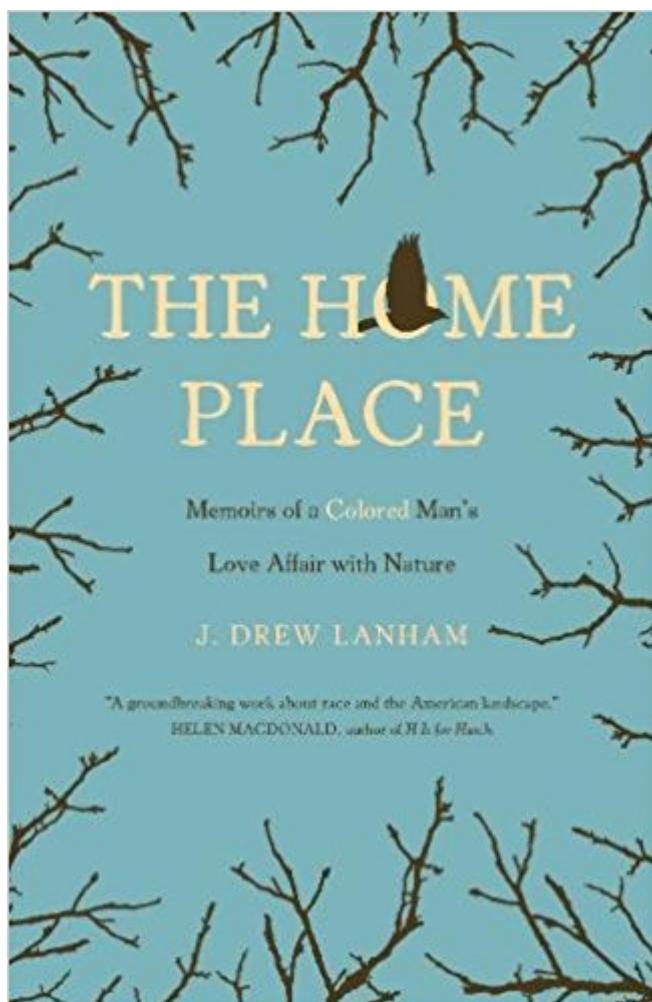


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The Home Place: Memoirs Of A Colored Man's Love Affair With Nature



Synopsis

From the fertile soils of love, land, identity, family, and race emerges *The Home Place*, a big-hearted, unforgettable memoir by ornithologist J. Drew Lanham. Dating back to slavery, Edgefield County, South Carolina—“a place ‘easy to pass by on the way somewhere else’”—has been home to generations of Lanhams. In *The Home Place*, readers meet these extraordinary people, including Drew himself, who over the course of the 1970s falls in love with the natural world around him. As his passion takes flight, however, he begins to ask what it means to be “the rare bird, the oddity.” By turns angry, funny, elegiac, and heartbreakingly honest, *The Home Place* is a remarkable meditation on nature and belonging, at once a deeply moving memoir and riveting exploration of the contradictions of black identity in the rural South—and in America today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Foreword Reviews Best Book of 2016 and Nautilus Silver Award Winner Praise for *The Home Place*—“A groundbreaking work about race and the American landscape, and a deep meditation on nature, selfhood, and the nature of home. It is thoughtful, sincere, wise, and beautiful. I want everyone to read it.” Helen Macdonald, author of *H Is for Hawk*—“An extraordinary and trailblazing perspective on nature and race, told by a southern black man who became a natural scientist and a bird watcher. J. Drew Lanham’s colorful and long-awaited memoir deeply enriches our understanding of American culture and the environmental movement,

