

**The Good Good Pig**  
***The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood***  
**by Sy Montgomery**

About the Book

When Sy Montgomery opened her heart to a sick piglet, she had no idea that this creature, later named Christopher Hogwood, would provide her with something she had sought all her life: an anchor (eventually weighing 750 pounds) to family, home, and community. Neighbors began fetching Christopher home from his unauthorized jaunts, the little girls next door started giving him warm, soapy baths, and the villagers brought him delicious leftovers. His intelligence and fame increased along with his girth, and he was eventually featured in *USA Today* and on several National Public Radio environmental programs. But Christopher Hogwood's influence extended far beyond celebrity. Montgomery reveals what she and others learned from this generous soul who just so happened to be a pig — lessons about self-acceptance, the value of community, and the pleasures of the sweet green Earth. *The Good Good Pig* provides proof that with love, almost anything is possible.

Praise for the Book

“Sometimes it takes a too-smart-for-his-own-good pig to open our eyes to what matters most in life.”

— **John Grogan, author of *Marley & Me***

“Animal lovers, prepare to be seduced by Christopher Hogwood. . . .  
Extraordinary, indeed.”

— *USA Today*

“[A] charming memoir. . . . Not since Fern's Wilbur has a pig bored its way more affectionately into the hearts and minds of humans.”

— *Minneapolis Star Tribune*

“Pig voyeurs everywhere will be charmed and enchanted by the author's lush and galvanizing nonfiction.”

— *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*

“What makes *The Good Good Pig* so much better than cute is Montgomery's loving and funny evocation of her . . . 750-pound squeeze.”

— *O: The Oprah Magazine*

*Courtesy of Ballantine Books*

## About the Author

### Sy Montgomery

1958-

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**Birth Place:** Frankfurt, Germany

**Personal Information:** Born February 7, 1958, in Frankfurt, Germany; daughter of Austin James (an army officer) and Willa Zane Montgomery; married Howard Mansfield (a writer), September, 1987.

**Education:** Syracuse University, B.A., 1979.

**Politics:** Democrat.

**Religion:** Congregational.

**Memberships:** Society of Women Geographers, Rainforest Conservation Fund (member of board of directors), RESTORE! The North Woods (member of advisory board).

**Addresses:** Agent: Sarah Jane Freymann, Stepping Stone Literary Agency, Inc., 59 W. 71st St., New York, NY 10023.

**Career:** Writer, journalist, naturalist, and educator. *Courier-News*, Bridgewater, NJ, science writer, 1980–84; freelance writer, 1984–. Research associate, Brookfield Conservation Park, Blanchetown, Australia, 1984. Member of adjunct faculty, Antioch/New England Graduate School.

**Awards:** Ray Bruner science writing fellowship, American Public Health Association, 1982; Science Book Award and New Hampshire Writers and Publishers Project award for best nonfiction book, *Los Angeles Times*, both 1991, both for *Walking with the Great Apes: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, Birute Galdikas*; *Walking with the Great Apes* named a Notable Book of 1991 by *New York Times*; Chris Award, 1998, for *Mother Bear Man*; Outstanding Nonfiction of the year, *Book Report*, 1999, for *The Snake Scientist*; Children's Book Award, International Reading Association, 2002, for *The Snake Scientist*; Editor's Choice for Science, *Booklist*, one of the Top Ten Books of the Year, Belief.net, and Top Outdoor Nature Book of the Year, Amazon.com, all 2000, all for *Journey of the Pink Dolphins: An Amazon Quest*; Texas Bluebonnet Master List, International Readers Association Award, John Borrough's List of Nature Books for Young Readers, Orbis Pictus Honor Book, Bulletin Blue Ribbon, and VOYA Nonfiction Honor List, all for *The Snake Scientist*; Oppenheim Toy Portfolio Gold Award, 2002, for *The Man-Eating Tigers of Sunarbans*; Sibert Honor Book, 2005, for *Tarantula Scientist*; John Burroughs Young Reader Award, Sibert Honor Book, and National Council of Teachers of English Orbis Pictus Award, all 2006, all for *Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea*.

