Evolution

Essays in honour of John Maynard Smith

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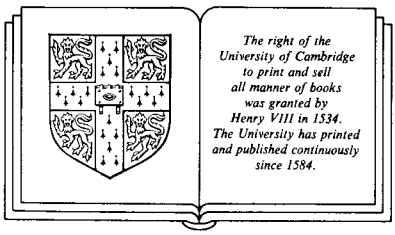

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Editorial preface

If there is a single characteristic that has made John Maynard Smith's influence on evolutionary biology so great, it has been his gift for finding the right metaphor to describe succinctly an evolutionary problem. The terms he has introduced and his ways of viewing evolutionary phenomena have become so pervasive that it is easy to forget that he was the first to discuss such problems as the contrast between 'kin and group selection', to focus attention on the 'cost of meiosis', to ask about the 'hitch-hiking of genes', to elucidate 'Haldane's dilemma'. These are of course in addition to his many illuminating contributions to population genetic and ecological theory and his numerous efforts in the general area of theoretical biology. Like his mentor, J. B. S. Haldane, Maynard Smith has worked in so many fields that one might think there are several authors with the same name. The citations to Maynard-Smith and J. M. Smith have added to this impression.

Maynard Smith's influence in biology has been more than through his writings, however. With his boundless energy and his curiosity for all biological subjects, he has motivated and stimulated scientists wherever he has visited. And his personal influence on those of us fortunate to know him well has been profound. Whether over coffee or beer or on long walks, we have been treated to his narratives (some of which are remarkable for their evolutionary stability), advice, observations, and laws.* His stories are instructive at a variety of levels. Anyone who has heard about Maynard Smith being stranded in traffic in Haldane's automobile will forever be mindful of the precautions needed in the event of a fire.

* Three rules for scientific argument that have become known with sufficient retelling as 'Smith's Laws' are: (1) the bellman's theorem (which Maynard Smith attributes to Haldane), 'What I say three times must be true' (from Lewis Carroll); and either (2) Aunt Jabisco's theorem, 'It is a fact the whole world knows' (from Edward Lear), or (3) the third law, 'It is a truth universally acknowledged . . .' (from Jane Austen). Any scientific dispute that cannot be resolved on objective grounds (and some that can) can be settled by invoking these powerful theorems.

The authors who have contributed to this volume of essays feel a special debt to John Maynard Smith and we are pleased to dedicate this volume to him. The diversity of views represented and the diversity of approaches taken reflect at least partially the breadth of his own interests. We thank the authors, together with Martin Walters and Valerie Neal of Cambridge University Press, for their cooperation and patience throughout the preparation of this book.