

Climate Change: Biological and human aspects

Jonathan Cowie

Cambridge: CUP, 2007

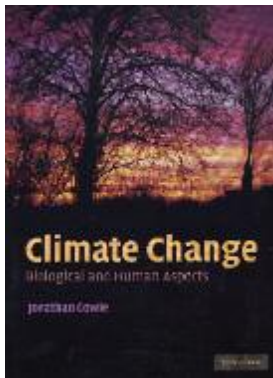
487pp, 17.5x24.5cm

Pb: £27.99

ISBN 978-0-521-69619-7

This book provides a wide ranging review of past, present and likely future climate change, with a particular focus on biology and human ecology. Although primarily written for undergraduate students in the life sciences, geography and environmental science, the book also provides a useful and informative introduction to climate change for teachers and non-specialists.

The first two chapters provide an introduction to climate change and some of the scientific methods that are used to reconstruct past



climates. These are followed by two lengthy and detailed chapters on the Earth's past climates stretching from the Hadean and Archean eons (4.6-2.5 billion years ago) through to the Quaternary period. Recent books on climate and environmental change tend to focus on the Quaternary period in terms of past climate, so consideration of longer timescales is a welcome addition. Chapters 5 and 6 consider recent through to likely future climate changes and their potential impacts. Good use is made of biological indicators of a changing climate instead of the usual reliance

on temperature and other meteorological fingerprints. The interconnections between climate and human society are the focus of Chapter 7, in which population and environmental impacts, energy supply, health and food production are the main themes. The final chapter considers policy aspects of climate change and how future implications are dependent upon the path we decide to take.

Although not written by a climate scientist, this is a valuable, balanced and informative text, pulling together complex materials from a wide range of disciplines. Unfortunately the book was in the final stages of production when the first of the most recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report was being published, and to which Cowie alludes in the appendices.

Nevertheless, I recommend it to anyone looking for a reader friendly introduction to climate change and its potential impacts.

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