for those interested in slow and slow-mod paced hikes.

Please let me know at hikes@oakridgestrail.org if you are interested in taking the certified hike leader course or would like more information.

Winter Hiking Tips

Fall is upon us and it's my favourite time of year for hiking. But winter is not far away and it's a time to enjoy the trails when they are generally quieter, the bugs have gone, and it is easier to spot the deer and other wildlife. While for experienced hikers preparing and dressing for winter has become second nature, for those less experienced here are a few easy to remember suggestions to help you make the most of the season.

1. Always wear appropriate foot-wear! Hiking boots, good icers, and hiking poles will help to keep you safe during chilly and icy hikes.
2. Dress in layers, but start cool! Don't wear everything at the start, or you'll be taking off a layer after the first hill. It's surprising how warm you can be after a short time, especially when using snow-shoes. You can always put on a layer if you don't warm up.
3. Pack some snacks and be sure to bring water and perhaps a warm drink as well.
4. Enjoy yourself! Breathe in nature, enjoy the gorgeous scenery of our trails.
5. Have questions or in doubt, just ask. Hike leaders and fellow hikers are always happy to share their experiences and ideas: but don't be surprised if there's no single right answer!

ORTA Hike Leader Spotlight

Stephanie Corvese



First Hike as Leader - August 21st, 2026

Discovering Hidden Trails in Richmond Hill

Stephanie guided us from an easy-to-locate school parking lot in Richmond Hill through local ribbons of green space. We travelled on groomed gravel paths and then slipped onto hidden trails that took us past minor wetlands and forests that had escaped development.

This 7km trail made for a perfect 2-hour hike during the coolest part of an August summer morning. Stephanie made this hike accessible and enjoyable!

Our ORTA Hike Leaders are the Foundation of the Club

I'm Stephanie Corvese and I've been a proud member of ORTA since 2017. I've been a certified hike leader since 2023 and recently completed the Standard First Aid CPR/AED course with The Canadian Red Cross. I am also an Ontario Certified elementary school teacher in York Region and am passionate about providing my students with outdoor learning experiences and bringing them on nature walks.

My favourite thing to do is spend time in nature and of course go hiking! I also love to kayak, read, bake cookies and travel with my husband. I'm extremely excited to be part of the ORTA Hike Leader Team and look forward to leading hikes inside the pretty Oak Ridges Corridor Conservation Reserve in Richmond Hill. I will be leading moderate hikes of about 7-10 km once a month on a Saturday.

See you on the trails!



Summer Trail Maintenance Activities

A Little TLC for the Blue Bird Trail



Ready for Action!

Volunteers bringing out equipment to groom the trail...



Supporting a trail maintenance team makes a difference for hikers!

This amazing team was comprised of the following ORTA members:

- Barb Anderson
- Debbie Van Herrewegen
- Andy Scheepers
- Bill McCullough
- Bob Comfort (not in photo)
- Scott Cecchin (not in photo)

Thank you team for sharing your time during the hot summer months to keep our trails accessible to hikers!

These are photos of the maintenance ORTA volunteers doing the Bluebird blue trail. Their work included: painting of the blazes, mowing the grass to keep the ticks back, clearing overhead bush, chainsaw and removal of obstacles across the trail.

Our volunteers also checked and monitored the bluebird boxes that are along the one end of the trail in the meadows. The team is now following up by rebuilding 12 bird houses that will be mounted out on the trail in the coming weeks.

Thank you for your amazing work!

Summer Time Trail Maintenance

Volunteers Work Through Hot Summer Days Keeping Trail Accessible



Trails Don't Maintain Themselves....

I hope you have enjoyed many of the ORTA trails this summer. As you pass through well shaded forests you may see the occasional pile of cut trees alongside the path. Either ORTA sawyers or the Conservation landowners were responsible while keeping the trail safe for trail users. While walking through meadow sections, I'm always amazed how the surrounding grass and wild plants grow a few metres tall, but the trail remains easily passable and wide enough to keep ticks at bay- ORTA mowers and string trimmers have been at work there.

