

Ridgefield CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER



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



DID YOU KNOW?

Although Wood Ducks are abundant nowadays, they nearly went extinct in the early 1900's.

Over the last several decades, thousands of Wood Duck nesting boxes have been erected to benefit this species. The Connecticut Waterfowl Association (CWA) has played a large part of this effort. These boxes are used by the DEEP's Wildlife Division and others.



WOOD DUCK NESTING BOX AT TURTLE POND

Wood Ducks were once close to extinction until efforts that included nesting boxes helped to save this species. Since they are unable to make their own nesting holes, Wood Ducks use these boxes for nesting sites.

Wood Ducks in Bennett's Pond



Educational Signs

Thanks to a grant from our friends at the Ridgefield Thrift Shop, The Conservation Commission installed a series of new educational signs at McKeon Farm that will guide you around the property with feature highlights. Thank you, Ridgefield Thrift Shop! Please drop us a note and let us know how you like our new signage! We love hearing from you! conservation@ridgefieldct.org



Bird Count Walk

This winter, several Conservation Commission members, along with friends of the Commission, joined Woodcock Nature Center for a fantastic Christmas Bird Count Walk. It was a fun-filled day with lots of interesting and exciting sightings!

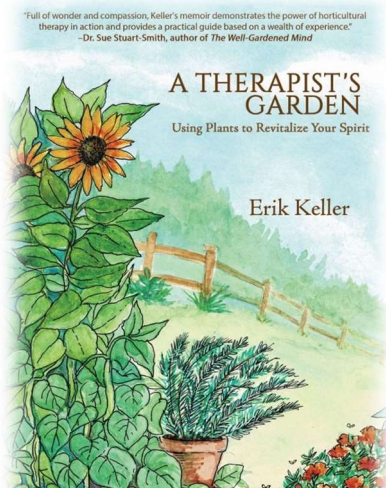


What A Sighting!



We had an awesome Coyote sighting at Bennett's Pond last month! Ridgefield's wildlife is pretty spectacular.

“A Therapist’s Garden”



Check out Conservation Commissioner Erik Keller's new book, *A Therapist's Garden*. It reviews Erik's 20 years of experience as a horticultural therapist working with a wide variety of clients including seniors, dementia patients, cancer survivors and at-risk students. Its nature-based tales of compassion and inspiration show readers the healing power of nature and working with plants. It can be ordered online or from any local bookstore.

Sonication

What is Buzz Pollination or as pollination ecologists call it, sonication? Buzz pollination is the process where a bee attaches itself to a flower and rapidly vibrates its flight muscles. This rapid movement causes the entire flower to vibrate and loosens the pollen so as to flow out the openings in the anthers. Bumble bees use buzz pollination when pollinating tomato flowers.

Other flowering plants that require buzz pollination include cranberries and blueberries, eggplants, and other plant species in the family Solanaceae.



Rid Litter Days

Saturday, April 23 and Sunday, April 24

**If everyone helped for 15 minutes, what a difference it would make.
Take Pride – Town Wide!**

Pick Up Supplies at:

Ridgefield Bicycle Company, 88 Danbury Road
Ridgefield Rec Center, 95 Danbury Road
Town Hall Information Office, 400 Main Street
(Supplies; safety vests, trash bags, clear bags for recycling cans & plastic bottles)



Drop off points for filled refuse bags are:

Branchville Elementary School, 40 Florida Road
East Ridge Middle School, 10 East Ridge
Farmingville Elementary, 324 Farmingville Road
Ridgebury Elementary, 112 Bennetts Farm Road
Ridgefield High School, 700 North Salem Road

For more information or questions, contact Barb Hartman
Call/Text: 203-858-6792 or Email: barbara-hartman@sbcglobal.net

Co-sponsored by the Caudatowa Garden Club and Town of Ridgefield
With support from RACE, Ridgefield Bicycle Co, Ridgefield Conservation Commission, Ridgefield Garden Club,
Ridgefield Hardware Store, & Woodcock Nature Center
Download flyer from Community Events Calendar at www.ridgefieldct.org/community/events

Tick-Borne Disease Prevention

OUTDOOR FUN STARTS WITH THE BLAST PREVENTION STEPS

Whether you're playing in the yard or heading out for a hike, it's important to take steps to avoid tick-borne diseases:

- Bathe or shower soon after outdoor activity
- Look for ticks and remove quickly and properly
- Apply recommended repellents to skin and clothing
- Remove Barberry from your property
- Treat pets with veterinarian recommended products

