

Report on Park Stewardship

Everett Crowley
Park Committee
2023

Prepared by
Park People
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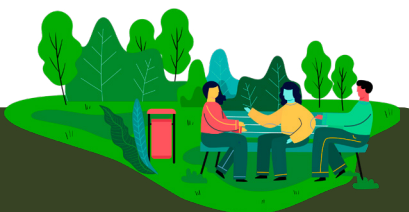
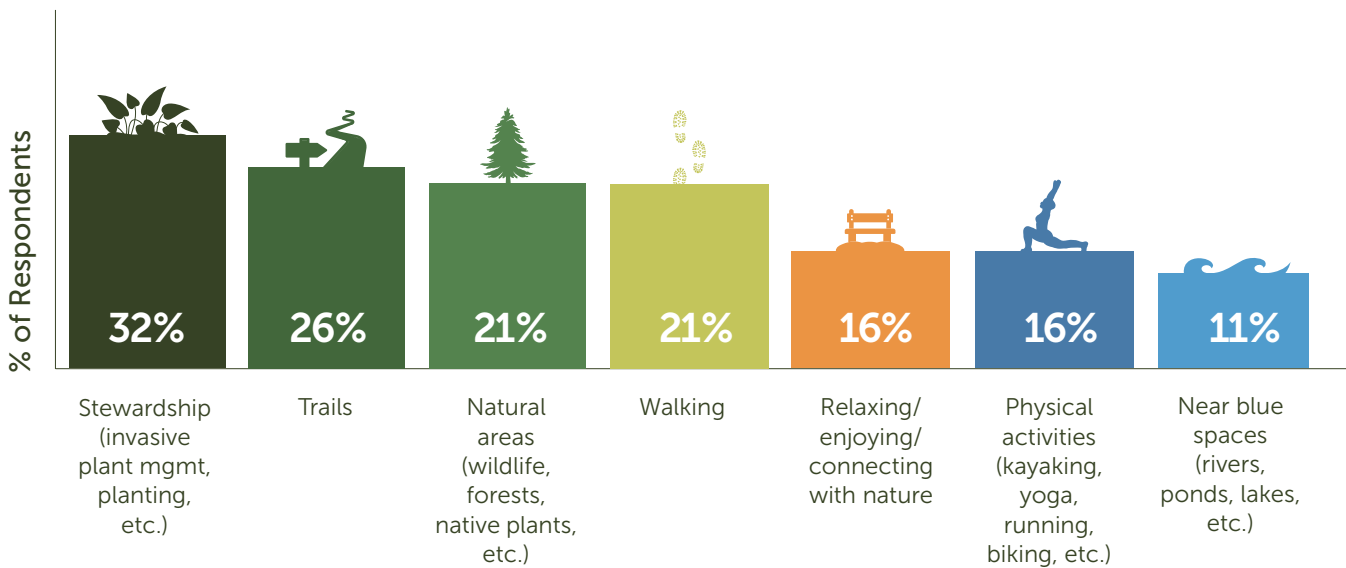
*Cover Photo: Volunteers from the Captain Scott Legacy Society removing invasive himalayan blackberry with Everett Crowley Park Committee.
Taken by: Evie (ECPC Staff Member), Spring 2023*

Park Context

The Everett Crowley Park Committee (ECPC) is a sub-committee of the Champlain Heights Community Association that works in Everett Crowley Park, which is a 38.08 hectare park in south Vancouver, BC. Everett Crowley Park is Vancouver’s 5th largest park which rests on an escarpment and looks out over the North arm of the Fraser River. It is home to nature trails, walking paths, and beautiful views which allow for an abundance of ways in which residents and visitors can connect and interact with nature.

Previous Cornerstone research in 2022 found that a strong connection to nature was highly associated with better perceived mental and physical health and overall well-being. Therefore, as people feel more connected to nature, their health and well-being improve.

Places and Activities that Promote Nature Connectedness



Just as certain park qualities can encourage nature connectedness, there are spaces and activities in parks that can have the opposite effect. Our 2023 survey showed that spaces that make people feel least connected to nature are spaces that have a lack of trees and wildlife (**36%**), built environments such as sports facilities, playgrounds, and other structures (**29%**), and grey/paved spaces (**21%**).

Park Restoration and Stewardship Programs

The Everett Crowley Park Committee’s mission statement is “To encourage stewardship of Everett Crowley Park as an urban wilderness.” The ECPC liaises with the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation on management issues and improvement projects. Projects in which the committee has taken an active part include new plantings, removing invasives, organizing community events in the park, maintaining a Mason Bee Condo, and maintaining the Butterfly Garden (planted to support bees, butterflies and hummingbirds).

Everett Crowley Park Stewardship Impacts 2023

Metric	Quantity
Cubic meters of invasive species removed (volume)	40 m ³
Number of shrubs planted	497
Volume of grasses/wildflowers planted	300 m ³ Meadow
Number of people who participated in Cornerstone Parks initiatives	100 People
Number of stewards who volunteered in hands-on, park-based programming	300 People
Number of hours dedicated to stewardship and restoration activities	900 Hours

Everett Crowley Park Committee Stewards

The Everett Crowley Park Committee is made up of park users and local residents who are working to see this green space protected and enhanced for the long term. From our surveys with stewards, we found that in 2023:

23% of surveyed stewards volunteer on an occasional basis (2-5 times per year)

19% volunteer on a regular basis (6 or more times per year)

65% of surveyed stewards were new to the program within the year

“Volunteering with ECPC is one of my favourite ways to contribute to my community. I love meeting other passionate people while getting active and improving the biodiversity of Everett Crowley Park.”

