

WELCOME TO THE GALWAY NATURE PRESERVE!

The Galway Nature Preserve contains about 2.5 miles of trails and is made up of ~49 acres of conserved forest, wetland, and pond habitat in the Town of Galway, New York. Now used as a public resource for nature study and outdoor learning, the property was originally donated in 2005 by the late Marshall DesRoches, who wanted to ensure that the land would remain forever wild and accessible to the community. Along the trails that meander through the property lie remnant structures built by the DesRoches, including a small wood cabin, an old stone fireplace, and garage. Please use caution around these areas, as they are important to the property's history.

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!

LETTERBOX CLUES FOR GALWAY NATURE PRESERVE

Whether you're walking, running, or skipping:

- 1. Your starting point will be the yellow trail on the right side of the Galway Preserve Nature Center. Before you begin, notice the black walnut tree with the bench surrounding it.**

Black walnut trees are quite scarce and have been coveted for their hard wood since colonial times. They are great for making furniture and have an edible nut that provides food to many animals.

- 2. Keeping the water of the pond on your right, continue down the yellow trail until you come to the fork that intersects with the red trail.**
- 3. Time to choose! You can either take a left down the red trail or stay on the yellow trail.**
- 4. Continue down either trail, until the two meet up again. Where the red and yellow trail meet, take a right (heading east) down the yellow trail towards the bridge that crosses a small stream. Proceed by crossing over the bridge.**

Pause on the bridge and look right. Do you see the black tunnel? This is part of an invention called a Beaver Deceiver. Before it was installed, beavers dammed the outlet in the pond that emptied into the stream. Instead of emptying into the stream that runs

under this bridge, the pond overflowed and flooded the path ahead and neighboring roads and farmland.

The Beaver Deceiver system helps drain water from the pond so that it doesn't overflow. It also leaves enough water in the pond to maintain a healthy aquatic habitat for beavers and other species. Living in balance with beavers!

- 5. Take a moment to stand by the pond – can you find the beaver lodge?**

A beaver's home is called a "lodge." Beavers are monogamous, meaning they have one mate. Adults live in the lodge and raise their young together. Hint: look for a large pile of sticks and mud built into the side of the pond.

- 6. Passing the pond, you will soon see an old wooden cabin that will be on the right side of the blue trail.**

This cabin was once used as a changing hut. The original owners of the property used this area as a swimming hole!

- 7. Until the 1950s this land was cleared and used for agriculture. It was later converted to a Christmas tree farm. Many of the pine and fir trees can still be seen today and make up a large part of the property's rich forest.**

- 8. Look for a Christmas tree nearby – and you might just find a surprise underneath it.**

GREAT WORK!

We hope you enjoyed your letterboxing adventure at the Galway Nature Preserve. Please return the letterbox as you found it. There are many other trails to explore though, so feel free to spend some time getting to know the other beautiful areas of the preserve!

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.



A 2020 picture of a beaver at Galway Preserve from PLAN's trailcam.