



# On the Water: A Fishing Memoir

*Guy de la Valdene*

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## **On the Water: A Fishing Memoir** Guy de la Valdene

From the acclaimed author of *Fragrance of Grass* comes a meditation on water and nature, fishing and growing older. *On the Water* is a gorgeously written collection of essays that all take place on or near the water and pay tribute to the flora and fauna associated with those ecosystems. There are essays about the finer points of tickling rainbow trout in the streams of Normandy, and of eagles and ospreys fishing for bass while barely breaking the surface of the water. There are stories of droughts and floods, of dogs and boats, of worms and rattlesnakes and even of catching and cooking soft-shell turtles that taste like osso-bucco. There is fishing and diving in the Bahamas, tarpon fishing in the Florida Keys, and fly fishing for sailfish in Central America. And there are larger-than-life personalities that are bigger than the fish tales they tell! *On the Water* is a finely honed and well-crafted collection of tales for the true sportsman and makes for a perfect companion volume to la Valdene's celebrated collection of essays on hunting.

## **On the Water: A Fishing Memoir Details**

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Author : Guy de la Valdene

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# From Reader Review On the Water: A Fishing Memoir for online ebook

## Paul Barnes says

An interest in fish, fishing, or even water is not needed in order to enjoy this book. Valdene's prose is powerful and his love for the outdoors is authentic. Everything drips with nostalgia, but that's what happens when you're fortunate enough to grow up fishing the Bahamas, Keys, and inland Florida before any tourist stepped foot there. Describing his summers as a youth down in Deep Water Cay, Valdene says: "Imagine a mirror granting every wish, and then imagine looking into that mirror every single day." Sounds good to me.

### Selected Quotes:

"That first morning after the storm had moved north and made a statement out of a hole, and every morning since, this small body of water is where I come to get away from human interference and observe, on a small, contained scale, nature's simple and effective protocol. My faith in the ecosystem affirms the reverie and the mystery that water evokes, and the toughness by which nature subsists. Water unpolluted by man is a joy to the eye and sanctuary from which to observe the genesis of life, not to the mention the inconsequentiality of one's own. Inside the pond there is no vanity, no malice; there is no greed. Fish don't have social aspirations; they have no egos."

"In this age of revelations, mystery is a valuable commodity. Progress often takes away what it took a long time to create."

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## Nicholas Maurer says

This book is filled with wonderful descriptions of life on the water. The author describes his childhood with such amazing detail that I feel like I speared the frogs myself or smelled the fish as the chef prepared it. Valdene is as silver tongued as they come and paints the scenery with great detail that if this book were a painting it would be a Monet. However the his story starts to become lackluster towards the second half and all he has are descriptors. It's as if his lived slowed down and all he knew how to do was paint the same scene over and over. It's a very easy read and will keep you captivated through his exciting childhood but be prepared that even the most exciting youthful exuberance exhausts with the responsibilities of adulthood.

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## Lauren says

If you enjoy nature, fishing, and a good read. This was an enjoyable book.

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## Lynn says

the best part about this book was that my wife saw it listed, thought I would like it and find it interesting, and

cared enough about me to buy it as a surprise gift. All of that in fact was very good, and the book would have been interesting if it had been about someone else. The first paragraph describes how he left New York at age 6 to live in a castle his parents had purchased in Normandy, and every page from then on drips with a sense of nobles oblige. He and his buddies are wonderful fishermen who view all those of lesser skills with mocking contempt. He brags about the women he has bedded with the same tone he uses in describing fish he caught, except he seems to value the fish more. He scolds frequently about the ecological damage we do to our planet while casually tossing out that he knew he couldn't get a permit to expand the pond on his 800 acre Florida ranch from 10 acres to 25 acres because it would flood a wetland, so he just did it without asking anyone. I thought that the most telling part of this "fishing memoir" was that you don't even learn that he has children and grandchildren till the next to last page, and then only as an aside. Then I found out that one of his two children shot herself in 2006, something that isn't even mentioned. The parts of the book about the ecology of his pond were interesting and the descriptions of fishing in places I'll never go (like Iceland) were informative, but overall the book was a reminder to me of the kind of person I'm trying not to be. If I had a 25 acre pond and wrote a book about it, the whole thing would be about family and you'd get a blow by blow description of teaching my grandson to fish, something I hope to start this summer. Nobody would read that book, but I'd have a great time living it.

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## **David Fox says**

I found this book peaking out from a recommend reading shelf at my local library. It's a short read and due to my recent obsession with fishing it was added to my stack of books as I left that day. Guy de la Valdene has lived such a life that God himself would be jealous. Raised in a castle in France, he spent his early youth hunting the streams that fed into the ocean. His catches were large, the food he ate was prepared by the castle chef and his adventures were only cut short when his family was uprooted and moved to South Florida. What a tragedy. Except he then befriended a family that took them in as one of their own and helped him along as he began to explore the Florida keys as they were in the 1960's; a truly remarkable paradise that no longer exists. These days were filled with boat runs to his private key. Fishing trips were they would catch 80 pound monsters from the deep. Youthful exploits, shenanigans, feats of strength, good food and lovely women. They were the kings of the earth during this time and Guy retells these stories with a fondness and nostalgia that is both beautiful and in a way sickening. I will always appreciate these tales but at the same time there is an unmistakable vanity to it all. The rich life they lived is gone, and it can never return. The keys were once unspoiled, a rich and exotic paradise of wildlife and sea. Now, they are the playground of the rich. Homes sit on every part that can be developed. They stare vacantly out to sea for the better part of the year, only hosting their owners for brief weekends or holidays. The characters that once inhabited this land are also forgotten in Guy's book. They are briefly mentioned as awe inspiring but we don't get to know them and instead are only left with a vague sense that we should know of them because they were heroes, according to Guy.

However the book is not only about Guy's reign as the brawny boy of Florida, it also covers his deep fascination with a pond he builds in his backyard in his later years. On his property, we follow him as he develops a 20 acre pond into a 60 acre pond. He documents the fish, the wildlife, the seasons and life cycle of his pond. Here Guy's story telling is his strongest. It's no longer about himself, but instead a true love story between him and the water he loves. Friends come and we meet them as genuine characters, not as lore. We struggle with him through drought and triumph with him as we watch the rains come again. In this the novel redeems itself!

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## **Bob Peru says**

excellent. one of my top 2 or three outdoor writers. i almost docked this a star for being too short as i wanted much more writing.

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## **Jeffrey says**

I have read quite a few books about fish, fishing and anglers. This book stands out.

The central theme in the book is the author's pond near Tallahassee, Florida. I can see the pond in my mind's eye. Oh how I would love to fish it and watch it change as the author has over the years.

He also speaks of his time growing up in France in the family castle, chasing tarpon, sailfish, steelhead and salmon, bass, brim, specks and other glorious finned creatures. He writes of songbirds, raptors, shorebirds and the myriad of other critters that make up the natural world; floods and droughts. He talks of that which has been destroyed, never to be found again. He speaks of anglers and friends that have made a mark in his fairytale life. He shares stories about the dogs he's loved.

My only complaint is that the book is slight in size. However, it is brimming with substance, clean and beautifully written sentences, ethics and restraint, mistakes and regrets.

A great book for anyone who has fished. A book that stands on its own.

'Of all the sounds that touch my soul these days, the most beautiful one of all is silence.'

Next year, when spring starts to show, I will read this again.

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