

A PLACE FOR ALL

A fiery autumn view from
the Escarpment summit
of Beaver Valley Ski Club.

SHARING THE KIMBERLEY FOREST

WRITTEN & PHOTOGRAPHED BY SANDRA J. HOWE

In the heart of the Beaver Valley, between Kimberley and Eugenia, is a spectacular tract of public lands called the Kimberley Forest. It includes almost 1,000 acres of Niagara Escarpment forests, meadows, hillsides, river valley, and wetland threaded by a vast network of multi-user trails. The lands are owned by the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forests (MNRF), Grey-Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA), and the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC). Since 2013, the Friends of the Kimberley Forest have worked tirelessly together to sustainably steward these lands and trails for the benefit of all users. Autumn is a great time to explore the trails and meet the people who take care of them.



▲ Gnarly Black Locust trees grow at an old homestead along Wodehouse Karst Side Trail.

The Kimberley Forest stretches along the western shoulder of Beaver Valley from the former Talisman Ski Resort in the north to Beaver Valley Ski Club in the south. The main Bruce Trail runs north-south through its length with trailheads at the top of the old Talisman Resort and on Windy Lane Drive at the top of the Beaver Valley Ski Club. These sites provide parking and amazing long views over the fall colours. Trailheads on Grey Highlands 7th Line provide access to fairly level trails above the Escarpment.

From Grey Road 30 on the valley floor, trailheads give access to the trails along the Beaver River and the lower Escarpment. For a detailed map go to kimberleyforest.ca and find the printable PDF under Visit Trails.

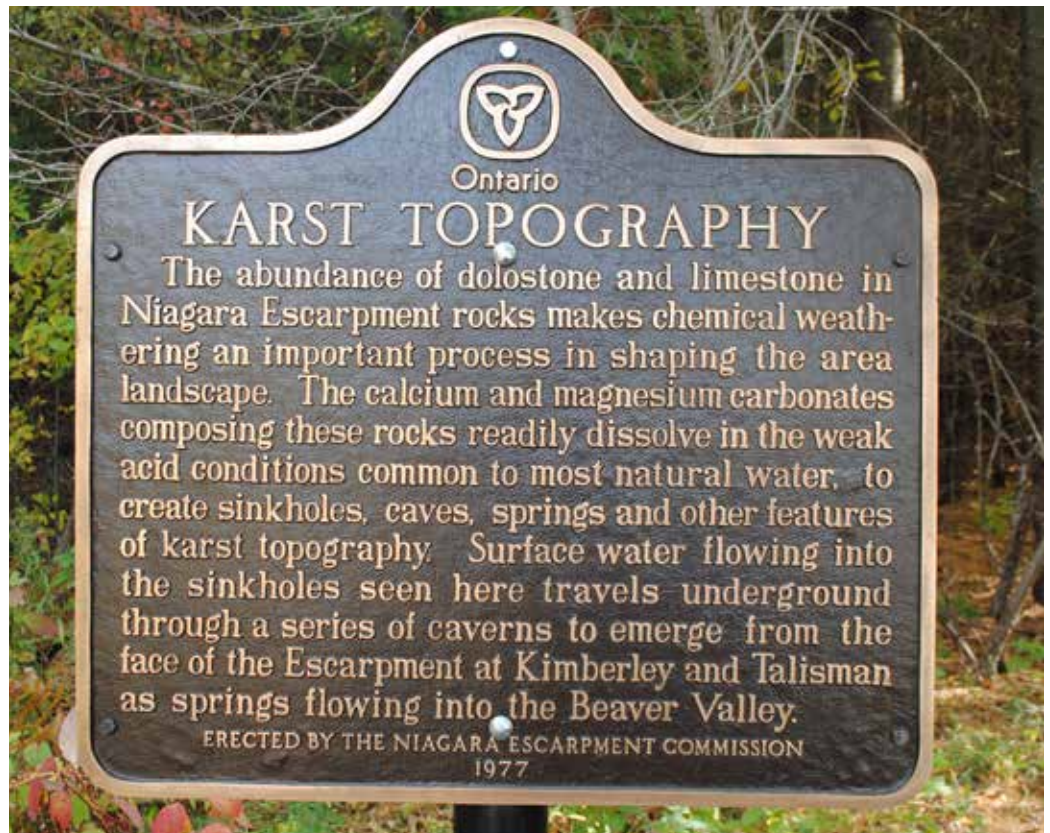
A great place to begin exploring the Kimberley Forest is in the northwest corner on the Wodehouse Karst Side Trail. Park in the tiny lot on Grey Highlands 7th Line near the former hamlet of Wodehouse. This blue-blazed trail winds through pine plantation and old homestead lands to witness some

fascinating geology. Gnarly Black Locust trees surround the pioneer foundations. The trail enters a wetland meadow with Wodehouse Creek flowing southward. The creek appears to have an abrupt end at a high ridge of rock and gravel, the Banks Moraine.

