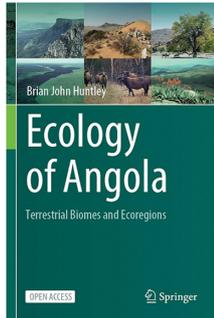




Check for updates

BOOK TITLE:

Ecology of Angola: Terrestrial biomes and ecoregions



AUTHOR:

Brian J. Huntley

ISBN:

9783031189234
(open-access eBook)
9783031189227 (hardcover,
459 pp, EUR49.99)
9783031189258 (softcover,
459 pp, EUR39.99)

PUBLISHER:

Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland

PUBLISHED:

2023

REVIEWER:

Brian W. van Wilgen¹

AFFILIATION:

¹Centre for Invasion Biology,
Department of Botany and Zoology,
Stellenbosch University, Stellenbosch,
South Africa

EMAIL:

bvanwilgen@sun.ac.za

HOW TO CITE:

van Wilgen BW. New ecological
textbook for Angola. S Afr J Sci.
2024;120(1/2), Art. #16548. <https://doi.org/10.17159/sajs.2024/16548>

ARTICLE INCLUDES:

- Peer review
- Supplementary material

PUBLISHED:

30 January 2024

New ecological textbook for Angola

Angola is one of the most ecologically diverse countries in the world, with terrestrial ecosystems ranging from the tropical rainforests of the Congo Basin to the hyper-arid Namib Desert. Although there is a rich and expanding literature on the terrestrial ecology of southern and eastern Africa, almost no work has been conducted in Angola until fairly recently. Consequently, there is very little in the way of relevant academic resources for training and supporting Angolan students and researchers in the ecological sciences. In addition, the scarcity of literature in Portuguese has been a critical barrier to the development of a new generation of Angolan scientists and ecosystem managers. Although this book is in English, a Portuguese translation is nearing completion and will be published shortly. In addition, this book is available online as an open access resource that can be downloaded free of charge at <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-031-18923-4>. Both of these features mean that the book will be widely accessible to academics, students and ecosystem managers in Angola.

This volume is primarily a textbook for students. It deals broadly with ecological concepts, and goes on to illustrate the relevance of these concepts in Angola's biomes, which include rainforests, grassland-forest mosaics, arid and mesic savannas, the Namib Desert, mangroves, and an escarpment zone. Each of these is treated in its own chapter in the book. In so doing, it is more than just a textbook as it contains up-to-date assessments of the state of knowledge pertaining to each biome. In the opening chapter, Huntley explains that the book covers selected ecological concepts, illustrated with local examples and supported by references to many other sources. A feature of the book is its focus on ecological concepts and terminology, with each term or concept printed in bold type where it occurs throughout the text, and defined at first mention. These definitions are collected in a glossary of ecological terms at the end of the book for ease of reference.

Brian Huntley is well positioned to write this volume, having worked as an ecologist in Angola during his early career, and having maintained contact with colleagues and undertaken many visits and expeditions to the country since then. He also consulted numerous leading experts while compiling this volume to ensure that the concepts and the content were accurate and up to date. The result is a detailed and extremely useful overview of the ecology of a little-known but important part of Africa. The book is also very well illustrated with colour photographs, maps and diagrams, which will enhance its appeal. It is perhaps worth noting that this book deals with the ecology of undisturbed ecosystems, how they came about, and the forces that maintain and shape them. It provides brief synopses on emerging environmental problems relevant to Angola, focusing on land degradation and transformation, invasion by alien species, climate change, and resource overuse and pollution, all of which will require urgent attention from ecologists. It thus provides an introduction to the baseline understanding vital to addressing these elements of rapid global change.

Open access publishing comes at a cost. Funding for this venture arose from strong collaboration between the Angolan and Portuguese ministries of science, technology and higher education. This admirable relationship between an African country and its former coloniser has already resulted in several important publications. This book is a very welcome addition, and I would highly recommend it to students of ecology, not just in Angola, but elsewhere in Africa and beyond. For Angolan students and lecturers, I would like to think that having a resource that so clearly illustrates the country's enormous diversity and value will engender a sense of pride and ownership in a country that has suffered from war and neglect for too long.