
book review

***Up on the River: An Upper Mississippi Chronicle* by John Madson. 1985. Nick Lyons Books, New York. 276 pp. (ISBN 0-8052-3966-9).**

John Madson's *Up on the River: An Upper Mississippi Chronicle* is a folksy, highly readable and exceptionally accurate guide to the Upper Mississippi River (from St. Louis to Saint Anthony Falls). In it, Madson dramatically summarizes the geological, biological and human history of America's most famous river, one so famous it is simply called "The River". This carefully crafted and authoritative work brings us up to date from where Mark Twain left us off a century ago.

The Upper Mississippi is an incredibly exquisite natural resource, and along its banks there has evolved a unique and timeless culture. *Up on the River* is an accurate portrait that captures the essence of both the natural and cultural worlds, demonstrating how each has influenced and shaped the other.

Madson takes us from the "Old River" with its clear waters, beds of Higgin's eye pearly mussels and 150 pound sturgeons to the "Modern River" with its dams, carp and recreational boating. He dramatically summarizes the River's long use and abuse by lumberjacks, shell gatherers (who used the shells to make mother-of-pearl buttons), barge men, fishermen, and the Army Corps of Engineers.

Up on the River is sometimes hilarious, it is masterfully written, and it is always accurate. Anyone who cares about the natural world of the Upper Mississippi and the independent people who inhabit its banks would do well to read Madson's account; those who don't care yet surely will after a very pleasant evening or two with what has to be one of John Madson's finest works.

Note: John Madson is a well known writer in the field of ecology and the outdoors. His articles appear regularly in such publications as *National Geographic* and *Audubon*. Previous books by Madson include *Out Home*, *Stories from Under the Sky* and *Where the Sky Began*.

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