



Island: Fact and Theory in Nature

James Lazell

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Guana, in the British Virgin Islands, is home to a remarkably diverse assortment of animal and plant life: mangroves, flamingos, iguanas, frogs, birds, snakes, spiders, tortoises, grasshoppers, and bats, to name but a few. What is so surprising about Guana's astonishing panoply is that, according to prevailing ecological theories, the island's diversity should be much lower than it actually is. This provocative book describes Guana's flora and fauna against the backdrop of islands worldwide and their ecology, evolution, and conservation. Much more than a book about one island, it raises important challenges to prevailing dogma of island biogeography and theoretical ecology. James (Skip) Lazell demonstrates that meaningful conservation and avoiding tragic loss of biodiversity demand we know far more about biological interactions, physiographic and geological structure, meteorology, and other factors. He presents compelling evidence that high levels of natural biodiversity underpin ecosystem resilience and stability. Lazell's engaging narrative, containing many entertaining asides and personal reflections, widens into an evocative commentary about the nature of life on earth.

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