



# The Best American Science Writing 2003

*Oliver, PhD Sacks*

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In his introduction to *The Best American Science Writing 2003*, Dr. Oliver Sacks, "the poet laureate of medicine" *New York Times* writes that "the best science writing . . . cannot be completely 'objective' -- how can it be when science itself is so human an activity? -- but it is never self-indulgently subjective either. It is, at best, a wonderful fusion, as factual as a news report, as imaginative as a novel." Following this definition of "good" science writing, Dr. Sacks has selected the twenty-five extraordinary pieces in the latest installment of this acclaimed annual.

This year, Peter Canby travels into the heart of remote Africa to track a remarkable population of elephants; with candor and tenderness, Floyd Skloot observes the toll Alzheimer's disease is taking on his ninety-one-year-old mother, and is fascinated by the memories she retains. Gunjan Sinha explores the mating behavior of the common prairie vole and what it reveals about the human pattern of monogamy. Michael Klesius attempts to solve what Darwin called "an abominable mystery": How did flowers originate? Lawrence Osborne tours a farm where a genetically modified goat produces the silk of spiders in its milk. Joseph D'Agnese visits a home for retired medical research chimps. And in the collection's final piece, Richard C. Lewontin and Richard Levins reflect on how the work of Stephen Jay Gould demonstrated the value of taking a radical approach to science.

As Dr. Sacks writes of Stephen Jay Gould -- to whose memory this year's anthology is dedicated -- an article of his "was never predictable, never dry, could not be imitated or mistaken for anybody else's." The same can be said of all of the good writing contained in this diverse collection.

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