

Preface and Acknowledgements

In this book, we have chosen for our focus a very small part of the universe of ecological problems. We have been guided in our efforts by the belief that ecological systems are inherently complicated and that insights will be gained slowly with much work. Nevertheless, we believe that in recent years substantial progress has been made in understanding the forces responsible for determining population stability. Much of this understanding has come about through systematic, long-term studies on laboratory systems, and these form the main subject of our discussion. Those areas in which our knowledge is deepest have been explored successfully, in the best traditions of science, with a combination of theoretical models and experimental tests. An overarching goal of this book is the prominent display of work that has used the inferential power of modeling and the strong inference potential of well-designed experiments. We think ecology can only benefit from continued application of these methods.

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