A bioenergetic framework for the temperature dependence of trophic interactions

Benjamin Gilbert,†a
Tyler D. Tunney,b Kevin S. McCann,c
John P. DeLong,d
David A. Vasseur,a Van Savage,e Jonathan B. Shurin,f
Anthony I. Dell,g
Brandon T. Barton,h
Christopher D.G. Harley,i
Heather M. Kharouba,j
Pavel Kratina,k
Julia L. Blanchard,l
Christopher Clements,m
Monika Winder,n
Hamish S. Greig,o and
Mary I. O’Connorp

Abstract
Changing temperature can substantially shift ecological communities by altering the strength and stability of trophic interactions. Because many ecological rates are constrained by temperature, new approaches are required to understand how simultaneous changes in multiple rates alter the relative performance of species and their trophic interactions. We develop an energetic approach to identify the relationship between biomass fluxes and standing biomass across trophic levels. Our approach links ecological rates and trophic dynamics to measure temperature-dependent changes to the strength of trophic interactions and determine how these changes alter food web stability. It accomplishes this by using biomass as a common energetic currency and isolating three temperature-dependent processes that are common to all consumer-resource interactions: biomass accumulation of the resource, resource consumption and consumer mortality. Using this framework, we clarify when and how temperature alters consumer to resource biomass ratios, equilibrium resilience, consumer variability, extinction risk and transient vs. equilibrium dynamics. Finally, we characterise key asymmetries in species responses to temperature that produce these distinct dynamic behaviours and identify when they are likely to emerge. Overall, our framework provides a mechanistic and more unified understanding of the temperature dependence of trophic dynamics in terms of ecological rates, biomass ratios and stability.

Keywords
Biomass pyramid, climate change, food web, interaction strength, predator prey, stability, temperature, transient dynamics, trophic dynamics.

INTRODUCTION
Ecosystem responses to changing temperatures depend on a complex network of feedbacks among biological and physical processes (Walther et al. 2002; Harley et al. 2006; Traill et al. 2010). Although much of the research on biological responses to temperature focuses on individual species, interactions among species are being increasingly recognised (Dunson & Travis 1991; Davis et al. 1998). Species interactions mediate many ecosystem processes, and temperature has the potential to differentially influence the underlying traits of interacting organisms (Dell et al. 2011, 2013). As a result, even modest temperature shifts might generate a cascade of changing interactions in food webs (Barton & Schmitz 2009). These indirect effects of temperature may affect the structural and dynamic properties of ecosystems such as food web stability and biomass ratios (Yvon-Durocher et al. 2011; Nelson et al. 2013). The magnitude of these changes will depend not only on the types of interactions present within a food web, but also on how temperature regulates the strengths of those interactions (McCann et al. 1998).

The strength of trophic interactions often depends on temperature. The impacts of large mammalian herbivores (Post &
Pedroni et al. 2008; Brodie et al. 2012) and the cascading effects of invertebrate (Barton & Schmitz 2009; Barton et al. 2009) and vertebrate predators (Post & Pedersen 2008) on plant communities can be magnified at elevated temperatures. Similarly, the direct impact of grazing zooplankton (Sommer et al. 2007; O’Connor et al. 2009) and indirect impact of fish predators (Kratina et al. 2012) on phytoplankton biomass have both been found to be more pronounced at increased temperature. These results suggest that top-down regulation of primary producers by herbivores and their predators may be enhanced by climate warming. In contrast, the response of producer biomass to nutrient fertilisation may be dampened (Kratina et al. 2012), and the direct effect of predators on herbivores may be reduced by elevated temperatures (Barton 2010). This diversity of empirical outcomes suggests that the response of trophic interactions is context-dependent, with some interactions magnified under warming while others are weakened.

Consumer–resource interactions form the most basic module of food webs, and can provide a foundation for understanding how temperature affects trophic dynamics (Vasseur & McCann 2005; O’Connor et al. 2011; Dell et al. 2013). In particular, they can be understood in terms of the vital rates of the component species (Rosenzweig & MacArthur 1963). Analysing empirical relationships between vital rates and temperature across taxa has led to the discovery of general temperature-dependencies across species and helped characterise systematic variation in those relationships. Data show how such relationships differ among distinct trophic levels such as herbivores and plants, as well as active predators and their prey (Gillooly et al. 2002; Dell et al. 2011; Amarasekare & Savage 2012). These results suggest that temperature effects on consumer–resource interactions may be predictable when details about taxa and habitats are known (Vasseur & McCann 2005; O’Connor et al. 2011; Dell et al. 2013). Such an approach could lead to a much needed theory for how food webs will respond to temperature change.

