

BOOK REVIEW

The Ecology of Plants. Jessica Gurevitch, Samuel M. Scheniner, and Gordon A. Fox. 2002. Sinauer Associates, Inc., Sunderland, Massachusetts. 523 pp., \$91.95 (hardcover). ISBN 0-87893-291-7.

As the first course in college ecology is usually a general one, courses in plant ecology, and therefore recent textbooks for such courses, are few and far between. *The Ecology of Plants* is such a text and an excellent one. As one would expect, it gives special attention to botanical topics including the ecology of photosynthesis, mycorrhizae, pollination, plant life histories, and other topics unique to plants. However, topics routinely treated in general ecology texts are also included: evolution and populations, competition, ecosystem processes, biomes, landscape ecology, and global change. Thus, there is ample coverage of general ecological principles.

The writing style should appeal to students; it is clear, straightforward, and occasionally laced with dry humor. An example of the latter: "Rabbits were brought to England in medieval times as a source of food and for sport hunting, where they, well, bred like rabbits" (Chapt. 11).

Except for the striking cover of an aspen forest in full-color, illustrations are black and white and not especially appealing. But a highly desirable feature is the inclusion of small "yearbook

photos" of notable ecologists scattered throughout. Examples are: Braun, Clements, Gleason, Harper, Tansely, Whittaker, and Wilson. It is likely that many ecologists have never seen an image of many of these contributors to the development of the science of ecology.

References appear both at the end of each chapter and at the end of the book. Included are both classical and more recent ones including a sizable number of 21st century references.

Negatives are few. Ecological concepts are adequately documented with one noted exception. The authors present an apparently new explanation for the existence of grassy balds in the southern Appalachians without any references to support their view (Chapt. 21). And, despite its importance and the existence of a huge literature on the subject, less than a page is devoted to the topic of seed germination.

With the few reservations noted above, I enthusiastically recommend this book, both as a text and as a record of the state of plant ecology at the start of the new century.

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