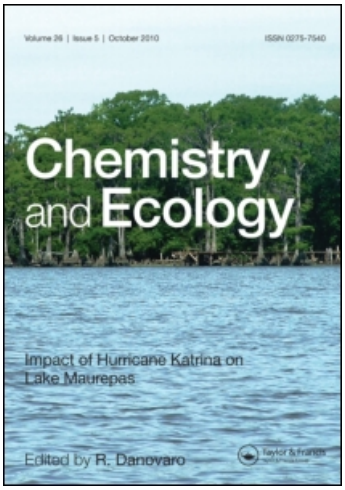

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Quantitative Ecology-Spatial and Temporal Scaling, David C. Schneider, Published Academic Press, 1994, 395 Pp., Isbn: 0-12-627860-1, Price £38.00, Hardback

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BOOK REVIEW

QUANTITATIVE ECOLOGY—SPATIAL AND TEMPORAL SCALING, David C. Schneider, published Academic Press, 1994, 395 pp., ISBN: 0-12-627860-1, price £38.00, hardback.

The sub-title of this book is a more appropriate description than its main one, for it is almost exclusively devoted to this important ecological subject. The emergent properties of ecosystems that are perceived as observational scales change is surely one of the most important subjects of the moment, since it could influence the success of environmental management strategies.

This is not, however, a book for the research voyeur. This is a text aimed — and successfully so — at the researcher or advanced student with a keen desire to get to grips with scale and its attendant problems, challenges and satisfactions.

The book is well structured in itself, with a clear introductory section and three others dealing in considerable detail with well chosen examples. The author has been careful to select examples that the ecologist or ecotoxicologist will be able to tackle in the Introduction—e.g. the relationship of sea bird distributions to the distribution of their food. In later sections, the examples are no less relevant but will need a more mathematical bent to appreciate fully.

The book tries hard to help the non-mathematical reader through what could be a puzzling field, and even in the closing chapters, suggests ways of coping with the question of scale that many readers will find valuable. However, it is a volume that stands putting down and taking up again at a later date. The reader can delve as far into the book as necessary.

The book is not just about scale in theory. It is about scale in practice. There is also quite a lot in the middle chapters about what most of us probably think of as beginning with the heterogeneity in our sampling area and finishing with a muddle of data distributed in just the way we don't want if our statistical software package is going to be able to cope with it. This book has much to say to biologists about their attitudes to a life in research, and one is tempted to suggest that the book could become compulsory reading, if not for its detail, then for the lessons it holds for those wishing to hear.

It was no surprise to find, after considering the book, that the author teaches a statistical biology course in the United States of America, but what is refreshing is the modesty with which the author regards the contribution he has made to this subject. He gives considerable prominence to the help he has received from others. He says it would have been easier to write a statistics book for biologists. There are enough of those already. What we have here is a book offering insight and procedures for those tackling the real world with all its bumps and hollows, and its multivariate problems stretched over time and space. It is a worthwhile investment for your library.

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