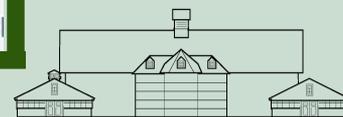
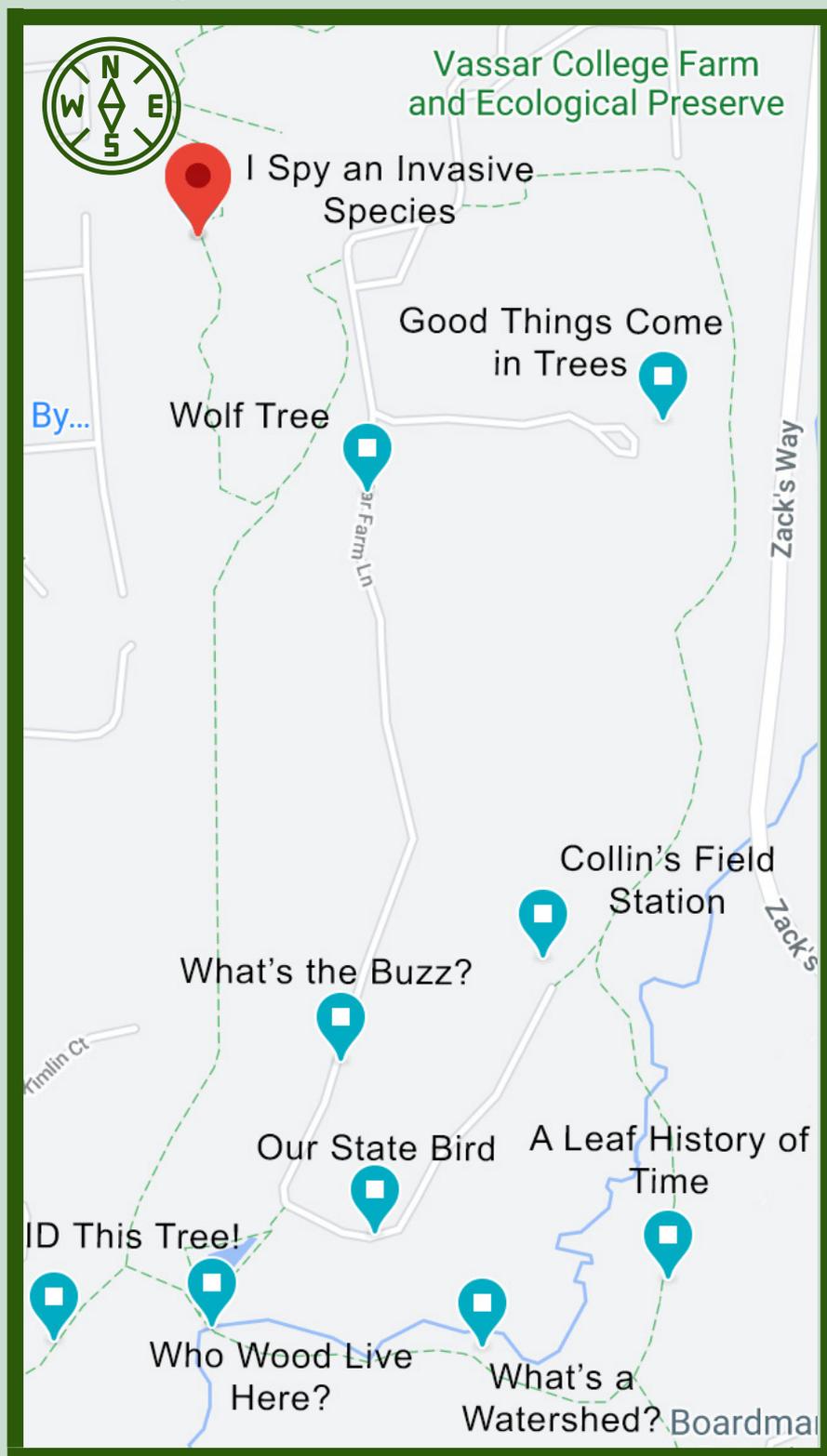


