

# Ecological Reserve Warden Program Overview



BC Parks



BC Parks  
Ecological Reserve  
Warden

**Thank you for your interest in the Ecological Reserve Warden Program.**

**This resource provides an overview of the program to help you determine whether it fits your interests.**

---

## **Contents**

- What are ecological reserves?
- What is the role of an ecological reserve?
- Who manages and protects ecological reserves?
  - Learn more
- The Ecological Reserve Warden program
  - The role of an Ecological Reserve Warden
  - Responsibilities of Ecological Reserve Wardens
    - Knowing the ecological reserve
    - Protection and management
    - Public liaison and education
    - Record keeping and reporting
- Inventory, monitoring and research
- Interested in becoming an Ecological Reserve Warden?
  - Accessing ecological reserves
  - Mileage reimbursement
  - Ecological Reserve Warden application process
- Questions?





## What are ecological reserves?

Ecological reserves are areas selected to preserve representative and special natural ecosystems, plant and animal species, features, and phenomena. Scientific research and educational purposes are the principal uses of ecological reserves.

Ecological reserves are established for the:

- preservation of representative examples of British Columbia's ecosystems
- protection of rare and endangered plants and animals in their natural habitat
- preservation of unique, rare, or outstanding botanical, zoological, or geological phenomena
- perpetuation of important genetic resources
- scientific research and educational uses associated with the natural environment

## What is the role of an ecological reserve?

Ecological reserves contribute to the maintenance of biological diversity and the protection of genetic materials. Appropriate research and educational functions are the primary uses of ecological reserves. They are not created for outdoor recreation and should not be confused with parks or other recreational areas. Most ecological reserves; however, are open to the public for non-consumptive, observational uses. Parks and ecological reserves, although serving somewhat different purposes, complement one another. Together they provide a wide range of opportunities for people to experience and learn from the natural world.

## Who manages and protects ecological reserves?

BC Parks, Ministry of Environment and Parks, is responsible for the management and protection of ecological reserves.

Ministry of Environment and Parks staff are assisted in the protection and management of ecological reserves by volunteer ER Wardens. ER Wardens contribute their knowledge, enthusiasm for conservation and their natural history expertise to the protection of specific ecological reserves. The ER Wardens serve an invaluable role in the long-term protection of British Columbia's ecological reserves.

## Learn more

To learn more about ecological reserves visit:  
<https://bcparks.ca/conservation/ecological-reserves>

# The Ecological Reserve Warden program

Established in the 1980s, the Ecological Reserve Warden program has a long history of supporting ecological reserves. ER Wardens contribute their knowledge and enthusiasm for conservation to assist BC Parks staff in managing the ecological reserves in accordance with the Ecological Reserve Act and regulations. These volunteers continue to serve an invaluable role in the long-term protection of ecological reserves.

## The role of an Ecological Reserve Warden

- Assist BC Parks staff to protect and manage the ecological reserves by observing, monitoring, and reporting back
  - Increase public understanding of the Ecological Reserve Warden program
  - Provide information about the ecological reserves to the general public
  - Provide input to management planning in the ecological reserves
  - Monitor the ecological reserves for their capacity to continue to meet their stated purpose
  - Report to BC Parks staff any changes or problems related to ecological reserves
- 

## Responsibilities of Ecological Reserve Wardens

ER Warden's responsibilities can be divided into five areas:

### Knowing the ecological reserve

New ER Wardens will attend an initial visit to the ecological reserve with a BC Parks staff member where they will discuss the ecological reserve, management issues of concern (threats), ecological values, current research projects, and other topics to help the new ER Warden understand the ecological reserve. An ER Warden's familiarity with an ecological reserve is a valuable resource to other groups and individuals interested in ecological reserves. Information sharing and mentoring by the ER Warden is extremely valuable to the Ecological Reserve Warden program when a new area supervisor or new ER Warden takes on responsibility for the ecological reserve.





## Protection and management

The ER Warden's role is to observe, record, and report on all values and threats related to the conservation and protection of the ecological reserve, including natural events and human-use impacts. ER Wardens are not empowered peace officers and are restricted to observation, recording, and reporting activities and events in the ecological reserve. When trained and interested, ER Wardens may participate in ecological monitoring, invasive species treatments, and ecological restoration activities. Though ER Wardens do not make management decisions, they may be asked to conduct protection or management-related activities on behalf of BC Parks; an ER Warden must have full instructions from and approval by the area supervisor to conduct protection or management related activities.

