

Leading Waters

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I was born in the Catskill Mountains of upstate New York, a beautiful watershed that was cleared out and reshaped to serve New York City with drinking water. Now it is pristine and protected, and the flooded towns at the bottoms of the reservoirs are history. The landscape has been healed with new forests that provide critical habitat and refuge for urban humans, my family included.

We soon moved just a short distance to the neighbouring Hudson River watershed. My childhood home had a nearby lake—really more of a pond by adult standards, but with plenty of water and shoreline for a small boy to explore and escape in. I swam, lay in the sun, and enjoyed my own thoughts. Adult vacations should be so simple.

I roam. The small lake soon gave way to states, countries, and continents. I moved west, first to Michigan, then Minnesota—Colorado was cool but didn't have much water. Along the way I fell in love with Lake Superior. And it brought me back to Michigan.

For many years I lived a short walk through neighbours' woods to the Huron River, a lovely, peaceful, and sustaining presence. The trails along the river were my daily bread. It is beautiful in all seasons, a perfect Michigan river.

I now live on an island in the Detroit River. It's a powerful body of water and the soul of the Great Lakes. Most nights I sleep on my boat and feel the headwater energy of Superior, Michigan, and Huron flow around me. Canada is south and Lake Erie is downstream. It's an intersection of waters, countries, and commerce, but often I have the place to myself.

I always love the water where I live, and never know where that will be. My favourite home is the beaches and forested shorelines of Vancouver, where the Fraser River meets the Pacific Ocean. Reaching the West Coast, starting from the East Coast, built in Detroit on the way—feels like destiny manifested. It may be a false hope, as with the water cycle, there is no end or final destination. It just comes back around and around. Nature is never finished. Enjoy the ride.