

Preface

The timing of the publication of this book couldn't be better as we celebrate the 50th anniversary of Charles Elton's seminal book, *The Ecology of Invasions by Animals and Plants*. Since this influential book was published in 1958, the study of bioinvasions has developed exponentially, alongside the exponential growth in the magnitude of the invasion problem itself. Today, bioinvasion, a highly complex ecological process and environmental concern, has become a specific branch in ecology and environmental studies, with many disciplines developing within it.

In early 2004 one of us (G.R.) received a letter from Springer Publishers asking to consider writing or editing a book on marine bioinvasions for their Ecological Studies Series. Springer's editors have been thinking of such a book for quite a while — and rightfully so. Over the past several decades, many books have been written on management, evolutionary or ecological perspectives of bioinvasions, but those books have focused mostly on terrestrial invasions with only a few marine examples. Research on marine bioinvasions has been mounting in the last two decades; a special biannual international symposium on the topic was established in 1999, signifying the fact that it has become a discipline in its own right, but no comprehensive marine bioinvasions book existed at that time. Today, four years later, this is still the first of its kind.

The challenge was exciting and, because the book's purpose was to reflect the full breadth of this fascinating topic, it warranted the inclusion of knowledge of many expert contributors. Dr. Jeff Crooks joined in as a co-editor, and we launched on this long journey together. It was a perfect match: both of us have worked on invasive mussels and their interactions with the native communities, one (G.R.) in one of the hottest hotspots of marine bioinvasions on earth, the eastern Mediterranean, and the other (J.C.) in one of the hotspots on the West Coast of North America, Southern California.

Together, we envisioned a book that will focus mainly on the ecological aspects of the invasion process in the marine environment, which in many ways is quite different to the terrestrial one. With the help of Prof. Jim Carlton, we crafted an outline for a book that would depict the different stages of the invasion process, discuss management issues, and present illustrative case studies from different regions of the world. Identifying prospective contributors was the easy part of the task: many excellent experts could address these different processes. The big

question was would these very prolific, busy, and active researchers be willing and able to contribute to this effort? The response was heartening: when we presented the idea to our prospective contributors, the excitement and willingness to commit were overwhelming. Within ten days, we had a list of chapter authors that would cover most of the topics we envisioned. This rapid and positive response reemphasized the great thirst for such a book.

One of the challenges in producing this book is that the topic is so “hot” and rapidly evolving that it is hard to keep up with the new science. This is for two main reasons. The first is that new invasions are being discovered weekly in many regions, and the second is that new basic research is continuously being produced on new, as well as older, invasions. With every iteration of the book’s production, new material seemed appropriate for inclusion and we were bound to draw the line somewhere. Yet this is what made this project so exciting. It became clear that it is impossible to include everything we might have wanted in this one book. Luckily, there are other excellent books on the general theory of bioinvasions that cover many of the topics of which we could only scratch the surface. Many are mentioned in the introductory chapter.

The dedicated contributing authors of this book made great efforts to keep the content as updated and relevant as possible. This enables our book, we believe, to serve as an up-to-date learning tool for students and a valuable asset for professionals in the field. Editing such an encompassing book wasn’t always an easy assignment, and quite challenging at times; still, we have thoroughly enjoyed this creative work. We are grateful to Springer Publishers for their support during this process, and mostly we thank our devoted chapter authors without which this book would not exist. We also thank our patient families, Iris, Shai and Shir Rilov, and Emma, Kai, and Aiden Crooks, for allowing us many hours of seclusion working on the book. We hope that *Biological Invasions in Marine Ecosystems: Ecological, Management, and Geographic Perspectives* will serve its purpose and broaden the knowledge and understanding of this important topic.

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