



Stormbird Press

## Stormbird Press Release

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Attention: Arts and Environment Journalists

# Every river tells a story. Every great story reveals a river.

**Saturday, September 29, is World Rivers Day**

**Title:**

Tales of the River:  
An Anthology of River  
Literature

**Lead editor:**

Donna Mulvenna

**Genre:**

Literary nonfiction

**Released:**

September 1, 2018

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Every river has a story to tell, as do the people who live, work, and travel along them. These are stories of passion, love, adventure, and wonder. *Tales from the River: An Anthology of River Literature*, captures a collection of these stories from river keepers—scientists, naturalists, activists, and adventurers—who love and care for the world’s rivers.

*‘Like stories, rivers have a beginning, a middle, and an end, starting somewhere, meandering through the landscape, then ending their journey. They carry the story construct through time, bringing to life the lessons of our past and painting pictures of our future,’* says Donna Mulvenna, *Tales of the River* lead editor. *‘What flows through the pages of Tales from the River is a story that binds us to each other.’*

Throughout the anthology, it is evident that rivers possess their own personality, offering boundless opportunity for discovery, and pure unfiltered joy. Author Ron Melchiorre writes of a sixth sense telling him he wasn’t alone on *his* river. He turned to see the big head of a moose swimming towards him, like a submerged iceberg. The cold waters of Saskatchewan have witnessed such communions for millennia.

In Australia, award-winning author Anthony Birch, transports us to his ancestral past, where he watched a water bird gracefully glide across the surface of the water, without making a sound. When he thought back to that first visit to the billabong, what he remembered most clearly was that it was the first time, in the life of an Aboriginal “slum kid” that country had spoken to him.

In Brazil, renowned environmentalist Jose Truda Palazzo Jr. offers glimpses of a private expedition along the Negro river where a family of pink dolphins, circled the sandbank for a long while, their loud *poofs* and surface antics, including the occasional jump out of the water, amazing the group of river travellers and touching them forever.

*‘Stories such as these remind us that if we experience wild places with the same wonder that we feel love, touching the depths of our souls, we would never stray far from them,’* says Mulvenna, who formed a deep connection with rivers in French Guiana. One vivid memory she has is of watching three young children paddling a traditional pirogue along a river in the Amazon. The eldest child was steering the canoe with a long takari pole, as confidently as a child peddling a little three-wheeled cart in a city park. The river was his world.

Aside from recreation, there is of course a practical need to care for our rivers. Without clean, healthy rivers we lose important wildlife and habitats. But there is also something more spiritual: a joyfulness that comes with being near a body of flowing water, and an innate longing to care for it.

In the foreword to the anthology Erik Solhiem, Executive Director of UN Environment, writes that it is, *‘when people connect personally with an issue, that change happens... Each story conveys a powerful message—that we must save the rivers of this planet. Because it is only when we save our rivers, will we be able to protect what we love.’*

*‘Rather than serving as a mere backdrop to stories and our lives, the rivers throughout the anthology are integral to the experiences of its authors, with memories of direct encounters lasting a lifetime,’* concludes Mulvenna. *‘Culture, adventure, beauty, love, and the sustenance of people and wildlife: that is what rivers are all about. That is why rivers are so precious.’*

*Tales from the River* is available through bookstores, the Ingram Content Group, or directly from [Stormbird Press](http://Stormbird Press).

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## Supporting information

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### *Tales from the River: An Anthology of River Literature*

Published in 2018, this collection of river literature compiles both classic and cutting-edge essays of twenty-one writers who draw on their wisdom, compassion, and ecological consciousness.

*Tales of the River* features original writing by award winning authors including Anthony Birch, author of *Ghost River*, winner of the 2016 Victorian Premier’s Literary Award for Indigenous Writing, and innovative prose by Kathleen Dean Moore best known for award-winning books about our cultural and spiritual relation to wet, wild places, and fresh new voices from across the globe. All have joined to create an original and inspiring collection borne from their unique connection with the natural world.

This association is shared in stories where, being so focused on the complexities of the river ahead makes the rest of the world completely disappear, and the smoke of a driftwood fire floats in air too thick to carry any sound but the rushing of the river. A canoe is tossed aside and rests akimbo with an aspen branch penetrating its hull, white fog flows down a river as if even the air runs to the sea, and an Aboriginal ‘slum kid’ steals a bike so he can visit a river rich in eucalypt trees that ‘old blackfellas’ had used to make bark canoes, scar trees.

Like Eric Sevareid’s *Canoeing with the Cree*, Hemingway’s *Big Two-Hearted River*, and Edward Abbey’s *Down the River*, the anthology promises glimpses into history, adventure and magic, and reminds us that the crystal-clear rivers of our childhoods are the way rivers are meant to be.

Editors Donna Mulvenna and Margi Prideaux share a passion for wild spaces as portrayed in the anthology’s dramatic range of environmental writing which offers an insight into rivers across the world, reflected by the varied perspectives of field biologists, environmentalists, wilderness guides, academics, writers, and naturalists.

