


# ecology of a Cracker Childhood (The World As Home)

*By Janisse Ray*

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**ecology of a Cracker Childhood (The World As Home)** By Janisse Ray

Janisse Ray grew up in a junkyard along U.S. Highway 1, hidden from Florida-bound vacationers by the hedge at the edge of the road and by hulks of old cars and stacks of blown-out tires. Ecology of a Cracker Childhood tells how a childhood spent in rural isolation and steeped in religious fundamentalism grew into a passion to save the almost vanished longleaf pine ecosystem that once covered the South. In language at once colloquial, elegiac, and informative, Ray redeems two Souths. "Suffused with the same history-haunted sense of loss that imprints so much of the South and its literature. What sets Ecology of a Cracker Childhood apart is the ambitious and arresting mission implied in its title. . . . Heartfelt and refreshing." - The New York Times Book Review.

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## Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review
The scrubby forests of southern Georgia, dotting a landscape of low hills and swampy bottoms, are not what many people would consider to be exalted country, the sort of place to inspire lyrical considerations of nature and culture. Yet that is just what essayist Janisse Ray delivers in her memorable debut, a memoir of life in a part of America that roads and towns have passed by, a land settled by hardscrabble Scots herders who wanted nothing more than to be left alone, and who bear the derogatory epithet "cracker" with quiet pride.

Ray grew up in a junkyard outside what had been longleaf pine forest, an ecosystem that has nearly disappeared in the American South through excessive logging. Her family had little money, but that was not important; they more than made up for material want through unabashed love and a passion for learning, values that underlie every turn of Ray's narrative. She finds beauty in weeds and puddles, celebrates the ways of tortoises and woodpeckers, and argues powerfully for the virtues of establishing a connection with one's native ground.

"I carry the landscape inside like an ache," Ray writes. Her evocations of fog-enshrouded woods and old ways of living are not without pain for all that has been lost--but full of hope as well for what can be saved. --*Gregory McNamee*

From Publishers Weekly
Ray, a poet and an environmental activist, takes a tough-minded look at life in rural southern Georgia in this blend of memoir and nature study. She presents detailed observations of her family members, most notably her grandfather Charlie, who was "terrifying, prone to violent and unmerited punishment"; her father, whose decision to buy a tract of land near Highway 1 and turn it into what became a massive junkyard with a house in the middle set in motion the key events in Ray's life; and her mother, whose total devotion to her family was tested when her husband began a three-year bout with mental illness. Interspersed with these portraits are various chapters describing the beauty of the longleaf pine flatwoods and other natural treasures found, and often endangered, in her home state. Ray's writing is at its best when she recalls her most harrowing memories, such as when her father gave her and her two brothers a whipping after they stood by and watched a friend kill a turtle. These scenes resonate during the interpolated naturalist chapters, which evoke the calm of the landscape and give readers a respite from the anger and pain that drive much of the family narrative. In a final chapter (in which she includes appendixes on the specific endangered species of the South), Ray laments the "daily erosion of unique folkways as our native ecosystems and all their inhabitants disappear." What remains most memorable are the sections where Ray describes, and attempts to prevent, her own disconnection from the Georgia landscape. (Nov.)
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From Library Journal
If this book is social history, why does it also read like natural history? Seemingly, that's the point Ray, a naturalist and environmental activist, hopes to make: that she is a product of her environment and therefore tied to it. Through alternating chapters, the author presents a biography of herself and her family and discussion of the longleaf pine tree community of the South (mainly Florida and Georgia). The family stories reveal poverty, strict parental and religious prohibitions, tough discipline, and a family history of mental illness. Writing these stories seems to have been cathartic for Ray, helping her understand why family members acted and believed as they did. Her natural history chapters describe the decline of the longleaf

pine forest ecosystem, detailing the damage that fire suppression and relentless logging cause, the fate of endangered species, and the connection that Ray feels with the land. Readers from the region, from a similarly impoverished background, or who are interested in the Southern pine forests will appreciate this book. Recommended for large public libraries.ANancy J. Moeckel, Miami Univ. Libs., Oxford, OH
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What do you regarding book? It is not important to you? Or just adding material if you want something to explain what your own problem? How about your extra time? Or are you busy man? If you don't have spare time to try and do others business, it is gives you the sense of being bored faster. And you have spare time? What did you do? Every individual has many questions above. They have to answer that question mainly because just their can do this. It said that about publication. Book is familiar on every person. Yes, it is correct. Because start from on pre-school until university need this specific ecology of a Cracker Childhood (The World As Home) to read.

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