

SCENIC HUDSON PARK QUEST

BLACK CREEK PRESERVE, ESOPUS

QUESTING:

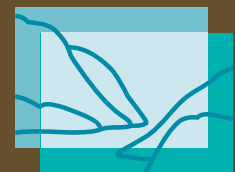
Use the information and map to learn about the history and wildlife at Scenic Hudson's Black Creek Preserve. At the end of your Quest, you'll find a box. Inside is a register for you to sign, a special stamp to mark this booklet, and more information about things you probably came across during your Quest. Don't forget to put the box back where you found it so other people can discover it too. The adventure takes about one hour, 15 minutes. Have fun!

DIRECTIONS:

From Mid-Hudson Bridge: 7.6 miles north on Rte. 9W, right on Winding Brook Acres Rd. Parking lot on left.

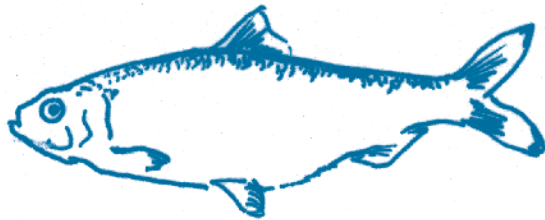
OPERATING HOURS:

Open year-round from dawn to dusk.



**SCENIC
HUDSON**

Use the map to visit some of Black Creek Preserve's most important natural and manmade features, and learn about creatures that depend on them for life. Begin your Quest by crossing the exciting suspension bridge above Black Creek. Pause on it for a moment and gaze down into the water.



BLACK CREEK HERRING

Alewives (*Alosa pseudoharengus*) and blueback herring (*Alosa aestivalis*) are common in Black Creek come spring. Both species spend most of their time in the ocean, only migrating to freshwater tributaries to spawn. They tend to swim in schools. Alewives arrive at Black Creek around mid-May, depositing their eggs in shallow water with a slow current. Appearing about a month later, bluebacks spawn in deeper, more swiftly moving water. Newborn herring begin their swim to the sea at about one month old. Alewives and bluebacks are important food sources for other fish, birds and mammals. Fishermen use them as bait for striped bass.

Herring populations on the East Coast have been declining. To help the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation determine how these fish are faring in the Hudson River, volunteers monitored the number of herring in Black Creek and other tributaries this spring.



HEMLOCK STAND HEMLOCK WOOLY ADELGID

You probably won't see these insect pests, but you might spot their eggs and you'll certainly notice the damage they've caused to hemlock trees at Black Creek Preserve. Native to Asia, the hemlock wooly adelgid (*Adelges tsugae*) was first discovered in New York forests in 1985. Females lay up to 300 eggs, resembling the tips of cotton swabs, on the undersides of hemlock branches. Once hatched, the young use long mouth parts to suck sap out of the trees. Prolonged infestation winds up killing the hemlocks—an important forest shade tree. Thousands of acres of eastern U.S. hemlocks already have been destroyed by these tiny creatures.



VERNAL POOL WOOD FROG

A sure sign of spring in the forest is the "barking" of wood frogs (*Rana sylvatica*). Once awakened from their winter sleep, these tiny amphibians hop to nearby vernal pools—temporary bodies of water formed in small depressions from melting snow or winter runoff. There the males begin their chorus, luring females. After mating, the females lay several hundred eggs in the water (a gelatin-like covering keeps them warm). By April, the pool is teeming with tadpoles, which eat dead leaves and other decaying matter. Around June, they've developed legs and set off into the forest, where they'll feast on insects and other small invertebrates.



Many types of wildlife depend on vernal pools—either for breeding or as a source of food—which is why protecting them from development is crucial. Black Creek Preserve contains about a dozen pools. Please be very careful not to disturb these ecologically sensitive places.



**TREES WITH HOLES
WOODPECKERS**

Notice the holes on the dead trees? They're caused by woodpeckers. Woodpeckers are built for drilling—they have chisel-like beaks perfect for pecking into wood, as well as a sturdy tongue that lets them reach in and grab insects. Their feet contain two backward-facing toes that enable them to hold onto tree trunks or branches. In addition to hunting for live insects, woodpeckers bore holes to create nesting places. In the spring they also "drum" on trees to attract mates. In the Hudson Valley, the most easy-to-spot woodpecker is the small but colorful red-headed woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*).

