



# Writing for Animals

New perspectives for writers  
and instructors to educate and inspire



Writing  
*for*  
Animals

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An anthology for writers and  
instructors to educate and inspire



Writing for Animals: An anthology for writers and instructors  
to educate and inspire  
Edited by John Yunker

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# Introduction

The more we study animals, the smarter they get.

Whales, we now know, communicate in complex languages over hundreds of miles; are curious, playful, and highly social; and can recognize themselves and others in a mirror. We know that sharks can sense how fast your heart is beating, and a polar bear can smell you from twenty miles away. Crows remember human faces, craft tools, and have long relied on the tires of passing cars as their personal nutcrackers. Bumble bees, like our companion animals, can be taught to pull strings and push balls in exchange for treats. Thanks to the efforts of professional and citizen scientists, we know so much more about animals than we knew just a generation ago.

Yet despite all we've learned, we have a long way to go when it comes to appreciating what animals can do. Because the skillset of a whale or a bumble bee doesn't position that animal for success in a hospital or on Wall Street, our society continues to view and treat nonhuman animals as lesser creatures.

Writers in all media, from fiction to film, bear some responsibility for our collective ignorance and mistreatment

of animals. Nothing makes me cringe more in a story when I see animals used as mere props or set pieces: A man falls off a boat into the ocean, so cue the shark to elicit fear out of the reader, even though the fact is, sharks very rarely attack people. Bears and wolves all too often suffer the same fate: They are pulled into the story when the writer needs an easy way to crank up the tension.

Consider the long-term impact of so many writers treating so many animals similarly—a planet of people who do not shed tears when sharks have their fins removed or when wolves are killed to protect cattle (who themselves are slaughtered by the billions at the hands of humans). Other misconceptions commonly propagated by writers include: Pigs are messy, fish don't feel pain, horses enjoy running with humans on their backs. Even the words and phrases we use have a collective, subconscious impact: *pigsty*, *like a beached whale*, *kill two birds with one stone*, *don't be a chicken*. Through their work and their art, writers have the power to give animals a voice among humans—yet if we give animals a lesser voice or an inauthentic voice, we do animals a disservice.

For society to change its views, writers must change their views. We must look closely at how we depict animals and ask ourselves difficult questions. For example, are we using animals for our writing in a way that is authentic and fair? Or are we using them for our own purposes, leading to further misconceptions and abuses?

Animals have, both in literature and in life, been unfairly used by humans for millennia. Yet as our awareness awakens about animals' intelligence, sensitivity, and capacity for such "human" emotions as love, grief, and joy, literature, too, is reflecting this change in awareness. From Franz Kafka's *A Report to the Academy* to Karen Joy Fowler's *We*

*Are All Completely Beside Ourselves*, animals have played an increasingly central role in the literature of the last hundred years, and writers are contributing to this advancing awareness of animal issues through the written word, giving animals the voices they deserve.

Yet little has been written about the *process* of writing about animals—from crafting point of view to giving animals realistic voices. Writers face many questions and choices in their work, from how to educate without being didactic to how to develop animals as characters for an audience that still views them as ingredients.

### **Writing *for*, Not Merely *About***

When we chose the title of this collection, we deliberately chose *Writing for Animals* over *Writing about Animals*. While you will find much in this book to assist you in writing about animals, we wanted this book to go further, to help writers understand not only the process but the responsibility of writing about animals.

As writers, we live in an era in which animal suffering is becoming more evident to more people, while animals are under continuing threats through a possible next great extinction. And for those who do not yet see this or who choose not to see this, reading a realistic, accurate, and sensitively written story, poem, or novel about an animal can open hearts and minds to the reality of this suffering and loss.

*Writing for Animals* is designed for writers across genres, inviting them to take a closer look at how they treat animals in their work and offering examples and tips along the way. The book is organized into four parts, beginning with the writer as “naturalist.” Like any scientifically trained naturalist, the writer faces profound and conflicting moral questions. For

starters, Joanna Lilley asks if we have a right to write about animals and, if so, what responsibilities do all writers bear? And when documenting the suffering that so many animals endure at the hands of humans, she notes:

It isn't easy writing about animals; it is complicated and complex, both intellectually and emotionally. Most of us, I suspect, do it because we must rather than as a conscious choice. When I stand for hours in galleries of extinct animals, sometimes I don't think I can do it anymore. But bearing witness gives me a place to stand and look, and a defensible reason for standing and looking.

