***Introduction to Theoretical Ecology Assignment 9***

Apparent Competition and P\* Rule

In addition to exploitative competition, species can also compete indirectly via a common predator, known as “apparent competition”:

***Species 1***

***Predator***

***Species 2***

In this assignment, we are going to build a model of such interactions among two focal prey species (*N1* and *N2*) and a predator (*P*) and simulate their population dynamics.

1. Assume that *N1* and *N2* grow exponentially with intrinsic growth rate *r1* and *r2* and are consumed by predator in a linear fashion at the rate *a1* and *a2*. The conversion efficiencies for the two prey items to predator are *e1* and *e2*, and the mortality rate of predator is *m*. Write out your model and simulate the system. Try out different combinations of parameter values and discuss if the two focal prey species can coexist. (5 pts)

***Solution***

*r1 > r2* and *a1 > a2*

*r1 > r2* and *e1 > e2*

1.tiff 1.tiff

*r1 > r2, a1 < a2,* and *e1 > e2*

*a1 < a2* and *e1 > e2*

1.tiff 1.tiff

In this system, the two prey species cannot coexist. One species will be driven to extinction, and the original model reduces to the Lotka-Volterra predator-prey model where predator and the remaining prey exhibit neutral population cycles.

Paralleling the R\* rule of exploitative competition for prey coexistence, there is also a P\* rule for apparent competition: the dominant prey species under apparent competition would be the one with a high *r/a*, as it can both withstand and support higher predator numbers. To put it another way, when predator increases from rare, the species with a lower *r/a* will exhibit zero net growth earlier and thus the one with a higher *r/a* would eventually survive.

**R code**

library(tidyverse)

library(deSolve)

Apparent\_exp\_func <- function(r1 = 1.2, a1 = 0.5, e1 = 0.5,

r2 = 1, a2 = 0.5, e2 = 0.5,

m = 0.5){

Apparent\_exp\_model <- function(times, state, parms) {

with(as.list(c(state, parms)), {

dN1\_dt = r1\*N1 - a1\*N1\*P

dN2\_dt = r2\*N2 - a2\*N2\*P

dP\_dt = e1\*a1\*N1\*P + e2\*a2\*N2\*P - m\*P

return(list(c(dN1\_dt, dN2\_dt, dP\_dt)))

})

}

times <- seq(0, 200, by = 0.1)

state <- c(N1 = 10, N2 = 10, P = 2)

parms <- c(r1 = r1, a1 = a1, e1 = e1,

r2 = r2, a2 = a2, e2 = e2,

m = m)

pop\_size <- ode(func = Apparent\_exp\_model, times = times, y = state, parms = parms)

pop\_size %>%

as.data.frame() %>%

pivot\_longer(cols = -time, names\_to = "species", values\_to = "N") %>%

ggplot(aes(x = time, y = N, color = species)) +

geom\_line(size = 1.5) +

theme\_classic(base\_size = 12) +

labs(x = "Time", y = "Population size") +

scale\_x\_continuous(limits = c(0, 200.5), expand = c(0, 0)) +

scale\_y\_continuous(limits = c(0, max(pop\_size[, -1])\*1.2), expand = c(0, 0)) +

scale\_color\_brewer(name = NULL, palette = "Set1") +

labs(title = paste("r1 =", r1, " a1 =", a1, " e1 =", e1, "\n",

" r2 =", r2, " a2 =", a2, " e2 =", e2,

"m =", m)) +

theme(plot.title = element\_text(hjust = 0.5))

}

Apparent\_exp\_func(r1 = 1.2, a1 = 0.5, e1 = 0.8,

r2 = 1, a2 = 0.5, e2 = 0.5,

m = 0.5)

Apparent\_exp\_func(r1 = 1.2, a1 = 0.5, e1 = 0.8,

r2 = 1, a2 = 0.5, e2 = 0.5,

m = 0.5)

Apparent\_exp\_func(r1 = 1, a1 = 0.5, e1 = 0.8,

r2 = 1, a2 = 0.8, e2 = 0.5,

m = 0.5)

Apparent\_exp\_func(r1 = 1.2, a1 = 0.5, e1 = 0.8,

r2 = 1, a2 = 0.8, e2 = 0.5,

m = 0.5)

1. Now consider *N1* and *N2* grow logistically with carrying capacity *K1* and *K2*. Again, write out your model, simulate the system, and discuss if the two prey species can coexist. What is the difference between this and the previous model? Can you explain why? (5 pts)

***Solution***

When the two prey species exhibit logistic growth, they are able to coexist under certain parameter settings. In particular, lower carrying capacity *K*, higher predator mortality m, and lower conversion efficiency e could facilitate the coexistence of the two species that may otherwise undergo competitive exclusion. These suggest that self-regulation of populations (logistic growth rather than exponential growth) is critical for species coexistence, and stronger self-regulation (i.e., smaller *K* values; greater intraspecific effect) as well as lower predator growth (higher predator mortality m and lower conversion efficiency e) would help stabilize the system.

**R code**