

# Award-winning writer to speak

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Author David Quammen writes about nature as myth and legend as well as science.

The award-winning writer from Montana is completing the final section of his tenth book, about "great, flesh-eating monsters and their relationships with humans."

The subject of a slide show and lecture in town today, his book will focus on four animal species that are endangered or have been threatened in the past: the Asiatic lion, the brown bear of Romania, the Siberian tiger of far eastern Russia and the crocodile of Australia, which plays an important role in aboriginal culture.

Mr. Quammen will speak at the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History for an event co-sponsored by UCSB called "The Improbable Lion: Can Big Predators Survive in a Crowded World?"

"The fact that they are really problematic, they're dangerous, all of those things make them expensive, inconvenient and unpopular," he said. His book considers whether the animals will even exist 100 years from now.

During the lecture, he will talk about their biology as well as the legends people have created about the powerful animals over the centuries. For example, the black bear is the "big, strong, dumb uncle of the

forest" in Romania, he says.

Mr. Quammen became interested in giant predators while working with Komodo dragons for his book, "The Song of the Dodo." He also contributed an article on Komodo dragons to Outside magazine during the 15 years he wrote for the publication.

He is considered an environmentalist but weaves his nonfiction works about nature like a yarn.

"He writes about things that he has camped next to or heard in the bush," said Tim Larrick, director of development for the Santa Barbara Natural History Museum and a Quammen fan.

Mr. Quammen talks about the animals in his upcoming book, which is still untitled, as creatures that humble humans.

"Humans are not above nature, we're part of nature," he said. "We're part of the food chain, even."

Mr. Quammen is a native of Cincinnati but lives in Montana. He says he is attracted to the area for the same attributes that make it very different from Santa Barbara.

"It's cold and snowy most of the year. It's private and remote, and there aren't many people," he said. "There's beautiful landscape and most of it is not the sort of landscape that people want to subdivide and develop."



David Quammen will give a slide show and lecture today at the Museum of Natural History.

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