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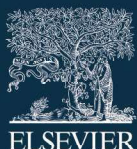
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# Rivers of South America



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**FIG. 20.1** Upper section of the Colorado River. (Photo: Pablo Macchi.)

## Chapter 20

# Colorado River system

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*Tan lejos de mi río se ahoga mi alma, y esta tristeza tiene sueños de agua: la vida es río, el río anhelo... ¡Ay, pescador de luz, canoa del consuelo! Quiero el regreso al río eterno, profunda claridad. Quiero volver al fin, al sueño de su paz.*

José Pelo Merelo Mendoza, songwriter

## 20.1 Introduction

The Colorado River system is the most extensive river basin contained entirely within Argentina, covering an area

of 361,835 km<sup>2</sup>. Located in the so-called South American Arid Diagonal, it includes the provinces of Catamarca, La Rioja, San Juan, Mendoza, San Luis, La Pampa, Neuquén, Río Negro, and Buenos Aires. The Colorado carries a large amount of material in suspension, giving the water a particular red color (colorado in Spanish), hence its name (Fig. 20.1). Climate change and anthropogenic factors related to the use and management of water and land-use planning have affected the hydrological connectivity of its main tributary, the Desaguadero River, which discharges into the Colorado only during exceptional events