Lisa Johnson, in "Animals that Work in Stories," explores some of the key roles that animals play in literature, covering authors such as Jack London and J.M. Coetzee. And in "The Case for More Reality in Writing *for* Animals," Rosemary Lombard makes a compelling argument, outlining a process that places animal characters on equal ground with their human counterparts.

The process of learning to know the animals is similar to writing about our own species. The research is like doing historical research as a background for story, yet, in fiction, having the freedom to depart from it in some ways. Likewise, structuring animal characters is similar to structuring human characters, creating a suite of characteristics of body, place, and behavior, but realistic details are even more important because

of one huge, obvious difference: The animals, except a few in communication training, don't share our language. Their repertoire consists of gestures, vocalizations, scent, postures, eye/pupil change, and more; some of that we can learn. You can also use talking animals, put words in their thoughts, or have humans talk about them, but each of those choices also involves knowing the animals well, including details of appearance, place, and behavior.

In Part II, we dive into the craft of writing for animals. In "Meeting the Wild Things Where They Are," Kipp Wessel takes a holistic approach to the writing process, reminding us of our connections with animals:

Animals, whether bounding through the backyard sumac or the Serengeti, are as dimensional as their human neighbors. Those of us who share our homes with them already know this truth. A dog is not a dog. A dog is. A barn owl is. An aardvark is. Animals are as sentient and multifaceted as any human being (sometimes more so). We need to be reminded of this when we delve into the writing of animal lives within the stories we tell. Regardless of nostrils or gills, those who have two feet or twenty, many vertebrae or none—each animal, bird, and reptile of the world has a life force and personality all its own.

In "Rewilding Literature," Paula MacKay shows how writers

can use creative nonfiction to foster empathy for wolves and other predators, inspiring compassion. She stresses that the first step in the process is rewilding oneself. She cites John Valliant, Ann Pancake, Peter Matthiessen and Aldo Leopold. She writes: “[I]t doesn’t benefit predators to rob them of their wildness by taming the terms used to describe them (to call a grizzly bear *cuddly*, for instance) ... We must choose our words carefully when writing about wildlife and use language that helps move people toward a more empathetic point of view.”

Hannah Sandoval provides a detailed character analysis of one of the more famous dogs in literature: Stephen King’s Cujo in “Rabies Bites.” And Beth Lyons tackles veganism and the fantasy genre with “Real Advocacy Within Fantasy Worlds.”

Hunter Liguore, in “Writing Animals Where You Are,” makes the case for focusing more on the animals you encounter every day:

When writers are willing to meet animals where they live, the hierarchy of certain animals being more important can fall away. What’s more, writers can start working *right now*, without the impediment of waiting until a “better animal” comes along.

Last, and most important, we become solid witnesses to our world and can give voices to the animals we—and our readers—encounter more frequently. If I write about the mice in my attic, I might connect with someone who also has mice in the attic, or if I write about the groundhog that comes each season, I might share something and

connect with someone who also sees groundhogs. Not everyone sees lions, tigers, and bears every day. Together, though, we can work to give voice to the diversity of the animal kingdom.

In Part III, we tackle anthropomorphism. While scientists are taught not to project human qualities onto animals, writers can project anything they wish—but even writers are often cautioned against placing animals on equal footing with their human counterparts.

In “Other Nations,” Marybeth Holleman discusses how one writes about an “other” species. She notes, “Writing about the nonhuman world is a practice in standing in the middle.”

And in “No One Mourns an Unnamed Animal,” Midge Raymond discusses the relationship between naming animals and empathy for animals.

When we give an animal a name, we give it an identity, an individuality that sets it apart from the rest of its nameless species. And, in doing so, we often can't help but develop an emotional attachment to these named creatures.

The final part of the book is dedicated to inspiring writers to use their work to change the world. Writers have the unique ability not only to highlight the problems of today in ways that can reach the broadest of audiences but also to imagine a better, more compassionate tomorrow.

Sangamithra Iyer's essay asks “Are You Willing?” She writes, “Writing about animals in a way that challenges rather than accepts societal norms is a radical act. Any radical act is often met with resistance.”