The blacklegged or "deer tick" (*Ixodes scapularis*) is responsible for spreading Lyme disease, anaplasmosis, and babesiosis in Connecticut. This tick is most often found at yard edge, under protective invasive plants such as barberry, in stone walls, damp leaves, ground cover, and along untended trails. While most cases occur in warm weather months, ticks may be encountered year-round. Avoiding tick habitat, dressing appropriately, and following the BLAST steps will help keep your outdoor adventures tick free. You'll find additional BLAST tick-borne disease prevention information, symptoms, and links to important research on the Ridgefield Health Department website at: Blastlyme.org





Vernal Pools

Saturday, March 26th marked the beginning of observing and gathering data on Ridgefield's vernal pools for the Natural Resources Inventory. Participants learned how to look for and identify many of the creatures that utilize these very important ephemeral natural features.

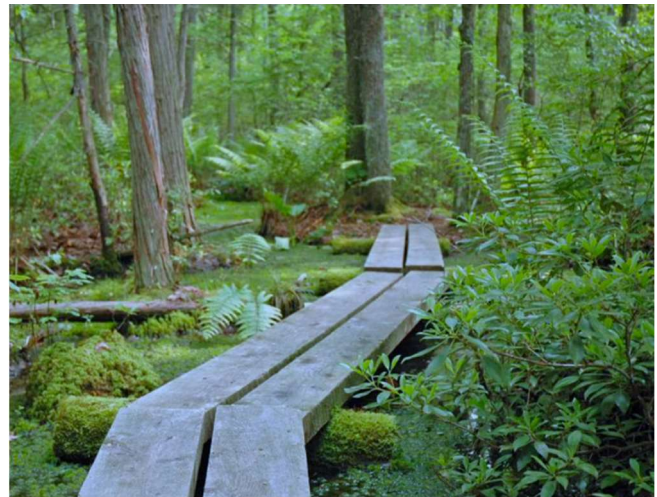
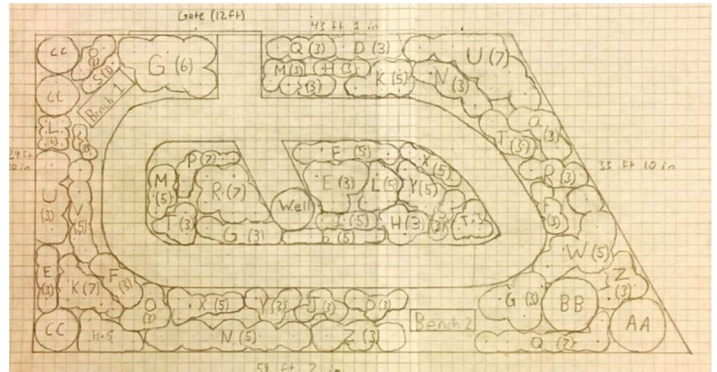
The “Super-Strange” American Woodcock

A dozen lucky Ridgefielders attended an RCC field trip to McKeon Farm on March 15 to watch and hear the incredible courtship display of the super-strange American Woodcock. The male woodcock’s evening display flights are one of the magical natural sights of springtime! He gives buzzy peent calls from a display area on the ground, then flies upward in a wide spiral. As he gets higher, his wings start to twitter. At the apex of the flight the twittering becomes intermittent, and the bird starts to descend. He zigzags down, a strange chirping sound produced as air passes through special feathers. The wet conditions at the field edges of McKeon are ideal for Woodcocks.



Eagle Scout Projects

The Eagle Scouts are invaluable to The Conservation Commission and we appreciate all of their hard work! This month, Scouts Emily Fox and Petru Zubek presented their proposals for their upcoming projects! Emily will build bog bridges at McKeon Farm in order to create an accessible and safe path for hikers to enjoy, and Petru will create a pollinator garden consisting of a variety of plants and a short pathway in a fenced off area. The walkway will trace around the edges of the fence, allowing the public to look at the flowers.



The RCC is updating the Natural Resource Inventory, which was last done in 2012. We are counting birds, bugs, animals and plants. We would love your help. Please consider joining one of our many upcoming events (register on the Woodcock Nature Center website). You can also download the iNaturalist app and use it to submit pictures of plants and animals that you take when you are in our open spaces or in your backyard. The app will help identify what you see and will also record it so it can be entered into our NRI database. We will have the final study done early next year.