



Volunteer Handbook



Table of Contents

Welcome	4
Contacts	4
About EALT	5
Volunteering with EALT	6
Types of Volunteering	6
Training & Safety	6
Volunteer Expertise	7
Children and Youth	7
Tools and Equipment	7
Register for an Event	7
Stewardship	8
Invasive Plant Management	8
Trail Maintenance	8
Sign Installation	8
Black Knot Removal	8
Barbed Wire Removal	9
Nest or Bat Box Installation or Cleaning	9
Field Planning and Preparation	10
Field Preparation Checklist	11
Clothing Checklist	11
Optional Activities	12
Communication	13
Communicating with EALT staff	13
Interacting with the Public	14
Media	14
Program Evaluation	14
Safety	15
EALT Safety Portal	15
Safety Meeting	15
First Aid	15
Volunteer Conduct	16

Insurance	16
Third Party Disclaimer	16
Quick Links & Passwords	16

Welcome

Welcome to the Edmonton and Area Land Trust volunteer program! Volunteers are at the heart of what we do. By helping us steward our conservation lands, build community support, and educate the public about environmental stewardship, your dedication to conservation helps us protect these special places for people and wildlife now and into the future.

This manual will guide you through what to expect as an EALT volunteer. Whether you have joined for the company, experience, or to make a difference for conservation, you will find a place on our volunteer team.

Contacts

Primary EALT Contact

Meghan Jacklin
Conservation Coordinator
meghan.jacklin@ealt.ca
780.655.4152

Secondary EALT Contacts

Kayleen Falkenstein
Conservation Coordinator
kayleen.falkenstein@ealt.ca
587.336.7945

Sheila Campbell
Executive Director
587.340.3829

EALT Office & Mail

#101, 10471 178 Street
Edmonton AB T5S 1R5
780.483.7578
Office hours: 9-4 by appointment

Social Media & Web

Facebook: [Edmonton and Area Land Trust](#)
Twitter: [@EdAreaLandTrust](#)
Instagram: [@EdAreaLandTrust](#)
LinkedIn: [Edmonton and Area Land Trust](#)
Website: [ealt.ca](#)

About EALT

The Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT) is a registered charity dedicated to conserving land in Edmonton and area for people and wildlife. We achieve our mission by securing land, stewarding land, and engaging the public in land conservation.

Our Mission

We conserve nature in Edmonton and area, engaging people and communities in land conservation and stewardship.

Our Vision

A network of forests, river valleys, wetlands, lakes, and farmlands in Edmonton and area is conserved as a legacy for future generations.

Our Values

It takes partnerships to conserve and steward land in perpetuity. We value collaboration and continually seek new ideas and opportunities to address the challenges of land conservation.

Our Community

Our EALT community is broad and diverse, and includes landowners, urban and rural residents, outdoor and nature enthusiasts, municipalities, donors, and our founding Member organizations.

Our Work

As the region's land trust we secure and steward land in the City of Edmonton and within a 150-km radius of the city. We primarily do this through donations of land title and conservation easements. We steward these special places with the tremendous support of volunteers, neighbours, and conservation partners. We are active in the community and raise awareness of land conservation through presentations, hands-on workshops, nature walks, and in our digital and print communications. Read more about our work in our [Strategic Plan](#) and [Regional Conservation Plan](#).

Our History

Born out of a desire for a local land trust, EALT was formed in 2007 through a collaboration between six organizations: City of Edmonton, Edmonton Community Foundation, Edmonton Nature Club, Land Stewardship Centre of Canada, Urban Development Institute, and Legacy Lands Conservation Society. Read more about [our history here](#).

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it's the only thing that ever has.”

- Margaret Mead

Volunteering with EALT

As a local charity with a small staff team, we rely on our dedicated volunteer team to help us achieve our mission and vision.

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!

This manual will cover the information needed for volunteer events and volunteering from home opportunities.

Types of Volunteering

There are a number of ways that you can get involved with EALT. Stewardship volunteer events, community outreach, and volunteering from home opportunities will be shared in our monthly [volunteer newsletter](#) and on our [events page](#). These opportunities are usually a one-time event, or for a set amount of time that is indicated in the description, and do not require previous experience or extensive training. These volunteer opportunities will be described in this manual.

EALT also has two volunteer programs that require a greater level of commitment, the [Conservation Land Stewards program](#), and the [Citizen Science program](#). These programs have their own volunteer manuals that are distributed after you apply for the program. If you are interested in either of these types of opportunities, apply on EALT's website.