Some of our ORTA trail volunteers are shown here- with their favourite tools. Barb and Chris joined us this year and were busy clearing grass on the Goodwood side trail. Barb is also a hike leader. Neil Runnalls, ORTA President, pitched in with Bill, Bob, Wilma, Barry and myself on the main trails in Goodwood and Secord tracts of Uxbridge. New volunteers Jack Parr and Robert Mutiger are part of the next generation of trail captains and are welcome help as many of the existing team are reaching their high seventies and early eighties.

Finally, Bill McCullough secures one of the ORTA self-powered mowers to the hitch mounted platform for easy transport. Where to today Bill- Uxbridge, Caledon, Northumberland? Thanks Bill, and all our volunteers, for all your work across the trail."

Brian Millage

Thank You to Our Donors



Exclusive Member Benefit: Save at SAIL!

We're excited to share a new perk for ORTA members! Thanks to our partnership with SAIL, one of Canada's leading outdoor retailers. ORTA members now receive exclusive discounts on a wide range of outdoor gear and apparel. Whether you're gearing up for a hike on the Oak Ridges Moraine or planning your next adventure, this is a great opportunity to save.



ENJOY AN EXTRA
20% OFF
ONLINE & IN-STORE



20-ORTA

Use code

CC2026101

Valid From

14/09/2026- 31/10/2026

Donations add to the health of our club

ORTA is truly thankful for all the donations that are received via all the different ways to donate; Canada Helps, United Way, My Tribute, Benevity, etc., or by members in their annual membership renewals. Your donations help us keep the trails for future generations. The following are special tributes in recent months.

In Memory of:

William (Bill) Salmon - Landowner
"Bill always enjoyed his activities with ORTA and the positive results we have had working as partners"

Robert (Bob) Hughes
Thank you for the many donations in his memory.
ORTA Member 27 years 1998 to 2025

In Appreciation of Scott Heaslip and Stephen Corr
Scott and Stephen led a walking tour on behalf of the Ontario Professional Planners Institute

Thank you ORTA from The Seniors for Nature Outdoor Club

In Honour Of
Kasie,
Chitu Shankhla,
Stephanie and Trevor.
Thanks for all the great work you do!

In Celebration of Over 30 Years with ORTA!
Virginia McLaughlin,
Tahir & Fazyah Mohammed,
David and Faith Smith

*Extra 20% off is valid on Mountain Warehouse, Outdoor Living, Active People and Animal brand products only. It is not valid on packages, gift vouchers or charity bags and cannot be used in conjunction with any other promotional offer. Offer excludes all third-party brands, and those items not sold and shipped by Mountain Warehouse. To redeem, please enter the promotional code at checkout online or present flyer at any UK store before the expiry date. For full terms & conditions, delivery and return, information please visit mountainwarehouse.com

Volunteer Recognition: Gaye Mas

The delightful Gaye Mas and I joined ORTA around the same time in its long and winding history. She was a hiking member for several years before becoming involved in the network of jobs needed by a volunteer-driven organization like ours.

Gaye jumped in with both feet as our Volunteer Coordinator in 2016. A big part of that role was to greet new members. She would call them up, welcome them, ask about how they wanted to participate, make sure they knew how to join a hike and so on. As events are being planned, all we ever needed to do was reach out to Gaye who would recruit volunteers to help with registration at the AGM, or be part of the Aurora Street Festival meeting potential new members.

Gaye has also played a key role in the Adventure Relay over the years. Pre-Covid, Gaye was part of the critical

timing team ensuring accuracy across the route.

The new Relay found Gaye working on the all important Checkpoint Captain binders - a lifeline for them all! This, in addition to her role as Stage #1's Checkpoint Captain.

Gaye could also be counted on to participate in most events! Her big smile and colourful hair are a welcome sight at any event. After 10 years, including the difficult pandemic ones, Gaye has decided to pass the torch to someone else. I'm sure we can expect to continue to see Gaye on hikes and at events going forward. On behalf of ORTA Gaye, thank you so very much for your considerable contributions!

All the best,

Lissa Dwyer

ORTA GUIDEBOOKS

Looking for an [ORTA Trail Guidebook](#)? Our Guidebook Coordinator, Cathy Souch, helps ensure members and trail users have access to ORTA guidebooks. A long-time ORTA member and enthusiastic supporter of the trail, Cathy coordinates guidebook sales and availability throughout the year. For guidebook inquiries, please contact:

guidebook@oakridgestrail.org

A guidebook is a great companion for exploring the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail and discovering new sections to hike.



