**Settling particles**

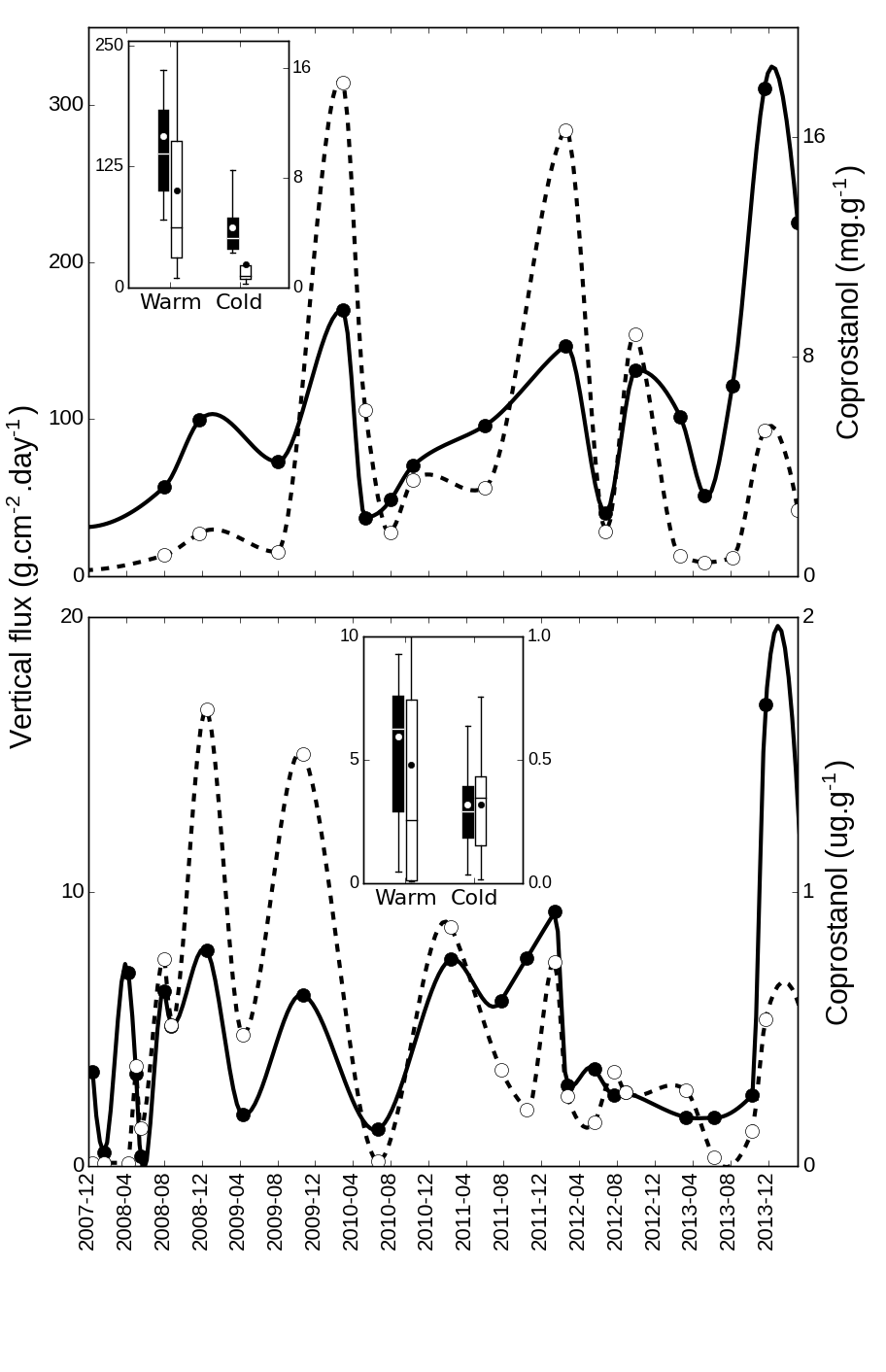


Fig. 1. Temporal variation of vertical flux (left axis, solid line) and coprostanol (right axis, dotted line) in settling particles collected at Buenos Aires (top) and Nandubaysal, Uruguay River (bottom). Boxplot depicts variation of vertical flux (left axis, black boxes) and coprostanol (right axis, white boxes) between warm (April-August) and cold (September-March) periods. Difference between these periods was significant for both parameters (t-test, p<0.05) at Buenos Aires and only for vertical flux at Nandubaysal.

