



Trackin'

The Chautauqua Rails to Trails Newsletter

Summer 2004

From The Locomotive

Another year of frantic springtime activity has begun. The work on the trolley line from Mayville to Quilliam Rd will start as soon as the trail dries out enough to get machinery into the areas that need drainage etc.

There is a strong possibility that this work can be completed this year and within budget. Work across 430 towards Mayville has already been initiated behind Family Health Services and will be extended this summer as soon as the drainage work done last fall takes effect.

There is great anticipation over the work to be done along the whole Sheman to Brocton sections of the Ney and Sheldon Trails with cooperative agreements included in the last T-21 grant received by the Village of Mayville.

The pressing need for the new year is still an injection of fresh blood for Board and volunteer activities. The present Board members are a group that has worked for a number of years and needs the support and creative juices of new members.

Please consider offering your time and energy to keep the dream of perpetual greenways alive. Your contributions of time and resources are essential to this vital task. Let us all hope for peace and prosperity in the months ahead.

Robert Berke, *President CRT*

Fun-For-All Summer Nature Series

Co-sponsored by Jamestown Audubon Society (JAS), Roger Tory Peterson Institute (RTPI), Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy (CWC), and Chautauqua Rails-To -Trails (CRT)

See back page for schedule

Dancing With Geese



This may look like a dance session, but it is really a defensive mother goose protecting her nest. When on the trail this time of year, one might be careful of disturbing the nesting/reproductive activities of the creatures living on or near the trail. They might let you know about your transgression. The goose thought Jim Burnett got too close to a nest. Avery Ann Jones of Westfield had a camera handy. Our thanks to them. (The pond near Titus Rd on the Sheldon Trail.)



Treechuck?

By: Jim Fincher

The other day, Tom Baer and I were walking on the Portage trail between Parker and Quillian Roads. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw a big fat squirrel climbing about 30 feet up a tree. On second look, I saw it wasn't a squirrel at all. It was a woodchuck! I called to Tom to make sure what I was seeing was real. He was surprised, too.

When I got home, I got on the Internet and learned that woodchucks are a member of the squirrel family, and that woodchucks are known to climb trees. They do so to escape predators and to forage for food. So, woodchucks do climb trees. I would guess not many of us have seen it.

Earlier last week as I was driving from Sherman to Mayville, I saw a crow 'dive-bombing; what appeared to be a buzzard. As the birds came closer to the road, I could see the object of the crow's wrath was a bald eagle. I haven't seen a bald eagle, or an eagle of any kind, around this area before.

I guess the moral of the story is; when walking on or near the trails, keep your eyes open and stay alert. Lots of interesting different things can be seen. Sure wish I'd had a camera in my pocket.

Wild Flowers

**If wild flowerw are
your thing , get out
there on the trails.**

**Last weekend the trail
sides were loaded.**

For descriptions of the different
CRT trails go to
www2.cecomet.net/crtt
and click on **Trails**

Hey! Birders

by Bill Fugagli

If you would like to see some of the "Birds of the Tropics", but don't have the time and/or the money to travel to the tropics, Kay and I discovered a way to do this.

Recently we traveled to Niagara Falls, Ontario to visit the recently opened **Niagara Falls Aviary**. It is so easy to get to: cross the Rainbow Bridge and take the first right turn. You can see the building from the checkpoint as you enter Canada.

It is similar to the Butterfly House. In the main section many of the larger tropical birds are moving freely in somewhat of a natural setting. Some of the walkways are elevated. This enables visitors to see the birds up close and another nice feature is that you get to see the top of the birds.

A really great way to spend a few hours. To top it off spend some time on the wonderful bike trail from Fort Erie to Niagara-On-The-Lake.

So enjoy the birds and a nice bike ride

When the politicians complain that TV turns the proceedings into a circus, it should be made clear that the circus was already there, and that TV has merely demonstrated that not all the performers are well trained. [Edward R. Murrow \(1908 - 1965\)](#)

**Have You Renewed
Your 2004 CRT
Membership Yet?**

If not, please take a moment and do so soon. We rely on **your** support.