## WRITINGS

### NONFICTION

- *Walking with the Great Apes: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, Birute Galdikas*, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 1991.
- *Nature's Everyday Mysteries: A Field Guide to the World in Your Backyard*, foreword by Roger Tory Peterson, illustrations by Rodica Prato, Chapters (Shelbourne, VT), 1993.
- *Seasons of the Wild: A Year of Nature's Magic and Mysteries*, foreword by Marshall Thomas, illustrations by Rodica Prato, Chapters (Shelbourne, VT), 1995.
- *Spell of the Tiger: The Man-Eaters of Sunderbans*, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 1995.
- *The Snake Scientist* (for children), photographs by Nic Bishop, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 1999.
- *The Curious Naturalist: Nature's Everyday Mysteries*, DownEast Books (Camden, ME), 2000.
- *Journey of the Pink Dolphins: An Amazon Quest*, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY), 2000.
- *The Man-Eating Tigers of Sundarbans*, photographs by Eleanor Briggs, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 2001.
- *Encantado: Pink Dolphin of the Amazon*, photographs by Dianne Taylor-Snow, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 2002.
- *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, Simon & Schuster (New York, NY), 2002, revised and shortened children's version published as *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 2004.
- *The Wild Out Your Window: Exploring Nature Near at Hand*, Down East Books (Camden, ME), 2002.
- *The Tarantula Scientist*, photographs by Nic Bishop, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 2004.
- *Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea*, photographs by Nic Bishop, Houghton Mifflin (Boston, MA), 2006.
- *The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood*, Ballantine Books (New York, NY), 2006.

### OTHER

Also developer and scriptwriter of documentary film *Mother Bear Man*, National Geographic Explorer TV. Author of "Nature Journal," a column in the *Boston Globe*. Contributor of articles to magazines and newspapers, including *Animals* and the *Los Angeles Times*.

## “Sidelights”

Sy Montgomery is a writer whose publications include various works on nature and wildlife. Montgomery published her first book, *Walking with the Great Apes: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, Birute Galdikas*, in 1991. This volume recounts the exploits of three primate specialists who had trained under anthropologist Louis Leakey. *Walking with the Great Apes* was recommended in the *New York Times* as a notable book of 1991.

Montgomery followed *Walking with the Great Apes* with *Nature’s Everyday Mysteries: A Field Guide to the World in Your Backyard*, which appeared in 1993, and *Seasons of the Wild: A Year of Nature’s Magic and Mysteries*, which came out two years later.

In 1995, Montgomery also produced *Spell of the Tiger: The Man-Eaters of Sunderbans*, which describes life along the massive swamp that extends along the Bay of Bengal. This region, replete with poisonous snakes and sharks, hosts a considerable population of tigers, and these mammals regularly prey on humans. Montgomery reports that the tigers will leap into fishing boats to obtain human sustenance, and adds that the animals also terrorize workers in the region’s woods. A *Publishers Weekly* contributor described *Spell of the Tiger* as “a vivid picture” and added that it “takes us on a magical journey.” Another reviewer, Donna Seaman, wrote in *Booklist*, of Montgomery’s “hair-raising stories,” and Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, writing in the *New York Times*, deemed *Spell of the Tiger* “fascinating.”

In her next book, *The Snake Scientist*, Montgomery focuses on zoologist Bob Mason, who is known as an authority on snakes. Montgomery relates Mason’s efforts to study snakes at the Narcisse Wildlife Management Area, and reports on Mason’s own findings about the slithering creatures. In addition, the book — which is intended for children — also addresses environmental concerns. *Booklist* contributor Stephanie Zvirin proclaimed *The Snake Scientist* “a stellar example of how good such books can be,” and *Horn Book* contributor Diana Lutz called it “a solid introduction to the ethos of experimental science.”

After completing *The Snake Scientist*, Montgomery issued *The Curious Naturalist: Nature’s Everyday Mysteries*. She followed that volume with *Journey of the Pink Dolphins: An Amazon Quest*, which recounts her study of South America’s exotic dolphins. During the course of her quest, Montgomery endured both extreme heat and drenching monsoons, and met with piranhas, poisonous ants, and massive rats. After finally encountering the pink dolphins, Montgomery succeeded in swimming with them. Nancy J. Moeckel wrote in *Library Journal* that Montgomery’s recollections are “heady stuff,” and Donna Seaman affirmed in *Booklist* that Montgomery “recounts her adventures and observations with the lyricism and penetrating insights of a poet.” A *Publishers Weekly* contributor, meanwhile, wrote that *Journey of the Pink Dolphins* “winsomely blends travel, reportage, adventure and natural history.”

