

Hell Swamp Book Reviews:

Short Reviews:

"...leaves the reader no choice but to turn page after page in anticipation of the latest unexpected twist." Renee Washburn, Apex.

"...edgy stuff that made me grit my teeth." Mary Deal, author of River Bones.

"...a good old fashioned roller coaster ride....After reading Hell Swamp, any thoughts I had about living in a small town just sank." David Fingerman, Minnesota Reads.

"...oozes local color. The author's sense of North Carolina is authentic; the novel is steeped in atmosphere....Worth reading!" Jacqueline Seewald, The Drowning Pool.

"...riveting from page one..." Theresa Jenner Garrido, Wind Whisperer.

Long Reviews:

Wonderfully evocative!

Hell Swamp, by Susan Whitfield, throws the reader straight into the investigation of a truly gruesome murder, but the beautifully described scenery on the journey lightens to the tone. The author's deft hand with conversation brings characters and location to life, with a particularly memorable discussion where local men don't recognize a hoop earring. Agent Hunter proves an able investigator, noting the cloudy water from thawing vegetables, bagging and tagging evidence, and tolerating the missteps of unseasoned country coroners with wise aplomb.

The story slows when Hunter's back-story intervenes, with reminiscences about her past and promises for her future. But beautiful descriptions bring time and place to life, and the present tale is more than able to keep the reader turning pages. Telling details of plants and foliage always come back to research and evidence.

Hell Swamp, up close and personal, soon lives up to its name. And danger, up close and personal, sends the reader on a wild exciting ride to find the killer. All the suspects seem so nice, if oddly named--and cook so well, sweetening the tale with some truly fascinating culinary detours. Red herrings (or catfish) are chased and caught, and the killer's final identity is revealed in a truly surprising conclusion.

A fascinating cast of characters carve a place in the reader's memory in this book, and a pair of lead investigators draws the reader on, promising more of their relationship and more mysteries to come.

Reviewed by S. Deeth "Sheila Deeth" (OR, USA)
September 9, 2009

SBI agent Logan Hunter is called back from personal leave to investigate a brutal murder along the banks of the Black River in Ivanhoe, North Carolina, where animal rights activist Clara Banoak is found hanging from her chandelier, gutted like a deer. Logan quickly learns that Banoak was outspoken in her views against harming animals and had more enemies than friends in this hunter-infested area. Due to an outbreak of the flu, Logan is initially on her own as she investigates the murder, developing a long list of suspects. When she gets too close, Logan is assaulted and left to die in Hell Swamp. More determined than ever, she doggedly pursues her case, uncovering other heinous crimes, with danger lurking around every corner.

Hell Swamp, book number three in the Logan Hunter Mystery series, is an intriguing thriller. Logan Hunter is an interesting character: a woman with backbone who does not let the threat of peril get in her way; an investigator committed to her case who will not stop until it's closed. Whitfield adds a nice touch of romance with Logan's lover, fellow SBI agent Chase Riley. The plot moves at a fast pace with an abundance of suspense and suspects, offering a mystery readers will be challenged to solve.

Reviewed by Christy Tillery French "reviewer and author" (Powell, TN)
August 3, 2009

You won't be sorry!

Hell Swamp was the first book I have read by Susan Whitfield, but it definitely won't be the last.

Someone asked me recently why all my reviews are five-stars, and the answer is simple, if I don't like a book, I don't give it any rating. If a book is good enough for me to take the time to rate--it deserves the best.

That's the reason Hell Swamp has five-stars from me.

I loved the characters and the emotions and suspense kept me reading.

I highly recommend this book!

Reviewed by Best-selling author John Foxjohn
July 19, 2009

Murder Mystery Oozes Local Color

When Clara Banoak is murdered in a gruesome manner--the murder victim is strung up on a gambrel used for skinning deer--Agent Logan Hunter, SBI Agent, is brought in to investigate the crime. The victim hated hunters and was an outspoken animal rights activist. Logan must discover whether this crime is a retaliation of the hunters or if they are being made scapegoats. This fast-paced suspenseful novel does not stint on character development. Logan, a tall, attractive woman who suffers from night terrors, is a well-rounded character. She a good daughter and a woman with a conscience. The love of her life is Chase Railey, who also works for SBI. They plan to marry, and he helps her solve the case, but not before Cyrano Blood, who had something to tell Hunter regarding the initial murder, is poisoned. The novel offers many interesting suspects including Hawk Daw whose fingerprint is found on a spotlight used in the crime. He is initially the prime suspect. However, Logan suspects that someone may be out to frame him. The novel offers many twists and turns and will keep the reader guessing. But the most fascinating thing about this novel is the use of local color. The author's sense of North Carolina is authentic; the novel is steeped in atmosphere.

Definitely a book worth reading!

Reviewed by Jacqueline Seewald "Jacqueline Seewald"

July 7, 2009

A Great Read!

