



The Evolution of Life Histories

By Stephen C. Stearns

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This book is the first comprehensive summary of life-history evolution, a field that holds a central position in modern ecology, evolution, and population biology. The book offers an up-to-date description of the analytical tools used in evolutionary explanation: demographics, quantitative genetics, reaction norms, trade-offs, and phylogenetic/comparative analysis. It goes on to discuss the evolution of such major life-history traits as age and size at maturity; clutch size, reproductive investment and size of offspring; reproductive lifespan; and aging. This is an essential text for biologists wishing to understand the evolution of the life cycle and the causes of phenotypic variation in fitness. It is additionally the only book available designed specifically for teaching the subject, with problems and discussion questions at the end of each chapter.

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Editorial Review

Review

‘Although aimed at advanced students, this work will be read much more widely, because the basics of life-history theory pervade all pure and applied branches of ecology, ethology, and evolution. Stearns sets us on the right track for understanding interactions between traits’.

‘The text flows well from start to finish because of clear summaries in, and connections between, the chapters. This is especially true of the first section on the fundamentals, which contains a lucid discussion of concepts such as natural selection, adaptation, and fitness.’

‘... an excellent read. *Nature*

‘One of the most beneficial actions an adviser could take for a new graduate student in evolutionary biology would be to put Stearns’ book in her or his hands and say, “Read this.” *Science*

‘The Evolution of Life Histories by Stephen C. Stearns stands as a signpost to the resolution of the debate. The book justifiably focuses on the evolution of life-history traits. The successful predictions of optimality models that are amply demonstrated in the book indicate the fruitfulness of this approach. One of the most beneficial actions an adviser could take for a new graduate student in evolutionary biology would be to put Stearns’ book in her or his hands and say, “Read this.”’

Samuel M. Scheiner, Northern Illinois University, *Science*, Vol. 258, December 1992

‘This is a comprehensive, up-to-date text in a field that holds a central position in modern ecology and evolution.’

Ethology Ecology and Evolution 5: 1993

About the Author

Stephen C. Stearns is at Zoology Institute, University of Basle.

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