

GREEN SPACES in EDMONTON

Edmonton Vital Signs is an annual checkup conducted by Edmonton Community Foundation, in partnership with Edmonton Social Planning Council, to measure how the community is doing. Vital Topics are a quick but comprehensive look at issues that are timely and important to Edmonton.

What do you mean by *green*?

NATURAL AREA: spaces identified for the conservation, preservation and/or restoration of natural features, biodiversity, or ecological processes with a relatively low level of human maintenance.

GREEN SPACE: spaces featuring vegetation and other natural elements that range in size, public accessibility, and human management.

PARK: An actively maintained, publicly accessible green space that may contain natural and man-made materials.



Edmonton Parks

Edmonton has **7 hectares of parkland/1,000 people**.

- Parks are **within 400 metres of anywhere in downtown Edmonton**, although connections are not always convenient, accessible, or pleasant.
- The Edmonton metro region has **17 off-leash dog parks and 5 boat docks** to launch non-motorized watercraft.
- (ÎNÎW) River Lot 1100 on Queen Elizabeth park road opened in 2018 and showcases permanent **art installations by six Indigenous artists** telling the story of this place.

DID YOU KNOW? The North Saskatchewan's muddy appearance, is due to the silts it transports. **Water quality testing indicates it is safe for a variety of recreational uses including swimming and tubing**, although users should be cautious in the spring and fall during heavy flow rates.



The Ribbon of Green

The **North Saskatchewan River Valley**, a loosely connected strip of land covering **18,000 acres**,

- is the largest urban park in Canada,
- has 160 kilometres of maintained pathways and 20 major parks,
- has been protected in some form since 1915 in response to the devastating flood when the North Saskatchewan River rose 42 feet.

3 kinds of natural habitat exist in Edmonton

FORESTS: These areas are largely filled with aspen and balsam poplars and some evergreens.

WETLANDS: Marshes are the most common type of wetland found in Edmonton. Marshes are in depressions, often surrounded by water-based plants, willows and other shrubs.

RIVERINE: The banks of the North Saskatchewan River, its tributary creeks, and the slopes of both the river valley and ravines.

DID YOU KNOW? The historic **Holowach Tree is the oldest standing horse chestnut in Edmonton**. It was planted on April 30, 1910 by Ukrainian pioneer Sam Holowach. It can be found off Jasper Avenue between 105 and 106 Streets.

Green Space is good for us.

There is evidence that accessing urban green spaces can provide:

- psychological relaxation and stress reduction,
- improved social cohesion and psychological attachment to the home area,
- immune system benefits,
- enhanced physical activity,
- reduced exposures to noise, air pollution and excessive heat.



BIGGEST PARKS BY AREA (m²)

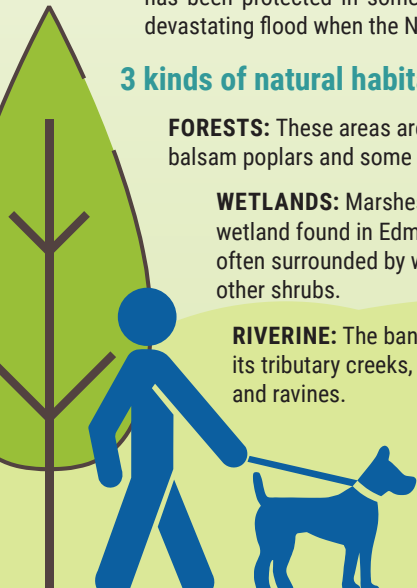
Whitemud Park
3,949,337

Terwillegar Park
1,736,951

Whitemud Ravine Nature Reserve
1,472,291

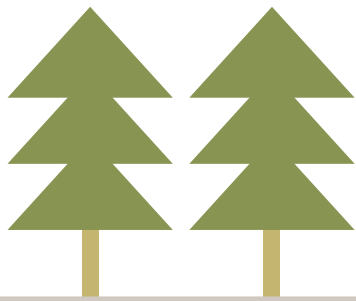
THE SMALLEST PARK

is called 'Stony Plain F', at a mere **15.4 m²** and located in Glenora.



