

# *Explorer's Guide*



**Essex Land Trust**

# Essex Land Trust Explorer's Guide

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## Welcome

Welcome Explorers!



Get ready for new discoveries, adventures, friendships, and fun experiences in the great outdoors. We welcome you

to Essex Land Trust (ELT) Explorers! Whether you're already a hiker or new to the trails, we're thrilled to have you join our community. Let's explore nature together, learn about our woodlands, and make memories that will last a lifetime!

## About Explorers

The ELT Explorer program will help you to discover nature, explore our preserves, and learn about the great



outdoors through fun activities that you can do with your family and friends.

There are scavenger hunts, nature-based crafting events, and

other activities that you might enjoy.


ELT Explorer materials can be downloaded or picked up at the Essex or Ivoryton Libraries.

Tracking your Progress:


- Use the ELT Explorer Program Achievements Card to track your progress.
- Collect your Sticker from the library when you complete a Scavenger Hunt or from an ELT Volunteer when you participate in an ELT Program.

- When you have completed all the activities on the Program Achievements Card, bring your complete card to the Essex Library or the Ivoryton Library for your prize.

**ELT Explorer's Program Achievements**



**Scavenger Hunts Completed**




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Place your sticker rewards in the box.

**Preserves I Have Visited**

--	--	--	--

Write in the Preserves that you visited and tape or glue a small twig or dead leaf that you collected on your hike.




**ELT Programs I Have Attended**

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Place your sticker rewards in the box.

- Use this card to keep a record of your Essex Land Trust (ELT) Junior Explorer achievements.
- Collect your Stickers from the library for completed Scavenger Hunts or at an ELT Program.
- When you complete all activities, bring to the Essex Library or the Ivoryton Library for your prize.



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## ***Have some fun!***

### **Scavenger Hunts:**

Hey Explorers! Are you ready for an adventure in the great outdoors? Put your detective skills to the test with a scavenger hunt! Scavenger hunts are like treasure hunts, you search for hidden treasures right in the heart of the wilderness. From spotting different types of leaves to finding animal tracks or even discovering hidden landmarks, there's so much to explore and uncover. Grab your backpack, lace up your boots, and embark on an exciting scavenger hunt through the woods. Are you up for the challenge?




















### **Choose Your Scavenger Hunt:**

Now it's time for fun. There are Scavenger Hunts for each season. You can also pick up ELT Scavenger Hunts at the Essex and Ivoryton Libraries or download it from our web page.




Remember that what you find on the trails might not match the pictures exactly and that's OK.


### Winter Fun Scavenger Hunt

					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seeds & Nuts	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Jay 	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clubmoss
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shadow	<input type="checkbox"/>	Blue Jay	<input type="checkbox"/>	Clubmoss
					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boulder	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tree Stump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hole in a tree
<input type="checkbox"/>	Boulder	<input type="checkbox"/>	Tree Stump	<input type="checkbox"/>	Hole in a tree
					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Holly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lichen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Squirrel Drey
<input type="checkbox"/>	Holly	<input type="checkbox"/>	Lichen	<input type="checkbox"/>	Squirrel Drey
					
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mountain Laurel	<input type="checkbox"/>	EMCY Marker
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bridge	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mountain Laurel	<input type="checkbox"/>	EMCY Marker


**Instructions:**


- Take a walk in one of our preserves.
- Look and Listen  for the pictured items.
- When you complete your hunt, bring to the Essex Library or the Ivoryton Library for your prize.

\*\*\*Images are representative; Your match may look a bit different.



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## Spring Has Sprung Scavenger Hunt



Stone wall



Acorn



Spiderweb



Robin



Trail marker



Tree Bark



Fiddlehead



Stream



Cairns



Kiosk



Blue Jay



Skunk Cabbage



Mushroom



Bridge




Pinecones



Lichen



### Instructions:

- Take a walk in one of our preserves.
- Look and Listen  for the pictured items.
- When you complete your hunt, bring to the Essex Public Library or the Ivoryton Library for your prize.

\*\*\*Images are representative; Your match may look a bit different.