Apart from advancing theory, a framework that integrates temperature-dependent rates into trophic dynamics can guide the design and interpretation of experimental research. The broad array of responses that warming experiments have generated has been used to suggest there is not a single, shared response of trophic dynamics to warming (Moore & Townsendsend 1998; Post & Pedersen 2008; Post et al. 2009; Brodie et al. 2012; Kratina et al. 2012). Better theory could help quantify how big these deviations are and whether there are only a few or many types of responses. Currently, the wide variety of experimental designs and interaction strength metrics that exist make it difficult to determine which patterns arise from real differences in systems and which are simply methodological effects. For example, short- and long-term dynamics are often qualitatively different (Post & Pedersen 2008; O’Connor et al. 2011; Kratina et al. 2012), indicating that study duration may be one source of variation in responses. Predicting how and when a change in temperature will affect the outcome of trophic interactions requires tests and measures of trophic dynamics within a conceptual framework that allows translation across ecosystems and experimental designs.

Here, we use theory to identify how consumer–resource interactions depend on key ecological rates, which in turn often vary with temperature. We focus on the bioenergetic relationship between consumers and their resources to develop a simple metric that characterises biomass flows and predicts biomass distributions across trophic levels. Our metric also yields clear predictions about how temperature alters food web stability, whether stability is measured as extinction risk, variability in biomass following small perturbations or rates of recovery from perturbations. Although the theoretical framework that we develop is distinct from previous theoretical work on trophic interaction strength, we show that it is related to classic experimental measures of interaction strength. Our bioenergetic approach provides a single coherent framework to inform the design and interpretation of warming experiments and for predicting how temperature affects trophic dynamics in ecosystems.

BEYOND INTERACTION STRENGTH

Trophic interactions are often characterised by their interaction strength, which is broadly defined as the change in the abundance of one species that results from the change in abundance of another (MacArthur 1972; Paine 1980, 1992; Laska & Wootton 1998). Taking the example of a consumer’s impact on a resource, experimental measures of interaction strength quantify the change in abundance of the resource when the consumer is removed, with the various measures differing in the duration of the treatment and how the results are standardised (Paine 1992; Berlow et al. 2004)(Appendix S1). Theoretical measures of interaction strength differ from experimental measures, and instead focus on interaction coefficients that measure the per capita effect of the consumer on the resource population or an individual of the resource species (i.e. they measure the effect of small changes in consumer density, not consumer removal; Laska & Wootton 1998; Abrams 2001; Novak & Wootton 2010).

Despite differences in experimental and theoretical measures of interaction strength, all may be understood as changes in fluxes of biomass that result from perturbations to the system. Indeed, an important insight for consumer–resource systems is that fluxes and standing stocks of biomass are not independent – the ecological rates that drive dynamics determine the standing stocks of the consumer and resource, which in turn alter the total magnitude of the fluxes between these pools (Rosenzweig & MacArthur 1963; Fig. 1). More concretely, this link between fluxes and standing stocks should allow the development of a measure that predicts both dynamical and equilibrium responses to changing temperature. Our approach links temperature to the ecological rates that structure consumer–resource interactions to determine how it affects these fluxes and standing stocks.

One method for understanding how ecological rates affect interactions is by experimentally modifying a key parameter, such as carrying capacity, and following changes in dynamics and standing stocks [e.g. (Rosenzweig & MacArthur 1963)]. A problem in predicting responses to temperature changes with this method is that many parameters are temperature dependent and thus are expected to change simultaneously. We modify this single-parameter approach by identifying aggregates of parameters that collectively govern the dynamic outcomes of
interactions in response to temperature change (e.g. Yodzis & Innes 1992; Appendix S1).

To consider these components of consumer–resource dynamics more formally, we use the Rosenzweig–MacArthur equations (Rosenzweig & MacArthur 1963):

\[
\frac{dR}{dt} = rR \left( 1 - \frac{R}{K} \right) - f(R)RC
\]

(1)

\[
\frac{dC}{dt} = ef(R)RC - m(C)C
\]

(2)

Here, resource growth is logistic with \( K \) representing carrying capacity, or total biomass that the resource can accumulate in the absence of the consumer (see Table 1 for parameter definitions and units for a Type I functional response). Carrying capacity in conjunction with \( r \), the maximum growth rate, determines the potential biomass accumulation of the resource when it is away from equilibrium. The consumer loss function, \( m(C) \), may depend on the consumer’s own density but in most models is simply the fraction of biomass lost per unit time (\( m; \) Table 1). The functional response of the consumer \( f(R) \) may depend on the resource biomass \( (R) \), and in the case of a Type I functional response \( f(R) \) is equal to the attack rate \( (a) \). The consumption efficiency is given by \( e f(R) \) and measures the rate of consumption and conversion of the resource to the consumer per unit biomass of both; this can also be thought of as the biomass gain by the consumer for a given biomass of consumer and resource. In the simplest case of a Type I functional response, consumption efficiency is equal to the product of conversion efficiency \( (e) \) and attack rate \( (a; \) Table 1). Other functional responses (e.g. Types II or III) can also be straightforwardly expressed and measured within this framework (Table S1).

