

Preface

Charles Darwin, Joseph Grinnell, G. Ledyard Stebbins, and many other luminaries in the fields of ecology, evolution, and biogeography have suggested that species invasions can provide invaluable opportunities to advance our understanding of nature. In spite of their foresight, most studies of species invasions have concentrated on the applied problems posed by non-native species. This book is an attempt to refocus some portion of the attention paid to species invasions back onto basic research questions, with the hope that such efforts can not only advance our understanding of basic issues in the life sciences, but also produce new insights that will improve our ability to deal with the very real applied problems species invasions present.

This book is predominately a product of serendipity and collaboration. None of its three parts, nor indeed the book as a whole, would have been possible without sustained collaboration and a willingness to proceed into areas unknown by any single author or editor. The kernel of the idea for this book formed after presenting material for a job seminar, in the hopes of finding a useful unifying theme. From there the book took on a life of its own. Early on, one contributor suggested holding a workshop that would bring the chapter authors together to discuss, flesh out, and improve their ideas. Such a workshop was held at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS) in March of 2004. Many of the book's participants were able to attend, and the forum provided an opportunity to revisit what has been accomplished since the Asilomar Conference hosted by H. G. Baker and G. L. Stebbins some 40 years ago. Indeed, the meeting proved to be of tremendous benefit both to those participating and to the book as a whole. It is our hope that these resulting chapters will be useful to those who read them and to the academic community at large.

Introduction

Certainly this book would not have been possible if not for the genuine interest of the participants, the support of the agencies that provided funding to the many authors involved, and the wonderful assistance provided by Sinauer Associates throughout the publishing process.

We also wish to acknowledge the participation of Mark Davis, Robin Pelc, and Eric Seabloom, who contributed substantially to the discussions at the NCEAS meeting. This book benefited tremendously from chapter reviews, and we thank all reviewers who assisted in this process. Finally, we thank Andrea Gaines for her suggestions for the book cover.

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