

The Biology of Deserts

This book offers a concise but comprehensive introduction to desert ecology and adopts a strong evolutionary focus. As with other titles in the *Biology of Habitats Series*, the emphasis in the book is on the organisms that dominate this harsh environment, although theoretical and experimental aspects as well as conservation and desertification are also considered.

Deserts are defined by their arid conditions; a consequence of this aridity is that most of the area occupied by desert is barren and monotonous, leading many people to regard it as wasteland. However, deserts are widespread and represent surprisingly biodiverse environments, although it is the relative simplicity of these ecosystems that makes them more tractable for study than more complex environments. In these resource-poor locations, natural selection is working at its most extreme and provides some of the best-known examples of Darwinian selection.

The Biology of Deserts includes a wide range of ecological and evolutionary issues including morphological and physiological adaptations of desert plants and animals, species interactions, the importance of predation and parasitism, food webs, biodiversity, and conservation. It features a balance of plant and animal (both invertebrate and vertebrate) examples, and also emphasizes topical applied issues such as desertification and invasive species. The book concludes by considering the positive aspects of desert conservation.

This accessible text is suitable for both senior undergraduate and graduate students taking courses in desert ecology. It will also appeal to researchers new to the field and to the many professional ecologists and conservation practitioners requiring a concise but authoritative overview of this fascinating habitat.

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