The distribution of abundance over the range of body sizes present in a community, known as the individual size distribution (ISD) or size spectrum, is a powerful representation of community structure and link between abundance, species’ traits, and overall function in terms of energy use. For aquatic systems, tree communities, and, more recently, soil invertebrate communities, the size spectrum is a well-established descriptor of the functional composition of a community. Due to the allometric relationship between body size and metabolic rate, the size spectrum is also the direct link between a community’s total abundance and its overall *function* in terms of energy use or productivity. Particularly for auatic communities, changes to the size spectrum are routinely used to detect substantive shifts in a community’s status brought about by, for example, overexploitation or changing climate.

The size spectrum – or ISD, as it is more generally known in these contexts – has received relatively little attention in terrestrial animal communities. However, it still promises to provide key insights into how terrestrial animal communities are structured, how their structure changes over time, and how these changes modulate the relationship between community-level properties such as species composition, total abundance, and energy use.

The most well-documented terrestrial ISDs are for small mammal and bird communities. These ISDs appear to be multimodal, with peaks corresponding to peaks in resource use at different body size classes. These peaks may emerge from fundamental biological or evolutionary constraints, specific conditions determining the distribution of resource availability in a particular habitat, species interactions, or a combination of these factors. As in the auatic and other realms, shifts to these ISDs may reflect changes in the functional composition of a community. If these changes include disproportionate impacts on large or small bodied species, they may additionally result in a decoupling of the relationship between total abundance and total energy use.