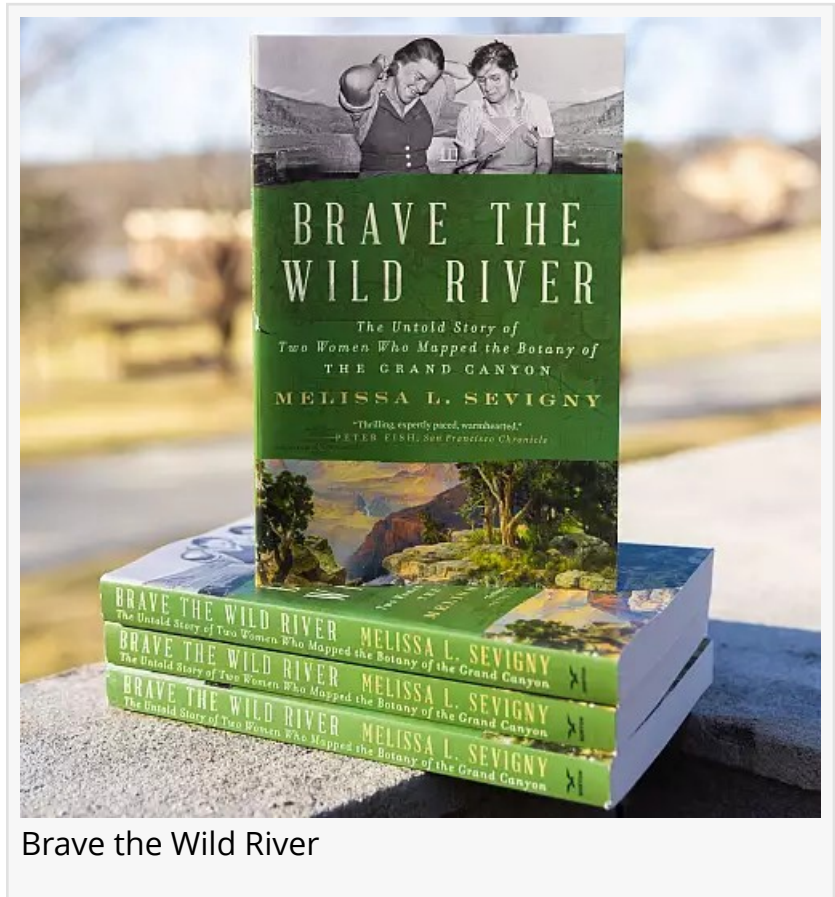


Brave the Wild River Chosen as 2026 Sweet Briar Shared Book

Sweet Briar's 2026 Shared Book highlights women in science as author Melissa Sevigny joins campus as the Waxter Environmental Forum speaker.

SWEET BRIAR, VA, UNITED STATES, February 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- For the 2026 Sweet Briar Shared Book, the College has selected Melissa L. Sevigny's *Brave the Wild River: The Untold Story of Two Women Who Mapped the Botany of the Grand Canyon*. Sevigny will visit campus as our Shared Book author, as well as this year's Julia B. Waxter Environmental Forum speaker. The forum invites experts in the environmental science field to campus for meaningful dialogue with students and other community members.



Brave the Wild River

The community will read *Brave the Wild River* ahead of Sevigny's visit to campus on April 22, as part of the College's Earth Day celebration. Her trip to campus will include class discussions, meals with community members, and a public presentation about her work. Copies of *Brave the Wild River* will be distributed to students and community members through tabling sessions in Prothro and will be available in the Dean's Office free of charge. Additional events related to Earth Day will also take place, with details to follow.

Brave the Wild River tells the true story of botanists Elzada Clover and Lois Jotter, who set off down the Colorado River in the summer of 1938, accompanied by an ambitious expedition leader, a zoologist, and two amateur boatmen. Determined to be the first to survey the Grand Canyon's plants, this nonfiction book documents the spellbinding adventure of two women who risked their lives to make an unprecedented botanical survey in the American West. The book earned critical success upon its publication, including being named winner of the National

Outdoor Book Award for history/biography; winner of the Reading the West Book Award in memoir/biography; a Southwest Book of the Year Top Pick; a Booklist Top of the List winner for nonfiction; a New Yorker Best Book; and an honorable mention for the Rachel Carson Environment Book Award for Reporting on the Environment.

“We are so excited to welcome author Melissa Sevingy to add a new voice to the ongoing campus conversations around environmental issues. It will be particularly exciting to read about and discuss the pioneering work of two women botanists in the 1930s while we are celebrating the College’s 125th anniversary of educating women leaders,” said Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dean of the College, and Chief Sustainability Officer Dr. Lisa Powell.



Melissa L. Sevingy Credit: Alexis Ann Photography

Influenced by her childhood in Arizona, Sevingy’s work explores the intersections of science, nature, and history. She has authored two other nonfiction books in addition to *Brave the Wild River*. Sevingy earned a B.S. in environmental science from the University of Arizona and an M.F.A. in creative writing and environment from Iowa State University. She worked for 10 years as a science reporter at KNAU Arizona Public Radio, where her stories earned national acclaim. She was also a science communicator in the fields of planetary science, western water policy, and sustainable agriculture. She worked on NASA’s Phoenix Mars Scout Mission during its ground operations on Mars in 2008, and an asteroid, 28976

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We are excited to welcome author Melissa Sevingy to contribute a new voice to ongoing campus conversations on environmental issues.”

Dr. Lisa Powell, Vice President of Academic Affairs

Sevingy, was named in her honor. Her literary work appears in *The New York Times*, *High Country News*, *Orion*, *Arizona Highways*, and *National Parks Magazine*, among other publications.

[The Julia B. Waxter Environmental Forum](#) is supported by an endowment established at Sweet Briar by the late Julia Baldwin Waxter ’49 and her husband, Bill. In addition to presenting a public lecture, each forum speaker interacts with environmental science students through class visits,

meals, and informal conversations.

[The Sweet Briar Shared Book program](#) provides students, faculty, and staff with a shared experience, fosters discussion on a wide range of issues, and introduces community members to new perspectives through literature.

Programs like the Sweet Briar Shared Book and the Julia B. Waxter Environmental Forum reflect the College's commitment to immersive learning, interdisciplinary dialogue, and women's leadership in science and the humanities. Students at Sweet Briar engage directly with authors, scholars, and global issues—building critical thinking skills and meaningful connections beyond the classroom. Prospective students interested in a college experience that blends academic rigor, environmental stewardship, and community-wide learning are encouraged to explore [Sweet Briar College](https://www.sbc.edu/admissions) at [sbc.edu/admissions](https://www.sbc.edu/admissions) or contact Admissions at admissions@sb.edu.

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Sweet Briar College: Where Bold Women Thrive, nestled in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is more than just a campus—it's a launchpad for fearless leaders, innovators, and changemakers.

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/890033126>

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