

# The Trail Times

from the Oxford County Trails Council  
Winter 2025

## Upper Thames River Water Quality Improvement

The Thames River and its headwaters, that parallel many trails in Oxford County, is classed as a “Grade D” river meaning that fish, bivalves and crustaceans it hosts are not suitable for human consumption. One of the causes is the phosphorous, a nutrient contained in inorganic and organic fertiliser used on farms to increase crop yields. Upper Thames River Conservation Authority has recently launched a four-year program to reduce the amount of phosphorous entering the river and its tributaries from farm fields using 4R practices (right source, right rate, right time, right place). Reducing phosphorous in the river will reduce algal growth and encourage natural water weeds to thrive, oxygenate the water and provide more shelter for aquatic fauna. Along with adjacent wetlands restoration, it’s another important step forward in making our riverside trails environment healthier and even more enjoyable.



## Being One with Nature: The positive effects of forest therapy.

In December 2024, McMaster University in Hamilton released a blog on the health benefits of spending time on forest trails. Most Oxford County trails pass through forests and woodlands and enjoying them with your eyes and ears can significantly improve your mental disposition and general well-being. Studies by McMaster, and supported by Southwestern Public Health, suggest immersive trail experiences can lower blood pressure and clear one’s mind of the negativity fed to us by the media. Next time you are on an Oxford County trail don’t just “do the kilometers” but slow down, look, listen and appreciate nature’s bounty. It’s free and you’ll feel mentally and physically better.



image: Richard Skevington

### Red-tailed hawk

Our most common hawk seen year-round. It can be seen sitting on posts, trees, hydro wires or soaring in the sky. Their large nests can be seen high in treed woodlots. Rodents and small mammals, including rabbits and squirrels comprise their diet.



# Trails in Winter

Positive user experiences, year-round, are the focus of those who build and maintain Oxford County trails. When it's not too cold, trail users can use the many benches to rest and enjoy their immediate winter environment that's starkly different from other seasons. Winter birds, animal tracks in the snow and perhaps the glimpse of a beaver or muskrat are rewards available to all. Behind the scenes, those who maintain the trails are busy bringing in supplies ready for spring, arranging work parties and keeping the trails safe. Many different local organisations work cooperatively during the winter to formulate short and long-term plans focused on improving the user experience. While many animals hibernate, trail-focused humans remain hard at work!



## Upcoming Events - Save the Dates

Be sure to visit Oxford County Trails Council's booth at the **Woodstock Recreation and Leisure Fair on Sunday March 2nd** between 1pm and 4pm at the Oxford Auditorium, 875 Nellis St., Woodstock. Free trail maps, talk to our volunteers and a chance to win a \$50 gift card door prize.

Planning is underway for the **2025 Oxford County Trails Festival on Saturday June 7th**. A single location this year and a return of last year's most popular attractions.

*Watch for more details.*



*Oxford County Trails Council*

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