

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every place on earth is special but, as the saying goes, some places are more special than others. California stands out as truly unique in its physical, biological, and societal diversity. This book documents aspects of California's diversity and the ecological dynamism that both maintains and arises from it. The project rose out of the need to have access to up-to-date knowledge on the nature of California's ecological wealth. Students needed it, because until now there has not been an available resource covering the large array of California's ecosystems for the many classes on this subject taught throughout the state. The book also serves the state's many and diverse practitioners who deal with conservation and resource management as scientists, managers, and decision makers.

Meeting the goals for this book was challenging because the enormity of the topic constantly did battle with our desire to craft a single, ideally portable, volume. The forty-one chapters cover the state's main ecosystem types, but each possesses so many variants that regrettably we had to leave out some areas and topics of value because of space limitations. However, we are extremely pleased about the amazing amount of knowledge that has been brought together by an enormous team of experts. In this volume we have assembled information on both terrestrial and marine systems. Although these systems interact in many ways, they are usually dealt with separately in overviews of California. This reflects in part an academic cultural divide that we hope fades in the future.

In addition to documenting and focusing on California's ecosystems today, we have looked to the geological and historical past to illuminate how we got here and what has changed. We have also considered the future to examine what is in store for these systems in light of the rapid regional and global changes, both ongoing and projected. Thus we strove to view the past, the present, and the future of the state's natural capital. We have taken a broad view of California's ecosystems and have therefore included chapters on the state's managed and built ecosystems as well as the more natural entities. Most of the chapters, across the spectrum of natural to managed ecosystems, discuss the services each ecosystem provides to illustrate the ways that they provision human well-being as well as the trade-offs involved in changing these systems.

This book could not have come to be without the dedication and work of an immense group of people. Foremost is the hugely talented group of experts on California's ecosystems who crafted these chapters. We thank them for their attention to endless details and their patience with us through many rounds of review and revision. At the production stage we had the extraordinary assistance of Melissa Chapin, who went above and beyond as graphics editor. We would like to particularly thank Chuck Crumly, formerly with the University of California Press, for his enthusiastic support of this venture from its inception. Merrick Bush-Pirkle, Blake Edgar and Kate Hoffman, also of UC Press, championed and saw this project through to completion. Parker Welch and Aaron Cole with the Center for Integrated Spatial Research (CISR) at the University of California–Santa Cruz worked diligently to produce the set of distribution maps for the book. Amy Smith Bell expertly tackled the enormous copy editing job. Emily Saarman, Diane Delaney, Astoria Tershy and Arica Mooney provided additional production input.

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Scott Stephens, John Stuart, Kerstin Wasson, and Will White, as well as those reviewers who asked not to be named.

Finally, we thank our families for their tremendous support and patience. And to those whom we have forgotten to mention here, we beg your forgiveness. This book has been an incredible eight-year odyssey for us. We could not have done it without the hundreds who have given their time, brilliance, and intimate knowledge of this great state. As the project comes to completion, we cannot help but reflect on the com-

munity it has helped to build among us. California is blessed to have so many scientists and scholars dedicated to its understanding and stewardship. We hope above all for that community and its collective knowledge to carry on and thrive in subsequent generations. If this book helps in service toward that goal, it will have been more than worth the effort.

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