PREFACE

The science of biogeography attempts to recount the ecological and historical factors that have interacted to produce biotic diversity. From empirical data on geographic distributions and from ecological and phylogenetic relationships of taxa, the biogeographer hopes to derive specific hypotheses for the histories of taxa of interest as well as more general principles helpful in elucidating the histories of unstudied groups. This book adds to the available information on insect distribution in a well-studied biogeographic region, the Caribbean, and serves as a report on the various methods used to analyze insect distributional data.

The diversity of insects far outclasses that of any other taxon in the Caribbean. This diversity has occupied much of the time of insect systematists, who must complete revisionary systematic research before they can begin to contribute new data to the field of biogeography. But the wealth of insect species and, in many cases, the restricted distributions of insect taxa suggest that biogeographic data from insects will dwarf the data obtainable from other taxa.

This book is a progress report on our understanding of the origins of the Caribbean insect fauna. To date, no other volume on biogeography has concentrated on insects from this region. It is our hope that the presentation of data on a variety of insect groups will illustrate various possibilities for biogeographic research using insects. Biological and distributional attributes differ among the taxa discussed, leading the contributors to use different techniques of analysis for the various groups.

In addition to the entomological contributions in this book are chapters by Thomas Donnelly, who provides a critical review of the geologic literature, and Edward Connor, who critiques the various techniques used by biogeographers. Thus the book aims to broaden the empirical data base on

Caribbean insects and to aid understanding of the context in which these data are interpreted.

Most of the contributions in this volume were presented at a symposium, "Historical Biogeography of the Caribbean Insect Fauna," held at the Entomological Society of America national meetings in Hollywood, Florida, on 10 December 1985. Manuscripts were then prepared and submitted to outside review either by the authors or by me. In submitting our manuscripts to other systematists and biogeographers knowledgeable about the taxa covered and about biogeographic techniques, we hope we have ameliorated flaws common to many symposium volumes.

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