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Through the Gateway

Volume 29 Issue 2

Fall-Winter 2021

President's Letter

by Beth Hayden

Winter truly is a wonderland. Its beauty is bold and dramatic. But nature offers subtle winter delights that often go unnoticed. On your next winter walk on the Gateway or Brown's Creek Trails, look to the snow for signs of other trail users you may not be seeing.

Turkeys happily wander the trails in search of acorns and dried berries hidden under winter's white layers. Their tracks are fairly easy to identify. These large, winged friends have four toes, three forward and a fourth that faces directly back but does not always leave a track. If you see distinct and consistent four-toed prints, you are likely looking at those of a Sandhill Crane.

Mice tracks are a novel and fun sighting. Since they are hoppers, they leave sets of prints on either side of a narrow line created as they drag their tail. Look for side-by-side indentations, with a notable space between "jumps," and a consistent line that runs down the middle.

Seeing a fox along the trail is a treat. And if you see four equally-sized paw prints (about the size of a domestic cat), longer than they are wide, you are near one! Each toe has a claw, and their main paw pad is triangular, spreading out from the toes. You may only see one track on each side as fox "direct register," meaning they place their hind foot in the same spot as their front foot.

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The leaves are beautiful on the trees but can be slippery on the trail. Thanks DNR!



Where am I? Email your answer to gbctanewsletter@gmail.com.

Welcome to Winter!

Trail Maintenance

Having 1.5 staff members work on the trail this year made a big difference in the condition of the Gateway and Brown's Creek State Trails. In addition to our regular maintenance tasks, we were able to install seven (7!) new benches, add gravel on the shoulder along the Gateway, remove trash collected by GBCTA volunteers, replace graffitied signs and hazard trees, and clear vegetation and brush from the trail shoulders.

Candlelight Events

The winter candlelight hike will take place on Friday, January 28, 2022, from 5—8 PM on the Gateway Trail. We will meet at Wildwood Elementary School, 8698 75th Street North (County Road 12).

Major Projects

Staff continue to work on the L'Orient Street project, the Westminster Bridge replacement and the failing culvert in the gorge on Brown's Creek State Trail.

Busy Trails

Last year (2020) was clearly a record year for use on both Gateway and Brown's Creek State Trails. But this year (2021) was not far behind. The Brown's Creek State Trail use counter from January 1 – November 1 shows:

- Daily average: 763
- Daily weekend average: 1144
- Peak day: May 29 with 3,238 trail users
- 2020 was busier January through August but this year has been busier in September and October.



Trail Extension Update - Scandia

The City of Scandia and local partners are advocating for funding to advance the proposed trail connection between Scandia and William O'Brien State Park. All necessary land acquisition is complete for this segment and a portion of the trail route has already been designed using funds from a previous bonding appropriation. If successful, additional funds would be directed at continued design work and, depending on available resources, construction of a separated grade crossing of Oakhill Road.

Thanks to the Association for all the great work you do! I hope to see you on the Trail!

Rachel Henzen
PAT Area Supervisor

Native Plant Restoration — October 2, 2021– Gateway Trail and Lansing Avenue

It was cloudy, cool and *very* humid when the group set out. They walked to a prairie site east of Manning which had been previously trimmed and cut by DNR staff. To continue the multi-step restoration process, the group hauled brush, cut buckthorn, amur maple and other invasives and did spot applications of herbicide to prevent regrowth. During this work, the group was ser-enaded by many birds including Canada Geese and a pair of Sandhill Cranes who flew over us on their way south for the winter. Linda Radimecky, Dennis Lindeke and Beth Hayden all shared their extensive knowledge of the complex environmental issues surrounding non-native plan species, and the need to continually work restoring native plants to the local landscape.

A HUGE thank you to all of you for the sweaty, dirty battle you were all a part of this Saturday as we fought back plant invaders to prepare for prairie beautification and restoration on the Gateway Trail.



President's Letter—continued from Page 1

For a handy visual guide to animal prints visit the News tab on our webpage.

If you're interested in seeing the animals themselves, here are some tips from our friends at the MN DNR.

- Go out at dawn and dusk for the best viewing.
- Be alert, move slowly and quietly. Be patient and don't move in for a closer look. You might spook them.
- Search for tracks in the mud or snow and look for gnawed saplings.
- Look near the edges of forests and fields, pond margins and treetops.
- Do some research before you go and choose the right place to find the species you want to spot.

