

Ecological Tipping Point Assignment

Ecosystems are fluid, multidimensional and ever changing. Small changes in the state can have a monumental effect on ecosystem structures and processes. Beyond certain points ecosystems can collapse and change into completely different states, encompassing different species and structure and in turn processes. These 'points' or 'threshold points' before an ecosystem shift in state occurs are called tipping points. These tipping points are extremely difficult to predict as ecosystems and biodiversity are complex structures and concepts.

Abiotic and biotic factors influence tipping points and subsequently can be used in an attempt to predict said tipping points. Trophic cascades and shift in climate or 'climate change' are examples of biotic and abiotic factors which could be used to aid predictions.

Taking one of the possible causes leading to an ecological tipping point in relation to one of the examples given in the lecture, describe with reference to previous studies the implications which are posed to the studied ecosystem. Give your answer in the form of a scientific review article for a magazine with a target audience of your peers.

For suggested reading see Ecological Tipping Points lecture.

Max 800 words.