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# Through the Gateway

Volume 28 Issue 2

Fall-Winter 2020

## President's Letter

by Beth Hayden

You can already feel a new energy in the air as the days grow delightfully longer. I hope that energy takes you out on the trails to let the crisp clean air and the muffled silence of winter renew your spirits in the New Year. As you head out, have some fun looking for a few points of interest you may not have noticed in your wanderings.

- Seek out the mural honoring the Gandy Dancers, workers who historically maintained the original railroad tracks for the Soo Line.
- The stone bridge on Brown's Creek Trail was constructed in the 1860s as part of a military road for troops heading off to serve in the Civil War.
- The 45<sup>th</sup> parallel, marking the halfway point between the North Pole and the Equator, crosses the trail near Flicek Park in Maplewood, connecting you at that moment to cities in France, Croatia, Mongolia and Japan, before circling back to the States through Oregon.
- Learn a little more about wetlands at the North St. Paul Urban Ecology Center, a 24-acre wetland restoration project, northwest of the intersection of McKnight Rd N. and South Avenue E.
- Pause on the Iron Bridge over Manning Ave. Built in 1873, it was originally located in Sauk Centre, MN, and was moved to various locations before becoming a permanent part of the Gateway route.

These are just a few things you may not have noticed in the past. But it's a new year, and there are new things to see. Enjoy!



The Gateway Trail won first place for best Bike Trail in the White Bear Press 2020 Reader's Choice Awards. We thank them for the honor, and this great certificate!



An endangered Blandings Turtle spotted on the trail this year—let's hope we see more of them! We ask everyone to be aware of and protect wildlife they encounter on the trail. Photo: Dennis Lindeke

## DNR Update by Rachel Henzen, DNR Parks and Trail Area Supervisor

### Welcome Winter!

#### The L'Orient Reroute and Westminster Bridge Replacement

Work continues on the design, development, permitting, and other necessary items for these two projects to move forward. If everything stays on track, construction on both projects should begin in 2021.

#### Brown's Creek Gorge Culvert

If you traveled on the Brown's Creek State Trail, you may have noticed a hole developing alongside the trail at about mile 1.2. It appears that a culvert beneath the trail is starting to separate. Our engineers have taken a look at the issue and will spend the winter researching the best ways to repair it.

#### DNR Candlelight Events

Unfortunately due to COVID, our two candlelight hikes have been cancelled this year. We hope to bring these popular events back in the future. The DNR encourages everyone to continue to use the trails in the winter; they are a quiet and peaceful place in our noisy world.

#### Our Busy Trails!

While most forms of recreation were limited this year, our Minnesota State Parks and Trails became the gathering place for many people. This was particularly obvious on the Gateway and Brown's Creek State Trails, which had record breaking levels of use. Data collected from the counter on Brown's Creek State Trail from January 1 - September 13, 2020 (a period of about 9 months) showed:

- Total year-to-date traffic was up 65%
- Cycling traffic was up 74%, and pedestrian use was up 50%
- During the stay-at-home order (March 27 – May 18), overall traffic was up 103%

I would like to acknowledge and thank Tim Voss. He performed trail maintenance work for many years on both trails, and retired from the DNR in early August. We plan to fill his position over the winter. I also want to thank the Association for all their support during this challenging year. We're looking forward to a great 2021!

### CSI: The Gateway Trail

by Karen Jeffords-Brown, Master Naturalist

On a crisp October day, I biked the Gateway from Jamaica Avenue to Pine Point and back. At Pine Point I approached the restroom, (even though I knew it had probably been locked for the season), and came upon an upsetting scene: A very large salamander lay at the edge of the cement slab, and several feet away was his tail! And in between, a shocking swash of blood.

Kneeling down beside him (her?), I surveyed the crime scene...what had happened to this creature lying immobile on the slab? I didn't see puncture wounds, so I doubted an animal had attacked him. Had someone stepped on him? But why leave him in such a sad state? And what was this salamander doing on a cement slab near a restroom in October?

Growing up in Pennsylvania, salamanders were small, pinkish, mud-colored, an inch or two long. This salamander was huge; probably 6-7 inches even missing his pathetic tail, and he was black with yellow spots. An Eastern tiger salamander, common in Minnesota but rarely seen, as they spend most of their life buried underground in the mud. They come up in the spring to find a mate and usually surface at night.

