

Rocky Raccoon:

Continues trail story

[By the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority]

In his last column Rocky provided us with some history on the Maitland Trail Association and its attempts to construct a system of hiking trails in the Maitland Valley running from Goderich to Wingham and beyond. Part of this trail has been completed and may be enjoyed by all this year. Association members are optimistic that another large section can be constructed this year.

Before you strike out on this most enjoyable recreational activity, Rocky wishes to tell you some things which must be remembered if you are to enjoy your experience and are to leave the trail in good condition for the enjoyment of others.

Experienced hikers follow a set of rules known as the Trail Users Code. They realize that good hikers hike only along marked routes; do not climb fences, but use the stiles; carry out all garbage (if you can carry it in, you can carry it out); do not camp or use fires, except at officially designated and posted campsites; leave plants and flowers for others to enjoy; never strip bark off trees; walk along the edges of fields, not across them; protect and do not disturb wildlife; leave only thanks and take nothing but photographs.

If we are all good hikers there will be no danger of the trails of Maitland Valley becoming run-down and covered with garbage.

There are some things to remember. When you go hiking whether it be for a short 1 or 2 hour trip or for an entire day or more, wear proper footwear. Your feet are all you have to get you out of an area so be sure that you have them well protected in light but strong, preferably water proof, boots. Running shoes may be comfortable for short walks on level stone free ground. However, your feet will tire quickly if the trail is steep and rocky. Also, if running shoes or street shoes become wet so do your feet and soreness will quickly follow.

In warm weather, always carry a container of insect repellent with you. Nothing can spoil an enjoyable afternoon's walk through the woods more quickly than a swarm of unstopped black flies or mosquitoes. Even Rocky has trouble with these pesky pests.

Try to be prepared for the unexpected. Weather conditions can change very rapidly in this part of the world. Balmy skies can give way to crashing thunderstorms in short order. So, always carry protective clothing such as a rain hat and slicker with you.

Try never to hike in shorts. Most trails are intentionally routed away from hazardous plants such as poison ivy, poison oak, stinging nettle, and take the easiest route around physical barriers. However, this avoidance is not always possible. It is extremely easy to walk through a patch of poison ivy or to slip on slippery rocks. Long pants will often provide the protection necessary to prevent injury.

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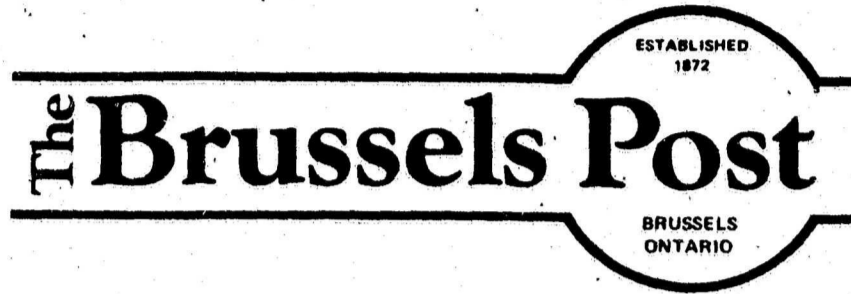
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The written expression of frank opinion on "Our Hometown Paper" should be at least 250 words but not exceed 700.

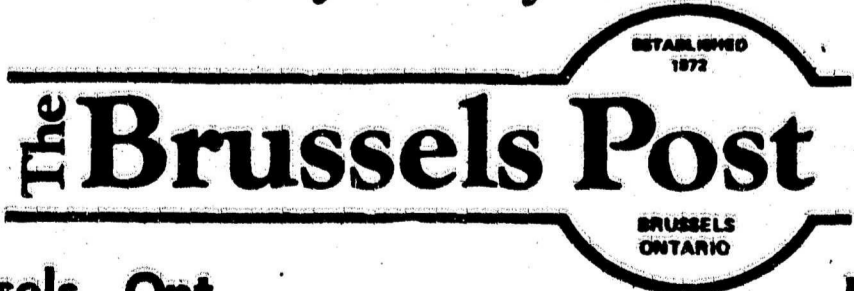
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