



Summer Trekking Program

McKeon Farm

Did you know...

Bluebirds are classified as "secondary cavity nesters," meaning they rely on pre-existing cavities, such as those made by other birds, or they will use nesting boxes like bluebird houses. They lack the beak structure and strength to excavate their own nesting holes in trees.



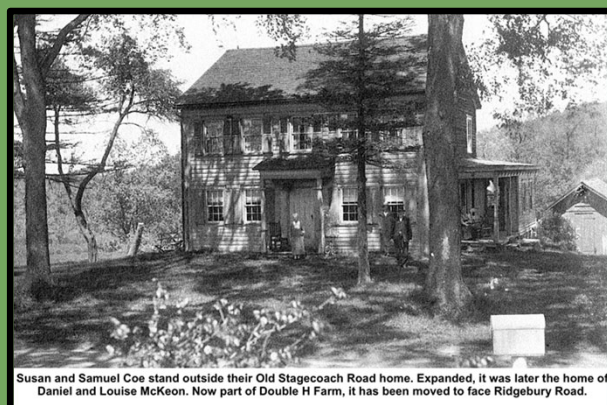
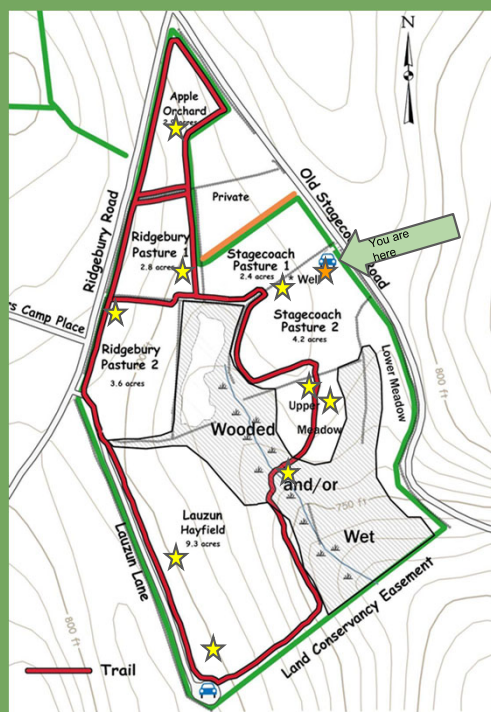
Visit the farm museum and learn about different farm tools!

Thank you to our co-sponsors!





Welcome to McKeon Farm



In addition to grazing pastures, the 43 acres comprising the McKeon Farm open space consists of differing habitats including hillside meadows, forests, wet meadows and pastures. This diversity provides important native habitats for a variety of birds, butterflies, flora and fauna.

Learn more about this very special place by walking the designated trail. Informational sign locations are marked with a star on the map to the left.

A few guidelines for enjoying your visit:

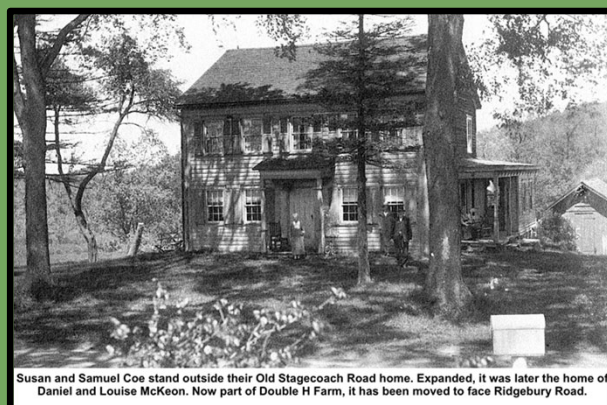
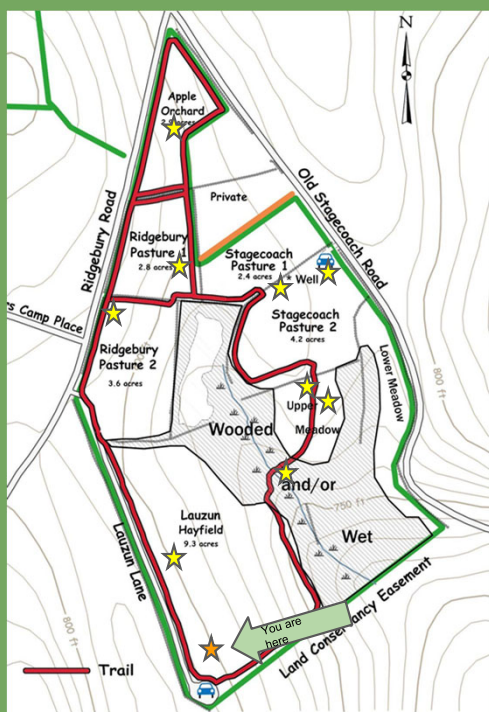
- Please stay on the red trail.
- Carry out what you carry in.
- Do not enter any fenced pastures.
- Do not approach or feed any of the farm animals.