We define an aggregate approach for consumer–resource dynamics by introducing sets of parameters that govern the flux of biomass from resources to consumers through trophic interactions. Biomass flux is governed by parameters that determine three types of processes: (1) consumption efficiency of the consumer \( (e) \) and attack rate \( (a; \) Table 1), (2) loss of the consumer \( (m) \) and (3) biomass accumulation of the resource \( (r \) and \( K \) in the case of logistic growth) (Fig. 1). We use \( K \) to represent biomass accumulation of the resource throughout this article, both because it represents the equilibrium biomass that
the resource accumulates in the absence of the consumer and because it is commonly measured in experiments (below). A body of theory on consumer–resource interactions uses \( K \) as a surrogate for productivity (starting with Rosenzweig 1971), much as we do here because \( K \) implicitly scales the growth rate of the resource through the functional form of the logistic growth equation. However, we discuss how the effects of changes in \( r \) and \( K \) differ in the Appendix (S2 and S5).

Each of the three processes that govern biomass fluxes can be used to calculate population-level measures (i.e. the births and deaths of individuals), or biomass standing stocks (Yodzis & Innes 1992). For example, the consumer biomass that is maintained at equilibrium depends on these interrelated processes. First, increasing biomass accumulation of the resource increases the energy available for the consumer and the size of consumer standing stocks. Second, consumption efficiency measures how the consumer uses this resource biomass accumulation by incorporating its attack rate \((a)\) and efficiency of converting the consumed resource into its own biomass \((e)\). Finally, consumer biomass accumulation depends on how quickly converted biomass is lost \((m)\) to metabolism or death (Fig. 1).

Two aggregates of ecological rates describe the dynamics of consumer–resource dynamics. The first is the ratio of the consumer rates (consumption efficiency/mortality: \( ae/m \)), which gives the consumer relative growth rate. The inverse of this aggregate rate defines the zero-growth isoline of the consumer (eqn 2 at \( dC/dt = 0 \)); Fig. 1), which is termed \( R^* \) (Tilman 1980). This isoline describes the equilibrium biomass of the resource when the consumer is present and is one of two quantities that need to be measured to calculate interaction strength experimentally. The second aggregate is the carrying capacity of the resource \((K)\), which quantifies the equilibrium biomass of the resource when the consumer is absent. \( K \) is also the second quantity that is required to calculate interaction strength experimentally. Although \( K \) does not appear to be an aggregate, it is in fact the ratio of two rates in many mechanistic models of resource growth; \( K \) depends on the nutrient supply rate and resource loss rate (Rosenzweig 1971; Schoener 1973; Appendix S5). In other words, \( K \) represents an aggregate for the resource that is conceptually similar to the consumer’s relative growth rate but also incorporates underlying supply rates of limiting nutrients.

The relationship between these aggregates suggests that inefficiencies in either one will prevent the accumulation of consumer biomass. Together, these aggregates describe the per biomass flow of energy between the consumer and resource (consumption efficiency) in the context of energy flow into the system (resource biomass accumulation) and energy loss from the system (consumer loss; Fig. 1). We express these aggregate parameters in a measure that defines the biomass potential of the resource that is captured by the consumer \( (BCR) \):

\[
BCR \propto \frac{[\text{Consumption Efficiency}][\text{Resource biomass accumulation}]}{[\text{Loss}]} = \frac{\text{Consumer Relative Growth} \times \text{Resource biomass accumulation}}{\text{K/R}} = \frac{\text{ef}(R)[K]}{[m(C)]} = \frac{eaK}{m}
\]

Which is equally:

\[
BCR \propto \frac{R \text{ without consumer}}{R \text{ with consumer}}
\]

Equation (3) unites three distinct approaches to understanding consumer–resource dynamics. First, it uses resource biomass accumulation and consumer relative growth to define \( BCR \) in terms of biomass flow through the consumer–resource system. Second, it relates this flow to static measures of the resource biomass \((K/R^*)\); these two measures are used to quantify the interaction strength of the consumer on the resource experimentally and therefore link our theoretical approach to experimentally measured responses (eqn 4).

Finally, \( BCR \) expresses biomass fluxes and standing stocks in terms of aggregates of parameters, which highlights how environmental conditions that modify the relative values of one or several ecological rates may influence the strength of interactions and biomass distributions. Much of the research on interaction strengths compares differences among species pairs, where species-level parameters are assumed to remain constant (Berlow et al. 2004; Novak & Wootton 2010). The rate-based approach we take here can also be used to track how interactions change when ecological rates are influenced by changes in other biotic or abiotic conditions, such as body size (Yodzis & Innes 1992; Brose et al. 2012; DeLong & Vasseur 2012). The \( BCR \) framework is particularly important for temperature change, as it allows us to explore how temperature-sensitivities of multiple ecological rates scale up to influence consumer–resource dynamics.