## Public liason and education

ER Wardens may encounter members of the public during their visits to ecological reserves. An ER Warden's role is to greet visitors, provide information about the ecological reserve, explain the difference between an ecological reserve and park, and discuss appropriate ways to behave in the ER or authorized activities in it where appropriate. Some ecological reserves require permits for the public to access them and so reporting human use in closed ecological reserves is important. As well, there may be sensitive values or features that we do not want to advertise to the public and so ER Wardens need to be sensitive to what values or features may fall under this category.

## Record keeping and reporting

ER Wardens maintain a field notebook (either digitally or on paper) documenting each visit to the ecological reserve with dates, locations, and times of observations. Observations address topics such as wildlife or plants observed, species at risk locations, visitors, conditions, repairs and maintenance undertaken, management needs, and regulatory infractions. Based on the mutual agreement between the ER Wardens and their BC Parks contact person, reports may be submitted after each visit, or summarized annually in the ER Warden's annual report.

## Inventory, monitoring and research

An ER Warden is in an excellent position to make significant and valuable contributions to the scientific knowledge of an ecological reserve. ER Wardens who are interested in this type of work can discuss opportunities with their BC Parks contact person. All inventory, monitoring and research projects must have approval from BC Parks.

---

## Interested in becoming an ER Warden?

Ecological Reserve Wardens come from a wide spectrum of backgrounds including naturalists, foresters, biologists, and many other passionate individuals with interest in these special natural spaces. Although specific qualifications are not required, here are some things to consider when deciding whether an ER Warden position is right for you:

- Specific knowledge of the environment is an advantage, but not required
- ER Wardens must sign a BC Parks volunteer agreement
- ER Wardens must be under the age of 85
- For safety reasons, it is recommended the ER Wardens visit ecological reserves in groups of two or more. Applications where ER Wardens apply in pairs will be prioritized
- ER Wardens are asked to visit the ecological reserve at least twice a year (more often if possible)
- ER Wardens are asked to commit to the role for a minimum of two years, but if circumstances change, ER Wardens can terminate their role before this time
- ER Wardens will have an onsite orientation with BC Parks staff but must be prepared to work independently in future visits to the ecological reserve
- ER Wardens are asked to complete an annual report summarizing their visits and observations
- Applications received from ER Wardens who hold a valid first aid certificate will be prioritized

## Accessing ecological reserves

- ER Wardens must be able to independently travel in a reliable vehicle to the ecological reserve.
- Some ecological reserves are only accessible via forest service roads, on foot, or by boat (motorized or non-motorized)
- Not all ecological reserves have cell service
- Many ecological reserves are not universally accessible and accessing them can involve rough terrain, steep inclines and/or bushwhacking
- Information about access requirements for specific ecological reserves can be found within the ER Warden application form or by emailing [bcparks.volunteers@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bcparks.volunteers@gov.bc.ca)





## Mileage reimbursement

Every Ecological Reserve Warden is eligible for mileage or travel reimbursement of \$100 per year. Forms must be completed and submitted to your BC Parks contact person prior to March 31 every year.

## Ecological Reserve Warden application process

Applications for Ecological Reserve Wardens are accepted in the spring of each year. An online application form will be available at [bcparks.ca](http://bcparks.ca).

Applicants who apply in pairs and have a valid first aid certificate will be prioritized. If obtaining a first aid certificate creates a barrier for applicants, funding may be available.

Once an application is received, they will be reviewed by BC Parks staff. If selected, candidates will be required to complete a criminal record check and sign a volunteer agreement. Successful applicants will also be required to provide a copy of their first aid certificate, if applicable.

New and existing ER Wardens will be invited to a virtual pre-season orientation where important program and safety information will be reviewed. Once completed, new ER Wardens will be scheduled for an onsite orientation with a BC Parks staff person.

New ER Wardens will also receive an onboarding package which includes their handbook, uniform, ID, and information related to the ecological reserve they will be volunteering in.

---

## Questions?

Looking for more information or have questions about the program? Please reach out to [bcparks.volunteers@gov.bc.ca](mailto:bcparks.volunteers@gov.bc.ca)