So, put on your boots and overcoat and take some time to observe winter's subtle markings.

Gateway Browns Creek Trail Association Updates

Trail extension to Scandia

by Robert Zuzek

As Rachel mentioned (page 2) Scandia Parks and Trail is working with the City of Scandia on the Gateway expansion. The City will be submitting grant applications for the different phases of the project. Phase One is for the section from the trailhead to Oakhill Road and Phase Two is for the tunnel. Mayor Maefsky met with Ken Cammilleri to discuss funding sources for this project. Bill Strusinski (lobbyist) suggested submitting a bonding request in 2022.

Volunteers

by Liz Stejskal

The Association thanks all the volunteers who helped out on the trails this year. Your work is important to us and to the DNR. Here are some of the many contributions you made:

- A group of builders made picnic tables for the Train Trax snack cart near the Zephyr Theater in Stillwater. Stop by if you haven't seen them, they look great!
- Map boxes were filled so folks could get check their bearings. Remember to try out the QR codes now posted at many rest stops. They take you to our website map, and using them saves paper and printing costs!
- The fearless Pooper Scooper Troop kept the Highway 96 and Manning Ave. bridges clear of 'horse apples'.
- Brush and invasives were cleared along a section near Manning Avenue to prepare for prairie restoration in 2022.
- Finally, the Adopt-a-Trail group picked up trash and more along the entire length of both trails. This is a huge effort on the part of many.

The Association appreciates the time and effort ALL of you put into keeping up the Gateway and Brown's Creek trails. Even this informal tree-removal crew. Thank you.



AWARD: The Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association was selected as the recipient of Parks & Trails Council's 2nd Annual Friends Group Partner Award. "This award recognizes outstanding stewardship, volunteerism, and collaboration in support of Minnesota's parks and trails." GBCTA:

- Helped P&TC to fulfill its mission to acquire, protect, and enhance Minnesota's parks and trails by being an on-the-ground advocate and local community presence for the Gateway and Brown's Creek State Trails.
- Organized and supported events, engaged in advocacy, collaborated with community partners
- Employed creative strategies to support the trail and engage community members



The Association thanks our business partners, volunteers and members. Together we keep the Gateway and Brown's Creek Trails in great shape.



Trail Angels—A good day is when you unexpectedly have the chance to help a fellow biker out

I was biking on Brown's Creek in mid-July when all of a sudden, I couldn't pedal. It would just spin. I stopped and saw that the fastener that should have been connecting the sprocket to the crank arm was missing.

The very first biker who came along stopped and offered to help. Since it had just happened, we started walking back the way I came, looking for the missing fastener. In approximately fifteen seconds we see a woman ahead of us waving. "Are you guys looking for this?" Yes, in fact, we were.

And two minutes after that, with help from the first guy, my pedal was doing what it was supposed to be doing and I was able to bike back home. A little extra tightening and my adventure was over. What a great feeling! I didn't get either of their names so if they are reading this, thanks so much.

Know about a Trail Angel? Send it to gbctanewsletter@gmail.com.

2021 GBCTA Board Officers	Beth Hayden, President Steve Kahn, Newsletter Editor	Laurie Mainquist, Treasurer Kerri Kolstad, Secretary	Cecily Harris, Vice President Liz Stejskal, Officer at Large
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Honorary Members	Judy Drew (Equestrian Liaison), Noreen Farrell, Bob Hagstrom, Doug Schwartz, Peter Seed, Vik Wilson		
DNR	Rachel Henzen, Parks and Trails Supervisor, Linda Radimecky, Naturalist, Brandon Helm, Acquisition/Development Specialist		

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Go to our website, click on 'Contact Us', then send us your
preference.*

The Back Page

By Rob McKim



"Hey, why are they cutting trees in the park?" You may be wondering about the plant management going on along Brown's Creek at the Neal Avenue Cold Water Station. This project, sponsored by the Watershed District, will protect and improve water quality in Brown's Creek. The creek has started to suffer from erosion along the stream banks, known as head cuts. These are a threat to stream

health and fish habitat by contributing more sediment into the water than is natural or healthy. Minnesota Native Landscapes was hired to fix the problem and restore the important wetlands along the creek.

This work includes removing invasive trees and shrubs, adding rock within the creek to slow water flow, creating checks on heavy runoff events and restoring the open areas with native vegetation. The project will continue through the winter with ongoing management of the newly planted native vegetation over the next several years. This is an effort to keep Brown's Creek healthy and beautiful.

