

Public Can Help Protect the Grassland Habitat of Thorn Preserve

In 2013 the estate of Laura Thorn donated 60 acres to the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development. It was the estate's wish that this land be both preserved and opened to the public. In partnership with Woodstock Land Conservancy (WLC), the Catskill Center opened the Thorn Preserve, located at 55 John Joy Road in the Zena area of Woodstock.

When dog walkers allow their dogs to run off-leash it undermines our efforts to protect sensitive habitat while providing a sanctuary for walkers, birds and butterflies alike. Grasslands in the Northeast have traditionally provided home and sanctuary to grassland birds, butterflies and other wildlife. In hayfields, pastures, and riparian grasslands, birds such as bobolinks and eastern meadowlarks have raised their young, hunted for food, and returned each spring to continue this cycle.

In addition to grassland bird populations, the meadow habitat at Thorn Preserve hosts a significant population of one of our most spectacular butterflies, the Baltimore Checkerspot. These beauties are suffering declines due to many factors, and we want to enlist the public's help in protecting them at Thorn Preserve.

In New York, two-thirds of our farmland has been lost over the past century, and the availability of grasslands has been further reduced by the shift to crop monocultures (such as corn, soybeans, and winter wheat) that provide little or no grassland habitat.

With its sweeping views of Overlook and mowed paths, Thorn Preserve has quickly become a destination for walkers and dog-walkers. However, not all dog owners are acting responsibly. In accordance with the **Town of Woodstock Leash Law**, all dogs walked at Thorn Preserve must be leashed at all times. To protect this sensitive habitat for ground nesting birds and butterflies, we also ask that all walkers, **and their dogs**, remain on the mowed paths and that all dog waste be removed from the site.

With the approach of breeding season, early-April through August, dogs off-leash and off-path, pose a significant threat to ground nesting birds at Thorn Preserve as well as placing other walkers, and their dogs, at risk for unwanted and potentially dangerous interactions.

The Catskill Center and Woodstock Land Conservancy are nonprofit organizations whose missions are to protect and foster the environmental, cultural and economic well-being of the Catskill region. We try to carefully maintain a balance between public access and protection of the land and habitat at the Thorn Preserve.

To learn more about the habitat at Thorn Preserve we encourage you to join us for one of our many scheduled nature walks. Visit www.woodstocklandconservancy.org for event information.

The Catskill Center and WLC invites all visitors to enjoy the Thorn Preserve. We just ask that the rules of the Preserve and the Town are followed during your visit.

Work at the Thorn Preserve is supported through generous donations to the Catskill Center. Learn more about our work on the Thorn Preserve at www.catskillcenter.org/thorn-preserve. If you have questions or would like more information please email the Catskill Center at cccd@catskillcenter.org or call us at 845-586-2611.