Fincher Report

By

Jim Fincher, Trail Manager

The big news of course, is the Portage/Trolley line trail. Our search for some grant money was successful and as soon as the trail dries up enough to work on, we'll have some heavy equipment restoring the ditches on either side of the Trolley line. Drying out the trail is the big thing to do, of course, and repairing the railbed where the beavers caused it to wash out is another fairly large chore. But with the right equipment and the right knowledge, we can do all that needs to be done. And we'll do it right, so it doesn't need to be done again in a few months.

We'll need some work parties to get everything done, but we can't schedule them till we get further along in the trail building process. We need to install gates, benches, and signs and we'll have a beaver

baffler to install. So keep your eye peeled for the announcement of a work party. It ought to be fun and will give us all a feeling of accomplishment.

Although it is a good ways off, the TEA-21 grant the Villages of Mayville and Sherman applied for and received, will probably result in the trail between the villages being surfaced with a tar and chip coating, like many of our roads. We'll keep you posted on the progress of this grant. We'll be happy to receive your comments and ideas relative to this grant and will bring them to the table at the proper time.

We hope you notice the STOP signs along the trail. We started with 36 signs and have 9 yet to install. They will be placed at all road crossings

for safety reasons. We don't want anybody to get hurt, especially at road crossings.

As you can see, we have joined with Roger Tory Peterson Institute, the Audubon Society of Jamestown, and the Watershed Conservancy to sponsor outdoor events. Please consider joining us on the outings. It should be fun and informative.

We have all six of our new 'saloon' type gates installed. They should all be painted safety yellow soon, too. We hope they will provide good security and yet allow trail users to pass through them. Our thanks to the Margaret L. Wendt Foundation, in Buffalo, for their generosity in granting us the funds for the gates. Rails to Trails is alive and well. Come join us.

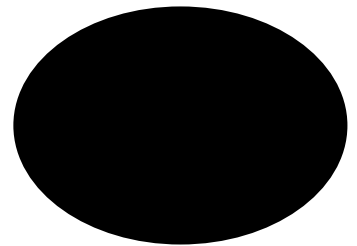
TAKE A HIKE!

It's good for your health.

Health Benefits Of Walking

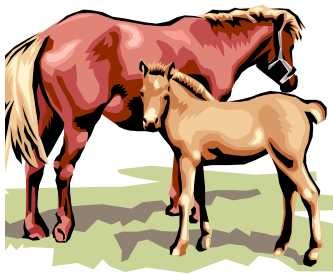
Studies show that walking can:00000011156666ZZZ

- Reduce the risk of coronary heart disease and stroke
- Lower blood pressure
- Reduce high cholesterol and improve blood lipid profile
- Reduce body fat
- Enhance mental well being
- Increase bone density, hence helping to prevent osteoporosis
- Reduce the risk of cancer of the colon
- Reduce the risk of non insulin dependant diabetes
- Help to control body weight
- Help osteoarthritis
- Help flexibility and co-ordination hence reducing the risk of falls



Whether you want to walk to improve your general health, to keep fit, to control your weight, or perhaps to recover from a period of ill-health, walking can help. It is something that can be done with children or older family members, it need cost you nothing, and can fit in with any lifestyle, income bracket, culture or domestic circumstance.

For more information on **Walking** check <http://www.ramblers.org.uk/info/everyone/health.html#Benefits>



FROM THE CORRAL

By: Carolyn Witt

The sun is shining and the days have grown longer as Peppy and I head out of the corral and onto our favorite trails to enjoy the summer riding season.

