To those who contributed to the state-of-the-art of community ecology by investing time and talent through empirical tests and theoretical hypothèses which took this doctrine to new heights; kept the brainstorming theories lively; made others think like Hutchinson, MacArthur and many more.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks to everyone who supported me to complete the research programme successfully during my career at Department of Aquatic Biology and Fisheries, University of Kerala.

My supervisors, Dr. Koos Vijverberg and Dr. P. Natarajan provided me with their substantial experience and advice throughout the programme. Dr. Koos spent most of his time even in the late nights for discussions during his short-term yearly visits to India. The immense literature provided by him and day long discussions with him helped me develop an insight in the subject. He corrected the manuscript and suggested improvements even during his busy schedule without any delay. There are no words that can express my sense of debt or my sense of gratitude to him for my development as a scientist. Dr. Natarajan provided me every possible help by discussing the topic, correcting the manuscript, structuring the programme and boosting my morale. I am also thankful to him for introducing me to Dr. Koos. I very much appreciate their help, patience, enthusiasm and encouragement.

Dr. M. Arunachalam helped both in the field and laboratory in many levels and assisted me so personally in most of the mind-jamming situations. Dr. A. Chandran also helped me with many suggestions throughout my career in the department. The sincerity, the interest and the enthusiasm shown by them are highly appreciated.

My fellow researchers, Mr. David Kingston, Mr. Harishanker and Ms. Jamila helped me on various occasions. I also thank my sister, Bindu, cousins Sandhya and Achu for helping me in computing the data and preparing tables. The infrastructural facilities and support provided by Dr. H. Suriyanarayanan is also acknowledged. Mr. Maniyan helped me in the field throughout the programme. The computer personnel, especially Mr. Sabu, at SAT, Trivandrum helped me complete the programme as on schedule. The advice, suggestions and help extended by Dr. Kortmulder, Leiden University, The Netherlands during the early part of the programme is highly appreciated. Without the help and support of all these individuals, I would not have submitted the thesis in time.

The fellowship was provided jointly by the Office of International Co-operation of the Leiden University, Netherlands Institute of Ecology and Netherlands Foundation for Advancement of Tropical Research WOTRO. The grant by these agencies helped to defray the costs of some equipments, chemicals, fieldtrips and allied research activities. The infrastructural facilities like lab space, conveyance and equipments were provided by University of Kerala.

Very special thanks go to my parents and sister. My parents supported me in every possible way so that I would have opportunities that they never could. I am also indebted to an anonymous SUPPORTER who helped and blessed me on every stage of my academic career to reach me where I stand now.