



Volunteer Manual



Who We Are

The Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT) works to conserve our natural heritage for present and future generations. We are the only conservancy that focuses exclusively on the Edmonton region to preserve natural areas and rural landscapes. We do this to enhance residents' quality of life and sense of place, for wildlife and their habitat, and to maintain the economic, health, and community benefits of natural areas.

Your Role as a Volunteer

It is our responsibility to ensure that we provide the best volunteer experience possible. This includes giving adequate instructions for a project or task, and to take every measure possible to ensure your safety, especially when volunteering in the field.

As a volunteer, you can play a hands-on role in a wide range of projects – visiting conservation lands as part of a team, building community support, educating others about conserving our lands, and many other types of activities. You are never limited to just one type of volunteer position, you can participate in as little or as many tasks as you prefer!

We recognize that as a volunteer, you are donating your valuable time to EALT. We depend on you to accomplish many of our tasks and projects. We ask that you make every effort to be on time and prepared. If you are ill or unable to meet a scheduled commitment, please inform us as soon as possible.

We ask all of our volunteers to follow our **Volunteer Code of Conduct**:

- Perform your duties to the best of your ability.
- Honour confidentiality and respect the mission and goals, and properties of EALT.
- Be courteous, friendly and cooperative.
- Offer constructive feedback about our organization in an appropriate manner.
- Follow through on commitments and advise us if you are unable to work as scheduled.
- Demonstrate respect for the direction and decisions of your supervisor(s).
- Treat staff, volunteers, landowners, and the public fairly and without discrimination.
- Do not take unnecessary risks while working in the field.

Communication

EALT sends out approximately one email per month with upcoming volunteer opportunities, some of which are also listed in the [Events section of our website](#). Instructions on how to get involved are outlined for each opportunity.

You can register for volunteer events online at <https://www.ealt.ca/volunteer-registration>

If you have specific interests and skills, please contact us to discuss opportunities further. Please also contact us if you have any questions or concerns about volunteering, or if you have ideas of how to make the volunteer experience better for everyone.

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Stewardship Volunteer Opportunities

Volunteers play a crucial role in stewardship EALT's conservation lands. The type of stewardship work on volunteer days varies by time of year, and by our current projects and needs. This means that we won't visit all of our conservation lands each year with volunteers, but of course you are welcome to visit them on your own!

Weeding for Wildlife

Prohibited noxious and noxious weed species displace natural vegetation and degrade wildlife nesting and foraging habitat. These invasive species are manually removed by pulling, cutting, or mowing, to improve and restore the ecological values of the land.

Wind up the Wire

Barbed wire fences are a common sight in the Canadian countryside. Many studies have shown that these fences can sometimes hinder the movement of wildlife through the area, and can injury wildlife, including deer and moose, waterfowl, and low flying birds such as owls and raptors. Removing unsafe and unnecessary barbed wire creates safer habitat for wildlife.

Nest or Bat Box Installation or Cleaning

Cavity-nesting birds such as tree swallows, chickadees and bufflehead will use a nest box if natural tree cavities aren't available. Adding nest boxes to our conservation lands, and maintaining our existing ones, creates important habitat for these species. Bats also benefit from artificial structures. A bat box can provide roosting habitat for maternal bat colonies of hundreds of bats! Occasional bat box installations are also completed with the help of volunteers.

Winter Wildlife Tracking

Winter wildlife tracking is conducted to monitor the natural area and record species that may not have been observed in the summer.

Installing Signs, Building Fences, or other Stewardship Work

Sometimes we need help with other types of stewardship work, such as installing signs or building fences. These tasks all contribute to the conservation of our natural areas.



Volunteer Field Work

Prior to a volunteer event, an EALT staff person will email you specific details, including what to bring, what to wear, and what we hope to accomplish with your help. In general, you can expect the following:

Time Commitment

- Usually 6-8 hours, including travel time
- Some types of field work may involve more or less time. We will let you know the approximate time we expect to complete the work and return to our meeting point.

What to Bring

- **Essential:** Backpack, water, lunch, snacks
- **Recommended:** sunglasses, hat, bug spray, sunscreen, extra shoes and/or socks
- **Optional:** camera, binoculars, field guides

Getting There

We first meet at a location in Edmonton and leave travel to the site in carpools. These meeting locations are easily accessible by public transit, so it's not necessary for you to have your own vehicle in order to participate in field work. You also have the option to meet everyone at the field site, if you prefer.

Weather

Weather conditions will influence our field work. Field work may be cancelled or stopped short if the weather is very hot, very rainy, or very cold in winter (-15 C).



How to Dress

- Comfortable, durable clothing; layers appropriate for the weather.
- Sturdy shoes (i.e. hiking shoes) for walking on uneven terrain. Rubber boots usually aren't necessary, but we will let you know if bringing some would be beneficial.
- Long pants to protect your legs from thorny or stinging plants.

