

Colloquy Down East: Nature Writing in the Anthropocene - Week 3, Kim Ridley

The Home Place: Memoirs of a Colored Man's Love Affair with Nature

J. Drew Lanham

Summary

“In me, there is the red of miry clay, the brown of spring floods, the gold of ripening tobacco. I am, in the deepest sense, colored.” From these fertile soils—of love, land, identity, family, and race—emerges *The Home Place*, a . . . unforgettable memoir by ornithologist J. Drew Lanham.

Dating back to slavery, Edgefield County, South Carolina—a place “easy to pass by on the way to 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—” to find joy and freedom in the same land his ancestors were tied to by forced labor, and then to be a black man in a profoundly white field.

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.” —from the book jacket

Suggested Chapters and Readings

From *The Home Place*

Me: An Introduction

The Home Place

Life's Spring

The Bluebird of Enlightenment

Birding While Black

New Religion

Patchwork Legacy

OnBeing Interview and Suggested Essays by J. Drew Lanham

<https://onbeing.org/programs/drew-lanham-pathfinding-through-the-improbable/>

“Nine Rules for the Black Birder” <https://orionmagazine.org/article/9-rules-for-the-black-bird-watcher/>

“Forever Gone: How Bird lives and Black Lives Intertwine Under the Long Shadow of History” <https://orionmagazine.org/article/forever-gone/>