

J. LAWRENCE SMITH - BIOGRAPHY

“When one experiences wind, water and woodlands — the things of the wilderness — he touches the outward signs of something of importance that is inner, unseen and that goes on forever.”

- J Lawrence Smith



John Lawrence Smith was raised in the industrially polluted city of Nitro, West Virginia, where he was deprived the pleasure of clean mountain air. During his boyhood, he became interested in the natural world and set his career goal as a nature writer. Upon his arrival at college in Morgantown, he discovered a brighter — and better smelling — picture of his state. On weekends, he would set off for the Potomac and Allegheny Highlands to further satisfy his increasing interests in ecology and bird watching.

He expanded his horizons to include history and heritage studies, and in 1968 he wrote his first book, *The Potomac Naturalist*. His appreciation for wild areas in contrast to where he came from, eventually led him to Blackwater Falls State Park and to his second book, *Blackwater Country*, published in 1972. Since then, he has authored two more: *The High Alleghenies* in 1982 and *Birds of the Kanawha Valley* in 1996.

Accompanying his work as a naturalist and a writer, John served pastorates in the Methodist Church from Huntington to the mountain highlands. Now that he is retired, he can focus full time on his West Virginia research and writing.