In “With a Hope to Change Things,” Alex Lockwood interviews the founders of *Zoomorphic* magazine, an online and print journal with a clear point of view regarding the future of animal-centric writing.

Finally, we have assembled a resource list for writers that comprises journals, blogs, and magazines dedicated to publishing environmental and animal-centric fiction and nonfiction.

What is the role of the writer in this age, the Anthropocene? In a time when the world has been forever changed by humans, we can begin to change it for the better. The way humans treat nonhuman animals has significant impacts not only on our own psyches but on the planet itself.

We invite writers to imagine a world in which there is less suffering, more justice, purer water, cleaner air—and each of these things is connected, in some way, to the way we treat animals: for food, for entertainment, for resources. We invite writers to imagine our similarities with our nonhuman counterparts rather than our differences. And finally, we invite writers to use their talents to show these things to the world. I hope this book will help all writers do just that.

John Yunker  
Ashland, Oregon  
August 2018

Part I:  
The Writer as  
Naturalist



# Do We Have the Right to Write about Animals?

*Joanna Lilley*

The girl took the poker her father handed her. As she looked up at him, he put his hand on her back and pushed her forward, closer to the animal crouching by a heap of rocks. Whatever the creature was, she'd never seen one before. It was the size of a large dog and had broad, dark stripes on its back and a wide face.

“Go on,” her father said. “It killed our sheep.”

The girl stood with her feet apart. She raised the poker with both hands.

I'm going to stop there because it's hard to write about the death of one of the last Tasmanian tigers ever to exist, particularly at the hands of a child, even if I am writing fiction. At least I hope I am. Reading *The Doomsday Book of Animals* by David Day, it isn't difficult to speculate that

something like this may well have happened. Day writes that all the attacks on humans by Tasmanian tigers were made by animals who were “found to be starving and almost toothless, being easily killed or driven off by sticks or, in one case, a poker swung by a child.”

I have feared the worst in my interpretation of those words and assumed that the poker was used to kill, not only drive off, the creature. I hope I am wrong.

We make many choices when we write. You may have noticed there are three potential points of view in the scene I’ve started here—the child’s, the father’s, and the Tasmanian tiger’s—and I haven’t opted for any of them yet. I, as the narrator, am not inside anyone’s head. The scene so far describes no one’s feelings. If I carried on writing the scene, I would have to commit to a point of view; I would need to show the reader what at least one of the characters is feeling, or avoiding feeling. Otherwise, unless I had great skill as a writer, the story would fall flat. The detached style would fail to draw in the reader.

The point of view I’d find most intriguing would be the tiger’s. (Actually, the Tasmanian tiger wasn’t a tiger at all but a marsupial, and I’ll call it by one of its other names, thylacine, from now on.) But how can I possibly know what that particular thylacine was feeling? How can I know what any thylacine once felt? Did the very last thylacine that we’re aware of, who died in a cage in Hobart Zoo in 1936 after being neglected by staff, know she was the only remaining example of her kind? I recognize that sounds fanciful, but we have very little idea what animals think and feel and perceive. This is the biggest challenge for writers trying to write authentically about animals. Do we have the ability, let alone the right, to presume what any creature is thinking or feeling?

I believe that, yes, we do have the ability and we do have the right to presume, conjecture, speculate, imagine, and explore what an animal might be experiencing. After all, we are animals, too. We forget this. Indeed, we are trained to believe we are not animals. This may not have been explicitly said to us during our *Homo sapiens* childhood (although the parental reprimand, “You’re not an animal. Don’t behave like one!” is not uncommon). The training tends to be more implicit, conveyed to us through attitudes and behaviors and through our cultural or religious influences.

Despite this training, perhaps we were confused when we observed that we lived with cats and dogs and rabbits and yet ate cows and chickens and pigs. Maybe the family dog was put down because the treatment for a tumor was expensive, and yet our grandmother lived her last years in a costly care home and didn’t know who we were when we visited. Perhaps our parents criticized our uncle for caring more about his dog than about his nephews and nieces. Maybe our mother hit a rabbit on the highway and winced but carried on driving.

