



Sophie: Dog Overboard

Emma Pearse

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If you're an animal-lover, then *Sophie: Dog Overboard* is a must read. This story gained global attention, and will become a film.

When Jan and Dave Griffith's beloved cattle dog, Sophie, fell overboard from the family yacht during rough weather, she feared the worst. But Sophie, a true Aussie battler, wasn't going to give up that easily. She swam six miles through shark-infested waters to a remote Whitsunday island where she survived for five months before being miraculously reunited with her amazed owners. Sophie, a highly domesticated dog, had been living ferally - and surviving. Yet one glimpse of her owners when they were reunited was enough for the old Sophie to re-emerge. This is an amazing, inspirational story of survival, loyalty and what binds animals and humans together.

Sophie: Dog Overboard Details

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Author : Emma Pearce

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From Reader Review Sophie: Dog Overboard for online ebook

Kathy says

This is a wonderful story of an incredible dog, a theme that is always a crowd pleaser. The writing is a bit amateurish (her first book), but very readable. For a while, I never thought we would get to the story. Granted, knowing Sophie before her journey, was important--how she was raised, how loved she was, etc. But it began to seem like a proud dog owner gushing about their special dog when it took up the first half of the book. But, being a proud dog owner myself, I sort of understand; it's just that all dogs are special. Then there was the side issue of research on koalas, which was a bit surprising. But overall, I enjoyed the story.

Harry Lane says

Who could not love a true story about a dog lost at sea, who swims five miles to an island and survives for several months on her own and is joyfully reunited with her family. It is indeed a lovely story told in detail. Too much detail. I think the story would have lost nothing and gained impact had it been edited down by about a third. (Audiobook)

Marleah says

I got around halfway in this book and just didn't feel like reading it anymore. I knew that the dog was going to survive, and it's not like the dog can tell us what she was up to the whole time on that island. I agree with other reviewers - the details in the writing just were unnecessary and I would skim through several pages without really reading anything.

I rarely say this (I usually say the opposite) - but I actually think this story would make a better movie than a book. Think "Marley & Me" in a tropical setting and with a happier ending.

B. says

If I could, I'd give five stars for the dog and one star for the book itself.

The good: The story and setting are interesting, and Sophie is undoubtedly an amazing dog. The author clearly did a lot of interviews and put a lot of work into giving the most complete account of Sophie's story possible (though this is both good and bad as the book tended towards the over-detailed in areas); as the author says time and again, it's impossible to know exactly what Sophie got up to in her time on the island, but I felt like the book gave the most probable options and narrative.

The bad: The nuts and bolts of the writing, editing, and proofing. I felt like the author's style and overall competence was passable at best (though of course such a thing is very subjective.) I felt often like too much detail was given in areas that didn't really relate that directly to the dog. But even the pictures included of the dog herself felt excessive, which really surprised me, because I love looking at pictures of cute dogs--who

wouldn't? But some of the pictures are not very good and seem redundant.

It's depressing to think that this book was edited, and possibly edited again for release in the US (the temperatures have all been changed to Fahrenheit, so someone at least looked at it) and still came out like this. Awkward sentences, outright grammar mistakes, missing words...and I'm not just talking about an error or two: there are bad sentences throughout the book.

It's ridiculous to have people pay full price for a book this poorly edited.

I also felt frustrated by a couple of mentions of Cesar Millan's philosophies: I am a big fan of his, so I know his books and TV show, etc. very well; I felt like someone who didn't know him as well would get the wrong idea from the way he's talked about a few times in this book.

First, his ideas about a "dog being a dog" were mentioned in context with Sophie's owners originally deciding to keep their dogs outside--as though Cesar supports keeping dogs outside! While this issue has its nuances, such as a dog's breeding and purpose, I know that Cesar supports dogs being members of the family, kept primarily in the house.

Then the upbringing of the family's previous Australian Cattle Dog is mentioned, which included her owner "who would rile her up, wrestling her, chasing her, roughing her around." This is put against a quote from Cesar about how ACDs need a job and physical fulfillment, which is of course true--however, the way this is written might give people the idea Cesar would support this level of physical, aggressive play with a dog who showed a good deal of aggression as Jordy is said to have. This is simply not the case.

Finally, I wish the book had mentioned somewhere the life vests and other boat safety ideas for dogs. I'm not an expert by any means, but everything I have read says vests are a must for any dog going on the water, no matter their breeding or how calm the waters are.

I don't say this to cause any more guilt for Sophie's owners, or to pretend I know for sure that a vest would have significantly altered the course of events for the better. I say this only because not every dog is Sophie, not every dog has the strength and luck that brought her through her ordeal. Why not give our dogs whatever advantage a vest might bring them? (Or a tie-line? which I imagine probably would have altered events significantly.)

(edited slightly 02/13/12)

Janetmanley says

This was a present, and as I have a cattle dog, I was excited to read blue heeler propaganda - the story is really quite nuts.

