

WISE, D. H. 1993. Spiders in ecological webs. Cambridge University Press [Cambridge Studies in Ecology], Cambridge, Great Britain. Available from the Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211. ISBN 0-521-32547-1. xiii + 328 p. Hardback with dust cover, 15.5 X 23.5 cm. \$79.95.

There has long been a need for a synthesis and evaluation of the work that has been done on spider ecology. This book makes a good start on filling that need. The first of nine chapters begins with a short introduction to spiders and brief generalized outlines of the life histories of some of the more common families. A short account of spider mythology and the derivation of the word "spider" is also included. Lastly, there are discussions of spiders as model terrestrial predators and the importance of field experimentation, which is the primary focus of this book.

The following chapters deal with food limitations (many spiders may be frequently hungry); the evidence for and against interspecific competition; lack of support for the classical interspecific competitionist paradigm in most field studies; how spiders avoid competition (little evidence for intraspecific competition); the impact of spiders on insect populations (including in agroecosystems); effects of environmental structure on spider populations; spiders as part of the larger community and effects of spider guilds on prey populations; and finally, a helpful discussion on experimental design and common errors (some of which the author reports he has been previously guilty of himself!), along with suggestions for future research. Useful synopses occur at the end of each chapter.

The author points out that most of the ecological work on spiders has been done on those species which build webs because these species are more easily manipulated than wandering spiders. Unfortunately, the level of knowledge on wandering spiders is illustrated on p. 10, where the author states that salticids cannot capture prey in the dark. This primarily diurnal, visually-oriented family **can** capture prey in the dark by tactile means. Despite this and a few other minor exceptions, the book is remarkably free of errors. The quality of the production is high. This is reflected in the price of the book, which is in the range of comparable volumes, in other words, is fairly expensive.

The bibliography is extensive, although due to the focus of the book on field experiments, not exhaustive. Considerable purely observational field work has not been included.

The book is written in a metaphorical style which seems to be an attempt to broaden the potential audience for the book; however, the breadth and depth of the research presented and analyzed here will require a fair background in biology to be fully appreciated. Nevertheless, I would heartily recommend this book as the place to start for anyone interested in doing serious work in the field of spider ecology. It would be worth the time of an ecologist working on any taxon to read the last chapter before starting a field experiment.

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