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### Summer Fun Scavenger Hunt

 <input type="checkbox"/> Ferns	 <input type="checkbox"/> Pileated Woodpecker 	 <input type="checkbox"/> Cairns	 <input type="checkbox"/> Seeds & Nuts
 <input type="checkbox"/> Litter	 <input type="checkbox"/> Beetle	 <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly	 <input type="checkbox"/> Moss
 <input type="checkbox"/> Birds Nest	 <input type="checkbox"/> Squirrels 	 <input type="checkbox"/> Wildflowers	 <input type="checkbox"/> Trail Markers
 <input type="checkbox"/> Clouds	 <input type="checkbox"/> Feather	 <input type="checkbox"/> Ducks 	 <input type="checkbox"/> Ants



#### Instructions:

- Take a walk in one of the many preserves.
- Look and Listen  for the pictured items.
- When you complete your hunt, bring to the Essex Library or the Ivoryton Library for your prize.

\*\*\*Images are representative; Your match may look a bit different.



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## Fall Fun Scavenger Hunt



Golden rod



Red Leaf



Pinecone



Hawk 



Burl



Bittersweet



Boundary Marker



Moss



Squirrel 



Yellow Leaf



Spiderweb



Barberry



Mushroom



Cricket



Crow 



Acorn



### Instructions:

- Take a walk in one of our preserves.
  - Look and Listen  for the pictured items.
  - When you complete your hunt, bring to the Essex Library or the Ivoryton Library for your prize.
- \*\*\*Images are representative; Your match may look a bit different.



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## ***Activities***

There are activities for ELT Explorers from time to time that you can take



part in and that you might enjoy. Things like wreath making from invasive vines and decorating your own hiking stick!

ELT Events and ELT Explorer activities are announced on our Facebook page. So, check our Facebook page regularly for updates.

## **Contests**

Contests can also be a lot of fun for Explorers. We'll be announcing them from time to time on our Facebook Page. So, follow the Essex Land Trust and look for contests which interest you.

***[bit.ly/ELTFacebookLink](https://bit.ly/ELTFacebookLink)***



## *Things for Explorers to Know*

### Sharing and protecting our trails:

ELT

Explorers are kind and courteous friends on the trails, tread lightly on sensitive natural areas, and practice these simple rules:



- **Leave No Trace:** Respect the environment by carrying out all trash and leaving nature as you found it.
- **Stay on the Trail:** Help preserve the natural habitat and avoid damaging plants or wildlife by sticking to marked trails.
- **Yield to Others:** Uphold courtesy by yielding to uphill hikers and allowing faster hikers to pass safely.

- **Keep Noise to a Minimum:** Respect the tranquility of nature and avoid loud noises or disruptive behavior.
- **Share the Trail:** Be mindful of other hikers, bikers, or animals, and give space when passing.
- **Pack Out What You Pack In:** Bring back all personal items, including food wrappers and containers.
- **Respect Wildlife:** Observe animals from a distance and refrain from feeding or approaching them.
- **Be Prepared:** Carry essentials like water, snacks, a trail map, and a first-aid kit. Inform someone of your plans and expected return time.
- **Follow Local Regulations:** Adhere to trail rules and regulations, including leash laws for pets and campfire restrictions.
- **Leave it Better Than You Found it:** Take the opportunity to pick up any trash you encounter, even if it's not your own, to leave the trail cleaner for others.

## Finding Your Way Around:

### Reading a map

Hey Explorers! Trail maps are like treasure maps—they guide you through the wilderness to hidden gems. When

you're out exploring, take a moment to study the map before you hit the trail. Look for landmarks like lakes, rivers, or



mountains to help you orient yourself.

Pay attention to the symbols and colors used on the map—they tell you

important things like where the trails are, where the viewpoints are, and

special items of interest that help you find your way. Always keep the trail

map handy and refer to it often as you hike. And if you're ever unsure of where

you are, don't hesitate to ask an adult, a fellow hiker, or an ELT volunteer for

help. Happy exploring!

## Trail Markers

Trail markers are like nature's breadcrumbs, they help you find your way in the great outdoors. Look out for colored blazes painted on trees, cairns (stacks of rocks), or signs along the trail. Each color usually represents a different trail, so make sure you know which one you're following. If you ever get lost, just backtrack to the last marker you saw and try again. And always remember, leaving the trail markers undisturbed helps others find their way too, so let's respect them as we explore!



