books noted with interest

**The World’s beaches: A global guide to the science of the shoreline**
Orrin H. Pilkey, William J. Neal, James Andrew Graham Cooper & Joseph T. Kelley
2011, University of California Press, 302 pp. $70.00/£48.95 (Hardback), US $29.95/£20.95 (Paperback)
ISBN: 9780520268715 / 9780520268722
http://www.ucpress.edu/

Ever wonder whether you chose the wrong study system? Engagingly written and with arresting illustrations, the authors provoke jealousy of their research area with a comprehensive account of coastal geology and a global classification of beach environments. Relatively little attention is given to the biota, with characteristic plants and animals covered in short sections, though with a longer consideration of what can be learnt from seashells. There are no in-text references but the recommended further reading would make this an ideal primer for students or those beginning shoreline-related work. Otherwise it’s perfect holiday reading for the beach.

**The theory of ecology**
Samuel M. Scheiner & Michael R. Willig (eds.)
2011, The University of Chicago Press, 416 pp. £120.00 (Hardback), $40.00 (Paperback)
ISBN: 9780226736853 / 9780226736860
http://www.press.uchicago.edu/

The editors have assembled a Who’s Who of theoretical ecologists to consider the state of the field’s big ideas. Much content will directly appeal to biogeographers, including chapters on meta-communities, the Equilibrium Theory of Island Biogeography, global change and biogeographical gradients, as well as stressing linkages among areas where ideas have apparently developed independently. Each chapter opens with an instructive diagram illustrating the connections between theoretical frameworks, further stressing the continuity of the field and resolving the broader pictures. It could form the spine of a graduate ecology course or a valuable refresher for even the most experienced reader.

Markus Eichhorn
Book Review Editor.
e-mail: Markus.Eichhorn@nottingham.ac.uk

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