Volunteers can also contribute to EALT's outreach and communications by applying for the [Conservation Outreach Volunteer program](#). Some training is required before volunteering.

The last type of volunteer activity EALT offers is [corporate and group](#) opportunities. If you are interested in this type of opportunity, apply on EALT's website.

Training & Safety

The training and safety requirements asked of EALT volunteers depend on the type of activity in which they are involved. Events that require field work or attending a public event require higher safety standards than working from home projects. Resources for health and safety, including Job Hazard Assessments (JHA) and Safe Work Guidelines (SWG) are available on the EALT Safety Portal, a password-protected page on EALT's website. Instructions will be provided to you regarding which sections are relevant to your volunteer activity and which can be reviewed before volunteering. More information about EALT's Health and Safety Program is found on page 17 below.

Volunteer Expertise

We welcome volunteers of all levels of knowledge and experience to work with us. Please remember that there may be people participating in an event at the same time as you who require more assistance or instruction than you, or vice versa.

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 and with the tasks assigned. Volunteering at home projects may require some level of experience related to the task as well, but instructions will be provided.

Children and Youth

Most field work and outreach 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.

Tools and Equipment

EALT will provide all required tools and equipment.

- Tools used may include hand clippers or other hand tools, small power tools, or a ladder. You do not need to use specific tools unless you are comfortable doing so.
- Any equipment or tools which appear to be damaged, defective, or in need of repair must be reported to EALT as soon as possible.
- You are welcome to use your own tools if you have them.

Register for an Event

EALT uses SignUp.com as a scheduling tool for stewardship and outreach event volunteers.

You must make a free account with SignUp.com, and register each person who will be joining you at this event. If you are no longer able to make it to the event you can cancel directly through SignUp, or contact us by email. Please let us know as soon as you can if you can no longer make it, as these events often have limited numbers and a wait list.

Stewardship

Stewarding and taking care of our conservation lands is important to make sure their conservation values are upheld, ecosystems are maintained, and infrastructure and visitor access are managed appropriately. With several lands to look after and only a small staff team, EALT volunteers provide crucial support in land stewardship. Most stewardship work takes place during the summer months, but may occur at any time of year. The type of stewardship work on volunteer days varies by location, time of year, and by our current projects and needs.

You will receive training for the stewardship tasks you will work on at any given event. You can only do tasks for which you are adequately trained and have demonstrated competence. You will receive training in-person at the event you are attending, and you will receive access to all our safety resources in advance of your volunteer event. This may include Conservation Land Information Sheets, Job Hazard Assessments (JHA) and Safe Work Guidelines (SWG).

Types of stewardship volunteer events include:

Invasive Plant Management

Controlling and monitoring prohibited noxious and noxious invasive plants is one of our biggest ongoing challenges, but is critical in supporting healthy, functioning ecosystems with a diversity of plants and wildlife. Management depends on the species, but generally most invasive plants can be manually pulled or cut. If not flowering, the plant can be left on the ground to decompose. If flowers or seed heads are present, discard the flowers or seed heads in a garbage bag.

Review our [Invasive Plant Removal Guide](#) Explore the [Alberta Invasive Species Council Fact Sheets](#)

Trail Maintenance

We maintain trails on our conservation lands so visitors can enjoy the land safely while minimizing their ecological impact. Trail maintenance differs based on the land – on some lands, neighbours or contractors mow the trails, while on other land EALT staff do it all ourselves. After EALT staff or contractors mow or weed whack trails to control ground cover, volunteers help to clip back branches and shrubs that overhang trails, or removing sapling, branches, or debris from the trails.

Sign Installation

We install directional signage to keep visitors from getting lost, and educational signage to help visitors learn about natural features. There is some heavy lifting (carrying signs and sign posts), but many hands make light work!

Black Knot Removal

Black knot is a fungus that infects shrubs and trees in the *Prunus* genus, like cherries. It forms black or greenish-brown tar-like swellings that causes stunted growth and death when plants become infected. Black knot must be removed in the winter when temperatures are below zero, as the

spores spread rapidly in warmer weather. This is generally early November to late February. Blades should be sanitized in between cuts.

View our [Black Knot Guide](#) to learn how to properly identify, remove, and dispose of black knot.