Additional parking is available on Lauzen Lane.





Welcome to McKeon Farm



In addition to grazing pastures, the 43 acres comprising the McKeon Farm open space consists of differing habitats including hillside meadows, forests, wet meadows and pastures. This diversity provides important native habitats for a variety of birds, butterflies, flora and fauna.

Learn more about this very special place by walking the designated trail. Informational sign locations are marked with a star on the map to the left.

A few guidelines for enjoying your visit:

- Please stay on the red trail.
- Carry out what you carry in.
- Do not enter any fenced pastures.
- Do not approach or feed any of the farm animals.

Additional parking is available on Old Stagecoach Road..

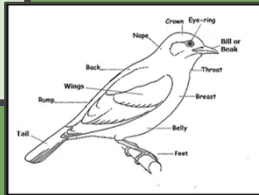




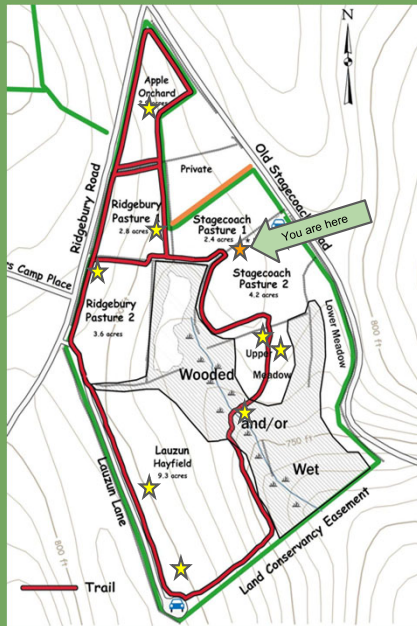
McKeon Farm is the perfect place to observe birds

This open space has many bird habitats including fields, meadows, wooded areas and streams, all of which attract both common and rare birds year round.

When looking for birds, it helps to know a little bit about them. As each species has different markings, beak shapes, sizes, etc. Knowing the body parts can help with identification.



In this field and in the lower meadow you will find wooden nest boxes that were built and installed by the RCC. These nesting boxes are used by eastern bluebirds and tree swallows. A white gourd rack that serves as an apartment "building" for nesting purple martins is also nearby.



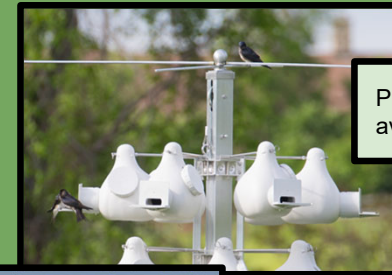
BIRDING FUN

- Learn how to use binoculars!
- Listen to the sounds each bird makes. Begin to learn the differences between species.
- Can you spot any old bird nests? Winter and early Spring are great times to look.

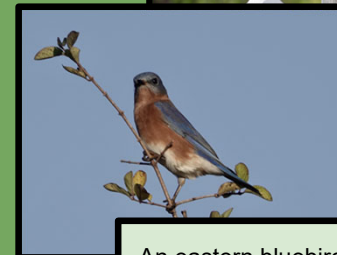
Did you know that. . .

- there are more than 440 species of birds living in Connecticut?
- the Connecticut state bird is the American robin?
- Birds help with dispersing native wildflower seeds and some species also pollinate flowers, which is known as ornithophily?

Be sure to visit the pollinator meadow to learn more about native wildflowers and the pollinators that visit them.



Purple martins checking out the available apartments.

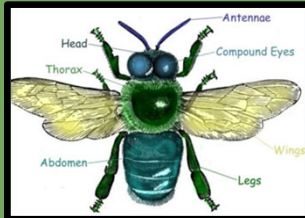
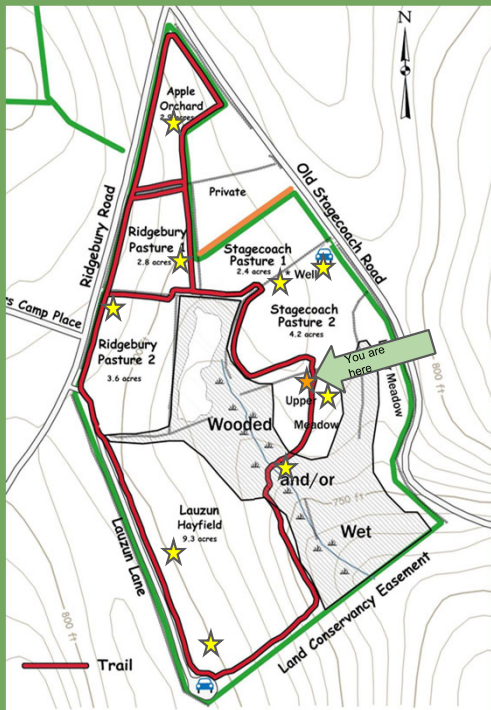


