THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Global Ecology Lab - #ProjectOzScav

Introduction

Carrion is a nutrient- and energy-rich resource that is used by a variety of organisms, particularly carnivorous vertebrates, arthropods and microbes. It can influence the movements and spatial distribution of scavenging species and, as many scavengers are also predators, the presence of carrion may have cascading effects on live prey.

The degradation of a carcass further influences soil properties, as well as the growth of certain plant species in the vicinity of the resource. Thus, carrion has the potential to affect many aspects of community ecology, and to play key roles in nutrient cycling and in shaping food-web dynamics through both direct and indirect pathways.

But despite the potential community-wide impacts of this resource, carrion ecology remains understudied, and research on the topic is primarily northern hemisphere based.

A new project to fill the knowledge gaps

ProjectOzScav's main directive is to investigate the role of carrion in ecological communities in Australia.

Specifically, this project:

(1) explores how carrion is used by Australian vertebrates, arthropods and microbes,

(2) determines whether the presence of carrion has cascading impacts on surrounding live prey, and

(3) examines the effects of carrion on soil nutrients and subsequent plant growth surrounding the resource.

The project currently spans three study systems across Australia, representing temperate, subalpine and desert biomes.

Want to work on ProjectOzScav?

We are expanding the project to include an assessment of the impacts of European wasps around carcasses, pathogen spill-over risk around carcasses, as well as looking at the ecosystem effects of mass mortality events, including culling.

If you are interested please email a copy of your CV, and academic transcript to thomas.newsome@sydney.edu.au

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Project Partners

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