

The Rattler



President's Message

ISSUE #1, 2021

Signs of spring are finally in the air — and at last there is hope in the air as well. We are all looking forward to the end of lockdowns and the freedom to get back to joining our friends for a hike on the trail. Last year saw an explosion of interest among Canadians in getting outdoors and into the wilderness. The Bruce Trail Conservancy also saw an explosion in its membership rolls. Some 150 of you who are reading this are new members of our club — and a warm welcome to you all! As soon as we are able to, we will take you out on our volunteer-led hikes.

And we will introduce you to the exciting new properties that we have recently acquired, most notably our new Cape Chin North nature reserve — more than 500 acres to be explored.

As new members, you will discover that we have a host of opportunities to get involved: as a property steward, trail maintenance volunteer, hike leader, communications expert, or on our board of directors. Don't be shy! You will be welcomed warmly and find that this club is a wonderful place for fellowship and worthwhile effort.

John Grandy



Grotto Icicles (photo by L. Chan)

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DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Any articles or stories of interest?
Deadline for submissions to next
Rattler: August 7, 2021

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Wild turkey tracks (photo by L. Chan)

Cape Chin Nature Reserve

Last December we reported that the Bruce Trail Conservancy had purchased a large estate at Cape Chin. This transaction secured 533 acres of conservation land offering a spectacular 270 degree view of Georgian Bay and the escarpment as well as 1.8 km of optimum route.

In that announcement we asked for your suggestions for the property — and specifically for the house. We have had over 40 replies to the article — 100 per cent approving of this extraordinary purchase. My sincere thanks for your many suggestions. All of your ideas have been tabulated for further consideration.

The question of what to do with the house itself may have been unfair, given the lack of context provided in the article. My personal feeling is that, having secured this property, the Bruce Trail Conservancy should provide public access to the premium feature here — the lands at the Cape Chin point. This is consistent with the BTC mission. Given that the house is within 20 m of the cliff edge, any sale of the structure is problematic.

Other options, such as repurposing or demolition, come with their own issues and

challenges including condition of the structure, adequacy of water and septic systems, a 3 km driveway, annual cost of ownership, etc.

A thoughtful examination of all relevant facts by BTC staff and volunteers will inform a sound decision, and I am confident that this will reflect the organization's values as well as the wishes of our donors, members and other stakeholders.

Special thanks to all of those who expressed interest in donating to and/or volunteering for work on what will be a very large project for the Bruce Trail Conservancy.

Plans are moving forward on several fronts as we work to integrate this property into the BTC trail and conservation programs:

1. An environmental assessment will begin as weather permits. BTC staff and volunteers will be looking for species at risk and invasive species, and evaluating possible trail routes. Remediation plans for the inland areas will be developed this spring. Cattle have been removed from the property.

(cont'd on page 4)



(cont'd from page 3)

2. A professional structural assessment has been sub-contracted. Our concerns include: 40-year-old wooden windows, doors, and decks; a leaking roof; potential mold and mildew; falling materials; and trip hazards. The remains of an unsafe cliff-side staircase will be removed. In addition, the well and septic system will be inspected. We expect that these are inadequate for any commercial use and may not even meet current residential requirements.