If we wish to write about animals, it is important to be aware of our influences and beliefs, chosen or imposed, evident or disguised, as this is the de facto training that has made us forget our own animal status. To help you, here are some questions you can ask yourself as a writer. You can also direct the same questions to your human and, yes, your animal characters.

*Is an animal an “it” or a “he” or a “she” or a “they”?*

*Is an animal a “that” or a “who”?*

*In what circumstances could you kill an animal?*

*In what circumstances could you kill a Homo sapiens?*

*Do you believe humans have souls?*

*Do you believe animals have souls?*

Our beliefs about animals can come from many different sources. Each of us is, of course, influenced by a unique set of circumstances including families, friends, economic status, class, education, religion, and geography.

For the past ten years, for example, I have lived in Yukon in Canada, next to Alaska. There are fourteen First Nations in Yukon, and the legends and stories passed on to them by their grandmothers teach them that Crow started the world:

He brought fish to the lakes; he brought the first light into the world by letting the sun, moon and the stars escape from a wealthy man, who owned them. Crow placed these into the sky so they would belong to everyone.

The implication that Crow rescued the sun, moon, and stars from the tyranny of man appeals to me more than the depiction of creation we find in the Bible, yet I admit both versions of creation are just stories to me. What did your religion or culture teach you to believe about animals? Our beliefs can be contradictory and complicated. In Hinduism, cows are revered and never killed. The Nivkh people honored bears in festivals, then killed and ate them, and in Judaism, pigs are never eaten because they are considered unclean.

For my part, I grew up in England, a country that is ostensibly Christian, though my parents only took me and my siblings to church once a year, on Christmas Day. Christians believe God created animals for human beings and that we can therefore use them however we want. Christians believe

animals are inferior to humans because they don't have souls and aren't capable of reason. I hope I have oversimplified the relationship of modern Christians to animals, but these statements feel true to the culture I grew up inside. Which is why, presumably, that culture finds it acceptable to keep billions of animals in extreme confinement and then kill and eat them.

What is notably confusing is that like millions of *Homo sapiens* of varying cultures, I assume, I was trained as a baby to listen to stories about animals and look at pictures of animals. It's astounding how many children's books are about our fellow creatures, albeit animals who can talk in human language and wear clothes and are invariably cute. Their reward for behaving like us is perhaps that the stories have happy endings. (It is interesting that when animals feature in adult stories, such as novels and films, they are highly likely to come to a sticky end. The humans might get a happy ending, but the animals rarely do.)

Like millions of other human children, I would persuade my parents to read me as many stories as possible and afterwards snuggle down to sleep among my stuffed toys—my monkey, bear, horse, and cat—and in the morning I would pour milk meant for baby cows on my cereal and at lunchtime eat a pig sandwich.

And so, when we write about animals, we need to know what belief system we are writing within and be aware of whether we are upholding, questioning, or opposing it. We must choose every word we use to describe an animal or convey an animal presence consciously, thoughtfully, deliberately. We must be able to explain each choice if we are called upon to do so. I mean, here, the words we select and what they create: vocabulary, diction, image, scene. (I am not saying the idea

for a story or poem in itself can necessarily be conscious or deliberate. In my experience, an idea will simply come to us, and we will be compelled to write about it.)

Is, for example, the animal in your story or poem a metaphor for the natural or the true? (Your protagonist sees a grizzly bear on a hillside and wishes she were as free.) Is the animal there to show how cruel a human character is? (Your antagonist kicks a dog.) Do the animals have any agency of their own, or are they props in a scene? (A cat curled up by a fireside to denote domestic harmony.) Or a plot device? (If the child hadn't been running after a dog she wouldn't have been hit by a car.) Are they there as a comic turn? (Comedy isn't my strong point; perhaps a raccoon overturns a garbage can while a teenager is trying to sneak back into a house at night.)

Could you write a story or a poem that includes an animal that isn't serving a human purpose? Could you write about what the cat curled up by the fireside does when the husband and wife in the room start arguing?

Could you write a story or poem without any human beings in it at all?

