

survive so far from its home. This is a naturally interesting story line, and it gives McKnight the opportunity to explore a range of scientific fields from the microscopic to global scale.

The story follows a dedicated group of scientists who are interested in the remote ecosystem of the dry valleys. The researchers venture into this polar desert, which is always cold and extremely windy and, for many months each year, completely dark as well. Mummified seals were discovered in the desert by the early polar explorer Captain Robert Scott in the early 1900s; his journal is woven into the book to provide insight into the early history of polar exploration. McKnight's group, however, is surprised to find fresh seal tracks, and finally the young seal itself, miles from its home at the coast. They then contend with international rules regarding Antarctic wildlife and their own feelings for the seal as they work to reach a solution that eventually results in a happy ending for all.

The book opens a window into a world that very few people know exists and even fewer understand. The hidden continent below the ice is described in vivid detail. The cut-away map illustrating the underlying mountains and continental configuration is one of the best I've seen. The abundant microscopic life in the form of bacteria, algae and worms in the seemingly inhospitable environment of the frigid Dry Valleys is revealed by photographs of these tiny forms of life previously foreign to most children.

It is impossible to read *The Lost Seal* without being captivated by the illustrations of the scientific party and their surroundings. The full-page colour sketches are friendly and inviting, and serve as accurate portrayals of the landscape and the people who work there. Particularly noteworthy are the drawing of the seals, ranging from a mummified seal as observed by Scott and

his companions to several sketches of the lost seal on a lonely patch of snow in the Dry Valleys, which perfectly capture the expressive face of a Weddell seal. An additional feature of the book that I particularly loved are the children's drawings, contributed by young students from around the world who watched a video of this lost seal as part of their study of Antarctica. Inclusion of their first names and hometowns personalize the story and demonstrate how receptive the students were to scientific outreach. While many lament the decrease in scientific literacy, a book like this, with an engaging story line and beautiful images, goes a long way toward conveying science to the public.

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ERRATUM

Gender imbalance in US geoscience academia

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Nature Geoscience **1**, 79–82 (2008)

In Figure 1, the labels 'Assistant professor' and 'Associate professor' should be transposed.