

Polar Bears. Wolves. Sea turtles.

Did I mention polar bears, wolves, and sea turtles?

The most popular posts on our blogs feature those subjects, along with fetching pictures. Some people dismissively refer to such creatures as charismatic megafauna, as if there were something wrong with people being attracted to some of nature's coolest denizens. But the attraction people feel to parts of nature is important — and most of the people who are dismissive and proclaim that they love only lichen and annelids *actually* have the same affection for the megafauna. Of course, these aren't all of nature, and they can't survive without ecosystems containing much humbler creatures. Just picture a polar bear saying, "I really want to thank the Academy and all the little creatures that made it possible . . ."

Just as movies need stars, ecosystems may need iconic inhabitants if they want to survive in a human dominated world.

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