



SPRING/SUMMER 2025

TRACKIN'

THE CHAUTAUQUA RAILS TO
TRAILS NEWSLETTER



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*Photo Credit: Bird watching
blind on the Ralph C. Sheldon
trail, taken by member Anne
Kolesar.*

It's What You Don't See

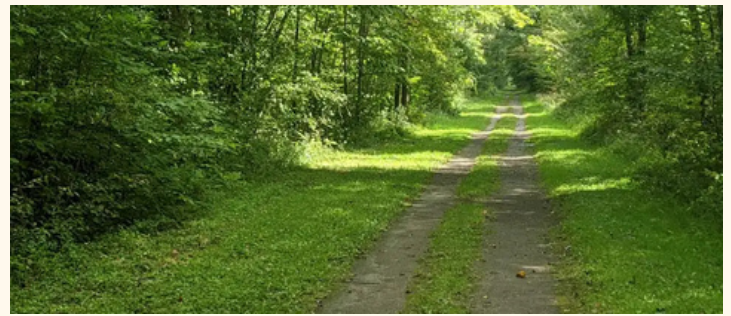
DIANE K. CLARK, PAST CR2T BOARD MEMBER

We think of the remarkable Rails to Trails system that has been established in Chautauqua County as an opportunity to experience the beauty of woodlands, open pastures and grand views. But what we don't see might be just as important as the scenery. What we don't see is the litter and discarded refuse which mars so much of our landscape. Trail users have an ethic based on the appreciation of nature. It is seldom that litter is seen along the trails. But it wasn't always that way. In the beginning days of establishing trails much attention was given to collecting litter. One stellar example happened before the opening of the Sherman Trail. As it happened this trail went right through an area that was commonly used as a dump. Diligent trail members attacked this mess with a vengeance. Bags and literal truck loads of litter were removed from the trail. A sense of justice was brought about by Bob Berke. (Continued, next page)

CR2T Board of Directors

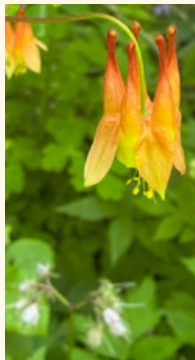
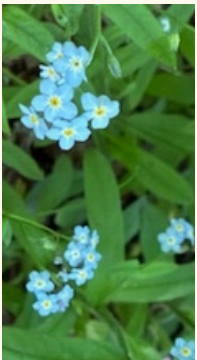
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David Akin, Mayville
Jacob Bodway, Bemus Point
Wendy Brickman, Mayville
Dee Dippel, Bemus Point
Dorothy Gruber, Portland (Treasurer)
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Steve Still, Chautauqua
Judy Takats, Portland (Membership Chair)
Bill Ward, Mayville (President)
Dena Ward, Mayville
Thom Wright, Jamestown (Trail Maintenance Czar)

We welcome interested trail enthusiasts to join our board. At the present time, we are in special need of representation from the areas of Brocton, Frewsburg, Portland/Westfield, and Sherman.

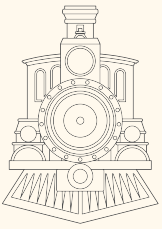


It's What You Don't See (cont.)

A sense of justice was brought about by Bob Berke. His profession as a doctor was used on the Clymer dump as he spotted prescription bottles among the discarded wastes. Here was a direct trail to the polluters. Each prescription bottle that was found gave a tracking clue. It is rather ironic to think that this was another use of the word "Tracking". Each person whose name was on a discarded medicine bottle at the dump was contacted. Revealing this information produced mixed results of denial and sometimes shame but mostly awareness that other people were concerned and interested in the contents of the Clymer dump. It was not used as a convenient trash bin once the trail was cleaned up and opened to the general public. That is a wonderful benefit of the trail system, making people aware of their litter and hopefully curbing the habit of doing it. Our trails are remarkably litter free and that takes the dedication of members and the awareness of the public.



May flowers on the Allison Wells Ney Trail
(Judy Takats)



From the Locomotive

BILL WARD, PRESIDENT

Happy summer trail pals!