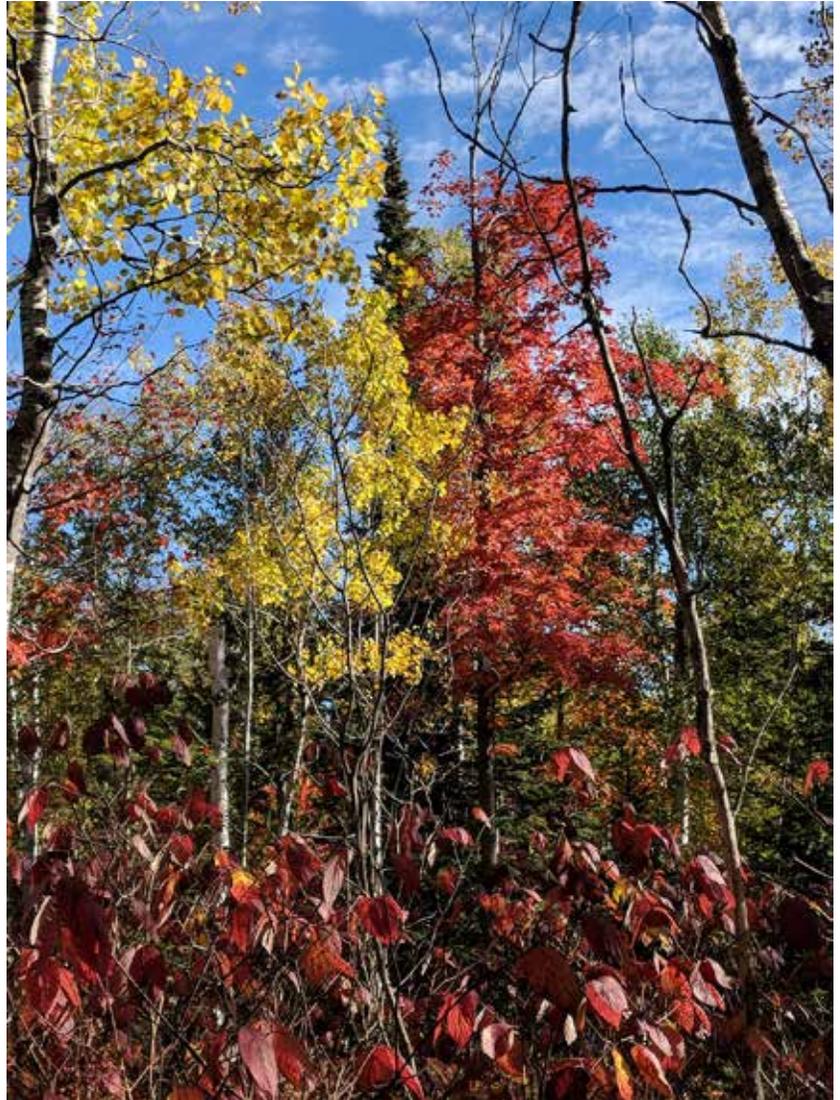
3. Trail director John Grandy is eager to flag possible trail routes. We are also reaching out to neighbors to confirm access points. (One of the most thoughtful suggestions received was to blaze the driveway as an accessible trail. I hope that our club is in a position to provide such access starting later this year.)

4. We have started the regulatory process required to apply for a parking area close to Cape Chin North Road.

We understand that BTC members are keen to visit this property. However, at this time there are no trails on the property. Hazards are known to exist along the cliff edge and surrounding the house itself. Until these issues can be addressed, the property is signed as "No Trespassing" and we ask for your patience as plans are implemented.

We will keep you posted as the situation develops. Please monitor pbtcc.ca for announcements regarding hiking and volunteer opportunities on this land.

John Whitworth



* * * * *

<p>CAPE CHIN BED & BREAKFAST</p> <p><i>Cabins and Cottage</i></p> <p>519-795-7200 info@capechinbb.ca www.capechinbb.ca 314 Cape Chin North Road Lion's Head, ON N0H 1W0</p> <p><i>Just 0.5 km from the Bruce Trail</i></p>	<p>MOUNTAIN TROUT CAMP</p> <p><i>Welcome to our hidden gem!</i></p> <p>Gillies Lake 60 Daly's Rd RR#1 Miller Lake, Ontario N0H 1Z0</p> <p>Phone: 519-795-7655 camping@mountaintroutcamp.com www.mountaintroutcamp.com</p>
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Remembering Uwe Wassermann

