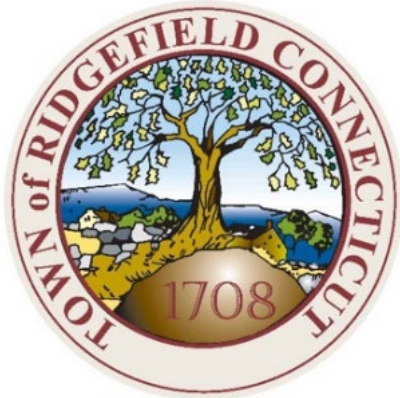


Ridgefield Conservation Commission



SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER

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



Outdoor Tip!

Tick Watch: Ticks carrying a wide variety of diseases may well be out in force this Spring given our mild Winter. Take precautions when out in the yard cleaning up or in our open spaces hiking out. Long pants and shoes sprayed with pyrethrin can help keep these critters away from hitching a ride on your body.

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

Pools of Life



With Spring comes the emergence of a wide variety of amphibians, many of whom depend upon vernal pools to breed. These wet spaces come and go in Spring and are an essential ecosystem for the health of salamanders and frogs that are potential prey of fish. Commissioner Jean Linville spotted over 100 egg masses at Sarah Bishop open space recently. The four pools she visited are literally hopping with action.

Open Space Purchase



Nearly 18 acres of farmland and woods off Old West Mountain Road has been purchased by the Town as open space. This \$1.4 million buy consists of two parcels: one directly across from the Ridgefield Academy and the other a thin sliver access road leading from Old West Mountain Road to Round Pond. Though the land is considered as open space, at this point in time it is not being managed by the Commission.

Open Space Winter Snapshots

COYOTE AT BENNETTS FARM



MCKEON FARM IN MARCH



FEBRUARY SNOW AT FLORIDA REFUGE



POND AT SPECTACLE SWAMP



Troop 116 Donates \$1000

Troop 116 presented the RCC with a \$1,000 donation in February, which is a result of the Troop's recycling program where the troop collects, sorts, and redeems recycled products around the Town. The RCC is most appreciative of this donation.



Watch for and Remove Invasives

Those lovely plants that pop up by themselves in a new place on your property may well be invasive vegetation brought to you by wind or animal. Here are five to take note of and remove:

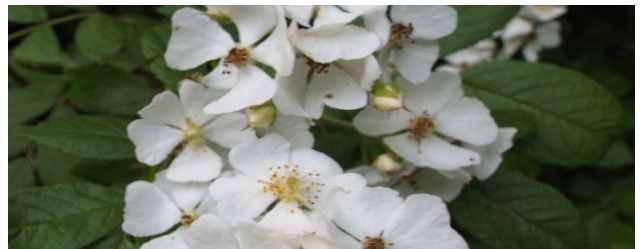
Autumn olive (*Elaeagnus umbellata*): This plant crowds out all others and negatively impacts the ecosystem. Easily identified by a silver underside on its leaf and bright red berries.



Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*): A nasty spiny shrub, two to eight foot high, that ticks like to live in. Cutting a branch reveals bright orange insides.



Multiflora rose (*Rosa multiflora*): Growing in thick patches, it produces clusters of small, white to pink blossoms with five petals.



Porcelain berry (*Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*): Though the berries are lovely and edible as a jam, this highly invasive vine can pull down trees and suffocate any plant in its way. Be afraid, be very afraid.



Winged euonymus (*Euonymus alatus*): Though a color champ in Fall with its purple fruits and scarlet red leaves, it will crowd out all other plants in its way.



Though you probably don't want it on your property, **poison ivy** is a native vine that supports birds and other wildlife.



McKeon Sign Up

Getting into McKeon Farm off Old Stagecoach Road has historically been a challenge. The clearing of invasive plants along the walls and a new sign at the parking space makes getting in and out now a relative breeze.



More Parking at Pine Mountain

Thanks to the Ridgefield Highway department, parking has been greatly enhanced on Pine Mountain Road. Prior to these improvements, there were only a few parking spaces at the end of the road near the entrances to Pine Mountain and Hemlock Hills causing cars to park on the street, creating safety and egress issues. That problem has now been solved.