His skin should have been shiny, moist, black. Instead, it was gummy and dull, and I couldn't see him breathing. I prodded him gently. He moved ever so slightly! I tried again, and again he moved. He was alive.



A (different!) Tiger Salamander taken a year after this story was written, seen near the Lake Wobegon Trail.

Photo: Karen Jeffords-Brown

*CSI: The Gateway Trail continued on page 5*



**Have you heard?**

### Paused: Events and Gatherings

Due to restrictions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, all regular GBCTA public events and gatherings are still on pause. We encourage all of you to get outdoors on the trail or to your favorite park for some fresh air and inspiration. The Association wishes everyone a happy and healthy New Year.

### Inviting All Gateway/Browns Creek Trail Photographers!

The Association will launch a **Digital Photo Contest** in 2021. The last contest we sponsored was held all the way back in 2008! Photo categories being discussed include People, Wildlife, and Scenery along any section of the Gateway or Browns Creek Trails.

Contest details are still being worked out, but we are excited about this, and look forward to seeing all your creative images! Watch our website at [gatewaybrowns creektrail.org](http://gatewaybrowns creektrail.org) for contest details, an entry form, and a description of prizes.



### GBCTA is Round-Up Partner at the Stillwater Co-Op in May 2021

The Stillwater River Market Community Co-op Round-Up Partner for May 2021 is...drumroll please...the Gateway Browns Creek Trail Association!! Visit the co-op at 221 Main St. in Stillwater, and make a purchase. Request that your total be rounded up to the nearest dollar, and those funds will be donated to the Association. Your cashier may also ask if you want to do this during check-out. Every little bit helps the trail! *Thank you for your support!*

### Water Station Installed along Brown’s Creek Trail at Neal Avenue

The City of Stillwater is very proud of the collaboration between the Gateway Trail Association, community members, the City Council, and city staff to complete the water station project at Neal Avenue, adjacent to Brown’s Creek Trail. As a Stillwater resident, bicycling enthusiast and trail user myself, I appreciate the community support for the City’s vision and planning for biking and pedestrian trails. This is another great amenity that will enhance users’ recreational experience on the trail.

With regards, Tom McCarty, Stillwater City Administrator

*Editor’s note: Watch for a more detailed story about this construction in our 2021 Spring-Summer edition!*



### October Clean-up on the west end of the Gateway

On the 10th of October, a group of intrepid Association members and Board members masked up and socially distanced with garbage bags in hand for a “trash party” at the Arlington parking lot. Those of you familiar with the west (city) side of the trail from the intersection of Arlington Ave. to downtown St. Paul know this area can be a bit of a challenge to keep clean.

Folks collected a small mountain of refuse that day. See the image at left for the fruits of their labors! Our thanks to Beth Hayden, Jeff Jeanson, Laurie Mainquist, Liz Stejskal, Cecily Harris, Barb Wahman, Kim Weber, and Tim Whisler.

A special note of recognition to volunteer liaison Barb Wahman, who has enlisted the help of a new volunteer on this trail section. They will be out collecting trash more regularly, which will be a great help.

# Gateway Browns Creek Trail Association Updates

## Membership: It Takes a Village

by Kerri Kolstad

The Gateway and Brown's Creek Trails were never busier than this year, as people found fresh air, peace and quiet, and re-connected with the outdoors. Yet with all that busy-ness, we need to remember to thank our volunteers and the DNR, who pick up, trim branches, maintain porta-pottys, and keep the trail safe for all of us.

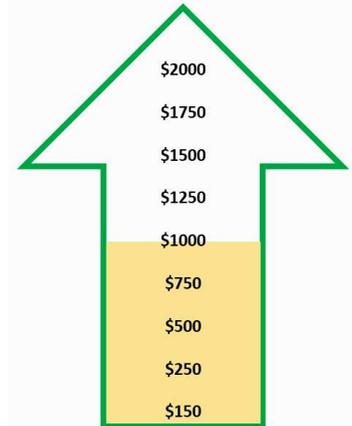
We also want to say THANK YOU to all our members!! Your membership dollars help us with many special projects, like benches, bluebird houses, repair stations, signage, and Association expenses related to graffiti removal.

