

Response to Reviews of **Scaling** *Sarracenia*

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We very much appreciate the detailed, thoughtful, and constructive comments of the two anonymous reviewers of our MPB manuscript *Scaling Sarracenia: Ecology of a Model System*. Both the reviewers, our two colleagues (David Foster and Sydne Record) who read the entire ms., and the series editors and Executive Editor Alison Kalett not only had similar broad comments but also had many detailed suggestions for revising technical issues. In revising the manuscript, we took to heart these comments and have revised the manuscript thoroughly. We summarize here the broad and structural changes we have done in the revision; technical points raised by all reviewers have been addressed throughout. About a dozen additional and relevant references that have appeared since the ms. went into review in July 2019 have been added and cited as appropriate.

Writing style

Comments from the reviewers

The reviewers praised the writing: a “clear, accessible ms” (rev. 1) and “extremely clear and well written, and the organization is generally sensi-

ble and clear” (rev. 2). They also noted that the intention to (re)integrate subfields and make (community) ecology whole again “is a highly worthy, and in my view necessary, undertaking” (rev. 1) and “a rare and complete synthesis of research and observations on a single study system...that is a superb example of ecological thinking that blends theory and empiricism.” (rev. 2). Sydne Record reminded us that NSF is running a series of town halls on the reintegration of biology and rolling out funding opportunities in this area (*e.g.*, Rules of Live, Biology Integration Institutes).

Response

We wrote the book with the hopes of such integration, and were therefore very pleased to read rev. 2’s comment that “We desperately need strong examples of this approach, and this book is written in such a clear and engaging prose that I believe this message will reach many ecologists.” Based on the reviewers’ positive comments, we did not change the overall style or “voice” in which the book was written.

Audience

Comments from the reviewers

The reviewers questioned the audience(s) for the book. While bemoaning the “siloeing of ecology”, rev. 1 questioned whether the book should be published in the MPB series which are terser treatments on “cutting-edge theory and empirical work on specific research topics” (*i.e.*, silos). David Foster directly asked “who is your audience?”, as the text ranges from accessible natural history to detailed and complex modeling.

Response

We intend this book to be read and used by researchers at all levels: undergraduates to senior researchers. We both have complete runs of MPBs

on our bookshelves and have continued to read them since we were undergraduates. Richard Levin’s *Evolution in Changing Environments* and Henry Horn’s *Adaptive Geometry of Trees* were accessible introductions to theory and concepts that we read as undergraduates. Warren Abrahamson & Arthur Weis’s *Evolutionary Ecology across Three Trophic Levels* and Gordon Orians’s *Some Adaptations of Marsh-Nesting Blackbirds* reminded us as graduate students intent on pushing theoretical envelopes that natural history knowledge remains the foundation of ecology. Many others have been more like rev. 1’s ideal MPB: highly technical—and invaluable—treatments of more narrow topics.

Change

We added an explicit discussion of “audience for the book” in the Preface, pp. xxi*ff*.

Structure

Comments from the reviewers

Rev. 2 found strength in the (new to them) approach of a general chapter, a “small world” chapter, and a “scaling up” chapter but also found themselves getting lost in the first chapter without knowing how it would connect to the others in the part. Rev. 1 suggested dropping the general chapters altogether. Rev. 1 felt that “more needs to be done to make sure there is coherence” and rev. 2 noted that “the structure [could be] improved by adding signposting and roadmaps early on” (rev. 2). For example, Rev. 2 found those signposts in Chapter 4 and Part III, but didn’t in Chapter 12.

Response

We agree with rev. 1 that there was too much free-standing background material in each of the “context” chapters that reduced the overall coher-

ence of the four core parts of the book. On the other hand, we disagree that the context chapters should have been dropped entirely, as framing and some introductory material are needed to guide readers through our various lines of thinking. This framing and streamlining led to substantial structural changes in the manuscript. Such an approach, we think, splits the difference between (for example) rev. 1, who took little away from Part I's chapters on scaling and natural history, and rev. 2, who felt that the scaling chapter was excellent and critical (and wished it were available right now for students in their undergraduate class and graduate students in their lab), and that most ecologists would connect with chapter 2 for how it conveys the love of nature.

Changes

- The chapter on natural history (chapter 2 in the original ms.) and free-standing background material in chapters 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, and 14 (original numbering) were moved into a set of seven Appendices. In total, the Appendices now account for approximately 25% of the total manuscript length. We prefer to retain this material somewhere in the book rather than expunge it entirely, as we feel that it will be useful to at least one-third of our intended audiences: students getting started in the field and looking for study organisms or study systems for theses and dissertations.
- The “context” chapters in each of the four parts of the book have all been substantially shortened (by 30–40%). They each now begin with a short (unheadered) summary/roadmap of the three chapters within the part. The remainder of each “context” chapter then tightly and tersely frames the material in the “small world” and “scaling up” chapters.
- To emphasize coherency and continuity between the three chapters

within each part, we have renamed and reworked their closing summaries. In the “context” chapter, this closing section is called “Next Steps”. In the “small world” chapter, the closing section retains its “Summary” designation, as these chapters tend to review existing work more than synthesizing it. The “scaling-up” chapters close with a short “Synthesis” section to emphasize their synthetic and more speculative focus and to bring a sense of closure to each of the four parts of the book.

- Throughout, we added substantial cross-referencing of chapters and sections to give readers additional guideposts and pointers to linkages within and across parts, and to background material now in the Appendices.

Title

Comments from the reviewers

The reviewers have sent mixed signals about the title. Reviewers of the prospectus were ambivalent about it. Rev. 1 wanted us to focus on pitcher plants, suggesting “The ecology of *Sarracenia*: how long-term research informs the distribution and abundance of a carnivorous plant and its inquiline community”. Rev. 2 thought that including *Sarracenia* in the title would make it less inviting to ecologists (“the idea of reading a book about a single species might not make a book rise to the top of the to-do list”). David Foster wrote that based on the title (and that it would be an MPB) that “he did not expect to find this book to be interesting or relevant to me” (but as a friend, he read it nonetheless, was pleasantly surprised, and provided us with many insightful comments in 13 single-spaced pages). But, as he wrote, “how many people will want to read ‘Scaling *Sarracenia*’? You need a marketing firm”.

Response

We continue look to the reviewers and editors for suggestions.

We like the alliteration of “Scaling *Sarracenia*”, and our response to reviewers of the prospectus was to add the subtitle “Ecology of a Model System”. Rev. 1 wants a focus on *Sarracenia* in the title but rev. 2 and David Foster wish it weren’t there. We know that titles help marketing teams sell books. Perhaps we could turn it around (“Ecology of a Model Ecosystem: *Sarracenia* and its Inquilines”) and add a photograph, line drawing, or even a graphical abstract on the cover (it’s been done before: MPB 12, 20, 24, 29, 31, 32, 36)? We are open to further creative suggestions.

Length

Reviewer 1 did comment on the length. The original ms. was 638 double-spaced pages. The current version is 611 (not including front matter and indices), but when formatted for print (single-spaced, font size, etc.), should fall within the standard size of a MPB. We had initially estimated a ms with about 90,000 words and ≈ 150 display items (figures, tables). The current version is just under 60,000 words, and includes 95 figures and less than a 20 tables.