

## Animal Stories by Young Writers

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At a time when the nation's schools are getting low grades for teaching subjects such as writing and language, it is encouraging to read well-constructed, imaginative stories coming from pre-teens. The editors of Stone Soup Magazine have compiled an anthology by young gifted writers on a favorite subject of young people-animals. Children have a familiarity with pets and wild animals that enables them to write with credibility and imagination. Their imagery is enjoyable, the plots creative and their emotion honest.

Topics vary: A horse dies because of a willful boy's actions. A child must bury a beloved pet skunk. A wild prairie boy lives with a herd of mustangs. A girl begins to understand her father's lifelong passion for studying wolves. There are stories about conquering fear, dealing with grief, bravery, responsibility, the supernatural and science fiction. Some are written from the perspective of a wild animal.

One of the most sophisticated pieces comes from one of the youngest contributors, Kelly Brdicka, age nine. Her lyrical "Voice of the Gray Wolf" begins: "Imagine, one starry evening you are looking out your bedroom window at your home in a snow-covered Canadian forest. You look up, up to the vast azure sky full of beautiful twinkling silver stars. Their soft, silver light floats through the window, calling you, changing you. Until you feel yourself running, running swiftly through the snow with your pack. You have long, white fangs that glisten in the starlight and a small, black nose that can smell prey a mile and a half away..."

Another story, "The Doe," Daniel Whang, age twelve, describes what it is like to pull the trigger for the first time on a traditional family deer hunt. "BOOM! I felt a shock run through my body. I stared disbelieving at the doe, which was struggling to stay alive, looking at me as if I had betrayed her. I gazed at the smoking gun and then at my finger which betrayed me. I refused to believe that I shot the doe. When I saw the bullet hole surrounded by blood, I vomited." The young hunter has participated in his first and last hunt.

Young people should enjoy reading these stories by their peers. Perhaps inclusion in the anthology will encourage these talented contributors to keep on writing and refining their skills.

LINDA SALISBURY (March / April 2000)

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