

# Ecology of World Vegetation

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**For David, Katherine and Gillian**

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## Preface

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The ecology of world vegetation is described in numerous books and journals, but these are usually very specialized in their scope and treatment. This book provides a synthesis of this literature. A brief introductory chapter outlines general ecological concepts and subsequent chapters examine the form and function of the major biomes of the world. A similar organization has been used for each biome type. These chapters begin with a description of environmental conditions and a brief account of floristic diversity in a regional context. The remaining pages describe characteristic adaptations and ecosystem processes.

Although there is a rapidly growing literature on ecological topics, most books are very specialized in their approach. No single volume can provide a complete overview of the diverse subject matter that is represented by 'ecology'. This book too has necessarily been selective, but it is hoped that the approach and synthesis will provide an adequate introduction to the ecology of world ecosystems. I have tried to minimize the length of this book by presenting information in a compact style. Numerous illustrations have been included to supplement this rather factual approach, and references to the original sources provide more detailed information on topics that are of interest to those for whom this book provides a first encounter with ecology and to readers with more background in this subject.

Keith Bigelow and Derek Thompson of the Department of Geography, University of Saskatchewan, completed

all of the drafting and photographic work. They have spent many hours on this project and their care and skill is reflected in the consistently high quality of the illustrations throughout the book. Many friends and colleagues have provided photographs. It has not been possible to include all of them, but the 'global' perspective of the book has been greatly enhanced in this way. I wish to thank them all for the time and trouble they have taken to supply this material. I must also thank Mary Dykes and the staff of the interlibrary loans department of the Library, University of Saskatchewan, for their unfailing ability to get even the most obscure references.

Dr Clem Earle of Chapman & Hall has been involved with this book since its inception and I am grateful for his advice and encouragement at all stages of production. The nature of the book is reflected in his interest and efforts. Dr Bob Carling, Dr Jo Koster and the production staff at Chapman and Hall must also be acknowledged for their excellent work in connection with this project.

Finally, I am sincerely grateful for the assistance and constructive criticism provided by my wife Anne. Although my mind has at times been preoccupied, my thoughts have always been with her and with my children to whom I dedicate this book.

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