



Audubon | VERMONT

Adopt-A-Trail Program Handbook



Green Mountain Audubon Center
 255 Sherman Hollow Road
 Huntington, VT 05462
 802-434-3068
vermont@audubon.org
vt.audubon.org

How to Adopt a Trail

1. Choose a trail to adopt from our [list of available trails](#). Please pay special attention to trail difficulty level and maintenance tasks to make sure the trail is a good fit for you. To select a trail, go to the “Availability” column and change ‘available’ to ‘unavailable’ for your trail.
2. Finish reading the Adopt-A-Trail Handbook
3. **Sign up!** Now that you have a trail in mind and know what adopter responsibilities are, sign up online using this link: <https://act.audubon.org/a/adopt-trail>
4. Fill out paperwork – Trail Adopter Agreement and Liability Form.
5. Attend a Trail Adopter Orientation lead by Audubon staff before starting work on your trail.
 - COVID-19: Normally these would happen in person at the center, but we will be scheduling orientations online for the time being.
6. Attend an Invasive Species Identification Training before tackling any invasive plants on our trail. Feel free to let us know where invasives are, but never flag or pull on your own without permission.
7. Perform necessary Trail Work Days at least three times a year (fall, spring, and summer) and trail inspections once a month.
 - Sign out tools from tool storage closet
 - Submit a Trail Report

Volunteer responsibilities

Adoption Period

The adoption period for a trail is one year, and can be renewed after that period with the approval of our Adopt-A-Trail Program Coordinator. This agreement is on a voluntary basis and may be terminated at any time by either party. The adoption period will begin in early spring and end at the same time the following year.

Trail Visits and Submitting Trail Reports

Adopters are asked to conduct a Trail Inspection any month that they are not committing to a Trail Work day. A Trail Inspection is a simple walk-through on your trail to make sure no issues arise and if they do, to report them. Trail Work is expected to be done at least once every spring, summer and fall. The days and times of trail visits are flexible and may be chosen at the adopter’s convenience. However, we do ask that you let the Program Coordinator know when you plan on visiting. Adopters must sign out borrowed tools from the tool storage closet before heading to their trail. Trail reports are mandatory after every Trail Work day and as issues arise during your Trail Inspection. These reports let Audubon Vermont know what work you completed and any existing issues on your trail. You may submit these through our Adopt-A-Trail website or on paper at the Audubon Vermont office.

Trail Work Days and Inspections

Trail Work Days include the following maintenance tasks: clearing the trail of debris, trash, tree limbs, pruning vegetation back, clearing debris from bridges, restocking trail maps, removing dog waste, and basic trail repairs within your skill range. Maintenance will differ by trail and season – for descriptions of maintenance tasks and trail difficulty visit our [Trail Availability List](#). If you are ever unsure of what tasks are necessary, reach out to Program Coordinator. Some maintenance tasks are prohibited for youth under the age of 16 including mowing, weed whacking, sawing and use of loppers.

Invasive species will not be removed by Trail Adopters. Adopters will be given an invasive species guide to take with them during Trail Inspections and Trail Work Days in order to identify the locations of invasive plants. Please note any infestations of invasive plant species you come across on your Trail Report Form and try to be as specific as possible about the location of the invasive.

Trail Report

Please submit a Trail Report after every visit. Trail reports let Audubon staff know about trail conditions, the time you spent out working, if there is an erosion or flooding problem, damaged or missing signs, vandalism, large trees down on the trail, or any other issues that cannot be handled on the day of your visit.

Trail Work Safety

It is our first priority to make sure our volunteers are staying safe by practicing proper trail work techniques when dealing with hand tools, vegetation and heavy materials. Every Trail Adopter individual or group will bring one of Audubon's fully stocked first aid kits out to their trail. We will go into more detail during the Trail Adopter Orientation, but please read the techniques below.

Clothing

Please wear clothing that covers most of your skin as a protective layer and to avoid sunburn, tick bites and other insect bites, and poison ivy. Comfortable close-toed shoes or work boots, working gloves and a hat should also be worn. Audubon has work gloves you can borrow or you can bring your own gloves.