Bathroom Facilities

Few of EALT's conservation lands have a bathroom facility. When nature calls while volunteering, we find privacy behind a tree.

Volunteer Expertise

- We welcome volunteers of all levels of knowledge and experience. Please remember that there may be people participating in an event at the same time as you who require more assistance.
- While some experience in the type of task on a given volunteer day is helpful, we will always provide instruction and training to ensure you are comfortable in the field.
- Tools used may include a weed whacker, mower, chainsaw, small power tools or a ladder. You do not need to use specific tools unless you are comfortable doing so.
- Experience in fence building, plant identification, bird and mammal identification, and gardening may also be helpful, depending on the activity.

Children and Youth

Most field work events are not suited for young children. Older children and teens are welcome, but must be accompanied by someone over 18. Contact us if you would like to attend with your child.

Safety and Emergency Procedures

Volunteer safety is very important to EALT. We practice due diligence to manage and reduce any risk associated with our volunteers, especially when working in the field.

Safety Meeting

Before every field work event, a brief safety meeting is held to address possible risks and hazards that may be encountered, as well as emergency procedures.

Be Prepared

Ensure that you bring enough water and food for yourself for a whole day of physical activity. Wear a hat and sunscreen on warm, sunny days to protect yourself from the sun and heat.

Instructions

To ensure safety in the field, we require that you adhere to the EALT staff member's instructions at all times (or the instructions of the person in charge). This includes instructions on how to use equipment, where to walk, and to stay in a designated group.

Safety Equipment

Safety equipment will be provided when necessary. This may include gloves, safety glasses, ear protection, hard hat, or dust mask. If you are not comfortable with potentially hazardous tasks (e.g. operating a weed whacker), you are not required to do so.

Physical Fitness

Some of EALT's conservation lands have trails, but the lands are left in their natural state and our work often takes us off the trails. We ask that if you plan to join us in the field that you are in moderately good physical condition in order to navigate the terrain.

Tetanus

We recommend that you ensure your tetanus vaccination is up to date, especially for Wind up the Wire volunteer days. If you are cut by barbed wire, visit a health clinic to ensure you are properly protected.

First Aid and Medical Information

- EALT staff have current first aid training and always carry a first aid kit. We encourage you to carry a first aid kit as well.
- Please inform us of any medical conditions that could impact your activities in the field, such as diabetes, severe allergies to insect stings, epilepsy.

Emergency Procedures

When you register to volunteer, we ask that you provide an emergency contact person in the event of an injury or other emergency. EALT staff have this information with them in the field, as well as maps to the nearest hospital.

Ticks

Ticks are becoming more prevalent in our region. Prevention and quick removal are key to reduce the risk of disease from ticks.

- In the field, pull socks over your pant legs, and wear light coloured clothing to allow you to spot a tick on your clothes.
- At home, check yourself for ticks. Ticks take time to anchor themselves, so taking a shower will usually dislodge them. Wash and dry your field clothes—a tick can survive the washing machine but not the heat of a dryer.
- If you are bitten, use tweezers to grab the tick at its mouthparts as close to your skin as possible. You may need to hold the tick in the tweezers for 30-60 seconds before it will let go.
- If the tick's mouthparts separated from its body and were left in your skin, go to the doctor to have it removed.
- See your doctor if the site of the tick bite develops a rash.

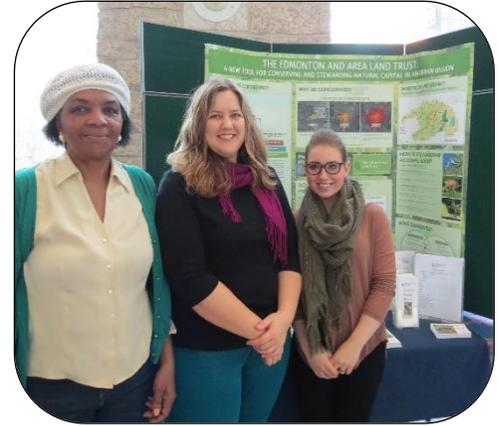
Outreach Volunteer Opportunities

Outreaching to the community is an important part of EALT's work. Volunteers assist with outreach in a variety of ways, including at home or at events in the community.

Staffing an Information Booth/Table

EALT sometimes hosts information booths at various locations, including farmers' markets, businesses, and special events. Volunteers can assist EALT by staffing the table, talking to interested people, and explaining EALT's work.

