

Read. Return. Repeat.

A ReadICT Podcast

Show Notes

Season 4 Episode 7: Read between the Lions (featuring Talia Kolluri)

September 6th, 2024



In this episode

Sara and Daniel interview author Talia Lakshmi Kolluri to talk about her debut short story collection *What We Fed to the Manticore*. Talia shares what inspired her to write stories from various animal perspectives, geeks out about research (especially animal research!) and the fascinating world of animal friendships – both with humans and other species – as we focus on ReadICT category 9, a book featuring an animal sidekick.



Photo by Sara Deragon

About Talia Kolluri

Talia Lakshmi Kolluri is a mixed South Asian American writer from Northern California. She is the author of a collection of short stories, *What We Fed to the Manticore* (Tin House 2022). A lifelong Californian, Talia lives in the Central Valley with her husband, a teacher and printmaker, and a very skittish cat named Fig.

More about Talia Kolluri

Taliakolluri.com

Instagram: [@taliakolluri](https://www.instagram.com/taliakolluri)

X (Twitter): [@TaliaKolluri](https://twitter.com/TaliaKolluri)

Books by Talia Kolluri

What We Fed to the Manticore: Stories (2022)

A list of published essays and stories can be found at taliakolluri.com/other-writing.

Books, films & other media mentioned in this episode

Survival of the Friendliest: Understanding Our Origins and Rediscovering Our Common Humanity by Brian Hare and Vanessa Woods (2020)

The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable by Amitav Ghosh (2017)

The Pride of Baghdad (Graphic Novel) by Brian K. Vaughan and Niko Henrichon (2008)

The Neverending Story (1984 film, directed by Wolfgang Petersen)

When Animals Dream: The Hidden World of Animal Consciousness by David M. Peña-Guzmán (2022)

Ma'iingan/Brother Wolf (2019 documentary by Wisconsin Public Television)

American Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West by Nate Blakeslee (2017)

Where the Red Fern Grows by Wilson Rawls (1961)

Watership Down by Richard Adams (1972)

Memoirs of a Polar Bear by Yoko Tawada, translated by Susan Bernofsky (2016)

Piranesi by Susanna Clarke (2020)

Topics discussed in this episode (with timestamps)

- About *What We Fed to the Manticore* 4:00
- Inspiration behind the stories 4:55
- Modern-day fables 8:29
- *The Dog Star is the Brightest Star in the Sky* (bear and fox story) 9:55
- The dark tone of the stories 14:20
- *The Good Donkey* (Donkey in Gaza story) 19:20
- The Manticore 24:23
- Humans and animals – how similar are we? 29:15
- Approach to research for the stories 33:40

- Use of a bibliography in a short story collection 39:18
- Villainized and misunderstood animals 42:15
- The emotional side of writing “sad” animal stories 47:15
- Why animal deaths in stories hits us so hard 50:56
- What animal would she choose to be? 57:06
- Upcoming projects 58:38
- Talia’s book recommendations 59:40

Relevant links to topics mentioned in this episode

[BBC.com: Climate change: Polar bears face starvation threat as ice melts \(February 13, 2024\)](#)

[Phys.org: Introducing co-cultures: When co-habiting animal species share culture \(July 11, 2024\)](#)

[NPR’s the Two-Way: Gaza zoo’s ‘zebras’ could pull donkey carts \(October 8, 2009\)](#)

[Worldhistory.org: Manticore](#)

[UNESCO: Sundarbans World Heritage site devastated by cyclone, according to UNESCO experts who visited the site \(December 7, 2007\)](#)

[Jim and Jamie Dutcher \(Living with Wolves founders\)](#)

[Jim Brandenburg \(wildlife photographer\)](#)

[Yellowstone National Park: Yellow Stone Wolf “06” remembered \(September 4, 2015\)](#)

[NOAA Fisheries: A Whale’s world of sound \(February 18, 2022\)](#)

[Scientific American: Is the alpha male wolf idea a myth? \(February 28, 2023\)](#)

[Iowa Now \(University of Iowa\): UI study: Pigeons use same basic learning process as AI \(February 7, 2023\)](#)

[National Geographic Education: The role of scavengers: carcass crunching](#)

[Does the dog die: Trigger warnings for movies, TV, books, video games and more \(website\)](#)

[PBS.org: Cuttlefish males fool rivals by imitating opposite sex \(video\)](#)

[Link to episode transcript](#)

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