# Geocaches at the Vassar Ecological Preserve



## Wolf Tree

Hint: animals love this tree's seeds

Coordinates:  
41.67292529,  
-73.89856945

Location: Farm Road

You will see a large, old tree that has been standing for over 100 years. They were once thought of as “predators” because foresters in the late 20th century believed they depleted the surrounding area of important resources due to their size. This is how they were given the name “Wolf” trees. Now they are considered important remnants of the forests that used to exist as well as providing habitat for a multitude of living things. Before the Ecological Preserve, much of this land was farmland. The branches are so big that you do not need to leave the road to find them. The cache is accessible by staying on the road; please do not go off the road or trails.

## What's the Buzz?

Hint: Look for information about the Old Fields

Coordinates:  
41.66633082,  
-73.89896225

Location: Farm Road

You'll see many different types of bees here in the old field. There are 416 bee species living in New York. Old fields such as this one provide nesting and foraging habitats for native bees, which generally are solitary and do not sting. Bees are extremely important to our food systems, as they work to pollinate a variety of crops including apples, blueberries, squash, tomatoes and much more. Butterflies are also important and beautiful pollinators. Many butterfly caterpillars only feed on one or two specific types of plants. A common example of this is the Monarch caterpillar, which only feeds on Milkweed. If you look closely you may find some caterpillars on milkweed plants here. Pollinator populations are declining so it is important to maintain habitats that provide shelter and food and to plant native plants that attract them. Birds, mammals, amphibians and reptiles also use old fields throughout their lifetimes.

Check out the sign here to learn even more!

## **Our State Bird**

Hint: A fine place to raise some babies

Coordinates:  
41.66433249,  
-73.89844424

Location: Farm Road

This could be where I raise my chicks : I am a bird that prefers to live in meadows and fields. Some say my song sounds like I am singing “cheer, cheerful, charmer”. My habitat is being reduced due to land management practices and development. As succession occurs, old fields are going back to forests. The loss of trees, especially old/decaying trees, has caused a lack of nesting sites (tree cavities) for me. Also, competition from invasive secondary cavity nesters like tree swallows and European starlings have contributed to the decline of my species. If I am a male, I am dark blue with a rusty red breast and throat. If I am a female I am grayish above with bluish wings and a subdued orange breast. I prefer to eat insects...I particularly like worms. Do you know what bird I am?

## **Who Wood Live Here?**

Hint: An old beaver home

Coordinates:  
41.66325527,  
-73.90097102

Location: Wright Trail

Beavers created this pond. You can see their work from where this cache is hidden. They have now moved down the stream, but their dam remains. Did you know beavers possess transparent eyelids that allow them to see underwater? Plus, the largest beaver dam in the world is ½ mile long and is visible from space! A keystone species is a species that other organisms depend on in some significant way. Beavers are considered a keystone species due to their valuable engineering skills in creating wetlands which provide habitat for many insects, birds, fish and plants. Beavers are vegetarians and are one of the few animals that can actually eat wood! They have special bacteria in their stomach that helps them digest cellulose, the main building block of trees. The Vassar Beavers have been around for about 6 years and if you are lucky you may catch a glimpse of one (or the family). Early morning and evening are the best times to see them.

## **Collin's Field Station**

Hint: this cache you will find near the field station

Coordinates:  
41.66753425,  
-73.89584266

Location: At the end of the Farm Road and Collin's Trail It is near a unique tree, an American-chinese hybrid of the original tree. The American chestnut used to make up almost a quarter of all forest from Maine to Mississippi, but then a fungus began killing off these trees. The American chestnut is considered functionally extinct, because although root sprouts still survive in forests they inevitably succumb to the blight before they can produce fruit. Find the sign near the cache to learn more about efforts to restore this tree.

