



# The Nature of Dogs

*Mary Ludington*

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In *The Nature of Dogs*, Mary Ludington seeks to capture the true nature of dogs -- their beauty, character, and spirit. Any dog owner will tell you that there is a profound and mysterious connection between humans and their dogs. Our regard for these creatures undeniably runs deeper than mere gratitude for companionship: we respect the unknowable aspect of their natures and understand that at least a part of their true spirit resides outside the human sphere. Though they hunger for our affection, our pets are often most themselves in their natural habitat.

Mary Ludington's spectacular and sensitive photographs reflect this understanding, capturing the particular personalities of sixty different breeds, from the handsome and feisty Irish Terrier to the exuberant and hardy Labrador Retriever; from the sleek, high-stepping Italian Greyhound to the snub-nosed, princely Pug. Ludington has her subjects roam outdoors, observing quietly and letting the dogs dictate her shots. The striking collection of more than one hundred twenty-five photographs that results from this natural approach offers us a glimpse of the dogs in their element -- whether caught midstride or in an hour of well-earned repose.

Of course, as Patricia Hampl notes in her foreword, though we may find ourselves drawn to a certain breed's characteristics, our love for dogs inevitably becomes deeply specific; a dog is an individual, not a bloodline. "There is only one dog," she writes, "mine...or of course, yours." This intense relationship between pet and owner is reflected in the set of original, personal essays that accompanies Ludington's photographs. The contributing writers include:

- **JAMES HILLMAN**, renowned psychologist and prolific author
- **MARY GAITSKILL**, National Book Award finalist
- **TEMPLE GRANDIN**, PhD in animal science and spokeswoman for the welfare of animals
- **KEVIN KLING**, playwright, humorist, and regular contributor to *All Things Considered*
- **WINONA LADUKE**, Native American environmental activist and two-time vice-presidential candidate
- **PETER TRACHTENBERG**, poet, essayist, and short-story writer

Their personal perspectives combine to create a narrative that addresses the nature of the species we call "man's best friend" in a volume you will treasure for years to come.

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