

# The Mississippi

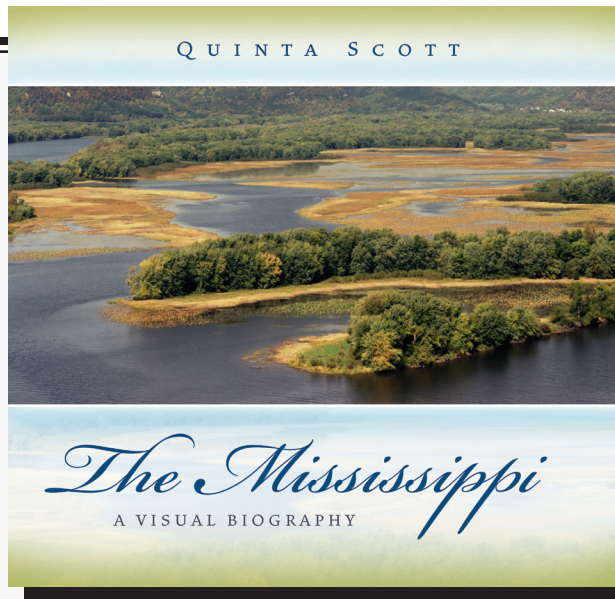
## A Visual Biography

Quinta Scott

Consider the Misi-zibi, the Great River: what natural forces took sixty thousand years to shape, we Americans molded to our needs in three hundred, damaging its wetlands, in some cases, beyond repair. Photographer Quinta Scott has documented the progression of the Mississippi River from its source at Lake Itasca to the Gulf of Mexico, with hundreds of stopping points along the way. In this remarkable volume—the only book to focus on the topography of the whole river and its floodplain—she blends images and text to weave a comprehensive view of the riparian landscape as a living organism and of the effects of human intervention on its natural processes.

Scott began photographing sites along the Mississippi just before the flood of 1993, and her images reflect the sweep of the river's history, from the Pleistocene era to Katrina. Wielding her large-format camera along the river's entire stretch, she captures important sites—places like Bayou de View in the Arkansas "Big Woods," where the Ivory-Billed Woodpecker was sighted in 2004, and the Timablier Island, a barrier island and hurricane speed bump—that represent both what Americans has done to change the river and our current attempts to restore its damaged ecosystems.

In 200 dramatic color photographs, Scott illustrates the geographical and botanical features of the river and its wetlands, showing how the latter were formed by glacial melt and the river's meandering. In accompanying vignettes, she explains how we have changed each site depicted, how we try to manage it, and the wildlife that occupies it. She describes what is being done to restore the islands and side channels on the Upper Mississippi, forests in the Lower Alluvial Valley, and coastal marshes along the Gulf of Mexico. She also reveals the role of



the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers first in changing the river, then in working to restore it, as well as the Corps' relationship with Congress.

No one has ever before attempted such a vast photographic documentation of the Mississippi River, capturing so many sites in all their diversity and complexity while also combining ongoing geologic processes with human history. This majestic book is nothing less than a natural biography of the Mississippi, showing that, to understand the river and its floodplain today, we must understand the natural processes we have disrupted. It is both a rich documentary source and a fascinating overview for anyone captivated by this quintessential feature of the American landscape.

QUINTA SCOTT'S other books include *The Eads Bridge* and *Images of St. Louis* (University of Missouri Press) and more recently *Route 66* and *Along Route 66: The Architecture of America's Highway*. She lives in Waterloo, Illinois. Available in August, 352 pages, List price \$75.00, Discount price \$60.00

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