



WRITER-ACTIVIST CRAIG CHILDS (COURTESY PHOTO)

**AUTHOR CRAIG CHILDS TO KEYNOTE SEPTEMBER'S ANNUAL GILA RIVER FESTIVAL**

by Donna Stevens, Coordinator, Gila River Festival

The many forms and facets of storytelling take center-stage at this year's Gila River Festival. Throughout human experience, stories have helped connect us to place and community. They allow us to inhabit our natural environment emotionally: to feel a visceral bond that moves us to protect nature.

Stories shape the way we live and think about our planet. Tales of America's splendor encouraged a flood of immigration to the New World, and later persuaded pioneers to pack their wagons and settle the frontier.

Although the West is now fully populated, the region's growth shows no signs of stopping. With environmental problems at an all-time high, it's past time to develop solutions, brainstorm strategies, and reconsider our relationship to this part of the world. In short, we need to create new stories.

At the 8th Annual Gila River Festival, we will do exactly that. From September 13-16, 2012, we will tell classic stories of the Gila and generate new ones. Join master storyteller Craig Childs — author of *The Secret Knowledge of Water*, *House of Rain*, and *The Animal Dialogues* — as he weaves the magic of the Gila into whole cloth.

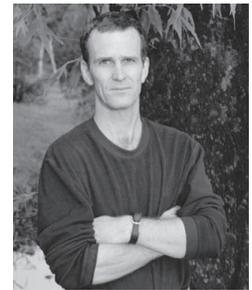
In addition, award-winning long-time GRIP board member and photogra-

**LAST YEAR'S KEYNOTE SPEAKER BLOGS ABOUT GILA RIVER**

We invite you to read the blog posting of Global Water Policy Project director and award-winning author Sandra Postel, describing eloquently her experience visiting the Gila River and participating in the 7th annual Gila River Festival during the autumn of 2012. The post is available on-line as part of National Geographic's "Newswatch." It's entitled *Still Wild and Free, New Mexico's Gila River is Again Under Threat* (<http://newswatch.nationalgeographic.com/2011/09/27/still-wild-and-free-new-mexicos-gila-river-is-again-under-threat/>). Postel serves as lead water expert for the National Geographic's Freshwater Initiative.

pher Michael Berman will release a new book of photos and essays to coincide with the Festival. We'll host an evening reception and booksigning for Berman and *The Gila: Radical Visions, Enduring Silence*. Some of the writers featured in the pages of his book also will tell stories about the river during this year's event.

The Gila River needs—and deserves—a new story. Or perhaps we need to return to an ancient story, one that values and respects the natural world, its rivers and wild places. There are misguided forces that want to divert and dewater the Gila River; people who don't sense its wonder or magic, but instead view it as a resource to be exploited and sold to the highest bidder. Our calling is to save the Gila, to rewrite the stories of how we inhabit this arid land, and to re-imagine our relationship with water, that most sacred essence.



MICHAEL BERMAN



GILA RIVER DESCENDING FROM MOGOLLON BOX INTO AGRICULTURAL AREA EAST OF CLIFF. (GRIP FILE PHOTO)

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