

Bradley Park is one of the Conservation Commission's most active and accessible parks. The 83 acre property is nestled high on a ridge between Wilton Center and Belden Hill Road. The Town acquired the land in the late 1960's and originally planned to construct a golf course, ski slope and ice skating pond on the site. Those grand projects were never implemented and today we are left with a wonderfully preserved open space on the edge of Wilton Center.

Visitors can access the walking trails from the main park entrance at the end of Oak Ledge Lane or one of the other entrances on Old Farm Road, Windy Ridge Place, and Graenest Ridge Road. Each of the entrance trails leads to the main loop trail (orange trail) which will guide visitors through the park and allow them to return to where they started the hike. The trails are well defined and fairly easy to traverse for visitors of all age groups. They are well maintained mostly through the help of volunteers who feel a strong connection with the property.

If you visit Bradley Park you will be walking through a mixed-hardwood deciduous forest consisting mainly of maple, beech and oak trees. The trails wind around several spectacular rock outcrop areas, around a red maple swamp and over a small stream. These areas provide different habitats which are home to a wide array of native plant and animal species. It also makes an easy hour long walk in Bradley Park a unique experience. More information about Bradley Park including a trail map can be found at www.wiltonct.org/conservation.

- *Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst*



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Wilton Conservation Commission Newsletter



ALICE LEVIN — AHEAD OF HER TIME



Many good things can be said about the legacy of Wiltonian Alice Levin who passed away in May at the age of 92, but as a protector of the open fields, untouched forests and pristine streams of our town, she was a visionary.

Alice first came to Wilton in 1929 on visits to her grandmother who resided in an old tavern built in 1807 which served travelers along Ridgefield Road as they journeyed between Norwalk and North Salem. Even though Alice still declared herself a Manhattanite after she moved to Wilton following World War II, somewhere in her young, city-dwelling imagination she developed a respect for nature and a deep connection to the land.

Fifty years ago Alice and her husband Peter led a group of landowners in an attempt work together with the developers and the Wilton Planning & Zoning Commission to balance a proposed residential subdivision with the preservation of the land along the Silver Spring Brook from the Wilton/Ridgefield town line to Ruscoe Road. What today, in 2015, we know as low-impact development was then just an unnecessary inconvenience. From the old letters exchanged between the neighbors, mention

of the living along the Silver Spring Brook from the Wilton/Ridgefield town line to Ruscoe Road

Today the ecological processes on which we rely for our clean air, abundant clean water and biodiversity are balanced together with our need for economic development in the land use science known as Low-Impact Development.

Much like the ecological processes on which we rely for clean air, abundant water, and biodiversity, our work transcends political and organizational boundaries.

We are fortunate to have protected open space and remaining undeveloped land. However, the pattern of our conserved land is one of unconnected "islands", still pristine and bio-diverse, but with weakening defenses to pollution, habitat destruction and further isolation.

What is our challenge?

Fragmentation is dysfunctional. Species are unable to migrate, biodiversity dwindles, water sources are cut off, pollutants encircle as development chips away at the edges, or even more destructively, cuts the spaces into ever smaller bits.

What do we do next?

We build connectivity. We link together our open spaces for the free flow of wildlife, water and recreation. We collaborate to ensure that corridors of movement are no longer bound by town borders and state lines. We plan strategically to balance the environment with commercial and residential development. Most importantly, we connect—not just our towns, wetlands, forests, and trails but our people and, ultimately, our generations.

- *Donna Merrill*

OUR GREAT OUTDOORS NEEDS YOU!

We are a town of active citizen volunteers, from our boards and commissions to our non-profits and clubs. Taking care of our parks and open spaces is no different. While the town has excellent and engaged staff with whom we work, we have only a token budget and much of what we do comes about from our, and your, efforts. If you love our parks, trails, meadows and streams, if you care about keeping all of our open spaces well maintained and clean, and you have even a small amount of time to give, then we need you!