Be sure to check out our new QR codes on the map boxes at each trailhead. With them, you can download maps onto your phone instead of using a paper map. Doing that saves trees and hundreds of dollars in printing costs each year. And you can use that QR code to become a member or donate too!

Right now we are asking your help with donations to stripe the trail next summer, because bonding for trail maintenance wasn't approved by the Legislature in 2020. One dollar equals 1 stripe. Please consider a special donation for this project, which is so critical for safety on the trail. You can admire those stripes when the weather turns warm! The response as of 28th Dec. has been great; let's keep it going.

It truly takes the community, our village, to keep the trails an urban escape!

Earn (BUY) your stripes  
Let's stripe the Gateway Trail  
We're halfway to our Goal of \$2000  
Thank You to All Who Have Donated!



Striping Appeal Donation total  
as of Dec. 28th 2020

## GBCTA Social Media

by Jon Slock

A lot of our Facebook views and new followers come from in-person events. Of course events like bike rides, candlelight hikes, moonlight walks and more are now on hold for now. We've adjusted by creating some virtual events, which still draw traffic to our page.

We've also kept the page active with (usually weekly) posts, and often include info and links from other like-minded organizations: Parks and Trails Council of MN, St. Paul Bike Coalition, Bike Alliance of Minnesota, and the DNR, to name a few. Sharing information between groups like these help us connect to the larger trail community, and the cross-promotion sends a few more eyeballs to our page.

A highlight of this summer/fall season: Being named best trail in the Twin Cities by the City Pages. That type of social media attention brings new people to our page and (eventually) to our trails. Another popular post was a mid-summer thank-you to the DNR for all the work they do on the trail. I mention that here so I can say thanks to them again for doing such a great job this year. Happy Holidays!

## Gateway Trail Project: Legislative Update

by Bill Strusinski

As many of you recall, a bill was introduced by Representative Bob Dettmer and Senator Karin Housley last year to provide funding for the Gateway State Trail to Scandia Extension Project. Costs to engineer, construct, and equip this trail from William O'Brien State Park to the center of Scandia on already acquired rights of way was estimated to be \$4.6M.

Unfortunately, in the October 2020 special session, this project did not make the \$1.9B Capital Investment (Bonding) bill passed by the legislature. In the final analysis, it was in competition with many other projects comprising more than \$5B of funding requests from around the state.

So what comes next? We anticipate a new bill for this project will be introduced and considered by the legislature in the future. The next Capital Investment Bill is expected to pass during the 2022 session. We are hopeful funding for the Gateway Trail Extension will be in that final bill. The process is starting over, and our goal is to get in the queue early for consideration. Grassroots support for this project will be critical.

## Gateway Browns Creek Trail Association Updates—Continued!

### Volunteer Update

This year, the work our volunteers did along the Gateway and Brown's Creek Trails was critical. In all seasons and weather, these faithful and hardy folks picked up trash, and alerted the DNR and our association to trail damage, storm debris, downed trees, graffiti, and more. Their work contributed to every trail users' safety and enjoyment in 2020.

Don't forget, taking care of the trail is everyone's job. If you see trash, pick it up. If you see something that needs reporting, drop us a line at our website or on Facebook. You can also contact the DNR. And if you see our wonderful volunteers (or the DNR) out of the trail cleaning up, please give them some room, a smile, and a loud "Thank You!"



*CSI: The Gateway trail Continued from page 2*

Now I felt responsible to save him, but how? I had mistakenly filled my water bottle with warm water and now was glad I had. This little guy needed to get wet and warm. I poured water over him, watching his black skin start to glisten. I weighed taking him to the Wildlife Rehabilitation Center, but he seemed too injured to ride inside my saddle bag for the 6 mile ride back to my car. I decided to return him to his habitat and hope he would survive. At least he wouldn't die on the cold cement.

