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New Finding

Compilation and network analyses of cambrian food webs.

Dunne JA, Williams RJ, ..., Wood RA, Erwin DH
PLoS Biol 2008 Apr 29 **6**(4):e102 [[abstract on PubMed](#)]
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Selected by | Jordi Bascompte **NEW**
Evaluated 9 May 2008

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Faculty Comments

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New Finding

Comments

This is, to my knowledge, the very first time someone has attempted to build and analyze ancient food webs. It opens the door to addressing one very fascinating question: were the rules organizing food webs - the networks depicting who-eats-whom in ecological communities - the same as in current ecosystems? The most extraordinary surprise is that the structure of food webs millions of years ago, in the midst of the radiation of life in the Cambrian, is the same as that which governs current food webs. More importantly, despite these similarities, there are also some interesting differences that can inform us about the historical process of stabilization of ecological networks through geological times. Building these food webs represents an extraordinary challenge and, necessarily, introduces ambiguity in assigning links (species can fossilize, but this is much more difficult for trophic links). However, the team does a very good job in dealing with the problem of uncertainty by assessing the robustness of their analysis in front of ambiguities in link establishment. This paper is a brave and most interesting beginning to adding an evolutionary perspective to food web research.