



## ORMLT Volunteer Assignment Description

### Nature Reserve Guardian

#### About the Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust

The Oak Ridges Moraine Land Trust is a charitable organization that focuses on conserving the ecological integrity of the Oak Ridges Moraine. Our mission is clear: "Create a thriving and everlasting ecosystem on and near the Oak Ridges Moraine." We recognize the critical ecological services provided by the Oak Ridges Moraine and Greenbelt, such as water filtration, climate regulation, and habitat preservation, and actively work to preserve these services, ensuring the long-term sustainability of the region.

We work with passionate and caring landowners and volunteers to protect and steward environmentally sensitive lands. Together, we nurture these lands, promoting health and sustainability for future generations.

Our three core areas of focus include:

- Protecting land forever. We protect beyond legislation.
- Stewardship and monitoring the properties we protect.
- Educating the public about the importance of conservation.

#### Position Summary and Objectives

Nature Reserve Guardians play an important role in stewarding and protecting properties. Depending on the site, volunteers are involved with ongoing management (and reporting) of the eco-systems, monitoring the health and safety of protected properties, managing pollinator gardens and ecological restoration sites, invasive species management, habitat/species monitoring and clean up.

Once you gain experience, you'll have the opportunity to take on leadership roles, either coordinating volunteer activities and training at our nature reserves or engaging in public education and guided tours.

#### Supervisor/Contact, Accountability

ORMLT volunteers receive support from program staff who possess expertise in conservation and eco-management, along with guidance from the Coordinator of Volunteers and Community Partnerships. Continuous communication and consultation ensure that volunteers feel comfortable in their roles and receive the necessary assistance when required.

#### Time Commitment

A commitment of 4 visits (2-3 hours per visit), annually is required. Although we welcome more ongoing engagement. Activities are mainly from April through late October, with some occasional monitoring during the winter months. Key stewardship is focused more heavily on the spring and fall months; however, days/times are flexible and are coordinated with the ORMLT staff and other stewardship volunteers. For properties that don't require managing gardens, planting or restoration activities, a commitment of 2-3 visits annually is sufficient.



### Location

Nature Reserve Guardians will be assigned to one of our nature reserves across the moraine, depending on their interests and convenience. The sites that need comprehensive and ongoing support are:

- Starcliff (King City)
- MapleCross (King City)

**General monitoring at our other nature reserves (located across the moraine) is completed two to three times per year and assigned based on interest, availability, and location.**

### Responsibilities & Duties

As a Nature Reserve Guardian, you will have the opportunity to participate in a range of tasks depending on the site, including:

- Property monitoring, completing a property record form and reporting back to the ORMLT team.
- Documenting specific property features and habitat with photographs.
- Data collection for habitat or species monitoring projects.
- Invasive species removal (including Garlic Mustard pulls, Buckthorn busts, and others).
- Trail maintenance including clearing trails of debris, cutting back overhanging vegetation (at our Starcliff, MapleCross and Beeton sites).

### Qualifications & Requirements

The following qualifications/comfort level are helpful, depending on the specific stewardship activities you are involved with:

- Comfortable working outside under various weather conditions and on diverse terrain.
- Ability to perform physical work involving bending or stooping, walking 1-4 km over uneven ground, lifting upwards of 10lbs, and using various hand tools.
- Basic knowledge of, or interest in, local ecology and species identification.
- Any technical skills/qualifications such as species ID, native plant identification and seed collection, trail maintenance, building, chainsaw certification, First Aid certification etc. would be an asset.
- Volunteers can choose the site that would be of interest and convenient to them, however they will need to have their own transportation to and from the property.

### Training/Safety/Risk Management Requirements

- Complete a general orientation to the organization.
- Participate in role-specific training as required (on-site and virtual).
- Review volunteer handbook and role-specific safety and risk management guidelines and resources.
- Complete a risk management and confidentiality waiver.
- Wear a high visibility vest while on an ORMLT property.



## Benefits

- Work as part of a dedicated team supporting the ORMLT mission and our commitment to conservation, stewardship and education.
- Gain skills and experience relating to conservation and land management.
- Meet and learn from staff and consultants with expertise in eco management and conservation.
- Expand your network – meet other volunteers interested in protecting land and conservation across the Moraine.

