Primary Literature Analysis  
Due 9/24/13

The purpose of this assignment is for you to explore current research approaches and findings in the field of ecology and for you to become more comfortable reading and evaluating research findings.

For this assignment you will need to select a paper of interest in the field of ecology published in the primary literature. Primary literature papers contain original data and ideas, and are generally the first published record of an investigation. Examples of primary literature include research articles, research monographs, dissertations, conference proceedings, as well as review articles (those that synthesize many previous articles). For this assignment your selected paper should be a research article. You are free to select a paper from any scientific journal (except Science or Nature as it will be more difficult to complete the assignment with an article from one of these journals).

Example of citation to include at the end of your assignment:


Your assignment should be written in your own words (typed, double-spaced, 12 pt font, 1-1.25 inch margins). The review must address the following:

1) What is the main scientific question that authors are trying to answer?
2) Is this work Descriptive or Explanatory? If it is explanatory, what were the specific hypotheses and predictions of this study? If the study was purely descriptive (i.e. not hypothesis testing), state this (but you will lose points if you say it was descriptive when there was in fact a hypothesis). Be aware that some papers don’t label their hypotheses and predictions as such so you will need to read the introduction carefully.
3) Briefly describe how the authors went about collecting their data. Were their data collected in the field or in the lab? What type of data did they collect? Was it observational? Experimental?
4) What were the conclusions/results of this study and why are they significant in the larger picture?
5) In your own opinion, did the authors adequately address their research question? Why or why not?
6) Lastly, generate a question based on their findings and a hypothesis for your new question.

Your paper should be well written (including correct spelling, grammar, and punctuation). It should have good organization and flow from one topic to another. It should NOT be in the format of a standard research article (i.e. Introduction, Methods, Results, Discussion). Overall, you should write this paper so that someone
could read your review and understand the main points of the research article without having to read the article itself. It is very important that you do not copy the text of the original research article in your review paper. This is plagiarism. You will need to use your own words to explain ideas. When referring to the original article it may be useful to use the authors’ names (e.g. “Edler and Friedl used two approaches to test their hypothesis…”). If your paper was written by three or more authors you can abbreviate the list as “Edler et al.” (which means Edler and colleagues). Attach a full copy of your research article to your literature review. The research article should be in the pdf format (or photocopy of the actual article). Do not print off the HTML version.

**Grading Criteria**

Study question identified: 5

Hypotheses and predictions identified 5
OR correctly identified as Descriptive:

Methods: 5

Conclusions: 5

Generated new question: 5

Generated new hypothesis: 5

Well written: 4

Include a copy of the article with the paper: 1

**TOTAL POINTS** 35