A bit fractious, he pulled at the bit on a recent rail ride wanting me to let him stretch his legs for a brief canter. I let the reins go lax in my hand as he snatched up his freedom and lengthened his stride. We were having a marvelous time until we rounded a bend down by the creek. Without warning, Peppy put on the brakes and planted his hindquarters. I was just about to boot him in the side and tell him to get going when I saw a small, furry black and white animal walk out behind a pine tree.

A former cutting horse with lightning speed and sure feet, Peppy spun deftly to the left and leapt forward with so much enthusiasm he nearly unseated me. After we had safely outdistanced the skunk, I pulled him up and leaned forward to place my cheek against his neck. What a horse! I was about to discipline him while he was busy saving us both from a most unpleasant experience.

I guess the moral of the story is not always assume that a horse is being willful when he puts in a sudden stop or does something else we did not ask him to do. He just may know something you do not!

Safety starts before you leave the barn or get the saddle on the horse. It is always a good idea to wear boots with a heel so your feet do not slip through the stirrup. A friend recently told me he was out for a ride on his mare, Dottie, when something jumped in the bushes frightening her. His foot slipped through the stirrup and he fell off. Luckily for him, Dottie exhibited a great deal of composure and patience while he extricated his foot and regained his seat.

Peppy and I hope to see you soon out on the trails.

Have a safe and enjoyable summer.



Rt to Lt: Matt Oehlbeck, Keith Cady & Brant Hennig

The Beaver Wars

The latest skirmish in the 'Beaver Wars' at the Titus Road area of the trail is over.

As we understand it, the war began many years ago after the gravel from both sides of the railbed was removed and used to help build the new county buildings in Mayville. Erosion took place, dirt and water filled the holes, vegetation began to grow, and after a while, beavers moved in. The dam the beavers built to provide themselves with shelter from predators and a place to store their winter food supply began to endanger the trail. Many attempts were made to control the height of the dam so as to protect the trail from damage, but none of them were terribly successful in the long term.

About a year ago, the beavers plugged the drainpipe that allows water to flow from one side of the railbed to the other. As a result, water has been flowing over the trail and has caused some damage to the surface.

On June 1, 2004, members of the Stanley Hose Co, from Sherman volunteered to try to clear the plugged drain pipe with a high pressure hose. As two of the members were working on getting the pump up to pressure, the third fireman poked a pole into the drain pipe and the water pressure blew out the plug. What a goosh and splort of water and mud as the drain pipe cleared.

Three days later, there was no indication of beavers since the drainpipe still flowed easily and there were two holes in the beavers' dam. We don't know what happened to the beavers.

Seven days after clearing the drain pipe, there were again indications of beavers. The holes in the dam were partially fixed, though the drain pipe still flowed easily.

We need to build a wire mesh 'box' around the drain pipe to keep the beavers from plugging it again, and we need to place a water height control device, again with a wire mesh 'box', through the beaver dam. We need to do these things so we can live in harmony with the beavers. There is no way to beaver proof the area around the trail, but we can and will take measures to protect the trail, and at the same time, have the beavers around to marvel at, and maybe cuss at as trees they've chewed on fall onto the trail. These marvelous creatures are part of our history, our present, and our future. Like most things in nature, we need to learn to live alongside them.

We'll call for a work party to install the 'boxes'. Keep your ears peeled when the water warms up for word of the party.

And our thanks to the Stanley Hose Company of Sherman for unplugging the drain pipe.

Birding the Sheldon Trail

Dick Miga

It was April 4, 1997 when I made my first visit to the Sheldon trail. As I indicated in my first column for TRACKIN' (1997), I was tremendously impressed by the variety of habitat type, and the tremendous potential that bird enthusiasts would enjoy in that area. My early prediction was that the trail had the potential to produce at least 175 species of birds, and even reach 200 over time.