## Appendix Documents

### Nature Reserve - Site Specific Information

#### Starcliff Nature Reserve

Nestled in King Township and situated at the ORMLT offices, the Starcliff Nature Reserve spans 18 acres and showcases a diverse landscape. It boasts a magnificent mature forest, century-old deciduous trees, and a charming small kettle lake. The reserve holds special recognition as a Monarch Way Station, acknowledging its role as a vital habitat for milkweed and grasslands, supporting the thriving butterfly population.

Activities specific to this site include:

- Tending to a pollinator garden, which involves caring for native plants, weeding, mulching, removing invasive species, and ensuring the overall maintenance of the pollinator gardens.
- Mowing and maintaining the grounds around the main office to keep the area tidy and welcoming.
- For volunteers interested in taking on additional responsibilities or leadership roles, there is an opportunity to assist with and/or lead:
  - Expanding the pollinator gardens and garden beds, showcasing native plants as educational demonstration gardens for visitors.
  - Enhancing the trail leading to the kettle lake, which may include adding steps in steep areas to improve accessibility.
  - Leading occasional public on-site tours of the gardens and grounds, allowing visitors to immerse themselves in the natural beauty and ecological significance of the reserve.

#### MapleCross King Nature Reserve

Spanning 80 acres, the MapleCross King Nature Reserve is a diverse and captivating property located in the Township of King. This remarkable reserve is home to a wide variety of Species at Risk, making it a critical sanctuary for these vulnerable species. Once a horse farm, the property has undergone an ecological transformation, now featuring a range of habitats to compliment the existing forests and Provincially-significant wetland which include: conifer plantations, constructed wetlands, and cultural meadows. The former horse paddocks are being carefully restored to create valuable grassland habitat. Additionally, the large stable area serves as a central gathering place for educational and event activities, enhancing the reserve's role as a community hub.



Volunteer involvement at this site is more event-focused, often centered around activities such as planting and invasive species removal. However, there may also be opportunities for monitoring and planting throughout the year to support the ongoing conservation efforts.

By participating in these activities, volunteers actively contribute to the preservation and enhancement of the MapleCross King Nature Reserve, helping to protect its diverse ecosystems and the precious Species at Risk that call this sanctuary home.

## Monitoring at our Nature Reserves

### The Benefits of Monitoring

Volunteering as a Nature Reserve Guardian or Monitor offers numerous benefits, including the development of a deep connection with the land which is important to learning about the property to assess opportunities, and threats that may exist. The observations and insights provided by volunteers offer valuable feedback to ORMLT conservation staff, aiding in the development of future property management plans to ensure the continued safety and protection of these cherished natural spaces.

ORMLT Nature Reserve Guardians and Monitors play a crucial role as the "eyes and ears" for our protected nature reserves, ensuring the well-being and preservation of these cherished areas. Their responsibilities include completing and submitting detailed monitoring forms for each visit. The actions involved in a monitoring visit encompass:

- Noting any instances of trespassing, vandalism, dumping, or cut trees, as well as the presence of invasive plants, and reporting these concerns to the ORMLT staff.
- Identifying and documenting the diverse flora and fauna within the nature reserve.
- Removing small pieces of litter or garbage (excluding heavy or hazardous materials) to maintain the reserve's cleanliness.

Additional activities, such as invasive species removal, trail maintenance, and habitat enhancement, are undertaken only after coordination with the ORMLT to ensure proper planning and execution.

### Guidelines and Restrictions. Volunteers Should Not:

- Access a property without notifying ORMLT, a minimum of 24 hours prior to the visit.
- Perform maintenance using hand or power tools without written consent from the ORMLT.
- Construct new trails or bridges without approval from the ORMLT.
- Enter confrontational situations with individuals found harming the property or engaging in illegal activities.
- Engage in activities that may pose unnecessary risks to themselves or the property and its features.
- Introduce new plantings, habitat structures, signs, or barriers without written approval from the ORMLT.