On the actual book, though, I don't know what to say about the writing. Given the author's bylines, I have to assume she can write, but the text was head-smackingly simple and grammatically odd. The details were at times mind-numbing, especially the amount of speculation ("while no one knows how long sophie spent on that island, she could have bathed in the sun and maybe played with the crabs running around on the rocks" - not actual text, but a sample of the randomness). I assume the bad writing was due to a) an expectation that the audience overlapped solely with people who read Readers Digest, or b) the editorial team was horrific and/or foreign (definite weird explanations of aussie things).

Giving Emma Pearse the benefit of the doubt; and if you skim, it's a nice story about a cool ACD.

Jessica says

This story is so incredible, but this book just wasn't that well written. The story follows the Griffith family and their dog Sophie. When the last of their children goes off to college, it's just Jan, Dave, and Sophie. One beautiful day they are out on their boat sailing to visit friends when the weather changes and Sophie somehow falls off the boat. Sophie is an avid swimmer and they search for hours, but there is no trace of her so they assume because of the rough seas she must have hit her head on the boat and drowned quickly. The family is devastated and feel extremely guilty that their sailing trip led to Sophie's demise. But, unbeknownst to them Sophie did survive and manages to swim almost 5 miles to the closest island. Over the course of 5 months she swims to two other islands seeking food and water. Eventually park rangers on the St. Bees Island discover Sophie and manage to trap her and through a series of coincidences they manage to figure out that she is the Griffith family's missing dog and they are reunited. The 2 or 3 chapters about the capture of Sophie and her reunion with her family are definitely worth reading, but overall the book was just kind of choppy and just didn't flow well. I've read a LOT of animal memoirs/books and while the story behind this book is amazing the book just didn't convey it all that well.

Kristin says

We have an Australian Cattle Dog mix in our family (as pictured in my current avatar), so Sophie's picture on the cover is what drew me in, as it very much looked like my dog lounging somewhere. Her story tells the perseverance of the breed, as she somehow falls from her family's boat in the seas off the coast of Australia and is presumed drowned when the boat canvasses the area where they believe she fell and there is no sign of her. For 5 months she lives on islands, miles from where she fell in, swimming courses that no human or water-breed dog would likely survive, much less a short-legged cattle herding dog. Her rescue is only due to a chance conversation between friends of her owners, as the islands she was inhabiting are teeming with endangered species and the scientists found the presence of a dog to be threatening, intending to either trap her or worse.

What I liked about the book was that it provided the backstory of who Sophie was before she was lost, the role she played in the family dynamic, what nuances of her personality contributed to her unlikely life on the islands, and just general cattle dog things that helped me connect to Sophie as if it was actually my cattle dog that got lost.

The author parallels Sophie's time on the islands, of which much is speculation and based on rare sightings, with the family's life while she was gone. The children were all grown and on their own, so Sophie was like a 5th child for the family, and the guilt became so bad that the only way they could live was not mention Sophie or even think about her or things she liked. Their loneliness prompted one of the sons to give his parents a red cattle dog, Ruby, for Christmas, and good or bad, she was the complete opposite of Sophie, more of a wild red maniac than the loving lapdog of blue Sophie. From what I've read, the red cattle dogs do tend to be more hyper, and I would definitely put our blue dog in the calmer category.

All in all, a quick read with a happy ending, not a spoiler, as it is clear early on that Sophie does survive her trip at sea. Definitely worth reading for dog lovers, and particularly those who share their lives with a cattle dog.

Brenda says

Bridget was just 16 years old when she first saw Sophie and fell in love! She had been begging her Mum,

Jan, and Dad, Dave for a dog of her own for a long time. While working two jobs during the holidays, she'd nip down to the pet shop in her lunch break to gaze into the window at the litter of cattle dog puppies. Sophie was a sleepy girl, whilst her siblings were much more boistrous and energetic. When the litter was reduced to two puppies in the window, Bridget knew she needed to act quickly. So she organised a shopping day with her Mum, and managed to get her to the pet shop, and as they say...the rest is history!

Sophie soon settled into a routine with the Griffith family, and the tough, gruff Dave's heart was stolen! Jan had fallen instantly in love with the delightful Sophie, while Bridget carried her everywhere, even managing to sneak Sophie to her bed at night. The whole family was very taken with Sophie's wonderful spirit, and her loving devotion to her family.

The day they decided to take her out for her first trip on the *Honey May*, Dave and Jan's 'retirement' boat, Sophie was beside herself with delight. She loved it, and went with them everytime they travelled out from Mackay on the weekends.

Then came the day Sophie disappeared overboard, out near the Whitsundays, and the hours Dave and Jan spent searching for her, travelling backwards and forwards, calling her, desperately looking, until they finally had to head back to land, realizing she couldn't possibly have survived that long in the water.

The family was completely grief stricken, totally unable to come to terms with Sophie's loss. Jan and Dave felt so incredibly guilty, convinced it was their fault she had been lost.

But the amazing Sophie wasn't done with yet! Unbeknown to the Griffith family, Sophie was proving what a cattle dog is made of, especially one as strong, determined and courageous as Sophie. As we learn of Sophie's amazing journey, it will astound you, it will cause you to cheer for her, to cry for her, and it will teach you of the unbreakable bond between human and animal.

