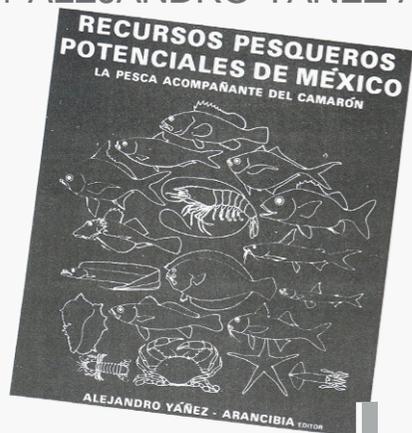


BOOK REVIEWS

PUTTING MEXICO ON THE MAP: REVIEW OF THREE BOOKS BY ALEJANDRO YAÑEZ-ARANCIBIA



Recursos pesqueros potenciales de México: La pesca acompañante del camarón. (Potential fishery resources of Mexico: Shrimp fishery by-catch). Edited by A. Yañez-Arancibia. 1985. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, D.F. 748 p. ISBN 968-837-034-7. 21 x 28 cm. No price information.*

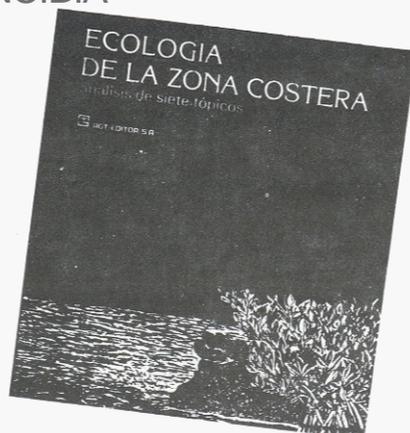
Various scientometric studies conducted throughout the world have demonstrated that scientific excellence, that is quality as opposed to simply quantity of research output, has a very "patchy" distribution, usually with one extremely charismatic and productive scientist at the center of each patch.

Moreover, it appears that the continued existence of such patches, whose periphery may consist of 10-20 graduate students and younger scientists, may be maintained even in adverse funding environments, such as those presently prevailing in most third world countries, as long as the group's key person continues to be actively involved.

The three books reviewed here represent part of the recent output of what I believe is presently the world's most productive group working in tropical marine ecology.

The overwhelming majority of contributions produced by Dr. Yañez-Arancibia's group, of which about two-thirds is usually published in Spanish, has multiple authorship -- doubtlessly one of the reasons behind the high motivation of his staff. The books reviewed here are somewhat atypical in having the same single author or editor.

Potential fisheries resources of Mexico: Shrimp fishery by-catch addresses the issue raised by 600,000 t of

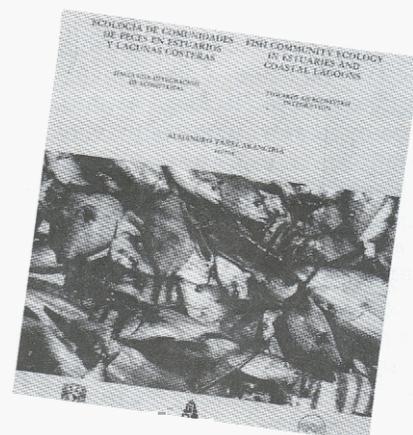


Ecología de comunidades de peces en estuarios y lagunas costeras. (The ecology of fish communities in coastal estuaries and lagoons). Edited by A. Yañez-Arancibia. 1985. Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico, D.F. 653 p. ISBN 968-837-618-3. 24 x 30.5 cm. No price information.*

perfectly edible fish being annually thrown away by the Mexican trawl fishery for penaeid shrimp, which operates solely for the United States market while based in a country in which over half of the children suffer from lack of protein. Some feel this is an economic fact about which nothing can be done -- these people are part of the problem and their views are not represented in this book.

Rather, in 17 chapters (three of which are in English) ranging from the taxonomy to the processing of the by-catch species, and from the description of multispecies communities to the property rights of the Mexican State, an attempt is made to come to grips with the distortion of fisheries development brought about by penaeid shrimp fisheries, which destroy over 10 t of fish for every tonne of shrimp caught, with estimates of annual total destroyed fish worldwide ranging from 5 to 15 million t.

To state that the scientists whose papers are included here solved this problem or even came near formulating economically feasible alternatives for what, to lay people at least, must appear as demented waste would be untruthful. That the by-catch problem is perceived as such by a group of scientists based in a country victimized by this form of fishery is positive, however. It is evident from reading this book that progress will come



Ecología de la zona costera: Análisis de siete tópicos. (Coastal zone ecology: Analysis of seven topics). A. Yañez-Arancibia. 1986. A.G.T. Editor, S.A., Progreso 202-Plant? Alta, C.P. 11800 - México, D.F. 189 p. ISBN 968-463-033-6. 16.5 x 23 cm. No price information.

when all costs involved in this form of fishing are accounted for and paid (e.g., in the form of a rent) by those who presently can afford to pass them on to malnourished children. The careful inventories of by-catch species and the description of the multispecies communities included in this book will be crucial in this process.

The *ecology of fish communities in coastal estuaries and lagoons* is aptly subtitled "*Toward an ecosystem integration*". This book, containing 29 contributions plus a very comprehensive species index, will be accessible to both English and Spanish speakers: all papers have bilingual titles and abstracts; one introductory paper is bilingual; 7 papers are in Spanish and 21 in English.

The book is massive, and is essentially a mine of crucial information on estuaries and lagoons in all the world's major areas, most by specialists reviewing their own line of work. The accounts range from annotated species lists to detailed examination of the mechanisms maintaining estuarine production. These and the large amount of tabular data along with copious references contribute to making

*Mail orders and enquiries to: Coordinación de Humanidades, UNAM, Dirección General de Fomento Editorial, Edificio Norte Anexo a la Torre II de Humanidades, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510. Mexico, D.F., Mexico.

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this book, I believe, a worthy successor of Lauff's *Estuaries*, a now outdated tome.

The book is backdated by two years, due to serious funding problems and to the 1985 earthquake which wrecked parts of Mexico City and also destroyed parts of the book's galleys.

Coastal zone ecology: analysis of seven topics, which is entirely in Spanish, is a booklet devoted to adding an estuarine dimension to general ecology and/or biology university courses. The seven topics reviewed are, freely translated: (1) the coastal zone; (2) coastal lagoons and estuaries as ecosystems; (3) systems

ecology (i.e., modelling); (4) towards a classification of lagoon-estuarine habitats; (5) ecology of fishing resources; (6) community ecology in tropical coastal systems; (7) demersal coastal fisheries and the shrimp by-catch problem. Taxonomic and subject indices are included. The graphs included in this book are well chosen; all illustrate general concepts, although the bulk of them refer to the southern Gulf of Mexico, well studied by Dr. Yañez-Arancibia's group.

This compact booklet should be extremely useful to graduate students and young researchers in Latin America,

breaking as it does into an area whose aquatic science was hitherto dominated by books and concepts generated in other areas of the world.

Overall, one can only regret that language problems will prevent some outside Latin America from acquiring and reading these three books. The language problem, at least for English speakers, is minimal with the second book reviewed here, which is also the one with the richest content and the one I would recommend most. **D. Pauly.**
