

Shallow subterranean habitats (SSHs) are areas of habitable space that are less than 10 metres in depth beneath the surface. They range from large areas such as lava tubes, to tiny areas such as cracks in cave ceilings or pore spaces in soil. Their study calls into question the prevailing view that subterranean habitats are extreme, nutrient-limited environments with no light and no daily or annual cycle. Shallow subterranean habitats have little in common with caves except for the absence of light and a specialized fauna with typical 'cave' morphology. Fascinating habitats in their own right, they also hold the key to understanding adaptation to subterranean environments in general.

This accessible book concentrates on the more typical SSHs of intermediate size, including seepage springs, spaces between rocks, spaces between gravel in streams, and cracks in lava. Similarities and differences between the habitats are considered and discussed in a broader ecological and evolutionary context. It is principally aimed at graduate students and researchers in the field of subterranean biology, but will also be of relevance and use to a wider range of ecologists, evolutionary biologists, freshwater biologists, conservationists, and habitat managers.

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