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The Role of Body Size in Multispecies Systems

Body size is a key trait of individual organisms and its effects ramify through to the higher levels of biological organisation. This thematic volume explores its role in multispecies systems (communities, food webs and ecosystems), in terms of how it influences their structure and dynamics. There are several recurring themes addressed here that reflect the current state-of-the-art in this field, including a consideration of individual-based food webs as a means of viewing multispecies systems from multiple (e.g. size-based and taxonomic) perspectives. In addition to highlighting some of these potential universal properties, important differences among certain ecosystem types are also revealed when they are seen through the prism of body size.

Cover Photo: Life boat of the Research Vessel Polarstern passing the ice edge of the eastern shelf region in the high Antarctic Weddell Sea during the expedition ANT XXI/2 (Bendex 2003/04), see Jacob et al. 2011 for an overview of the nature of the Weddell Sea food web and the role of body size in this pristine system in this volume. (Photograph copyright © Alfred Wegener Institute for Polar and Marine Research (AWI).



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