Karst Landscape

At this point the water all goes underground through sinkholes characteristic of karst topography. The

dolostone and limestone of the Niagara Escarpment have weathered and dissolved to allow water to flow through, emerging at the base of the Escarpment as springs. Continuing along the trail, you arrive at a tiny lake with beautiful pond lilies and fall colour reflections. The trail now rises slightly onto the moraine created by glaciers 10,000 years ago. The Sugar Maples in this mature hardwood



▲ The Niagara Escarpment Commission's plaque gives useful information about the karst landscape of the area.

▼ View across Beaver Valley from the summit of former Talisman lands to Old Baldy on the east side.



forest are alight with red, orange, and yellow leaves.

The land here falls away steeply on the right. A trail junction offers two choices. Go straight ahead to stay on level terrain atop the Escarpment. This path follows red markers to circle back to meet the Wodehouse Karst Side Trail. Otherwise turn right to continue steeply down the face of the Escarpment to meet the main Bruce Trail. A left turn on the Bruce Trail brings you to Bill's Creek which tumbles from the boulders and flows down the slope. This is the waters of Wodehouse Creek that disappeared into sinkholes high above. Turn around here to retrace your steps unless you have a vehicle parked at another trailhead.

Stew Hilts of Meaford, a retired geology professor and a founding friend of the Kimberley Forest, has a great article online about the Wodehouse Karst geology. He says it is "one of the most interesting examples of karst topography in Canada." Stew and many other community volunteers were concerned about extreme erosion happening on trails throughout the Kimberley Forest. As crown land, the area was free access to all users but no one was managing for sustainability. Motorized vehicles were tearing up the fragile Escarpment lands causing erosion and habitat destruction. In 2013, a public meeting was called in Kimberley to see what could be done to protect and manage this community asset.

Variety of Friends

A broad spectrum of users and organizations participated in this initial meeting: hikers, cross-country skiers, dog walkers, horse riders, hunters, anglers, ATV riders,



▲ Dennis Stier of Southampton enjoys a trail's autumn splendour.

snowmobilers, mountain bikers, the Beaver Valley Ski Club, and Sustainable Trails Ontario, plus the Municipality of Grey Highlands, MNRF, GSCA, and the BTC. Out of these consultations, the Friends of the Kimberley Forest was created. Despite challenges and differing

perspectives, 10 years later this local community group continues to work together to steward and manage the Kimberley Forest. Members meet monthly to set goals and priorities. Land owners continue to be supportive, and the municipality has helped with grants and services. Trail

construction, maintenance, and rehabilitation are key volunteer priorities.

Cathy Little of Grey Highlands is a founding member and active volunteer. She became involved because she wanted to develop a cross-country ski club and trail network. By partnering



▲ Beaver Valley is famous for apples, which grow everywhere, both in old, abandoned orchards, and as wild trees from seeds spread by wildlife and people.



▲ The work of a beaver in Beaver Valley.




— THE —
**HIGHLAND
 MANOR**

Grand Victorian
 Bed & Breakfast

867 4th Ave. A West
 Owen Sound
 1-877-372-2699
 highlandmanor.ca

FINE ART ORIGINALS



amc annemore.com
 (905) 633-7210
 anne more originals



B - 139 Resort Rd (Red Bay)
 South Bruce Peninsula, ON N0H 2T0
 519-534-1868
 reservations@evergreenresortredbay.ca
 evergreenresortredbay.ca
 Interac, Visa, Mastercard accepted

Evergreen Resort
 Cozy cottages, sitting room
 & 4-pc. bath
 Natural sand beaches
 All-inclusive
 Open May to mid October
 Spring & Fall Specials






▲ Cathy Little of Grey Highlands doing some clipping as part of trail maintenance.



▲ Lilla Fodor of Kimberley on her favourite summit rock.

with the Beaver Valley Ski Club, the Beaver Valley Nordic Ski Club was able to share a parking lot on Windy Lane Drive. Their network of trails meanders through old fields, pine plantations, and forests above the Escarpment with beautiful views to the farmlands west.

Cathy says, “There is a new fitness-oriented demographic of downhill skiers at the Beaver Valley Ski Club. They love to downhill in the morning, and cross-country ski in the afternoon. The Nordic club membership is now over 200, and people are stepping up as volunteer trail stewards. It is very exciting to see the club grow and develop!”

Many other creative partnerships are emerging as diverse users learn to work together. Snowmobilers are helping with cross-country ski trail grooming. Mountain

bikers are re-routing trails to reduce erosion on steep slopes. Community members are widening trails to allow easier multi-use access. Fat bikers and snowshoers are sharing trails comfortably. All users are learning about hunting and fishing seasons to ensure safety on the trails.

“There is room in the Kimberley Forest for all through respect and collaboration,” notes Lilla Fodor of Kimberley, an avid hiker and skier.

To learn more about the Friends of the Kimberley Forest see kimberleyforest.ca or The Kimberley Forest on Facebook. To connect with the Beaver Valley Nordic Ski Club, see their website. **NEV**

Sandra J. Howe is a frequent contributor. Her last piece was “Building a New Future Through Owen Sound’s Reconciliation Garden,” Summer 2023.



▲ Dennis hikes a trail along the Beaver River.