Whew, where do we start? It's been a busy fall and winter, as you will learn in this spring/summer Trackin' newsletter. We have been busy managing, visioning, connecting, corralling volunteers for trail stewardship and, of course, doing our best to maintain and develop our valuable stretch of trails.

We have once again honed our vision with a very successful Kate Ebersole-led strategic planning retreat and are very much looking forward to the growth that that plan offers.

We're also very excited about the progress we've made connecting with the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail as well as the Industrial Heartland Trail. CR2T is a proud member of Chautauqua County Friends of the Greenways, and we are grateful friends of the neighbors and communities along our trail.

Read on and stay tuned for updates on these particular areas and more. And... hit the trail!

THE MAYVILLE BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL IS NOW A FUNDRAISER FOR CHAUTAUQUA RAILS TO TRAILS. PLEASE SUPPORT THE TRAILS BY JOINING US AS AN ATTENDEE, A VOLUNTEER, OR BOTH!

MAYVILLE
BLUEGRASS FESTIVAL
SATURDAY AUGUST 16, 2025 AT BIG INLET BREWING

TICKETS ON SALE NOW!



Trail Updates

Ramblings From Trailside

THOM WRIGHT, TRAIL CZAR

As another Summer season is upon us, we bring you information and updates on the various sections of the CR2T network. But first, a heartfelt thanks goes out from the Board to all of our volunteers, we have had a number of dedicated people step up to be Trail Stewards for various sections of our network. These folks take time out of their lives to inspect the trails for issues such as illegal/unwarranted ATV or vehicle use, tree blow downs or concerns, illegal dumping, as well as grass length and corridor needs. But remember, anyone who uses the CR2T network, can reach out to us via our website, email, or Facebook site to report concerns. You can use your own discretion to move small limbs and branches off and toss onto the unmowed portion of the trail. Larger branches and trees, please report to us so we can get them taken care of. Again, we are all volunteers, so sometimes it takes time to get someone out there.

We are hopeful to have several projects happening this year, if mother nature and funding streams agree.

1. Resurface Highland Ave. to Webster Road
2. Repair and address issues with a small culvert
3. Top coat portions of the Fincher Trail
4. Continue our mowing initiative and address trail corridor width along impacted sections.

Please understand that besides CR2T contracting with Rizzo Excavating and Allegheny Construction for mowing purposes, the regular caretaking of the trails is totally volunteer driven. Any improvements such as surface tread or culverts are funded by individual donations, fundraisers and some fortunate grant writing.

The CR2T network exists on private and municipal property and it's the generosity of these property owners that allows the trail network to exist. Please adhere to all signage you see regarding directions, rules and closures. We do have continued problems with illicit use on certain sections of the trails by atvs, dirtbikes and the occasional motor vehicle. The only authorized use is for either an adjacent landowner to access their property, or for trail inspection and maintenance. Recreational riding of the above vehicles is prohibited, and CR2T is connecting with our various municipalities to identify and address chronic misuse.

We hope that as we move through the Summer months, you all get to enjoy being outdoors and taking in the wonderful sights and sounds.



Group Hikes Update

OUR GROUP HIKE EXPLORE CHAUTAUQUA RAILS TO TRAILS AND OTHER GREAT LOCATIONS. ALL ARE WELCOME! TO PARTICIPATE CONTACT JUDY TAKATS AT HIKE@CR2T.ORG

Monday Morning

Monday hikes are 3-4 miles long and begin at 9:30 AM every Monday. Occasionally the group may gather for coffee or food after the hike.

Spring/Summer hikes included:

- Treasure hunting on the Laurie A. Baer Trail
- A tour of Chautauqua Institution gardens in bloom, attended by 15 people and 3 good dogs
- Wandering through Lilly Dale Assembly paths and old growth forest



Co-Sponsored 3rd Saturday

Co-sponsored with the Chautauqua Hiking Club, these nature-focused hikes offer a chance to connect with fellow nature lovers and learn more about our region. New hike leaders are always welcome, email hike@cr2t.org to volunteer!

To date in 2025 participants have experienced:

- CR2T's Webb Trail (with bonus ice castle tour!)
- Point Gratiot in Dunkirk
- Howard Eaton Reservoir
- Chautauqua Gorge



Ever Heard of Geocaching? It's Adventure with a GPS!