## Topographical lines

Hey Explorers! Ever wonder how to read those squiggly lines on a map? Those are called

topographical lines, and they're like nature's 3D glasses, they show you the shape of the



land. The closer together the lines are, the steeper the slope. When you're hiking, pay attention to the lines to understand if you're going uphill, downhill, or across flat terrain. If the lines form circles, it means you're on a hill or a mountain top. Knowing how to read these lines can help you plan your route and understand the terrain better. So next time you're out on the trails, don't forget to check out those squiggles, they're your guide to the great outdoors!



## Wildlife

Get ready to embark on an adventure into the realm of woodland animals. As you wander through the forest, you'll encounter a diverse cast of creatures,



from scurrying squirrels to majestic deer and everything in between.

These furry and feathered

friends call the forest their home, and each one plays a special role in the delicate balance of nature. Learning about woodland animals not only adds excitement to your hiking journey but also fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation for the natural world. So, let's lace up our boots and explore the wonders of woodland creatures together!

## Plants

Welcome to the wonderful world of woodland plants. As you wander through the forest, you'll encounter a fascinating array of greenery that plays a vital role



in the ecosystem.

From towering trees to tiny wildflowers, each plant has its own story to tell.

Learning about

woodland

plants not only helps you appreciate the beauty of nature but also teaches you how to respect and coexist with the environment around you. So, let's dive in and explore the magical world of woodland plants together!

## Caution!

ELT Explorers enjoy the outdoors and are careful on their adventures. Our preserves provide



safe and fun environments, but it's important to be a little careful. It's wild out there! A few things that you should keep in mind to stay safe.

### **Wildlife**

When you're out exploring nature, it's important to know how to deal with and respect wildlife. Remember, animals in the wild are just that—wild. Keep a safe distance and never approach or try to touch them, even if they seem friendly. Observe them from afar and use binoculars to get a closer look. If you encounter larger animals like deer or bears, stay calm and back away slowly

without making sudden movements. Always stay on marked trails to avoid disturbing habitats and nesting areas. And never feed wildlife, as it can make them sick and dependent on humans for food. Let's show respect for nature and its inhabitants while we enjoy our hikes!



### **Ticks**

When you're out on the trails, be aware of ticks. They're small bugs that can bite you and sometimes make you sick. Wear long pants and socks and use insect repellent to keep them away. After your



hike, check yourself for ticks, especially in warm, hidden spots like behind your knees and in your hair. If you find one, ask an adult to help

you remove it carefully with tweezers.

Don't worry, as long as you're careful, ticks won't ruin your outdoor fun!

### **Poison Ivy**

When you're out exploring nature, keep an eye out for poison ivy. It's got three shiny leaves and can give you a really itchy rash if you touch it. Wear long sleeves, pants, and closed shoes to protect your skin. If you



accidentally brush against it, wash the area with soap and water right away. Don't scratch it, or it could get worse!

And remember, if you're not sure what it looks like, ask an adult or an ELT volunteer to help you spot it. Happy hiking!

## Bees

When you're exploring the great outdoors, watch out for ground bees.

These buzzy insects like to build their nests in the ground, and if



you step on or near their nest, they might sting you. You may see a warning sign or if you see a hole in the ground with lots of bees buzzing around it, steer clear! Walk softly and stay on marked trails to avoid disturbing their homes. If you do accidentally disturb a nest and bees start flying around you, don't panic. Slowly and calmly walk away from the area until you're out of their territory. Remember, bees are important for nature, so let's give them their space while we enjoy the outdoors!



## ***Books you may like***

Explorers! Here are some great books that you may enjoy:

- ***The Kids' Outdoor Adventure Book: 448 Great Things to Do in Nature Before You Grow Up*** by Stacy Tornio and Ken Keffer - This book is filled with fun outdoor activities, games, and nature facts perfect for young adventurers.
- ***National Geographic Kids Ultimate Explorer Field Guide: Birds*** by Julie Beer - A colorful guide that introduces kids to the world of birds with stunning photographs and fascinating facts.
- ***The Stick Book: Loads of things you can make or do with a stick*** by Fiona Danks and Jo Schofield - Encourages

creativity and imagination with ideas for outdoor play using sticks, perfect for young explorers.

