

WELCOME TO THE WOODCOCK PRESERVE!

The Woodcock Preserve is ~72 acres of conserved woodland and forested wetland habitat located in the Town of Clifton Park, New York. The land that makes up the preserve was acquired by Saratoga PLAN in three different stages from 1993 to 2002. Today, there are approximately 2.4 miles of trails located throughout the property managed by the generous and enthusiastic help of volunteers.

What is Letterboxing?

Letterboxing is an old English tradition dating back to 1854 where people began leaving a self-addressed post card or note in a jar, hoping for them to be returned by mail by the next visitor. Today we've adapted this English tradition and put it to use on Saratoga PLAN's nature preserves and trails. Each preserve has a letterbox ranging in difficulty for participants and gives each type of adventurer an exciting opportunity to explore our preserves and have fun while doing so. When you find the letterbox, you can feel free to take a postcard, and mail it back to us with your comments about your journey. You can also take the stamp from within the letterbox and mark your PLAN Preserve Passport on the appropriate page. Once you have collected at least five stamps (or listed three species observed during each visit) stop by PLAN's offices in Saratoga Springs for a FREE Saratoga PLAN t-shirt!

We hope you enjoy your letterboxing experience on this preserve. Interspersed within the clues *in italics* are natural history observations and hiking information for those interested, for example:

American Woodcocks are short, plump, shore-like birds that dwell within young forests and shrubby fields and have long, thin bills used for probing the ground for insects. They are very distinctive both in their sound and appearance with coloring perfectly camouflaged with the forest floor in shades of browns, tans and blacks. Their sound is quite distinctive and can be described as a "peent" sound. The male's display involves flying high up in the sky and acrobatically shooting straight down to the ground again. During this flight their flapping wings create a whistling sound.

LETTERBOX CLUES FOR WOODCOCK PRESERVE

Whether you're walking, running, or skipping:

- 1. Start your journey at the trail head with the kiosk on your right. Take note of the map at the kiosk, there are a lot of trail options on this preserve that you may want to explore after letterboxing.**
- 2. You will start your journey on the white trail, and will continue along passing an open field on your left.**
This may be a good place to spot a woodcock performing its acrobatic display!
- 3. You will cross over a small wooden bridge.**
- 4. Follow the white trail until you reach an intersection with the yellow trail.**
- 5. Take the yellow trail to the right.**

- 6. Follow the yellow trail as it meanders through the woods and some swampy areas. You will pass between a tree that has fallen across the trail and has a large chunk sawed out in the middle.**
- 7. Continue down the trail until you spot a trail marker that is mounted on a yellow piece of wood that has been cut to form two arrows facing opposite directions.**
- 8. You are now very close to the treasure you seek! Begin to look around for a very large tree. You will know that you have found it because it has a small white sign on it that says "This land has been conserved by the Saratoga Land Conservancy."**
Saratoga PLAN was called the Saratoga Land Conservancy until 2003.
- 9. Begin searching the area around this large tree.**

GREAT WORK!

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure at the Woodcock Preserve. Please return the letterbox as you found it, and head out the way you came in. If you have time, we hope you enjoy exploring the other trails.

Thank you!

- Your Friends at Saratoga PLAN

The mission of Saratoga PLAN is to preserve the rural character, natural habitats and scenic beauty of Saratoga County so that these irreplaceable assets are accessible to all and survive for future generations. To learn more, please visit us at www.saratogaplan.org.