The integrated approach used to generate \( BCR \) also turns out to be important for unifying different empirical methods (Table 2). Several studies measure parameters directly (e.g. DeLong & Hanson 2011) or use model-fitting approaches on observational data to infer them (e.g. Laska & Wootton 1998; Novak & Wootton 2010). For these studies that calculate parameters, eqn (3 and 4) can be rewritten in terms of its component parameters and \( BCR \) can then be calculated. For example, for a Type I functional response, eqn (3 and 4) becomes:

\[
BCR_{\text{Type I}} = \frac{\text{ef}(R)[K]}{[m(C)]} = \frac{eaK}{m}
\]

For studies that measure standing stocks (densities or biomass), eqns (2 & 3 and 4) clarify that \( e(R)/m(C) \) is equal to the inverse of the resource equilibrium biomass with the consumer present \((1/R^*)\). This relationship facilitates measurement of \( BCR \) for consumer–resource models with any functional response (Table S1): the ratio of the resource without vs. with the consumer present at equilibrium measures \( BCR \) for all of these variations. Similarly, understanding the component rates that comprise \( BCR \) for different consumer–resource models allows it to be tested when systems are not at equilibrium (Tables 1, 2, S1).

The definition of \( BCR \) based on standing stocks \((K/R^*)\) can also be used in 3-level trophic chains so long as the appropriate measures of \( K \) and \( R^* \) are incorporated (Appendix S5). Indeed, a closely related metric has been used in empirical studies of trophic cascades by examining resource abundance with and without a top predator (Borer
Table 1 Temperature dependency of ecological rates and model terms used in equation 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters and notation with units</th>
<th>Functional form of temperature dependence†</th>
<th>Eqn</th>
<th>Examples from previous studies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$r$: maximum repro. rate</td>
<td>$r(T) \propto e^{\frac{qE}{2}}$</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>$E_B = 0.53–0.85$ (Savage et al. 2004; diverse ectotherms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(biomass time$^{-1}$ biomass$^{-1}$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$K$: carrying capacity</td>
<td>$\Delta K = \frac{K(T)}{K_0} = e^{\frac{qE}{2}}$</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>$\Delta K &lt; 1$ (Roemmich &amp; McGowan 1995; marine) $\Delta K &gt; 1$ (Kratina et al. 2012, aquatic mesocosms)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(biomass)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$m$: mortality (biomass loss)</td>
<td>$m(T) = m_0 e^{\frac{qE}{2}}$</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>$E_m = 0.65$ (Dell et al. 2011 across diverse taxa) $E_m = 0.45$ (Savage et al. 2004 for fish)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(biomass time$^{-1}$ biomass$^{-1}$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$a$: attack rate*</td>
<td>$a(T) = a_0 \sqrt{v_{aT}^2 e^{-2E_{ma}/kT} + v_{sa}^2 e^{-2E_{ma}/kT}}$</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>Dependent on type of foraging interaction (Dell et al. 2013) Independent of temperature (Peters 1983)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(biomass time$^{-1}$ biomass$^{-2}$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$e$: conversion efficiency</td>
<td>$e = constant$</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(biomass$^{-1}$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$\frac{de}{DT}$: relative growth</td>
<td>$\Delta RG = \frac{a(T)e m_0}{m(T) e a_0}$</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td>$\Delta RG &lt; 1$ (Rall et al. 2010) $\Delta RG &gt; 1$ (Kratina et al. 2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(biomass$^{-1}$)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Units are given in terms of resource biomass removal rate per consumer biomass as a function of resource biomass. The temperature-dependent function is expressed in terms of movement velocities, which determine the encounter rates of the consumer and resource and thus the potential attack rate. The constant $a_0$ scales encounter rates to attack rates. See text for more details.
†Temperature subscripts allow the consumer temperature ($T_C$), resource temperature ($T_R$) and nutrient temperature ($T_D$) to differ.

Table 2 Interpreting experimental observations of consumer and resource densities, coefficient of variation (CV), and short- vs. long-term observations in terms of $B_{CR}$, stability and critical asymmetries. Effects are predicted from theory used to generate $B_{CR}$. All measures are relative to a control treatment of unmanipulated temperature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Densities</th>
<th>Correlation between density and CV of consumer</th>
<th>Consistency of transient and equilibrium dynamics*</th>
<th>Asymmetries $\Delta K$; $\Delta RG$</th>
<th>Stability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>$B_{CR}$ INCREASES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Static</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>$\Delta K &gt; 1$; $\Delta RG = 1$</td>
<td>Destabilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Decrease Static</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>$\Delta K = 1$; $\Delta RG &gt; 1$</td>
<td>Destabilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase Decrease Static</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Consistent†</td>
<td>$\Delta K \times \Delta RG &gt; 1$</td>
<td>Destabilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$B_{CR}$ DECREASES</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease Static</td>
<td>++</td>
<td>Different</td>
<td>$\Delta K &lt; 1$; $RG = 1$</td>
<td>Stabilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease Increase Static</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>Consistent†</td>
<td>$\Delta K = 1$; $RG &lt; 1$</td>
<td>Stabilising</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decrease Increase Static</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Consistent</td>
<td>$\Delta K \times \Delta$; $RG &lt; 1$</td>
<td>Stabilising</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Refers to whether the short-term direction of change in $C$ and $R$ densities is consistent with changes over the long-term (at equilibrium).
†Only $\Delta RG \neq 1$, $\Delta K \approx 1$ can produce changes that are consistent over the short- and long-term at high $B_{CR}$ (Appendix S4).
high, consumer biomass is maximised (Fig. 1a). Systems with low resource biomass accumulation (Fig. 1b) or low relative growth (Fig. 1c) dampen consumer biomass accumulation, which is lowest when both resource biomass accumulation and relative growth are weak (Fig. 1d). Recognising that resource biomass accumulation and relative growth also define $B_{CR}$ allows us to generate a relationship between $B_{CR}$ and consumer–resource biomass ratios (Fig. 2a). Together, these simple relationships enable us to better understand temperature effects on equilibrium population sizes, and also to elucidate how the temperature-sensitivity of any individual component rate is likely to alter $B_{CR}$.