When I started my current project of writing poems about extinct species, I wanted to be able to write poems that had no human presence in them and were not even filtered through a human experience. I wanted to be absent, for the animals to be able to communicate for themselves. I knew it was impossible, for writing is a human artifact, and I can't, unfortunately, experience anything unless it is through my own consciousness. Yet the fact that I have this urge is promising. If I'm thinking this way, then thousands of others will be, too. That's generally how it seems to work. Philosophers such as Peter Singer and his work on speciesism have propped the door open for people like me, and more and

more of us are walking through. (As long ago as 2003, J.M. Coetzee's eponymous character, Elizabeth Costello, likened our treatment of animals to the treatment of humans in the Holocaust. Consider that.)

It is exciting that our minds are at least capable of attempting to experience a consciousness other than our own.

So, as animals ourselves, we are giving ourselves permission to write about other animals. Now, how do we go about knowing what those other animals are thinking or feeling? Here are some more questions for us to think about.

Have you ever lowered your hands and knees to the grass on a warm day and synchronized your breathing with the dog lying beside you? Have you ever opened your mouth when no one is looking and let your tongue loll? Have you been for a walk at night and, like the dog beside you, never looked up at the stars?

Have you slow-blinked at your cat when she looked at you? Have you lapped water with your tongue from a glass? Have you spent hours watching sparrows fly in and out of a hedge? Have you growled in your sleep? Perhaps you've purred.

Find an animal. In your house or garden, in the park or forest, on a mountain, in a zoo or on a safari, in a book or on YouTube. Find a cat, a dog. Find a wasp, ant, beetle, robin, raven, squirrel, gazelle, beaver, badger, fox, pheasant.

Watch that animal. Untighten your face, lower your shoulders, let your arms hang, feel from the inside every part of your body and relax each one: your muscles, your heart, your liver, your spine, the soles of your feet. Loosen your molecules; let them float apart. In this state, watch an animal.

Now let the space between you soften. Let the animal's form drift toward yours. Go closer to the other creature without physically moving. Feel as if you are merging. Let

your skin slacken and become more permeable. Dissolve the air, paper, screen between you.

Become fur, chitin, bone, feather, fossil.

Pick up your pen. Touch the tips of your fingers to your keyboard. Write. Write sentences, if they happen to come, or just words. Make a row of marks and then another: your code for translating human experience.

This is not a technique that will appeal to every writer; it is just one way of attempting to connect with what another animal is thinking or feeling. We are skilled at doing this with our fellow human beings. I think we can get better at doing it with animals, too. I have shared this perhaps rather whimsical method with you because I find it to be an effective approach and also because it makes it clear that my own attitude toward animals is based on something we might call *intuition* or *emotion* rather than scientific study and analysis. Self-awareness is always useful. I have learned from years of writing that however much I want to be rational, scientific, factual, methodical, I write from a place of feeling. Almost all of what I am sharing here is what I know from personal experience rather than what I've learned through courses in animal studies (I haven't taken any) or from the writings of Jeremy Bentham, Peter Singer, Jane Goodall, Elisa Aaltola (read them if you can) and many others.

Nevertheless, observation, I believe, is the bridge between a subjective and an objective approach to writing about animals. I have observed the skull of a thylacine at the Royal Ontario Museum in Ontario, Canada. I have seen the extinct Xerces blue butterfly in a drawer in Regina, Canada. I have traveled three and a half thousand miles from my home in Whitehorse to meet Martha, the last-ever passenger pigeon, at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC.

I speculated earlier, perhaps fancifully, whether the last thylacine in captivity knew she was potentially the last of her species. I have the same question, arguably more fittingly, for Martha, who died in 1914 at the Cincinnati Zoo. Perhaps my question is entirely anthropomorphic. Perhaps it is based on what I know to be true about passenger pigeons.

In 1866, a flock of passenger pigeons flew over Ontario in Canada. The flock was a mile wide and three hundred miles long. According to the Center for Biological Diversity, it took fourteen hours for them all to pass overhead. It's hard enough to imagine what it would have felt like to stand watching an ocean of birds flow above you, let alone what it would have been like to have been one of the birds themselves.

While I stood looking at Martha in Washington, DC, I wanted to know what it was like to be a small bird in a flock of millions. Complicating my efforts to empathize with Martha was the fact that I had read she was born in captivity. Were the two males displayed beside her born in captivity, too? What had it been like for Martha to be confined in a cage at the zoo as she was now confined inside a glass case at the museum? I had so many questions for the small brown bird, yet all I could do was make notes, take photographs, and sketch, badly, her graceful shape.