Challenges for Parks

- **Inadequate funding** for park maintenance, programming, and repairs.
- **Increasing damage** from extreme weather.
- Parks used as **alternative housing** by people experiencing homelessness.
- **Growing demand for trails** and off-leash dog parks.
- **Demand for unstructured gathering spaces** and areas for unstructured play.
- **Accommodating an aging population.**



Edmonton's Park Use

In a 2017 perception survey of Edmontonians, in the past year:

82% used their **NEIGHBOURHOOD PARK**

64% used a **RIVER VALLEY PARK**

According to BREATHE part of Edmonton's Green Network Strategy (2016):

- 90% of Edmontonians said they used green spaces to **enjoy nature**,
- 86% believe **trees are the most important feature** of open spaces,
- 81% **used green spaces for wellness** and,
- 65% used them for **celebration**.



Wildlife/Habitat

Edmonton is host to almost 50 species of mammals, more than 150 species of birds, 5 species of amphibians, 2 species of reptiles and approximately 30 species of fish.

- **40 species** of wildlife are **at-risk** in Edmonton.
- WILDNorth admits almost **3,000 injured or orphaned** wild animals from the Edmonton region. **95% are displaced due to human activity and practices.**

In Greater Edmonton the most common injured or orphaned species are:

- mallard ducks
- white-tailed prairie hares
- black-billed magpies
- American robins
- red squirrels
- Canada geese



Ways you can Help Wildlife

- **Keep pets on a leash** or contained when outside.
- **Do not feed birds bread** or other unnatural food.
- **Keep garbage contained** and secure to avoid encouraging unwanted wildlife behaviour.
- **Cover windows to avoid a reflective surface**, to reduce bird window strikes.
- **Do not assume an animal is orphaned** until you have monitored it for some time and contacted a professional for advice.

DID YOU KNOW...?

Natural areas provide food for pollinators when crops are not yet flowering. Pollinators are essential to many types of foods we eat.

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Native bees in Alberta are pollen-collecting bees.



THE BUZZZZ ON BEES

Alberta is home to more than **300 native species of bees** but most of these are solitary bees (non-aggressive).

The Honeybee is not native to Alberta.

The city of Edmonton has been trying to **increase natural areas since 1995 by leaving grassy areas uncut and monitoring for noxious weeds.**

Beyond the River Valley

Just east of Edmonton is Beaver Hills Biosphere which was named a UNESCO biosphere in 2016. The landscape contains wetlands, lakes and forests, and is home to a variety of animals. This area includes Elk Island National Park, several provincial parks, and protected areas that are situated within this ecologically-significant region.

Visitation to Elk Island National Park has nearly doubled in a decade, from 185,000 visitors in 2009 to **more than 360,000 visitors in 2018.**

ECF@WORK Edmonton and Area Land Trust (EALT) received \$50,000/yr for 2017, 2018, and 2019 to help build the organization. EALT's mandate is to conserve natural areas in Edmonton and the surrounding region. **In 11 years they have secured 12 natural areas totalling 2,243 acres.**

WILD MYTHS:

MYTH: *Nestlings can not be returned to the nest once the scent of people is on them.*

FACT: Parent birds will not reject nestlings as almost all birds have no sense of smell.

MYTH: *If you find a baby hare, porcupine or deer fawn alone, you can assume it's orphaned.*

FACT: It is normal for mothers of these species to leave their young alone during the day and will return at night to nurse the young.

MYTH: *I should be afraid of coyotes.*

FACT: Coyotes are a natural part of our urban ecosystem and serious conflicts with people are **extremely rare**. Though they normally stay away from people, avoid habituating them to human food sources and keep small pets close. Should you encounter a coyote that seems a little too curious, face the animal, make yourself appear large, and be loud and aggressive by shouting and clapping. We can live in harmony with this important species.

