

The Balance of Nature

"John Kricher masterfully describes the ancient origins of the concept of a balance of nature and its unquestioned incorporation into the thinking of many ecologists and conservationists. Kricher shows that we can understand and protect natural ecosystems better by rejecting the assumption that nature is a well-designed machine and accepting the true complexity created by numerous interacting species."

—Robert Askins, Connecticut College

"A deft and inviting tour of ecology and evolution, a book of revelation about the balance of nature that really counts, namely that between ourselves and the living planet. This is an appealing read that reveals the most important story of human history."

—Thomas E. Lovejoy, president of the H. John Heinz III
Center for Science, Economics, and the Environment

"This is a highly readable account of ecology, rich in substance, metaphor, and examples. The author's main goal is to puncture the cozy idea that nature is in a state of balance. While the concept of balance fitted the philosophy of some of the ancient Greeks and their intellectual descendants, John Kricher explains how it has repeatedly failed the test of empirical science. Nature, he shows, is much more interesting."

—Peter R. Grant, Princeton University

"Kricher's new book challenges our long-held belief in the balance of nature. Presenting fascinating evidence in a highly readable style, Kricher makes the case that no, there is no balance within nature, but yes, we need a sounder ethic that trumpets the urgency that we must save our environment—now!"

—Herb Raffaele, United States Fish and Wildlife Service

"Kricher is an excellent storyteller and this is an important story to tell. I thoroughly enjoyed this little book. It is chock full of interesting ideas that challenge conventional wisdom. *The Balance of Nature* is a fun read throughout, and will appeal to a broad range of readers both within and outside the discipline."

—Richard Karban, coauthor of *How to Do Ecology*

"Kricher dispels the popularly held notion that nature exists in some single, harmonious balance, and shows how, as a consequence, we need to change the way we view nature. His passion and breadth of understanding come through very clearly. *The Balance of Nature* is a charming and very readable book."

—Oswald Schmitz, Yale University

 PRINCETON
press.princeton.edu

U.S. \$24.95

ISBN 978-0-691-13898-5

52495

9 780691 138985