



Hudson River Watershed

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A GREAT RIVER

The Hudson River flows through 315 miles of eastern New York State, moving mostly from north to south. The river's source is Lake Tear in the Clouds on Mount Marcy in the Adirondack State Park and Mountains in Upstate New York. It is not called the Hudson River until many miles downstream.

At the end of 315 miles, the mouth of the Hudson empties into the Atlantic Ocean, between New York City and Jersey City, New Jersey. The lower half of the river is a tidal **estuary**, the place where freshwater rivers and streams flow into the ocean, mixing with the seawater. A wide variety of birds, fish, and other wildlife live in estuaries. The Atlantic's changing tides impact the flow of the Hudson River through its final 150 miles – almost half its length.

In the last ice age, the Hudson River Valley was filled by a large glacier that pushed south all the way to Long Island. At that time, water from the Great Lakes drained south from a large glacial lake called Lake Iroquois through the Hudson Valley to the Atlantic. Today, what is left of Lake Iroquois is called Lake Ontario – one of the five Great Lakes.

HISTORICAL RIVER

The Iroquois called it *Muh-he-kun-ne-tuk*, the "Great Mohegan." The Lenape, who lived on both banks of the lower half of the river, called it *Muh-hea-kan-tuck* – *river that flows two ways*. When European explorers came to North America, many sailed up the river in hopes of finding the Northwest Passage, a possible water route connecting the Atlantic to the Pacific.

One such explorer was Henry Hudson, an Englishman who sailed with the Dutch East India Company. In 1609, he sailed upriver looking for a connection to the Pacific. He went so far north that Canada's Hudson Bay is also named after him.

The Dutch were the earliest European settlers in the area. They called it the North River and named another river nearby the South River. Today it is called the Delaware River (crossed by George Washington in the Revolution). The Dutch settled in the area because it was a good strategic place, easy to protect. It also a good route inland to the interior of North America. For many years the Dutch and English struggled over who should control the river and the young colony.

During the American Revolution (1775-1783) the River Valley was the site of many battles. The British wanted control of the river in order to divide the colonies in half, thereby weakening their threat. In the early 1800s, the Hudson River became the eastern outlet for the Erie Canal. Completed in 1825, the canal created a connection between the Great Lakes and Midwestern states and territories and the

Hudson River Stories

Washington Irving (1783-1859), the first American author to win respect in Europe, lived a part of his life in the Hudson River Valley in Tarrytown, NY. He wrote fictional stories about the people and events set in the towns along the river. Some of his best known tales include *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*, *Rip Van Winkle*, and *Ichabod Crane and the Headless Horseman*.



Lithograph of Ichabod Crane being chased by the Headless Horseman

large cities of the east coast. It became an important commercial transportation artery between two important regions of the young country.

RIVER ECOLOGY

The valley's geology created and now supports a wide variety of habitats such as pine-barrens, grasslands, cliffs, mountain ranges, caves, streams, and wetlands, including globally rare freshwater tidal wetlands. It is the mix of these diverse habitats that makes the River area extremely important from an ecological perspective, both nationally and around the world.

Here's an interesting fact: the river valley area covers **13.5%** of the state of New York, but it is home to nearly **90%** of the bird, mammal, reptile, and amphibian species found in the state. Of particular importance around the world is the diverse turtle population. And across the country, it is also noted for dragonflies and damselflies. Conserving the amphibian and reptile biodiversity in the river valley is a great concern.

Many species use the valley as a migration route or a breeding habitat. For example, migrating fish and the endangered monarch butterfly follow the river route as they travel. Birds such as the cerulean warbler, marsh wren, bald eagle, osprey, and ruby-throated hummingbird live a portion of their life cycle here as they move from the far north to South America.



Looking across the Hudson to the Catskill Mountains
https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/thumb/0/07/Catskills_beyond_Hudson.jpg/550px-Catskills_beyond_Hudson.jpg



Near the mouth of the Hudson between Midtown Manhattan (foreground) and Weehawken, New Jersey (background)

<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/6/65/HudsonRiverJavitsCenter.agr.JPG>

The Hudson River Estuary ecosystem is home to a number of species that have their best or only remaining populations in the region. Approximately 150 species in the watershed are listed as threatened, endangered, or of special concern in New York State. Of the eleven turtle species found in the Hudson Valley, six are on state or federal lists of endangered, threatened, or special concern animals, primarily due to habitat loss.

LANDMARKS

There are many important and historical landmarks along the river including the home of Franklin D. Roosevelt- National Historic Site, the United States Military Academy at West Point, The Palisades, Sing Sing Correctional Facility, and The Cloisters at Fort Tryon Park. The Hudson River was designated an American Heritage River in 1997.

Resources and place to learn more:

- Hudson River Estuary Program Report, 2006. Beautifully illustrated, many photos and other visuals.
http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/remediation_hudson_pdf/hrebcf.pdf