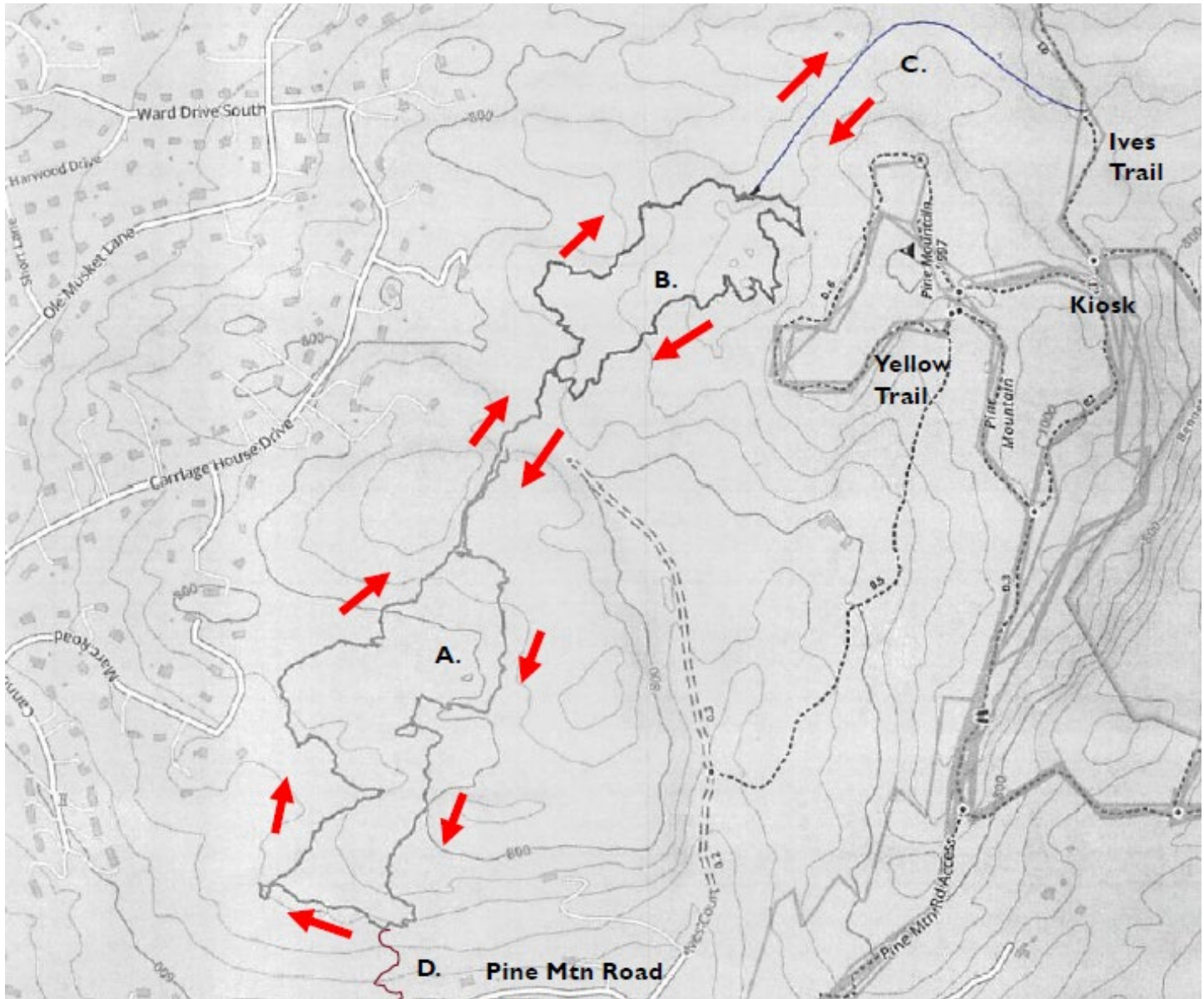
Getting Batty

A bat house has been installed at McKeon Farm. Bats are an essential part of our ecosystem as each bat can eat nearly 5,000 insects an evening. Many species are endangered because of a variety of environmental threats and habitat loss.



Trails at Pine Mountain

This spring the Commission and the New England Mountain Bike Association—Fairfield Chapter will start the construction of nearly 4 miles of new trails on Pine Mountain and the adjoining property that was purchased last year from the Boy Scouts of America. The Commission has hiked the proposed trail a number of times to view the trail layout ensuring that it does not impinge on sensitive ecological areas and is done in a fashion to minimize harm to the space. It is expected that the trail will be finished by the end of this year.



Watch out for Mud

Though the Commission wants you to avail yourself of our local trails, please refrain from doing so after heavy soaking rains this Spring (Mud season). Traversing with bikes or feet in wet weather destroys the structure of the soil facilitating trail erosion.

Woodcock Walk

This March, Commissioner Allan Welby took a group of Ridgefielders woodcock watching at McKeon Farm. In an avian version of a perp walk, right on cue, at 10 minutes past sunset, a bunch of males flew in, grabbing their favored display spots. Soon all started preening and dancing, then flying up in spectacular fashion within a few feet of participants.



Tree Huggers Unite

As part of the once-a-decade Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) the RCC is currently conducting, a few commissioners got to take a walk on the wild side with Western CT Service Forester David Beers. They were examining the health and diversity of a number of forests that are part of Ridgefield's open space. Their findings and others concerning the ecological health of Ridgefield will be published later this year in an NRI document.



SPRING GET TOGETHERS:



RCC will be participating in the **Ridgefield Action Committee for the Environment's, (RACE), Earth Day Expo at the Ridgefield Library on April 23 from 2 to 4pm.** We will be joined by other local environmental champions including, Woodcock Nature Center, The Hickories, the Norwalk River Watershed Association, Pollinator Pathway, Wilton Go Green and Curbside Compost. Expo topics will range from electric vehicle charging, solar panels, heat pump technology, to composting, recycling, planting butterfly gardens, invasive plants, bird conservation, and a leaf blower showdown. There will be a fun eco scavenger hunt for the kids as well!

Celebrate Earth Day, April 22, 9:30-11:00 am at Aldrich Park by viewing Spring ephemerals. These woodland wildflowers take advantage of the full sun before the trees develop leaves and shade the forest floor. Some ephemerals and other early bloomers we may see include Trillium, Dutchman's Breeches, Trout Lily, Spring Beauty, Bloodroot and more!