– ECPC Volunteer





Photo: ECPC members Dave and Sue Day planting native species in area 4.
Taken by: Unknown, 2023

“Attending an ECPC event is always a weekend highlight. The volunteer coordinators are knowledgeable, friendly, and kind. I always leave with a heightened sense of community and connection to local nature.”
– ECPC Volunteer



Benefits from Stewardship

From our surveys, we also found that not only does the environment benefit from stewardship, but there are a host of benefits for stewards. The 2023 survey of ECPC stewards found that:

96% of stewards say that participating in stewardship contributes to feeling connected to nature and the environment

88% of stewards say that participating in stewardship contributes to their sense of belonging to a community

88% of stewards say that participating in stewardship contributes to their sense of meaning and purpose in their life

83% of stewards say that participating in stewardship contributes to staying in shape and getting physical exercise

92% of stewards say that participating in stewardship contributes to feeling happy and satisfied and contributes to their mental well-being (eg. they feel more relaxed and peaceful)

When stewards were asked how they feel when they're in Everett Crowley Park, the most common responses were:

32% Happy

26% Connected (to nature/
community/self)

42% Peaceful/calm/relaxed

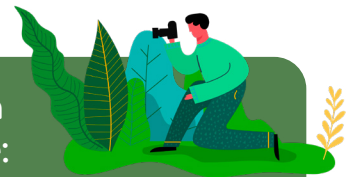




Photo: Damian (ECPC Chair) leading a nature walk.
Taken by: Grace (Free the Fern), Summer 2023

Pro-Environmental Behaviour of Stewards

Our 2023 survey results also indicate that those participating in stewardship activities often carry their experiences beyond Everett Crowley Park. They also engage in other pro-environmental behaviour, some of which are newly adopted and possibly inspired by their work with ECPC.

71% of stewards say they have taught other people about park stewardship and/or environmental issues, with 54% of them starting within the past year

92% of stewards have started performing additional environmental actions at home (i.e. recycling/composting, using less electricity)

50% of stewards say that they encouraged friends or family to get involved in park stewardship since volunteering with ECPC

83% of stewards became involved in other community groups or volunteer organizations related to stewardship, conservation, or the environment (54% of which were already doing this before volunteering in stewardship)

“Volunteering with the ECPC was one of my favourite experiences. The whole process is expertly run and the work they have done and continue to do is astonishing. There’s nothing more motivating than seeing the success of past volunteers while you’re working and the ECPC has done so much to restore the park’s ecosystem.”

– ECPC Volunteer



Fostering Inclusion in the Park

Cornerstone surveys conducted from 2021-2023 found that park users and stewards tend to identify as women, white, and able-bodied. However, Vancouver residents need to share access to high-quality, large urban parks equally. Therefore, the Everett Crowley Park Committee is working to employ strategies to foster inclusion within the park and stewardship programs.

To increase inclusivity in the park and Everett Crowley Park Committee programs, ECPC has undertaken the following actions

ECPC has carefully considered how to make all its events (including Earth Fest, their public stewardship program, and education programs such as nature walks) more accessible through:

- Free events and free lunches and refreshments for volunteers
- Events held next to wheelchair accessible trails to accommodate people with physical disabilities
- Family friendly and weekend events to accommodate those who work during the week as well as people with children
- No previous skills or minimum commitment required for their volunteering or events, to help lower barriers to entry or getting involved



*Photo: Students and teachers from St John's high school planting wildflower seeds in area 4.
Taken by: Damian (ECPC Chair), May 5, 2023*



*Photo: ECPC member David Heibert at the ECPC native plant delivery from park board.
Taken by: Unknown, 2023*

Much of the housing surrounding the park is low income and seniors housing, with the highest concentration of COOP housing in BC. As this housing is more affordable, much of the surrounding local community consists of families, new immigrants, and low income individuals that ECPC engages by:

- Advertising events in local community centres
- Providing programs for local schools and organisations (including locations and lesson plans)
- Onboarding local residents to the ECPC committee to have their voices and visions of park restoration heard

ECPC fosters Indigenous reconciliation by:

- Incorporating land acknowledgements into events and online
- Honouring the land that was stewarded by Indigenous communities since time immemorial by planting native species
- Inviting and empowering local Indigenous peoples to lead and attend events

Appendix

A. What are Cornerstone Parks?

Cornerstone parks are rich in biodiversity, increase our cities' resilience to climate change, and for the millions of urban Canadians who visit them yearly, provide the deep connections to nature that people need to ensure their mental and physical well-being. These parks are stewarded and animated by communities to maintain and enhance the benefits these green spaces provide to society and the environment.

Cornerstone Parks is Canada's only national network dedicated to maximizing the impact and influence of Canada's large urban parks.

B. Methodology

Data was collected through surveys developed by Park People in collaboration with our Cornerstone Park partners. In 2023, 86 park stewards participating in programs with four of our Cornerstone partners were surveyed. These partners include; Meewasin Valley Authority, Saskatoon; Darlington Ecological Corridor, Montreal, Free the Fern Stewardship Society and Everett Crowley Park Committee, Vancouver.

The survey was designed for participants of park stewardship programs (activities related to caring for the land, i.e. invasive species removal, tree planting, and plant and wildlife inventory) and was conducted in the fall of 2023 through online surveys. This is the second iteration of the survey and previous research findings from our surveys in 2022 at our founding Cornerstone Parks can be found on our website.

The goal was to understand better the impacts that stewardship participants perceive on their well-being and behaviour.



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