



Friends of
BLUE MOUNTAIN -
BIRCH COVE LAKES

The Blue Mountain NEWS

Photo: C. McKellar

Vol. 23 Winter 2025

A NEW YEAR, RENEWED ENERGY: A MESSAGE FROM FRIENDS CHAIR

Hello loyal supporters of the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness,

First, my apologies as you have not heard from us since summer. We had some new Board members to get oriented, and then back-to-back elections have kept us busy. Hopefully, we are now back on track and you should get regular updates in 2025.

Since the conclusion of the Municipal election in October, we have been busy connecting with new councillors and setting up meetings with them to help them get familiar with the incredible opportunity presented by a proposed National Urban Park at Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes. We had just begun to make some headway on that front when a Provincial election was announced. So now we are also getting ourselves introduced to a new batch of MLAs. Our goal is to meet with all new councillors and MLAs that surround the wilderness area by the end of January and to reconnect with returning councillors and MLAs as soon as possible. We also have a meeting scheduled with our new Mayor, Andy Filmore.

There will be more to report on all of this in our next newsletter in early spring o2025. Our Big Backyard Speaker series has returned. Our first speaker will have happened by the time this letter arrives. We hope to be accessing the newly renovated Keshen Goodman Library for these events, along with other venues in the communities surrounding the wilderness area. Stay tuned and watch for event updates in your mailbox.

We wish we could report on progress with the park establishment process since our last update, but for various reasons there have not been any stakeholder meetings since last spring. We have continued to stay in touch with our contacts at Parks Canada, HRM, the Province and the Nature Trust and have had



Photo: I Barrett

several meetings with various members of these groups. They all assure us that the work is progressing. Hopefully, we can report on more substantial activity in our next update.

In the meantime, we wish you all a wonderful New Year. Sign up for our hikes on our website, join us at our speaker events, and keep an eye out for more event announcements coming soon.

Mary Ann McGrath, Chair of Friends

BIG BACKYARD SPEAKERS SERIES RETURNS ON JANUARY 22

With the start of 2025, Friends is back to hosting its HRM Big Backyard speakers series.

The first event is set for **Wednesday, January 22, at 7 p.m.** at the **Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre**

In a time where wildlands are dwindling, and many people live their whole lives out of context from the natural world we intrinsically belong to and depend on, restoring and tending our ancient ways of being in connection with nature is essential to human survival.

Join **Arnaud Gagné** from **Connection Pathways** for a presentation on deep nature connection, mentoring, ancestral skills and cultural repair in service to the Earth and Future

Everyone is welcome, and it's free. For more information, contact info@bluemountainfriends.ca or visit bluemountainfriends.ca



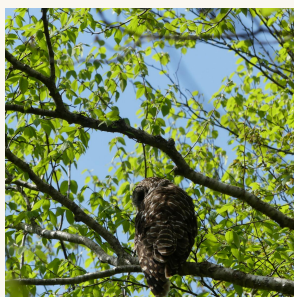
The poster features the logos for 'Friends of Blue Mountain - Birch Cove Lakes' and 'Connection Pathways - Ancient Skills & Wisdom for Modern Times'. The main title is 'Friends of Blue Mountain Speakers Series'. Below the title is a photo of Arnaud Gagné, a man with a beard wearing a cap and a jacket. The title of his talk is 'Rewilding the Urban Soul'. At the bottom, the event details are listed: 'Wednesday January 22, 2025 7:00PM Bedford Hammonds Plains Community Centre Activity Room, 2nd Floor, 202 Innovation Dr, Bedford'. A small paragraph of text describes the talk as a presentation on deep nature connection, mentoring, ancestral skills and cultural repair in service to the Earth and Future.

A FAMILY-FRIENDLY WALK submitted by Wendy McDonald

When talking about the unmanaged trails within the Blue Mountain-Birch Cove Lakes Wilderness Area, we often use the terms frontcountry and backcountry. One of my recent discoveries is the frontcountry **Brookline Drive Trail** or the Black Duck Brook Trail, named after the brook adjacent to the trail. Years before development, this old coach or lumber track alongside the brook was popular with cross-country skiers in the winter and birders in the spring and fall.

As the Bedford West housing development has grown, this improved trail has become more popular. In order to allow the many local residents and visitors easy access, several bridges had to be built to cross the brook and the trail corridor runs along the brook from Terradore Lane to the last bridge below Cairnstone Lane, a steep access path from that cul-de-sac.

The sudden heavy rains of 2023 overflowed the normally quiet brook and damaged most of the bridges and the trail bed. The trail was closed briefly but is back in service, thanks to HRM. For those who prefer a flat, gentle walk, this is a popular front-country route within the concept map for the National Urban Park. Some residents enjoy the walk daily with their dogs and any I have encountered are always on leash.



To explore this trail, you can park at Brookline Trailhead Park, Brookline Drive, off Larry Uteck Drive, and head towards the entrance to the trail beyond this large parking lot. HRM plans to post a map soon. This sloping access point is approximately midway along the trail.

