Response to the comments on Ms. Ref. No.:  FOOWEB-D-14-00006R1:

1. I believe the introduction is too long. There are a lot of ideas here but not a clear focus in places. I think you could shorten some of the discussion of alternative hypotheses and move some of the information on stability to the methods. It would seem to be more appropriate in methods as these are techniques they used to measure their simulated food webs.

**The discussion of how stability is determined was moved to the beginning of the methods. Also as a result we moved the methods section “General Model” to 2.1 for better flow. We deleted the short paragraph on optimal foraging theory, as this was not especially relevant for the rest of the paper.**   
  
2. L29 - L36 are a bit distracting in the first paragraph. I appreciate the definitions but this would flow better if they moved from the sentence ending in "predator" directly into the discussion of distribution of published food webs (L37). Perhaps within this second paragraph they could briefly (more briefly than in the first paragraph) define trophic position and longest chain at the first mention of these terms. For example, in the sentence L37-38 could read "The distribution of trophic position, measured as one plus the average trophic position of a species' prey, for 50…"

**We moved the definitions as you suggested, and shortened them.**   
  
3. L68: Define dynamic constraints at first mention

**Now defined on lines 60-61.**   
  
4. L152: You need to describe when a + is assigned and when a - is assigned. Is the + for the predator species and the - for the prey?

**The meanings of (+) and (-) are now defined on lines 175-177.**

5. L158: Define connectance  
  
**Connectance now defined at first mention, lines 183-184.**

6. L161: It wasn't clear to me, but when you assign remaining links randomly among species is the condition of universal omnivory always satisfied, such that if a link is drawn between species at trophic level 3 and 2 then a link is automatically drawn between species 3 and species at trophic level 1?

**Universal omnivory is an assumption that applies only to the simple webs that we simulated. The manner in which we simulated random and niche model webs also includes omnivory, although to a lesser (perhaps more realistic) degree. We have now made that explicit in both sections describing the construction of random and niche model webs (lines 191-192, 215).**   
  
7. L171: What are the cascade and niche models?

**Brief definition included at first mention, lines 198-201.**

8. Figure 1: Shouldn't the y-axis be number of observations? Or frequency of observation? Density doesn't make sense in this context

**Density was used to normalize the y-axis but we switched to frequency to improve clarity.**