

BOOK NOTICES/BOOKS RECEIVED

RICARD SOLE and BRIAN GOODWIN. 2000. **Signs of Life: How Complexity Pervades Biology**. (0-465-01928-5, pbk.). Basic Books, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016, U.S.A. (Orders: 212-340-8100, Fax: 212-340-8115, www.basicbooks.com) \$17.50, 322 pp., b/w photos, drawings, and diagrams, 6" × 9 1/4".

Publisher Comments: "In every major field of biology, from molecular genetics and neurobiology, through animal behavior and ecology, to evolution, extinction, and economics, there are well-known phenomena that today's standard theories are powerless to explain: Why don't cells in identical environments with identical genomes live identical lives? How do such simple creatures as ants and termites manage such complex behavior as building nests? Why did all the animal kingdom's basic body plans appear in a single geological era, and no new ones since? Yet, as Ricard Sole and Brian Goodwin show, various tools of complexity theory can offer us new ways to understand these phenomena. A tour of biology such as you've never seen before, *Signs of Life* is about explaining the unexplainable-by using new ideas to answer questions yesterday's ideas can't help us with."

The authors point out that the real aim of this book is to show how the new ideas are exerting their influence in a variety of biological areas. *Signs of Life* is divided up into 10 chapters: **1)** nonlinearity, Chaos, and Emergence; **2)** Order, Complexity, Disorder; **3)** Genetic Networks, Cell Differentiation, and Development; **4)** Physiology on the Edge of Chaos; **5)** Brain Dynamics; **6)** Ants, Brains, and Chaos; **7)** The Baroque of Nature; **8)** Life on the Edge of Catastrophe; **9)** Evolution and Extinction; and **10)** Fractal Cities and Market Crashes.

Biodiversity of Deserts

SARA OLDFIELD (Photography by Bruce Coleman Collection). 2005. **Deserts: The Living Drylands**. (ISBN 0-262-15112-X, hbk.). The MIT Press, 5 Cambridge Center, Cambridge, MA 02142-1493, U.S.A. (Orders: 800-405-1619, mitpress-orders@mit.edu, <http://mitpress.mit.edu>). \$29.95, 160 pp., 180 illustrations, color throughout, 12 1/2" × 9 1/2".

Publisher Comments: "Deserts represent the ultimate challenge to life on Earth. Their lack of water and extreme temperatures make survival difficult for both wildlife and people, yet deserts are rich in animal and plant life and culture. Their unique species and ancient civilizations include fragile treasures needing protection in a rapidly changing world. Deserts are among our planet's last great wilderness regions, and they continue to offer scientific puzzles and new discoveries. *Deserts: The Living Drylands* is a celebration of the world's least understood ecosystems. In this richly illustrated book—featuring 180 color photographs—wildlife expert Sara Oldfield leads readers on a journey to some of the most remote places on earth, from the rolling sand dunes of the Arabian Peninsula's Empty Quarter to the ancient rock formations of central Australia. *Deserts* is both a vivid inventory of spectacular images, facts, and stories and an invaluable source of reference. It brings to life our planet's unique arid habitats at a time when they are more in need of protection than ever.

This is a book with incredibly beautiful and often unbelievable photographs. Once you open the book you will not want to close it. If you think you've seen the desert, think again. The seven chapters take you through a survey of deserts of the world: Africa, The Middle East, Asia, Australia, The Americas, and ends with the future of drylands.—*Barney Lipscomb, Botanical Research Institute of Texas, 509 Pecan Street, Fort Worth, TX 76102-4060, U.S.A.*



Lipscomb, Barney L. 2004. "BOOK NOTICES/BOOKS RECEIVED." *SIDA, contributions to botany* 21, 766–766.

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