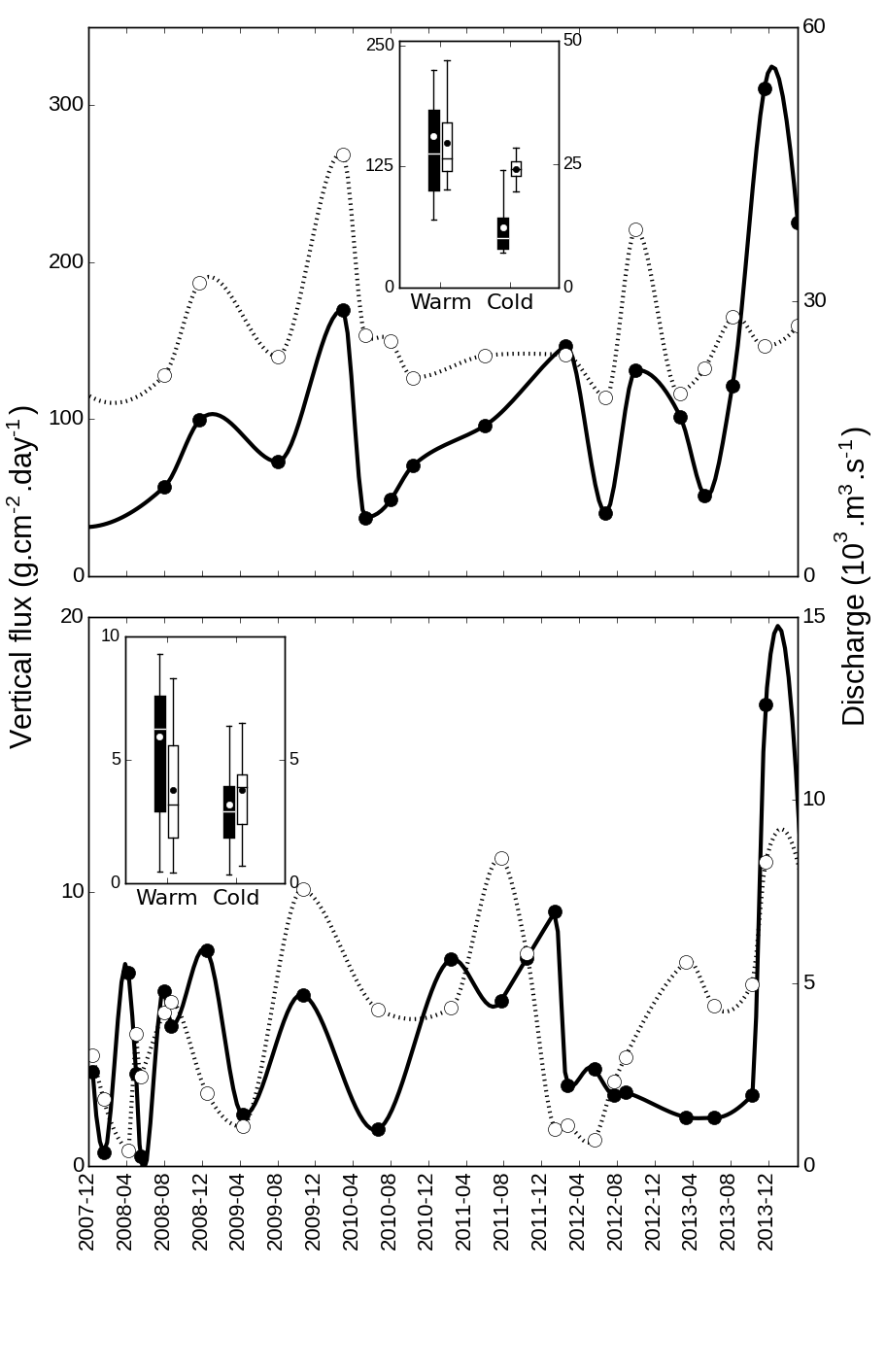


Fig. 2 Temporal variation of vertical flux (left axis, solid line) and river discharge (right axis, dotted line) in settling particles collected at Buenos Aires (top) and Nandubaysal (Uruguay River, bottom).