- The Commission has open seats and we would welcome a couple more engaged residents who care as we do about the present and future of our open spaces and our environment. Please contact us if you'd like to learn more about what we do, and please contact the RTC or DTC to pursue the nomination and appointment process, which is very straightforward. Come join us!
- Each of the commissioners has responsibility and "ownership" of one or more parks in town. This involves upkeep, light trail maintenance, promoting use and awareness, and more. In some of our parks, we also have a need for citizen stewards who care about the park and have an interest in helping to keep it a great place to visit. This may include battling invasive plants, beating a new path, trimming small branches, patching a bridge, etc. If you love being outside, are handy with a lopper or a hammer, and have some time to give, please contact us – we'd love your help!
- There is no shortage of get-your-hands-dirty projects for kids and teens! Wooden bridges, stone paths, signage and kiosks, and more. Opportunities abound for club and Eagle Scout projects!
- Every year, we run the town's Hazardous Waste Collection Day and Town-wide Cleanup Day. We need your involvement and assistance with both events: getting out the word, showing up, helping us organize and coordinate, and rallying your friends, neighbors, and community groups to come clean up. Please watch for announcements of both, and please participate!

If you love Wilton's rural charm and have even a little time to give, we need you. Please get in touch or come to one of our monthly meetings and we'll be delighted to help you get involved. Thank you in advance and we look forward to meeting you!

- Dan Berg, Chairman

LET'S BUILD A "BEE HIGHWAY" IN WILTON!

Across rooftops and balconies, an effort to build the first ever "bee highway" is taking shape in Oslo, Norway. Floral 'feeding stations' are popping up across the city to create a wildlife corridor for the tiny pollinators so important to food production and so battered by pesticides and pathogens. Urban bees, of course, face a specific challenge where concrete is plentiful and flowers are scarce, but even in the greener landscape of Wilton, we can't forget that as we reshape our backyards for our own needs, we share these spaces with other species that live there, too.

What if we decided to build a bee highway in Wilton? What if a bit of your lawn were replaced with a small circle of pollen-rich flowers? What if you told your neighbor and he pitched in to help out our little worker bee pals—or even better, the entire neighborhood made sure that a way-station of flowers occurred every few hundred yards. Our honey bee friends could eat from the little restaurants you've provided as they move from blossom to blossom pollinating our plants and trees.

Oslo may be hailed as creating the first bee highway in existence, but let's follow their example. The threat to our bees may be global but that doesn't mean we can't solve the problem locally. We're dependent on bees for much of our food but don't forget-- it's mutual. They're dependent on us, too.

- Donna Merrill



BEARS IN WILTON

Wilton's Department of Environmental Affairs has been receiving an increasing number of inquiries about black bear sightings in town. Some residents have seen a black bear in their neighborhood this summer and even more residents have seen photos or videos of black bears on social media. Last year the Connecticut Department of Energy & Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) recorded 32 reported bear sightings in Wilton. It is unlikely you will encounter a bear in our woods this year however their population is growing so it is important to learn the facts about bears and how to minimize interactions with them.

The black bear is typically black or dark brown in color. Adults can weigh between 150 to 450 pounds and grow to 5 or 6 feet long. They typically live in forested areas with thick vegetation. These omnivores are opportunistic eaters and will eat a wide range of food including acorns, insects, berries, grass, small mammals, deer and even bird food and household garbage.

Between the mid-1900's and the present day, Connecticut's landscape has undergone a major shift; open farmland has been left to grow into forests. The increase in forestland has created prime habitat for large native mammals including deer, bobcats, coyotes and bears. This ecological change also means that we must co-exist with wildlife in our communities and sometimes in our backyards.

Co-existing with bears in our town means that we must learn to become aware in our surroundings when spending time outdoors. It can be exciting to see a bear whether it is in one of our parks or in your own backyard but it is important not to get too close to these wild animals because they could be dangerous if threatened. Bears are often spotted in residential



areas when they are attracted by food people have left outside for wildlife or by household garbage that was left outside. A bear can make a quick meal of bird food from a bird feeder or pet food left outside. Some experts recommend taking bird feeders in during the spring, summer and fall and only putting them back outside in the winter months when bears are likely hibernating.

The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) is in charge of controlling the bear population. They rarely will relocate a bear and typically will suggest leaving a bear alone so it can move along to a more natural habitat. DEEP also recommends:

If you see a bear:

- Enjoy it from a distance.
- Advertise your presence by shouting and waving your arms or walk slowly away.
- Never attempt to feed or attract bears.
- Report bear sightings to the Wildlife Division, at (860) 675-8130

- Mike Conklin, Environmental Analyst

REMINDER!

Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day
Saturday October 31, 2015 9:00AM – 1:00PM
Miller-Driscoll School, Wolfpit Road

**We do not accept paint as there is a program where the paint is accepted at retailers*

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

WILTON CONSERVATION COMMISSION



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