Barbed Wire Removal

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 injure 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. Wire is removed from fence posts with fencing pliers and rolled into circular bundles for transport to an Ecostation.

View our [Wire Fence Removal Guide](#) for more information about removing wire.

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! Nest boxes and bat boxes are installed in spring, summer, or fall where there is a need, and nest boxes are cleaned out every fall.

View our [Nest Box Cleaning Guide](#) or our [Nest Box Cleaning Video](#) for more information on cleaning nest boxes.

Field Planning and Preparation

What to expect

A few days 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 information about the following:

- **Time Commitment**
 - Stewardship events are 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.
- **Getting There**
 - Volunteers drive directly to the site. Volunteers may arrange to carpool with each other using SignUp.com.
- **Weather**
 - Weather conditions will influence our field work. Field work events may be cancelled or stopped short if the weather is very hot, very rainy, or very cold in winter (-15 C). We will inform you of cancellations via email or phone by 4pm the day before an event. We will proceed in mild conditions, so if weather is not extreme, please come dressed for it.
- **Bathroom Facilities**
 - Most of EALT's conservation lands do not have bathroom facilities, with the exception of Bunchberry Meadows. When nature calls while volunteering, we find privacy behind a tree.

Field Preparation Checklist

Recommended

- Cell phone or other effective means of communication. We recommend that you save the event leaders' phone number to your contacts
- Personal first aid kit
- Backpack
- Food and water
- Sunscreen
- Extra socks
- Insect repellent

As needed for tasks

- Any necessary tools and PPE
- Work gloves

Optional

- Field guides
- Binoculars
- Camera
- Bear spray

Clothing Checklist

- Practical hiking attire
 - Long pants and long sleeves
 - Layers – extra jackets, socks, rain jacket, etc.
- Practical footwear
 - Hiking boots or other sturdy outdoor footwear
 - Waterproof footwear as needed
 - Snowshoes or traction devices may be needed for snow or ice conditions
- Accessories
 - Sunglasses
 - Hat

Optional Activities

While the core volunteer needs are outlined above, there are other ways for volunteers to contribute to EALT.

Share your photos with us

We are always in need of photos for our outreach efforts! Let us know if you have great photos of you volunteering, wildlife, or landscapes. If you post your photos on our social media, we can share from there, or you can email photos to us.

Write a testimonial or guest blog

Love writing? Consider writing a testimonial or guest blog about your experience as an EALT volunteer for us to use on our website.

Photos and testimonials from volunteers are extremely valuable to EALT. These can increase our chances of receiving grant funding which boost our stewardship and conservation capacity, and they can also increase our uptake of new volunteers when included in blogs, newsletters, and posts on social media. We greatly appreciate your support.

Communication

Communication is key to the success of the volunteer program and a positive volunteer experience.

Volunteer newsletter

EALT's volunteer newsletter is sent once per month, either at the end of the month or the start of the next. It features volunteer opportunities available in the upcoming month, including stewardship and outreach events, and volunteering from home opportunities. Instructions on how to get involved are outlined for each opportunity.

Events Page

Most volunteer stewardship and outreach events are added to our [Events Page](#) as well.

Facebook page

Sometimes EALT volunteer stewardship and outreach events are added to our [Facebook page](#) if we need more volunteers or if we have a last minute need for volunteers.

SignUp.com

You will be sent reminder emails about events you have signed up for through [signup.com](#). You may cancel your attendance through [signup.com](#) or by emailing the event supervisor.

Communicating with EALT staff

Ciara Fraser is the primary contact for general volunteer opportunities. Reach her at: 780-913-4205 or ciara.fraser@ealt.ca. Contact information for other EALT staff is available at the start of this manual and on our website. If you have signed up for an event, the contact information for the staff member leading that event will be available in the description of the event on our website and in [SignUp.com](#).

Email

EALT staff will use email to inform you of changes to events, reminders, program surveys, and other information. Please check your spam filters to make sure you're not missing emails from us. You can email EALT staff directly with questions or concerns.

Phone

You may contact EALT staff by phone with questions or concerns. EALT staff may call you if there is a last minute change to a volunteer event or in other situations that require an urgent response.

Interacting with the Public

As an EALT volunteer, you are representing EALT and must follow the [EALT visiting guidelines](#) on our conservation lands. You should be familiar with EALT as an organization and what we do and act in a professional and respectful manner. It is important to remember EALT is a non-advocacy organization. We recommend exploring our website and [Frequently Asked Questions page](#) to learn more. You may provide members of the public with EALT's contact information and direct any questions or concerns to an EALT staff member.