An eastern bluebird and babies in a nest box



Pollinator meadow

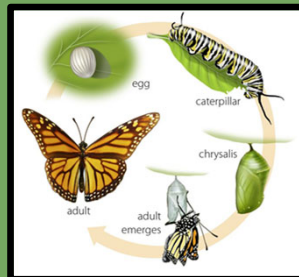
In the spring of 2020, Evan Abramson of Landscape Interactions was contracted by the Norwalk River Watershed Association on behalf of the RCC to create a meadow to support pollinator species at risk. The RCC hopes that McKeon Farm will serve as a model for biodiverse, ecologically resilient landscape design and management practices for others. Some of the native plants that you will find here include common milkweed, wild bergamot, evening primrose and black-eyed susans.



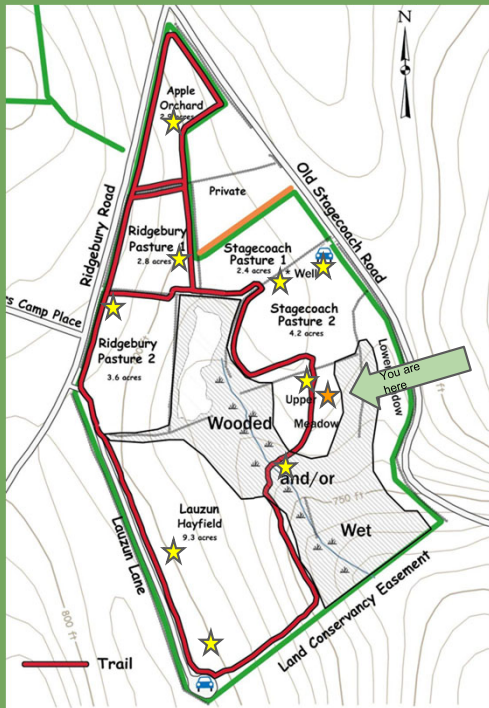
There are many different insects that frequent this meadow.
Take a moment and see how many you can observe.

Did you know that. . .

- Scientists estimate that there are 200 million insects for every living human being!
- Insects are invertebrates. Their bodies have a hard outer casing and are divided into three sections: head, thorax and abdomen. Most adults have six jointed legs and two pairs of wings.
- Butterflies and moths are very similar, but generally butterflies are larger than moths and have more colorful patterns on their wings.
- The European praying mantis is the designated Connecticut state insect.



McKeon Farm is a great place for community service, to grow vegetables and learn about nature



The vegetable garden serves as a teaching space. This program was started initially by Cornerstone Home and Gardens to provide learning opportunities to young adults with autism spectrum disorder and related disabilities.

Please enjoy this garden from **outside** the fence.

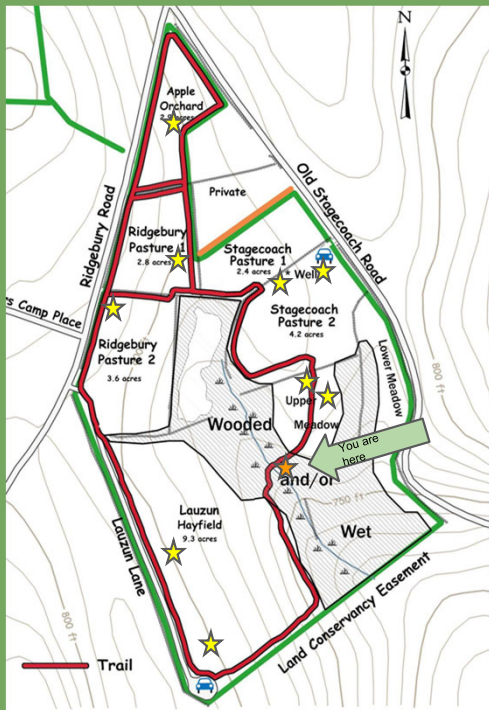


McKeon Farm provides many students with the opportunity to complete community service hours. Volunteers from the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Ridgefield schools and other community organizations work hand-in-hand with RCC commissioners projects including clearing invasive plants from the stone walls and restoring native plants to the farm.