For your safety, please do not go off of the trail. This geocache was created and is maintained by the Environmental Cooperative at Vassar Barns and the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve.

## **What's a Watershed?**

Hint: You will find this cache close to the Casperkill Creek

Coordinates:  
41.66301872,  
-73.89678227

Location: Wright Trail

Did you know the Casperkill Creek is part of the Hudson River Watershed? This means that the Casperkill drains into the Hudson River. Therefore, the water quality of the Casperkill impacts the water quality of the Hudson River. It is important for us to take care of all water sources around us. Do you know what types of critters you might find in the Casperkill? There are some special organisms called aquatic macroinvertebrates which means that they are animals that live in the water, have no backbone, but you can see them without a microscope. They are an important part of the food web as they provide a meal for many fish, birds, and other predators. Examples of macroinvertebrates include the larval stage of many terrestrial insects, such as dragonflies, mayflies, and mosquitoes, but also include crayfish, and freshwater mussels.

## **Good Things Come in Trees**

Hint: This cache is hidden near newly planted trees

Location: Restoration Site

This geocache is located on a restoration site, meaning that the efforts from the Ecological Preserve are being made to return the land to its former state. To initiate this recovery, 200 native and resilient trees were planted at a highly degraded site. The planting was done in the Spring of 2020.

Coordinates: 41.67376575, -73.89399175

## **A Leaf History of Time**

Hint: It is hidden in a dead tree, but it is one of the few of its kind that is still standing. You will see many dead trees of this kind on this section of the trail.

Location: Quercus Trail

This tree is a pioneer tree. These trees were thriving during the primary succession stage of this forest regenerated from farmland. Now, the oak trees have taken over and shaded out these pioneer trees. When you find this cache you will see a picture of what this forest could have looked like during its early successional stages. This tree has reddish-brown bark with long fibrous scales. The branches are often short. Do you know what tree it is?

For your safety, please do not go off of the trail.

Coordinates: 41.6638056, -73.89391002

## **ID This Tree!**

Hint: Look for thorns!

Coordinates:  
41.66308536,  
-73.90341303

Location: Helen Johnson Woodworth Memorial Trail

This cache is hidden in a tree whose most identifying feature may be its thorns. Its leaves are alternate and compound (several individual leaflets). Its bark is relatively smooth and is a dark red-brown color. Older trees have longitudinal ridges. It is not native to Eastern NY, but is native to Western NY. It is more common in southern states. This tree has been historically used for medicinal purposes, especially in Native American culture. Can you guess what type of tree this is? Find the cache and solve the mystery!

# I Spy Invasive Species

Hint: Where might I sit and observe nature?

Coordinates:  
41.675449,  
-73.900928

Location: Drumlin Trail

This cache is along the Drumlin trail at the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve. Unfortunately, along the Drumlin trail there are many invasive species that you may notice. An invasive species is a non-native species that causes ecological or economic harm. For instance, in the springtime, you may see garlic mustard, with its small white flowers. All year round, you may notice Oriental bittersweet, wrapping around trees. In springtime and early summer you may also notice the tubular, pink, white, or yellow flowers of honeysuckle. While pretty, it is also an invasive plant. It tends to grow leaves early in the season, outcompeting native plants and tree saplings for sunlight. In addition, they create a good habitat for ticks, increasing the risk of lyme disease where honeysuckle is prevalent. Can you spot any of these invasives on your way to this cache? If you want to learn more and find out how we are combating invasive species in our Conservation Action Plan, check out the Vassar Farm and Ecological Preserve website.



**For more information about the Environmental Cooperative or the Vassar Ecological Preserve visit:**

<https://environmentalcooperative.vassar.edu/>

and

<https://farm.vassar.edu/>



**The Environmental Cooperative  
at the Vassar Barns**