

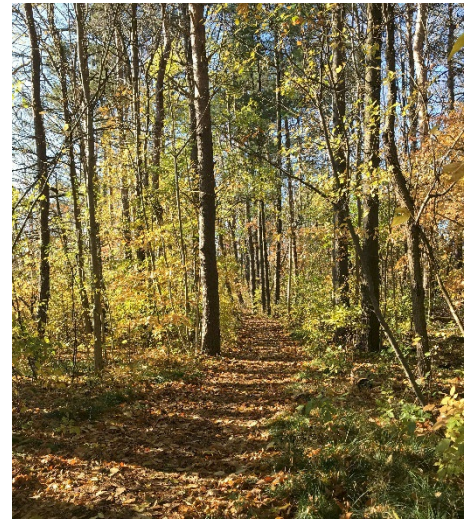
CULTURAL MOMENT FOR AUGUST 26, 2024 CELEBRATING JACK BENHAM



Jack Benham

In 1981, after Damascus Lake was excavated, a local writer, Michael Baker-Pearce approached Jack Benham about putting a walking trail around the lake.

Jack was involved with the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA), and along with a group of local volunteers under his direction after hours they planted trees, built a bridge, put up bird houses as well as mason bee habitats. The trail has been constantly used and has the locals cutting grass and helping maintain it. It is accessible off Wellington County Road 16 at the south side of the lake.



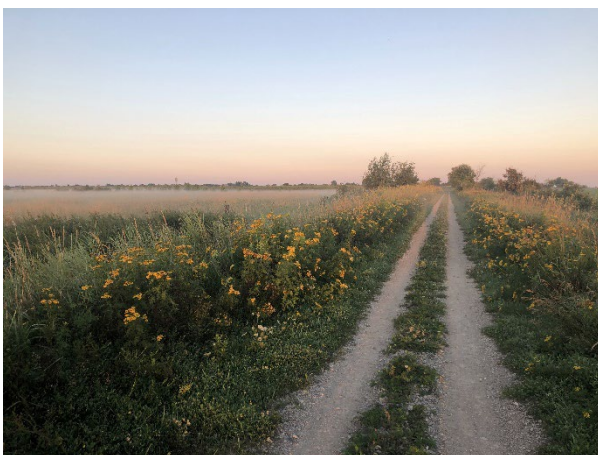
The River Trail, Arthur.

The next project was the River Trail, which officially opened in 2015. Along with Dave Stack and Ian Turner, Jack spearheaded the building of this trail. Dave approached

the local landowners for permission, and Ian enlisted some of the local Lions Club members who would help clear brush and build stairways and a boardwalk. An Ontario Trillium Foundation grant was received to help with the costs of lumber, signage and some of the benches. Other benches have been donated in memory of local people.

The trail is 4.2 kilometres out and back, beginning at Lions Park on Smith Street. If you look closely at the right time, you may see a Pileated Woodpecker. When looking around the trees, their hole is an oval shape in a dead tree whereas the other woodpeckers make round holes. It is the largest of the species.

The Township of Wellington North took over grooming the trail and building a bridge over Farley Creek. Past Reeve and County Warden Doreen Hostrawser also was awarded \$2,500 for her service as warden, which she gave to the River Trail for expenses.



West Luther Trail

When the railway beds were abandoned and would be offered to the landowners along the track from Arthur to Grand Valley, Jack then took a proposal to the Township to acquire this land as a trail. The West Luther Trail, or the "Rail Trail," starts in Arthur on Eliza Street at the north end of town and goes to the West Luther/East Luther Townline. There is also a parking area and entrance off Wellington County Road 16 between Line 2 and Wellington Road 109.

A couple of creeks needed bridges so with a few phone calls, some flatbed trailers were located and installed to solve the problem. Railings have been added for safety. Gravel was added, signs, benches and now with the Green Legacy Project, many trees, shrubs and native flowers have been planted to enhance the experience. This trail is mostly maintained by a dedicated army of volunteers.

These trails would not be part of our outdoor heritage without the leadership of Jack Benham. Thank you, Jack.

Submitted by Bonny McDougall, Wellington North Cultural Roundtable