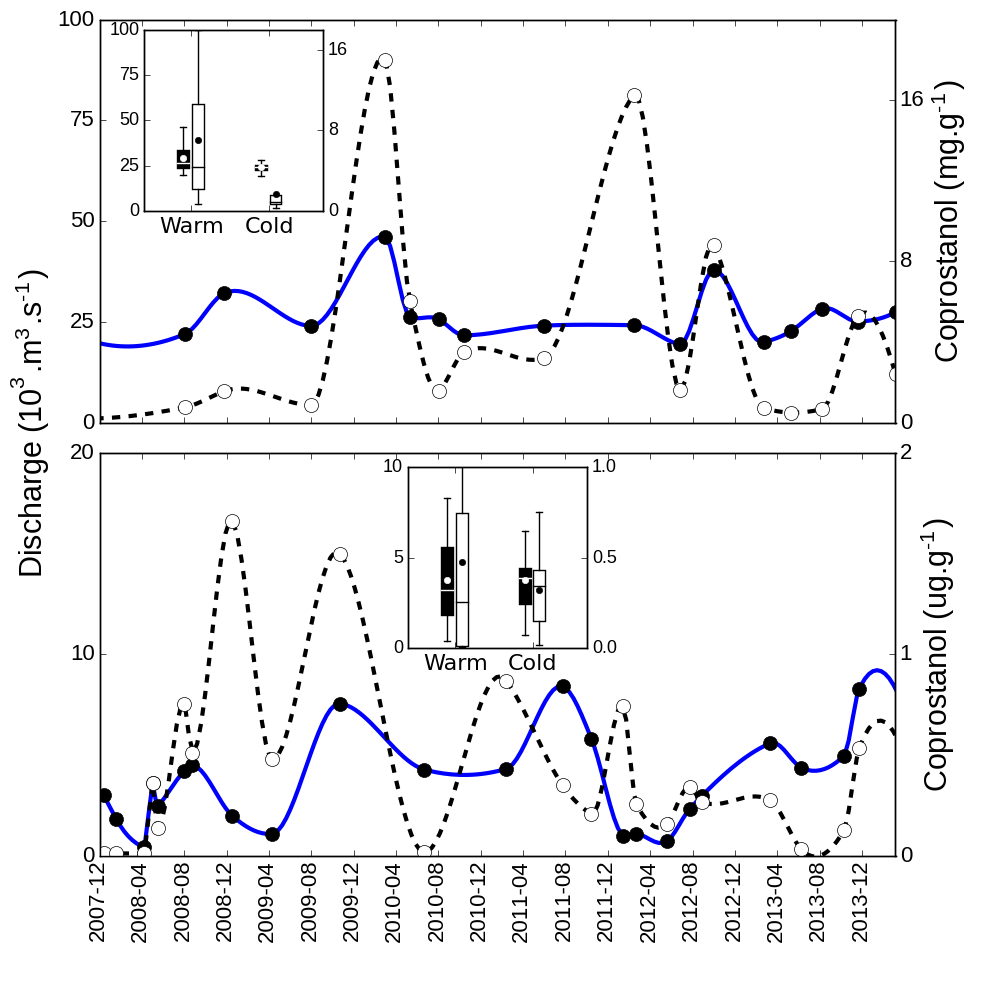


Fig. 3 Temporal variation of river discharge (left axis, blue solid line) and coprostanol (right axis, dotted line) in settling particles collected at Buenos Aires (top) and Nandubaysal (Uruguay River, bottom).