ORTA Member Awards

Jeremy Reesor - Outstanding Member of the Year



Wilma Millage and Jeremy Reesor

Long Live the Adventure Relay!

" Jeremy Reesor receives the ORTA Award for "OUTSTANDING MEMBER OF THE YEAR".

In 2026, after a 5 year post covid lapse, Jeremy decided it was time to restart the Moraine Adventure Relay. This had been ORTA's main fundraiser for many years- an annual event looked forward to by members and competitors alike. It was a great success with many former teams and volunteers anxious to join in the excitement.

As a member of ORTA's board, Jeremy has been a driving force behind the return of the Relay.

Many thanks Jeremy- Race On!"

Photo on Right:

Pictured here are Jeremy, George and Denise Jones (our generous Gore's landing hosts), and the Scottish piper.

Many thanks Jeremy- Race On!"



ORTA Member Awards

Scott Cecchin Receives Trailbuilder Award



Keeping the Trail Alive in the Eastern Section

Scott Cecchin of Peterborough recently received the ORTA TRAILBUILDER AWARD for his work maintaining the ORTA trails in the Northumberland region at the east end of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail.

In addition to trail maintenance, Scott leads hikes in this forested area north of Cobourg introducing ORTA members and the public to the winding, tree covered trails. Following the presentation, Wilma Millage and several hikers joined the trek."

Scott pictured second from right.

Fall Photo Moments

This is one of the best times of year to take photos on the trail. Send in your best fall photo and we will look to publish them online and in the next newsletter. Feel free to send your photos to:

pres@oakridgestrail.org

Or, if you know how, post your photos on **Facebook** with the hashtag **#ORTAfallphotos** or simply **#OakRidgesTrail**

Hit the trails and take a minute to capture your best moment on the trail!

A Fall Walk in North Walker Woods

Take the time to notice the diversity of life...

Funghi Galore In Walker Woods

What beautiful days we have had for walking now that some of that high humidity weather is past us. Brian and I went for a walk in one of our favourite areas recently and were pleased to see so many types of fungi around at the side of the blue trail there. We saw lots of them, but chose just a few to share here as well as a few other pictures of nature's beauty in the fall. It seems this is a great fall for lots of fungi too be seen everywhere. More recently, we were in one area where we saw 5 puff balls! A very unusual sight.

But, back to Walker Woods....

As hikers, we don't often take the time to look at all the interesting things that are all around us as we trek the trails. This particular day, we were focused on enjoying those items. I am not familiar with all the names of the individual fungi but if you can identify any of the pictures with labels, please share them with me.

I hope you have the opportunity to get out and enjoy a relaxed on the trails to enjoy the beauties of nature around us.

Wilma



News from the Greenbelt Foundation

Don't miss your chance to help the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail!

ORTA, in collaboration with the Greenbelt Foundation, is leading the first major public engagement process in more than two decades to strengthen the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail. We are part-way through the public consultation process, and we've heard from many people through the community workshops and/or the online survey – big thanks to those of you who have already participated!

So far, we've heard what people love about this trail, from favourite sections and wildlife to the volunteers that keep it going. We've also heard what's not working, like on-road sections, faded signage and aging boardwalks, along with ideas for the future.

If you've been holding back for any reason, we encourage you to add your voice! More people participating means the process has a stronger voice, and a stronger voice is what helps make the case for funding and resources. This matters because the results of this consultation will be used by the Greenbelt Foundation, ORTA and others to demonstrate community priorities and advocate for the funding and resources this trail needs, one of the province's most significant trail systems. The more people participate, including repeating what's already been said, the more we can show that people are invested in and care about the trail's future.



It's important we hear from you. The deadline for feedback is October 12, 2026. Go directly to the survey online here: <https://oakridgesmorainetrail.mysocialpinpoint.com>.

We're looking forward to hearing from you! Also please encourage your friends, family, and others in your network to share their thoughts. We will share a summary of what we heard in early 2027.

Article Submitted by:

Samantha Bennett
Program Coordinator,
Greenbelt Foundation



For more information about the Greenbelt visit:

www.greenbelt.ca