I cleared space in a nearby flower bed, gently laying him in moist leaf litter warmed by the sun. I poured water over him again, and covered him with leaves. At home researching this salamander, the most startling thing I found: *Salamanders can regrow their tails!*

Two days went by. I couldn't get this magnificent little creature out of my mind. I needed to see if he had died there in the leaves. During the middle of my work day I raced up to Pine Point from St. Paul. I pulled into the parking lot and rushed over to the flower bed. It was undisturbed. A predator would not have been able to remove him without disturbing the leaf litter. I uncovered where I had left him...he was gone! I got down on my hands and knees and carefully sifted through the whole bed, thinking he had crawled away to die. He was totally gone.

All winter I thought about this wonderful little amphibian. I pictured him burrowed into cold mud. I imagined him in the deep stupor of winter hibernation, lying still, silently, steadily, and quite magically growing an amazing new tail.

Author's note: Salamanders can not only regrow tails, but also limbs and some internal organs. For those interested, here is a delightful YouTube video of a tiger salamander regenerating his leg: <https://youtu.be/qD1K7BoWVC8>

*Editor's note: I tried this link, and can verify it works. Karen is right, it's fascinating!*

2020 Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association Board / Association Officers					
<b>President</b>	Beth Hayden	<b>Treasurer</b>	Laurie Mainquist		
<b>Vice President</b>	Cecily Harris	<b>Officer at Large (Newsletter Editor)</b>	Liz Stejskal		
<b>Secretary</b>	Kerri Kolstad				
Association Board of Directors					
Lorrie Beaulieu (Equestrian Liaison), John Kimberly, Rob McKim (Community Liaison), Dennis Lindeke (Trail Extension and Legislative Advocate), Pam Meyer (Graffiti Removal Captain), Janie O'Connor, Ed Sanderson, Jon Slock (Facebook/Social Media/Website Manager), Barb Wahman (Volunteer Liaison), Kim Weber					
Honorary Board Members and Trail Liaison					
Judy Drew (Equestrian Liaison), Noreen Farrell, Bob Hagstrom, Doug Schwartz, Peter Seed, Vik Wilson					
<b>DNR Parks and Trails Supervisor</b>	Rachel Henzen	<b>DNR Trail Naturalist</b>	Linda Radimecky	<b>DNR Acquisition/Development Specialist</b>	Brandon Helm

**Return Address:**  
Gateway Brown's Creek Trail Association  
P.O. Box 9295  
North St. Paul, MN 55109



*Get your newsletter online to save resources and GBCTA funds!  
Go to our website, click on 'Contact Us' and send us your  
preference.*

## The Back Page



### The Gateway is part of the solution

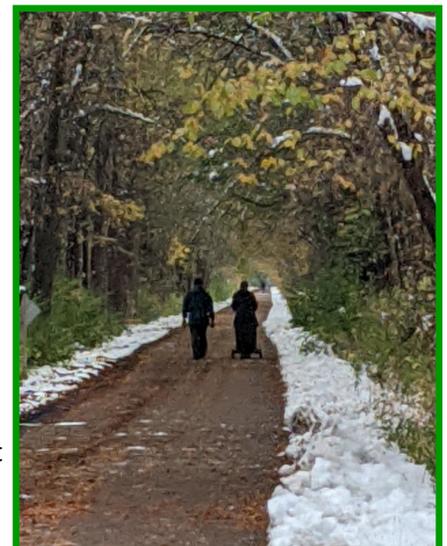
People have discovered a couple of simple things to make life seem everlasting! What are they? Living in the present, and making the best of what we have now. Many who seek these things find them in nature, exercise, and fresh air.

I noticed many of my fellow walkers, runners, bikers, and horsey folk outside this year, and they definitely got all of those on the Trail. Just being outdoors walking, skiing, or biking for 20 minutes a day will suffice.

The Gateway and Browns Creek trails are a short walk for me and a simple, quick, ride for many. These "gems of the Twin Cities and suburbs" really are life savers! While COVID continues to make life different for all, and difficult for many, we can escape to this wonderful resource.

Robert Frost said "Two roads diverged in a wood and I...I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference." The trail and nature can make all the difference for you. Won't you take some time and get out today to improve your life? And besides getting out on the trail, why not become a member of the GBCTA, or if you are already a member, upgrade your membership. Visit our website, to find out more.

*Kim Weber, long time trail aficionado*



A couple walks in October snow along the Gateway, just past the English Street.  
Photo: Liz Stejskal