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Ecology and Biomechanics: A Mechanical Approach to the Ecology of Animals and Plants

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We live in a well-engineered universe. This engineering is present in every system and organism in existence, including in the actions and interactions of plants and animals. In fact, one could say that the function and movement of plants and animals is just as much a part of their makeup as chlorophyll and fiber or bone and blood. Consequently, if we want to understand the ecology of animals and plants especially in an integrated ecosystem, it follows that great insight can be gained by taking an approach that studies function and integration of parts rather than the individual parts themselves.

Ecology and Biomechanics: A Mechanical Approach to the Ecology of Animals and Plants offers a collection of state-of-the-art papers that ingeniously demonstrates how biomechanics can provide novel insights into long standing ecological and evolutionary questions. The majority of the book's chapters were originally presented at a symposium held at the annual meeting of the Society for Experimental Biology in Edinburgh, U.K., in 2004. Combining approaches from various disciplines, this volume covers subjects that encompass theoretical concepts and practical approaches involving research on both plants and animals, as well as interactions between the two.

Although most of the examples emphasize distinct organism-environment relationships such as the grazing of ruminants, the book also includes a few examples that span larger temporal and spatial scales, achieving wider application across ecosystems. This can be seen in the chapter Implications of Microbial Motility on the Water Column Ecosystems, which highlights how microbial ecosystems can be understood from the mechanics, morphology, and motile responses of the individual organisms.

Designed to serve as a reference for students and researchers, Ecology and Biomechanics: A Mechanical Approach to the Ecology of Animals and Plants paves the way for further research by demonstrating what can happen when the approaches from two seemingly disparate subdisciplines within the field of biology are creatively combined.

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