What is a wet meadow?



You are currently standing in what is known as a wet meadow, which is a type of wetland located in poorly drained areas. Soils in a wet meadow are saturated for part or all of the growing season, but only rarely have standing water. During periods of high rainfall, they collect runoff, reducing the likelihood of seasonal flooding to downstream low-lying areas.

In the process of collecting and storing runoff, the vegetation of wet meadows removes the excess nutrients accumulated by the water, acting as a natural filter. This nutrient-rich environment provides vital food and habitat for many insects, amphibians, reptiles, birds and mammals.

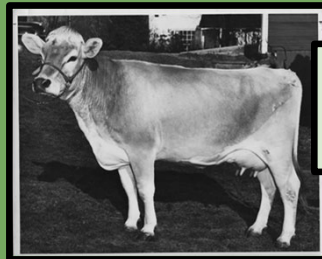
The RCC manages this wet meadow by removing invasive plants and replacing them with native ones that thrive in these growing conditions.

Plants pictured are from top to bottom:
Common buttonbush, pussy willow, swamp rose and Allegheny monkey flower.





Is it a pasture or a field?

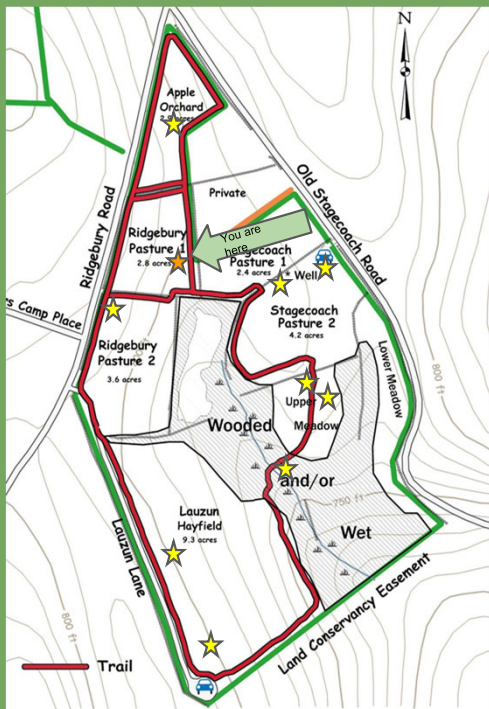


One of McKeon Farm's prize winning cows from the 1900s.

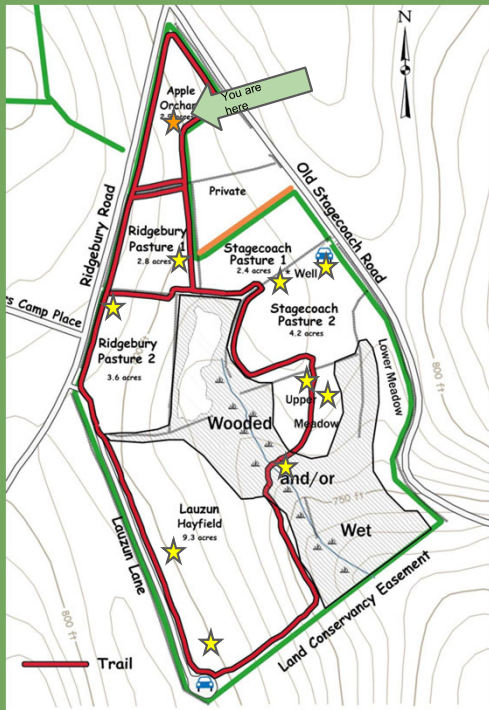


A *pasture* is a piece of land suitable for grazing by cattle, sheep and other livestock. A *field* is generally a bounded piece of open land in which crops are or can be grown.

Cattle barns and cows in the pastures were a common sight when the McKeon's operated Arigideen, which was the name they gave their farm. The RCC continues this tradition by leasing several parcels for the purpose of pasturing animals.



Stone walls and the apple orchard



The long agricultural history of McKeon Farm is evidenced by the numerous stone walls surrounding it. For many fields in Connecticut, before any farming could occur, many stones were removed to make the ground suitable for crops. Early settlers discarded the stones in linear piles that lined the edges of their fields and created the network of stone walls that are still in existence today.