Montgomery teams up Gary Galbreath, an evolutionary scientist, to search for a rare golden-haired bear in *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in*

*Pursuit of a New Species*. The search takes Montgomery and Galbreath into the deep jungles of Southeast Asia where they encounter not only bear hairs that they gather for DNA analysis but also poachers, and the harsh lives of hill tribes. Donna Seaman, writing in *Booklist*, noted that the book is “rich . . . in adventure, discovery, profiles of heroic wildlife specialists, bear lore . . . humor, and a subtle but pervasive spirituality.” Montgomery also adapted the book in a smaller revised version for children, titled *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*. Jennifer Mattson, writing in *Booklist*, noted the author’s “smooth presentation of complicated concepts, all delivered with engaging, shoot-from-the-hip enthusiasm.” *School Library Journal* contributor Patricia Manning noted: “This attractive and informative offering is an intelligent reportage of science as it happens.”

*The Wild Out Your Window: Exploring Nature Near at Hand* features forty-nine essays by Montgomery that focus on nature and wildlife in New England and the relationship among many of these animals and their habitats. “Everyone will learn something new from these delightful essays,” wrote Maureen J. Delaney-Lehman in the *Library Journal*.

In *The Tarantula Scientist*, Montgomery tells the story of Sam Marshall, featuring a research trip to the French Guiana rainforests where Marshall gathers specimens and then back to the college where Marshall teaches and conducts his research on tarantulas. “Montgomery has a gift for scene-setting, describing Marshall’s activities in just enough detail,” wrote a *Kirkus Reviews* contributor. Stephanie Zvirin, writing in *Booklist*, noted that the author provides readers with “a clear understanding of how the answers derived from research become the roots of new, intriguing questions.” *School Library Journal* contributor Patricia Manning referred to the book as “a treat, even for arachnophobes.”

*Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea*, takes young readers on a journey as scientists in New Guinea track a tree-dweller with a radio collar. A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor wrote that the author “paces her narrative well, alternating focus on people and place, keeping the reader engaged and concerned.”

Although Montgomery usually writes primarily about wild animals, she changes her focus to the barnyard in *The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood*. The story revolves around a pig that the author and her husband raised on their homestead for fourteen years and named Christopher Hogwood. Montgomery writes of the care and feeding of the pig, which required help from many, and delves into the adventures that made the pig famous in the local community. In her review in *Booklist*, Donna Seaman commented that the author “writes with extraordinary lucidity, candor, and grace about what this good, good pig taught her and others about life, love, [and] happiness.” A *Kirkus Reviews* contributor noted that the author “learns a good deal from Hogwood about celebrating the evanescent pleasures of living.” Likewise, Sharman Apt Russell wrote in *OnEarth* that the book’s “strength lies in Montgomery’s understanding of how her relationship with a common domestic pig enhanced her relationships with human beings.”

Montgomery once told CA, “I write to illuminate the lives of nonhuman beings and our relationships with them.

“Even as a young child, I always felt at ease with animals — dogs and cats and birds, bees and snakes, even the hippos at the Frankfurt zoo (into whose pen I toddled safely before I was two, to my parents’ horror). I always wanted to be with animals. My best friends were usually animals. When I daydreamed, I thought of animals, and imagined I could enter their world as one of them — that I could smell the scents my dog could discern, or see as far as a bird can see. But I learned early on that not everyone felt this same delight in the company of other creatures. My first day of kindergarten I saw a little boy pulling the legs off a Daddy Long Legs (so I bit him — and was promptly sent home by the teacher.) It seemed natural as a small child to dream of a career as a veterinarian. But as I learned to read, the first stories about pollution and overpopulation and deforestation began to appear in American newspapers. I realized then that the real dangers facing most animals — dangers that could not only kill individuals but wipe out entire species — were not illnesses or injuries a veterinarian could fix, but human ignorance and arrogance that perhaps I could tackle as a writer. If I could help people to see the glory of these other lives, if I could introduce them to some of the wonderful individuals I knew from other species, if I could help readers understand the connection that we share with the rest of animate creation, I hoped I could make a difference in how people lived their lives, and move them to cherish and protect the other rich, precious lives on the planet. And that is what I do to this day.”

