
Preface

A reviewer for the first edition commented that this book was the equivalent of 'summarizing the ecology of Europe in some 250 pages'. This is a fair comparison: the regions are roughly similar in size, population, and linguistic diversity. Tropical East Asia has far more wild species than Europe—I estimate four or five times as many—but these are generally less well known, so the amount of relevant information I have had to review is far less than is available for Europe. The balance between compactness and comprehensiveness that has been my target would probably be impossible in a similar book on the ecology of Europe.

The aim of this book remains the same: to provide an overview of the terrestrial ecology of Tropical East Asia. I hope to make it easier for people working in the region to acquire the understanding of its ecology necessary to put their own work into a broader context, while, at the same time, providing an accessible summary for people living outside the region. In order to maintain a reasonable degree of coherence, eastern Indonesia is omitted, because it is not biologically part of Tropical East Asia, and southern China is included, because it is. A big change for the second edition is the inclusion of northeast India, along with Bhutan and the eastern margins of Bangladesh. This region is ecologically and culturally part of East Asia and its omission from the first edition made little sense. Its inclusion has allowed me to expand coverage of the northwest of the region, making use of the extensive Indian literature for this area.

The other changes are mostly more subtle. Apart from a general update, reflecting five years of additional literature, my own perspective on the region has changed as I have moved, first from Hong Kong to Singapore while writing the first edition, and

then, two years ago, to my present position as Director of the Center for Integrative Conservation at the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanical Garden (XTBG), Chinese Academy of Sciences, in rural southwest Yunnan, near the borders with Laos and Myanmar. As well as the change in geographical location, my new job has more of a conservation focus, which is reflected in changes to the last two chapters. Another major influence since the first edition has been my involvement as a 'lead author' for the 'Asia' chapter in the Working Group Two contribution to the Fifth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

This second edition was written entirely at XTBG and so many people here have helped in various ways that any list must be incomplete. I would particularly like to acknowledge Alice Hughes for redrawing the maps, and Alice, Ferry Slik, Kyle Tomlinson, and Uromi Goodale for comments on particular chapters. David Dudgeon in Hong Kong helped a lot with the last two chapters, as he did with the first edition. I also benefited greatly from discussions with Zhou Zhekun and Frédéric Jacques on Neogene palaeoecology and with Chen Jin and many others on regional conservation issues. Photographs and other graphics are acknowledged individually, but I would like to add a general 'thank you' for the hundreds of additional pictures that were kindly made available for which I had no room. Lucy Nash and the other staff at OUP were always a pleasure to work with.

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