

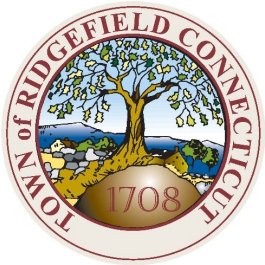
Ridgefield CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SUMMER 2021 NEWSLETTER



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



DID YOU KNOW?

Through the course of last summer nearly all of the McKeon bluebird boxes were occupied, producing numerous clutches of eggs. A total of 71 of those eggs hatched!

MCKEON FARM BLUEBIRD PROJECT

Everyone loves the Eastern Bluebird. You can't help but smile when you see one. They are fairly common in our area, but that has not always been the case. Bluebirds historically nested in natural tree cavities. But competition for these cavities from more aggressive non-native, introduced species (European Starling, House Sparrow) caused the population of Bluebirds to drop precipitously in the mid 20th century. As concerned bird lovers began to erect nesting boxes throughout their range, Bluebird numbers recovered remarkably well! The Conservation Commission erected 16 bluebird boxes at one of Ridgefield's beautiful open spaces, McKeon Farm.



Eco-Friendly Yard Waste Tips

Raking leaves, mowing, gardening and pruning are necessary and enjoyable outdoor activities, but what do you do with all the debris? Tempted to dump it into nearby Open Spaces? *Please don't!* Dumping is a violation of Town Open Space Use Ordinance with fines. Try these ideas instead and add to the health and biodiversity of your own property.



Leaf clean-up?

Avoid it! Leave them be for as long as you can then mulch them into your yard and flowerbeds. They will add nutrients, increase moisture retention, provide insect habitat and discourage weed growth.

Grass clippings?

Don't rake and dump in the trash, instead turn them into a nutritious treat for your soil. Cut grass left on the lawn, as long as it is not in large clumps, will biodegrade within a few weeks becoming a food source for beneficial microbes and fertilizing your lawn.

Garden and small pruning leftovers?

Compost, compost, compost! You may be used to composting foods like eggshells and vegetables, but garden debris and pruning leftovers can also be thrown into the heap. A nice mix is three parts brown leaves, branches and other dead yard waste to one part green materials, such as food or garden waste.

Larger branches or projects?

Larger branches can be cut and dried and eventually fuel that marshmallow roasting fire you have been yearning for. Utilize Ridgefield's Transfer and Recycling Station. (Note that brush in excess of 5" in diameter, stumps, logs and grass clippings are not accepted) or schedule a pick-up through a waste management service. Although applying for a burn permit through the town is another option, try and refrain from this as the smoke released can pose a threat to human health and the environment.

Should you see anything like this on any of our wonderful Open Spaces, please contact the Conservation Commission:



Beautiful Bennett's Pond

It is always so exciting to see who is visiting Bennett's Pond! The Great Blue Heron and masked Cedar Waxwing were spotted recently. There is nothing like Ridgefield's open spaces and trails! Make sure to take a hike and enjoy YOUR land this summer!



The Great Blue Heron



Cedar Waxwing

Ridgefield Conservation Commission Bird Walk

Ten participants attended the Conservation Commission's May 6th bird walk at Bennett's Pond State Park, one of Ridgefield's great open spaces. Early May was a fantastic time to be looking for birds in Ridgefield, as this was the peak time to see migrating birds passing through on their way from Central and South American wintering grounds to breeding grounds from here to the arctic. Our walk produced fifty-five species of birds, including some uncommon, hard to find species. At the Fox Hill Lake marsh, we observed two Virginia Rails, an extremely difficult to see "skulker." At Bennett's Pond we were treated to views of twelve different warblers, including the rare Hooded Warbler. Three flyover Broad-winged Hawks were a nice surprise. Deep in the woods we were surprised by the beautiful song of a tiny Winter Wren. After some careful scanning of the forest, we were able to locate this little guy singing his heart out on a small stump. And at the far end of Bennett's Pond, we were treated to looks at a secretive Marsh Wren!



