



### Why we protected this place...

This 96-acre park offers two miles of woodland trails and a shoreline with stunning Hudson River views. This is a prime spot for watching bald eagles, and the shallow waters just offshore of the park are among the Hudson's most important spawning grounds for striped bass.

### Thank you

Thanks to the Hudson River Foundation for a Hudson River Improvement Fund grant to enhance interpretive information at Esopus Meadows Preserve.



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**[www.scenichudson.org](http://www.scenichudson.org)**

NatureNotes created by Susan Hereth.  
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### The Interpretive Trail

For more information about the upland forest ecosystem, follow the red trail and look for the interpretive signs.

As you hike the red trail, be on the lookout for these fascinating plants, many of which are labeled. Some are easier to spot in the spring.

- Feel like something's watching you? It's probably the paper birch trees. Scars on their trunks, where branches have fallen off, look like eyes!
- At the base of the birch, look for tiny plants with spotted green leaves. In mid-spring, you may also see yellow flowers. These are trout lilies.
- Hear something squeaking and creaking? Don't be scared—it's just an old tree moving in the wind.
- Touch the bark on the black cherry tree. What does it feel like?
- Find nature's own furniture—a big, furry rock.
- Why do areas with fewer tall trees have more plants growing close to the ground? You might find the answer later on.
- Notice the shape of chestnut oak leaves. See that same shape at the base of the tree? Can you find any acorns?
- The Eastern hophornbeam puts out seeds in little papery-sac bunches. Its trunk is covered by small green patches of lichen, layers of algae and fungus living together. The lichen's color depends on the kind of algae.
- Dead trees make great food for fungi. How many different fungi shapes can you count?
- What's that smell near the creek—skunk cabbage, perhaps? In early spring these big-leaved plants put out large red and purple flowers. They use the stinky smell to attract flies and other insects, which pollinate the plants. DON'T TOUCH: skunk cabbage is poisonous to humans.
- Feeling tall? Since the Eastern hemlocks died and fell, more sunlight reaches the forest floor, giving these shrubs a chance to grow. Rub a leaf and smell its spiciness!
- Got an insect bite? The bark from witch hazel can treat that. But please don't peel it off. Witch hazel medicine is available at the drug store!

# NatureNotes

## ESOPUS MEADOWS PRESERVE

### *Esopus*



Robert Rodriguez, Jr. • [www.robertrodriguezjr.com](http://www.robertrodriguezjr.com)

For centuries Esopus Meadows' most extraordinary natural feature—the large tidal flat off its shoreline—has made this a special place for wildlife and humans. It's long been an important breeding ground and nursery for fish, which drew Native Americans here to catch them. And its shallow water has been a hazard for sailors since Henry Hudson's day. But Esopus Meadows also will play a big part in the river's future, as water levels continue rising because of climate change. To find out how, look inside.

### Who's Scenic Hudson?

We're a group of dedicated people who care about the Hudson River Valley. Starting in 1963, our founders fought to stop a power plant from destroying a mountain. Since then Scenic Hudson has continued protecting special places like this park. Now we're focused on Saving the Land That Matters Most—working with communities and other partners to preserve lands of the highest scenic, ecological and agricultural significance.

For more information about the 50-plus parks we've created or enhanced, visit [www.scenichudson.org/parks](http://www.scenichudson.org/parks).





## SCENIC HUDSON NATURENOTES



### GOING WITH THE FLOW

Long before the *Half Moon's* arrival, Native Americans relied on the Hudson River for transportation, utilizing dugout canoes on the waterway they called "Mahicantuck," meaning "the river that flows both ways" (for how its flow changes with the tide). The Dutch created a special ship, the sloop, to handle the river's winds and currents; in the 18th century, sloops were the prime mode of moving people and freight. With the introduction of the steamboat and the opening of the Erie Canal in the 19th century, the Hudson became the main artery for shipping goods to and from the West. It was America's first superhighway. Opened in 1871,

Esopus Meadows Lighthouse alerted captains to the dangerous shallows along the river's western shore.

### LIVING IT UP

Americans who prospered from the nation's industrial and transportation revolutions in the mid-1800s showed off their new wealth by purchasing land along Dutchess County's Hudson shoreline and erecting grand homes. One of these—Mills Mansion—is visible across the river; another, Vanderbilt Mansion, stands south of here in Hyde Park. Although they only visited for a few weeks each summer or fall, the owners of these palaces spared no expense in creating beautifully landscaped grounds, where they enjoyed horseback riding, hunting and the same magnificent views that thrill visitors to these historic homes today.



Historic homes in Staatsburg viewed from Esopus Meadows.



### HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Native Americans called this land "esepeu," meaning "high banks." Your drive here from Route 9W descended these banks. But where are the meadows at Esopus Meadows? They're underwater. Actually they're a tidal flat, an area so shallow that the muddy river bottom is almost exposed at low tide. Esopus Meadows is one of the largest tidal flats in the Hudson River. It's called a meadow because farmers once brought their cattle here to feast on native water celery. The flat also is a nursery for shad, perch and striped bass, which made it an important fishing ground for Native Americans. The Klyne Esopus Kill, a Hudson River tributary, flows into these shallows. "Kill" is the Dutch word for creek.



A shoreline restoration project to remove invasive Japanese knotweed (*Polygonum cuspidatum*).

### RISING TO THE OCCASION

The shoreline at Esopus Meadows will play an important role if the Hudson's water level continues rising because of the expected effects of climate change. As a floodplain—land that is periodically flooded—it serves as a sponge, storing and gradually releasing floodwaters. Natural floodplains also act as filters, trapping sediments and pollution, while trees and plants along their banks prevent erosion and provide essential habitat for native plant and wildlife species. As the river rises, Esopus Meadows Preserve will provide room for these animals and plants to migrate inland, ensuring the preservation of the Hudson Valley's great "biological melting pot."



Esopus Meadows Lighthouse



Evidence of Native American activity at Esopus Meadows was found by students on a field trip to the preserve. This point was made 3,000 years ago from Greene County rock. Attached to a wood, bone or antler handle, it served as a spear or knife.

## CONNECTED BY WATER!

Esopus Meadows Preserve is at "River Mile 87" measured from the southern tip of Manhattan.

Use the guidepost in the park to see how the Hudson River connects so many communities!

