

Ridgefield CONSERVATION COMMISSION

SUMMER 2022 NEWSLETTER



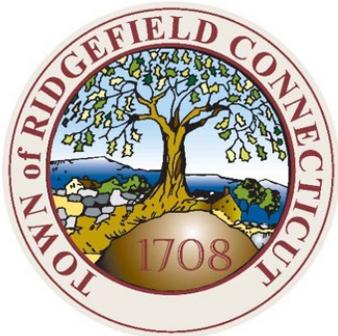
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Ridgefield's Conservation Commission serves the town by devoting its efforts to the sound development, conservation, supervision and regulation of the town's natural resources.



BEAVER DAMS AT BENNETT'S POND

Busy as a beaver is the watchword at Bennett's Pond as crafty colonies of these aquatic mammals have built not one but two dams drastically changing the water flow and coverage of the pond. Though some may think this a nuisance and destructive, such structures help the environment by creating new habitats (both plant and animal) as well as control flooding and improve water quality.



DID YOU KNOW...

...that native plants support many more pollinators than imported ones? When you look to purchase plants, buy ones native to New England.

Aldrich Park bog bridge repair

Hat's off to RCC commissioners Matt Sharp and Jim Liptack who repaired the Aldrich Park bog bridge in three spots, two that were damaged by fallen trees. With over 50 miles of trails to manage, the RCC has its hands full keeping all trails safe and in repair. If you see any fallen trees on trails or unsafe conditions, please contact the RCC so we can inspect and remedy the situation as quickly as possible.



No-mow May

There was a great excuse mid-Spring to leave the lawn mower in the shed: No-mow May. This initiative, started in the UK and now spreading around the world, has the goal of allowing grass to grow unmown for a month to create habitat and increased foraging opportunities for early-season pollinators. Commissioner Jim Liptack wasted no time letting his lawn go for the benefit of pollinators. Ajuga was popping with flowers by mid-May. Dandelions had gone to seed and the daisies were starting to arrive.



Coming Up Clover

The area around the water well at McKeon Farm has always been a bit of an eyesore. The fence separating it from potential livestock contamination historically has been a garden of mugwort and other invasive weeds. The RCC smothered it with tarps in 2021 and has planted red and white clover over the space recently in an attempt to create an easy-to-maintain pollinator area. Wish our experiment luck!



Lovely Lady Slippers

The keen eye of Commissioner Matt Sharp captures this perfect image of the native lady slipper at Hemlock Hills. This member of the orchid family is decreasing in population in our forests because of loss of habitat, deer predation and human collection. If you have the fortune to spot one of these beauties, take only pictures as this plant is extremely delicate and will not transplant well.



Cleaning Up

Commissioner Peter Nichols and resident Ben Shaw tackle the tough duty of clearing invasive plants and poison ivy from the Levy Park monument just off Barrack Hill Road. These are some pictures from Levy Park just off Barrack Hill Rd. Levy Park was donated to the Town 55 years ago as both a recreational park and wildlife refuge. The field that fronts the wooded area is filled with milkweed and lights up with fireflies on warm summer evenings in a kaleidoscopic display.



McKeon Farm fence replacement

Maintenance at properties that the RCC is responsible for is a never ending (albeit expensive and time consuming) task. But this year it was able to tackle the long put off chore of replacing the decaying fencing around McKeon Farm on Lauzun Lane, Ridgebury Road and Old Stagecoach Road. Close to 2000 feet of fencing will be installed by mid-Summer. Rather than replace all the fencing, over half of the rails, which are still in excellent condition, were reused keeping down costs and wastes.



The martins have returned

The space age abode for purple martins installed last year at McKeon Farm has been repopulated with many adult and baby birds. Our colony is getting bigger! A high of 18 purple martins have been seen at the tower, with at least 12 occupying the tower so far this season. Six two-plus-year-old birds (all purple) and six one-year-old birds (white underside). Activity in year two of the gourd tower is better than expected. As of July 1 there are seven occupied nests containing 31 eggs. Last year we had seven birds (which fledged seven youngsters).



Meet the commissioners:

The Ridgefield Conservation Commission consists of 11 volunteer Ridgefield residents (nine commissioners 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 hold a wide range of strengths and skills that enhance the Commission's mission. Meet three of the members:

Jack Kace was Vice President of Environmental and Safety Affairs for Hoffmann La Roche, Inc. and led its sustainability efforts. His responsibilities also included energy conservation, industrial hygiene, radiation safety and hazmat transport. He was a member and/or chairman of several national organizations of the most environmentally proactive U.S. corporations. Prior to joining Roche, he was an environmental engineer for two other large companies. Jack has lived in Ridgefield since 2008 and joined the Commission in 2013. He currently serves as the Vice Chairman and Assistant Treasurer.

Erik Keller is a horticulturist and therapist at Ann's Place, a not-for-profit facility that helps those with cancer. Prior to this, he ran a management consulting business, Wapiti LLC, where he advised software companies and investors. He has lectured at major corporations around the world and as an adjunct at Yale University. Erik has lived in Ridgefield since 1991 and joined the Commission in 2019. He also has received certification from the University of Connecticut as a Master Gardener and from The New York Botanical Garden in Horticultural Therapy.

Allan Welby has been a Ridgefield resident since 2006 and is a systems administrator for a Greenwich, CT, trading firm. He joined the Commission in 2019 and was president of the Chicago Ornithological Society and editor of their monthly magazine, *The Undertail Covert*. Allan is an avid (he would say "obsessed") birder. He leads bird watching trips and workshops for a number of Connecticut and New York nature organizations, and particularly enjoys introducing newcomers to the wonders of the bird world.

