
Preface

It is now 10 years since the first edition of *The Ecology of Tropical East Asia* was published in early 2009, and 5 years since the second edition in 2014. The region covered by the book has changed a lot over this period. Natural forests and large vertebrates have continued to decline, while plantations, urban areas, and infrastructure have continued to expand, with even the most remote parts of the region increasingly impacted. On the human side, the region is considerably wealthier than it was 10 years ago, more people live in urban areas, and mobility, communications, and access to information have all increased. Overall, it has been mostly bad news for nature and good news for people, but there are also signs of a real change in the relationship between the two. Local environmental non-governmental organizations have flourished and concerns for biodiversity and the environment have gone mainstream. It is no longer assumed that economic development justifies environmental damage, and no longer accepted that this trade-off is inevitable.

The major aim of the book continues to be to provide an overview of the terrestrial ecology of Tropical East Asia. The third edition retains the balance between compactness and comprehensiveness of the previous editions, and the even-handed geographical treatment of the whole region, but it updates both the contents and the perspective. The cumulative number of relevant papers published on the region roughly doubles every 5 years, and their quality and scope have also been increasing rapidly, so about a third of the book text is new or greatly modified, while almost every paragraph has some changes. New tools, particularly from genomics and

remote sensing, have played a big role in this update. The change in perspective largely reflects the growing realization that we are in a new epoch, the Anthropocene, in which human activities have at least as large an influence as natural processes, and that stopping or reversing ecological change is no longer an option. This does not mean that biodiversity conservation is no longer possible or worthwhile, but that the biodiverse future we strive for will inevitably be very different from the past.

This edition was written largely at XTBG, although I travelled extensively in the region during its preparation. It is not possible to list everyone who has contributed in some way, but Alice Hughes and Kyle Tomlinson have had the greatest influence on the final text. I must also thank Aki Nakamura, Chen Jin, Su Tao, Liu Jingxin, Tony Lynam, and my present and past graduate students for their varied contributions, including very useful discussions on the region, as well as my many ecologist friends in Kunming, Hong Kong, Beijing, Thailand, and Singapore. Far more is known about this region by the people who live and work here than has been written down, so I have learned at least as much through personal communications as from reading. Alice Hughes, from XTBG, created most of the maps in the main text and Patrick Roehrdanz, from Conservation International, produced the colour climate maps in Chapter 2 and 7. Many different people kindly provided the photographs used in the book. Finally, I must thank Bethany Kershaw and the other staff at Oxford University Press for their help at all stages, from the book proposal through to its final production.