**STONE WALL
EASTERN
CHIPMUNK**

Stone walls and rock outcroppings are good places to spot eastern chipmunks (*Tamias striatus*). But don't be surprised if you hear their high-pitched squeak before you see them. These timid, squirrel-like rodents spend their days searching for food, from nuts and mushrooms to worms and bird eggs. Pouches in their cheeks come in handy for transporting meals to their underground homes, where they hide out from hawks, foxes, raccoons and snakes. To make it harder for predators to nab them, chipmunks camouflage their burrows with leaves and sticks, and carry dirt they've excavated to distant locations—again with their cheeks.



The stone wall is a remnant from a farm whose fields and meadows once blanketed Black Creek Preserve's rolling landscape. Farmers created the walls as a way of using large rocks uncovered while plowing. It's only in the last century that nature has once again taken over the land they worked so hard to cultivate.



**HUDSON RIVER
BALD EAGLE**

While you're enjoying views of the majestic Hudson River, don't be surprised if you see one of the world's most majestic birds: the bald eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Boasting a seven-foot wingspan, these awe-inspiring creatures have made a remarkable comeback in the region. Before 2000, none had hatched here for at least a century, the result of waterfront development destroying their habitats. Since then, as many as 60 bald eagles have emerged from Hudson Valley nests. If you're really lucky, you'll see one of these birds of prey swoop down and pluck a fish out of the river with its talons.

Places like Scenic Hudson's Black Creek Preserve guarantee that bald eagles will always have places along the river to build their nests—and humans an opportunity to connect with these magnificent creatures.

The Pitch Pine Overlook is your last stop. Don't forget to locate the Quest box. Inside is a special stamp for marking your guide. Please put the box back where you found it.



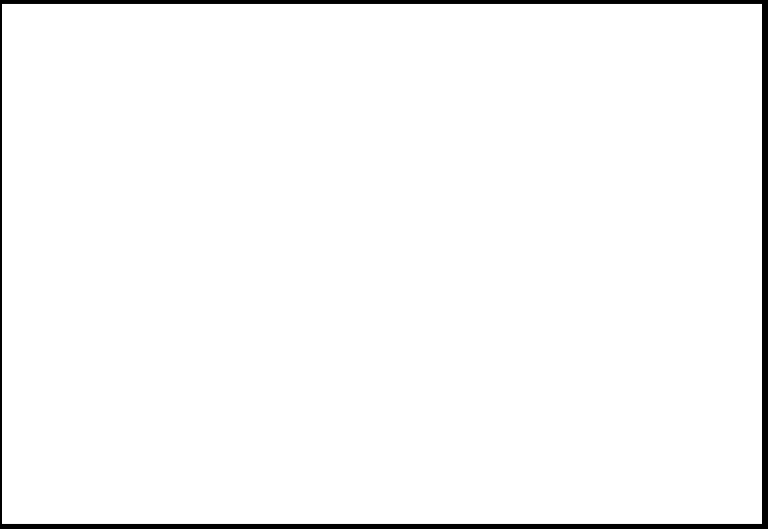
Why we protected this place...

The 130 acres Scenic Hudson purchased at Black Creek Preserve protect a portion of a significant Hudson River tributary—an important spawning ground for herring—as well as a complex of vernal pools that provide critical breeding habitats for amphibians. Wetlands at Black Creek filter pollutants from the river and act as a sponge during storms, preventing inland flooding and erosion.

Who's Scenic Hudson?

We're a group of dedicated people who care about the area we live in—the Hudson River Valley. Forty-five years ago, our founders fought to protect a mountain from being made into a power plant. Since then, we've continued to work together with local communities to protect special places. We've created or enhanced 40 parks and preserves for you to enjoy.

For more information about our parks, visit www.scenichudson.org/parks.



PLACE QUEST STAMP HERE

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Become part of our online community at: www.scenichudson.org

ParkQuest created by Susan Hereth. Illustrations by Seth Martel.

Let us know what you think of this Quest. E-mail your comments to shereth@scenichudson.org.