- When representing volunteering for EALT at an event, it is helpful for you to have some knowledge of EALT's mission, goals, and conservation work. You will also be briefed prior to the event, and given some ideas for talking points.
- Volunteers are not expected to be able to answer every question; it is okay to say "I don't know" and refer the curious person to EALT's website or give them a staff member's contact details.
- Volunteers are asked not to be 'aggressive,' but rather be available to speak with interested people who approach the display.
- Sharing your EALT volunteer experiences with interested individuals can offer a unique perspective.
- While you are representing EALT, we ask that you dress respectfully. Clothes must not be torn, frayed or dirty. Offensive logos are not allowed.
- The level of formality of your attire is dependent upon the event and is generally business casual or neat and tidy casual wear (e.g. jeans and a sweater or t-shirt). If a more substantive dress code is in effect, it will be communicated by your supervisor.



Writing and Research

Volunteers can assist EALT in public education efforts through writing. This could take the form of blog posts of various types, or publications. The time commitment is usually 4-8 hours, or more, depending on the level of involvement.

Publications

Skills in graphic design or experience making publications are helpful, as we sometimes request assistance from volunteers to create new publications. These range from wildlife identification brochures and booklets, to stewardship resources, and other publications. The time commitment is usually 10-20 hours, or more, depending on the level of involvement.

Building Artificial Habitat and kits

EALT puts up bird and bat boxes in our natural areas to provide artificial habitat for species that have lost their natural habitat due to development and changing land use. We also sell completed bird boxes, bat boxes, and bee hotels to support our conservation efforts, and we run workshops where participants make their own bird box, bat box, or bee hotel to take home. We can use helping hands to build these boxes, or kits for workshops, throughout the year. The time commitment is usually 10-20 hours, or more, depending on the level of involvement.

Additional Volunteer Stewardship

Volunteers who are interested in taking on a larger commitment, or taking on stewardship work on their own time may wish to be a volunteer steward or citizen scientist. Please contact us if you are interested in either of these roles.

Volunteer Stewards

- Volunteer stewards usually live or recreate near one of EALT's conserved lands, and assist in a variety of aspects, such as keeping out a watchful eye for things such as off-highway vehicle trespassing, downed sections of fence, or even unique species, and also assisting with field work either as a solo project outlined in the [Citizen Science and Stewardship Manual](#) or joining volunteer work party days.
- Volunteer Stewards are asked to check in with EALT staff with any updates of observations or stewardship needs identified on the natural area.
- Volunteer Stewards are generally updated on stewardship needs, upcoming projects or volunteer days, and given the opportunity to be involved.
- Depending on interest, the time commitment could be one or more days a month.

Citizen Scientists

- Citizen scientists visit EALT's natural areas to collect data on species present, clean out nest boxes, or carry out specific stewardship needs. These volunteer opportunities are usually advertised in our monthly email.
- Citizen scientists should read the full [Citizen Science and Stewardship Manual](#) for additional training and considerations.
- Depending on interest, the time commitment could be one or more days a month.

Safety Precautions

- Volunteer Stewards and Citizen Scientists should only take on these roles if they are comfortable working in the field alone. You should take safety precautions when heading out to EALT's lands alone: always tell someone where you are going, when you expect to be back, and check in with them when you return.
- Do not confront anyone on EALT lands when you observe them doing something unlawful, such as riding their quad on the land. Make note of what they look like, a licence plate if applicable, time of day, and location, and report the incident to EALT staff as soon as possible.



Policies

The online registration form includes a standard waiver, as well as information about photographs.

Waiver, Indemnity and Consent

- We ask that you agree to a standard Waiver of Liability. EALT always practices due diligence to reduce risks to volunteers and also has appropriate insurance coverage for volunteers.
- Due to the nature of our organization, we are involved in confidential land deals. This states that as a volunteer you will not divulge sensitive information to external sources.
- EALT is committed to protecting individual privacy. We take every step to ensure that any and all personal information in our possession is fully protected and strictly confidential. We do not share your information with anyone. Our Privacy Policy may be viewed upon request.

Consent to Photograph

- EALT staff take photos of volunteer activities to share with our social media followers and to use in informative brochures and other materials. This helps the public and our supporters learn about EALT's stewardship and education initiatives. The photos also encourage others to get involved and volunteer their time to conserve our natural heritage.
- If you are not comfortable with EALT using photos of you, you may indicate this in the registration form. Please also inform your supervisor on each volunteer day, and do not participate in group photos.

Harassment Policy

- Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT) is committed to a healthy, harassment free work environment for all our employees, contractors, and volunteers.
- Harassment occurs when an employee, contractor, or volunteer is subjected to unwelcome verbal or physical conduct because of race, religious beliefs, colour, place of origin, gender, mental or physical disability, ancestry, marital status, family status, source of income, or sexual orientation. Alberta human rights laws prohibit harassment in the workplace on these grounds.
- Our policy for preventing and addressing incidents can be viewed [here](#).

Thank You!

Thanks to you and your generous donation of your time and abilities, we have been able to protect a growing inventory of ecologically significant lands in the Edmonton area. With your help, we will be able to protect many more in the future. If you have any feedback to help us improve, please do not hesitate to contact us.