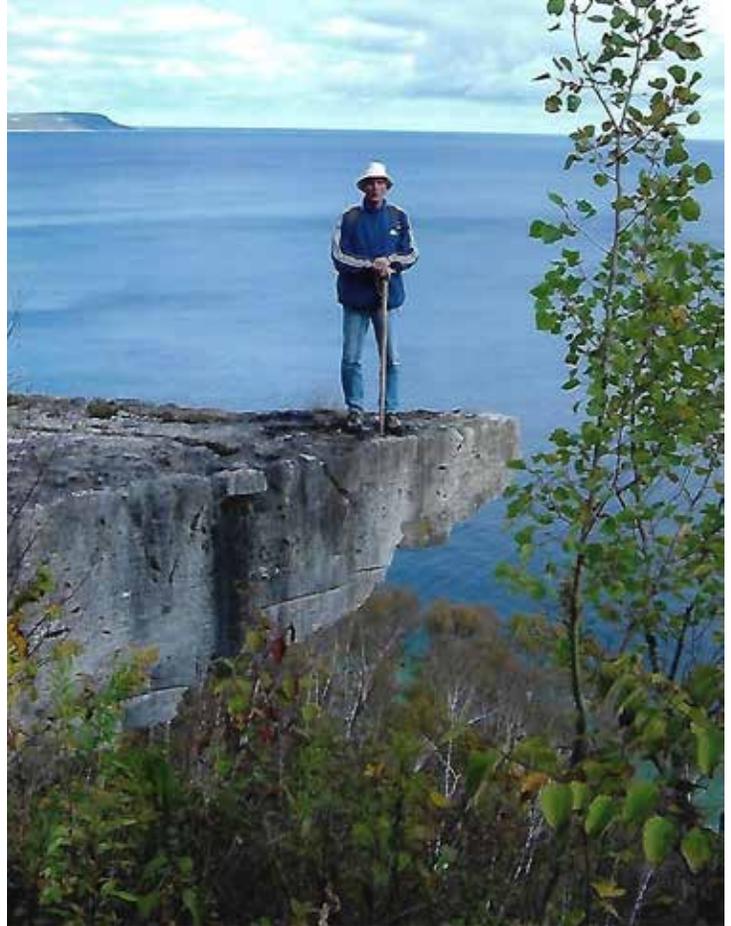
It is with sadness that we reflect on the loss of one of the Peninsula Club's dedicated volunteers, Uwe Wassermann. The PBTC extends its sincere condolences to Uwe's wife Elaine, and to his family and friends. In the paragraphs below, Elaine provides her remembrances of Uwe's love of the outdoors and his association with the Bruce Trail:

I met Uwe in 1965 while working in Germany at a small Black Forest pension and resort. He was enjoying a camping holiday and offered, when I had free time, to be my tourist guide. After I returned to Canada, we continued to correspond, and this led to Uwe immigrating.

After settling in Georgetown, Uwe introduced me to camping, initially in a tent, which I loved. Later, with kids in tow, we graduated to a VW Westfalia pop-up camper, which took us across Canada, including the Yukon. On weekends we explored provincial parks, a favourite being Cyprus Lake Provincial Park, now Bruce Peninsula National Park.

When we purchased our piece of paradise near Devil's Monument on the Bruce Trail in the late 1980s, we began to fully explore and appreciate the area. In 1992, with Uwe and our son on the building crew, our log home was framed, and, until retirement in 2001, most weekends and holidays were spent working on the interior.

Once on the peninsula full time, we became members of the Bruce Trail Association, now Conservancy, joining scheduled hikes and nature walks with Parks personnel, fully absorbing the beauty of the Bruce. We soon became trail captains for the Devil's Monument area, feeling blessed to be stewards of this section of trail. Uwe eagerly helped to build trail, and enjoyed exploring Lake Huron and Georgian Bay with the Thursday kayak group, and hiking the Peninsula, Sydenham, and parts of the Blue Mountains and Beaver Valley sections.



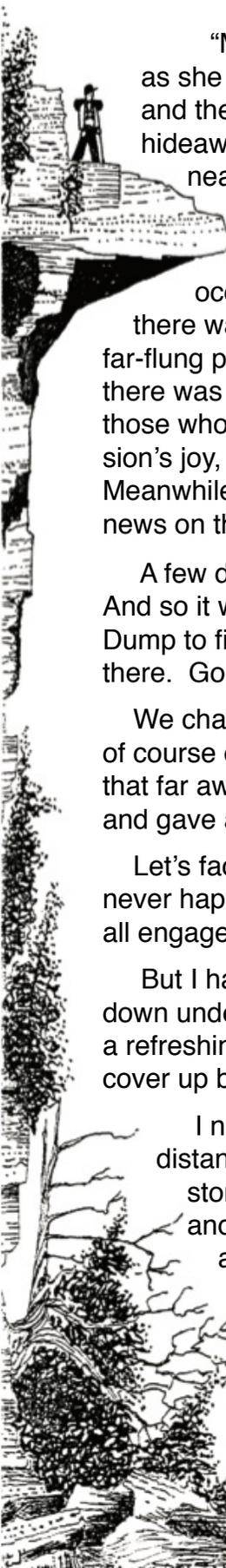
With Uwe's dementia diagnosis, compounded by glaucoma, our idyllic life was no longer feasible, despite the loving support of the Alzheimer Grey Bruce Society in Owen Sound. In 2019 we moved to Guelph, closer to our children, where Uwe succumbed on February 10, 2021.

