

REUSABLE BAG INITIATIVE

This past year the Board of Selectmen has promoted a Reusable Bag Initiative, and we are fortunate to have Wilton Go Green’s support in implementing the program. Over twelve thousand reusable bags were given away for free over a two month period; there was also a car window sticker give away, and an aggressive public relations program with a school contest to generate the art to put on the reusable bags. The Board of Selectmen seriously considered passing an ordinance concerning the use of reusable bags, but we decided to see if an education program could work to achieve the same goal. Go Green has stated a goal of fifty percent use of reusable bags; I personally support that goal. Go Green conducted an audit at several stores to compare the percentage of people using reusable bags before, and two months after the program began. The rate of reusable bag use before the program began was eight to ten percent; the rate two months later was over twenty percent. I will update you on how the trend continues—we hope! There will be another audit in November from Go Green. We have seen an uptick, but we are far from our goal.

Why bother? Why does it really matter on a Town level? Towns are the key to promoting Green initiatives. The fact is, corporate lobbies are so strong, that passing any meaningful legislation on a State level is extremely difficult. There are one million plastic shopping bags used per minute worldwide. Less than one percent are recycled in the end. The Connecticut State legislature has attempted to pass legislation on this matter, and has repeatedly failed. We need to take matters into our own hands.

Like the saying goes, think globally, act locally.

- Ted Hoffstatter

Please visit www.wiltonct.org regularly to access trail maps, Wilton’s zoning and wetland regulations, news about community events and more.



RESIDENTIAL CUSTOMER
WILTON, CT 06897

BULK RATE
U.S. Postage
PAID
Wilton, CT
Permit No. 11



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Wilton Conservation Commission Newsletter



THE DISAPPEARANCE OF BATS IN THE NORTHEAST

White nose syndrome (WNS) has devastated bat populations across the eastern United States during the past five years, killing more than a million bats since it was first discovered in a New York cave in February 2006. Nine bat species in 19 states and 2 Canadian provinces have now been documented with either WNS or the fungus, *Geomyces destructans*, that is the likely cause of this devastating disease.

Little brown bats are sustaining the largest number of deaths. Currently five other hibernating bat species are affected by the fungus: big brown bat, northern myotis, tri-colored bat, eastern small-footed myotis and the federally endangered Indiana bat. Ultimately, all bats across North America are at imminent risk. Recently WNS fungus has been found and identified in France; however, it is yet unsure if the fungus came from Europe or has been transmitted from the U.S.

Named for a cold-loving white fungus typically found on the ears, wings or nose of infected bats, WNS causes bats to awaken more often during hibernation and to use up their stored fat reserves that are needed to get them through the winter. Infected bats often emerge too soon from hibernation and are often seen flying around in midwinter. These bats usually freeze or starve to death.

As the primary predators of night-flying insects, bats rank among humanity’s most valuable allies. A single little brown bat can catch hundreds of mosquito-sized insects an hour, and a typical colony of big brown bats can protect local farmers from the costly attacks of 18 million root-worms each summer. Any substantial decline in the population of native bats could have profound economic, ecological and regulatory consequences.

The bat conservation community is deeply concerned and involved in identifying the possible cause of the disease. An extensive network of state and federal agencies is working to investigate the source, spread and cause of bat deaths associated with WNS and to develop management strategies to minimize the impacts of WNS. Bat to bat transmission of WNS has been documented and a great amount of research is focusing on the mode of transmission and the cause of the fungus. Currently there is no cure for WNS. There is no information indicating that people have been affected after exposure to the white fungus.

Funds are being dedicated to support researching the fungus, providing roosting alternatives, and enhancing communication among researchers, agencies, environmental organizations, and the general public. The US Fish and Wildlife service has produced a draft framework for managing WNS that emphasizes the need for a basic understanding of WNS pathogenesis and host/disease ecology. This information is vital for researchers to develop a control mechanism that may stop further devastation from WNS.

The good news is that not all bats are being affected by WNS. Migrating bats (red, hoary, silver, etc.) have not been found with the fungus. Some colonies of big-eared bats living in the same caves as affected little brown bats have not gotten the fungus. This may be because they hibernate in a slightly warmer part of the cave. Some European bats have been found with the fungus but do not seem to be harmed.

Wildlife biologists and land managers are alarmed by what many are saying is the most serious threat facing bat populations in human history. Some say, North American bats may face regional, or even complete, extinction.

- Kristen Begor

NEONICOTINOID PESTICIDES AND BEE DEATHS

Honeybee populations began a mysterious decline worldwide beginning in 2006. The name given to this decline, Colony Collapse Disorder, has been responsible for a die off each winter of one-third of the U.S. bee population. This is double the normal rate and has been attributed to a combination of interacting factors including pathogens and sub-lethal pesticide exposure. The key symptoms of CCD include an inexplicable disappearance of the hive’s worker bees, the presence of the queen bee and an absence of any invading bees and the presence of food stores and capped brood.

