



The Man-Eating Tigers of Sundarbans

Sy Montgomery

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Along the Bay of Bengal, between the countries of India and Bangladesh, stretches a strange and beautiful landscape—part ocean, part river, part forest. This is the Sundarbans Tiger Reserve, and it is home to more tigers than anywhere else on the earth. Nowhere else do tigers live in a mangrove swamp. Nowhere else do healthy tigers routinely hunt people. Yet about three hundred people a year are killed by the tigers of the Sundarbans. And no one knows why.

The Man-Eating Tigers of Sundarbans Details

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Author : Sy Montgomery

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J.E.Lindberg says

I've always been fascinated by tigers and I do like Sy Montgomery's work; she crafts this tale with some beautiful language. The tigers of the Sundarbans are such an unlikely presence in the modern age. Big cats that routinely prey on humans and humans who have not exterminated them as would be the natural reaction of a species quite capable of such an act. A culture that has incorporated and accepted the presence of the primeval threat in their world view. The author was clearly smitten by the exotic culture despite her well documented frustrations with penetrating its mysteries and communicating with the people she met. I would have liked to have learned more about this unique population of tigers and their natural history in this environment where the sea, rivers and land combine to create a nearly impenetrable refuge. National Geographic produced a documentary based on this book.

Lizabeth says

very redundant. Got bored. Never finished.

Diana says

Read this to catch a glimpse of people who live with an animal who kills them, and people who respect the lives of those tigers. A way of living with the unknown, the unknowable, and danger, and willing to live within a world they (we) cannot control. With respect, honor and love. And fear. An amazing view into how we once lived with animals.

Meredith Trotter says

Publication: 2001

Grade/Age: Ages 10-14

Annotation: A non-fiction book that explores the mystery of the tigers of Sundarbans. Almost all other kinds of tigers do not hunt humans, but these tigers are known for hunting and eating people.

Themes: Tigers, dangerous animals, the mangrove forests on the border between India and Bangladesh

Ways to use the book:

After reading the book, have students discuss or write the reason they think these tigers hunt and eat humans.

Have students research some of the other interesting animals mentioned in this book.

Pretend that you live near these tigers' habitat. Write about why you choose to live here, despite the obvious dangers.

David P says

Among the few remaining strongholds of nature, in this age of vanishing wildlife, is a place where tigers still stalk and kill humans, not the other way around. That is a maze of saltwater swamps, mangrove forests and low islands, the "Sundarbans Tiger Preserve" in the delta of the Ganges, a true wilderness in spite of its proximity to metropolitan Calcutta. Its tigers subsist on deer and wild boar, but they do not fear man. Expert swimmers, they may leap onto a boat that has entered their domain--often illegally, its occupants seeking timber or wild honey--snatch a victim and disappear.

This book is a travelogue, the fruit of several visits to the Sundarbans. Though unseen tiger eyes have no doubt watched and followed the writer, the tiger himself is rarely seen: only once, for a few seconds, does Sy Montgomery catch a glimpse. Yet its presence is everywhere--in tiger stories told by villagers, pawprints in the mud, or in the carcass of a deer floating by, killed by a powerful bite through its neck.

India is a crowded country, and villages surround the preserve. Each year, by official count, tigers there kill 30 to 40 people--the real number is probably larger, because attacks on those entering illegally are rarely reported. The dreaded Bengali cyclones, vicious storms which make the sea overflow the land, claim many more lives, and crocodiles and snakes also find victims; but it is the threat of the tiger which colors daily life. The way people co-exist with tigers and adjust their lives to its threat, that is what the book is really about.

More and more of us, even in India, dwell in cities, where religion is either institutional or neglected, and where divine intervention is no longer taken for granted. Villages in the Sundarbans live by older rules: both nature and the gods are tangible and alive, and the tiger is their natural link. Daksin Ray, ruler of all tigers, and Bonobibi, goddess of the forest, are feared and revered by Hindus and Muslims alike, and whenever villagers enter an endangered area, a holy man with spells and amulets, a gunin, comes along to keep the tigers away. If such a party is nevertheless attacked--even the gunin may be a victim--a reason is invariably found, an act of impiety, some offense which the gods would not let pass.

Superstition? Easy for us to say so, surrounded by paved roads, our daily life revolving around electric and electronic gadgets. But for those that dwell in the Sundarbans, listening to the wind, watching the darkness (what was that bump against the boat? are we being followed?), life remains steeped in mystery. Stories of miraculous escapes and divine retributions are not viewed as strange but fit the pattern. It is to the credit of Sy Montgomery that her book captures that other-worldly atmosphere without in any way belittling the people who live in it. I doubt many of us would actually want to visit that part of India and cruise the muddy waters of the Sundarbans, the way she did. But reading about it, in the comfort and safety of one's armchair, is an enjoyable and memorable experience.

Beverly says

Wow! Tigers that really attack and eat men! but these are men that ill advisedly go into the tiger preserve in this area of India. This preserve happens to be a huge mangrove swamp, and the local people are not supposed to go into the preserve. So if they get taken by a tiger, it really is on their own head!

Fascinating information; terrific photographs

Keesha 11-12 says

The Man-Eating Tigers of Sundarbans is really interesting. You get to catch a glimpse of people getting eaten by the animals they live with. This book provides information on these dangerous predators. After reading this book, I thought of how awful it must have been being eaten by a tiger. The pain that flows through your body must be excruciating. I really enjoyed reading this book.

Katrina says

I thought this would be a bit different than it was...It's a short children's book with photographs, not in novel form. But it was interesting.

Karen says

Fascinating description of the fact and fiction surrounding tigers, looking at why certain tigers (and only certain tigers) eat men.

Nuria Castaño monllor says

3,5

Marie says

Really informative book.

Seth Nelson says

Interesting

k says

Library find which although informative, is written as if for children. (Later found Sy's book "Spell of the Tiger: the Maneaters of Sunderbans") Straightforward and realistic, an impressionable documentation. This would have given my six year old self many sleepless nights. However, there is wisdom here for developing minds. Realizing man is subject to predation and a part of "nature" and seeing how cultures co-exist with

man-eaters is valuable knowledge. Tigers are the guardians of the wildness that humans need to live, and man has brought them to the precipice of extinction. Thought provoking.

David Ward says

The Man-Eating Tigers of the Sundarbans by Sy Montgomery (HMH Books for Young Readers 2004) (599.756). The Sundarbans Tiger Preserve is found on the Bay of Bengal between India and Bangladesh. Most of the world's tigers live there – and they have a taste for humans. Does anybody else remember Sher Khan from The Jungle Book? My rating: 7/10, finished 2006.
