

# Foraging in Replenishing Patches



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# Problem Statement

Understanding human foraging behaviour in a replenishing patches environment.

## Importance

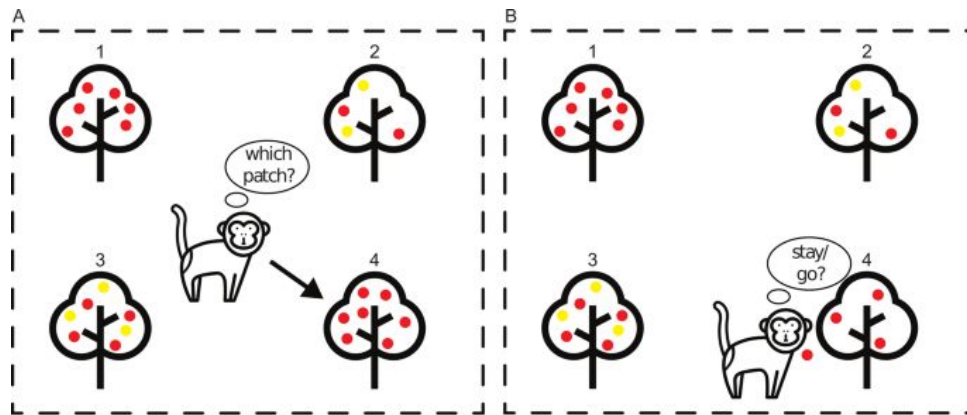
- Learn about sequential decision making processes in the face of uncertainty.
- Understand the role of working memory in sequential decision making.
- Possibly improve existing reinforcement learning algorithms.
- Different from conventional foraging tasks as patches can be revisited.



# Foraging Task

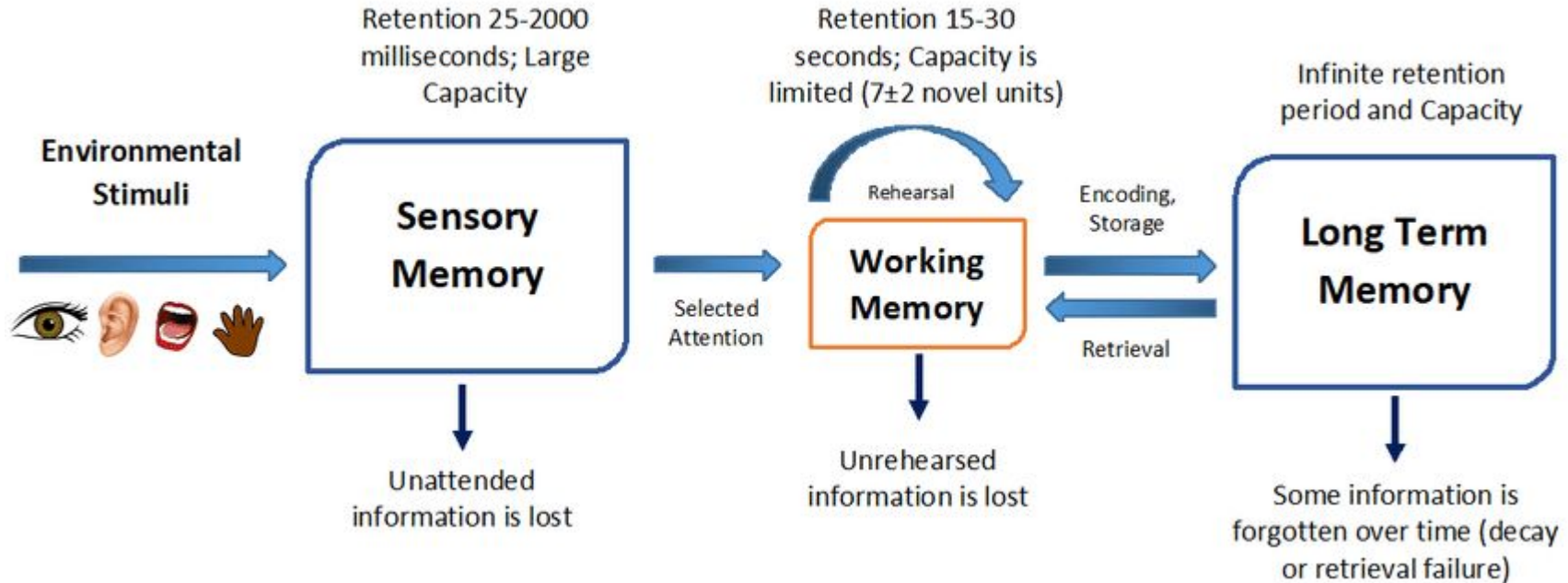
Foraging is searching for wild food resources. It affects an animal's fitness because it plays an important role in an animal's ability to survive and reproduce.

