

It is clear that nature is undergoing rapid changes as a result of human activities such as industry, agriculture, travel, fisheries, and urbanization. What effects do these activities have? Are they disturbing equilibria in ecological populations and communities, thus upsetting the balance of nature, or are they enhancing naturally occurring disequilibria, perhaps with even worse consequences?

It is often argued that large-scale fluctuations in climate and sea levels have occurred over and over again in the geological past, long before human activities could possibly have had any impact, and that human effects are very small compared with those that occur naturally. Should we conclude that human activity cannot significantly affect the environment, or are these naturally occurring fluctuations actually being dangerously enhanced by humans?

This book examines these questions, first by providing evidence for equilibrium and non-equilibrium conditions in relatively undisturbed ecosystems, and second by examining human-induced effects.

KLAUS ROHDE is Professor Emeritus at the University of New England, Armidale, Australia. He is well known for his work on the ecology, biogeography, and ultrastructure of parasites, particularly marine parasites, and on latitudinal gradients in biodiversity. He has published extensively on parasite ecology, non-equilibrium ecology, and marine parasitology.

Cover illustration: *Atelopus cruciger*. Photo by Cesar Luis Barrio-Amorós.

In Venezuela there are nine known species of *Atelopus*, two in the Coastal Chain, and the rest in the Andes. All of them are considered critically endangered, and one is extinct already (*Atelopus vogli*). All species in the Andes appear to be either very rare or gone altogether, despite efforts to find them. The only remaining species in Venezuela is *Atelopus cruciger*, which was thought to be extinct as well until 2003, when a group of hikers found a population in the most remote rainforest of the Venezuelan Coastal Chain. Since then, this population has been the subject of study and monitoring, and looks healthy to date. The locality is obviously not divulged in order to preserve the species from pet dealers.

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS
www.cambridge.org

ISBN 978-1-107-01961-4