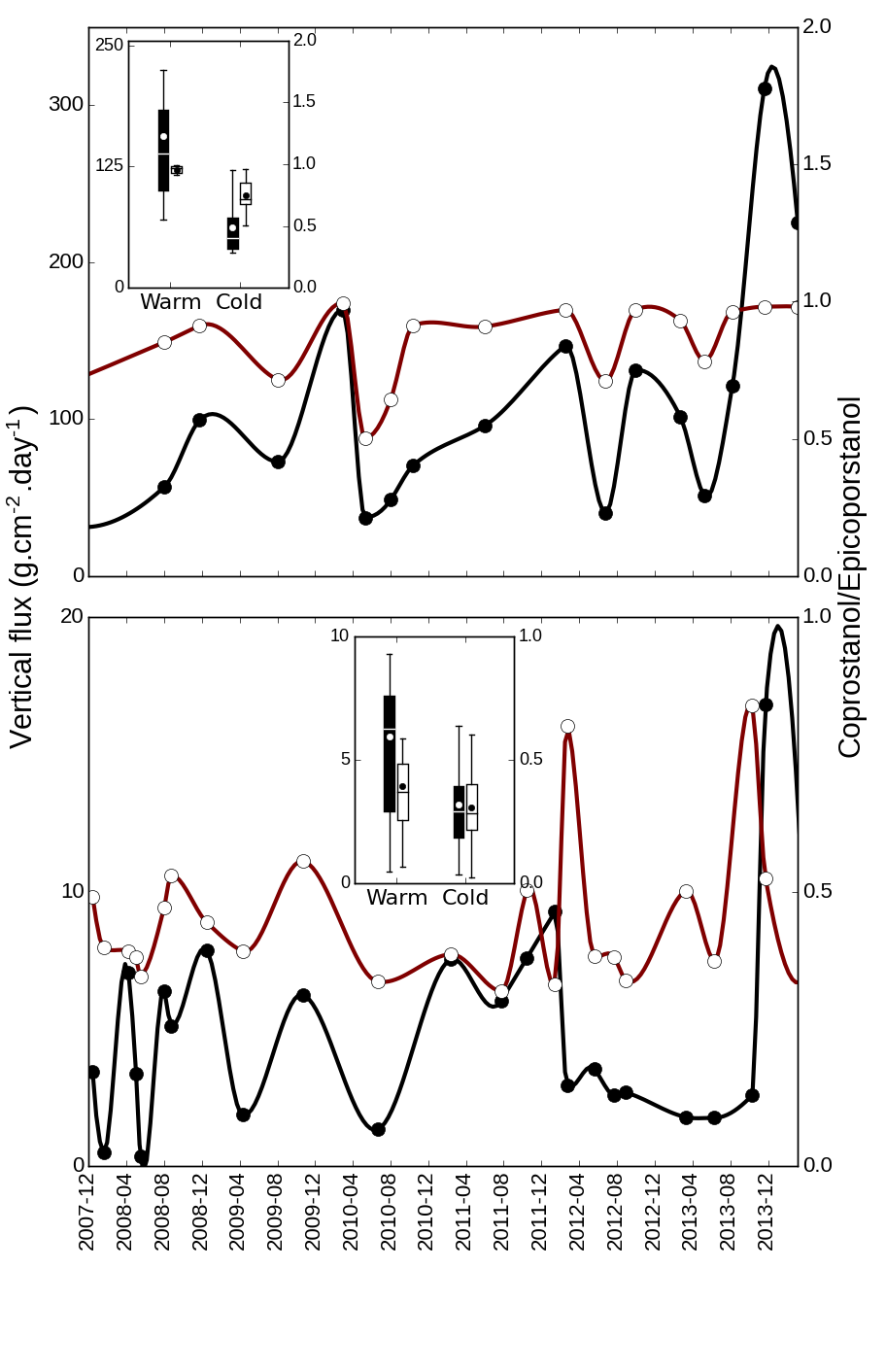


Fig. 4 Temporal variation of vertical flux (left axis, black line) and coprostanol/epicoprostanol index (right axis, brown line) in settling particles collected at Buenos Aires (top) and Nandubaysal (Uruguay River, bottom).

