

2024 Trails Festival
June 1st
Save the date!

The Trail Times

Oxford County Trails Council

Spring 2024

“More homes built faster” acts



Trail volunteers installed seven new bluebird/ tree swallow and two new screech owl nest boxes this spring. All existing nest boxes were cleaned out ready for the arrival of migratory birds. The Oxford Thames River Trail and wetlands provide a near-perfect habitat and an ideal location for bird watching.

Only a big Cat® will do.....



Ducks Unlimited and Stewardship Oxford contracted with Paul Brown and Sons Excavating Ltd. to remove a large willow tree from the Thames River at the eastern end of the Oxford Thames River Trail in mid February. The fallen tree partially blocked the river causing flooding and localized erosion of the trail surface that will be repaired by a future work party. Trail users may notice that this consortium also dug several new ponds in the wetlands to provide more aquatic habitat and improved water level control.

The Tree Swallow



Image and text: Richard Skevington

One of our first insect eating birds to return in the spring, typically arriving around March 15th. Adults are spectacular with bright, glossy blue-green backs and white underparts. Young birds (hatched the previous year) are brownish green on the back. They nest in cavities in dead standing trees or in bird houses designed for them or Eastern Bluebirds. All our swallow species have declined considerably in recent years, likely related to a massive, global decline in insect abundance.

Fortunately, Tree Swallows have declined less than some of our other swallows so are still a common sight along waterways that have nearby standing dead trees. Tree Swallows feed on flying insects such as midges, mosquitoes and small beetles.

A message from our President.



June 1st 2024 is International Trails Day and Oxford County Trails Council is well advanced with our own plans for this special day of local festivities. Branded as **“Take a Hike, Oxford!”** we’ll be offering no fewer than four locations in Oxford County where people can come to learn more about our wonderful trails network and participate in a wide variety of activities designed to bring nature, and our shared responsibility to protect it, deeper into our lives. Combining knowledge, physical and mental health is vital to our wellbeing and we recognise this starts from an early age and can last a lifetime.

So, the activities at our four public sites will feature fun for kids and parents while catering for those who wish to explore each trail, with or without a guide, and perhaps capture their experiences with their camera or other mobile device. We’ve teamed up with several Woodstock area partners to allow up-close and personal and hands-on experiences to encourage a broader understanding of local nature, our environment and the many related, local resources available to us.

The four locations we have selected are as follows:

- ◆ **Herbert Milnes Park Woodlot : Patullo Avenue, Woodstock.**
- ◆ **John Lawson Trail, Wonham St. South, Ingersoll.**
- ◆ **Hickson Trail – North, 99 Lovey’s St., Hickson.**
- ◆ **Oxford Thames River Trail, 454779 45th Line, Beachville.**



Each location will be open from 10am to 2pm, rain or shine and will feature sanitation and hydration facilities. Bring your own water bottle, snacks, bug spray, sun screen and outdoor foot ware. Free parking will be available.

We’d like to thank our event sponsors who have made this festival free of charge for visitors.

Be sure to check our website and Facebook page for more details and event updates.

Download the latest Oxford County trails map here:

<http://www.oxfordcountyrailscouncil.ca/2023OxfordOutdoorsBrochure.pdf>



Vernal ponds are common on Oxford County trails.

Winter snow and rain fill the ponds to provide a spring habitat for breeding frogs, toads, salamanders and turtles that hibernate in the bottom mud. Spring and warming water can result in a breeding frenzy with egg and spawn laying accompanied by a cacophony of chirps and croaks. As the heat of summer dries out the pond, a new generation of pond residents thrives in the mud, roots and leaves and waits to repeat the cycle the following year.



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www.oxfordcountyrailscouncil.ca