## **FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

### **PERIODICALS**

- *Book*, September-October, 2002, Beth Kephart, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 76.
- *Booklist*, January 15, 1999, Donna Seaman, review of *Spell of the Tiger: The Man-Eaters of Sundarbans*, p. 878; February 15, 1999, Stephanie Zvirin, review of *The Snake Scientist*, p. 1064; February 15, 2000, Donna Seaman, review of *Journey of the Pink Dolphins: An Amazon Quest*, p. 1064; September 15, 2002, Donna Seaman, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 187; December 1, 2002, Donna Seaman, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 639; January 1, 2003, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 791; March 15, 2004, Stephanie Zvirin, review of *The Tarantula Scientist*, p. 1304; December 1, 2004, Jennifer Mattson, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*, p. 665; March 15, 2006, Donna Seaman, review of *The Good Good Pig: The Extraordinary Life of Christopher Hogwood*, p. 12.
- *Children’s Bookwatch*, April, 2005, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*.
- *Entertainment Weekly*, October 4, 2002, Daneet Steffens, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear*, p. 148.

- *Horn Book*, July, 1999, Diana Lutz, review of *The Snake Scientist*.
- *Kirkus Reviews*, August 15, 2002, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 1202; February 15, 2004, review of *The Tarantula Scientist*, p. 182; November 1, 2004, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*, p. 1045; February 15, 2006, review of *The Good Good Pig*, p. 173; October 1, 2006, review of *Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea*, p. 1020.
- *Library Journal*, February 15, 2000, Nancy J. Moeckel, review of *Journey of the Pink Dolphins*; October 15, 2002, Maureen J. Delaney-Lehman, review of *The Wild Out Your Window: Exploring Nature Near at Hand*, and Nancy Moeckel, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 92; July-August, 2004, Danielle J. Ford, review of *The Tarantula Scientist*, p. 469; March-April, 2005, "Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Award," p. 235; May 15, 2006, Wildad Williams, review of *The Good Good Pig*, p. 121.
- *New York Times*, February 16, 1995, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, "Tiger, Tiger Burning Bright, You Are Still Divine," p. B2.
- *New York Times Book Review*, April 14, 1991, Mary Midgely, review of *Walking with the Great Apes: Jane Goodall, Dian Fossey, Birute Galdikas*, p. 18.
- *OnEarth*, summer, 2006, Sharman Apt Russell, review of *The Good Good Pig*, p. 39.
- *People*, December 11, 2006, review of *Quest for the Tree Kangaroo*, p. 55.
- *Publishers Weekly*, January 9, 1995, review of *Spell of the Tiger: The Man-Eaters of Sundarbans*, p. 53; February 21, 2000, review of *Journey of the Pink Dolphins*, p. 79; August 19, 2002, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in Pursuit of a New Species*, p. 77; February 6, 2006, review of *The Good Good Pig*, p. 51.
- *School Library Journal*, May, 2004, Patricia Manning, review of *The Tarantula Scientist*, p. 172; December, 2004, Patricia Manning, review of *The Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*, p. 164; April, 2005, review of *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*, p. S50; October, 2005, Patricia Manning, reviews of *The Tarantula Scientist* and *Search for the Golden Moon Bear: Science and Adventure in the Asian Tropics*, p. 64; December, 2005, Kathleen Baxter, reviews of *The Tarantula Scientist*, *The Snake Scientist*, and *The Golden Moon Bear*, p. 35.

#### ONLINE

- *Bookreporter.com*, <http://www.bookreporter.com/> (June 2, 2006), interview with author.
- *The Good Good Pig Web site*, <http://www.goodgoodpig.com> (February 8, 2007).

**Source:** *Contemporary Authors Online*, Thomson Gale, 2008.

**Source Database:** Contemporary Authors Online

## Author Interview

**Q: For previous books you traveled to India to research man-eating tigers, bonded with the great apes of Africa, swam with the pink dolphins of the Amazon, and tracked the golden moon bear through Cambodia. For your latest book, *The Good Good Pig*, you stayed a lot closer to home. Tell us about it.**

**Sy Montgomery:** For most of my books, I travel to jungles and cloud forests and deserts and swamps, and I get a lot of credit for not being killed in the process. I'm best known for writing about rare animals and foreign cultures in remote places. This book, though, is about the pig in our barnyard (though sometimes beyond — in his youth, Christopher Hogwood, like me, had the travel bug, only he didn't get quite as far). The setting isn't glamorous. Pigs aren't endangered or exotic. Yet Christopher Hogwood's adventures and personal charisma provided as much drama and delight as any expedition I have ever undertaken. It was he — and the interspecies family who gathered around him — who sustained me on all my voyages, and anchored me, for the first time in my life, to family and to home.