The relationship between $B_{CR}$ and stability is more complex, but nonetheless exhibits general properties whether stability is measured using time to extinction, resilience of equilibrium conditions or biomass variability (Fig. 2b). When $B_{CR}$ is weak, stability is low because extinction risk increases when consumer densities are low and have slow return times following perturbations. At the other extreme, a strong $B_{CR}$ also leads to low stability (Fig 2b). In this case, low stability is driven by intrinsic dynamics, with consumer–resource populations fluctuating widely following even small shifts away from equilibrium due to overconsumption by the consumer. These fluctuations can bring the consumer and resource to critically low densities, which increases extinction risk (Rosenzweig 1971; Rip & McCann 2011).

The stability relationship can be explained more formally by exploring how $B_{CR}$ influences the maximum eigenvalue of the Jacobian matrix; this eigenvalue quantifies the rate that the system returns to equilibrium following a perturbation. Importantly, the effect of $B_{CR}$ on extinction rate and consumer coefficient of variation (CV) mirror trends in the eigenvalue, indicating that the analytic solution is a good proxy for common empirical measures of stability (Fig. 2b). For example, consumer consistency (1/CV) is lowest when $B_{CR}$ is very weak or strong, and highest at weak to intermediate $B_{CR}$ (Fig. 2b red line). Here, we have employed eqn 1 and 2 with a Type I functional response, but this equilibrium and stability relationship is common across consumer–resource models (Rip & McCann 2011; McCann 2012).

One benefit of $B_{CR}$ (eqn 3) relative to measures of interaction strength lies in its use of aggregate parameters that have predictable effects on biomass ratios and stability. Other studies have provided in-depth critiques of interaction strength measures, a goal that is beyond the scope of this paper (Laska & Wootton 1998; Berlow et al. 1999, 2004; Abrams 2001; Novak & Wootton 2010). Nonetheless, we can compare the outputs from interaction strength measures by solving for the parameters that other measures quantify, as is done in Appendix S1 for a Type 1 functional response. For example, the Jacobian and Community Matrix measures of interaction strength provide information on elements of consumer relative growth ($e/m$ and $a$, eqn S3, S4), but do not incorporate resource biomass accumulation. As a result, these interaction strength measures cannot predict how different responses in resource rates (driving $K$) and consumer rates ($a$, $e$ and $m$) with temperature will alter consumer–resource dynamics, nor even if a change in one consumer rate ($a$, for example) will alter stability or biomass ratios. Paine’s index (Paine 1992) measures $a/r$, or the consumer attack rate relative to the resource maximum growth rate. As with the Jacobian and Community Matrix, this measure predicts relative biomass distributions and stability only when other dynamics scale appropriately. In other words, although interaction strength measures provide information on specific parameters, none capture the scaling of biomass ratios and stability that are likely to occur when ecological rates have different thermal responses, as is explained below.

**Figure 2** Relationship between $B_{CR}$, the consumer to resource biomass ratio (a) and three measures of stability (b). The C:R biomass ratio increases monotonically with $B_{CR}$ (a), whereas stability shows a bi-directional response (b). Stability increases initially, but strengthening interactions beyond a critical point causes destabilisation. The rate of return (black line) measures how rapidly the interaction will return to equilibrium following a small perturbation, and is calculated here as $-1^{*}$dominant eigenvalue. The red line is the inverse of the coefficient of variation of the consumer (1/CV). Time to extinction (grey line) is the logarithm of mean time to extinction of the consumer or resource, here divided by the maximum value (2.5) to present all stability measures on the same scale. Numerical solutions for (a) and (b) were obtained by varying the consumer mortality rate ($m = 0.25$–1.95) and holding other parameters constant ($e = 0.4$, $a = 0.05$, $r = 2$, $K = 100$).

**ASYMmetric thermal RESPONSES AND THE TEMPERATURE DEPENDENCE OF $B_{CR}$**

Imbalances in temperature sensitivities between interacting species, such as between primary producers and herbivores (Allen et al. 2005; López-Urrutia et al. 2006; López-Urrutia 2008), and predators and their prey (Dell et al. 2011), or imbalances in energy ingested and metabolic costs of consum-
ers (Rall et al. 2010; Vucic-Pestic et al. 2011), may alter $B_{CR}$ and therefore dynamic stability of a system (Binzer et al. 2012). Recent work has used empirical estimates from metabolic theory (Brown et al. 2004) to show that some combinations of resource and consumer vital rates ought to produce ‘asymmetrical’ temperature responses among interacting species (O’Connor et al. 2011; Dell et al. 2013).