T. JOHN MCCUNE, CR2T BOARD VICE PRESIDENT

Geocaching is a real-world treasure hunt where players use the Geocaching app or a GPS to navigate to hidden containers called geocaches. With millions of geocaches hidden in 190+ countries—including plenty tucked along the Chautauqua Rails to Trails—it's an epic way to explore the world around you. But geocaching is more than just finding boxes in the woods. It's about thrilling finds, unexpected twists, and unforgettable moments with fellow adventurers!

This May, our trails hosted a legendary visit from geocaching superstar Captain Math (Kevin), his wife Joy, and their geocaching pal Lies, all the way from Belgium. These three were on a mission: to tackle puzzles, hunt for containers, and uncover some local flavor.

After I got a message from Captain Math himself—who, by the way, has found over 100,000 caches and 30,000+ puzzles!—we met up on the trail. Joy hiked in from Bentley Road while Kevin and Lies biked in from Route 430.

Along the way, we found hidden caches tucked into mossy logs, encountered the mysterious Sasquatch Monitoring Station, and shared some laughs under the canopy. And just when the adventure couldn't get any better—we celebrated with the ultimate Western New York delicacy: PICKLE PIZZA! (continued, next page)



**Ready to start your own
adventure?**

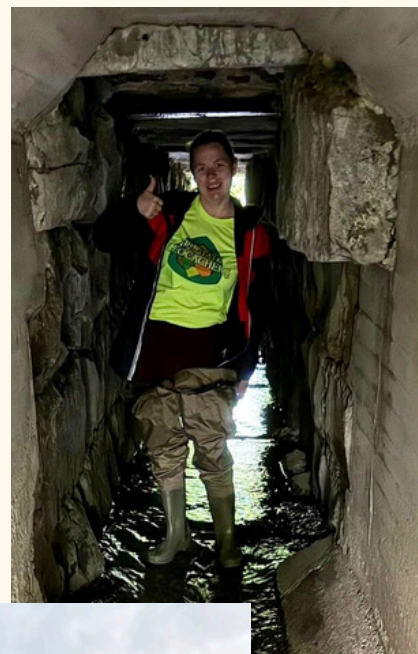
Create a free account at
www.geocaching.com and hit the
trails. Who knows what you'll find?



Ever Heard of Geocaching? It's Adventure with a GPS! (continued)

Still not done? Of course not! Our crew wandered off to explore a couple of historic culvert caches. Captain Math is obsessed with tunnel caches and enjoyed finding one tucked away in a narrow stone-lined passage, and another one in an iron culvert. The logs were signed, the boots were wet, and the smiles were big.

We ended the day at Boxcar Barney's for some well-earned ice cream. It was the cherry on top of a perfect caching day.



Email your trail stories to admin@cr2t.org



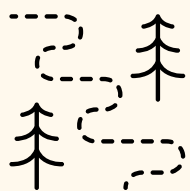
An Evening Walk on the Sheldon Trail

ANNE KOLESAR

My favorite time to walk the Ralph C. Sheldon Trail from Titus Road in Sherman is in the evening, just before sunset. The birds compete and combine with the frogs in a cacophony, accompanied by the wind symphony in the willow branches. I start my Merlin app as I set out, and within minutes I've logged eight or ten different species. By the end of my stroll, I'll have collected a list of twenty or more. I'm not a birder and I don't have great vision, but Merlin has opened a new world for me. I've heard kingbirds and blackbirds, vireos and sparrows, scarlet tanagers, catbirds, mockingbirds, hawks and osprey, warblers, flycatchers, semipalmated plovers, birds I didn't even know existed!

