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UNIVERSITY PRESS

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The “King of Sting” describes his adventures with insects and the pain scale that’s made him an entomological celebrity.

THE STING OF THE WILD

by Justin O. Schmidt

Entomologist and Ig Nobel Prize-Winner Justin O. Schmidt is on a mission. Some say it’s a brave exploration, others shake their heads in disbelief. His goal? To compare the impacts of stinging insects on humans, mainly using himself as the gauge.

In *The Sting of the Wild*, the colorful Dr. Schmidt takes us on a journey inside the lives of stinging insects, seeing the world through their eyes as well as his own. He explains how and why they attack and reveals the powerful punch they can deliver with a small venom gland and a “sting,” the name for the apparatus that delivers the venom. We learn which insects are the worst to encounter and why some are barely worth considering.

The Sting of the Wild includes the complete Schmidt Sting Pain Index, published here for the first time. You may recognize the scale from Marvel’s 2015 summer blockbuster *Ant Man*. In addition to a numerical ranking of the agony of each of the eighty-three stings he’s sampled so far (from below 1 to an excruciatingly painful 4), Schmidt describes them in prose worthy of a professional wine critic: “Looks deceive. Rich and full-bodied in appearance, but flavorless” and “Pure, intense, brilliant pain. Like walking over flaming charcoal with a three-inch nail embedded in your heel.”

Schmidt explains that, for some insects, stinging is used for hunting: small wasps, for example, can paralyze huge caterpillars and then lay their eggs inside so that their larvae can feast within. Others are used to kill competing insects, even members of their own species. Humans usually experience stings as defensive maneuvers used by insects to protect their nest mates.

With colorful descriptions of each venom’s sensation and a story that leaves you tingling with awe, *The Sting of the Wild*’s one-of-a-kind style will fire your imagination.

"It's no wonder Justin Schmidt is known as the 'Connoisseur of Pain' and 'The King of Sting.' As an entomologist who has savored the stings of insects from all over the world, from the bullet ant to the yellow jacket, Schmidt serves as the perfect guide to these tiny and exquisitely painful creatures. A fascinating blend of science, storytelling, and adventure, *Sting of the Wild* is a must-read for anyone who has ever looked at a wasp with wonder, but not dared to get too close. Justin Schmidt dared to get close, and, fortunately for us, he lived to tell the tale."—Amy Stewart, New York Times bestselling author of *Wicked Bugs: The Louse that Conquered Napoleon's Army and Other Diabolical Insects*

"It is impossible to read this book without feeling things crawl up your leg or hearing angry buzzing. The world’s greatest expert on insect stings describes his experiences with cow-killers, fire ants, yellow jackets, killer bees, giant hornets, and all those other pain-inflicting creatures, while offering an evolutionary account of their defenses."—Frans de Waal, author of *Are We Smart Enough to Know How Smart Animals Are?*

"You’ll feel only pleasure and no pain when you read this captivating, accessible, and sometimes humorous account of Justin Schmidt’s life with stinging insects; the wasps, ants, and bees. Schmidt recounts fascinating adventures and encounters of the stinging kind. Expect to be both informed and delighted as you read about his tales from the field and laboratory. This book is a must-read for naturalists, hikers, entomologists, and everyone who enjoys being outdoors."—Stephen Buchmann, author of *The Reason for Flowers: Their History, Culture, Biology, and How They Change Our Lives*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Justin O. Schmidt is a biologist at Southwestern Biological Institute and is associated with the Department of Entomology at the University of Arizona. He is the coeditor of *Insect Defenses: Adaptive Mechanisms and Strategies of Prey and Predators*.

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Johns Hopkins University Press
280 pages 5.5 x 8.5 x .81

978-1-4214-1928-2 \$24.95 hc

978-1-4214-1929-9 \$24.95 eb

Publication date: May 15, 2016