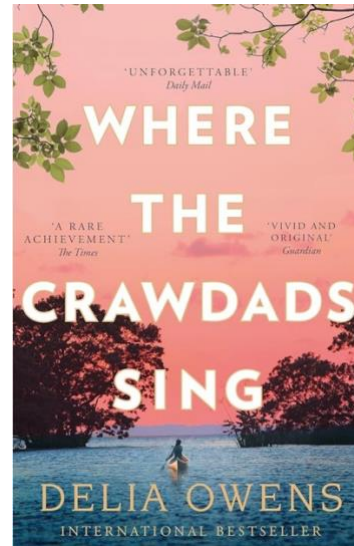


July 2026 –

Where the Crawdads Sing

by Delia Owens



“Where the Crawdads Sing is at once a mystery, a romance, a back-to-nature reverie full of gnarled trees and hanging moss, and a parable of women’s power and independence in a world crushed under by masculine will.

“It is at once an exquisite ode to the natural world, a heartbreaking coming-of-age story, and a surprising tale of possible murder.”

The above reviews perfectly and concisely describe this book by Delia Owens. It has everything a good book should have although this was not universally agreed by members of our Book Group as can be seen in their comments below!

Their reviews are below:

“Where the Crawdads Sing” by Delia Owens is a novel that has captivated readers with its blend of fiction, mystery, and coming-of-age storytelling. The story is set in the marshlands of North Carolina and follows Kya Clark, known as the “Marsh Girl”, who grows up isolated after her family leaves her behind. The novel explores themes of isolation, resilience, love, human connection, and survival in a harsh world. It is praised for its character-driven narrative and the strong sense of place it creates. The book has been well-received for its atmospheric storytelling and has been adapted into a movie, further cementing its status as a modern classic.”

“Delia Owens is a zoologist in her 70’s and this is her first novel - 2 months ago I started to read it and loved the descriptions of locality and wildlife but not gripped with the story emerging. Put book to one side - Revisited book a few weeks later and pleased that the story took a better turn for me. The central character surviving instinctively, isolated, abandoned by family with little human contact. Ability to self-educate to an advanced level albeit with some unreliable encouragement from two different young guys who did not fulfil her need for supportive love. I liked the moderate tone of the novel compared with younger novelists that could have laboured a political or racist case for our heroine’s fate. By chance watched film of book - a disappointment compared with detail in novel.”

"I was hooked by the opening and really liked the first third of the book: the interesting setting, natural world descriptions, prejudiced townspeople and engaging, resilient heroine. For me, though, it then turned into a YA romance and finally a murder mystery which, while entertaining, felt tacked on.

I wasn't convinced by Kya's transformation from a dirty, illiterate child into an Einstein reading, Queen's English speaking, physically irresistible siren. I thought some of the secondary characters were lazy stereotypes, for example the inept doughnut-munching Southern cops and the local kindly Black folk."

"What a wonderful book! All the characters are brilliantly portrayed. It was so realistic that I felt I was reading a biography, not a novel. It had all of the elements I like best in a book all rolled into one in the heart-wrenching story of a girl, struggling to survive in dire circumstances and finding happiness in her surroundings despite all.

This book held all the ingredients of a good read for me - a love story, a murder mystery, courtroom drama, historical references and I loved the way she squeezed in Natural history facts relating them to human behaviour.

I loved every page of this book. How could anyone not be touched by the heartrending image of the little girl, sitting on the step and watching her mother disappear down the lane forever in her Alligator shoes. This image will stay with me for a very long time."

"I liked the differences in her relationships with the other characters, her brother Jodie, her father, Tate, Chase, Jumpin' and Mabel and how the townspeople had to change their opinion of her. The poetry supposedly written by "Amanda Hamilton" but by Kya, was amazing. I wasn't sure about this book when I started it and deliberately did not watch the film, but in the end, I couldn't put it down!"

"The story follows Kya, an isolated young woman tried for murder. It is quite bleak, highlighting prejudice and loneliness and is a heart-breaking story. Kya's mother leaves when she is a young child without saying goodbye. Her older siblings leave as soon as they can, leaving Kya at home with her father – a heavy drinker and unpredictable – they are poor. Kya is often left alone for long periods and learns to fend for herself, hiding from strangers and school truant officers. She learns how to find her way around the marsh in her boat, how to source food and cook, all the time hoping her mother will return. She finds solace and refuge in the marsh and the creatures that inhabit it.

I enjoyed the book and the film which brought the marshes alive in my imagination. Kya's plight was harrowing but showed the power of strength over adversity. It was thought-provoking and beautifully written, capturing my heart and mind. Kya changed from an illiterate, secluded young girl into a knowledgeable, wise, creative and resilient young woman although it was sad in parts. I liked the twist of the plot and that Kya came out of it stronger and happier, having found her happy place and person."

“I am not sure what crawdads are! I thought they were some sort of insect like a grasshopper but my American niece said crayfish and grits are like semolina!

The story is about the life of Kya from the age of six until she dies although from age 25 is all in the final chapter. She lives on the edge of the marsh in a primitive, remote shack but there is a track leading to it. In 1968 running water and electricity are installed – where did this come from? Another contradiction, she has no formal education but knows she has a legal deed to her property and the land. (However, this is me being picky and does not detract from the story).

It is a tale of violence, abandonment, loneliness, love, racial discrimination and class prejudice. The descriptive prose is brilliant, wherever she was, you were there- in the marshland and the swamps, on the bench with the gulls, in the courtroom. I liked how she described and compared people and creatures in nature – small details like the cat who visited her in prison and talked with his tail!

We knew Chase was dead but the author kept interest and tension in the courtroom by going backward to how it was in real time for Kya and how this was interpreted by the prosecution. Sometimes I had to check the chapter heading to know what year we were in.”

“I spread out the reading of *Crawdads* as I enjoyed it so much. Having seen the film I realised as usual that the book had so much more to offer. Describing how Kya, the central character, thinks in so much detail about her surroundings, her emotions, her love of nature, the author allows the reader to get to know Kya very well. Deserted at 12 years old by all her family, the “Marsh Girl” (as she is known in Barkley Cove, the nearest village), manages to live alone. Her father’s boat is a life-saver, her connection to a village store owned by a kind couple who become her friends, and Kya’s love of nature become her family – the seagulls, the crabs, the birds – and she uses her uninterrupted time to transfer this love and great talent for painting from her huge collection of natural objects.

A kind, like-minded boy (Tate) becomes her friend, and realising how Kya’s abilities reflect a deep, botanical awareness, encourages her to get her work published. They maintain a strong, platonic friendship until Tate has to leave her to go to college. Devastated and now 16, she innocently falls victim to Chase – an egotistical young man, who woos her until finally luring her into bed on a trip to another village in his big, smart boat, whilst two-timing her with another girlfriend. Kya reacts by refusing to see him again, hating his deception. Chase is found dead at the bottom of the fire tower and Kya is arrested. After crucial factual evidence is revealed, a kind lawyer, sensible judge and decisive jury she is cleared of his murder.

But we still do not know who did it?!”

Christine Wright