



An Entangled Bank: The Origins of Ecosystem Ecology

Joel Hagen

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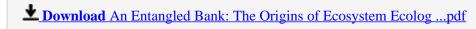
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This book was a revelation. I was simply enthralled by Joel Hagen's brilliance in reviewing the emergence of the discipline of ecosystem ecology (the study of biotic-abiotic interaction and nutrient flows in ecological systems). He does a magnificent job of introducing the personalities that midwived the new science. He explains their intellectual struggles, philosophical cross-currents, and different academic milieux. He also expertly illuminates sociopolitical context. Through his in-depth research he is able to dispel some misconceptions and truismsm, arriving at the heart of what made each scientist tick. Even when exploring some of the arcane figures and dead-end developments, he is so compelling that they become integral to the story, not sidetracks.

His breadth of knowledge, his discerning inclusiveness, his clarity of thought, all make _An Entangled Bank_ a stimulating read. Very often in science courses we are presented only with the canonical "state of the science," having to swallow its agglomerated whole free of context. Hagen reveals the wisdom of understanding intellectual foundations. Through study of the origins and development of a science, we may better grasp the received tenets of current scientific understanding. As a young science, ecosystem ecology has a historical context that is relatively accessible to us, if less romantic than a tale of the origins of astronomy might be.

A peek into the labs and offices of botanists, limnologists, and biogeochemists might not seem like the acme of excitement. Hagen inspires us with his insights. He makes his subject meaningful to us. Though it is not pleasure reading by any stretch, its clear-sighted intellectual vigor makes _An Entangled Bank_ pure enjoyment.



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