Well-loved, Uwe will be remembered for his 110% work ethic, love of the outdoors and people, zest for life, sharing his many skills, and irrepressible humour and wit. Our 19 years on the Bruce were precious and greatly expanded our lives.

Elaine Wassermann



Tales from the Trail



“Maybe I’ll saunter over later and keep you company,” she said in an Aussie accent as she turned away to walk to her tent. It was a Wednesday afternoon in late September and the last thing I had expected was other people camping at what I consider my private hideaway at Reed’s Dump. I have been a trail captain on the White Bluffs section for nearly 20 years and while people camp there on weekends and in summer, midweek in fall the place tends to be deserted.

I had looked forward to a few days away and on my own. My daytime occupation is running an adventure travel agency and ever since the pandemic hit, there was little joy to be had. Sure, rescuing clients and even complete strangers from far-flung places was something I took pride in back in March and April. But by summer all there was left to do was cancel people’s trips, file insurance claims and negotiate credits for those who didn’t have insurance. I called myself an un-travel agent, and much of my profession’s joy, which comes from creating great experiences for travellers, had been taken away. Meanwhile, the CBC (a.k.a. the Corona Broadcasting Corporation) continued its litany of sad news on the increasing numbers of cases and deaths. In short, it was a stressful summer.

A few days of trail maintenance and camping out in the bush seemed like a great antidote. And so it was with much joy that after a hard day’s work on the trail I descended to Reed’s Dump to find a nice spot to camp. But then, as I exited onto the beach, she was standing there. Gone were my dreams of some peace and quiet on Georgian Bay.

We chatted a bit after which she said she’d come walking over later. Being Canadian, one of course doesn’t want to make people feel unwelcome. Especially not when they are from that far away and certainly not when they come to seek out our beautiful trail. So I shrugged and gave a non-committal “sure” in reply.

Let’s face it — how many times do people say, “we should meet up some time,” and it never happens? Perhaps it is a typical Canadian way of being friendly, but it is something we all engage in.

But I had not reckoned with her Australianness. When they say, “perhaps I’ll walk over,” down under, it means, “I’ll walk over so we can have a chinwag.” And so, as I emerged from a refreshing skinny dip in the cool waters of the bay, I barely (pardon the pun) had time to cover up before she indeed walked over, dinner in hand, for a chat.

I need not have worried. We cooked dinner and bonded, at a respectful physical distance, over shared travel experiences. We were both well-travelled and we swapped stories of hiking trips in the Rockies, on the south coast of Turkey, in the Dolomites and Ireland, along the Amalfi Coast and around Mont Blanc. We had a great night and looking back at it, it was a great way to restore my energy levels so I could plunge into work with renewed vigour.

And if that is not exactly what the Bruce Trail is meant to do, then what is?

Tom Gehrels



Reed's Dump



*At water's edge below Spirit Rock C.A.
(photo by L. Chan)*



*The work of a pileated woodpecker
(photo by M.K. Chan)*

Calling All Birders

With the launch of the PBTC birder badges, the club is more excited than ever about the upcoming migration season. Many of you will have participated in Bob and Anita's mid-May bird outing in the past. See Bob's note below about how COVID restrictions have impacted plans for 2021.

In addition to the traditional bird outing, the hiking team is planning a series of weekend birding loop hikes in May. Stay tuned — when the pause on BTC organized hiking is lifted, we'll let members know by email, and post the details of any birding hikes on the BTC unified hiking list.