Our metric allows us to determine when and how consumer–resource dynamics will change due to temperature-driven asymmetries in vital rates. For example, eqn 5 can be rearranged to predict that temperature will not change $B_{CR}$ when

$$\Delta e(T) \Delta a(T) \Delta K(T) = \Delta m(T)$$

(6)

where delta ($\Delta$) represents the relative change in each parameter with temperature (Table 1). Equation 6 can also be written to show that $B_{CR}$ changes whenever either relative growth ($ea/m$) or resource biomass accumulation ($K$) change with temperature. More generally, all consumer–resource models can be represented in a manner similar to eqn 6 (Table S1), illustrating that changes in vital rates with temperature must be symmetrical for relative biomass to be unaffected by temperature. Consumer–resource models with more complex functional forms require that even more vital rates be perfectly symmetric (e.g. Table S1: Type I vs. Type II functional response).

Biological rates frequently show an exponential increase with temperature up to a critical point. For a given body size, this increase is often well-described by a Boltzmann–Arrhenius factor ($ce^{-EB/kT}$), where $c$ is a species- and rate-specific constant, $E$ is the activation energy of the biological rate, $T$ is body temperature and $k$ is Boltzmann’s constant (Gillooly et al. 2002; Brown et al. 2004; Savage et al. 2004). This relationship is a central component of metabolic scaling theory, which provides a basis for understanding the environmental and biological control of key vital rates that underlie temperature (Figs. 1 and 2). A key finding is that asymmetries arise because the rate dependence of the body velocities of both species. In contrast, for interactions where one individual is moving and the other is stationary (i.e. sit-and-wait or grazing strategies), attack rate depends only on the temperature dependence of whichever individual is moving.

To identify the asymmetries that alter consumer–resource dynamics with warming, the temperature dependence of vital rates can be expressed in terms of the aggregate rates that drive $B_{CR}$. Both the change in relative growth ($\Delta R$; eqn 11) and carrying capacity ($\Delta K$; eqn 8) have the potential to create asymmetries with changing temperature. Incorporating these into eqn 6 allows us to determine the thermal dependence of $B_{CR}$:

$\Delta B_{CR} = \Delta K \times \Delta R$ (12)

Asymmetries determine the temperature dependence of $B_{CR}$ by causing changes in carrying capacity or relative growth with warming. As a result, these asymmetries can predict how fluxes, biomass distributions and stability change with temperature (Figs. 1 and 2). A key finding is that asymmetries arise if the vital rates of interacting species, or the rates of biotic and abiotic processes, differ in their responses to temperature. Research indicates that responses to temperature will frequently differ among some of these rates (Melillo et al. 1993; Dell et al. 2011), causing shifts in trophic dynamics.

© 2014 John Wiley & Sons Ltd/CNRS
THE THERMAL DEPENDENCE OF $B_{CR}$: TESTABLE PREDICTIONS

The incorporation of temperature-dependent rates into $B_{CR}$ allows ecologists to make predictions about the effects of temperature on consumer–resource dynamics. For example, warming is predicted to increase $B_{CR}$ when consumer consumption efficiency increases at a faster rate than mortality ($\Delta RG > 1$) or resource metabolism does not keep up with increased nutrient supply rate ($\Delta K > 1$, black line in Fig. 3a). In this scenario, warming drives an increase in the consumer–resource biomass ratio and the system becomes more top heavy (Fig. 3b). This increase in the biomass ratio in turn stabilises the consumer–resource dynamic if both consumer and resource biomass are initially close to zero by decreasing the likelihood of extinction (Fig. 3c, solid arrow). However, if the consumer–resource biomass ratio is initially high, this further increase causes the interaction to become less stable (Fig. 3c, dashed arrow).

This simple example highlights three important factors that contribute to predicting when warming will change consumer–resource interactions, and when these changes will have a large impact. First, changes in consumer relative growth ($\Delta RG$) will occur whenever a species’ consumption efficiency $(ae)$ and mortality change at different rates. Empiricists may expect this to occur in active-capture interactions when predator and prey movement rates respond differently to temperature (Dell et al. 2013) or when the temperature dependence of consumption and loss differ (Rall et al. 2010). Detailed knowledge on interacting species, or more general knowledge about the temperature sensitivities of different groups of organisms (Dell et al. 2011), are necessary for this level of prediction.

Second, ecosystems that are expected to quickly increase or decrease nutrient supply rates with warming are likely to show large changes in resource biomass accumulation ($\Delta K$). For example, climate-driven changes in upwelling rates alter both water temperature and nutrient supply, and are considered responsible for large changes in zooplankton biomass in Southern California (Roemmich & McGowan 1995). In some regions, such changes in nutrient supply rates may be predicted from ecosystem models (e.g. Malmaeus et al. 2006). Although measuring $K$ directly is difficult in observational studies, eqns (8 & S10a) suggest that $\Delta K$ can be coarsely estimated by calculating the difference in gross and net production with temperature change over short timeframes (Supplementary S.5).

