

# Youth Conservation Leadership Program

Program Guide





*photo: Joshua Galicki*

The mission of Audubon is to protect birds  
and the places they need today and tomorrow.

# About the Youth Conservation Leadership Program

Inspiring the next generation of conservationists through diverse, paid learning opportunities for teens and young adults

With five different programs (Youth Conservation Interns, Junior Conservation Technicians, Counselors in Training, Seasonal Educators, and the VYCC Forestry Partnership), Audubon Vermont's Youth Conservation Leadership Program (YCLP) engages youth during crucial decision-making periods in their lives. Participants gain paid hands-on experience in environmental education, conservation, and policy issues as they work alongside local Vermont conservation professionals to explore future career options.

By participating in YCLP, youth build their resumes, connect with peers and professionals, expand their knowledge of Vermont's natural history, and embark on rewarding work-based learning experiences that shape their future lives.



Since 2020, the YCLP has annually surveyed participants about the ways the program has impacted them.

- **Main themes from the survey data include strong professional and personal growth, and increased connection to nature and other people.**
- 88% of respondents agreed with "I am more interested in work in the conservation field."
- 100% of respondents agreed with "I enjoyed the work I was doing."
- 96% of respondents agreed with "I felt like the work I was doing mattered and that I made a difference."
- 90% of respondents agreed with "I developed leadership and teamwork skills."
- 83% of respondents agreed with "I plan to get involved with other environmental and conservation projects."
- 95% of respondents agreed with "I felt I had the proper training to be successful."
- 88% of respondents agreed with "I pay more attention to nature."

All quotes in this program guide are from the ongoing YCLP survey.



Our commitment to...

- Ecological literacy
- Building professional skills
- Experiential learning
- Forging community connections

Creates...

- A pathway to careers and educational opportunities in environmental conservation
- A strong, diverse conservation workforce
- Youth-led conservation actions

# Youth Conservation Interns

Paid opportunities for higher education students and ambitious young professionals with relevant experience or degree focus

Opportunities in fall, spring, and summer

Students of all backgrounds collaborate with our expert staff every fall, spring, and summer semester in one of three different types of internship: environmental education, conservation, or policy. After their internships, participants are invited to join the Youth Conservation Leadership Alumni Group, allowing them to contribute to future YCLP trainings and connect with the National Audubon Society's extensive network of conservation professionals.

EDUCATION competencies developed include:

- Lesson planning and development
- Local natural history knowledge
- Teaching different age groups
- Group management
- Working as part of a team

CONSERVATION competencies developed include:

- Data collection/monitoring
- Habitat management and restoration
- Real-life application of bird and forest ecology concepts
- Forest inventory and assessment

POLICY competencies developed include:

- Policy research and analysis
- Administrative and legislative process
- Written and oral communication skills (e.g., policy briefs, press releases, presentations)
- Collaboration and networking with local environmental organizations



Check out what interns are saying on the ongoing YCLP survey...

*“Participating in the Vermont democratic process was an invaluable experience to me. We advocated for legislation that addressed the ongoing climate crisis, which is the single greatest threat birds face today.”*

-- Policy Intern



*“Working with the after school kids and the Forest Playschool group were both challenging experiences but allowed me to build connections with the students over multiple sessions and continually tested my skills as an educator.”*

-- Education Intern

*"Helping evaluate the forest conditions of private landowners looking to participate in the Bird-friendly Maple project was a hands-on learning experience in forest health that I will never forget."*

-- Conservation Intern



# Junior Conservation Technicians

Paid hands-on conservation experiences for youth aged 14-18 who work alongside local Vermont conservation professionals

Apply in early winter

The Junior Conservation Technician (JCT) Program is a paid opportunity for youth aged 14-18. JCTs gain practical skills in outdoor and environmental education, wildlife and habitat conservation, naturalist skills, teaching and mentoring, teamwork, leadership, and resume building.

Projects may include bird banding, bird-friendly forestry practices, trail management, community science initiatives, native plant gardening, and invasive species removal. JCTs also have the opportunity to work individually or in groups on their own projects and lead conservation activities for summer campers.

