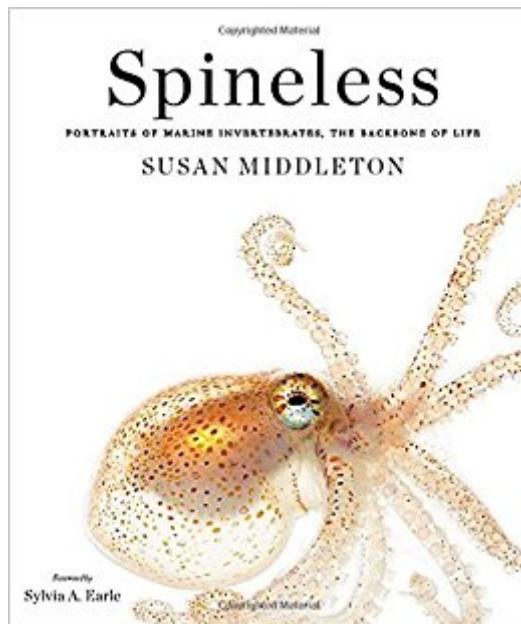


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# Spineless



## Synopsis

In *Spineless*, acclaimed photographer Susan Middleton explores the mysterious and surprising world of marine invertebrates, which represent more than 98 percent of the known animal species in the ocean. They are also astonishingly diverse in their shapes, patterns, textures, and colors—*in nature's fashion show, they are the haute couture of marine life.* This collection of more than 250 remarkable images is the result of seven years of painstaking fieldwork across the Pacific Ocean, using photographic techniques that Middleton developed to capture these extremely fragile creatures on camera. She also provides short essays that examine the place these invertebrates occupy on the tree of life, their vast array of forms, and their lives in the ocean. Scientist Bernadette Holthuis contributes profiles describing each species, many of them for the first time. Middleton's book is a stunning new view of nature that harmoniously combines art and science.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

A gorgeous, light-drenched book that treats the senses. In one exquisitely-crafted portrait after another, accompanied by stirring prose, Middleton reminds us that we share the planet with equally fascinating neighbors, some of whom just happen to live beneath the waves. (Diane Ackerman, Author of *The Human Age*) Susan Middleton, whose brilliant photography of wildlife is unexcelled, has brought to life and intimacy the small creatures who make up the foundation of animal life in marine waters. (Edward O. Wilson, University Research Professor Emeritus,

Harvard University) "This is a wonderful tribute to the astonishingly diverse, beautiful, and urgently important creatures who truly rule the world." (Sylvia A. Earle, Explorer in Residence at National Geographic, Founder of Mission Blue) "Gorgeous portraits." (Smithsonian.com) "The marine invertebrates in her photographs are such beautiful, ethereal, otherworldly creatures, they almost appear to float atop the pages." (Entertainment Weekly) "Ravishing . . . rekindles a certain sense of wonder from childhood." (New York Times) "Each image is rendered in exquisite detail. . . . As pure art it is a celebration for the eyes. As a tribute to nature's inventiveness, it is an inspiration for the soul." (Natural History Magazine) "Nothing short of spectacular." (BookPage) "Middleton is a gifted photographer." (Seattle Times) "There is nothing in this book that does not inspire awe and delight. Dive in!" (Wall Street Journal)

Susan Middleton is an acclaimed photographer, author, and lecturer specializing in the portraiture of rare and endangered animals, plants, sites, and cultures. For thirteen years she was the chair of the Department of Photography at the California Academy of Sciences, where she now serves as research associate. Her most recent book is *Evidence of Evolution* (Abrams 2009). Previous books in collaboration with David Liittschwager include *Archipelago, Remains of a Rainbow* (National Geographic), *Witness*, and *Here Today* (Chronicle Books). Her photographs have been exhibited worldwide in fine art and natural history contexts, and are represented in the permanent collections of the National Academy of Sciences and the National Gallery of Art. She was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in 2009. She lives in San Francisco.

Wood worker's magazines have advertisements for "woodworkers' porn sights" web sites that feature pictures of the highly figured woods they offer for sale (at highly figured prices) "Whooo boy, look at the grain on that tiger maple." "Spineless Portraits of Marine Invertebrates, the Backbone of Life" has page after page of equally exquisite pictures of luscious, naked marine invertebrates. The portraits are gorgeous, truly gorgeous. At first glance I thought they were drawings not photographs. They are photographs and at the end of the book Susan Middleton the author and photographer describes how she took the pictures. Her subjects were collected, put in small glass tanks which were placed on a white or black background and photographed. This method is not new .I used a roughly 6' by 6'by2 inch chamber to photograph invertebrates 45 years ago on the Sea Isle Sholes off New Hampshire's minuscule Atlantic coastline. She has refined the system to perfection. Even

small amounts of silt scatters light, a finger smear blurs, an off-angle shot distorts. Nothing like that is in her pictures; they are clear, undistorted and beautiful. The animals are labeled both as Genus specie as well as their frequently amusing common names-Minor Venus's girdle Velamen parallelum or Curly Head Spaghetti Worm *Thelepus crispus*. Sylvia Earl has written an introduction and the book includes four essays by the author. She discusses the ongoing and probably never ending (even with DNA typing) taxonomic augment over which creature belongs where. Her comment on the effect of evolution on taxonomy is pithy "After the theory of evolution took hold, classifications became genealogies. "She describes basic animal symmetry spherical, radial and bilateral and its effect on classification. Then too there is an ecological undercurrent of climate change and over utilization flowing through the essays. *Spineless* is lucid and illuminating and, did I mention, gorgeous.

A big, beautiful coffee table book with gorgeous pictures and intriguing text. With so much damage being done to our oceans -- and environment overall -- this book shows us what is almost invisibly beautiful, and important, about life under the surface of the sea. The book is a heavy, substantial one, with good quality paper and high-quality reproductions. *Spineless* is an odd title, but it fits all the strange, unique, and rare "animals" that are featured throughout the book. Readers won't be disappointed with the phenomenal sights.

Wow, this is really, really, an incredible book. The best part: the catalog at the end with thumbnail photos of every entry in the book and then an essay regarding each entry. Sometimes the entries are short; sometimes very, very long. I bought this for my 11-y/o granddaughter who wants to be a marine biologist -- she loves it, as I expected she would.

Really liked this book, love invertebrates, and this is a collection of very nice, detailed pictures that show a wide range of spectacular invertebrates. But, the summaries for each animal could have been a little longer; I like to know a lot of information on what I am looking at, and while there were short summaries on each of these animals, they were too short. But, would recommend it to anybody interested in photography, invertebrates or marine science in general.

What a beautiful book! A perfect way for nature geeks to recruit their friends--just drop it in their lap and they'll be hooked.

Gorgeous book of incredibly beautiful creatures who live in the oceans. Susan Middleton's superb photographs are works of art and express the love of nature that all of us should feel.

Absolutely gorgeous!

A beautiful book with a lot of scientific information. The photographs draw you in, the information keeps you there.

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