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HEADLINE: Does the Loss of a Single Species Matter?

CONTACT: Barb Johnson, Marketing Lead

PHONE: 970-581-6429

EMAIL: RavenMountainPress@q.com

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Worldwide, a bewildering and rapidly rising number of plant and animal species are disappearing, their numbers reduced by habitat loss, changing climates, introduced species, and myriad other causes. Ecologists warn of the potential dire consequences of this loss of species, but many people do not understand how the loss of any single species matters. The Earth is home to millions of plants, animals, fungi and microbes. So how could the loss of just one single species matter?

In her new book: “One Single Species: Why the Connections in Nature Matter”(Raven Mountain Press, March 2020), award-winning author, illustrator, and naturalist, Susan E. Quinlan, aims to help readers of all ages discover the answer to this question. Through lively text and dramatic, colorful illustrations, Quinlan relays the important story of Dr. Robert T. Paine’s landmark ecological research on ochre sea stars. Following the steps and observations of Dr. Paine as he explores the coast of Washington, readers first learn about the tumultuous wave-scoured environment there and the varied creatures that inhabit it. The story goes on to reveal how Dr. Paine, or Bob as he preferred to be called, set up a novel experiment to determine the consequences of removing just one single species, the ochre sea star, from this ecosystem.

The dramatic results of his clever experiment clearly conveys the surprising consequences that can result from the removal, or loss, of even a single species from an ecosystem. Through illustrations and a discussion of what observers can easily see in nature, the author helps readers consider how Dr Paine’s research findings apply to all kinds of ecosystems. The book’s back matter provides several curious examples of other important species and interesting ecosystem connections from diverse environments around the world.

The book’s author obtained degrees in wildlife biology from Colorado State University and the University of Alaska, conducted wildlife research in remote areas Alaska, and worked several years for Lindblad Expeditions, traveling to many environments around the world as a naturalist guide.

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Quinlan says, “I created this book because reading about Dr. Paine’s fascinating ecological study many years ago helped open my eyes to the critical importance of nature’s invisible connections. I hope that sharing his scientific work in the form of an illustrated story will help more people better understand the value and roles of individual species and the complex connections that tie all of nature together.”

Those who take time to reflect on Paine’s experiment and the fascinating hidden connections in nature this book describes will better understand why the current, rapid, worldwide loss of thousands of species greatly alarms scientists – and everyone who cares about nature.

As this book clearly conveys, the loss of even one single uncommon species can have far-reaching and unpredictable consequences. That seems like something all humans need to better understand.

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One Single Species: Why the Connections in Nature Matter

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Author-autographed copies available at [Nature Science Art](#)

For more information,:

Visit: www.ravenmountainpress.com or the author’s website: www.susanquinlan.com

CONTACT: Barb Johnson, Marketing Lead

PHONE: 970-581-6429

EMAIL: RavenMountainPress@q.com

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