

December 1, 2021

Dear Terri Irwin,

Your book, *Steve and Me*, sparked my interest in many new subjects I had never even thought about before reading it. In the book you describe your many adventures with Steve Irwin. Learning about you rescuing crocodiles and teaching people about unique animal species got me interested in herpetology, something I had never even heard of before. It also got me interested in a lot of other new subjects like biology, zoology, primatology, and so many more.

My mom is a paleontologist, so for most of my life I have been interested in dinosaurs and fossils. Before I read your book, when I thought about science I thought of paleontology. When I thought about animals, I thought of dinosaurs. My entire view of science and biology was just prehistoric creatures. I wasn't interested in much else when it came to science or animals. That changed almost instantly when I picked up your book and started reading.

Crocodiles kicked off the chain of dominos. I read your numerous stories about saving saltwater crocodiles, and I learned a little bit about them. All it took was two facts, how big they could get and how they killed their prey using a "death roll". I was hooked, and I began researching crocodiles. My view of reptiles completely changed within a month. Before, I had the idea in my head that only mammals and dinosaurs were worth researching and that they were the only interesting animals. Now I had discovered crocodiles, and if crocodiles were interesting, couldn't other reptiles also be?

Down came the next domino. Snakes were my new interest. I read about your adventure with Steve and the sidewinder, and was instantly inspired to learn. This sidewinder rattlesnake quickly made me realize that crocodiles were not the only reptiles worth learning about. I began researching snakes, learning about a million different species from the rhinoceros viper to the green mamba. All of these eccentric snakes were what knocked over the final domino.

Unique animals were, and still are, my obsession. Every opportunity I get, I learn about new animals. I have researched tons of animals from brightly colored birds like the Victoria crowned pigeon to tree climbing monkeys like the black and white colobus. There are too many animals that most people don't know about, and I want to know about every single one of them. Even commonly known animals I will try to learn more about. You learn some about those animals, but there's also a lot that you don't. For example, a lot of people don't know that woodpeckers wrap their tongues around their brains, and a good number of people don't know that wombats' poop is cube shaped.

This new love of unique animals and reptiles has completely changed my way of thinking. I now see birds, animal footprints, feathers, and wildlife where before I saw a long, boring hike. I now think of reptiles, primates, monotremes, birds, and amphibians when I think of animals, when I used to think of dinosaurs. When I think of science I am interested in, I think of herpetology, primatology, biology, and more when before I just thought of paleontology. My entire view of the world is broader now, and I appreciate nature much more.

Reading your stories in your book, *Steve and Me*, inspired me to learn about new animals and subjects. It also made me appreciate the nature around me much more, and have a new love and passion for animals. Thank you.

Sincerely,

-Lily