This evening, I encounter a small painted turtle right at the start of the trail. Scared and fragile, I move her to the grassy verge. A two-foot garter snake slithers into the weeds. The trail, though wet, is easy to walk and the swamp ponds glimmer in the oblique rays. Canada geese honk. My dog loves this trail full of smells and movement. A bit further on, I come across a sad sight... another painted turtle has been run over (has someone been on the trail in a motorized vehicle, or did a cyclist hit her?) Her shell is broken and she is dead, but there is one, perfect egg next to her body. I will take it home, place it in sand and keep it warm, though I don't have high hopes. Some small animal will have a turtle dinner later tonight. (continued, next page)





An Evening Walk on the Sheldon Trail (continued)

Wild purple irises are out now. There are only a few, but they're perfect. I'm waiting for the delicate pink swamp roses that appear when the temperatures rise. But there are so many flowers... tiny ones on the ground and spreading ones in the trees! As evening drops and the birds fall silent, I return to my car, relaxed and restored. I'll never learn the names of all the birds and flowers out there, but the pleasure I feel being among them is enough.



For more on Merlin go to
merlin.allaboutbirds.org



For more on the Ralph C.
Sheldon Trail go to
cr2t.org/trails/



**PLEASE CONSIDER SUPPORTING THE TRAILS BY
DONATING REDEEMABLE CONTAINERS. ASK THE
ATTENDANT TO ADD THE TOTAL REFUND TO
THE CHAUTAUQUA RAILS TO TRAILS ACCOUNT.**

Southside Redemption Center
1752 Foote Ave,
Jamestown, NY

Don's Car Wash
184 East Fairmount Ave,
Lakewood, NY



Since Our Last Trackin'

A SUMMARY UPDATE PROVIDED BY BOARD SECRETARY
WENDY LEWELLEN

Many worthwhile accomplishments cited in the last newsletter have continued. Speaking about more recent developments (2025), here they are. I'm sure there are more.

- We managed to get the Town of Chautauqua to agree to plow the new parking lot on Summerdale Road.
- Sign Ninja Bob Lannon posted many needed arrow signs in order to eliminate trail user uncertainty.
- A new overdue logo sign was put up at the parking lot by the Mayville Depot with the help of Village of Mayville workers.
- A family picnic at the Prospect Station trailhead was planned and pulled off on the first Chautauqua Trails Day, largely through the efforts of Membership Chair Judy Takats.
- A Trail Stewards system was created for the first time. Bob Lannon listed the Trail Steward Duties and Trail Maintenance Czar Thom Wright has managed the list. The goal is to make sure all trail segments are taken care of by delineating volunteers for each one, not leaving reportage to chance and serendipity.
- Utilizing the expertise of Kate Ebersol, assisted by Bree Agett, a retreat was conducted in April for the purpose of updating our Strategic Plan, a necessary and successful effort.
- We changed our website's name to CR2T.org. This one is more user-friendly than our former one.
- For the first time the annual Mayville Bluegrass Festival held at Big Inlet Brewing in August will become an official fundraiser for our organization.
- We decided for several good reasons to forego the annual July Wine Walk Event and to explore other fundraising efforts which are not so labor-intensive. There will not be a Gravel Grinder ride this year. Last year was our first attempt at staging that event.
- Our participation in the Erie to Pittsburgh Trail Alliance is ongoing, thanks to our Vice President, T. John McCune. Adept management of our finances continues utilizing the skills of Dorothy Gruber, our Treasurer. Trail Maintenance Czar Thom Wright has been especially challenged by the number of blowdowns this spring, along with beaver dam flooding. Bree Agett has made sure that Giving Tuesday and GiveBigCHQ have yielded much-needed funds. And of course, our President Bill Ward has continued to lead with aplomb, determination, and grace as he endeavors to herd us cats.

LET'S KEEP IN TOUCH



Take a Hike!

To alert us of trail maintenance needs, discuss volunteer opportunities or for any contact needs, complete the Contact Us form on our website www.cr2t.org/join-us/



***BECOME A MEMBER,
OR RENEW YOUR ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP***

LEVELS

- INDIVIDUAL- \$25.00
- FAMILY- \$40.00
- PATRON- \$60.00
- SUSTAINING- \$100.00
- BENEFACTOR- \$250.00
- SPONSOR- \$1,000.00
- CUSTOMIZED DONATION

ONLINE AT
WWW.CR2T.ORG/DONATE/
OR BY MAIL AT P.O. BOX
151, MAYVILLE, NY 14757.
THANK YOU FOR
SUPPORTING THE TRAILS!