

BOOK REVIEW

Foundations of Biogeography Classic Papers with Commentaries. Mark V. Lomolino, Dov F. Sax and James H. Brown, Eds. University of Chicago Press, Chicago IL, 2004. 1328 pp. (ISBN 0-226-49237-0, \$45).

This is a magnificent volume. Volume it has, all 170 cubic inches of it, and weight; at *ca.* 5 lbs it is surely not suited to bed-time reading. But it is certainly a wonderful bedside companion that offers a treasury of classic papers from Buffon to the epic biogeographical decade of the 1970s and a little beyond. Published in association with the International Biogeographical Society and the U.S. National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis, this work continues the successful Foundations series, Foundations of Ecology (1991) and Foundations of Animal Behavior (1996) from the University of Chicago Press.

Seventy-two key works are presented in eight sections that cover Early Classics (Buffon, Linnaeus, Forster, de Candolle, Humboldt, Darwin *et al.*), through Earth History; Vicariance and Dispersal; Species ranges; Revolutions in Historical Biogeography; Diversification; The Importance of Islands; Assembly Rules and Gradients in Diversity. Each section is introduced with a Commentary, each of which is a perceptive critique of the papers to follow. All 72 papers are too many to note separately, but all are well chosen and great reading.

Your reviewer is not a biogeographer by profession and it may have been presumptuous of me to review this book, but my rationale is that the contents transcend Biogeography *sensu stricto*. They present major facets of the history of ideas in Biology and they document the interwoven approaches to understanding the evolution and distribution of organisms: life in time and space. It will be an es-

sential book for seminars and advanced courses in Biogeography. More than that, it would be a salutary exercise for students of cell and molecular biology to read selected chapters, if only to sense that there is more to the study of Life, that rigorous thinking can be applied to global issues and that great science was done more than a century ago.

Every reader will find treasures here—papers often quoted but seldom read—and translations of classics from German and French. My own favorites include Linnaeus on the creation of all species on a high mountain in Paradise and their subsequent differential increase on the habitable Earth. Alexander van Humboldt, arguably the founder of modern Biogeography, is represented by his famous essay on the distribution of plants, and Wegener by his theory of the origin of continents and oceans. Por, whose work was not previously known to me, discusses the Suez Canal as a biogeographical experiment. Brundin, who is among the few with multiple entries and a pioneer on transantarctic relationships, defends his differences with Darlington.

All the usual suspects are there from more recent decades: Simpson, Hulten, Elton, Croizat, Mayr, Wilson, MacArthur, Brown, Diamond and Whittaker to mention only a sample of the many greats.

In sum this is an essential volume for all Biology libraries, both institutional and private, and a bargain at the price.

JOHN S. EDWARDS
Department of Biology
Box 351800
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington 98195
E-mail: hardsnow@u.washington.edu