

26 April 2010

Discussion Questions: Davis (2009) Chapters 11 and 12

1.) In chapter 10, Davis suggests that the field of invasive biology has been limited by the problems of pluralism, authority, and paradigms. What do you think about his arguments?

a.) Do you agree that science is a self-correcting discipline that works through “The wisdom of crowds?” That is, by working in groups “the community is able to recognize and cancel out the biases of individuals” (pg. 180).

b.) Davis describes the problem of citation error and misrepresentation of results in interpreting the impact of invasive species. Davis’s most prominent example is that of Wilcove et al. (1998). The article is often cited as evidence that invasive species are the second greatest threat to the survival of species in peril. Davis suggests that Wilcove et al. does not include the data to support such as claim and that many people are citing this article without actually reading it (I have attached a pdf of this article if you would like to read it). How pervasive do you view this problem? How should it be remedied?

2.) Davis argues that invasion biology has become an isolated sub-discipline that should be abolished and integrated into mainstream ecology. What is your reaction - do you agree with Davis? Would re-defining the field of invasion biology be useful (e.g. neo-invasion biology, SPRED)?

3.) In general, what are your reactions to Davis’s book? Did you like it? What contributions do the book have on the field of invasion biology?

4.) At the beginning of the semester we spent some time addressing the question, “What is an invasive species?” How has your view/definition of an invasive species changed since reading Elton and Davis? Throughout his book Davis provides examples of the positive impacts of invasive species in addition to their negative impacts. Do the facts that many invasive species are desirable and some invasive species have positive impacts change how you feel about invasive species?

5.) What advances do you feel have been made since Elton first published his book? Has invasive biology progressed from a largely descriptive science into a more predictive and quantitative discipline?