

- Below are five easy things you can do to prevent tick bites:
- Protect yourself! Use bug spray on your skin and clothing. If you are going to be in an area with lots of ticks use DEET on your skin and apply permethrin to your clothing for extra protection.
 - Wear light colored clothing. It is easier to spot a dark colored tick on light colored clothing.
 - Tuck it in! Tuck your pants into your socks and your shirt into your pants to create less exposed skin area for ticks to bite.
 - Stay away from tall grass and brush. Ticks like to hang out in wooded vegetative areas waiting for potential hosts to pass by. If your legs graze the brush ticks can transfer to your skin or clothing.
 - Check yourself! Conduct tick checks on yourself and on pets every time you go outside and remove any ticks you find right away.

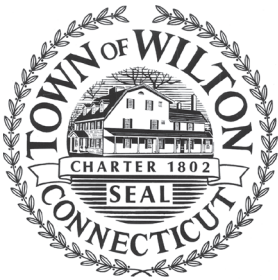


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Wilton
Conservation
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Newsletter



COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS KEEP WILTON GREEN

Did you know that it takes a village to keep a village green? The Wilton Conservation Commission manages many town-owned open space areas and serves as advisors to the Board of Selectmen on various environmental issues. While the commission serves as a base for many environmental projects, it is often the work of non-profit environmental partners that help complete successful conservation projects. Our non-profit environmental partners focus on land and water protection, plant biodiversity, and environmental education in Wilton.

Preserving open space and the rural character of Wilton’s past is important to our community. The Town’s Plan of Conservation and Development targets certain parcels of land for long-term protection because they have a significant ecological value. The commission works with the Wilton Land Conservation Trust and the Aspetuck Land Trust in their mission to acquire ecologically sensitive parcels of land for the purpose of long-term protection. The land trusts work to protect open space through property acquisitions (donations or buying land), and through obtaining conservation easements or restrictions on private property essentially purchasing the development rights to the property, thereby protecting it in perpetuity.

Do you value our clean water? The Norwalk River is inarguably one of Wilton’s most valuable natural resources. Its sparkling waters ultimately flow into Norwalk Harbor; protecting this watercourse is critical to preserving and enhancing the health of Long Island Sound. The river water quality is closely monitored by Harbor Watch and the Norwalk River Watershed Initiative. When those groups identify areas of potential pollution, the Norwalk River Watershed Association and Trout Unlimited implement river enhancement projects to prevent pollutants from entering the river.

Many of the beautiful planting beds found in our public spaces are the result of the dedication of the Wilton Garden Club. This group not only serves to beautify the town but they are committed to the conservation and preservation of trees and plants in our landscape. The Wilton Garden Club is working to increase the biodiversity of plant species in town through educating home owners about the benefits of gardening with native plants.

Exploring Woodcock Nature Center is a great way for children to learn about our natural world. The nature center hosts school programs, summer camps, and other events throughout the year to provide hands-on learning for children and adults alike. Wilton Go Green furthers the mission of environmental education through hosting the Wilton Go Green Festival each spring. The one day event features exhibitors showcasing innovative ways to improve our homes and town. From promoting residential solar energy to “green business designation” Wilton Go Green is at the forefront of bringing new ideas and initiatives to town.

Over the past year the Conservation Commission has partnered with all of these groups in organizing guided park walks, hosting lectures at the Wilton Library, conducting riverbank restoration projects and applying for grants for projects that would improve the ecology of the town. The strong partnerships between these non-profit organizations and the Wilton Conservation Commission have proven to be the key to success of many conservation projects. If you appreciate the ongoing environmental efforts of these groups please consider supporting them in the future. Together we can keep Wilton green.

— Mike Conklin
Director of Environmental Affairs

KENT POND RESTORATION EFFORTS UNDERWAY

You have probably driven past the intersection of Ridgefield and Linden Tree Road many times. Have you even taken a moment to discover what lies beyond the meadow? Nestled into a quiet neighborhood along Linden Tree Road is Kent Pond, a popular spot for ice skaters and nature lovers.