**Q: Some people will look at this book and think it's about a pet pig. But Christopher Hogwood wasn't a pet, was he?**

**SM:** Not really — not in the sense that “pet” implies ownership. If anything, he owned me! In any case, I was certainly his valet, chef, butler, and maid. As well as his masseuse, public relations representative, and confidante.

**Q: Christopher Hogwood became quite famous. What was the reaction of the real Christopher Hogwood to having a pig named after him?**

**SM:** We wondered about that, actually. Not everyone would be thrilled to have a pig named after him — especially an elegant and handsome conductor who is quite famous in his own right (even more famous than our Hogwood was). But after Christopher's death made headline news, we discovered that the musician actually had a link to Chris' obit on his webpage. So he must have taken our naming a pig after him as the heartfelt compliment it was.

**Q: Where do you think your affinity for animals and the natural world comes from? Why do some people seem to lack this feeling? Is it a cultural thing? Genetic?**

**SM:** I think most humans are born with a fascination with animals — which is what you would expect from evolution. For all but the very latest moments of our existence as a species, humans who didn't have sense enough to pay attention to the natural world either couldn't find food or got eaten by something else. Unfortunately, now that so many of us have turned from hunter-gatherers into shopper-gatherers, this natural affinity is often overlooked or actively discouraged — a casualty of the rush to fill our lives with unnecessary plastic and electronic items.

**Q: What led you to become, in the words of the *Boston Globe*, “part Indiana Jones and part Emily Dickinson”? Who were some of your influences, both literary and scientific?**

**SM:** My biggest hero was my father, a war hero, POW, army general, world-traveler, polyglot — and absolutely fearless. And before I could even read, I discovered a lifelong heroine in the pages of *National Geographic*: Jane Goodall, pictured humbly in the magazine, squatting and holding her hand out to a chimpanzee in Tanzania.

From the moment I could read, I favored books about animals. I adored *Charlotte's Web* of course — never suspecting that I would have a pig of my own one day! I devoured everything I could find by Farley Mowat and Gerald Durrell and Hope Ryden. In college, my most profound literary influence was the man who I would later marry: Howard Mansfield, who was then and is now simply a breathtaking writer. Working with him side by side on the college paper — and since then, on our different books — has affected my own writing deeply.

Henry Beston's classic *The Outermost House*, which I discovered shortly after graduating college, was a great beacon. In particular, his moving and perceptive understanding of animals provided a sort of blueprint for all my work: “We need another and a wiser and perhaps a more mystical concept of animals . . . For the animal shall not be measured by man. In a world older and more complete than ours, they move finished and complete, gifted with extensions of the senses we have lost or never attained, living by voices we shall never hear. They are not brethren, they are not underlings; they are other nations, caught with ourselves in the net of life and time, fellow prisoners of the splendour and travail of the earth.”

**Q: Christopher Hogwood is certainly at the heart of *The Good Good Pig*, but the book is about so much more than his amazing life. Were you surprised as you were writing that so much personal material, especially about your mother and father, found its way in?**

**SM:** Surprised and somewhat mortified! Why bother writing about a person if you could write about a *pig*? My wonderful literary agent, however — and later my excellent editor — convinced me to include my personal life as well as Christopher’s in the book. My own life could provide a backdrop against which his soul could shine.

Too, this book is, at heart, a book about family. Therefore I had to write about the humans who comprised my biological family as well as the larger inter-species family my husband and I made for ourselves. The contrast is rather striking — and the story defeats the limited and rather uninteresting definition of family as merely two opposite-sexed married humans and their biological offspring.

**Q: Was Christopher Hogwood a typical pig or a pearl among swine? He was clearly atypical in not being killed early in his life as most pigs are, but as I read, I couldn’t help wondering how many other Christopher Hogwoods never have the chance to touch people’s lives simply because they end up on people’s plates.**

**SM:** I never met a pig I didn’t like. All pigs are intelligent, emotional, and sensitive souls. They all love company. They all crave contact and comfort. Pigs have a delightful sense of mischief; most of them seem to enjoy a good joke and appreciate music. And that is something you would certainly never suspect from your relationship with a pork chop.