[\[Wiki\]](#)



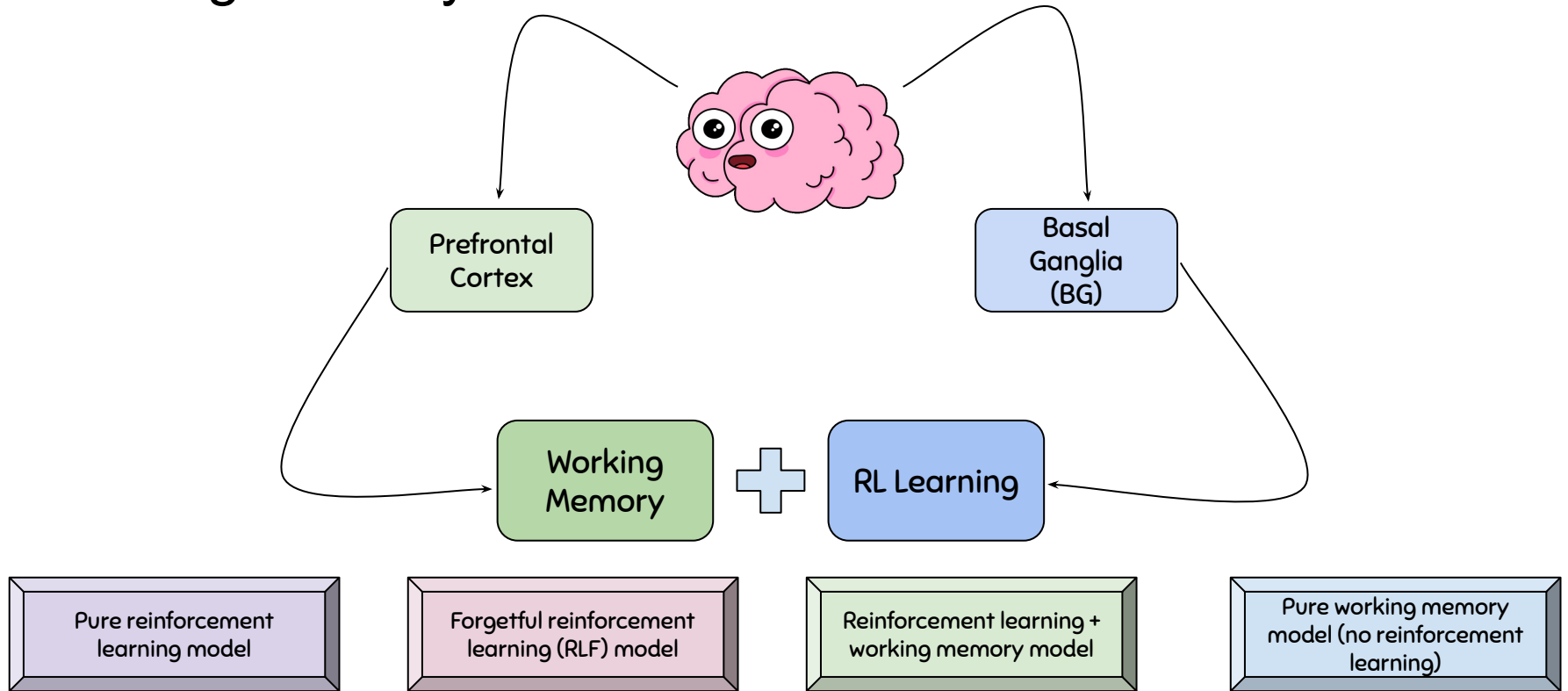
Foraging is an extensively studied tool to understand the neural computations that underlie sequential, value-based choices in animals.

