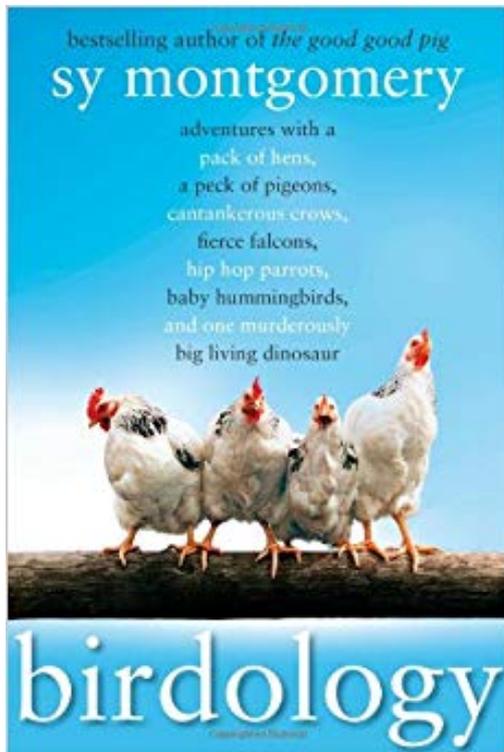


Birdology: Adventures with a Pack of Hens, a Peck of Pigeons, Cantankerous Crows, Fierce Falcons, Hip Hop Parrots, Baby Hummingbirds, and One Murderously Big Living Dinosaur (t) *by* Sy Montgomery



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Meet the ladies: a flock of smart, affectionate, highly individualistic chickens who visit their favorite neighbors, devise different ways to hide from foxes, and mob the author like she's a rock star. In these pages you'll also meet Maya and Zuni, two orphaned baby hummingbirds who hatched from eggs the size of navy beans, and who are little more than air bubbles fringed with feathers. Their lives hang precariously in the balance—but with human help, they may one day conquer the sky. Snowball is a cockatoo whose dance video went viral on YouTube and who's now teaching schoolchildren how to dance. You'll meet Harris's hawks named Fire and Smoke. And you'll come to know and love a host of other avian characters who will change your mind forever about who birds really are. Each of these birds shows a different and utterly surprising aspect of what makes a bird a bird—and these are the lessons of *Birdology*: that birds are far stranger, more wondrous, and at the same time more like us than we might have dared to imagine. In *Birdology*, beloved author of *The Good Good Pig* Sy Montgomery explores the essence of the otherworldly creatures we see every day. By way of her adventures with seven birds—wild, tame, exotic, and common—she weaves new scientific insights and narrative to reveal seven kernels of bird wisdom. The first lesson of *Birdology* is that, no matter how common they are, Birds Are Individuals, as each of Montgomery's distinctive Ladies clearly shows. In the leech-infested rain forest of Queensland, you'll come face to face with a cassowary—a 150-pound, man-tall, flightless bird with a helmet of bone on its head and a slashing razor-like toenail with which it (occasionally) eviscerates people—proof that Birds Are Dinosaurs. You'll learn from hawks that Birds Are Fierce; from pigeons, how Birds Find Their Way Home; from

parrots, what it means that Birds Can Talk; and from 50,000 crows who moved into a small city's downtown, that Birds Are Everywhere. They are the winged aliens who surround us. *Birdology* explains just how very "other" birds are: Their hearts look like those of crocodiles. They are covered with modified scales, which are called feathers. Their bones are hollow. Their bodies are permeated with extensive air sacs. They have no hands. They give birth to eggs. Yet despite birds' and humans' disparate evolutionary paths, we share emotional and intellectual abilities that allow us to communicate and even form deep bonds. When we begin to comprehend who birds really are, we deepen our capacity to approach, understand, and love these otherworldly creatures. And this, ultimately, is the priceless lesson of *Birdology*: it communicates a heartfelt fascination and awe for birds and restores our connection to these complex, mysterious fellow creatures.



Reviews of the [Birdology: Adventures with a Pack of Hens, a Peck of Pigeons, Cantankerous Crows, Fierce Falcons, Hip Hop Parrots, Baby Hummingbirds, and One Murderously Big Living Dinosaur \(t\)](#) by Sy Montgomery

Yla

I absolutely LOVE this book! Sy Montgomery is a wonderful writer with a great sense of humor and a huge heart. As I am also a vegetarian (but not a vegan), I love her sensibility about animals and respect for all living things. this book is in chapters, each chapter about a different species of bird (hawk, chicken, crow, pigeon, etc.) and they are all fascinating. I learn so much from her books in terms of language and understanding. I especially loved her book "The Soul of an Octopus" -- that one was so very special to me. it even made "Finding Dory" more fun since I now knew and understood more about that intelligent and wonderful creature. But I did learn to appreciate and let into my hear, crows. before, I really disliked them and even feared them, but when you realize how intelligent they are, it changes one's perception of them. I pick and choose my way through this book, chapter by chapter. I started with "hummingbirds" which is somewhere in the middle of the book. and I am finishing with 'chickens' which is the first chapter of the book.

Tori Texer

To quote one of the people in *Birdology: Adventures with a Pack of Hens, a Peck of Pigeons, Cantankerous Crows, Fierce Falcons, Hip Hop Parrots, Baby Hummingbirds, and One Murderously Big Living Dinosaur*, Sy Montgomery's goal in this book is allow readers to "experiences the divinity of creation revealed in the birds." Montgomery profiles chickens, cassowaries, hummingbirds, hawks, pigeons, parrots, and crows, each with its unique personality quirks and traits. The end result is a delight to read, especially for avid birders or ornithologists.