### Praise for *Tales of the River*

The beauty and extraordinary natural nuances of our rivers are wonderfully captured in this book. If we are to preserve and nurture this essential but threatened resource, then our motivation must come from the heart. The richly varied yet delightful chapters in this book are from the heart. The result is a powerful, emotional exhortation to preserve and regenerate this vital nourishing life-source.

—Charles Massy, *Call of the Reed-Warbler: A New Agriculture - A New Earth*

Rivers are story bearers. In this volume, memories and murmurs, tragedies and travels, elegies and epics are borne to us on currents of masterful language. Reading *Tales from the River* was like sailing the world anew on a vessel built of sheer joy.

—Alyson Hagy, *Ghosts of Wyoming and Scribe*

Fresh water rivers—elixir of life and our planets very arteries are sadly in dire straits. In “*Tales of the River*”, 21 essayists evoke the beauty, peace and joy afforded by healthy flowing waters, but as well, demonstrate our global collective need to restore and protect these life-givers.

—Micheline Jenner, *The Secret Life of Whales*

This wonderful collection reminds us that rivers are far more than just sources of water: they nourish people’s fields and souls, they flow through our cities and our cultures. Protecting and restoring the world’s rivers requires us to value them for all their benefits: this book evokes these benefits and provides a powerful call for a re-evaluation of why rivers matter.

—Stuart Orr, Leader Freshwater Practice, WWF

This beautiful celebration of the life giving power and seasonal pulse of rivers worldwide is timely and important. Rivers are threatened almost everywhere, and their life among the most

imperilled of any habitat on Earth. These lyrical vignettes remind us to better appreciate rivers or risk losing much that we would sorely miss.

—Callum Roberts, *Ocean of Life: How our Seas are Changing*. Professor of Marine Conservation at the University of York, UK.

This book gathers together stories of people around the world taking the pulse of the planet by enjoying, cherishing and defending waterways. Some explore rivers that still flow far from humanity's touch; others discover the resilience of the natural world by paddling on stressed urban waterways--but every story reminds us that we need to love our rivers again. It's a joyous read that will inspire you to plan your own riparian journey.

—Rick Hodges, *To Follow Elephants*

## Tales of the River Lead Editor

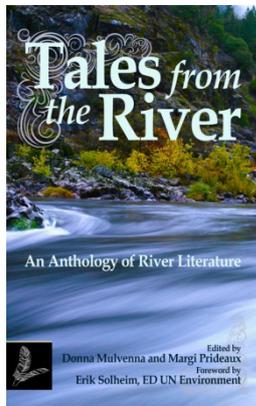
Donna Mulvenna is a horticulturalist, whose journey as a writer began when moved to the Amazon rainforest in French Guiana.

For four years she wrote from a platform high in the canopy where the wildlife became her only company. Through her writing she hopes to give readers a glimpse of the wonder she discovered in the rainforest, reveal the profound effect it has on people's lives, and share why it is more important than ever before, to reconnect with the natural world.

'Nobody leaves the Amazon rainforest unchanged,' says Donna, when explaining why she no longer feels the need to own a mobile phone, buy material possessions, or even wear shoes. When not writing or gardening, she can be found sitting under a tree reading or paddling along a river in a sprint canoe.

Donna is a Fellow of the International League of Conservation Writers, and the author of *Happiness is Green*, *Wild Roots: Coming Alive in the French Amazon*, and *The Awe of Nature*. She co-authored *All Things Breathe Alike: A Wildlife Anthology*, and is the co-editor of *Tales of the River*.

## Press Images



## Chapter Outline

Foreword by Erik Solheim, Executive Secretary UN Environment

Introduction

POLAR FRESHWATER

Memories of Hockley Lake, Ron Melchiorre

TEMPERATE UPLAND RIVERS

Growing Up With Rivers, Tim Palmer

Seven Rivers, Rob Carney

TEMPERATE COASTAL RIVERS

The Wild Atnarko River, Mary Woodbury

Let the River Run, Wes Ferguson

Kayaking Chile's Pascua River, Diana Saverin

Prodigal River, Rebecca Lawton

Paddling the Sewershed, Brice Particelli

When a River is a Person, Gary Wockner

Catfish Bend, Lisa Knopp

Upo Wetlands to Doyo Islet, Louise Duff

TEMPERATE FLOODPLAIN RIVERS

Three Water Stories, Anthony Birch

The Willamette, Kathleen Dean Moore

River of the Past, Conor Mihell

The Loner, James Roberts

Three Rivers, Karen Lloyd

Musical Life, Margi Prideaux

TROPICAL UPLAND RIVERS

Wilder Rivers, Donna Mulvenna

TROPICAL FLOODPLAIN RIVERS

On the Negro River, José Truda Palazzo, Jr.

Deafened by Nature, Jessica Groenendijk

The Mother River of India, Mariellen Ward

ABOUT THIS BOOK

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Rivers are Imperilled

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