

Mathews completes record hike

By Mark Pavilons

In her historic seven-day marathon of the Oak Ridges Moraine Trail, Aurora resident Kelly Mathews did much more than 'take a hike.'

Mathews endured the punishing journey, setting a quick pace of between five to six kilometres per hour, every day for seven days. Her ORMT300 ran from Aug. 28 to Sept. 3, from Caledon to Trent Hills.

The trek was 'way more painful' than she ever imagined, despite training for several months. She admitted that one never knows how something like this will play out. Mother Nature was on her side, too, dishing out very good weather for the entire time.

She saw some beautiful scenery along the way and counted 13 monarch butterflies in a single day. The most impressive site was along Old Swamp Road Trail in Clarington, a must-visit vista.

She had a close encounter with a resident rodent at Mussleman's Lake the Monday night of her journey. At 2 a.m., with her head pressed against the side of her tent, she felt something scratching her head and making a purring sound. Startled, she bolted out of her slumber to catch a glimpse of the culprit - a raccoon.

Mathews never had to face the grueling pain alone, as many supporters and volunteers from the Oak Ridges Trail Association flocked to join her along the way. She called it the most 'un-solo solo hike.' She admitted she had trouble keeping pace with the incredibly fit hikers from ORTA and she found this very humbling.

Some special moments included an ice cream delivery from the Pattersons in the middle of nowhere; a lawn chair and snack delivery out in Trent on the last day. The laughs, the cries, the packages and packages of mole skin made it quite memorable.

At the finish line in Trent Hills, Mathews was met by many, including ORTA staff, who cheered her on and provided cake and champagne.

Mathews received an Honourary Lifetime Membership with the Oak Ridge's Trail Association at the finish line and her End to End Badge.

Most of all, the event was a fundraiser for both Seneca College in King and the ORTA. She almost doubled her initial goal and closed in on \$9,000.

'Thank you again, all of you,' she said. 'Your enthusiasm and support kept me going. There were many times that my body and mind wanted to stop!'

'I can't thank all of you enough for the tweets, retweets, texts, emails, calls, etc.,' she added. 'I tried my best to keep up with them all.'

'Without a doubt, that was the toughest thing I have ever done both physically and mentally,' Mathews observed. 'I could not have done it without the overwhelming support from key people at the ORTA. Special thanks to Brian and Bob, my trusty trail guides, and to Michele at the ORTA office, for keeping everything and everyone updated and on schedule. I would also like to thank Wilma and Judy (my extra trail moms) in addition to my parents. This turned out to be the most un-solo, solo-hike ever hiked and I am so grateful for it!'

Sharing this Oak Ridges Moraine Trail record experience with all of her followers was simply the 'icing on the cake for me!'



Kelly Mathews recently completed her seven-day, 300-kilometre trek of the Oak Ridges Trail. Submitted photo