
Preface

Trying to write a book on invasion biology is a daunting task. First, one's book inevitably will be compared to Mark Williamson's 1996 classic on the topic. Second, articles and books on the subject of biological invasions are being published at a furious pace. Writing this book was a lot like trying to shovel a sidewalk in the middle of a Minnesota blizzard. As soon as I cleared a path, a new gust of wind would sweep in new drifts that needed my attention. Third, while much progress has been made since Williamson's book was published, uncertainty and some lively contentiousness still characterize much of this exciting and rapidly growing field. Thus, it would be impossible for any author to please all the readers. I am quite confident that all readers will find something in this book to contest. Since the cumulative wisdom and instincts of an entire research community will normally trump that of any individual member, I am less concerned that I got everything right than I am that the book promotes focused reflection and dialogue.

During the twentieth century, Elton provided the field its primary operating paradigm. By the end of the first decade of the twenty-first century, the field of invasion biology is in a state of transition, somewhere between its Eltonian-based roots and a reframed and robust discipline of the twenty-first century. I hope that this book can help the field redefine itself during this period of self-transformation. My intended primary audience for this book includes students, researchers, land managers, and science writers, although I believe that policy makers and general citizens would find certain portions of the book interesting and informative as well. As a teacher, I have always valued thoughtful and critical discussions. It is my hope that this book will fuel many such discussions, both inside and outside the classroom.

To try to meet the needs and interests of different readers, and to make the book as user-friendly as possible, I have included a taxonomic index and a geographic index, in addition to a general subject index.