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Circling Home (Wormsloe Foundation Nature Book)

John LANE

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After many years of limited commitments to people or places, writer and naturalist John Lane married in his late forties and settled down in his hometown of Spartanburg, in the South Carolina piedmont. He, his wife, and two stepsons built a sustainable home in the woods near Lawson’s Fork Creek. Soon after settling in, Lane pinpointed his location on a topographical map. Centering an old, chipped saucer over his home, he traced a circle one mile in radius and set out to explore the area.

What follows from that simple act is a chronicle of Lane’s deepening knowledge of the place where he’ll likely finish out his life. An accomplished hiker and paddler, Lane discovers, within a mile of his home, a variety of coexistent landscapes—ancient and modern, natural and manmade. There is, of course, the creek with its granite shoals, floodplain, and surrounding woods. The circle also encompasses an eight-thousand-year-old cache of Native American artifacts, graves of a dozen British soldiers killed in 1780, an eighteenth-century ironworks site, remnants of two cotton plantations, a hundred-year-old country club, a sewer plant, and a smattering of mid- to late twentieth-century subdivisions.

Lane’s explorations intensify his bonds to family, friends, and colleagues as they sharpen his sense of place. By looking more deeply at what lies close to home, both the ordinary and the remarkable, Lane shows us how whole new worlds can open up.

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