



# NEW Year-Round Access TO Petun Conservation Area

BY NOTTAWASAGA VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

**F**our-season hiking pleasure is available at Petun Conservation Area (CA), which is owned by Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority (NVCA). During a visit, you are sure to stop on the bridge over Black Ash Creek, enjoying one of many special experiences.





A woman stands on the bridge over Black Ash Creek in Petun CA.





▲ The Bruce Trail here leads to spectacular views of Black Ash Creek Valley and south Georgian Bay.

**A**s motorists ascend the steep hill on 2nd Line Grey County towards the Petun CA, they are nearing some of the highest elevations on the Niagara Escarpment. Acquired by NVCA in 1975, Petun CA is named for the Tionontati people who inhabited the land during the early 1600s. Though the surrounding area has become more developed in the past 400 years, the views of the region's landscape from Petun CA still remain breathtaking.

In 2021, NVCA moved

the location of the parking lot and trailhead from the south edge of the property to the north to provide visitors access to the property's trail year round. This new location, along with year-round maintenance, will provide opportunities to explore the dynamic landscapes atop Osler Bluff through every season.

The spacious parking lot on the northwest corner of the site provides more than ample parking and removes the need for visitors to park along the road side as at other local access points to the

Bruce Trail. At the property's main entrance, visitors will note a large information kiosk including directional signage, an open field with recent tree plantings, and the Georgian Triangle Anglers Association's (GTAA) clubhouse.

From the parking lot, follow the 340-metre Black Ash Creek Side trail to connect to the main Bruce Trail, which runs the length of the property. A short distance along the Black Ash Creek Trail, the landscape changes from an open field to a mixed forest with varied elevations. Down a

small valley, a small footbridge allows hikers to pass over the side trail's namesake.

You are encouraged to stop on the bridge and listen to the sounds of the Black Ash Creek babbling combined with chirping birds and chattering squirrels. Along the banks of the creek, a diversity of tree species can be noted with the presence of Eastern White Cedar, hemlock, willow, spruce, pine, and maple.

Moving on from the tranquility of the footbridge and through a White Pine stand, there is a reminder that





▲ Visitor information sign in the new parking lot.



▲ The Bruce Trail's Black Ash Creek Side Trail links the new Petun CA parking lot up to the top of the Escarpment.





▲ Crevices and moist conditions create excellent habitats for a variety of mosses and ferns.

hikers are not yet atop the Osler Bluff. The trail tracks upward with a moderate climb, eventually intersecting with the Bruce Trail.

### **Bruce Trail East or West**

At an information kiosk, visitors can choose to follow the Bruce Trail east leading towards Niagara Falls or west towards Tobermory. Eastwards, the trail follows a ridge line along limestone cliffs that leads to spectacular views of Black Ash Creek Valley and the south Georgian Bay region.

Trees along the ridge include birch, Black Cherry and Blue Beech which create beautiful opportunities for viewing autumn colours, while the absence of foliage in the winter allows for a more expansive view. Along the trail are information panels about the region's agriculture and ecology. The agricultural

information is particularly relevant as the trail moves close to neighbouring farm fields. The transitional land between the fields and Petun CA boasts its own ecological benefits with the presence of milkweed creating attractive habitat and host plants for Monarch Butterflies.

The section of Bruce Trail between Black Ash Creek Trail and 2nd Line winds through the limestone crevasses and boulders that are signature features of this part of the Niagara Escarpment. While traversing through this dynamic and enjoyable section of the trail, visitors may remark on the unique fern and moss communities of the area, growing in the cool sheltered areas of the fissures and grykes, which are vertical cracks in limestone.

### **Positive Conservation**

Not only does the Petun CA

offer peaceful recreational opportunities only a 15-minute drive from downtown Collingwood, but ongoing conservation efforts from within the area have had a positive impact on the region's ecology.

In 2020, NVCA removed a man-made dam and pond on Black Ash Creek. This improved water quality and lowered summer water temperatures by 4°C, which improved habitat conditions for native Brook Trout. Additionally, the Georgian Triangle Anglers Association (GTAA) lease a portion of the property for the operation of a native fish hatchery. According to the GTAA, "the hatchery has the capacity to produce up to 100,000 fish a year and has been in operation for more than 30 years." The hatchery is not open to the public, but those interested can contact GTAA to learn more.







▲ Examining a Brook Trout: trained staff from Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority weigh and monitor Brook Trout populations in Black Ash Creek.



▲ Restoring the creek. In 2020, with funding from Bruce Power, Greenbelt Foundation and other partners, NVCA removed a man-made dam and stagnant pond in the headwaters of Black Ash Creek and restored stream habitat.

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Petun CA is also used as a seismic monitoring location. This monitoring location records tiny vibrations produced by earthquakes from around the world, forming part of an earthquake monitoring network. This location was chosen because it's far from sources of man-made noises, which are also suitable conditions for a quiet afternoon hike!

Daily parking fees per vehicle at NVCA properties are \$10.00+HST and annual parking passes are available for \$71.00+HST per vehicle. All fees collected are annually reinvested into general and enhanced maintenance needs.

NVCA strives to provide passive recreational opportunities suitable for all abilities, however the geological features, including steep inclines and dolomite bedrock trail at the Petun CA unfortunately creates challenging trail conditions. NVCA partners with the local Bruce Trail Blue Mountains Club, the Town of the Blue Mountains and Grey County on the maintenance and enhancement at this location.

### Directions

Directions to Petun CA from Collingwood: travel west on Sixth Street to Osler Bluffs Road/County Road 34. Turn left and travel south to Grey Road 19. Turn right and follow Grey Road 19 to the 2nd Line. Turn left and follow the 2nd Line for approximately half a km, at the base of the hill of the Escarpment. The parking lot is on the left; visitors will see signs for the Petun Conservation Area and for the Georgian Triangle Angler's Association. Visitors should be aware that the 2nd Line south of Petun CA is not maintained during the winter. It is best to approach Petun CA from the north in the winter. **NEV**



▲ Year-round access offers beautiful scenery in winter.



► Children enjoying a hike on the Bruce Trail.



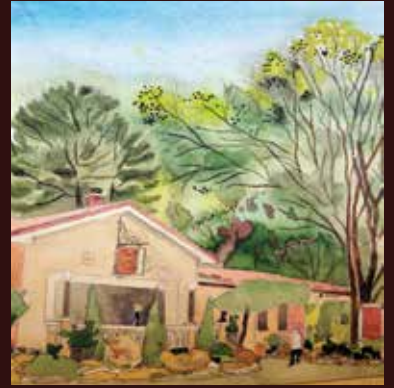


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▲ Seismic monitoring station in Petun CA records earthquakes from around the world, forming part of an earthquake monitoring network.



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