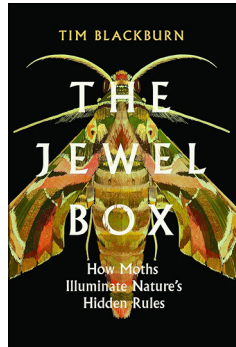


The Jewel Box: How Moths Illuminate Nature's Hidden Rules

By Tim Blackburn. 2023. Island Press. 288 pages, 37.95 CAD, Hardcover, 29.99 CAD, E-book.

Tim Blackburn is a professor of invasion biology at University College London and an accomplished ecologist; this book is a clear reflection of that expertise. It is essentially an ecology text with a moth narrative, complete with equations for population size (mainly in Chapter 1). Using the contents of the author's moth trap as the context, the book delves into fundamental tenets of ecology in each chapter. There are a few black and white photos, including one at the start of each chapter. The sections are divided by charming moth symbols, but the book does not contain colour images.



As a note, although the entomological societies of America and Canada adopted the common name Spongy Moth for the species *Lymantria dispar* in March 2022, the author uses the older common name (considered by some to be derogatory, still in use in the United Kingdom [UK]) for the species—this is briefly acknowledged in a footnote.

The Introduction provides an overview of the field of ecology, and topics covered in the book include: population growth models (Chapter 1); interspecific competition (Chapter 2); predation and parasitism (Chapter 3); reproduction and growth strategies (Chapter 4); ecological communities (Chapter 5); migration, meta-populations, and habitat patches (Chapter 6); species richness and diversification (Chapter 7); and species declines and human influences (Chapter 8).

This book will teach readers about moths, and the explanations of ecological concepts are well executed and grounded in moth-y examples. Because the examples are pulled from a moth trap set in the UK, most of the moth-specific focus is on those species, although the links to broader concepts increase the book's relevance beyond the UK.

I would assign this book as an ecology primer to my students, and as moths are a love of mine, indoctrinating students to moth ecology would be an excellent bonus. Depending on your background in academic ecology, this book could be an excellent review, a solid introduction, a bridge to more learning, or a wonderful connection between your current knowledge of insects and ecology, building on both and clarifying concepts with well-grounded examples. If you have not had the opportunity to study ecology or population biology and you've at least a passing interest in insects, this book will teach you the fundamentals better than most expensive textbooks. It is also eminently more fun to read. However, if you mainly seek moth facts and your eyes glaze over at the thought of Lotka and Volterra's predator-prey model, this may not be the book for you. Moth-focussed readers could skim over the ecological theory sections, but the academic and moth content is interwoven. Overall, the author has created a moth-centred ecology text that delivers on its promise of 'illuminating nature's hidden rules'; providing you do not pick it up expecting the glossy colour moth photos of a coffee-table book or the prose and scope of a travelogue, this book may be just what you are looking for.

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