

Dayton Daily News

What you may not know about the Buckeye Trail

Get Active

By [Debbie Juniewicz](#) - Tuesday, January 12, 2016
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Andy Niekamp — aka Captain Blue — is one of several local hikers who have thru-hiked the Buckeye Trail. CONTRIBUTED

Andy Niekamp had high hopes but low expectations when he set off to thru-hike the Buckeye Trail.

“I thought — from a hiker’s standpoint — Ohio was a boring state,” the longtime Ohio resident said.

But 1,400 miles later, Niekamp thought differently.

“I was overwhelmed by the beauty and the hospitality that I experienced,” he said. “It’s a very pretty state, but much of it can’t be seen from a window of a car. You have to experience it on foot or on bike.”

The Kettering hiker is the supervisor of the “Troy” section of the Buckeye Trail — a 52-mile portion that encompasses pathways in and around Downtown Dayton as well as near the Wright State University campus and along the Mad, Great Miami and Stillwater rivers as well as bike trails through Tipp City, Troy and Piqua.

Niekamp and other local hikers will share their love of the trail at the upcoming Buckeye Trail Association membership drive on Jan. 21 at the Star City Brewing Company in Miamisburg.

What you may not know about trail

“Many people have probably been on it and didn’t even know it,” BTA member Brent Anslinger said of the Buckeye Trail. “It’s so cool to have a trail like this go right through our own backyard.”

The 1,400-plus miles of the Buckeye Trail loop around the state from Cincinnati to Cleveland and many points in between encompassing a variety of terrain.

“It links the four corners of Ohio and travels through half the counties,” Niekamp said.

The Buckeye Trail, however, is more than a state trail, it is also part of the North Country Trail — the longest National Scenic Trail in the country. The North Country Trail runs from North Dakota to New York and passes through 12 National Forests.

“When you think about being a part of a National Scenic Trail, it really is incredible,” said Anslinger, who also has thru-hiked the Buckeye Trail.

Why membership is so important

While the Buckeye Trail was first proposed more than a half century ago and was completed in 1980, there is still work to be done.

The Buckeye Trail Association is a large body of volunteers who maintain and promote the trail. Though the entire route is marked, the Buckeye Trail continues to change and

improve. The BTA looks for ways to move road sections off the roads, and to upgrade those off-road sections to high-quality trails.

Members also help with trail maintenance, outreach and educational events as well as providing a variety of professional services.

The membership drive event is about more than contributions, it's about camaraderie.

“We want to build enthusiasm, energy and awareness,” Anslinger said. “And have fun doing it.”



The Buckeye Trail is identified by blue blazes on trees or poles. CONTRIBUTED

BUCKEYE TRAIL FAST FACTS

- Covers more than 1,444 miles
- First 20 miles of trail were dedicated in Hocking County in 1959
- Includes 26 sections, each named for a town or feature within the section
- Identified by blue blazes (2 inches wide by 6 inches high) on trees or poles.
- Trail towns include Dayton, Milford, Piqua and Xenia

LIVE, BREATHE AND HIKE THE BUCKEYE TRAIL – BTA MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

What: Support the Buckeye Trail Association by becoming a member and spending an evening with fellow Buckeye Trail enthusiasts.

When: Jan. 21, 6:30 p.m.

Where: Star City Brewing Company, 319 S. 2nd St., Miamisburg

Tickets: \$20 which includes: one-year, individual membership in the Buckeye Trail Association; admission to event; one mug of Blue Blaze Ale (alcoholic) or one mug of Grandma Gatewood Cream Ale (non-alcoholic); pizza and a raffle ticket.

Agenda:

6:30 p.m.: Check-in, social time, food and drink

7:30 p.m.: Five short presentations about the Buckeye Trail

- Overview of the BTA - Andrew Bashaw
- Hiking Therapy on the Buckeye Trail - C.W. Spencer
- A Thru Hike of the Buckeye Trail - Andy Niekamp
- Maintaining the Buckeye Trail - Sharon Mullins
- The Big Picture: Dayton & The Buckeye Trail - Brent Anslinger

8:30 p.m.: Raffle drawing, winner must be present to win

8:45 p.m.: Closing remarks

Info: www.buckeyetrail.org



From a hilltop overlooking the Ohio River in Cincinnati to the Lake Erie beach, a hiker can experience a little of everything Ohio has to offer from the Buckeye Trail. CONTRIBUTED

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