- **A Walk in the Woods: Into the Field Guide** by Emily Laber-Warren - This interactive field guide introduces kids to the wonders of the forest with activities, crafts, and wildlife facts.
- **The Nature Connection: An Outdoor Workbook for Kids, Families, and Classrooms** by Clare Walker Leslie - A hands-on guide to exploring and connecting with nature through activities, journaling, and observation.



- **The Lost Art of Reading Nature's Signs: Use Outdoor Clues to Find Your Way, Predict the Weather, Locate Water, Track Animals— and Other Forgotten**

**Skills** by Tristan Gooley - Teaches young hikers how to read and interpret nature's signs, perfect for budding naturalists.





## **For Parents**

### **11 Kid-Friendly Ways to Encourage Hiking**

Hiking with children is a fun and rewarding experience that promotes family bonding and a healthy, active life. Fortunately, the Essex Land Trust's (ELT) preserves with more than 35 miles of trails right in town mean you don't have to go far to amble on an easy scenic trail, hike a river-spanning bridge, explore a marsh boardwalk, or visit a sandy river shore. The following tips will help your young hikers engage their senses, explore, and play while they hike.

1. **Choose child-friendly trails:** If it's your first hike, pick something guaranteed to be a fun success! Pond Meadow and the Millrace are good choices.
2. **Make it a scavenger hunt:** Use the ELT Explorer program to engage young hikers in age-appropriate scavenger hunts looking for natural elements along the trails.
3. **Praise and encouragement:** Complement young hikers. Call attention to how strong and capable they are.
4. **Bring snacks and treats:** Pack snacks to keep energy up during the hike and a special treat for the end as motivation.
5. **Remember fun is in the journey:** Let young hikers lead the way and explore their surroundings. Allow them to stop and investigate bugs, flowers, or animal tracks.
6. **Play nature games:** Incorporate games into the hike -- play "I Spy" with natural objects, collect different

colored leaves or flowers, skip stones across a stream.

7. **Bring tools to explore:** Give your young hikers binoculars, magnifying glasses, or a small bug-catching kit to enhance their exploration of the natural world.
8. **Capture the moment:** Bring a camera or smartphone to take photos. Encourage children to document their hiking adventures and create a scrapbook.
9. **Do a pre-hike brief:** Talk about rules of the trail (running ahead?), staying on the trail, and what fun things to expect on the trail (bridge, stream, hill, etc.). Tell them you are all prepared (band aids) if there are any little scrapes along the way. Ask each hiker to carry their own water - even a small amount is good practice!
10. **Relive your experience after the hike:** Remember the fun and how strong your hikers were.

The benefits of introducing children to the outdoors are abundant. Spending time in nature improves physical health by encouraging active lifestyles and reducing stress. It also enhances mental well-being by providing a break from screens and technology, promoting creativity, and fostering a sense of calm and tranquility.

Additionally, outdoor experiences teach children to appreciate and respect the environment, instilling in them a lifelong commitment to conservation and sustainability.

Overall, by immersing children in the wonders of the natural world, parents set them on a path to a healthier, happier, and more connected life.

## **Ideas and Feedback**

We are excited to launch the ELT Explorer Program. As we continue to develop our children's hiking and outdoors program, we would love to hear your ideas and feedback! We're committed to creating an engaging and educational experience that instills a love for nature in young adventurers. What activities do you think would be most enjoyable and beneficial for kids? Are there any specific skills or topics you believe should be emphasized? Your input will help us craft a program that inspires children to explore the great outdoors while fostering their physical, mental, and emotional development. Email us your input at:

**[elt.programs@essexlandtrust.org](mailto:elt.programs@essexlandtrust.org)**

## **About the Essex Land Trust (ELT)**

### **What We Do**

We are a volunteer organization that conserves, protects, and cares for open spaces in our community. We also hold programs and events to promote recreational activities and to build a community of those that care for the environment.

### **About our Preserves**

Essex Land Trust Preserves have been given to or acquired by the land trust for their conservation and recreational use. There are 24 Preserves for which ELT is responsible with over 35 miles of trails. These lands will not be developed and will be secured for the protection of habitat and for the recreational use of our community. They are a community treasure.



[essexlandtrust.org/preserves/](https://essexlandtrust.org/preserves/)

## Join Us!

Join the Essex Land Trust and get a free copy of our trails guide and regular updates on our family-friendly hikes and kayak trips.



