



Polarized Light in Animal Vision: Polarization Patterns in Nature

Gábor Horváth, Dezső Varju

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The subject of this volume is two-fold. First, it gathers typical polarization patterns occurring in nature. Second, it surveys the polarization-sensitive animals, the physiological mechanisms and biological functions of polarization sensitivity as well as the polarization-guided behaviour in animals. The monograph is prepared for biologists, physicists and meteorologists, especially for experts of atmospheric optics and animal vision, who wish to understand and reveal the message hidden in polarization patterns of the optical environment not directly accessible to the human visual system, but measurable by polarimetry and perceived by many animals. Our volume is an attempt to build a bridge between these two physical and biological fields. In Part I we introduce the reader to the elements of imaging polarimetry. This technique can be efficiently used, e. g. in atmospheric optics, remote sensing and biology. In Part II we deal with typical polarization patterns of the natural optical environment. Sunrise/sunset, clear skies, cloudy skies, moonshine and total solar eclipses all mean quite different illumination conditions, which also affect the spatial distribution and strength of celestial polarization. We present the polarization patterns of the sky and its unpolarized (neutral) points under sunlit, moonlit, clear, cloudy and eclipsed conditions as a function of solar elevation. The polarization pattern of a rainbow is also shown. That part of the spectrum is derived in which perception of skylight polarization is optimal under partly cloudy skies.

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