The Valatie Kill

The Hudson River Valley was colonized by Dutch settlers in the first half of the 1600s. The stream in front of you—the Valatie Kill—draws its name, pronounced "vah-lay-sha," from the Dutch words "vaal" (falls), "je" (little), and "kill" (stream or creek), roughly translating to "little falls stream." Valatie Kill waters rise from the Rensselaer Plateau north of Nassau Lake, flow south through Kinderhook Lake to the Village of Valatie to meet Kinderhook Creek, and then join Stockport Creek, a tributary of the Hudson River. The Albany-Hudson Electric Trail follows the Valatie Kill's course for ten miles, from Nassau Lake to Valatie.

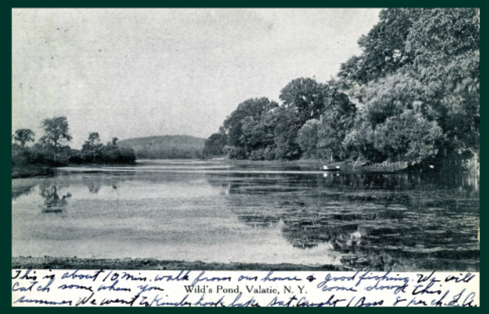
Agricultural Growth and Decline

In the early 1800s, European settlers cleared most Hudson Valley forests for farms, from which they could efficiently ship agricultural products to New York City via the Hudson River. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 and the rapid spread of railroads opened up rich midwestern farmlands to supply eastern US markets. The resulting widespread abandonment of Columbia and Rensselaer County farmlands led to reforestation of over half the region.

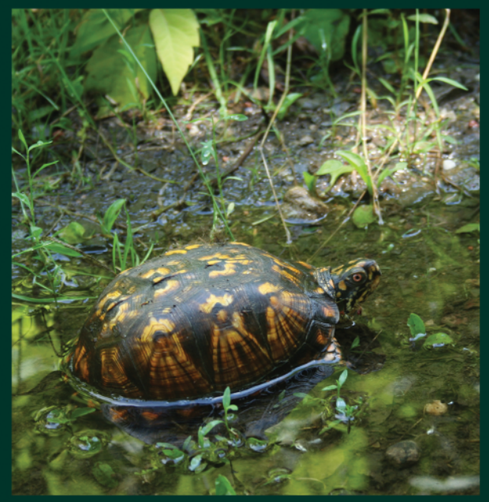
Changing Forests

Today's woodlands are very different from the precolonial old-growth forest. American chestnuts, revered by Native Americans as sources of both food and timber, were decimated by a blight introduced in the early 1900s. Ash trees are now falling victim to the invasive emerald ash borer beetle. Climate change is favoring species such as red oak and red maple, while species such as yellow birch, sugar maple, and red spruce, better adapted to colder climates, are in decline.

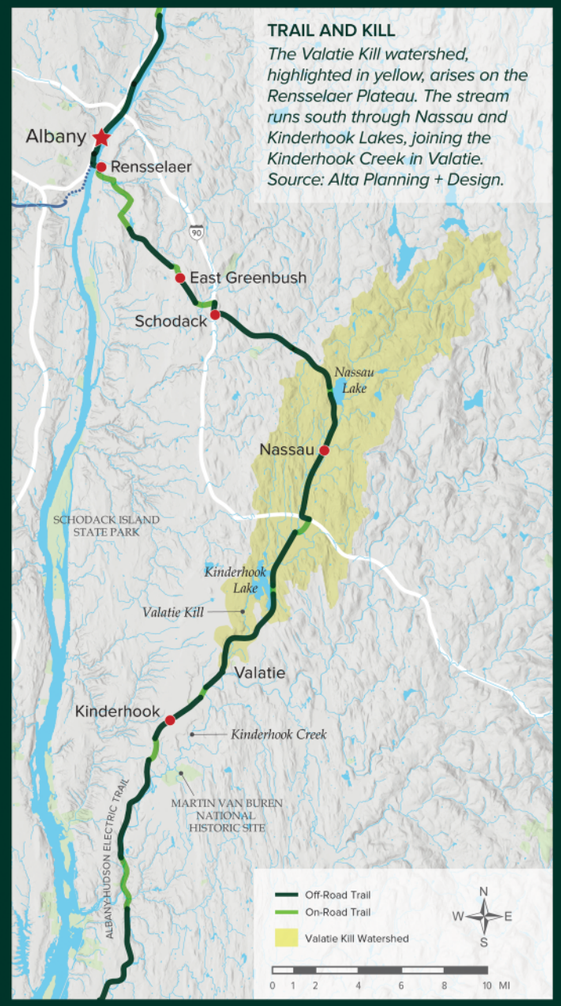
▲ **BROOK SNAKETAIL DRAGONFLY** *(Ophiogomphus aspersus)*
The Kinderhook Creek watershed hosts this rare dragonfly named for the males' snakelike mating claspers. Among the most colorful US dragonflies, it is also among the most environmentally sensitive, and its presence indicates high water quality. It also needs undisturbed fields and woodlands for feeding and breeding. Source: Hawthorne Valley Farmscape Ecology Program.



▲ **WILD'S POND**
The Valatie Kill fed Wild's Pond in Valatie, dammed for textile mills in the 1820s. Although man-made, the pond was considered scenic and was featured among postcards sold by Valatie news agent Frank L. Fowler. Source: Village of Valatie / Guy Gamello Collection.



EASTERN BOX TURTLE ***(Terrapene carolina carolina)*** ▶
This land-based turtle found in the greater Kinderhook Creek watershed is omnivorous and inhabits forests and fields near water. Although it typically lives thirty to forty years or more, it is slow moving, slow to mature, has few offspring, and is imperiled by automobiles, agricultural machinery, and land development. It is in decline in New York, where it is considered a "species of special concern." Source: Hudsonia.



TRAIL AND KILL
The Valatie Kill watershed, highlighted in yellow, arises on the Rensselaer Plateau. The stream runs south through Nassau and Kinderhook Lakes, joining the Kinderhook Creek in Valatie. Source: Alta Planning + Design.

▲ **ELECTRIC TROLLEY**
The Albany-Hudson Electric Trail follows a former trolley line, shown here north of Valatie, which ran from 1900 to 1929. The trail crosses the Valatie Kill five times on new bridges installed where original ones were long ago removed. Source: Schodack Town Historian.

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