

*Monotypic: Evolution and Adaptations of the World's Most Distinctive Species* is the culmination of over two years of research, illustration, design, and communication. As my BFA thesis and Honors with Distinction Capstone project, it has pushed me intellectually and artistically to create a cohesive body of work that reflects my skills and interests in scientific visualization.

This capstone has been the first true long-term illustration project I have worked on, having started researching the topic at the end of my sophomore year. The entire capstone experience from the Honors Proposal course to my final exhibition has been rooted in the processes that I will use every day in my professional career, including writing project proposals, working with subject matter experts, having benchmark meetings to discuss progress on my work, and pitching my ideas to galleries and science centers. The challenges associated with a project of this scale prepare me for working for clients while still being a part of the supportive atmosphere of the Honors College.

One of the most significant skills I have gained from Honors with Distinction is the ability to engage with truly interdisciplinary collaboration. As a scientific illustrator, it is critical to interact with research and experts of the topics I'm illustrating. The more I understand the nuances of scientific research, the more effectively I can translate the concepts into visuals and get the highest level of accuracy in my illustrations. For my capstone, I worked with curators at the Drexel Academy of Natural Science to photograph specimens for reference images, including Kyle Luckenbill (ichthyology), Ned Gilmore (herpetology), and Dr. Chelsea R. Smith (botany). Other researchers I collaborated with include Dr. Casey Dunn from Yale University, Dr. Graham Martin at the University of Birmingham, Alexander Harman at Oklahoma State University, and many professionals in scientific illustration who helped review my work.

Beyond the technical skills and academic knowledge gained, the capstone experience instilled in me a deeper understanding of how I can use art as a tool for communication and natural science education. It is my responsibility as a scientific illustrator to use my skills to accurately communicate science, create graphics accessible to all people, and to combat misinformation while distilling information into its visual form. This process has reinforced my appreciation and commitment to fostering scientific literacy and conservation advocacy through art. With my exhibition being hosted by the Cape May Point Science Center, I am able to engage with a broader public community that I haven't had the opportunity to work with before. In college, our projects and illustrations have been for a specific client, our professors, and while most are created with the goal of being for a specific audience, *Monotypic* has a public component that allows me to put that practice to use.

Looking ahead to my professional life after college, I am excited to apply everything I have learned through the Honors capstone to further my career and continue to advocate for the conservation of unique and underrepresented species of plants and animals. I am confident that the interdisciplinary skills, research, and artistic growth cultivated through *Monotypic* will serve as a strong foundation for future success. As I continue to navigate the intersection of art, science, and science communication, I am eager to continue promoting the pillars of Honors in everything I do.