



Fact Sheet 2.3

How is town open space affected by the hunt?

It is the responsibility of the Conservation Commission to protect and maintain most of the open space in Ridgefield, including spaces with and without trails. The Parks and Recreation Department oversees athletic fields, school and municipal properties and the public golf course.

Approval for hunting on open spaces begins with the DMIC meeting to decide on properties they would like to hunt. These are presented to the RCC and P&R, who approve or deny those properties, based on past experience, the property deed (if applicable), and use. The RCC and P&R make their recommendations to the BOS, for approval. The RCC also has input into the signage that indicates the hunt on each property. Private properties are also hunted, but not as part of the town-sponsored hunt.

The 2018-2019 hunt was the town's 13th consecutive year of hunting town open spaces. During that time, the number of spaces hunted per year has ranged on the order of 10-15 properties and the number of deer taken from 92 in 1998 to 336 in 2009.

During the 2018-2019 hunting season, 15 open spaces were included in the hunt. Eight of the properties were in Ridgebury, three were on the western edge of town, two were east of Route 7, and two were nearer the town center.

Table 2.3-1 identifies the open spaces used since 2008 and the harvest related to each one. Data for 2011-12 is not available. The hunting season allows bows and guns, including muzzleloaders, depending on the season. The hunting season for the 2018-19 hunt had the following dates, which are typical from year to year:

- Archery: October 15 – January 31
- Firearms: November 14-December 4
- Muzzleloader: December 5 – December 31

The approved properties are closed while being hunted, for safety, so in reviewing the list of proposed properties, the RCC tries to minimize the use of open spaces that are more heavily

used by the public and to direct the hunt to properties that have few or no trails. The desire to keep open spaces "open" must be weighed against the need to protect the understory in those areas. Of course, deer don't stay in one place, and hunting in one area doesn't mean it won't be browsed again.



The value of being able to enjoy town open spaces in all seasons must be weighed against the benefits to be gained from the hunt. It is important to note that our open spaces (including the golf course) are used extensively in the fall and winter, not just in the warmer weather. We should continue to monitor the forest conditions and conduct understory studies in order to make informed decisions regarding properties that should be hunted.

The Bottom Line

Ten to 15 town open spaces have been closed to the public each year for the controlled hunt.

Table 2.3-1

Deer Hunt Harvest by Open Space Property

| Hunt Years | 2008-09 | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2017-18 | 2018-19 | Total |
|--|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|-------|
| Hemlock Hills | 12 | 18 | 4 | | | | | | | 34 |
| Pine Mtn | 3 | 7 | | | | | | | | 10 |
| Shadow Lake | 38 | 28 | 4 | 7 | 27 | 13 | 12 | 5 | 12 | 146 |
| Spectacle | 10 | 6 | | 8 | 4 | 0 | | | | 28 |
| Levy Park | 9 | 13 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 3 | | | 54 |
| Canterbury | 8 | 14 | | | | | | | | 22 |
| Keeler | 23 | 24 | 2 | 8 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 66 |
| Golf Course | 8 | 4 | 7 | 16 | 23 | 22 | 7 | 3 | 3 | 93 |
| Perry Lane | 2 | | | | | | | | | 2 |
| Reed | | 4 | | 7 | 8 | 3 | 3 | | | 25 |
| Lynch Brook | | 7 | 1 | | | | | | | 8 |
| Powdermaker | | 6 | 4 | | | | | | | 10 |
| Laurel Lane | | | 6 | 3 | 13 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 29 |
| Old Sib | | | 6 | | | | | | | 6 |
| Limestone | | | 14 | | | | | | | 14 |
| Old Trolley | | | 14 | | | | | | | 14 |
| George Washington | | | 3 | | | | | | | 3 |
| Linden | | | 11 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 23 |
| Scoden | | | 2 | 5 | 9 | 2 | | | | 18 |
| Shadow Lake 2 | | | | 6 | 9 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 35 |
| Schlumberger | | | | 5 | | | | | | 5 |
| Ledges | | | | | 15 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 42 |
| Stonecrest | | | | | | | 1 | 6 | 0 | 7 |
| Prospect Ridge | | | | | | | 4 | | | 4 |
| Ridgebury Farm | | | | | | | 7 | 7 | 8 | 22 |
| Turtle Ridge | | | | | | | | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Sarah Bishop | | | | | | | | 12 | 7 | 19 |
| Bobby's Court | | | | | | | | 3 | 2 | 5 |
| Colonial Heights | | | | | | | | 3 | 5 | 8 |
| Number of Kills | 113 | 131 | 87 | 76 | 118 | 71 | 46 | 60 | 53 | 755 |
| Number of Properties | 9 | 11 | 14 | 11 | 11 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 13 | NA |
| Note: a blank entry means that property was not available to hunt. A zero means no kills at that site. | | | | | | | | | | |