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Stable Isotope Ecology

Brian Fry

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Stable isotopes are frequently used as tracers in biological systems, and their ability to track changes and processes over time has made them increasingly important to ecological research. For ecologists, stable isotopes provide a natural way to directly trace details of element cycling in the environment.Stable Isotope Ecology provides a solid introduction to this advanced subject, and can also be used as an instructive review for more experienced researchers and professionals. The book approaches the use of isotopes from the perspective of ecological and biological research, but its concepts can be applied within other disciplines as well. In order to enable scientists to establish source-sink connections in ecological settings, Stable Isotope Ecology begins by reviewing fundamental topics of tracer fractionation and mixing. Several mini-reviews profile problems and successes encountered with isotope tracing in particular focus areas, while emphasizing the role that humans increasingly play in changing our planetary ecosphere. A novel, step-by-step spreadsheet modeling approach is also presented for circulating tracers in any ecological system, including any favorite system an ecologist might dream up while sitting at a computer. Just type in values and watch the isotope action unfold in the dynamic models.Fry's humorous and lighthearted style painlessly imparts the principles of isotope ecology, using a unique, hands-on approach to engage students. The mechanics of fractionation and mixing are laid out in simple steps, with numerous examples and accessible mathematics (algebra only). The book encourages students to begin their own pilot project with stable isotopes.The accompanying online material includes color illustrations, spreadsheet models, technical appendices, and problems and answers. The materials are accessible for novices and experts alike, and enhance the learning experience, adding electronic dynamics to the printed book.

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