



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 a 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!

LETTERBOX CLUES FOR WOODCOCK PRESERVE

- 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!

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.

- 3. You will cross over a small wooden bridge.**

As you walk along the winding path, look for large stones that have lifted, parallel spines. These stones were deposited or "dropped" here by glaciers 14,000 years ago.

- 4. Follow the white trail until you reach an intersection with the yellow trail.**
- 5. Take the yellow trail to the right.**
- 6. A swampy area is crossed with wooden logs placed to avoid the muddy area.**

*This is an example of **corduroy bridging**-an arrangement of small logs laid parallel with each other on wet ground, perpendicular to the direction of travel, as a walkable stepping surface in swampy trail sections.*

7. Continue on the yellow trail and you will pass a bench as the trail bends to the left.
8. Continue down the yellow trail and you will cross more corduroy bridging in another wet area. You can see tussocks (clusters of grass) growing together.
9. You will come to the intersection with the white trail where there is another park bench.
10. Sit on the bench for minute and look across the trail toward your left. You will see a tree with bark that looks shaggy or like the tree is shedding its bark. This is a Shagbark Hickory tree.

The shagbark hickory is a common hickory in the Eastern United States and southeast Canada. It is a large, deciduous tree, growing well over 100 ft tall, and can live more than 350 years!

11. Go to this tree and look behind it. You will find the letterbox behind this 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.



nationalgrid

Thank you for generously
funding the Passport Program!

Please return the clues to the kiosk. Thank you!