# Atkinson-Shiffrin model of memory

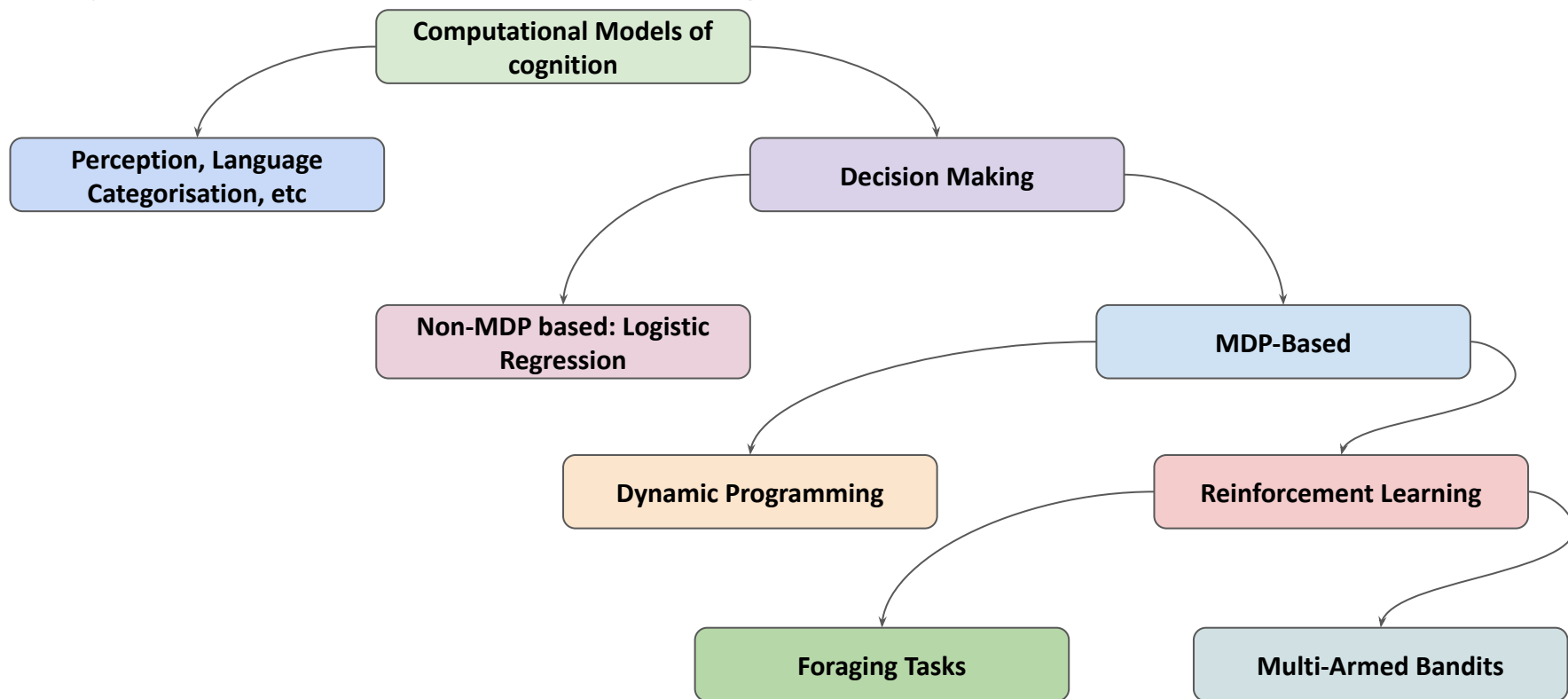


[https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Atkinson-Shiffrin-3-stage-model-of-human-memory\\_fig1\\_338116821](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Atkinson-Shiffrin-3-stage-model-of-human-memory_fig1_338116821)

# Working Memory

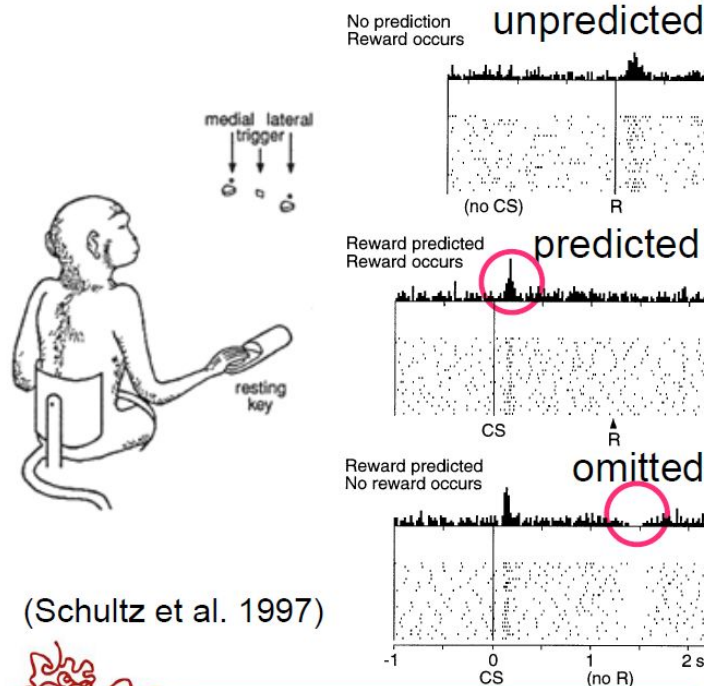


# Why Reinforcement Learning?

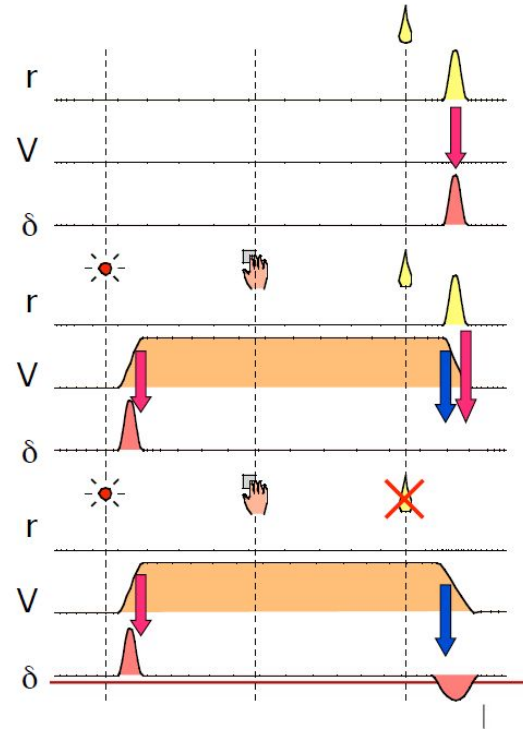


# Dopamine Neurons Code TD Error

$$\delta(t) = r(t) + \gamma V(s(t+1)) - V(s(t))$$



(Schultz et al. 1997)



# Summary of important concepts

- Temporal Difference Learning algorithms.
- Marginal Value Theorem/Opportunity cost of harvesting.
- Recency Effect.
- Perseveration.
- Bayesian methods for incorporating priors and estimating uncertainty.