**Q: The term for the care and killing of livestock is *animal husbandry*, a loaded term if ever there was one. What are your thoughts about the burgeoning animal rights and animal welfare movement as exemplified by organizations like PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals)? What can people do to make a difference in the way animals, both pets and livestock, are treated in our society?**

**SM:** I have always felt that humans are just one among a plethora sea of wonderful species — all of whom we should treat honorably.

Yet in our everyday lives, many of us end up supporting unthinkable atrocities. I can’t imagine that women who wear fur, for instance, have any idea of the cruelties of this unnecessary industry. My mother had a closet full of fur coats, including one of a leopard! And my father, who loved animals, had bought them for her! The same ignorance supports factory farming of food animals. Most Americans simply don’t know about the conditions these animals face — and sometimes when they do learn, it’s so horrible they can’t believe it.

We need to reach out to those who aren't aware, in many different ways. Maybe it will be a billboard that changes someone's mind, or a television show. Or maybe a book — maybe even my book. I read Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* in my early 20s, and from the moment I finished its last page, never ate meat again. Now that I am a vegetarian, I consider every meal I make an act of love, not only for the people who'll be nourished by this healthy, delicious, carefully prepared food, but also for the animals it spares and for the wholeness of the earth.

But there are many other ways to honor the many forms of life on Earth. Not only can we boycott those industries that profit from hurting animals and raping the land — we can also support those that protect the planet and its creatures. We can join a humane organization like The Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, or a conservation organization like Rainforest Conservation Fund. We can donate land, or a conservation easement, to a land trust. We can adopt animals from a shelter. We can choose to limit our family size so that we use fewer resources.

These are just a few ideas. We have so much power! In our everyday lives, by the purchases we choose or avoid every day, by the food we eat, we powerfully affect the lives of other creatures. As we learn more, and share what we learn, we'll find more and more ways to help — and in so doing, we will be honoring all of life, and enriching ourselves in the deepest and most profound sense.

**Q: I was struck by the quote from St. Francis that your neighbors put up on your barn: “Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission: to be of service to them whenever they require it.” Does this quote have value outside its specific religious context?**

**SM:** Certainly! You don't have to believe in God to believe in kindness.

**Q: Christopher Hogwood touched so many lives in his fourteen years. What was it that made him, in the words of one of your neighbors, “a great big Buddha master”?**

**SM:** That’s a quote from Lilla Cabot, my next door neighbor, whose two little girls grew up feeding and petting and scratching and watching Christopher every day. Let me answer that in part with the rest of her words: “He taught us how to love. How to love what life gives you — to love your slops. What a soul! He was a being of pure love.”

It’s true. He loved company. He loved good food. He loved the warm summer sun, belly rubs from little caressing hands. He loved this life. And to show us how to relish this abundant, fragrant world would have been gift enough. But he showed us something else as well: that a pig did not become bacon but lived 14 years, pampered and adored till the day he died peacefully in his sleep — that’s proof we need not accept the rules that our society or species, family or fate seem to have written for us. We can choose a new way. We can make a more compassionate world.

That is something that great teachers have tried to tell us for eons. It took a pig to get me to listen.

**Q: Your writing has a spiritual dimension to it, as others have observed, and you write in *The Good Good Pig* about your membership in your local church. As the controversy over the teaching of evolution draws battle lines ever more starkly between proponents of science and religion, how do you keep a balance in your own work and life?**

**SM:** When I was in the Amazon, researching *Journey of the Pink Dolphins*, I met many people who told me about the dolphins’ powers: they could transform themselves into humans, the stories said. In his handmade house built on stilts over the river, a very respected village elder, Don Jorge, told me quite honestly how he had met a dolphin who came to a festa — wearing a hat to cover the blowhole — and how this shape-shifter seduced all the women at the dance, who fell irresistibly in love with him.

On the same trip I also met a scientist, Gary Galbreath, who told an equally incredible story about dolphins. He told me that the ancestors of the dolphins were whales who walked! Only recently, he said, scientists had found not only the legs of these early whales — but also their HOOVES! (They were quite like pigs’ hooves, actually.)