Pesticides have been linked to the death and widespread disappearance of honeybees in the United States and there has now been a loss of more than one third of the commercial honeybees. A study by the USDA links the use of neonicotinoid pesticides to bee deaths and possibly Colony Collapse Disorder (CCD). Neonicotinoids have been used as a replacement for DDT. Two chemicals in the neonicotinoid family, clothianidin and imidacloprid accounted for over a billion dollars in sales for Bayer in 2009 and have become one of the most widely used insecticides in the U.S.

These chemicals are coated onto seeds and the pesticide becomes systemic in plants and is taken up by the vascular system and expressed through pollen and nectar from which bees then forage and drink. Neonicotinoids kill sucking and chewing insects by disrupting their nervous systems.

Bees are an essential part of our food chain; they pollinate plants that keep people fed. Read labels and never use a neonicotinoid pesticide on a blooming crop or on blooming weeds if honeybees are present.

-Kim Young



DRUG TAKE-BACK BOX INSTALLED AT WILTON POLICE STATION

Many consumers keep drugs in their possession because they do not want the drugs to go to waste or do not know how to dispose of them properly. Residents are often instructed to flush unwanted pharmaceuticals down toilets or dispose of them in the trash. There is concern that these practices contribute to the contamination of surface waters and ground waters. The presence of pharmaceuticals has been linked to abnormalities and impaired reproductive performance in some aquatic species. In addition, unwanted medications disposed of in the trash have the potential to be stolen, used, or accidentally ingested if they are not rendered unusable. Having these items around the home also presents a danger to children, animals, and guests of accidental ingestion.

As a means of addressing this vital public safety and on-going public health issue, a permanent lock box has been installed in the foyer of the Wilton Police Station for deposition of expired prescription drugs on a year-round basis. Please see the table below for acceptable items.

- Kristen Begor

ITEMS ACCEPTED*

- Prescription medications (including controlled substances like Vicodin, Codeine, etc)
- Street drugs (including cocaine, methamphetamines, marijuana, etc)
- Vitamins and supplements
- Medicated ointments, lotions, creams
- All over-the-counter medications
- Medication samples
- Pet Medications

HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNWANTED MEDICINES

1. Gather expired, left-over medications and supplements.
2. Pour all pills into a sealable plastic bag. Keep ointments and liquids in their original containers.
3. Bring unwanted medications to a medicine take-back site.

**This is a list of generally accepted items, however each take-back site may differ.*

HOW TO DISPOSE OF UNACCEPTABLE ITEMS

For hazardous substances, needles/sharps please consult your local Household Hazardous Waste Center.

WILTON IS RECYCLING—CAN WE DO MORE?

The amount of waste being recycled in Wilton is increasing, but there continues to be more room for improvement. For instance, between the fiscal years 2008/9 and 2010/11, the percentage of waste handled at the Town of Wilton Transfer Station has grown by 21%.

What can we all do to recycle even a greater portion of our waste?

1. Review what is recyclable
2. Review what is NOT recyclable

Items approved for recycling can be taken to the Town’s Transfer Station or picked up at your home by your private hauler.

If using a private hauler, please be sure you have a mutual understanding of expectations such as the specific manner in which he expects the recyclable material to be prepared for pick up (e.g. use of blue bin, tying of newspapers, etc.)

A continued focus by all of is required to continue this trend toward more recycling and less waste going into landfills. While the non-recyclable trash goes to the clean energy plant in Bridgeport for burning, 10% of the trash still remains as ash after the burn process, which in turn then goes into a landfill.

To keep up to date on what **items can be recycled**, refer to the listing at www.wiltonct.org/departments/publicworks/transferstation

Also of interest might be a list of items that **cannot** be accepted for recycling:

- Garbage
- Plastic Bags
- Hard Covered Books
- Bottle caps
- Plastic utensils
- Food waste
- Food tainted items (used paper plates, boxes, napkins)
- Polystyrene or Styrofoam
- Motor oil bottles
- Hazardous chemical containers
- Plastic toys or sporting goods
- CDs or DVDs
- Foam egg cartons
- Ice cream cartons
- Light bulbs
- Hangers
- Yard waste/Garden tools
- Pots and Pans
- Black plastic containers
- Wax or plastic-coated cardboard
- Plant containers
- Medicines
- Tyvek or similar envelopes

If you have any questions or concerns concerning recycling in Wilton, please call the Wilton Public Works Department at 203-563-0152.

- Dave Hapke

REMINDER!

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day

Saturday, October 29, 2011 9:00AM – 3:00PM
Miller-Driscoll School, Wolfpit Road.

**We do not accept water based paint (these can be dried and thrown in your regular garbage) or electronics.*

F or more information, please contact Environmental Affairs at 203-563-0180

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