

WELCOME TO THE COLDBROOK PRESERVE!

This ~63 acre preserve has close to two miles of marked trails that wander through wetlands and towering pines in the Town of Northumberland, New York. The Coldbrook Preserve was officially opened in April of 2013 after Jim & Christine McKnight donated the property to Saratoga PLAN, fulfilling their long-term dream of seeing the land permanently conserved. Although the property was once primarily farmland, the preserve has since grown back to forest, and has a section of the Cole Brook stream running through the land.

Like all of our projects, the Coldbrook Preserve was the result of long-term planning and the collaborative efforts of landowners, volunteers, donors and project partners. Financial support came from RBC Wealth Management's Blue Water Program, the NYS Environmental Protection Fund, the Town of Northumberland, and many Saratoga PLAN donors. The Leadership Saratoga Class of 2011 designed the preserve's trails, and Eagle Scouts helped make trail improvements by adding bridges and benches.

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:

The Coldbrook Preserve is actually named for the Cole Brook stream that runs through the land.

LETTERBOX CLUES FOR COLDBROOK PRESERVE

Whether you're walking, running, or skipping:

- 1. Start your journey at the trail head with the kiosk on your right, this is the yellow trail.**
- 2. Proceed down the yellow trail. With a field extending down the entry trail on your right, you will eventually start crossing over several small wooden bog bridges.**

Several of the trees that border the preserve entry trail are Hemlocks, a favorite of the Porcupine!

Porcupines inhabit the same trees generation after generation. Over time, trees show signs of being "lived-in". They may be missing branches or look a little misshapen. Can you spot any?

- 3. Follow the trail's sharp right turn just beyond the large Pine tree that has been snapped in half.**

What do you think could have caused this kind of break?

- 4. Soon the trail will take another sharp right. If you'd like a rest, stay straight to take advantage of a bench that overlooks a beautiful wetland.**

Wetlands help clean the air and water. Their thick soil filters pollutants in the water and they store carbon within their plant communities and soil instead of releasing it into the atmosphere as carbon dioxide.

- 5. Staying on the yellow trail, you will soon wind around to another bench and another overlook.**

- 6. As the field comes back into view on your right, the trail will take a sharp left down over a bridge.**

The Coldbrook Preserve provides a significant buffer to wetland habitat for the Blanding's Turtle, a New York State threatened species that was discovered in the Wilton area in 2003. One of the biggest threats to all turtles, including the Blanding's Turtle, is road crossings. Many turtles travel long distances to their nest sites, and many have to cross roads to do so. Be careful in your travels and look out for turtles in the road.

- 7. Follow the yellow trail uphill and stop when the trail splits.**

- 8. Take the blue trail, keeping the water on your right-hand side. Now, look ahead for a big pine tree that splits into two large trunks. Start searching around this tree, and soon you will find your prize!**

GREAT WORK!

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure at the Coldbrook Preserve. Please return the letterbox as you found it, and head out the way you came in. If you have time, hike the entire blue loop; it's a beautiful journey through a dense forest! Taking either end of the blue loop all the way around will lead you back to the intersection with the yellow trail.

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.

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