The 14-acre pond is a shallow water body that has been experiencing an increase in invasive aquatic plant growth in recent years. Because the invasive species have no natural predators, it is easy for them to grow faster than natives. They have a high tolerance to low light and cold conditions allowing them to reach the top of the water column early in the growing season, in many instances this happens before native populations have had the chance to establish. This unfair advantage allows for the invasive species to outcompete natives and degrades the ecology of the water body.

Several pond enthusiasts met with the First Selectman to voice their concerns. The First Selectman encouraged them to form a neighborhood group to build support for active management of the pond. After a few neighborhood meetings this past fall, the pond enthusiasts formed Friends of Kent Pond. They are working with Wilton's Department of Environmental Affairs and the Conservation Commission to understand the factors that have caused the pond's degradation to learn what can be done to restore the water quality.

After the successful reduction of lily pads in Horseshoe Pond, The Pond and Lake Connection was contacted to assess the condition of Kent Pond and give their opinion on management strategies. The Lake and Pond Connection found eight species of aquatic plants, three of which are invasive. They suggested the use of herbicides similar to what was done on Horseshoe Pond, dredging the Pond to make it deeper and limit the area where aquatic plants would grow, and biological control through the introduction of sterile fish. These fish, known as grass carp, strictly eat aquatic plants and can control the invasive plant growth over time.

With this new information the Department of Environmental Affairs conducted a study on the watershed of Kent Pond. The study identifies the factors that may be contributing to excessive aquatic plant growth in an effort determine the most appropriate treatment method. The Kent Pond watershed begins at Carriage Road around a small pond known as Henderson's Pond and flows south into Kent Pond. The water from Kent Pond flows down the Huckleberry Hills Brook into Rock Lake, a public drinking water supply managed by the South Norwalk Electric and Water (SNEW). Following a meeting with SNEW, the Town eliminated the option of using herbicides in the pond. This decision was made with the interest of protecting the public drinking water supply. SNEW was able to share several years of pond water testing data with the Town. This information will serve as a water chemistry baseline allowing the Town to measure the results of future pond management efforts against the historical data.

After much consideration the Conservation Commission has decided a combination of biological and manual control will be used to manage the invasive plants in the pond. The state permitting process to obtain the grass carp has begun and we anticipate releasing the fish this summer. The fish will be 10-12 inches in length when they are stocked and will grow to be 24-36 inches at maturity. Grass carp are productive eaters for 5 to 6 years before they slow down and restocking is necessary. The only drawback to the biological control is the results are not immediate; we will not see good control of the plants for 1 to 2 years. To mitigate this we are planning to use benthic blankets which can be placed on the bottom of the pond for a month to successfully kill off vegetation. These blankets can be moved to various locations around the pond to control plants in smaller areas.

The Friends of Kent Pond is working to fund the restoration effort through donations and the work is anticipated to begin this spring. To make a tax-deductible donation, please send a check made payable to "Town of Wilton" with "Friends of Kent Pond" in the memo to Department of Environmental Affairs, Wilton Town Hall Annex, 238 Danbury Road, Wilton, CT. 06897.

— Jennifer Fanzutti, Environmental Analyst

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR TOWNWIDE CLEANUP DAY – SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2017

We have all seen litter on the side of the road. Litter detracts from the natural beauty of the landscape, it is harmful to animals, and it is costly to remove. You may be wondering "how can I make a difference?"

Set an example for your family, friends, and neighbors by cleaning up litter on your street and encourage others to join you. Remind them that even small pieces of trash like cigarette butts, which make up 50% of littered material by object, are still an environmental degradation.

Get others involved! Once people see how much litter is scattered throughout town they will be less likely to contribute to it. Come celebrate Earth Day with the Wilton Conservation Commission on April 22, 2017 and take part in our Townwide Clean Up Event!

A year's worth of litter has accumulated along our roads and in our public spaces and now is the perfect time to help clean up our town. Volunteers will meet at 9am on the Wilton Town Green to pick up garbage bags and work gloves before heading off to various assigned locations throughout town to pick up litter. The Conservation Commission will have a dumpster at the Town Green until 12pm to receive the collected debris.

This is a great opportunity for citizens to help clean up our town and make a positive impact in our community on Earth Day. Pinocchio's Pizza will be supporting cleanup day by providing a free pizza slice voucher to each participant. Additionally, we will also have some exciting prizes! We hope to see you there rain or shine!

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION



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CC Sarah McDevitt