

Atlas of Coastal Ecosystems in the Western Gulf of California: Tracking Limestone Deposits on the Margin of a Young Sea

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BOOK REVIEWS



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Atlas of Coastal Ecosystems in the Western Gulf of California: Tracking Limestone Deposits on the Margin of a Young Sea, Markes E. Johnson and Jorge Ledesma-Vásquez, 2009. Tucson, Arizona: The University of Arizona Press, 192p. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2530-0, \$US70 hardcover.

This is a neat book that I very much enjoyed reading. The editors (also authors of various chapters) are to be congratulated for producing a really nice piece of work. Even after admitting that the Gulf of California is one of the most beautiful places on earth and that it would be hard to go wrong writing about this environment, the authors have all done a superb job. The key to the whole effort, however, belongs to the editors, who clearly provided strict guidance on formats and procedures so that each chapter follows the same general guidelines. There are location maps and diagrams, followed by color photographs and superb high-resolution ASTER (Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection Radiometer) satellite images. The latter images really are spectacular, and the editors were alert enough to have a CD inserted in a pocket on the end cover. These satellite images are nothing less than spectacular and I wish that I had enough wall space to print the satellite images out for display. To me, if they were printed on glossy paper, they would be museum quality, beautiful to view and instructional at the same time. Having worked with such imagery, I can only congratulate the editors for their diligence and patience in obtaining so many high-quality images.

The book is divided into 12 chapters as follows: Chapter 1—Gulf of California Geography, Geological Origins, Oceanography, and Sedimentation Patterns; Chapter 2—Peninsular and Island Rocky Shores in the Gulf of California; Chapter 3—Pliocene and Pleistocene Development of Peninsular and Island Rocky Shores in the Gulf of California; Chapter 4—Corals and Coral-Reef Communities in the Gulf of California; Chapter 5—Coral Diversification in the Gulf of California During the Late Miocene to Pleistocene; Chapter 6—Living

Rhodolith Bed Ecosystems in the Gulf of California; Chapter 7—Contribution of Rhodoliths to the Generation of Pliocene–Pleistocene Limestone in the Gulf of California; Chapter 8—Ecological Changes on the Colorado River Delta: The Shelly Fauna Evidence; Chapter 9—Growth of Pliocene–Pleistocene Clam Banks (Mollusca, Bivalva) and Related Tectonic Constraints in the Gulf of California; Chapter 10—Sand Dunes on Peninsular and Island Shores in the Gulf of California; Chapter 11—Beach Deflation and Accrual of Pliocene–Pleistocene Coastal Dunes of the Gulf of California Region; and Chapter 12—Active Geothermal Springs and Pliocene–Pleistocene Examples. These 12 chapters cover a wide range of topics and illustrate much of what is to be seen in the region.

I heartily recommend this book to interested readers. There is much to be learned from reading a book that is so well illustrated. An important point to remember is that it is not just about the Gulf of California, because the concepts and principles that are applied here are relevant to many coastal regions the world over. Aside from its technical and scientific content, this book is a joy to have around due to the colorful illustrations. What a beautiful study area, one that deserves to be protected. Unfortunately, that means keeping troves of people out, as they tend to wear out pristine environments just by their mere presence and all the support mechanisms that go along with tourism. Australia has managed to preserve parts of the Great Barrier Reef as part of the world heritage, and the Gulf of California would seem to me to be another candidate. For those of us who can't go there in person, we can enjoy a vicarious visit by perusing the *Atlas of Coastal Ecosystems in the Western Gulf of California* by Markes Johnson and Jorge Ledesma-Vásquez. This geological vignette is but an *apophoreta* for what remains to be studied and described in the rest of the Gulf. For their production of such a beautiful book, coastal researchers should be grateful for the editor's masterful approach to the region and thorough explanations of the limestone deposits on the margins of this young sea.

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