

Preface

This book is about recent efforts toward enrichment of ecosystem theory. Ecosystems, conceived of as more than simply a collection of organisms, and more than energy and nutrient flows, trophic webs and competition communities, are the full interactive *network* among coexistent living organisms and their non-living milieu. The diversity of viewpoints and approaches for theoretical study of ecosystems that are collected here share the perception of ecosystems as networks, and represent the state-of-the-art. We believe that exchange and interaction among these diverse approaches will generate further exciting research and a better and deeper understanding of ecosystems. With that belief, we gathered at two related symposia, entitled 'New Approaches to Ecological Networks' and 'Search for Ecosystem Principles: A Network Perspective', held during the joint meetings of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), the International Society of Ecological Modelling (ISEM) and the IV International Association of Ecology (INTECOL) Congress in August 1986 at Syracuse, New York. This book grew out of that opportunity, and reflects the results of exchange during and after the meeting. We sincerely hope this volume leads to new empirical research, theory and understanding of the nature of ecosystems.