

Artist Statement Abstract

Every day I think about the state of our environment. About the destruction that has been caused and how the way many of us live our lives negatively affects different ecosystems and animals. Almost everything we do has a consequence, and I can't escape feeling a pang of guilt every time I start my car or use a paper cup to get coffee. Day after day I go to my environmental studies classes, and I leave feeling sad and hopeless, like there is nothing I can do. Why am I even bothering with trying to change anything?

But I have to do something. I couldn't live with myself if I sat by idly and did nothing. The environment and animals do not have a voice. I have to be their voice. But I read, see, and learn about these injustices everyday and it puts me into this state of anger or depression. I must remind myself to stay hopeful. To continue to think about these issues, but in ways that do not constantly bring me down. This project allows me to do that as I study different keystone species and their impacts on the environment, and the environmental issues affecting them, but in a more hopeful way. This project is to advocate for the incredible species that inhabit this Earth by bringing awareness to their importance.

For each species, I have drawn a scientific illustration. These illustrations are straightforward and informational. I spend hours closely observing the species by looking at photos of the whole animal or plant, as well as certain important parts of their bodies. I'll also do research on the species to understand the importance they have in their habitats, as well as to learn about what they eat, where they live, and how they live their lives. This visual research that I conduct helps me to better understand the species, and how their different parts play roles in how they affect their habitat. I have also created an imaginative illustration for each species. These illustrations are whimsical and have the species in a situation with a household appliance. When I began this project, I started thinking about why keystone species are important in their habitats as they each play a specific and important role. I began to look at them as tools in the habitat that is their home. Appliances that play a part in keeping everything running efficiently. When I began to think of the species as tools and appliances, I related them to the ones that are in my own home, and the homes of most people that I know. These objects are important fixtures in helping us keep our lives running smoothly, but what would happen if they were suddenly gone from our lives? We would be forced to adapt. That is exactly what would happen if keystone species went extinct and no longer existed in their habitats.

Although the styles of the scientific and imaginative illustrations are different, there is one purpose for them both: to educate people on keystone species, their roles in their habitat, and why they are so important to the wellbeing of their environment. A problem when it comes to environmental issues, is that many people are simply unaware. I want to educate people on how

amazing the many different species on this planet are, why they are important, and why they are worth saving.