



# Ryerson Almanac

A Newsletter from Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods 🌿 Spring 2016

## “Conservation must be a blending of head and heart; rigorous science and evocative art.”

Dr. J. Drew Lanham,

2016 Smith Nature Symposium speaker

Drew Lanham created a stir with his humorous, but painfully timely and true, essay “9 Rules for the Black Birdwatcher” in a 2013 volume of Orion Magazine. (<https://orionmagazine.org/article/9-rules-for-the-black-birdwatcher/>)

For example: “Rule 1. Be prepared to be confused with the other black birder.” and “Rule 5. Carry your binoculars—and three forms of identification—at all times.” He called attention to the fact that birding “is one of the whitest things a person can do.” Unfortunately, that observation is true for many environmental and conservation activities. Dr. Lanham’s keynote presentation at the Smith Nature Symposium on May 14th will explore why it is important for the conservation world to work to escape that condition.

An avid birder and hunter, Lanham says that his fondest childhood memories are the endless hours he spent exploring the woods around the small farm in South Carolina where he grew up. In his twenty years as a distinguished professor at Clemson University, he has accrued a long list of accolades for his work exploring how forest management impacts wildlife and how humans think about nature. His recent work is influenced by the deeply personal nature writing of Janisse Ray, author of the 1999 best seller *Ecology of a Cracker Childhood*. Ray’s memoir inspired Lanham to develop a voice different from that of an academic. He says “voices out of the South about southern ecology and the social context are rare.”

The Smith Symposium talk he will present is titled *Range Mapping—Overlapping Habitat for Birds and People*. “As an ornithologist, I spend a lot of time looking at range maps,” Lanham says. “Looking at [habitat] maps of rare birds, like the Aplomado falcon, we can’t ignore the social considerations. With the changing demographics of our country we notice that, especially in the Southwest and the Southeast, rare birds and important natural areas occur where black and brown people

live. We need to be preaching to a different choir.” Lanham considers conserving birds and their habitat a moral mission that needs the broadest and most diverse audience possible to be truly successful. To spread his message, Lanham uses blogs, articles, and books of poetry, and he also makes personal appearances around the country.



Save the date 33rd Annual  
**SMITH NATURE  
SYMPOSIUM**

Range Mapping—Overlapping Habitat  
for Birds and People

**SATURDAY, MAY 14, 2016**

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Called “one of our important conservation voices” by Curt Meine, the biographer of Aldo Leopold, Lanham is not only a professor of wildlife ecology, but also a gifted storyteller and a poet. His first solo work, *The Home Place—Memoirs of a Colored Man’s Love Affair with Nature* (Milkweed Editions, Minneapolis, MN) will be published in September 2016. A book of his own poetry, *Sparrow Envy* (Holocene Press, Spartanburg, SC), will come out this May.

Brushwood Center board member Joel Greenberg, who is also the 2014 recipient of the Award for Distinguished Leadership in the World of Nature, summarizes Lanham’s credentials well. “As an ornithologist and birder, Drew is one of the country’s premier ambassadors in helping share the joys of nature with a wide diversity of audiences. A most engaging scholar and advocate, he has spoken all over the country and we are fortunate in having Drew participate in this year’s symposium.”

In memory of our dear friend,  
Harry Chandler.



**Brushwood Center at Ryerson Woods** is a non-profit organization dedicated to nurturing art, nature and discovery by offering multiple points of entry for the public to connect with the natural world. Brushwood Center is located in the heart of the Lake County Forest Preserve District’s 561-acre Edward Ryerson Conservation Area, which is designated as an Illinois Nature Preserve where no pets, picnicking, or off-road cycling are permitted. Please visit [www.brushwoodcenter.org](http://www.brushwoodcenter.org) to learn more about our community engagement, unique events and art programs.

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