The point is that passenger pigeons are said to have been one of the most social species of land birds. As human beings, we're used to being in large crowds—at a railway station, in a bar, at a concert—but is there something else going on when millions of individuals fly together as they migrate?

As a social animal, whether born in captivity or not, what would have been Martha's experience of solitude and confinement? Would she have had a sense of boredom? Or incompleteness? Did Martha attempt to connect or merge

with other life she saw around her? Would the *Homo sapiens* visitors standing on the other side of the bars have provided an alternative social structure for her to attempt to become part of?

I wonder if my speculation about whether Martha knew she was the last of her species is so fanciful after all?

I have a final question for anyone who is trying to write about animals. Do we always know why we want to write about animals, why we have the urge to write from their point of view, express what they are thinking and feeling? We don't necessarily have to know, but I believe it's a worthwhile question to ask. I didn't used to be able to articulate why I felt compelled to write about animals. (I didn't even realize that animals featured in everything I wrote until it was pointed out to me by author Patrick Neate at an Arvon writing course.)

For the last year or so, however, I have had an answer. I only have it due to a conversation with a friend who is vegan and committed to helping animals. I was complaining about animal welfare organizations e-mailing me gruesome images of suffering animals, such as a monkey with electrodes in her head or a fox cut in two by a snare. I said they were preaching to the converted. I didn't need to see it; I already knew what went on.

My friend pointed out that she felt obligated to look at such images. Someone had to bear witness to animals' suffering, she said. We mustn't shirk from knowing how cruelly animals are being treated; we must not look away. Since that conversation, and a knowing in my navel that she was right, I have become more willing to bear witness. I recognize that it is the humans advocating for animals who are engineering the opportunity for me to bear witness. The animals themselves cannot present their suffering to me; I may or may not happen

across it and mostly will not in my comfortable, Western life. That, I believe, was my friend's point.

It isn't easy writing about animals; it is complicated and complex, both intellectually and emotionally. Most of us, I suspect, do it because we must rather than as a conscious choice. When I stand for hours in galleries of extinct animals, sometimes I don't think I can do it anymore. But bearing witness gives me a place to stand and look, and a defensible reason for standing and looking.

This is why I must continue to write about animals. This is why I must write about a child who picks up a poker and kills an animal that is now almost definitely extinct.

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# Contributors

**Marybeth Holleman** is the author of *The Heart of the Sound*, co-author of *Among Wolves*, and co-editor of *Crosscurrents North*. A Pushcart-Prize nominee, her essays, poems, and articles have appeared in dozens of journals, magazines, and anthologies, among them *Orion*, *Christian Science Monitor*, *Sierra*, *Literary Mama*, *North American Review*, *AQR*, and *The Future of Nature*, as well as on National Public Radio. Holleman has taught creative writing and women's studies at the University of Alaska and has written for nonprofits on environmental issues from polar bears to oil spills. A North Carolina transplant, she has lived in Alaska for more than twenty-five years.

**Sangamithra Iyer** is a writer and civil engineer. She is the author of *The Lines We Draw* (Hen Press), was a finalist for the 2016 Siskiyou Prize for New Environmental Literature, and is the editor of *Satya: The Long View* (2016). Sangu served as the assistant editor of *Satya* from 2004 to 2007, and as an associate for the public policy action tank Brighter Green. Her writing has been published by *n+1*, *Creative Nonfiction*, *Waging Nonviolence*, *Hippocampus Magazine*, *Local Knowledge*, *Our*

Hen House, and *VegNews*. Her essays have been anthologized in *Primate People: Saving Nonhuman Primates through Education, Advocacy and Sanctuary*; *Sister Species: Women, Animals and Social Justice*; and *Letters to a New Vegan*. She was a recipient of a Jerome Foundation literature travel grant and an artist residency at the Camargo Foundation. She lives in Queens, where she works on watershed protection and water supply infrastructure planning for New York City.

**Lisa Johnson**, PhD, JD, MFA, teaches and studies animal law and animals in society at the University of Puget Sound. She is also a fellow at the Oxford Centre for Animal Ethics. Her recent publications include “On the Suffering of Animals in Nature: Legal Barriers and the Moral Duty to Intervene” (2017) and “The Religion of Ethical Veganism” (2015), both published in the *Journal of Animal Ethics*; and *Power, Knowledge, Animals*, published by Palgrave-MacMillan (2012).

