

# Bruce Trail gets safer and greener with new Off-Road Route in Caledon

**By Riley Murphy**

Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

The Bruce Trail Conservancy has announced a newly protected natural area that preserves 137 acres in the Town of Caledon called the Meltwater Moraine.

The Meltwater Moraine will secure 640 metres of the Bruce Trail Optimum Route.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy is one of Ontario's largest land trusts. It conserves, manages, and restores land along the Niagara Escarpment UNESCO World Biosphere, making it available to explore by foot through the Bruce Trail and protected areas.

The new Bruce Trail re-route spans four-kilometres and removes 3.3 kilometres of the Main Trail from the high-traffic areas of Airport Road and Escarpment Side Road.

The Bruce Trail Conservancy stated that the creation of this area is about bringing the Bruce Trail off the road and into nature.

Adam Brylowski, Manager of Conservation and Trail at Bruce Trail Conservancy, spoke on the impact of taking the trail off Airport Road.

“Safety was sort of one of the big elements that led towards this acquisition. But beyond that, there's also some really great opportunities for conservation,” said Brylowski. “We're always protecting land to create this conservation corridor, and we've already observed the presence of four different species at risk on the property.”

Brylowski stated they've seen the following at-risk species on the property already: the bobolink, the meadowlark, the barn swallow, and the butternut tree.

To continue to protect these species, they will do a three-season ecological, biophysical inventory that captures all of the rare species and assign a volunteer land steward to look after the property and the species in the future.

He also shared that one of the Bruce Trail Conservancy's mandates is that if they acquire land for agricultural production, they ensure it stays in agricultural production.

“We appreciate the value of farmers and their growing food for communities. So, we continue to work with the farmer on the property to keep that land in good agricultural production,” said Brylowski.

The relocation didn't come without challenges.

Several pieces of old equipment, including a house, were found in the area. Brylowski shared that the house on the property is quite old.

But the house can't go anywhere; a group of barn swallows have made it their home.

“We want to ensure that the barn swallow habitat remains because we've noticed that they were actively nesting there. So, we're going to be working with the neighbor to the north of our property, the gentleman whose family grew up there, and he's offered to help us fix up the barn so that we can retain it and make sure that barn swallow habitat stays intact,” shared Brylowski.

Brylowski painted a picture of what hikers can expect as they enter the new rerouted area.

As you walk through a portion of agricultural land, you'll see a fence line running through the middle, and along that, there are around 20 butternut trees, an endangered species that is now available to observe on the trail.

Moving on, hikers will see how the area is situated between three different moraines: the Singhampton Moraine, the Gibraltar Moraine, and the Paris Moraine.

Hikers can see moraine features like low, undulating hills and rocky material deposited by glaciers over 10,000 years ago.

?There's a great throwback to geological history of southern Ontario that's alive and sort of on display on the property there,? said Brylowski.

?Properties like the Meltwater Moraine property are really, really important in showing not just the value of the conservation land that we protect, but also the fact that we're really trying to encourage safe practices or safe hiking environments for hikers. This is a win in both senses. It's a win for safety, and it's a win for conservation.?