

Food web aggregation: mathematics or biology?

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Summary: Every food web is aggregated to some extent, the question is whether it is based on precise algorithms or biological intuition. We discuss the pros and cons of aggregation based on network position of nodes, functional groups and taxonomy. The results of network analysis can be highly sensitive to the way original data were aggregated. There is no single best practice but it is useful to keep it in evidence what kind of biases our aggregation style may cause. I will compare different aggregation algorithms, used for a range of networks and I will follow the fate of key network positions during aggregation. This exercise might be useful when managing complexity and, hopefully, can contribute to more predictive food web modelling.

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The Alfred Wallace Seminar Series