The consumer–resource biomass ratio is the third factor that contributes to predicting when warming may have a large impact on a consumer–resource system. In particular, when the initial consumer–resource biomass ratio is at one extreme (extremely high or low), it tends to be very unstable (Fig. 2b). As a result, consumer–resource dynamics will show more dramatic shifts following changes in $B_{CR}$. For example, when the consumer–resource biomass ratio is very low at ambient conditions, any change in $B_{CR}$ will cause a detectable shift in extinction rates by either increasing ($\Delta B_{CR} < 1$) or decreasing extinction ($\Delta B_{CR} > 1$, Fig. 2b). There is considerable variation in biomass ratios among communities (Cebrian et al. 2009; Rip & McCann 2011), suggesting that this metric could be used to identify ecosystems that may be particularly vulnerable to changes in temperature a priori.

Understanding how temperature-driven asymmetries influence $B_{CR}$ also allows empiricists to interpret dynamical and equilibrium-based measures in terms of the underlying rates and vice versa (Table 2). For example, when the temperature...
sensitivities of interacting species are known, researchers can use these rates to predict how changes in temperature will alter biomass (Table 2, using asymmetries as predictor). Alternatively, when experiments have shown temperature to alter biomass and stability, these joint responses can be used to predict whether temperature creates changes in resource biomass accumulation or relative growth (Table 2, using asymmetries as response), which can in turn be useful when trying to forecast the impacts of introducing new species, altering nutrient conditions, and so on.

Our testable predictions for $B_{CR}$ imply that it may be used for retroactive tests of completed studies. Several studies report only some of the information needed to calculate $B_{CR}$, such as biomass or rate changes with temperature. When these studies have collected other, unreported data, they may be appropriate for testing changes to biomass ratios, stability or changes through time that are predicted by $B_{CR}$ (Table 2).

**PREDICTING SHORT-TERM (TRANSIENT) AND LONG-TERM (EQUILIBRIUM) RESPONSES**

When warming alters $B_{CR}$, short-term responses are often qualitatively different from responses measured at the long-term equilibrium (Rall et al. 2010; O’Connor et al. 2011). These differences can cause experiment duration to alter inferences about the effect of warming on consumer-resource dynamics, even for otherwise identical experiments. Understanding the link between changing $B_{CR}$, transient and equilibrium dynamics is most easily understood by examining how changes to the aggregate rates that make up $B_{CR}$ shift consumer-resource isoclines (Figs 1 and 4, S1).

Differences in transient and equilibrium responses can occur if populations cycle before reaching equilibrium. Cycling occurs over much of the $B_{CR}$ range, whenever a slight increase in $B_{CR}$ would destabilise the consumer-resource pair (Fig. 2, right side of peak on black line). This cycling causes consumer and resource populations to move in a counter-clockwise spiral towards the equilibrium (Fig. 4, all trajectories move from the open square to the black circle). If the pre-warmed densities of the consumer and resource are in the white region of Fig. 4, this clockwise movement causes the initial transient response to differ from the ultimate response in either the consumer or resource (Fig. 4a–c). For example, in Fig. 4a the abundance of the consumer initially decreases even though it increases in the long-term. Transient and long-term responses only coincide when starting conditions fall in a relatively narrow range of densities (grey region, Fig. 4b).

The aggregate rates that drive $B_{CR}$ (resource biomass accumulation and relative growth) are useful for predicting when short- and long-term dynamics coincide under some circumstances. For example, when an experimental system is at the control (ambient temperature) equilibrium prior to warming, a change in $B_{CR}$ that results from a change in resource biomass accumulation ($\Delta K \neq 1$) causes short-term dynamics to differ qualitatively from long-term dynamics – the point of ‘origin’ relative to the new equilibrium will always be in the white region of Fig. 4. Short- and long-term dynamics can only coincide when the change in $B_{CR}$ results from a change in consumer relative growth ($\Delta RG \neq 1$), as this causes the equilibrium to shift along the resource isocline (Fig. 4). This link between different aggregate rates and the consistency of short- and long-term responses provides a tool for ecologists to reconcile apparent contradictions in outcomes of experiments that vary in duration (Table 2).

When considering all possible starting conditions for consumer and resource abundance, it is likely that the initial transient responses will be different than the long-term responses. This white region, where short- and long-term responses differ (Fig. 4), tends to be larger than the grey (consistent) region and is even larger for other functional responses (Type II and III;
for quantifying changes in species interactions with temperature and relating them to asymmetries in resource biomass accumulation or consumer growth. For example, previous studies have found changes in consumer–resource interactions that resulted from asymmetries between consumer consumption and loss rates (Rall et al. 2010; Vucic-Pestic et al. 2011), as well as from asymmetries in resource biomass accumulation (O’Connor et al. 2011). Identification of these asymmetries allows empiricists to focus measurements on a few key parameters, and should lead to generalisations about temperature-dependent asymmetries across ecosystems.