Once down on the trail, you can venture to the right towards the Terradore Lane end or left to a unique arch created by a fallen tree near the last bridge. The entire trail is no more than one kilometer in length. And note the bridge where you started out, it can be confusing the first time exploring.

Keep your eyes and ears tuned if you enjoy nature, you may see or hear an owl. This is not a common



sight during the day, but it may make its presence known to you. On two of my recent walks, I have been fortunate to see and hear the 'local' owl! And come spring, watch for our common wildflowers and the many ferns growing in the shade of the Acadian forest. Download and make use of the free app iNaturalist.ca to help identify new and familiar plants or trees. Another free App, Merlin, will help identify the local bird songs.

Enjoy this family-friendly trail in all seasons. You cannot get lost!

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: ROBIN MULLIN

Over twenty years ago was the first time Robin Mullin hiked the area that since 2009 became the Blue Mountain Birch Cove Wilderness Area. He stumbled across it while hunting down a geocache—a pay phone hidden in a log, one of the more unique ones he's found. It was a gorgeous hike, and he kept going back to try to find the trail around Ash Lake but it eluded him. It took about six attempts for him to find it as it kept petering out.



Since moving to Clayton Park in 2013, Robin has enjoyed the solitude of exploring the area on foot, snowshoe, ski and by canoe, sometimes with multiple outings in a week. "I was concerned with the unplanned development and trail erosion I was seeing resulting from increasing use. I wanted to do something tangible to make a difference, so I joined Friends in 2019 and fully embraced the vision of seeing the area become a properly managed park."

Friends was developing a Hike Leader program and Robin worked with Mark Young and Bruce Chanter to get the program going. Robin has participated in portage trail maintenance of the Birch Coves Lake circuit with Canoe Kayak Nova Scotia's Portage Committee, whom he also volunteers with. He particularly enjoyed working with a Search and Rescue Team and other Friends Hike Leaders to run a remote aid station as part of the Wild 10K Run last Spring.



"Friends appears to be the only group fighting to realize the full geographic potential for the National Urban Park. Restricting the Park to the current Wilderness Area means excluding the majority of the Birch Cove Lakes that make this area so special." Robin's commitment to conservation prompted him to want to do more. He took on the role of Board Recording Secretary in 2020. With his retirement from a career in consulting, volunteering with Friends has been the perfect channel for Robin's administrative capabilities, outdoor leadership experience and passion for sharing his love of the natural world with others. Robin often comments on the beauty of the Wilderness Area and the need to protect it for future generations.

"Taking my kids hiking and paddling in BMBCL has been a source of joy and the bonds form from shared experience of life in the woods. I recently took my 4-year-old granddaughter on an overnight canoe trip in the Cox Lake area. I long for this special place to be protected as a place where my grandkids and their kids can find their place in nature."

Friends is saying good bye to Robin as he and his wife, Darlene, move closer to family in New Brunswick. From afar, Robin will continue to follow and cheer on the designation of BMBCL as a premier National Urban Park.

GUIDED WINTER HIKES IN BMBCL

Friends has several hikes planned this winter. Each one offers a unique experience in BMBCL. These are wonderful opportunities to learn more about this critical wilderness in HRM, meet new people and enjoy the winter season.

- Ash Lake, January 25
- Charlies Lake Loop, February 1
- Three Lakes Loop, February 08
- Susies Lake West, March 1
- Blue Mountain Summit, March 15



Length and time vary. Registration is required. Space is limited. Click the button below or visit bluemountainfriends.ca

Hike Schedule and Registration

JOIN HIKE NOVA SCOTIA

Friends of BMBCL is a Hike Nova Scotia member group. It is through Hike Nova Scotia Friends supporters can make donations to BMBCL. But did you know you can also become an individual or family member by visiting their website hikenovascotia.ca



Hike Nova Scotia is the voice for those who hike, walk (Walk Nova Scotia) and snowshoe as well as those who build and maintain hiking trails. Membership includes a discount at several local venues and a preferred rate for the upcoming annual Hike Summit in Bridgewater, May 30 - June 1, 2025.

Membership has its benefits including a regular e-newsletter, access to special hikes or events, and a growing list of local discounts.

THANK YOU FRIENDS

A big heartfelt thank you for the countless volunteer hours of hike leaders, trail stewards, board members, committee members, past and present, and membership and event team supporters over the past year. Thank you to photographers, communications and social media experts, supporters that set up and take down our booth at community events and much more.

Thank you for your continuing contributions so that residents and visitors are able to enjoy our Big Backyard! Every moment, hour and dollar makes a difference.



cherish the beauty in your backyard

SUPPORT BLUE MOUNTAIN-BIRCH COVE LAKES WITH A DONATION. BE A PART OF MAKING THIS WILDERNESS A NATIONAL URBAN PARK.

[DONATE TODAY](#)

B. Levy photo

CONTACT US: Let us know what you think.
Send comments or pictures to info@bluemountainfriends.ca

All previous editions, starting in 2018, can be viewed [on our website](#).



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