Carrying & Transport Techniques

Some trails will be further from the tool storage closest than others, meaning you are responsible for transporting these tools to your work spot. Tools should be gripped by the handle about 6 inches behind the head (or at the balance point) and carried to the side, on the down-slope side of the body rather than over the shoulder or as a walking stick. This prevents injuries due to falling on the tool, since it can be easily tossed away when carried correctly. Tools with sharp blades should be carried with the blade facing the ground and equipped with a sheath to prevent accidental cuts and to retain their sharp edge. The sheath should remain on the tool while it is carried to the worksite and removed only when used. Keep a 10 foot distance when walking among others with tools in hand. Always lift with your legs, not your back to avoid injury.

Ticks

Most of the year ticks will be active at the Audubon center, including deer ticks and other species that can transmit illnesses like Lyme's Disease. Wearing light-colored clothing, tall socks and applying insect repellent to clothes and skin are not fool proof, but preventative steps you can take when working in the woods. We always recommend a thorough tick-check at the end of the day. Tweezers can be found in all first aid kits for removal. [For more information visit the Vermont Department of Health's page on tick safety.](#)

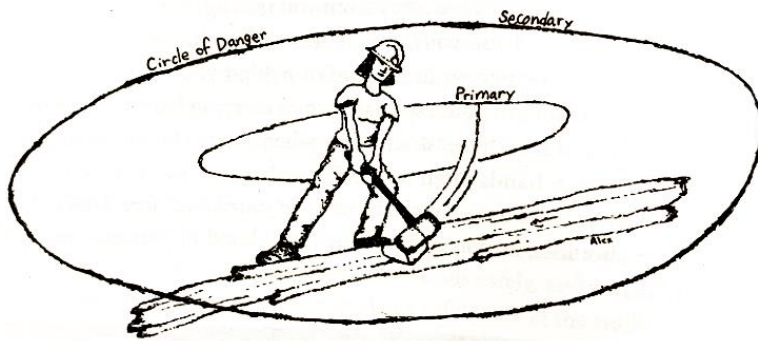
Plants

Never touch or eat a plant that you don't know! Please make sure you are able to identify the following plants for your safety:

- Poison Ivy
- Poison parsnip
- Cow/wild parsnip
- Stinging nettle

The Circle of Danger

The Circle of Danger is a safety principle that applies to the use of all trail tools, especially those that are swung like an axe. When using a tool make sure that all people are outside the circle of the radius created by the tool.



AMC's Complete Guide To Trail Building & Maintenance. (2008).

Communication

Our Audubon center location is remote and without cell service. For this reason, our adopters must make sure they come prepared and are aware of our emergency action plan. Please bring enough water, snacks, insect repellent, sunscreen and any other materials you need to keep yourself comfortable and safe. Due to COVID-19, we have limited our Audubon office hours to 8 AM-12 PM. As such, there may be times that you are working on your trail without staff on site. In the event of an emergency, the Audubon office has a landline you can use inside – if we are not open the nearest landline is located at the red house at 214 Main Road. This house is the private residence of a staff member, so this door may be locked when he is out. Otherwise, if you drive down the road toward the town of Richmond you will gain service again. We will provide our office Wi-Fi password for Adopters as well.

COVID-19 Guidelines and Safety Information

Trail Work is a wonderful way to get outdoors, especially during the pandemic, because it inherently involves physical distance from others and working in an open air environment. Still, we are implementing safety protocols in the Adopt-A-Trail Program in order to keep our volunteers, visitors and staff healthy and safe from COVID-19.

Do NOT volunteer if

- You are experiencing symptoms such as a fever, shortness of breath, cough, exhaustion or headache.
- You live with or are in frequent contact with people in higher risk categories
- You have visited a country or county within the states that has a higher caseload than Vermont and have not yet self-quarantined.

Hand washing and mask wearing:

- The Audubon office will be open from 8 AM-12 PM Monday-Friday. You must wear a mask to enter the office.
- Please sanitize your hands before and after volunteering. The office sink will be accessible from 8 AM-12 PM and hand sanitizer will always be available in the tool storage closet or in the out houses on the lower half of the property.
- If anyone in your Adopter group is not a member of your household we ask that you please wear a mask while working together at the Audubon center. However, if you are performing strenuous activity and are 6 feet apart then you may remove your masks.

Tool sharing:

- Audubon Vermont will provide tools for Trail Adopters to borrow. We ask that these tools are wiped down after use with the Clorox wipes in the tool storage shed.
- While not necessary, you might consider bringing your own work gloves and tools if you are able.

[For the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 safety and quarantining visit the Vermont Department of Health website.](#)

Please ask about any risk that may be associated with the program and DO NOT take part if you are uncomfortable with the level of risk.