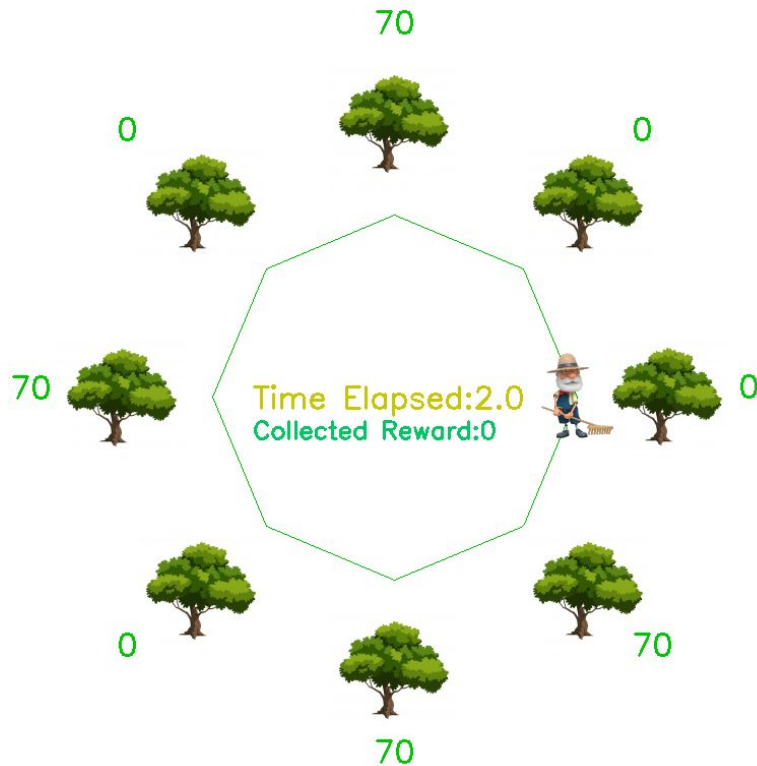




# Environment

Senario:

- 8 bushes forming a regular octagon
- Fixed 4 have fixed initial berries [ rewarding bushes ]
- Hungry man [ doesn't know which ones have berries, at the start ]



<https://www.desmos.com/calculator/56fx5k2zol>



# Environment

Aim:

- Hungry man has to maximise the berries he eats

Constraint:

- Time = 300 sec [horizon]

Actions:

- Eat/Harvest [takes 1 sec]
- Move from one bush to other [takes time  $\sim$  distance]



# Environment

Reward:

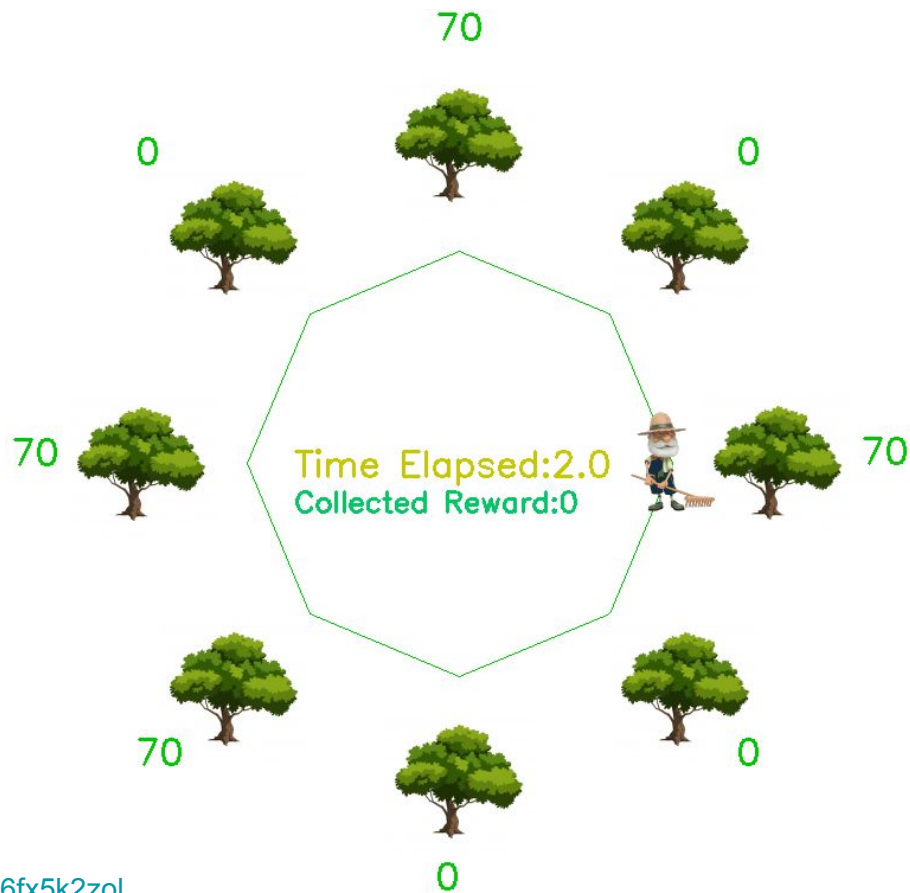
- Hungry man gets reward when he eats from a rewarding bush
- 90% of the berries of that bush