What an incredible tale! Surely, though, Don Jorge would have thought Gary Galbreath’s story as impossible as Gary Galbreath considered Don Jorge’s. But both, you see, are true. They are in fact mirror images: in Don Jorge’s story, the dolphins come out of the water and dance on land; in the scientists’ tale, the dolphins start out on land and then shape-shift into water-dwellers.

Both stories speak mirroring truths, both tell us about the possibilities of transformation.

The fossils tell this story as a factual, physical, historical account. The villagers tell us the same thing, but in the same way that Jesus chose to phrase His parables: these stories are metaphors, speaking a larger (“meta”) truth.

Metaphor does not need to masquerade as science. Science does not seek to replace religion. Both science and story can both be true in their own realms, both of them very real. We need only to listen for truth — and this is one thing my journeys among animals and people, from our barnyard to jungles and mountains, has helped me to learn.

**Q: Is a wider balance or rapprochement possible? The biologist E. O. Wilson, writing in a recent issue of *New Scientist*, thinks not: “There is something deep in religious belief that divides people and amplifies societal conflict. The toxic mix of religion and tribalism has become so dangerous as to justify taking seriously the alternative view, that humanism based on science is the effective antidote, the light and the way at last placed before us.” Do you agree?**

**SM:** I am a huge fan of E. O. Wilson. He showed me his ants once — 10,000 of them lived in his old office at Harvard. He said if you looked at them under a microscope you could see individual differences. His awe and delight in his ants seemed to me a holy thing. If there is a Heaven, I can’t imagine the gatekeepers wouldn’t let E. O. Wilson in.

Today there can be no doubt that religion can be horribly twisted and used as an incitement to violence. But there are also many people of all religious stripes who are working very hard for peace on Earth — peace for all of us, human and otherwise.

**Q: When it comes to pigs in literature, E. B. White’s *Wilbur* is at the top of everyone’s list. Like *Wilbur*, *Christopher Hogwood* was a runt not expected to survive. Did the two pigs have anything else in common?**

**SM:** Both had the benefit of spider companions. Chris’ barn always attracted many species of spiders, including talented orb-weavers like Charlotte. And both pigs were able to show their human families, as well as the wider community, the power of love to reveal and perhaps even to create radiance.

**Q: You mentioned your partner, Howard Mansfield, who is also a writer. Do the two of you help each other as you work, read over each other's drafts, and so on, or do you both pretty much go your separate ways?**

**SM:** We help one another very much. He is my most trusted editor, and I his. This book, more than any other, bears his imprint. The book is full of his recollections, gathered from his own writing and his memories, always recalled with his sharp eye and told with his marvelous sense of humor. Possibly, at least in theory, I might have struggled my way to write some of my other books, in some palsied form, if Howard were not in my life — but I certainly could never have written this one without him.

**Q: As the prognosis for the health of the planet grows increasingly dire, the Bush administration displays little urgency in protecting the environment and endangered species; indeed, it seems to regard such organizations as Greenpeace as close kin to terrorists. Is there enough time to turn things around, or is it too late? Again, what can individuals do that will have any effect on the larger scale?**

**SM:** I can't believe it is ever too late. Otherwise I would eat the cyanide pill and stop sucking down perfectly good oxygen. Of course we need to vote the bad guys out of office. And we need to vote with every purchase, with every meal, with the words we say and the sort of life we lead. We need, at heart, to vanquish our own greed. That's what's corrupting us. And worse, greed — for money, for power, for cars and clothes, for *stuff* — is masking for us the beauty of the *real* world — the myriad of good souls, animal and otherwise, that enliven and nourish this sweet, green Earth.

**Q: Christopher Hogwood came into your life when your father was dying, and his presence helped you endure that painful experience. Similarly, when your mother passed away years later, Christopher lent you support in countless ways. I think a lot of people have had similar experiences with dogs and cats, but it may surprise them to discover that pigs are also capable of providing this kind of comfort and understanding to human beings. Perhaps all animals can do so, in one way or another. What do such moments teach us about our relationship to other animals?**

**SM:** Throughout human history, animals have been our teachers, our healers, our inspiration. North American Indians tell us that the bear was the original medicine woman, who taught humans how to use medicinal herbs. Robert the Bruce took inspiration for his deciding battle from watching a spider. In the Book of Job, the Bible advises, "Ask the animals and they will teach you; the birds of the air, and they will tell you."