[essexlandtrust.org/join-us/](https://essexlandtrust.org/join-us/)

## Essex Open Space Properties Essex, CT

Total open space in Essex exceeds 1000 acres, of which the Essex Land Trust owns 753 and the Town of Essex holding 336 acres. With preserves open from dawn to dusk, 35 miles of trails are accessible to the public. Visitors are asked to stay on trails and respect the environment.

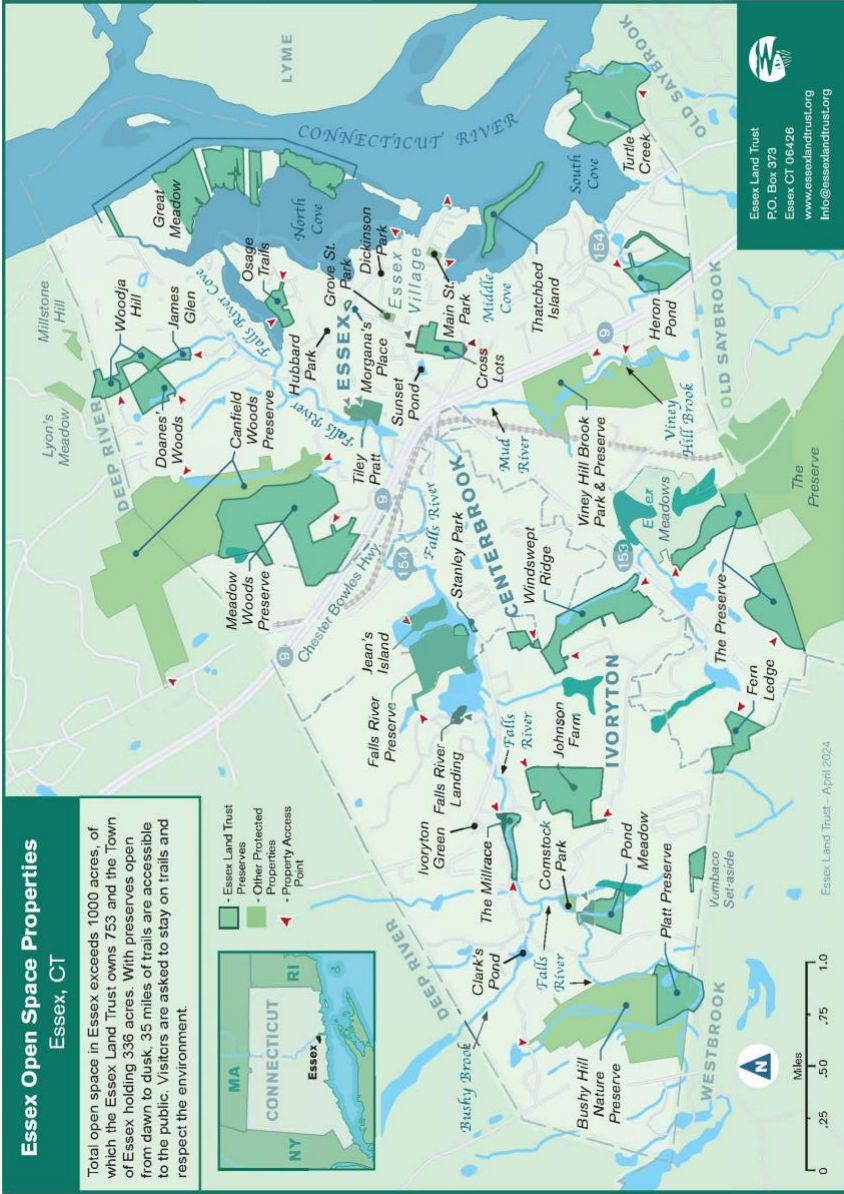
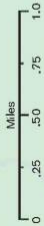


-  Essex Land Trust Preserves
-  Other Protected Properties
-  Property Access Point



Essex Land Trust  
P.O. Box 373  
Essex, CT 06426  
[www.essexlandtrust.org](http://www.essexlandtrust.org)  
[info@essexlandtrust.org](mailto:info@essexlandtrust.org)

Essex Land Trust - April 2024



Essex Land Trust

**24 Preserves**  
**752 acres**  
**35 miles of trails**

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