Dynamics:

- Every time man eats from a rewarding bush, the berries on that bush reduce by 0.9 times
- Every time man eats from a rewarding bush, the berries on other rewarding bush replenish by a fixed amount say  $x$ .
- Max berries at any bush = 200



# Demo



<https://www.desmos.com/calculator/56fx5k2zol>

# Testing Environment (Text Render of Explore Strategy)

Game start time: 2 Game start patch: 0

Time Elapsed: 4.847759065022574 Patch Visited: 2 Harvest Received: 63.0  
Time Elapsed: 6.847759065022574 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 10.46088494757327 Patch Visited: 7 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 13.308644059797901 Patch Visited: 5 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 15.308644059797901 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 66.00000000000002  
Time Elapsed: 18.521769989550654 Patch Visited: 2 Harvest Received: 60.30000000000001  
Time Elapsed: 20.921769989550654 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 22.921769989550654 Patch Visited: 2 Harvest Received: 54.0  
Time Elapsed: 25.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 27.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 1 Harvest Received: 77.400000000000003  
Time Elapsed: 29.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 31.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 7 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 33.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 70.19999999999999  
Time Elapsed: 34.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 63.0  
Time Elapsed: 36.769529054573226 Patch Visited: 7 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 39.6172881195958 Patch Visited: 5 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 43.03150168196899 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 45.03150168196899 Patch Visited: 1 Harvest Received: 76.499999999999994  
Time Elapsed: 48.644627611721646 Patch Visited: 5 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 51.49238667674422 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 54.34014574176679 Patch Visited: 5 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 57.75435930413988 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 60.602118369162454 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 60.299999999999995  
Time Elapsed: 64.01633193153555 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 67.4305454390864 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 54.0  
Time Elapsed: 70.84475905628173 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 74.45788498603449 Patch Visited: 7 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 78.45788498603449 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 79.30564405105706 Patch Visited: 2 Harvest Received: 70.200000000000005  
Time Elapsed: 82.15340311607963 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 85.0011621811022 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 52.2000000000000045  
Time Elapsed: 87.84892124612477 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 90.6968603114735 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 46.799999999999995  
Time Elapsed: 93.54443937616992 Patch Visited: 4 Harvest Received: 109.79999999999995  
Time Elapsed: 96.95865293854301 Patch Visited: 4 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 99.80641200356558 Patch Visited: 5 Harvest Received: 0.0  
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Time Elapsed: 117.94348318810967 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 47.7000000000000045  
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Time Elapsed: 129.6390013181548 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
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Time Elapsed: 144.08055437265378 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
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Time Elapsed: 156.75674056242258 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 160.17095412479568 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 161.17095412479568 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 163.17095412479568 Patch Visited: 2 Harvest Received: 102.59999999999991  
Time Elapsed: 166.01871318981827 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 169.43292675219138 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 173.04605268194413 Patch Visited: 7 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 175.04605268194413 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 177.04605268194413 Patch Visited: 7 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 180.46026624431724 Patch Visited: 4 Harvest Received: 101.700000000000005  
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Time Elapsed: 187.4876057364431 Patch Visited: 3 Harvest Received: 0.0  
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Time Elapsed: 191.9018192889162 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 47.7000000000000045  
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Time Elapsed: 198.73024642356242 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 42.299999999999995  
Time Elapsed: 199.73024642356242 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 37.799999999999995  
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Time Elapsed: 264.7079144745453 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
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Time Elapsed: 284.5636810914174 Patch Visited: 0 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 287.41144015643994 Patch Visited: 2 Harvest Received: 121.5  
Time Elapsed: 290.82565371881304 Patch Visited: 5 Harvest Received: 0.0  
Time Elapsed: 294.4387796485658 Patch Visited: 1 Harvest Received: 117.0  
Time Elapsed: 297.8529932109389 Patch Visited: 6 Harvest Received: 61.199999999999982





# Approximate Solutions for Baseline Performance

## Assumptions:

- Problem can be approximated to a multi armed bandits situation
- Choice with agent to pick a patch to go to, and then it commits to harvesting
- An episode lasts until time runs out

