

Ridgefield Conservation Commission

www.ridgefieldct.org/conservation-commission
conservation@ridgefieldct.org
66 Prospect St. 2nd floor, Ridgefield, CT 06877
(203) 431-2713

The Ridgefield Conservation Commission serves the Town by devoting our efforts to the sound development, conservation, supervision, and regulation of the Town's natural resources.



SPECIAL NRI 2022 NEWSLETTER



The RCC is in the midst of updating Ridgefield's Natural Resources Inventory. A survey was last completed in 2012, so it is time to ascertain the overall health of habitats found in Ridgefield. Formalized surveys and data have already been collected on macroinvertebrates, mammals, and vernal pools. Additionally, several bird walks with Tommy McCarthy (Woodcock Nature Center) and an ephemeral wildflower walk led by Cathy Smith (Norwalk River Watershed Association) have also been conducted.

Most recently, on June 11th, a BioBlitz was held in partnership with Woodcock Nature Center and Weir Farm National Historical Park, which hosted the event. More detailed information appears below on each of these data collection efforts, all of which have been fueled by the involvement of many local citizen scientists.

Benthic Macroinvertebrate Survey

Commissioner Roberta Barbieri spear-headed this effort with the support of several other commissioners. Benthic (meaning bottom-dwelling) macroinvertebrates include small aquatic animals and the aquatic larval stages of insects, such as dragonflies, snails, beetles, and stonefly larvae. They are reliable indicators of water quality because they spend all or most of their lives in water, are easy to collect and have varying tolerance to pollution.

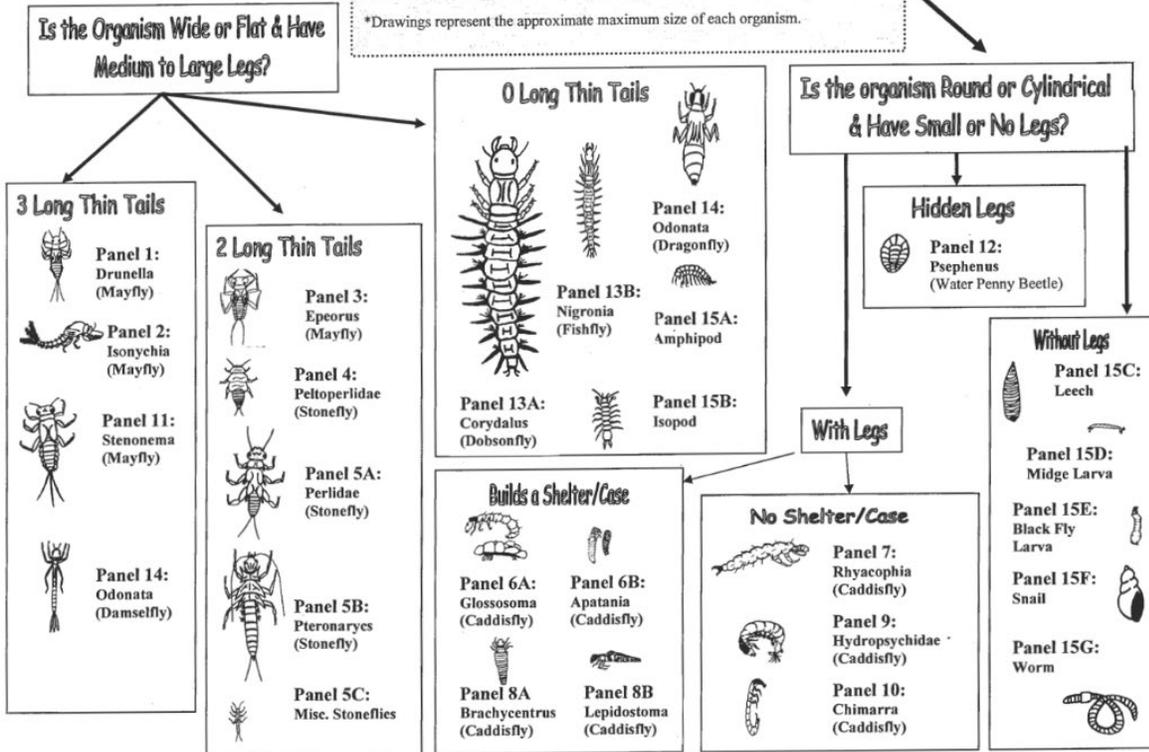
For this study, kick samples were obtained from key streams in town and the collected macroinvertebrates were counted and then released back into the streams. At the end of the survey, the data was sent to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) for interpretation. Once the results are obtained from DEEP, the Ridgefield data will be shared in a future newsletter and within the new NRI report.



