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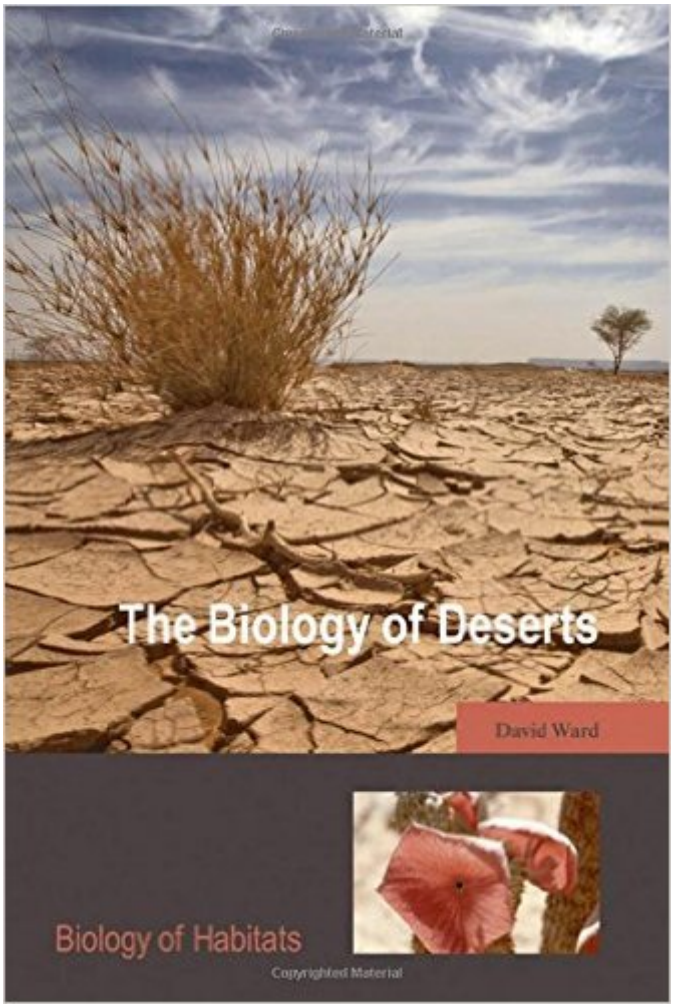
The Biology Of Deserts (Biology Of Habitats Series)



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Synopsis

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. Each of the books in the Oxford Biology of Habitats Series introduces a different habitat, and gives an integrated overview of the design, physiology, ecology, and behaviour of the organisms found there. The practical aspects of working within each habitat, the sorts of studies that are possible, and habitat biodiversity and conservation status are all explored.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I read this textbook as a primer for my comprehensive exams. I study a specific group of desert organisms and wanted to gain a better understanding of deserts as a whole. While I found some parts of the book more informative than others, I'm glad that I read it.First off, the writing in the book is very good. There were certainly some parts that I struggled to get through (it is a textbook, after all) but most of the time I was able to read through large sections without counting down the pages left in the chapter.Personally, I thought the beginning of the book was the best, it fell off a bit in the middle, and then ended strong. I found the initial chapters that defined deserts to be extremely informative. I learned a lot in a very short time and breezed through the first few chapters. However, I was less impressed by the middle chapters. They tended to read like an intro ecology textbook that merely used desert organism in the examples and case studies. This was definitely the area where I found myself struggling to get through at times. Starting at chapter 8, the book picked up for me again and while some sections still read like an intro ecology text, I learned a lot and found the different case studies much more interesting.The book assumes some prior knowledge of ecology and if you don't have any previous experience with ecology, then anything after the first few chapters will be difficult to absorb. Overall I'm glad I picked up this textbook and I feel like I know a lot more about deserts than I did previously.

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