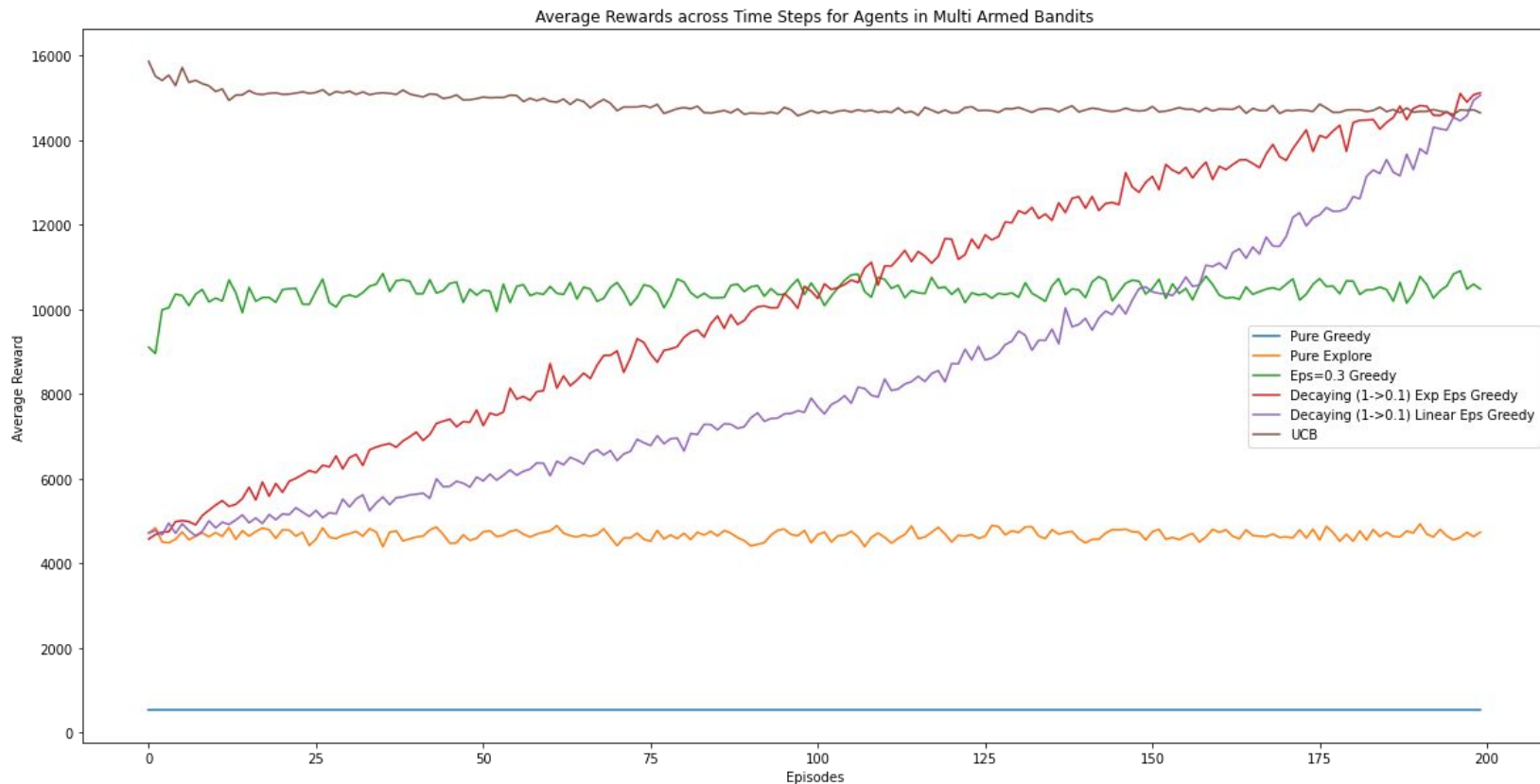
Under these simplifying constraints, following strategies were tested:

- Pure Greedy
- Pure Exploratory
- Fixed Epsilon Greedy
- Decaying Epsilon Greedy
- Uncertainty Confidence Bound (UCB)