Your safety is our top priority. Do not confront anyone engaging in suspicious behaviour, illegal activities, or activities prohibited on EALT lands, such as recreational OHV use or snowmobiling. Make note of what they look like, a license plate, if applicable, time of day, and location, and report the incident to an EALT staff member.

Media

If you are approached for an interview, please refer the media contact to an EALT staff member. Generally volunteers are not authorized to represent EALT to the media.

Program Evaluation

You will receive an invitation to fill out an anonymous volunteer survey after each stewardship or outreach event. This survey allows us to correct any issues that may arise as soon as possible. If you have a concern or suggestion, please feel free to use this survey or contact us directly by phone or email to let us know.

Safety

Health and safety is a priority for us and the goal of the EALT Health and Safety Program is to ensure **a safe and healthy workplace, in each task, on each work site, every day**. Health and safety is a shared responsibility and each person has a role to play, including volunteers.

As a volunteer, you are considered a worker under Alberta Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation. This means you have responsibilities under OHS legislation to ensure your own health and safety, and that of others. You must have training in the work you will do, and, participate in identifying and controlling hazards so you and others can work safe. EALT has a duty of care to provide a safe workplace and ensure all workers know how to and can work safe. To that end, and to meet our shared responsibilities in health and safety, EALT has a robust health and safety program.

You will be trained in proper safety procedures and how to use equipment during a Safety Meeting at the start of each in person event. You will also receive access to the **EALT Safety Portal** prior to your event for optional additional reading. EALT staff will provide you with more detailed instructions about what is required after you register for volunteer opportunity.

If you need to leave a volunteer event early for any reason, please inform an EALT staff member.

EALT Safety Portal

This is an **online password-protected page on the EALT website** where you can find the EALT Health and Safety Program Manual and associated resources you need as an EALT volunteer, including Conservation Land Information Sheets, Job Hazard Assessments (JHA) and Safe Work Guidelines (SWG). Reviewing these resources is recommended, but optional, as EALT staff will provide safety information prior to each event at a safety meeting.

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. After the Safety Meeting, you will be asked to sign the Site Hazard Assessment acknowledging that you have discussed the risks and been trained to work safely.

First Aid

Working in the field carries inherent risks, and there may be times when first aid is necessary. Although we do not require volunteers to maintain a valid first aid certificate, we encourage you to pursue basic first aid training and to carry a personal first aid kit. EALT staff have current first aid training and always carry a first aid kit. Please inform us of any medical conditions that could impact your activities in the field, such as diabetes, severe allergies to insect stings, epilepsy.

Volunteer Conduct

Volunteers have a duty to conduct themselves in a way that supports a safe and healthy workplace, in each task, on each work site, every day. EALT expects all volunteers to exercise their responsibility to work safe and ensure the safety of others. Refer to *Section 12: Worker Conduct* in the EALT Health and Safety Program Manual for information on your rights as an EALT worker, Code of Conduct, impairment in the workplace, smoke-free work environment, workplace harassment and violence, whistle-blower, privacy, and insurance and liability.

Insurance

The Edmonton and Area Land Trust maintains valid Commercial General Liability, Directors and Officers Liability, Volunteer Accident Insurance, and Workers' Compensation Board insurance. EALT volunteers who have signed an EALT Volunteer Agreement are deemed to be EALT workers while they are performing work for EALT under the provision of Section 14(5) of the Workers' Compensation Act. Workers are advised that if injured in a work related accident, they can claim workers' compensation benefits and cannot sue EALT, their employer, or any other employer or worker covered under the Workers' Compensation Act. You must sign an EALT Volunteer Agreement to be in EALT's records as a volunteer.

Third Party Disclaimer

Recommendations of applications (apps) and links to third party softwares are provided by the Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT) without warranty of any kind and without affiliation. Any use of these applications and softwares is at the user's own discretion and risk. EALT has no control over the content and privacy policies of these applications and softwares. EALT recommends individuals do not use their social media login credentials when using other applications and softwares.

Quick Links & Passwords

- [EALT Website](#)
- [Stewardship & Fieldwork Training page](#)
- [EALT Safety Portal](#)
 - Password: EALTSafety
- [EALT Public Resources](#)
- [Our Team \(Meet the Staff\)](#)

Thank you again for supporting local nature conservation!