Hell Swamp! What a story! Author Susan Whitfield whisks her readers off to the rural south to solve a grisly murder along with female SBI Agent Logan Hunter. Her hard hitting prose leads us through swamps and down dirt roads, into both mansions and shacks, before finally presenting us with a surprisingly evil conclusion.

I always like to see women portrayed as strong and able to solve problems in their own right, not just as creatures to be rescued by some man. Susan Whitfield has managed to create a strong female protagonist who is at the same time feminine and sexy. A good role model for us all!

Reviewed by JRM "The Tsarina" (Laurens, SC)

July 7, 2009

Watch out for the Snakes!

I've followed SBI Agent Logan Hunter through her internship at Genesis Beach as she solved her first murder. I followed her through the NC Mountains in Just North of Luck as she solved yet another murder. Now I've followed her into the NC backwoods as she tries to survive in Hell Swamp while solving the murder and gutting of Clara Banoak.

Clara is a widow and getting up in age so who would want to murder her as if she was an animal? The answer is everyone. Clara was the most hated person in the whole area around Hell Swamp. She hated hunters and wasn't afraid to tell them or anyone else that would listen. But Clara's death isn't the only mystery. Cats and dogs are starting to become missing. Is there a cult running loose in Hell Swamp? And is this cult possibly connected with the church that allows its members to drink poison and handle rattle snakes?

Whitfield really outdid herself with Hell Swamp. She has created a murder mystery that has a surprising ending while including a little humor along the way that only Whitfield can get by with. This was another enjoyable book in the Logan Hunter series. I can't wait to read her next book "Gator Creek."

Reviewed by Martha A. Cheves (Charlotte, NC)
July 2, 2009

The Backwoods Like You've Never Seen Them Before!

Clara Banoak has many enemies - specifically hunters. The reason? She's a fervent animal rights activist, and what hunters consider to be sport she sees as the slaughter of innocents - and she has no qualms about letting them know. Every time one of them appears in the local paper proudly displaying their latest hunting "trophy," soon after they receive nasty, threatening letters from Clara, accusing them of being cold-blooded murderers and condemning them to damnation for their evil deeds.

So, it comes as no surprise to anyone when Clara is found murdered in her home one day; what does come as a shock, though, is the horrific way in which her life is ended: strung up and gutted like an animal - much the way a hunter would dispatch his quarry...

SBI agent Logan Hunter is then dispatched to the scene, and she soon finds herself caught in the middle of - to say the least - quite interesting circumstances that only seem to grow stranger over time. Unsettling characters and a host of bizarre rituals combine to complicate Hunter's investigation, and her resolve is further tested by emergent problems in her personal life. To top it all off, the simultaneously beautiful and deadly Hell Swamp, the daunting backdrop of all the action, adds its own mysterious flavor and mystical lore to the mix.

In the third installment of the Logan Hunter Mystery Series, Susan Whitfield doesn't miss a step with Hell Swamp. Action-packed, intriguing, and rife with suspense, Hunter's

latest adventure through the heart of rural North Carolina exposes the reader once again to the particular folkways and mores of a mini-society that proves to be quite compelling. Not one to engage in exaggerated satire, though, Whitfield is to be commended for framing her characters in a realistic light, exposing their adopted habits and lifestyles without turning them into caricaturist, backwoods rubes.

Hell Swamp also solidifies Whitfield's status as a true master of mystery. Her prose is tight and engaging, and her suspenseful writing style leaves the reader no choice but to turn page after page in anticipation of the latest unexpected twist.

Followers of Susan Whitfield will surely not be disappointed with her latest effort, and it will most certainly be successful in drawing even greater numbers to her ever-growing fan base.

An enjoyable, recommended read!

Reviewed by Renee Washburn - Apex Reviews (Durham, NC USA)
March 24, 2009

Run with Agent Hunter!

Hell Swamp, a police procedural by Susan Whitfield, starts with the gory death of an animal rights activist that has Agent Hunter running full speed into a swamp full of snakes of both kinds, those that slither and those that walk upright. Although tough and well-trained, she's thwarted and attacked in this Carolina Low Country tale of greed and mis-guided deeds. Fasten your seat belts for this fast-paced read.

Reviewed by Maggie Bishop (Boone, North Carolina, USA)
February 20, 2009

I had the pleasure of reading the Hell Swamp manuscript just before it went to publication. The action jumps out at you from the first chapter and never lets up. North Carolina's Agent Logan Hunter learns that the people who live around the swamp have their own rules. They are all hunters and kill and string up and gut anything they can eat. While investigating a gruesome murder, Agent Hunter becomes one of the hunted.

This is edgy stuff that made me grit my teeth.

Reviewed by Mary Deal "Author/Writer" (Kauai, Hawaii, USA) Author of River Bones
February 16, 2009