That first year saw a lot of birding activity, with members from the Lake Erie Bird Club, the Roger Tory Peterson Institute Ornithological Club, and the Jamestown Audubon Society spending quality time on the trail enjoying and recording the bird species found there. The first two months, being the prime birding season of the year, recorded 139 species as reported in that article. The second article I wrote for the newsletter was an update that appeared in the summer 1998 issue entitled One Year Later. In that article, I reported the species count had reached 153 as of June 7, 1998. This number was well below our target figure of 175. One theory for the lower than expected number was a major environmental change that occurred on the trail. This event had a negative impact on the expected utilization of the wetland region by waterfowl and shorebirds. While the early trips to the region envisioned high spring and fall migration visits by the many shorebird species that frequent other Chautauqua county locations, unfortunately, just off the trail property, a family of beavers moved in. Their work resulted in the damming up the outlet flow of water from the nearby water habitats observed from the trail proper. This behavior resulted in higher than anticipated water levels, creating an unfavorable habitat for those anticipated species.

Another negative impact created by the higher water level, was the submerging of the main trail making it difficult for walkers, bikers and others to traverse. Fortunately, the many volunteers that built the trail, under the leadership of Les Johnson, and, cooperation from local industries, repaired the

trail making it once again passable.

The Sheldon trail today represents to birders from Chautauqua county, as well as visitors, one of the top birding sites in the region. There are very few local places where one can go, park the car, and visit in one spot such a variety of habitats as wetlands, marshes, woodlands, shrub zones, open fields, deserted orchards and many other fine areas.

To my knowledge, the current one day record on the trail is still 98 species recorded in May of 1997 by the Lake Erie Bird Club on it's annual Crump Day led by Dr. Allen Benton.

The current number of species, as the writing of this article (February 14, 2000), is at 171*. The list can be obtained by calling me at 716-672-7363 or, the Chautauqua County birding hotline (716-595-8250), and leave your name and mailing address.

Some of the groups of birds reported on the list include: 16 species of ducks and geese, 9 species of vultures and hawks, 12 species of shorebirds, all 7 local species of woodpeckers, 10 species of flycatchers, 7 species of thrushes, an excellent sighting of 28 species of warblers, 12 species of sparrows, and three rarities including a Common Raven, (observed by your truly) the hybrid Lawrence's Warbler, and a Clay Colored Sparrow. (Observed by David Neveu, a frequent visitor to the trail) However, the list does not contain any Owls, nor, many of the other expected common birds that are normally found in the area. It is hoped that the many visitors to the trail that have recorded birds would review the list and add species as sighted. There is no doubt in my mind that the original 175 target will be reached this year, and that the dream of 200 is reachable.

Editor's Note: - *This is a reprint of an article I thought needed to reappear.*

Yes-I want to support CRT's effort to change the abandoned rail lines of Chautauqua County into multi-use trails which can be enjoyed by all.

Individual \$20 Sustaining \$100
 Family \$35 Benefactor \$500
 Patron \$50 Sponsor \$1000 up
 Business Partner \$100/\$200 per year for 10 years

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Mail to: Chautauqua Rails to Trails
PO Box 151
Mayville, NY 14757-0151

Check out the **CRT** website at:
www2.cecomet.net/crtt

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If not, please take a moment and do so soon. We rely on **your** support.

Fun-For-All Summer Nature Series

Presented by

Chautauqua Watershed Conservancy, Jamestown Audubon Society,
Roger Tory Peterson Institute and Chautauqua Rails-to-Trails

Saturday "June 19, 2004" 9 am to 11 am
Secret Lives of Salamanders - RTPI

Friday "July 30, 2004" 8 p.m. - 10 p.m.
Creatures of the Night Audubon - JAS

Saturday "August 28, 2004" 9:30 to 11:30 am
Why Fish Need Trees -- Field Biology for Families
LCLC - CWC

Saturday "September 18, 2004" 10 am to 2 p.m.
Take A Hike - CRT

For more information contact the sponsoring agency.

Contact Information

RTPI

Phone (716)665-2473
(800)758-6841

JAS

Phone (716) 569-2345

CWC

Phone (716) 664-2166

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Phone (716)269-3666



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