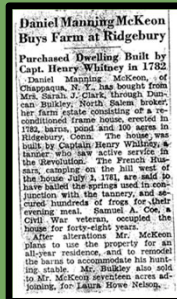
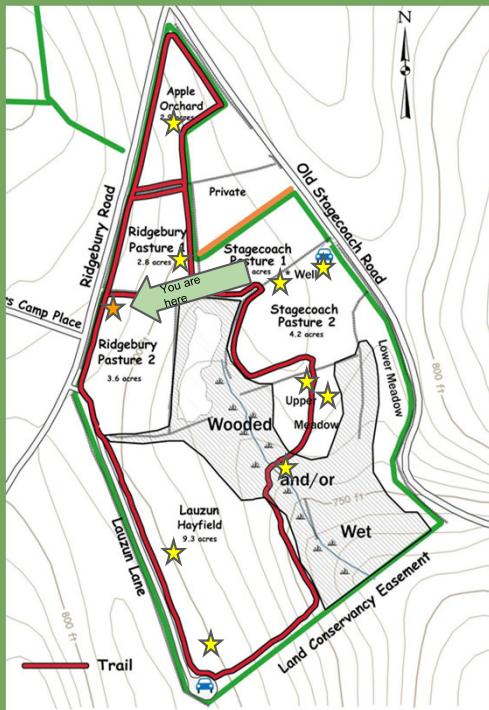
It was also common to plant a small orchard of apple trees to provide the farmer and the animals with fruit. As safe drinking water was not in abundance during Colonial times, hard apple cider was a common and favorite beverage.





View of history

From this vantage point in a southeasterly direction you can look down a valley toward Main Street where the Battle of Ridgefield was fought on April 27, 1777. What is now McKeon Farm has had its own varied history.



Samuel Coe in his Civil War uniform, with his wife, Susan, probably in the early 1920s. He lost part of his left arm in the war.

1697 - This land was originally part of a 150 acre parcel granted by the Colonial Assembly to Isaac Hall, a Connecticut surgeon.

1740 - The property was sold to Moses Knap and became known as Knap's Farm. The Knap family continued to own some land until 1793.

1747 - Moses Knap sold 100 acres to Josiah and Timothy Foster and Nathan Sherwood, which would become known as Sherwood Farm.

1781 - An advance camp of French grenadiers (Hussars) was set up here under the command of Alexandre Berthier after marching in from Newtown.

1782 - Revolutionary War veteran Captain Henry Whitney built a home here. His daughter married David Hunt.

1836 - Ridgebury-Norwalk Stage Line was established by David Hunt and departed from The Captain Whitney House.

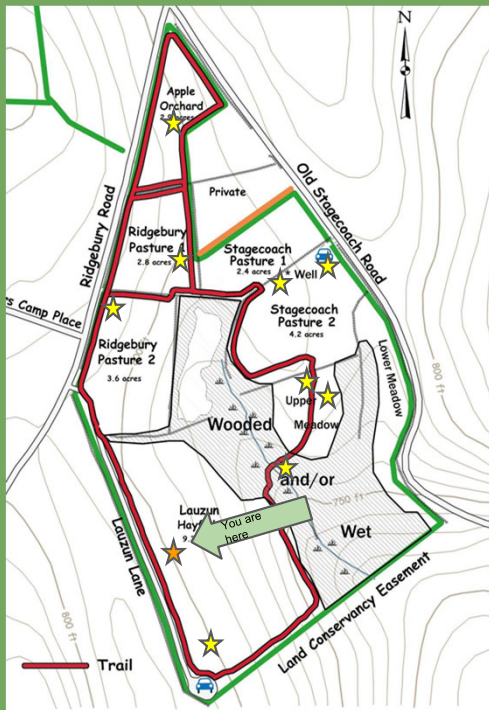
1887 - The house and property were acquired by Civil War veteran and Selectman Samuel Coe.

1933 - The property was sold to Sarah J. Clark of New York City.

1937 - Daniel and Louise McKeon purchased the land from Sarah Clark and began operating Arigideen, a "gentleman's farm" with 45 award-winning Brown Swiss dairy cows.

2002 - The RCC purchased McKeon Farm with the help of many generous donors.

Lauzen hayfield and the changing sunrise



Lauzen hayfield is the largest single parcel at McKeon Farm. It has a gently sloping topography leading down to a stream and wetlands that bisects the McKeon Farm property. Its current use follows historical patterns of a working hayfield, which is harvested mid-summer as fodder for animals, and as a breeding and feeding area for birds.

It is also one of the best places in Ridgefield to appreciate the changing sunrise over the ridge to the east. Twice a year at the Spring and Fall equinox, the sun rises straight ahead at approximately 90 degrees due east. For the Summer solstice, the sun rises approximately 30 degrees to your left; for the Winter solstice, it will be 30 degrees to your right. This change in position occurs because the Earth circles the Sun in an elliptical path and it is tilted on its axis in relation to the Sun.