**Hunter Liguore’s** life motto is “respect for differences.” Her writing seeks to create a dialogue that promotes understanding our shared humanity as an alternative to discrimination and hate. She holds degrees in history and writing, and she teaches writing in New England. An award-winning writer, her work has appeared in over a hundred publications internationally, including *Spirituality & Health*, *Orion*, *Great Plains Quarterly*, and *Anthropology & Humanism*. She has several screenplays optioned, including *Everylife*, which is currently in pre-production. Her eco-fiction, teen novel, *Silent Winter*, is forthcoming and already being compared to *The Handmaid’s Tale*. [www.hunterliguore.org](http://www.hunterliguore.org)

**Joanna Lilley** is the author of the poetry collection *The Fleece Era* (Brick Books), which was nominated for the Fred Cogswell Award for Excellence in Poetry, and the short story collection *The Birthday Books* (Hagios Press). Her second poetry collection, *If There Were Roads*, was published in 2017 by Turnstone Press. Joanna emigrated from the UK to Yukon in Canada ten years ago. Find her at [www.joannalilley.com](http://www.joannalilley.com).

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**Midge Raymond** is the author of the novel *My Last Continent* and the award-winning short-story collection *Forgetting English*. Her fiction, articles, and essays have appeared in *TriQuarterly*, *American Literary Review*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, the *Los Angeles Times* magazine, the *Chicago Tribune*, *Poets & Writers*, *LitHub*, *Zoomorphic*, *The Daily Beast*, *Daily Review* (Australia), *Barefoot Vegan*, *VegNews*, and many other publications.

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**Kipp Wessel**’s debut novel, *First, You Swallow the Moon*, a novel of heartbreak and wilderness, was a BookLife Prize in Fiction finalist and earned a *Writer’s Digest* first-place award. His short stories have been published in a dozen commercial and literary magazines, and he’s taught fiction writing at the

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**John Yunker** writes plays, short stories, and novels focused on human/animal relationships. He is a co-founder of Ashland Creek Press, author of the novel *The Tourist Trail*, and editor of two fiction anthologies, *Among Animals* and *Among Animals 2*. His plays have been produced or staged at such venues as the Oregon Contemporary Theatre, the Source Festival, and the ATHE (Association for Theatre in Higher Education) conference. His teleplay *Sanctuary* was performed at the 2017 Compassion Arts Festival in New York, and his short stories have been published in *Phoebe*, *Qu*, *Flyway*, *Antennae*, and other journals.



# About the Cover



Pictured on the cover is a quokka on Rottnest Island in Western Australia. Quokkas (*Setonix brachyurus*) are small marsupials that were mistakenly identified by early Europeans as small cats or rats. Today, the quokka is a protected species and a major tourist draw to Rottnest Island. And while a growing number of tourists arrive seeking selfies with these largely docile creatures, often going as far as to feed or pet them, fortunately a dedicated organization of volunteers is working to educate the public and to protect these amazing animals.

Also pictured on the cover is the keyboard of a 1938 Remington Remette portable typewriter.



Ashland Creek Press is a small, independent publisher of books for a better planet. Our mission is to publish a range of books that foster an appreciation for worlds outside our own, for nature and the animal kingdom, for the creative process, and for the ways in which we all connect. To keep up-to-date on new and forthcoming works, subscribe to our free newsletter by visiting [www.AshlandCreekPress.com](http://www.AshlandCreekPress.com).

# A unique anthology of articles and essays to inspire animal-themed creative writing

As our awareness awakens about animals' intelligence, sensitivity, and social and emotional lives, literature is beginning to reflect this change in awareness. Yet little has been written about the *process* of writing about animals, from crafting point of view to giving animals realistic voices.

Writers face many questions and choices in their work, from how to educate without being didactic to how to develop animals as characters for an audience that still views them as ingredients. In this book, writers will find myriad voices to assist them in writing about animals, from tips about craft to understanding the responsibility of writing about animals. Ultimately, this book is about opening the hearts and minds of both writers and readers to advance our relationships with the animals we share this planet with.

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