May 6th Walkers



Virginia Rail



Hooded Warbler

What is a pollinator pathway?

Inspired by Norway's "Bee Highways", the Northeast Pollinators Pathway is a multi-state initiative which creates a corridor that contains waystations for pollinators to rest and eat while passing through large tracts of developed suburbia. Ridgefield is one of these stops! To learn more about this incredible project, visit pollinator-pathway.org and our commission's website.



Beneficial Bugs....

Why do people use insecticides in the vegetable garden? To kill insects. But most insects in the garden are *not* pests. Some of these are beneficial insects, like bumblebees, which benefit us because they pollinate flowers, or many insects that are predators of pests, such as ladybeetles or green lacewings. Other insects feed on organic material in the soil, or feed on nectar and pollen at flowers, or simply rest on the plants while passing through. There are many ways besides toxic chemicals to control "pests". If you do decide to use an insecticide, it is crucial to avoid using insecticides with a toxic effect on a broad spectrum of insect species. Many bugs are beneficial, please keep this in mind when deciding how to manage.



Meet the Commissioners

The Ridgefield Conservation Commission consists of nine volunteer Ridgefield residents (and two alternates) who serve the town for staggered three-year terms. Commissioners are appointed by the Board of Selectmen to devote their efforts to the sound development, conservation, supervision and regulation of the town's natural resources. Our commissioners represent a wide range of strengths and skills that enhance the commission's mission. Meet three of the members:



Jim Coyle is an environmental engineer with over 45 years of experience in environmental management. He has worked for the New York City EPA where he was the Director of the Office of Environmental Impact and several engineering consulting firms directing environmental programs and studies for both government agencies and private industrial companies. He is a former Associate Professor at the Pratt Institute Graduate School of Architecture and Planning where he taught a course in environmental impact assessment. Jim has lived in Ridgefield since 1992. He was a member of the Ridgefield Planning and Zoning Commission for several terms. He is currently the Chairman of the Commission where he has been a member since 2016. He has a BS in Chemical Engineering from Columbia University, an MS in Applied Mathematics from NYU, and an MA in Urban Studies from Hunter College.



Kitsey Snow has lived in Ridgefield since 1988. She has been involved with the Commission since 2006. Other related affiliations include the Norwalk River Watershed Association and the Ridgefield Garden Club. She has also been involved with the Norwalk River Valley Trail, the Pollinator Pathway, youth sports and the PTA. After graduating from Wheaton College, she worked for First Manhattan Investment Co. and Bankers Trust. She has also worked for The Elements Art Gallery in Greenwich. Kitsey is certified by NOFA (the Northeast Organic Farming Association), as a Master Gardener from University of Connecticut and as a Pesticide Applicator.



Daniel C. Levine is the founder and Artistic Director of ACT of CT, one of the northeast's most acclaimed regional theaters located in Ridgefield, CT. Daniel also serves as an artistic advisor for The Ridgefield Playhouse. Daniel graduated magna cum laude from Brandeis University as a pre-medical student (Biology major, Theater Arts minor). Upon graduating, Daniel attended Tufts University School of Dental Medicine. After his second year at Tufts, Daniel was cast in his first Broadway show - significantly altering his career path. Since then, Daniel has appeared in many Broadway shows and National Tours including Les Miserables, The Rocky Horror Show, Chicago, Mamma Mia, Tommy, Little Shop of Horrors, and Jesus Christ Superstar (receiving a Tony Nomination for Best Revival). Daniel is the CEO of Big Apple Tutoring, LLC – one of Manhattans largest educational tutoring agencies, which he founded in 1995. He was named one of TownVibe's "Ridgefield 25", honoring 25 leaders of the community who help make Ridgefield a dynamic place to live and work. Daniel has been a resident of Ridgefield since 2010, is an Executive board member of Compassionate Ridgefield, and joined the Conservation Commission in 2016.