

The Biology of Mediterranean-Type Ecosystems

The world's mediterranean-type climate regions (including areas within the Mediterranean, South Africa, Australia, California, and Chile) have long been of interest to biologists by virtue of their extraordinary biodiversity and the appearance of evolutionary convergence between these disparate regions. Comparisons between mediterranean-type climate regions have provided important insights into questions at the cutting edge of ecological, ecophysiological, and evolutionary research. These regions, dominated by evergreen shrubland communities, contain many rare and endemic species. Their mild climate makes them appealing places to live and visit and this has resulted in numerous threats to the species and communities that occupy them. Threats include a wide range of factors such as habitat loss due to development and agriculture, disturbance, invasive species, and climate change. As a result, they continue to attract far more attention than their limited geographic area might suggest. This book provides a concise but comprehensive introduction to mediterranean-type ecosystems. As with other books in the Biology of Habitats Series, the emphasis in this book is on the organisms that dominate these regions although their management, conservation, and restoration are also considered.

The cover shows slopes, densely covered by chaparral shrubs, in the western portion of the San Gabriel Mountains located near Los Angeles in southern California. In the foreground is the tall flowering stalk of chaparral yucca (*Hesperoyucca whipplei*) and a post-fire resprouting sugar bush shrub (*Rhus ovata*). In the background, the canyons are hazy with smoke as a fire is burning out of view to the south (right). A fire-fighting helicopter is just visible in the sky heading towards the wild fire.

The inset is a large flower in the genus *Protea* at Table Mountain, Western Cape Region, South Africa. South African sugarbushes (*Protea* spp.) represent an important and diverse family (Proteaceae) that occurs in all southern hemisphere mediterranean-type climate regions. This family is especially diverse in species and important in South African and Australian mediterranean-type climate regions.

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