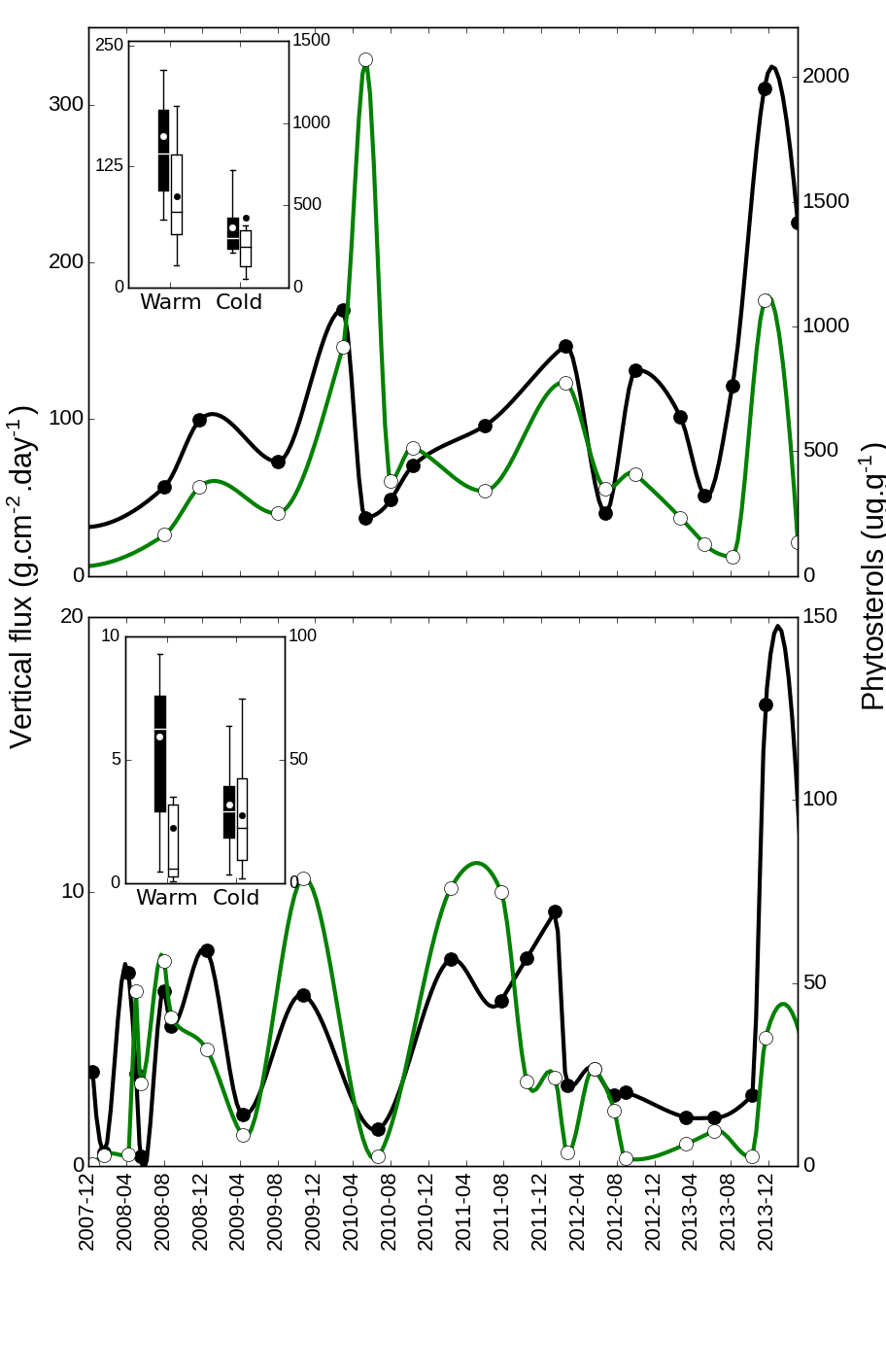


Fig. 5 Temporal variation of vertical flux (left axis, black line) and phytosterolsl (right axis, green line) in settling particles collected at Buenos Aires (top) and Nandubaysal (Uruguay River, bottom).