*"I loved how it felt to spend an entire day outside in the woods with friends. The last time we met, we learned how to identify maples and tapped them, hiked around the Audubon, and kept an eye out for birds. Overall, it's been an incredibly great time of getting outside and learning about our natural world!"*

-- Junior Conservation Technician





## Counselors in Training

Paid camp-based experiences for teens aged 14-18 who collaborate with our experienced camp staff to provide engaging environmental education activities for 3-12 year old campers

Apply in late winter

Counselors in Trainings (CIT) earn a competitive wage while gaining invaluable experience in outdoor education and conservation. CITs can choose between working with the Preschool Nature Camp or Ecology Day Camp. Both options offer young campers immersive and exciting experiences such as scavenger hunts, nature walks, crafting, puppet shows, wildlife spotting, and hiking.

CITs explore their interests in outdoor education, wildlife conservation, nature awareness, and teaching while building teamwork and leadership skills. By providing our CITs with a strong foundation of ecological literacy, professional skills, and networking opportunities, we help them grow into the next generation of camp counselors and naturalist educators at Audubon and beyond.

*"I had so many fun times with the campers! The whole program taught me how to be more patient and how to adjust to many different needs and wants at the same time. I learned how to be more creative and get excited even at the littlest things. Another thing that impacted me is when a child called me Miss Anna. It really showed me that I am a role model for them and they look up to me."*

-- Counselor in Training

# Seasonal Educators

Paid camp teaching positions for young adults with relevant experience/degree focus, or for teaching professionals with summer availability

Apply in early spring

Seasonal Educators guide children aged 3-12 through immersive outdoor experiences across 255 acres of diverse habitats. They are responsible for teaching outdoors all summer, crafting camp activities and curriculum, and collaborating effectively with a dynamic camp team. This includes other seasonal educators, an education intern, Audubon's year-round staff, and high-school Counselors in Training who view the educators as mentors.

They work with both Preschool Nature Camp and Ecology Day Camp and coordinate weekly and daily logistics for campers.

Seasonal Educators benefit from six days of paid professional development and naturalist training before camp begins. Throughout the summer, they are challenged to grow their leadership, teaching, and mentoring skills while sharing the wonder of discovering the most magical places at the Green Mountain Audubon Center.

*"I knew I wanted to work in the conservation field, but this job has shown me that I fit best in education. Engag[ing] kids in the outdoors through hands-on learning and activities [is] the kind of teaching that I want to do. Also, running through the woods with kids is really fun."*

-- Seasonal Educator







## VYCC Forestry Partnership

Paid immersive experiences in forest management for young adults 18 or older interested in or already working in forestry

Apply in late winter/early spring

Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) Forest Project Crews provide young adults with valuable skills for future careers in the Vermont forest products industry and conservation. Through AmeriCorps Forestry Crews (entry-level) and Pro Crews (experienced), participants engage in projects that enhance Vermont's landscapes while building their technical expertise and professional networks.

In collaboration with Audubon, VYCC incorporates ecological forestry and bird habitat management into the program. Audubon's conservation biologists and foresters offer guidance and training in bird-friendly forest

management practices, ensuring participants understand the importance of protecting both forest health and bird populations. Together, VYCC and Audubon cultivate environmental stewards dedicated to sustainable forest conservation.

Crews work and live together for extended durations of time as they camp and travel to complete projects around Vermont. These communal elements are part of what make this experience unique, by providing additional skill building beyond the technical forestry practices.

Learn more at [vycc.org](http://vycc.org)

*“Projects where I understand the ecological benefit of what we're doing definitely make it a lot more fun, and make it a lot more meaningful.”*

-- Pro Crew Member

*“I really appreciate Audubon’s support over the past few years. My time at Audubon steered me towards this life path and I couldn't be happier!”*

-- Youth Conservation Leadership Program Intern,  
capturing one of the main themes in the ongoing YCLP ongoing survey



The birds Audubon pledges to protect differ in color, size, behavior, geographical preference, and countless other ways. By honoring and celebrating the equally remarkable diversity of the human species, Audubon brings creativity, effectiveness, and leadership to our work throughout the hemisphere.

Audubon Vermont  
Green Mountain Audubon Center  
255 Sherman Hollow Road  
Huntington, VT 05462  
(802) 434-3068  
[vt.audubon.org](http://vt.audubon.org)