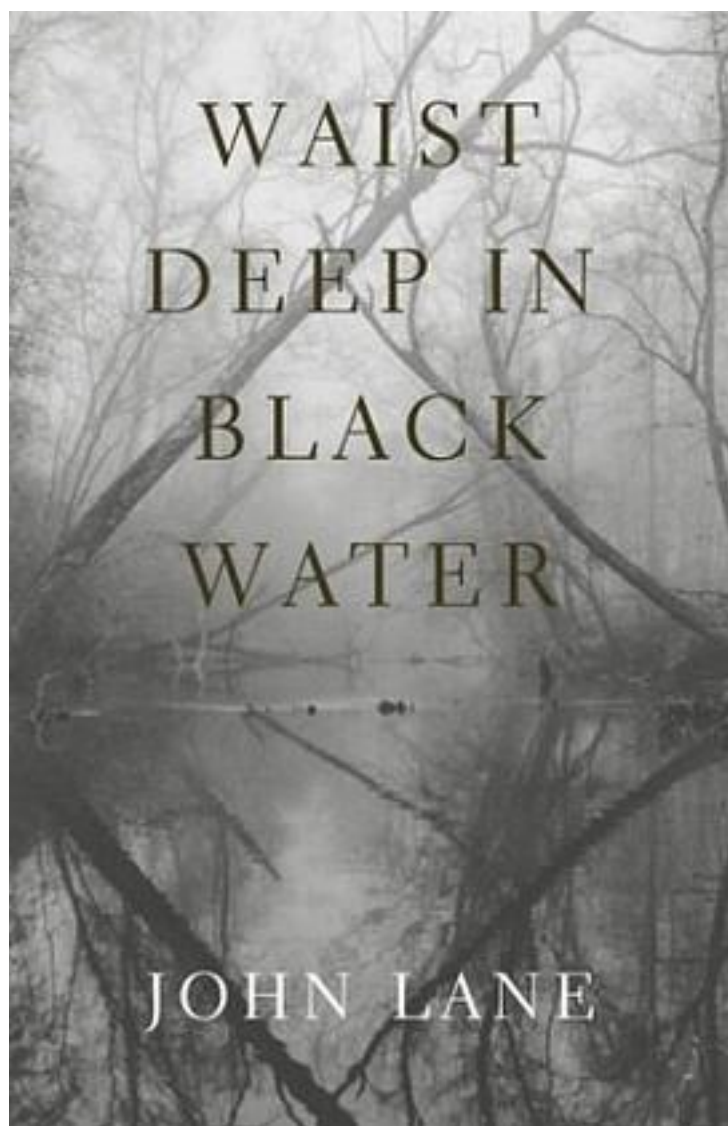


Waist Deep in Black Water



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John Lane has scaled a granite dome in the Suriname rain forest and waded past cottonmouths in the heart of a Florida cypress swamp. He has shadowed crocodiles in a Yucatan mangrove thicket and paddled the rapids of North Carolina's Tuckaseegee River in search of a drowned kayaker. "Waist Deep in Black Water" offers a collection of Lane's own writings that range from wilderness exploration, to conservation issues, to explorations of family history in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Lane's trek to the Medicine Wheel National Historic Landmark in Wyoming becomes an occasion to draw connections between religion, sexuality, and mountain lore. A hike into Kentucky's Red River Gorge prompts a meditation on the words and spirit of Wendell Berry, who helped prevent the gorge from being dammed. Some of Lane's writings are set closer to home, where the South Carolina hills meet the Blue Ridge. In "Something Rare as a Dwarf-Flowered Heartleaf," Lane recounts his campaign to stop the development of a woodland area within Spartanburg's city limits. Family issues also surface, as in "Confluence: Pacolet River." Here Lane kayaks through country where his family has lived for generations as he reckons the distances between himself and his farming, millworking forebears. Something is always at stake wherever Lane takes us: a stand of old-growth trees, a primate population, a friendship, a soul. Lane bestows loving attention on the places and people he visits in this collection and, in the process, goes beyond the traditional concerns of nature and travel writing.

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