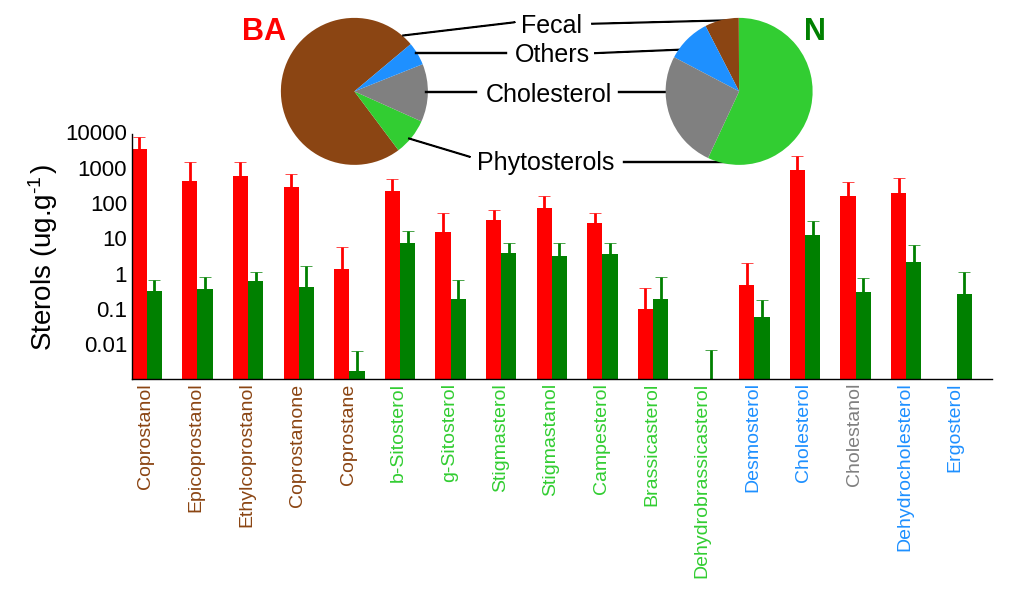


Fig. 6. Individual sterol concentrations of settling particles at Buenos Aires (BA, red bars) and Nandubaysal (N, green bars). Pie charts display the proportions of the main sterol categories (colors of histogram bottom labels correspond to these categories). Note the logarithmic scale at vertical axis.

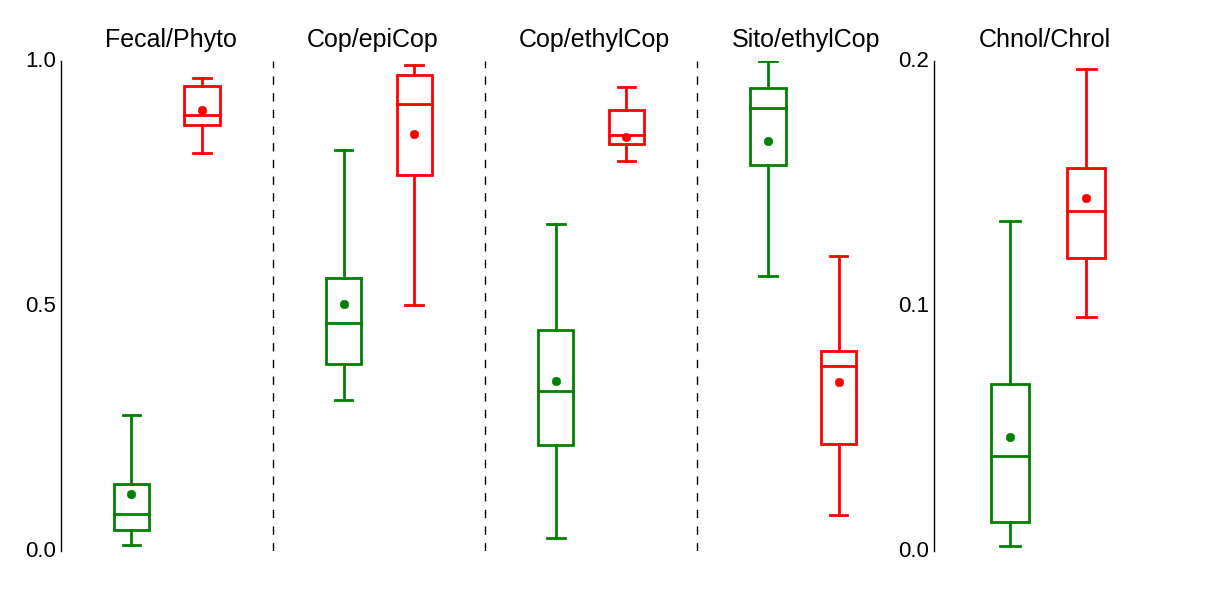


Fig. 7. Differences between Nandubaysal (green boxes) and Buenos Aires (red boxes) for several sterol ratios. Fecal/Phyto: fecal sterols to phytosterols, Cop/epiCop: coprostanol to epicoprostanol, Cop/ethylCop: coprostanol to 24-ethylcoprostanol, Sito/ethylCop: sitosterol to 24-ethylcoprostanol, Chnol/Chrol: cholestenol to cholesterol. All differences were highly significant (t-test, p<0.0001)