length of time over which the articles were prepared. It is a minor defect compared with the value of the publication as a whole and I have no hesitation in recommending it to critical readers as a very worthwhile publication.

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Australian Saltmarsh Ecology

Neil Saintilan (ed), 2009.
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BEA SOMMER[1]

AUSTRALIA, including its territorial islands, is surrounded by almost 60 000 km of coastline (Geoscience Australia, http://www.ga.gov.au/education/) and, according to Saintilan, coastal saltmarshes occupy some 16 000 km^2. Saltmarshes provide valuable ecosystem services and are generally recognized as among the most productive ecosystems on Earth. This is considered to be ecologically important because excess detrital matter exported to marine waters sustains food webs, including important fisheries (i.e., Odum's [1980] 'outwelling hypothesis'). Although physically and biologically similar to saltmarshes elsewhere, Australian coastal saltmarshes have certain unique characteristics (e.g., the tidal zonation of marsh and mangroves and levels of productivity) that natural resource managers need to be aware of. Perhaps more so than elsewhere, the great majority of the Australian population lives along or near the coast. Consequently, Australian saltmarsh environments have been subject to significant human-driven change since European settlement. In spite of these compelling facts, Australian publications remain under-represented relative to the extent of saltmarsh on the continent. *Australian Saltmarsh Ecology* does much to correct this situation.

Australian Saltmarsh Ecology brings together leading saltmarsh researchers in Australia and represents the first synthesis of knowledge of Australian saltmarsh ecology. The book is the result of a growing awareness of the fragility and vulnerability of coastal saltmarsh, which has prompted a sustained research effort, particularly over the last decade. It is not a conventional text book that systematically deals with every topic related to saltmarsh ecology (such as, Paul Adam's *Saltmarsh Ecology*, 1990). Rather, it is a collection of papers that is well organized into ten chapters and covers most aspects of the topic: Australian saltmarshes in global context, distribution of Australian saltmarsh plants, geomorphology and habitat dynamics, the ecology of molluscs in Australian saltmarshes, ecology of burrowing crabs in temperate saltmarsh of south-east Australia, fish on Australian saltmarshes, saltmarsh as habitat for birds and other vertebrates, ecology and management of mosquitoes, protection and management of coastal saltmarsh, and mapping, assessment and monitoring of saltmarshes.

I have only two minor criticisms of this otherwise excellent book. First, smaller macroinvertebrates (other than molluscs and crabs), algae and bacterial associations are only dealt with indirectly, but this may be due to the scarcity of studies on these topics. Second, given the extent and importance of inland saltmarsh habitat in Australia, these unique ecosystems have only been dealt with when comparing to coastal saltmarsh (although the distribution of common saltmarsh plants presented in Chapter 2 includes inland areas and is very useful). I would have expected at least an entire chapter devoted to this topic because, although similarities in fauna and flora exist, inland saltmarshes are in many ways rather different than coastal ones. This problem could have been avoided by changing the book title to 'Australian coastal saltmarsh ecology'.

In conclusion, this book is a valuable and long-overdue resource that will benefit saltmarsh ecologists, managers and other stakeholders, as well as students and the wider public.

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