rising as it does from the silence of an entire people. This is a captivating and crucial biology and a volume that I'll proudly add to my bookshelf. *Janisse Ray*, author of *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood* "Wisdom and generosity fill the pages of" *The Home Place*. This memoir and story of a familial ecosystem is anchored firmly in the Piedmont clay of South Carolina that J. Drew Lanham's enslaved ancestors worked and would later come to own and love. A man born of forests and fields, Lanham thinks deeply about the land writ large and our connections to it as well as to each other. His honest and insistent words encourage us to cultivate a broader, deeper perspective that recognizes ties between race and environment in deliberate ways. *Lauret Savoy*, author of *Trace* "Consider The Home Place required reading" it's a thoughtful and relevant-as-ever look at race and identity in the great outdoors. *Outside* "A lyrical story about the power of the wild, The Home Place synthesizes J. Drew Lanham's own family history, geography, nature, and race into a compelling argument for conservation and resilience." National Geographic "When you're done with" *The Home Place*, it won't be done with you. Its wonders will linger like everything luminous. You might find yourself hoping for a world where every family has a J. Drew Lanham in it. *Minneapolis Star Tribune* "A beautifully rendered and deeply personal story of the complex geographies of home, and displacement . . ." *The Home Place* is a deft examination of how we come to define ourselves in a world that, in turn, is relentlessly trying to define who we are and how we can take those definitions over and make our own. *Sierra* "There are no fireworks here" simply the musings of an African-American naturalist who, throughout his lifetime, has trained himself to marvel at the minor. Trust me, that is enough. . . . Of the many powerful lessons J. Drew Lanham bestows upon readers, perhaps this last one is his best: proof that human nature, like Mother nature herself, can still surprise us with its grace. *Los Angeles Review of Books* "The Home Place" teems with life notably the author's own remarkable one. This wise and deeply felt memoir of a black naturalist's improbable journey travels the hallways of academia, the fields and forests of ornithological study, and the dusty clay roads of the rural south where it all began with grace, humility, and an abiding appreciation for this exquisite world. *William Souder*, author of *Under a Wild Sky* "Your world will change while reading this beautiful, deep, and generous book. A book by a scientist that goes far beyond science, a book by a black man that looks issues of race in the eye but then transcends them, a book by a loving son who, in the end, finds a new identity." *The Home Place* is really about

what it means to be human, and in particular what it means to be human in relationship to the land. It is a love song to family, soil, trees, birds, and wildness itself. Read it and be enlarged. *David Gessner*, author of *All the Wild That Remains* “Rapturous and illuminating . . . A shrewd meditation on home, family, nature, and the author’s native South.” *Kirkus* “Insightful . . . Encouraging readers to pay closer attention to nature, *J. Drew Lanham* gathers the disparate elements that have shaped him into a nostalgic and fervent examination of home, family, nature, and community.” *Publishers Weekly*

J. Drew Lanham is a native of Edgefield, South Carolina, and an Alumni Distinguished Professor of Wildlife Ecology and Master Teacher at Clemson University. Lanham is a birder, naturalist, and hunter-conservationist who has published essays and poetry in publications including *Orion*, *Flycatcher*, and *Wilderness*, and in several anthologies, including *The Colors of Nature*, *State of the Heart*, *Bartram’s Living Legacy*, and *Carolina Writers at Home*, among others. He and his family live in the Upstate of South Carolina, a soaring hawk’s downhill glide from the southern Appalachian escarpment that the Cherokee once called the Blue Wall.

I am enjoying every page of this outstanding book. I grew up in a white suburban neighborhood in the segregated South. I find *Drew Lanham*’s descriptions of his youth in a rural area so touching. I am envious of his childhood observations of nature. I love the concept of a sense of place. How does the place where you grew up affect you for the rest of your life. This book certainly provides *Drew Lanham*’s amazing sense of place. *Drew Lanham* is a gifted writer and I appreciate his sharing of these deeply personal experiences.

This is a marvelous book, and I’m not just whistling Dixie. It’s thoroughly entertaining, enriching, enlivening, and original. Composed of a series of beautifully honed and crafted stand-alone memoir pieces about *Lanham*’s life growing up black in rural S.C., becoming a lover and preserver of nature (especially birds), and his journey to becoming a fully-realized person (he’d probably say “work-in-progress”), it’s chock-full of pitch perfect details that pin one to the page. He’s a fine writer, and from what I can tell, a fine human being. He’s definitely one on whom nothing has been lost, and he has a singular talent in bringing his rich world--and self--to life.

Very insightful for those of us who wander freely looking at nature and don’t have to think so hard about what we are looking at or how we look. *Lanham* writes with humor and also a great

understanding of nature : human and wild! A good read.

His home life and love of nature are told with humor and frankness. Candor and beauty are mixed together to inspire others to excel in whatever they do, and to love their work as he does.

As a white Southerner, I found kinship in the love of Piedmont land. I also had a glimpse of the hypervigilance that I have the privilege to be free of. I greatly appreciate the gift of this book.

The pace and style of his writing reminds me of the stories that my grandfather and great grandfather would tell me of life on the Currituck Sound. I started this book last year and misplaced it. I'm so glad to have found it and finished it. I would recommend it to anyone who loves nature and family history.

This was powerful, inspiring, and moving. I want to meet the author, hope we can get him to come to South Carolina State to do a reading. Gave me ideas of how to move on with the memoir I am working on. I identified with him in some of it. My only tiny quibble was that I wish the publisher had included an insert of photographs instead of just using them for the Frontispiece. Maybe in a second printing? Am lending my copy to a friend, but I hope many many people will buy this and pass it on.

Loved it. I grew up near there in Augusta, Ga. where my Dad was a science professor. Botany was his interest and we had a farm south of Augusta where I spent summers and week-ends in a log cabin. I felt very connected to his love of the land.

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