

Looping Through Sydenham: 25 Short Walks and Hikes in Niagara Escarpment Country Between Walters Falls and Wiarton.

2nd edition (Revised and Enlarged). Sydenham Club, Bruce Trail Conservancy, 2012.

Review by Linda Pim

Confession: I adore loop trails. On a return linear hike, your half-way point is self-evident. But on a loop, as you soak up nature along the way, the sense of distance can be a delicious mystery, especially on loops you haven't hiked before.

This new edition of *Looping Through Sydenham*, first published in 2006, is a gem of a trail guide. It recognizes 50 years since building the Bruce Trail began. Even more cause for celebration are the creation of new loops in the Sydenham section since 2006 and, thanks to the magnificent, 69-kilometre Bayview Extension that opened in 2007, the incorporation into the Bruce Trail proper of several isolated loops pre-dating the Extension.

This guide has fewer space constraints than the Bruce Trail Reference Guide, providing more leisurely text with fascinating nuggets about the natural and cultural history of the land and water along each loop. You'll read where you're likely to find Hart's Tongue Fern, Walking Fern and fossils, as well as caves, potholes and other geological marvels. You'll also read some vignettes of the history of European settlement in this part of Grey County. Several loops or side trails are named for volunteers who have played pivotal roles in the Bruce Trail, so we learn a bit about these luminaries.

For each loop, there is a clear map, the trail length and estimated hiking time (from one to five hours, most being two hours or less), degree of difficulty, parking location, and suitability for skiing and/or snowshoeing.

I had previously hiked only a couple of the Sydenham loops. While I would eagerly hike every loop, admittedly I have marked those that look particularly appealing to me – Walters Falls, Bognor Marsh, Woodford Escarpment, Bayview Escarpment Nature Reserve, Sydenham Forest, Boyd Crevice, the Palisades, Frank Holley, Ron Savage, Ross McLean and Kemble Mountain.

The hiking experience has three elements – anticipation, through maps and trail descriptions; the hike itself; and memories, enjoyed through photographs and stories. *Looping Through Sydenham* is invaluable for enriching both the anticipation and the hike. The beauty of this little trail guide is that it will suit both someone wanting only a short jaunt and the longer-distance hiker who can combine two, three or four loops for a full-day outing. Whichever you are, you will come away with a fuller appreciation of Ontario's beautiful Niagara Escarpment and all the people and planning that have kept it protected.

Proceeds from the sale of *Looping Through Sydenham* will be donated to the Escarpment Legacy Campaign, to fund land acquisitions for the Bruce Trail.

Linda Pim is a member of the Bruce Trail Conservancy who lives near the trail in Inglewood (Caledon Hills section).