**Clue #1** At the wooden bridge directly behind the nature center building take a southwest bearing, and follow the trail into the woods. You’ll soon reach a fork in the road and a sign pointing you in many directions.

**Clue #2** While standing at the colorful sign take a bearing on your compass and head south and then slightly uphill along the “sweet” trail. You’ll pass a black capped chickadee nest box (#2) and, a hickory tree if you are headed in the correct direction. Watch for deer and look for rocks with fossils along the way. Continue on the trail until you reach an intersection.

**Clue #3** At the intersection take the Succession Trail, which is marked with orange blazes, to the south (right). You will see decomposing logs on the sides of the trail and—if you are letterboxing in the spring time—wildflowers. Keep on the trail until you find an object that is used for sitting.

**Clue #4** Once you’ve had a rest continue on the trail and up a hill past an old property line. See how several of the trees have grown into the wire.

**Clue #5** Continue on the trail until you find the sign describing an animalistic arbor and walk to this strange lupine loner of a tree. You will know which tree it is because there is no other that looks the same.

**Clue #6** Stand on the north side of the Wolf Tree facing down the hill you just walked up—but don’t look too far. Find a rock made of flint and limestone. Only a few steps away you should see a pile of rocks where you’ll find the letterbox hidden. Please be sure to hide the letterbox in the same place before returning to the nature center.

**Clue #7** Continue on the Succession Trail (orange blazes). Brr...do you feel a chill in the air reminiscent of the tundra? Stop at the next trail sign to learn more about the interesting plants that grow here but please be careful not to walk on this fragile ecosystem. Continue your way around the trail until you reach the Perimeter Trail (yellow blazes). Follow the signs back to the nature center.

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**Glossary**

**Bearing:** Direction, especially measured from one position to another using land or star reference lines.

**Blaze:** A trail marker, often painted on a tree or other landmark.

**Coordinates:** Set of numbers used in specifying the location of a point on a line, on a surface, or in space.

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Cover photos courtesy of Robert Dudzic and Lloyd Heath
WHAT IS LETTERBOXING?

Letterboxing is an outdoor hobby which mixes elements of treasure hunting, navigating, art and puzzle solving. A waterproof box is hidden in a beautiful, remote or interesting location. Inside are a logbook and a carved rubber stamp. The person hiding the box writes directions or “clues” to its location, which often involves map coordinates or compass bearings from landmarks. Hunters take the clues and attempt to find the box. Once located, hunters take their own personal rubber stamps and stamp the logbook inside the box. They use the stamp from the box to mark their own personal logbooks. In this way they are able to keep a record of the boxes they find and the logbook from the box records all the visitors who found it.

HISTORY OF LETTERBOXING

Letterboxing began in England when a guide named James Perrott hid a bottle in a remote area at Cranmere Pool on the moors of Dartmoor in 1854. In the bottle, he left his calling cards so that future hikers who found the bottle could contact him and leave their own cards. Overtime, a tin waterproof box replaced the bottle and visitors began leaving self-addressed postcards or letters inside, hoping these would be mailed by the next visitor (hence the name “letterboxing”). Clues to boxes were passed around by participants or published in an annual catalogue. Eventually logbooks and rubber stamps replaced postcards in the containers to help record visitors’ accomplishments in finding the locations of the hidden boxes.

Letterboxing came to the United States in 1998 after an article was published about the hobby in the Smithsonian magazine. Intrigued by the story, groups of people began hiding letterboxes throughout the country. Websites and forums sprang up for people to share information and as a result, the American version of letterboxing relies more heavily on the Internet to distribute clues to box locations. It also became more popular in America to hand-carve a rubber stamp to use as your letterboxing identity.

HOW TO USE A COMPASS

Hold your compass flat in your palm so the Base Plate is level and the Direction of Travel arrow is pointing straight away from you.

The Magnetic Needle, called “Red Fred,” is painted red on one end and white on the other. The red portion shows you which direction North is. Turn your body while keeping the compass straight in front of you. You’ll notice that as the compass moves, the needle continues to point the same direction, North.

To find your direction, turn the Degree Dial until the directional point you want (North, South, East, West) lines up with the Direction of Travel Arrow. Holding the compass steady, turn your body until the Orienteering Arrow and Magnetic Needle are lined up. When this happens, you are facing the direction you want.

An easy way to remember this is that the Magnetic Needle is called “Red Fred” and he wants to be in the “Shed” (red portion of Orienteering Arrow). To get “Red Fred” to the “Shed” you must move your body while keeping the compass steady until the two line up. Once “Red Fred” is in the “Shed” you are facing the direction you want to go.