Any way you look at the Hudson River watershed, it’s big. A **watershed** is an area of land that drains into a specific body of water, like a river, stream or lake. It includes all the land, mountains, deserts, streams, cities and farms within its borders. The Hudson River watershed covers an area as large as the states of Connecticut and Massachusetts combined (13,390 square miles/34,680 square km). From its **headwaters** (source) in Lake Tear of the Clouds high in the Adirondack Mountains, the Hudson gathers strength and flows 315 miles (507 km), all the way to the New York-New Jersey Harbor. It’s as deep as 175 feet (53 m) at World’s End near West Point and as wide as 3.5 miles (5.6 km) at Haverstraw Bay.

Named after Henry Hudson, the first European to explore it in 1609, the Hudson is often called America’s River because of its national importance. During the Revolutionary War, it was the site of many battles between the British and Americans. Artists made its scenery world famous, which inspired others to appreciate its beauty and work to protect it. The opening of the Erie Canal allowed the Hudson to connect the Great Lakes to the Atlantic Ocean. As the Hudson became a busy shipping route, the New York-New Jersey Harbor became a major port.

The Hudson River as we know it today was mostly carved out by glaciers more than 20,000 years ago but its earliest beginnings go as far back as 65 to 75 million years. In addition to having many different **habitats** (places where plants and animals usually live), the Hudson River and its watershed are of interest to people wherever they live.

**Headwaters:** Source, or beginning of the river.

**Mouth:** End of the river, where it flows into an ocean, sea or lake.

**Tributaries:** Small rivers that flow into the main river.

**Confluence:** The place where two or more rivers or streams meet.

**Boundary:** Border.

**Floodplain:** Found alongside many rivers, these flat areas are normally dry, but are underwater when water levels rise.

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**Wetlands:** A wetland is ‘wet land’ where the soil is waterlogged all or part of the year. Wetlands capture and store water and slow its movement. There are several types of wetlands, such as swamps, salt marshes and bogs.

**GLACIER:** 20,000 years ago much of the Hudson Valley was covered by mile (1.6 km) high ice! Glaciers helped shape the river we see today.