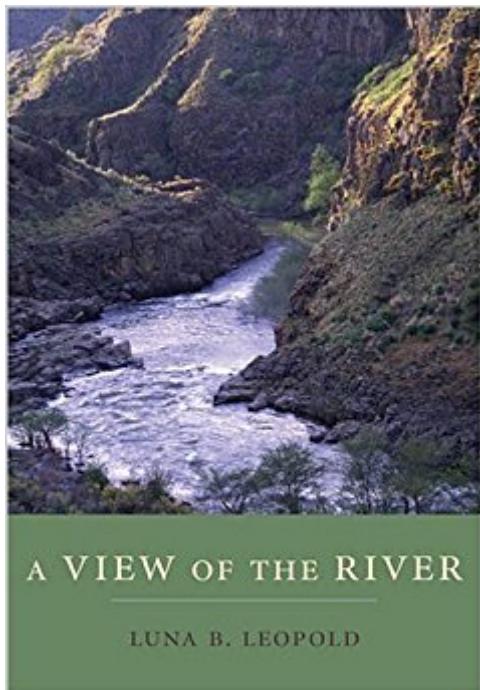


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A View Of The River



Synopsis

With the Midwest under water, America had a chance to see how effectively it had "improved" its rivers. We've straightened and dredged them, revetted and rerouted them, made massive efforts to control them, yet our actions have been less than successful. Too often, physical changes made to a river conflict with natural processes, resulting in--rather than alleviating--damage. Applying available knowledge on how rivers form and act could prevent such problems. In this book, Luna Leopold seeks to organize such knowledge. Widely regarded as the most creative scholar in the field of river morphology, Leopold presents a coherent description of the river, its shape, size, organization, and action, along with a consistent theory that explains much of the observed character of channels. The laws of physics that govern rivers allow for variations, many of them dictated by random chance. Thus, a river's adaptation, as Leopold describes it, tends toward the most probable form, the one with the least variance among hydraulic parameters. We see how this probabilistic tendency plays out as Leopold views the river as a whole from headwater to mouth, in the drainage net, in the behavior of meanders, and in aspects of sediment transport. Grounded in hydraulics, geomorphology, and surveying, as well as in extensive fieldwork on rivers in the eastern and Rocky Mountain states, Leopold's view of a river is at once technical and personal, providing both a firm foundation for understanding the behavior of rivers--including instructions for getting started in backyard hydrology--and a wealth of firsthand observations by a thoughtful and experienced scientist. It will be of immediate interest and great use as we seek to develop, preserve, and appreciate our most fluid natural resource.

Book Information

Hardcover: 312 pages

Publisher: Harvard University Press (June 30, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0674937325

ISBN-13: 978-0674937321

Product Dimensions: 9.5 x 6.6 x 0.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 12 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #573,040 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #133 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Hydrology #544 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Rivers #1022 in Books > Science & Math > Earth Sciences > Geology

Customer Reviews

Luna Leopold is responsible for perhaps the most important research on rivers over the past 50 years. In this very personal book he reflects upon that experience, providing insights that go far beyond mere research results. (Vic Baker Science 1994-11-25)

The strength of this book is the force of intellect and experience Leopold brings to his subject. His writing style is clear, his explanations lucid, the coverage comprehensive. This is an extremely personal, almost autobiographical book--it is certainly not a dry, equation-filled treatise. It ranks with the best of John McPhee, but in this book the scientist speaks in his own voice. I recommend it highly. (Edwin E. Herricks, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign)

If you read Barry Lopez River Notes, this book is not that. There is a subtext that comes through -- Leopold loved his work, the outdoors life of a river surveyor, and the rivers he studied -- but this is not a book of naturalist poetry. What it is, is the digest of a lifetime's study of the fluvial morphology of small rivers in America. Leopold indicates early on in the preface that he has not done much work on other continents, on big rivers or in tropical climates. However, these limitations acknowledged, much of what Leopold describes can be generalised into wider contexts. The main limitation for New Zealand readers will be the lack of any real discussion about braided rivers. For students of hydrology and morphology this book could be a primer, or, I suspect, it contains important insights for expert readers too. I am just a student of river projects, and make no claim to any specialist knowledge, but the text is accessible throughout. You don't have to be a scientist to get a lot out of this. It is a kind of exemplar too, because Leopold presents his findings eloquently, clearly, in plain English, and with plenty of illustrations. If you are a scientist I suggest you buy it, if you are an engineer I am not so sure. I must give you some examples of Leopold's knowledge, experience and vision. Hydro engineers will appreciate the value of complete records kept over an extended period of time; the question is always about that minimum flow in years of drought. In Chapter Two, River Measurement, Leopold is discussing the network of gaging stations: "The matter is complicated and will not be treated in detail here. But it is important to realize that many river gaging stations are so affected by the works of man that they do not provide a representation of the hydrology of the river basin". A few pages further in Leopold reveals himself as a very practical man, shunning the black art: "The easiest way to measure velocity is by floats, and the best float is an orange peel. It has just the right specific gravity to float nicely at the surface, it is brightly colored and thus easily seen, and it is readily available". Later, near to the end, Leopold has possibly found some naturally occurring

herbs: "The longitudinal profile of a river is concave to the sky". I am glad to have bought my copy of A View of the River. I dip into it when I'm in a dreamy mood, and every time I gain some small insight which seems valuable. It is not a thick book, but the text is reasonably dense, such that there is a lot of knowledge contained in just 298 pages.

Very readable. Great analysis of hydrology and the processes that shape rivers.

This book is a must-have for your library if you will only have ONE book on freshwater hydrology. Leopold thoroughly explains the essential processes in a way that is clear and understandable. Also show ways to put this knowledge to work near your home. Reading this book is critical to your competent understanding of basic hydrologic processes, so you can be an intelligent consumer of the stuff put out by the mass media. Get it. Read it. Re-read it.

very good

This is a well composed and concise book. It helps me a lot in understanding fluvial river processes, and recommend for anyone who study the same area.

really good still reading

If you're into stream ecology, this is the book for you. there are some videos out there by this guy too.

A View of the River is an excellent summary of fluvial research and patterns. It is not written explicitly as a textbook or reference book, but it could easily be used that way. Organization will always be difficult when including such a wide variety of information. The chapters were organized in an effective way, but a more detailed table of contents or a more extensive index would be helpful for referencing ideas and concepts that appear throughout the book or are connected to concepts proposed at earlier stages in the book. The lack of in-text citation, which the author acknowledges as a compromise in the preface, contributes to the inadequacy of referencing. If one is using this book to conduct amateur analysis on local streams, as the author suggests, better referencing is essential.

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