Christopher certainly did. And really, it's no wonder that pigs can perceive human suffering and offer us comfort. Pigs are so like us that we borrow their skins to heal our wounds, and steal their hearts to replace our own faulty valves. We are so alike.

In fact, despite the fact that most mammals' powers of observation are vastly superior to our own, our biological and, I think, basic psychological make-up is very similar among social mammals, from dogs to pigs to whales.

What about those animals who are *unlike* us? What about, for instance, a wild tarantula — a creature who wears her skeleton on the outside, whose face is covered with legs and fangs and clusters of eyes, who tastes the world with her feet? It is unlikely that among her many talents is an ability to understand a human's sorrows. No matter — this beautiful creature still has the power to lessen our distress. The simple fact of her wild, vivid, precious, spidery life gives me joy — and that is powerful comfort indeed.

**Q: Are there more pigs in your future?**

**SM:** This I don't know. But, as I write in this book, I do know this: a great soul can come to us at any time, in the form of any creature. I'm keeping my eyes open.

**Q: Will your next book project take you further afield?**

**SM:** I'll always travel, I reckon, or at least till I get too creaky! Soon, I hope to begin research for a new book for adults with a co-author, my friend Brenda Peterson, on multi-species families — which will take me to Kenya and Tanzania again, and who knows where else. Also I'll be working with photographer Nic Bishop on another children's book on the highly endangered flightless giant parrot, the kakapo, which lives on a remote and windswept island off New Zealand. And after that, we'll be working together on another kids' project in Mongolia, about snow leopards. Meanwhile I hope to start a book I have been dreaming about for five years now, a book for adults about birds — and you can imagine the limitless possibilities that could offer.

*Courtesy of Ballantine Books*

## Discussion Questions

1. Did reading *The Good Good Pig* make you feel differently about your relationship to animals and the natural world? If you eat meat, for example, did it make you question that? Or question other aspects of your lifestyle?
2. Sy Montgomery writes about the extended interspecies family that coalesces around “the good good pig,” Christopher Hogwood. If you have a pet or pets, do you think of the animal as a central part of your family unit, or as a kind of appendage to it? In what ways does your pet affect the family dynamic?
3. Lavishing as much money and attention on any animal as Sy Montgomery did on Christopher Hogwood is wasteful when there are human beings in need of assistance. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Why?
4. Do you think you would have enjoyed having Christopher Hogwood and Sy Montgomery for neighbors? Why or why not?
5. We humans seem to have a love-hate view of pigs. On the one hand, there are beloved and humorous fictional characters like Miss Piggy, Piglet, Porky, Babe, and Wilbur. Yet at the same time, in many religions pigs are considered to be unclean animals, and in common parlance, calling someone a “pig” is far from a term of endearment. What do you think accounts for this divergence of views?
6. Do you feel a special connection to any particular kind of animal? If you could be an animal for one day, which would you choose and why?
7. At the beginning of the previous century, most Americans still lived and worked on farms and had close relationships with a variety of animals, both wild and domesticated. Now only a minority of people in this country experiences a close relationship with animals other than dogs, cats, and other familiar pets. What affect do you think that has had on our sense of connection to the natural world, both individually and as a society? Is it important to have that kind of a connection? Why?
8. Consider this quote from St. Francis: “Not to hurt our humble brethren is our first duty to them, but to stop there is not enough. We have a higher mission: to be of service to them whenever they require it.” What might this service consist of? If St. Francis were alive today, how do you think he would react to the animal testing of drugs and other products, livestock farming practices, and the like?
9. What are your thoughts about the animal rights and animal welfare movements? Are they following the advice of St. Francis or taking matters too far? What can people do to make a difference in the way animals — pets, livestock, and wild — are treated in our society?

10. Do animals possess inherent rights that human beings are morally obligated to respect? If so, what is the source of these rights? Should animals have legal or civil rights beyond what is currently accorded them?
11. Do animals have souls?
12. Is the hunting and killing of wild animals an important part of human heritage that should be preserved?
13. The people of Sundarbans regard the local tiger population as manifestations of the divine, and thus do not hunt the animals even when they prey upon human beings. Montgomery finds much to admire in this attitude. Do you agree with her? Why or why not?
14. There are many anecdotes reflecting the extraordinary, even uncanny, sensitivity of animals toward the natural world and toward people. What examples can you give from your own experience, and how do you explain them?

*Courtesy of Ballantine Books*