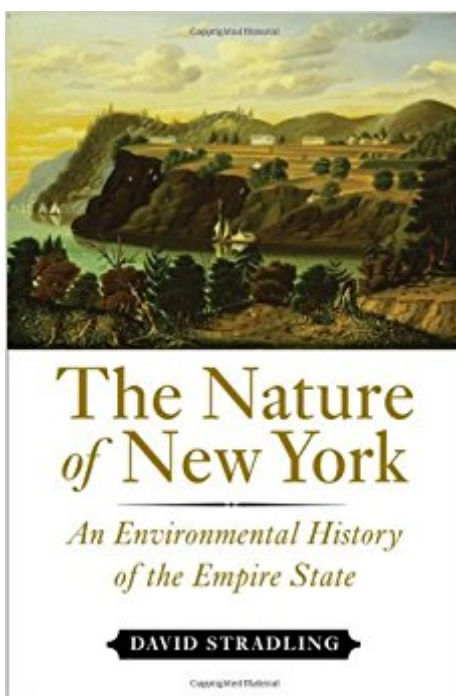


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# The Nature Of New York: An Environmental History Of The Empire State



## Synopsis

From the arrival of Henry Hudson's Half Moon in the estuarial waters of what would come to be called New York Harbor to the 2006 agreement that laid out plans for General Electric to clean up the PCBs it pumped into the river named after Hudson, this work offers a sweeping environmental history of New York State. David Stradling shows how New York's varied landscape and abundant natural resources have played a fundamental role in shaping the state's culture and economy. Simultaneously, he underscores the extent to which New Yorkers have, through such projects as the excavation of the Erie Canal and the construction of highways and reservoir systems, changed the landscape of their state. Surveying all of New York State since first contact between Europeans and the region's indigenous inhabitants, Stradling finds within its borders an amazing array of environmental features, such as Niagara Falls; human intervention through agriculture, urbanization, and industrialization; and symbols, such as Storm King Mountain, that effectively define the New York identity. Stradling demonstrates that the history of the state can be charted by means of epochs that represent stages in the development and redefinition of our relationship to our natural surroundings and the built environment; New York State has gone through cycles of deforestation and reforestation, habitat destruction and restoration that track shifts in population distribution, public policy, and the economy. Understanding these patterns, their history, and their future prospects is essential to comprehending the Empire State in all its complexity.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Stradling examines virtually every major environmental issue in U.S. history from the point of view of how it played out in the state of New York. In some cases, the environmental actions of such New York men as the Roosevelts and Bob Marshall of The Wilderness Society influenced the whole country. . . . Stradling's scope runs from the effects of the Erie Canal in producing the market revolution to the pollution by chemical industries that caused the Love Canal crisis. . . . This accessible, gracefully written book meets its goal and will be especially useful for students of New York history." —Choice, June 2010 "A focused, accessible, and comprehensive environmental history. The bibliographic essay is particularly helpful and the text is well-complemented by 12 color plates and 30 figures and maps. The narrative flows as swiftly as any Catskills mountain stream." —Lawrence C. Swayne, Kaatskill Life (Fall 2011) "In what proved to be a brilliant pairing of project and author, Cornell University Press invited David Stradling to write 'an accessible, comprehensive environmental history of New York State.' The resulting book stands as an exemplary state-focused history. It is also a book brimming with insights into the complex relationship between technology and the environment . . . an outstanding work of environmental history." —Jeffrey K. Stine, Technology and Culture (October 2011) "David Stradling's survey of New York's nature over four hundred years—from the Lenape and Leatherstocking to Levittown and Love Canal—is a marvel of environmental writing. In at times heartbreaking detail, he reminds us that New York, like anywhere, is a living place—pristine, violated, cleansed, preserved—where humans are just one organism, a part of and apart from the destiny of the place." —Gerard Koepfel, author of Water for Gotham: A History and Bond of Union: Building the Erie Canal and the American Empire "Don't be fooled by the term 'environmental history' in its subtitle; The Nature of New York is a big, broad, ambitious, important, and best of all, highly readable book. Given that the Empire State has so often led the nation in environmental progress (and at times in degradation as well), this book will interest anyone who cares about American attitudes toward our natural inheritance. For New Yorkers in particular, David Stradling's book should be required reading." —Paul Schneider, author of The Adirondacks: A History of America's First Wilderness "What most impresses me about The Nature of New York is David Stradling's focus on events, people, and places that are obviously connected to the state's natural history and his ability to connect that environmental history to the overall history of the region. Simply put, Stradling persuasively illustrates how one cannot fully understand the history of the Empire State without also taking into account the state's intimate relationship to the natural environment." —Neil M. Maher, author of Nature's New Deal: The Civilian Conservation Corps and the Roots of the

## American Environmental Movement

David Stradling is Professor of History at the University of Cincinnati. He is the author of *The Nature of New York: An Environmental History of the Empire State* and coauthor of *Where the River Burned: Carl Stokes and the Struggle to Save Cleveland*, both from Cornell. He is also the author of *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills*, and *Smokestacks and Progressives: Environmentalists, Engineers, and Air Quality in America, 1881–1951*.

This is an excellent history of New York. It tells the story of how New Yorkers have used nature and how the environment has affected society from the colonial period to the present. Even those readers familiar with the state's history will enjoy it. David Stradling adopts a unique approach to New York's past focusing less on politics and individuals and more on environmental matters such as the development of farming, the impact of industrialization, the creation of protected areas in the Catskills and the Adirondacks, and the growth of the environmental movement. He is an expert on the environmental history of cities, especially how politicians and ordinary citizens grappled with air pollution. Because of this, his sections on New York's urban landscape are particularly strong. A book like this could easily have focused entirely on conventional 'environmental' topics such as farming, logging, and water development. He covers those with great skill while also incorporating cities into his discussion. Though Stradling is a history professor, this is not a dry academic tome. He has a lively writing style and his passion for the state is evident on every page. The author and the press did a wonderful job with the production. They included a glossy insert of paintings showing the state's environmental past through the centuries, including classics by famous Hudson River School painters. I moved to central New York from the western U.S. seven years ago, and since then, I've wished for a well-written history of the state that explains the development of its various landscapes. Finally, here it is! If you are interested in the state's history, you'll want this book. If you have a friend or someone in the family with this interest, the book will make a great gift.

I purchased this book as a requirement for a class on Empire State History. I was only required to read the first four chapters, but ended up finishing the book. Stradling takes a new approach to NY State history. He looks at it from every perspective, the people, the culture, the landscape... I really liked this book and intend to hang on to it.

This book is great for an overview of New York's environmental past--from an expert. If you want to

understand the environmental issues of the future for New York, you need to know its past. The future, of which this book does not spend much time on (as that isn't the author's intent), does not say much about Climate Change--though it does acknowledge that it is a problem "for which no solution appears imminent." New York State has undergone a lot of environmental change in the past 500 years as the author details very well. It is the foundation for the future looming crisis of Climate Change.

everyone especially in NY state should read this book; I already had read it and ordered this one as a gift..

...informative and useful...thank you!!

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