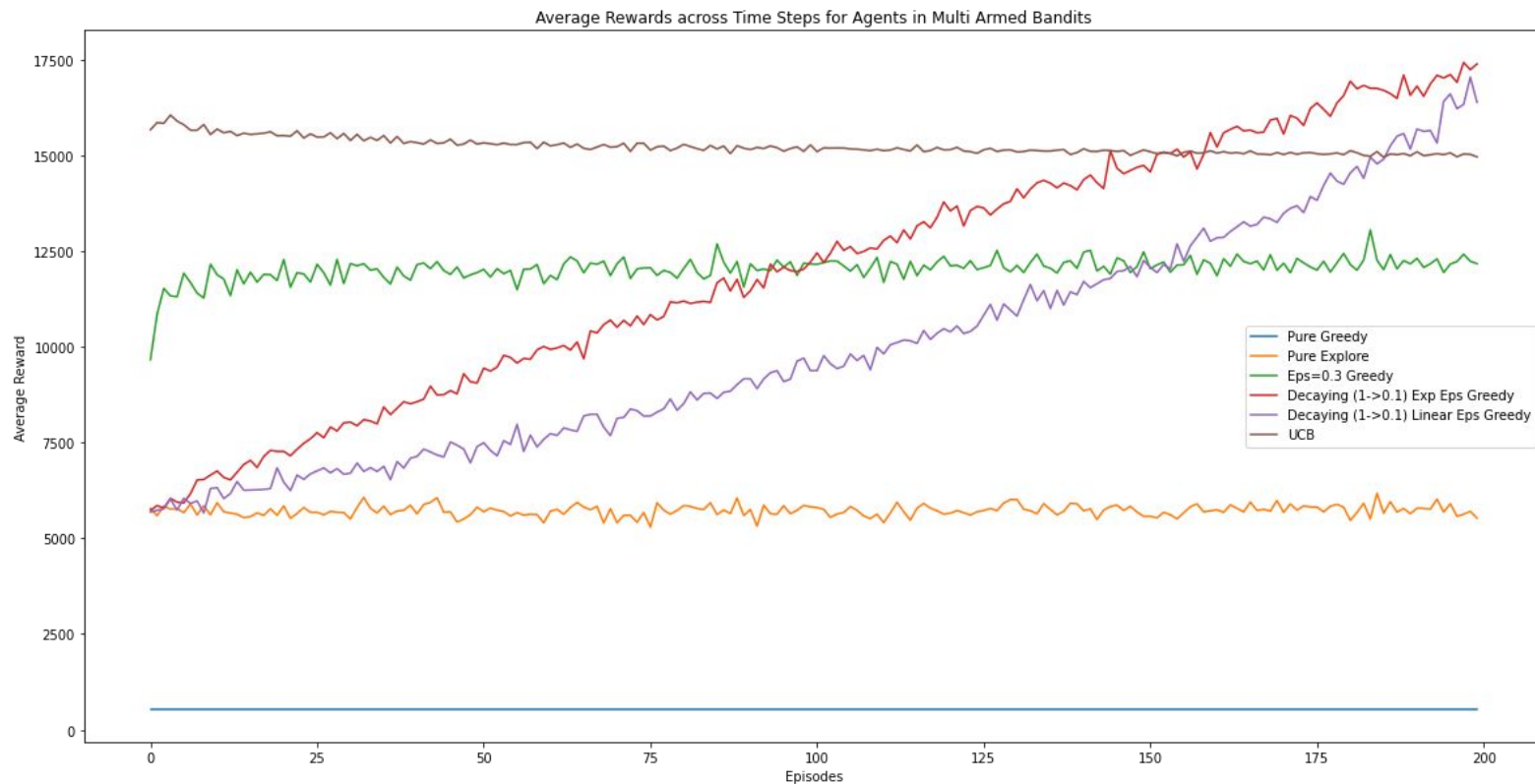
# Average Rewards for Agents in MAB across Episodes