*Sandhill
Crane at
Singing
Sands*

*(photo by
L. Chan)*



Note from Bob Cunningham

As I write this, it is early March 2021 and my thoughts are looking forward to an early spring. In fact, just two days ago in Lion's Head things warmed up and we had a fairly heavy rainfall. I thought, "How wonderful! Here comes spring! Goodbye snow!" Unfortunately, the rain was followed by two of the coldest nights we have had all year and our laneway turned into a skating rink. Walking the road is treacherous and thanks to all-wheel-drive the safest way out is very carefully by car. But I am assured that spring will arrive sometime and we are only a few weeks away (perhaps 8 or 10) from the Peninsula once again becoming a flyway for thousands of migrating birds.

Despite COVID, last year's migration happened even without our usual mid-May club bird walk to welcome them all back. Many of you did report your local observations during May 2020

and in total we ended up with something like 109 species from southern Ontario and various locations in the U.S.A. This year Anita and I had big plans to invite you all back once again but it seems COVID rules are changing almost daily and currently it appears that a group outing may not be in the cards. Perhaps we will do another "backyard birding" month with any of you who are interested. However we are monitoring things and will keep you posted.

We currently have a distribution list of about 45 birders but if you are reading this from the Rattler and have not received a similar email from us you are not on the list. If you want to be included, drop me an email at robcunningham@gmail.com

Keep healthy and stay safe.

Bob Cunningham



Warbler, Cedar waxwing eggs & Luciano, my song sparrow seen close to home, close to the trail (photos by J. MacKie)

PBTC Organized Hikes

The hiking program of all nine Bruce Trail clubs continues to be paused until all areas along the Niagara Escarpment and the Greater Toronto Area are at least back in the orange zone as per provincial COVID-19 public health measures.

But that doesn't stop us from planning! The PBTC hiking team has developed a series of hikes it hopes to be able to offer when restrictions are lifted. These hikes include:

- spring birder hikes
- guided geology hikes
- fast-paced, longer distance loop hikes for experienced hikers
- an end-to-end series

We will provide details through a Rattler e-news update when organized hiking resumes. Registration for hikes will be through the BTC hike calendar at <https://hikes.brucetrail.org>

In the meantime, please postpone plans for thru-hiking the Bruce Trail or completing sections outside your region until it is safe to travel to other communities along the trail, and follow these guidelines for personal hiking:

- Stay local. Avoid travelling outside your municipality/region.
- Plan ahead (check for closures and restrictions on our Trail Changes page).
- Stay home if you are unwell.
- Practice physical distancing.
- Respect closures.
- Expect no facilities.
- Leave no trace.

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New Fern and Orchid Badges

There are few better places in the world to see orchids and ferns than on the Peninsula section of the Bruce Trail. The Bruce Peninsula is home to 46 species of orchids and a great diversity of ferns, totalling more than three dozen species. PBTC's new fern and orchid badges encourage hikers to slow down and notice the beauty and variety of plants along the trail.

The requirements for the badges are detailed below.

Once you've fulfilled the requirements, instructions for obtaining the badges are available on the PBTC website at <https://www.pbtc.ca/badges>.

Orchid Badge

Document through photo, name and location a minimum of 15 of the 46 species of wild orchids on the Bruce Peninsula in one calendar year. The orchids must be found along the sides of the main trail or on the side trails of the Bruce Trail from Wiarton to Tobermory. Record your observations in a log. In the log, acknowledge your awareness of good orchid etiquette.



Fern Badge

Document through photo, name and location a minimum of 20 species of ferns on the Bruce Peninsula. There is no time limit for identification. The ferns must be found along the sides of the main trail or on the side trails of the Bruce Trail from Wiarton to Tobermory. Record your observations in a log. In the log, acknowledge your awareness of good fern etiquette.

Badge Designs

A big thank you to Julie Heinrichs and Sue Dymont for their submissions to the badge design contest (for the Orchid Badge and Fern Badge, respectively). The simplified images adapted from these two pieces of original art have now been used in the design of the two badges. They are the first in a series of conservation-themed badges that is planned by the Peninsula Club.

We also give a heartfelt thank you to the contest judges:

for the Fern Badge — Dee Cherrie, John Jackson, Deborah Wong, and Lynn Allen;
and for the Orchid Badge — Stuart Burgess, Jim Wadleigh, Jane Greenhouse, and Bernd Baldus.