Birdology isn't a natural history of birds or observations of them in the wild. Ironically, most of the birds Montgomery meets live in captivity of some sort, from her chickens (the "Ladies") to hawks used for falconry (only the cassowaries were truly wild birds). In fact, each chapter seems to focus

both on a different species of bird and a person who knows it well, such as a pigeon racer or hummingbird vet.

I had mixed feelings about this. Obviously, birds are at their fullest in the wild, and that's where it would really be great to see them. At times, *Birdology* feels a bit too much like a book about "people and their birds." On the other hand, focusing on these particular birds allows Montgomery to really get to know them well and provide detailed observations. For example, after years of watching her hens in her backyard, she has noticed that certain personality traits are passed from one generation to the next - what we would call culture. Chicken culture - imagine that!

While Montgomery loves her birds, she resists the temptation to anthropomorphize them. In fact, the best parts of *Birdology* discuss how birds are different from humans in ways we don't yet fully appreciate. Many birds still have strong instinctual impulses, from the gull chicks who incessantly peck at red objects to the overwhelming urge birds of prey have to hunt (known as "yarak"). She also suggests Alex, the famous African Grey Parrot, had trouble learning some colors because parrot vision recognizes a broader spectrum of colors than does our own.

I do wish Montgomery had chosen more birds to profile, especially when the goal of her book is to give readers some sense of what it means to be a bird. Some of the stories of the more familiar birds have been told in different forms elsewhere. For example, the discussion of Alex the Parrot is also the subject of *Alex & Me: How a Scientist and a Parrot Uncovered a Hidden World of Animal Intelligence--and Formed a Deep Bond in the Process*. Other birds, such as pigeons and crows, are fascinating if not exotic. It would have been nice for example to have had a chapter on penguins, a very different type of bird, or the great wandering albatrosses (the subject of Carl Safina's wonderful *Eye of the Albatross: Visions of Hope and Survival*). There are so many types of birds - over 10,000 species - so it's impossible to cover them all, but I definitely felt there was room in the book for a few more.

Reading *Birdology*, one gets the feeling that it would be really fun to just be Sy Montgomery. Some of the relationships she's had with birds are truly magical. She doesn't just describe the birds, but also tries to share how it felt emotionally to be in the presence of such wonderful animals. I thought it fascinating for example to hear her describe the hawk as master and the human handling it as the servant. For those of us who haven't been able to spend much time with birds, *Birdology* conveys that sense of wonder.

Note: If you want a straight up natural history of birds, I might suggest David Attenborough's *The Life of Birds* or Colin Tudge's *The Bird: A Natural History of Who Birds Are, Where They Came From, and How They Live*. The latter is a bit dry, but comprehensive.

Itiannta

I'm not sure I can say enough about this book. It's a lovely, lyrical tribute; an extraordinary and personal experience; an exceptionally well-written and -researched look into a creature we see daily, but rarely really SEE.

A pleasure to read, full of information but never so technical that it bogs the reader down. The author chose her examples very well, and uses a combination of personal experience and scholarly research to beautiful effect. With each chapter, I kept thinking, "this is my favorite," until I got to the next one.

If you have any interest at all, even just slight curiosity, I urge you to read this book. You may not love it as much as I do, but I believe you will enjoy it and get a lot back for the time spent.

Hulis

Sy Montgomery is a gifted writer. She has a child's sense of awe, a scientist's analytic mind, a deep

curiosity about and appreciation for animals, and she's gutsy. She goes places to see and tell us things that are interesting, fun and thought-provoking. In the process she expands our mental world in wondrous ways. As a fledgling birder I was aware of many of the subjects presented in Birdology. Nonetheless, Sy has a way of presenting information that is fresh as she brings us along on all of her adventures. I recommend Birdology to anyone who has ever looked up into sky and found their heart quicken. To those who wonder: what would it really feel like.....to fly, to take off and soar along a thermal or rip through the sky on a windy day. Or someone who was a child and experienced the thrill of hearing their pet parakeet talk for the first time. In short, for anyone who has experienced, even if just for a second, the beauty and mystery of our fellow feathered travelers.

Gandree

I spotted this book on the shelf of a treehouse B&B and it was love at first sight. I read a chapter there, then went home and ordered a copy. It's so lovely to read - the writer is sweet, funny, informative, and the topics are varied and interesting. Even the chapter about chickens is a delight to read - I feel like I'm in her yard. Gave me warm fuzzies - or should I say feathers? Elicits so many feelings - mystery, adventure, comfort, amazement.

ACOS

Birdology is a wonderfully fun book that celebrates the world of birds. Sy Montgomery is a wonderful lady with a great passion for birds and especially her chickens! She holds none of her passion back in her writing. :) It is fun and educational. I highly recommend it. I even read this to two little bird lovers at the ages of 10 and 6 years old! They loved it and we laughed through her stories.

Paster

I would love to have a little family of hens clucking away in my back yard. My home is situated in an area of heavy traffic on US1, so no hens in my life. This is a wonderful book, so much information on avian species well told with compassion and concern. I have not finished the book but wanted to recommend it as educational but written in a way that will engage the reader from the get go.

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