



Among the Swamp People: Life in Alabama's Mobile-Tensaw River Delta

Watt Key

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Among the Swamp People is the story of author Watt Key's discovery of the Mobile-Tensaw River Delta. "The swamp" consists of almost 260,000 acres of wetlands located just north of Mobile Bay. There he leases a habitable outcropping of land and constructs a primitive cabin from driftwood to serve as a private getaway. His story is one that chronicles the beauties of the delta's unparalleled natural wonders, the difficulties of survival within it, and an extraordinary community of characters—by turns generous and violent, gracious and paranoid, hilarious and reckless—who live, thrive, and perish there.

There is no way into the delta except by small boat. To most it would appear a maze of rivers and creeks between stunted swamp trees and mud. Key observes that there are few places where one can step out of a boat without "sinking to the knees in muck the consistency of axle grease. It is the only place I know where gloom and beauty can coexist at such extremes. And it never occurred to me that a land seemingly so bleak could hide such beauty and adventure."

It also chronicles Key's maturation as a writer, from a twenty-five-year-old computer programmer with no formal training as a writer to a highly successful, award-winning writer of fiction for a young adult audience with three acclaimed novels published to date.

In learning to make a place for himself in the wild, as in learning to write, Key's story is one of "hoping someone—even if just myself—would find value in my creations."

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