Images that inspired the new badges



Detail from a painting by Julie Heinrichs



Detail from "Harts Tongue Ferns of the Bruce" painting by Sue Dymont

Orchid and Fern Etiquette

When viewing orchids and ferns, please follow the practices outlined below. Orchids, especially, are very sensitive to disturbance — many species grow under unique conditions, which are easily altered or destroyed.

- 1) Please do not leave the trail to take photos. Many of our orchids and ferns are in wetlands and fragile environments. It is ill-advised to walk in a wetland to get a badge. Please ensure you stay at least 1–2 metres away from the plants as they are susceptible to soil compaction which can harm root systems. Please leave the orchids and ferns as you found them.
- 2) Orchids and ferns are environment-specific. Please do not touch, weed or “help” them in any way. Orchids and ferns grow where they do because of the vegetation and ground features around them.
- 3) Picking the orchid’s flowers destroys the plant. Many of our orchids take 10–16 years to reach flowering size. Picking or digging them up is illegal, prevents them from reproducing, and almost always kills the plant.
- 4) If you have taken the time to discover the orchids and ferns in their environments as is required for these badges, please share your log only with the PBTC or people on your group hikes. Please, never post and share the locations with the public. By sharing locations with people who are not aware of the fragility of these plants, you may be exposing them to unnecessary stresses or destruction. Please ensure the location is removed on any digital photos as this may inadvertently lead to sharing locations.
- 5) When taking photos of orchids or ferns, please be aware of the plants around your feet and near where you will be stepping (and remember why we ask you to stay on the trail). Set packs down carefully away from the plants. Where there is one plant there could be more, and for this reason, small group sizes are recommended for orchid or fern hikes.

Call for New Directors

Do you want to play a role in shaping the future of the Peninsula Club? Your PBTC board of directors is looking for volunteers to fill the following roles on the board: vice president, communications director, and volunteer coordinator. If you would like to gain some experience on the board before deciding on a specific role, we also have director-at-large positions. We meet in person four times per year on the Peninsula (except during COVID when we have held virtual meetings) and communicate mainly by email the rest of the time. If you're interested in finding out more, please feel free to email us to arrange for an informal chat at pbtgeneralinfo@gmail.com.

Ideally, the **vice president** will have experience volunteering for the Peninsula Club. The vice president presides at meetings in the absence of the president and may be called on by

the president to undertake special duties as the needs arise. More importantly, there is an expectation that the vice president will eventually take on the role of president.

As **communications director**, you would have responsibility for setting and implementing the club's communication strategy, producing the newsletter, maintaining the club's website and Facebook pages and liaising with other communications partners both in the Grey Bruce area and at BTC headquarters.

A key role for the **volunteer coordinator** is managing a volunteer database. The focus of this role over the short term is updating our existing database to interface with the main Bruce Trail Conservancy database. In addition, the volunteer coordinator helps to recruit and match volunteers to the right roles and organize volunteer recognition events.

PBTC board members past and present having fun. Being on the board isn't all meetings and emails!



Trail Reroute at Little Cove (Map 42)