## Block 1 (replenish rate = [0, 4, 4, 0, 4, 0, 4, 0])

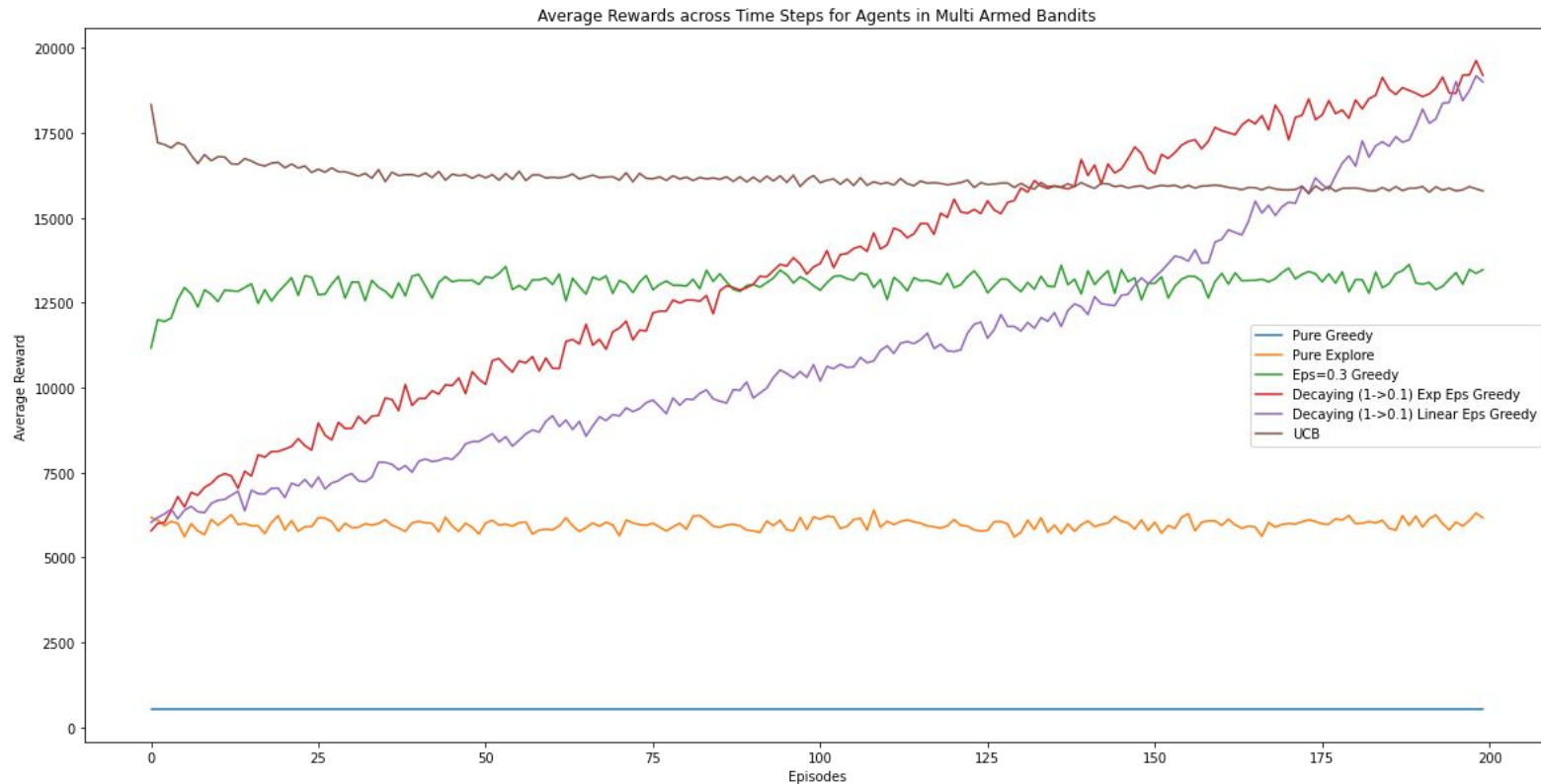




## Block 2 (replenish rate = [0, 0, 8, 2, 0, 5, 0, 8])



## Block 3 (replenish rate = [2, 0, 0, 4, 8, 0, 16, 0])



# Initial Steps/Approaches/Models

Pure RL Strategies with minor modifications and performance of different blocks:

- Smart Exploration ( only on rewarding patches )
- Negative reward for travelling (cost  $\sim$  time or distance)
- Time component in state value function

Testing Marginal Value Theorem for optimality [\[1\]](#)

Determine the best algorithmic approximation for MVT for our task [\[2\]](#)

Generating the optimal policy when the environment is known. Thereafter using model based learning. [\[3\]](#)



# Approach For Human Behaviour Modelling

Aim - Dynamic integration of RL and WM processes observed in human behaviour to capture *behavioural variance*

Forgetfulness - After each value update step, we decay the values towards their initial values

$$Q(s,a) \leftarrow Q(s,a) + \varepsilon \times (Q_0 - Q(s,a))$$

Working Memory Model - Using two value functions  $Q_{RL}$  (pure RL) and  $Q_{WM}$  (with forgetting ) and assigning a weighted probability for action selection.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3390186/>



# Challenges

- Identifying which specific events are stored in memory and which are not.
- Modeling probability of each one of events being stored.
  - Probability might dynamically change over time
- Accounting for the observed effects of memory load and time delay on performance.



# Project Timeline

Phase 1 [ done ] : Environment set up and literature review

Phase 2 [2 weeks]: RL algorithm for optimal policies guided by the Literature Survey

Phase 3 [2 weeks]: Modifying above implementations to incorporate human behaviour (WM)

Additional : Comparing human learning *trajectory* with our RLWM model



# Individual Contributions

Gym Environment - Abhinav

Baseline Solutions and Environment Testing - Shiven

Literature Review - Parth and Samrudh

Next Approaches - Archi



# References

Goldstone, R.L., Ashpole, B.C. Human foraging behavior in a virtual environment. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 11, 508–514 (2004). <https://doi.org/10.3758/BF03196603>

Hall-McMaster, S., Luyckx, F. Revisiting foraging approaches in neuroscience. *Cogn Affect Behav Neurosci* 19, 225–230 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13415-018-00682-z>

Constantino SM, Daw ND. Learning the opportunity cost of time in a patch-foraging task. *Cogn Affect Behav Neurosci*. 2015 Dec;15(4):837-53. doi: 10.3758/s13415-015-0350-y. PMID: 25917000; PMCID: PMC4624618.

Matt L. Miller, Kevin M. Ringelman, John M. Eadie, Jeffrey C. Schank, Time to fly: A comparison of marginal value theorem approximations in an agent-based model of foraging waterfowl, *Ecological Modelling*, Volume 351, 2017, Pages 77-86,



# Questions