I absolutely loved this extraordinary story of survival, luck and loyalty, and the beautiful reunion between Sophie and her family brought a lump to my throat. I will recommend this book to everyone, but especially animal lovers!

Jessica says

This truly is an incredible story, just as the title promises. Sophie the dog is separated from her family, and somehow survives against all odds for five months until they are reunited. With that being said, I think the story was so exciting that it had the potential of a much better book than this one.

Sophie: The Incredible True Story of the Castaway Dog really needed another edit. The book was just overly detailed, to the point that it became boring. It was tedious to read chapters upon chapters of details completely unrelated to Sophie or her family. I think about half of this book could have been cut, and you would have had a 150 page book that was REALLY GOOD. In reading about the author, I discovered this was her first book and that she used to be a journalist. I feel that it explains a lot of why the book ended up reading the way it did.

I still liked Sophie: The Incredible True Story of the Castaway Dog because it was an interesting storyline, and Sophie Tucker *really* won me over. She reminds me so much of my parents dog that I actually teared up at times. I can't fault the dog because the writing was so poor, but ultimately **I have to suggest you just Google this story and pick up a different dog book to read instead.**

Almira says

Dave and Jan took their blue cattle dog out on their boat, Sophie disappears in a matter of moments to their disbelief, naturally, they search for her, but due to the weather they finally must give up. Torn apart with grief, they return home devastated. But even in this day and age, miracles DO happen, somehow Sophie not only manages to survive in the shark infested waters, but she comes ashore on an island about 5 nautical miles from where she went overboard. No one will ever know how Sophie manages to survive on two different islands, where she had to learn to feed herself, fortunately, these islands do not have any predators, and as a matter of fact, she becomes a predator to survive, or so it is believed, but survive she does. This takes place in Australia, these two islands are only inhabited by few people and NO domestic animals - they are prohibited on these islands - there are lizards, and koalas and that is about it. Sophie survives, and is finally "trapped" after 6 months, and returned to Dave and Jan.

Sabrina says

I'd love to give Sophie herself five stars, but the book? Not so much. It was filled with redundant details and the writing was sub-par at best. I also really got tired of reading about how Sophie's people kept their dogs outside and how they treated their dogs "like dogs." While I don't exactly blame them for Sophie going overboard (accidents do happen), they certainly weren't very likable otherwise, either.

Suzy says

I followed this story in the media when it happened, so I was very excited when the book came out. A true story about an Australian cattle dog named Sophie, who is knocked overboard in rough seas and survives for months on her own on a deserted island. The story is fabulous, but this book let it down.

The entire thing read as if it were a long-winded newspaper article, and I was not at all surprised when I read the acknowledgements to find that Emma Pearse is actually a journalist. The font size also put me off - it was something like 18 point font and I felt like I was reading a kids book. Additionally, the story was irritatingly repetitive, which I took to be a 'filler' to make the book something more tangible.

Read the book because the story is truly interesting, but Emma Pearse should stick to journalism, and the editor should be fired.

Sarah says

I heard about this story from my mother. My parents owned an Australian Cattle Dog for years and couldn't

help but perk up anytime they heard about another one. Sophie's story is amazing - she fell overboard while boating with her family one day and then survived for five months on the isolated islands off the Australian coast before being reunited with her family. While the story is gripping, I didn't find this book as good as I hoped because Pearse's writing is very elementary and not at all exciting. Additionally, I'm not sure how many people will remember this story by the time the book is published. Should find an audience among dog lovers.

Thanks to the publisher for an advance reader's copy.

Lindsay Foster says

As a dog lover, and a huge fan of cattle dogs, the story of Sophie was heartwarming and a joy to read. I shed tears of joy when Sophie was reunited with her owners after months lost at sea. It's amazing to me that any dog conquered what Sophie did and survived.

Julie G says

I was excited about receiving this book, although I don't remember hearing about Sophie when all of this happened. The idea that she could have swum as far as she did and survived for 5 months in the wild seemed almost impossible to believe.

How did Sophie get stranded on the island? How did she survive? And how did she get rescued - and manage to get back home to her family?

It's an amazing story.

This book follows Sophie's life from newly-adopted puppy through her first boat excursion. To the day she disappeared off the Honey May through being sighted on nearly-unpopulated islands. To her capture and reunion with Dave and Jan, five months after she went into the water.

Emma Pearse shares the details of the Griffith family life, sightings of Sophie on Keswick and St. Bees, and an amazing reunion in March, 2009. While no one can know what Sophie did or experienced during her time as a castaway, the author does her best to paint a complete picture.

At 300 pages, this book feels about 100 pages too long. What could have been told in a few paragraphs goes on for chapters, with fully 1/3 of the book just leading up to the day that Sophie disappeared. It was (for me) a tedious, slow read that I put down and picked up many, many times before I finished.

The book could also have benefitted from some judicious proofreading. There are missing words and typographical errors throughout. Someone converted measurements to American standards, yet no one caught the mistakes.

With that said, this is an amazing story with an incredible 'heroine'.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own.
