



Massie Skiing Hills

WRITTEN &
PHOTOGRAPHED
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The Massie Hills Management Area, owned by Grey Sauble Conservation Authority (GSCA), is located on the Niagara Escarpment southeast of Owen Sound. It is a huge, diverse, and fascinating property at about 119 acres with over 10 km of trails to explore. The Bruce Trail has crossed this land since the trail's beginnings in the 1960s but the route shifted in 2007. This change marks an important bit of Bruce Trail history. Originally the Bruce Trail traversed the full length of Massie Forest, continuing west toward Inglis Falls and Owen Sound. After four years of hard work by dedicated volunteers, the Bruce Trail was extended from Massie Forest for an additional 69 km to Bayview Escarpment Provincial Nature Reserve. The main trail now turns north, and the former main is the Spey River Forest Side Trail.



Left, Carl Sadler of Owen Sound often spends three days a week grooming the trails, then comes out to ski on Saturday. He shares his enthusiasm for Massie Hills with Dennis Stier of Southampton.

“I love to ski at the Massie Trails!” says Bettilyn Berglund of Owen Sound. “I have carved out a relatively flat route over the years so I am quite comfortable going there alone. This winter is amazing for snow, and the groomers have been so generous with their timely trips on behalf of all of us. I came to this area, Grey Bruce, for work, about 40 years ago, and joined the Bruce Trail Conservancy, for all the wonders that it has to offer. This includes the main Bruce Trail and blue side trail through Massie Hills. I met Curly Harnden, who looked after that section of trail. We were ultimately married and partners in that endeavour so it always has a special place in my heart. I am heading there today! Great snow, even some sun, perfect temps. Carpe diem!”

The Spey River Forest Side Trail is the backbone of the trail loops that allow hikers, bikers, horse riders, and dog-walkers to explore Massie Hills Conservation Area in the green seasons. In winter, access is limited to cross country skiers. The Owen Sound Cross Country Ski Club maintains and grooms classic double-track for a spectacular Nordic skiing experience. The trails range from fairly level beginner sections to more challenging, intermediate hills and turns. The diversity of habitats and terrains is fascinating: upland maple-beech forests, pine and tamarack plantations, cedar lowlands, and extensive wetland areas.

Kelly Rogers, ski club president, explains what she enjoys about skiing Massie Hills. “I love the peace and quiet. It’s a place to go to escape the bad news and revel in the beauty of the



▲ Sandra J. Howe skiing through snow-laden conifer plantation.

Massie Hills. It’s more of a wilderness experience than other ski trails in the area. It harks back to a simpler time when cross country was all about quiet skis in the woods. Not that I am averse to skate skiing at other ski trails!”

As to her experience as president, Kelly says “All positive. I work with a great board. They are always keen to pitch in when things need

doing. We have recently added an annual moonlight ski which has been well received by our community. Otherwise, our mission is to simply continue to offer classic skiing in a wilderness landscape. Our volunteer trail crew captains, Gary and Carl, have been maintaining this trail, summer and winter, for years; there wouldn’t be skiing without them. They are out there in all

types of weather keeping our trails in great shape. GSCA staff are very supportive, and are excellent partners.”

After Big Snow

The trails really are in wonderful condition. The volunteer grooming team is out machine-packing and track-setting several times weekly. It can take up to three hours each time. After



▲ Gary Shute on trail groomer. He has been a groomer since 2010, and loves being on the trails. Gary talks to all the skiers, and is a great ambassador for the club.



◀ Bettilyn Berglund of Owen Sound has skied at Massie Hills for many years. Her broad grin shows how much she loves to be out on the trails that hold many memories for her.



Fresh snow provides a cozy forest blanket over everything. After a big snow, volunteer groomers may need to ski with hand tools to cut back hanging limbs, or clear fallen debris.



Well-groomed double track offers excellent ski conditions through young deciduous forest.

a big snow, they may also need to ski with hand tools to cut back hanging limbs, or clear fallen debris.

Carl Sadler says “I love every minute I spend on the trails! Whether I am skiing for recreation or working on trail maintenance, I am happy

in Massie Forest. It reminds me of winters in the north, Algonquin area. It is so quiet, peaceful, and remote feeling. But it is close to home.”

There is also a powerful sense of community on the trails. Skiers and volunteers stop to greet each other, and

to chat. The double track allows people to ski side by side, engaging in conversation. Friendly faces and a warm welcome are important parts of the skiing experience here.

No one embodies this quality of being an ambassador for Massie Hills

better than Gary Shute. He has been grooming trails here since 2010, and it is clearly a labour of love for him. Gary stops the snow machine to talk to everyone. He likes to know where they are from, hear their ski stories, and recommend great trail routes for them.



▲ Left, Bob Knapp of Owen Sound and Dennis Stier of Southampton chat about the early history and development of the Massie Hills trails.

“We’ve had people come from Lake Huron and Peterborough, from Lake Erie and the Sault, and all points in between. Massie Hills is such a spectacular area that once people ski here, they keep returning. The snow, the beauty, the

community, call them back again and again,” shares Gary.

Reciprocal Ski Clubs

The Owen Sound Cross Country Ski Club community reaches beyond Massie Hills to connect with other Grey Bruce ski clubs. Members



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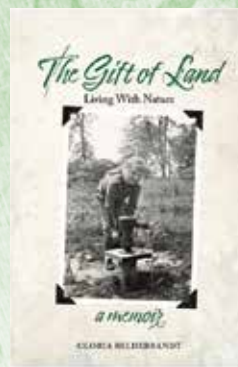
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▲ Ani Eby is a dedicated skier who enjoys chatting with people on the trails. She loves to night ski at Massie with a headlamp because the forest is so peaceful. She also appreciates the double-track grooming for skiing with family and friends, allowing conversation on the trails.



▲ Gary Shute clears snow from a property map to share a favourite route with visitors.

enjoy reciprocal free ski weeks through January and February. Sauble Beach Cross Country, Bruce, Glenelg Nordic, and Beaver Valley Ski Clubs all participate in the exchange program. This provides amazing opportunities for club members to explore

other areas. For non-members, day-use fees can be paid at the trailheads, or by e-transfer on club websites. Membership fees support club activities, and provide the necessary insurance coverage for trail operations.

Are you ready to get out

for your own ski adventure at Massie Hills? There are two trailheads with parking available. The main access is off Concession 6 South, Municipality of Meaford, south from Grey Rd.18. This entry takes you straight into the rolling hills, and colour-

coded loop trails. Maps are posted at each junction. The secondary access is on Sideroad 6 with roadside parking. From here, it is a long, gentle ski toward the North Spey River bridge. This entry point is a better choice for beginner skiers. Find



▲ Doug and Loreen Cumming of Owen Sound, and Dennis Stier of Southampton enjoying fresh snow and superb ski conditions.

directions and maps at: <https://www.greysauble.on.ca/portfolio/massie-hills-management-area/>.

For more info about Owen Sound Cross Country Ski Club, ski conditions, club membership and news, visit: <https://massiehills.com/>. **NEV**

Sandra Howe's last piece for this magazine was "Wild, Wild Women! Riding the Georgian Trail," in Autumn 2024. Her note for this feature: "In memory of my beloved husband, Dennis Stier."

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