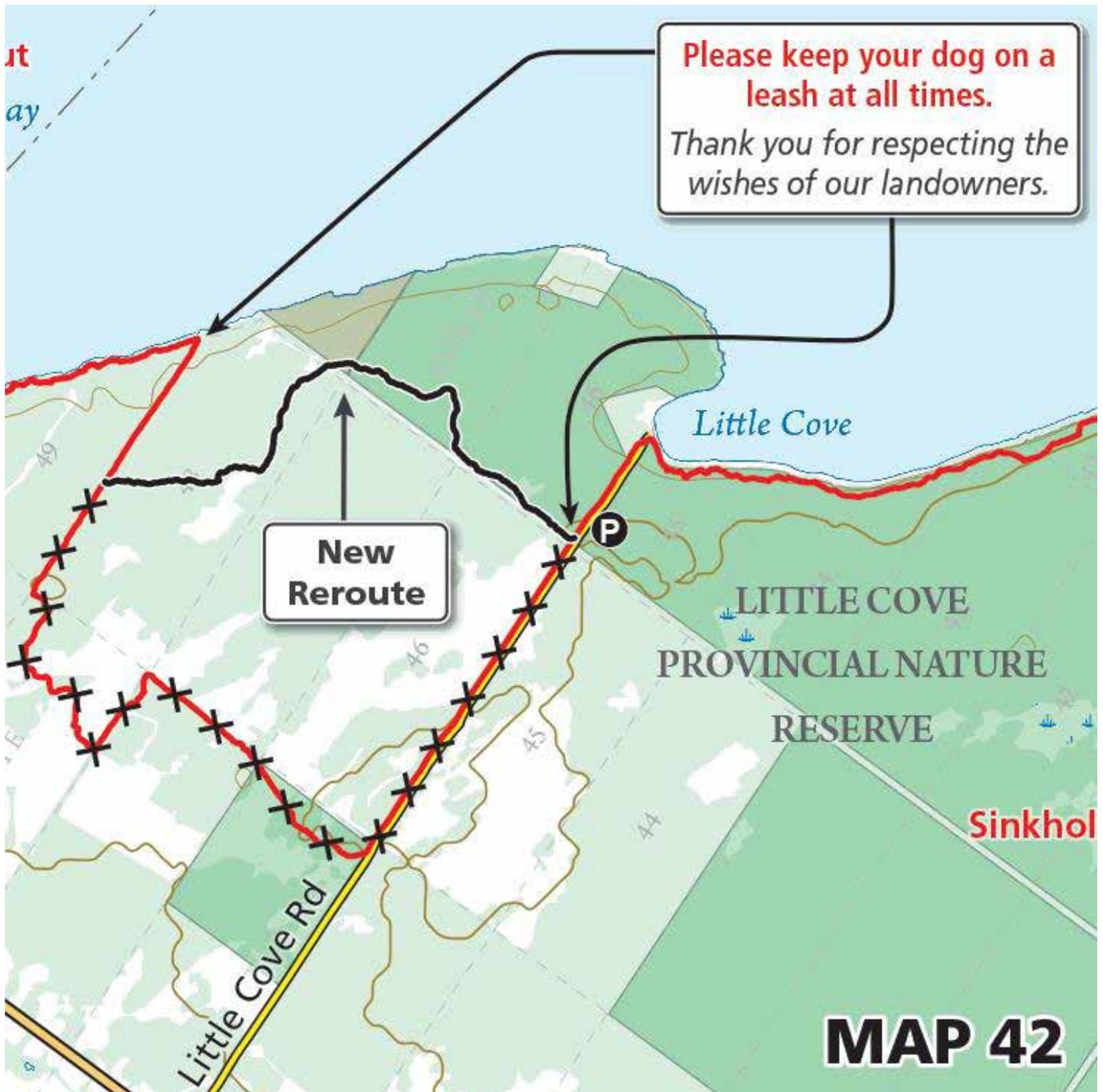
The trail reroute at Little Cove (Map 42) was completed in December.

A new and more direct route has been established through the generosity of a private landowner.

The new route in part follows a private laneway. Please do not park on this laneway.

Please keep your dog on a leash at all times.

Additionally, parts of this route will be shared with snowmobiles during the winter months, so please exercise caution.



Note from the Rattler team

“I know we’ll meet again some sunny day...”

The Rattler received the email message below in February from volunteer Rich Coons, whose home is in the United States. Rich has since received his second COVID shot and will drive up as soon as travel is permitted. Like Rich, I know we’re all looking forward to that day!

Here’s the message:

“Hi Everyone, I feel trapped on the wrong side of the border this past year due to the pandemic. No chainsaw hiking, what a bummer. After spending 74 years on the Peninsula this 75th year has been very different. We are all in this together. I have received the first inoculation for covid 19 and will get the second shot in 2 weeks.

***I do enjoy all the activity on Facebook and The Rattler.
Hoping to return to The Peninsula when the border opens.***

Hike on and on and be SAFE, Sawyer Rich Coons”

PBTC Annual General Meeting – Save the Date!

Due to COVID-19, the 2021 PBTC annual general meeting will again be a virtual event.

The AGM will be held:

Sunday, May 16, 2021

4 p.m.

via Zoom online webinar

Registration details and meeting materials will be distributed by email prior to the meeting.

We’re planning to hold a face-to-face get-together when conditions allow.

Can’t wait!



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