Rapid Bioassessment for Volunteers Kick Sample

Note: This chart is for preliminary sorting purposes when implementing RAPID BIOASSESSMENT FOR VOLUNTEER MONITORS. This chart is not intended to produce definitive identification of aquatic macroinvertebrates. It was designed to complement a series of field identification cards and the RBV data sheet. Additional information about the RBV program is available at www.ct.gov/dep/rbv or by contacting Mike Beauchene at (860-424-4185) mike.Beauchene@ct.gov

*Drawings represent the approximate maximum size of each organism.



Winter Mammal Survey

As part of a collaboration with PACE University in Pleasantville, NY, Professor Michael Rubbo and two teams of students set up baited trip cameras in locations throughout Ridgefield's open spaces. Cameras were set up in two rounds, each for 3 weeks, during the months of February and March. For this study and the vernal pool study, Ridgefield was divided into north and south sections, each comprising approximately 10,000 acres.



Coyote at night



Red fox on a wintry day

Once the surveying was completed, hours upon hours of camera footage was reviewed and each sighting was recorded. A table of the results appears below. We hope to post some of the amazing bobcat videos on the RCC website soon!

Location	Black Bear	Bobcat	Grey Fox	Red Fox	Coyote
North	1	16	2	32	33
South	5	15	0	12	74

Recorded Sightings from Mammal Trap Camera Footage 2022

Vernal Pool Study

Vernal pools are seasonal pools of varying size and despite being dry at times they teem with life when filled with rain and melt water. An important fact about vernal pools is that they are devoid of fish, which make them critical breeding grounds for many amphibian and invertebrate species that would otherwise not be able to survive.



For this study the north and south sectors of Ridgefield each had different teams surveying them. Northern vernal pools were documented by Ridgefield High School teacher Chris Tate and his Environmental Studies students along with David Herberger and other members of Western Connecticut University's Herpetology Club.

The southern vernal pools were surveyed by Professor Michael Rubbo of PACE University and several of his students. Professor Rubbo and his students gave a wonderful presentation to the public of their findings from both the mammal and vernal pool studies at the Ridgefield Library on May 5th.



BioBlitz at Weir Farm National Historical Park



The BioBlitz began Friday evening with a moth survey that continued into the wee morning hours by Raymond Simpson and his team of experts. A few hours after the conclusion of the moth survey, a group of early morning birders led by Woodcock Nature Center's staff member, Tommy McCarthy and RCC's own, Allan Welby.

Next up were three sessions of supervised observations in field, forest and pond habitats. Many families and citizen scientists enjoyed learning about caterpillars, butterflies, mushrooms, amphibians, newts, dragonflies, fish, snakes and more from several experts who generously lent their time including: Dr. Kirsten Martin, Sarah Breznen, Tommy McCarthy, Lukas Keras, Chris Tate, Zaac Chaves. Also lending a hand to this event were Commissioners Kitsey Snow, Peter Nichols, Roberta Barbieri, Allan Welby, and Jean Linville.

The RCC was fortunate to partner with several amazing organizations from this event. The expertise of Yale Peabody Museum entomologist, Raymond Simpson along with the kind and knowledgeable staff of the Woodcock Nature Center and the very accommodating National Park staff made this event truly memorable.

The weather and site conditions at Weir Farm were exceptional as well as the Park's willingness to provide tents, tables, transportation, signage, parking and staff.

In addition to the enthusiastic Park staff, the Friends of Weir provided many volunteers as well as "Make a Nature Journal" and "Bear Aware" stations that included several art activities.

The efforts of the staff and Friends of Weir Farm raised the bar for future events such as this. The RCC would like to especially thank Sarah Breznen from Woodcock Nature Center and Ranger Kristin Lessard and Community Volunteer Ambassador Bridget Craig from Weir Farm for all of their work and support.

Data from this event will be shared once it has been reviewed and compiled.



Early Morning BioBlitz Birding



Dr. Kirsten Martin and Sarah Breznen look for dragonfly nymphs.

Where do we go from here?

Over the next few months work will begin to update maps with the new data and additional surveys will be conducted. Be sure to check in with the Woodcock Nature Center and the RCC's websites for information on upcoming opportunities to get involved. Registration for all events will be through the Woodcock Nature Center's website.

Remember you can also submit any observations that you make on your own by using iNaturalist and joining the RCC NRI group. Directions on how to do this can be found on the RCC website.

Next Up:

- July 23 - Moth Study
- August 6 - Butterfly Walk with Vic DeMassi and Lukas Keras
- Late August Native Wildflower Walk
- Fall Bird Migration
- Fungi Walk