Recent research on the metabolic scaling of vital rates provides a powerful starting point for identifying when temperature-dependent asymmetries are likely to arise (Allen et al. 2005; López-Urrutia et al. 2006; Dell et al. 2011). For example, foraging effectiveness is often dependent on consumer and resource movement rates (Dell et al. 2013), which leads to asymmetries when consumer and resource metabolic responses to temperature differ. A number of consumer–resource pairings differ in mean responses, such as carnivore–herbivore and vertebrate–invertebrate pairings (Dell et al. 2011). These differences suggest that interactions involving these groups are more likely to show changes in $B_{CR}$ with warming. Moreover, when the direction of the asymmetry is known, the direction of change in $B_{CR}$, and therefore abundance, can be predicted. As an example, carnivores are less sensitive to temperature on average than herbivores (Dell et al. 2011). This difference can cause an increased velocity of herbivores relative to carnivores with temperature, which in turn can generate increases in encounter rates that outstrip increases in carnivore mortality; the resulting asymmetry is predicted to increase $B_{CR}$ with warming, causing a relative increase in carnivore density.

Applying metabolic theory to the $B_{CR}$ framework also highlights gaps in current knowledge that are necessary for understanding and predicting impacts of temperature change. The carrying capacity of resources within ecosystems ($K$) is one such gap, as is the effect of declines in ecological rates that occur when temperature exceeds species thermal tolerances. Warming experiments that have manipulated nutrient supply rate, or used inferred measures, have illustrated its importance to trophic dynamics (O’Connor et al. 2009; Rall et al. 2010). Similarly, observational studies have shown that some of the strongest climate signals in marine zooplankton were not due to direct effects of warming, but rather resulted from decreases in nutrient supply rate at higher temperatures (Roemmich & McGowan 1995).

The $B_{CR}$ framework clarifies that warming will alter trophic dynamics by altering $K$ whenever resource metabolic rate and nutrient supply rates have different temperature sensitivities. Nutrient supply rates are often driven by both abiotic and biotic processes, such as temperature, water availability and microbial activity in terrestrial ecosystems (Melillo et al. 1993; Delgado-Baquerizo et al. 2013). Differences in the temperature-dependencies of these processes are likely in most ecosystems, and therefore determining how temperature affects carrying capacity in different habitats should be an important goal for ecologists. Ecosystem studies and predictive models can be used to make a priori predictions about the direction
and magnitude of nutrient shifts with temperature, and thus to predict where changes in $B_{CR}$ are likely to be driven by changes to resource carrying capacity. For example, a broad scale marine study showed that apparent temperature limitations of bacteria were actually due to limited resources (López-Urrutia & Morán 2007). Similarly, terrestrial models suggest that increases in soil nutrients will be prevalent following warming in northern ecosystems (Melillo et al. 1993), and fine scale models are available to understand differences in the temperature-dependency of phosphorus among lakes (Wang et al. 2003; Malmaeus et al. 2006).

The temperature-rate functions we have considered model increases in biological rates that occur with temperature, but do not capture declines in rates that occur at higher temperatures. The functional relationship between temperature and rates in this declining phase are only beginning to be understood and still lack empirical generality (Dell et al. 2011; Amarasekare & Savage 2012). Nonetheless, the $B_{CR}$ framework allows scaling from vital rates to consumer–resource dynamics and vice versa, even when vital rates decline with temperature. For example, warming beyond a predator’s temperature optimum will cause mortality rates to increase more quickly than attack rates, thus reducing relative growth (Fig. 3a, descending line). Direct measurement of these vital rates would lead to new insights in both physiological responses to temperature and how these responses scale up to affect community dynamics.

The second insight to emerge from the $B_{CR}$ framework is that temperature changes that alter biomass ratios also have predictable effects on stability. This insight addresses two central goals for ecologists: predicting how biomass changes with temperature and when these changes cause trophic interactions to become unstable. Both measures have clear and broad implications for warming effects, ranging from changes in the stability and impact of insect herbivores (Frazier et al. 2006; Currano et al. 2008; Nelson et al. 2013) to increases or failures of fisheries (Rose 2004; Cheung et al. 2010). The novel insight we gain is that stability can change bi-directionally with $B_{CR}$ whereas biomass ratios follow a consistent trend. Taking the carnivore–herbivore example from above, an increase in $B_{CR}$ with temperature will cause a top-heavy system to become less stable following warming. In contrast, a system with initially low carnivore abundances that experiences a similar increase in $B_{CR}$ would be less prone to extinction following warming (Fig. 2). This bi-directional relationship means that diagnostic measures, such as the correlation between consumer abundance and coefficient of variation, can be used to predict the long-term effects of warming on extinction (Table 2).

The relationship between stability and consumer to resource biomass ratios facilitates predictions about ecosystems that are most sensitive to shifts in $B_{CR}$. Recent studies have demonstrated that warming can have a large effect on stability (Rall et al. 2010; Binzer et al. 2012; Nelson et al. 2013), but ecologists have lacked general predictions about when these effects are likely to generate population fluctuations or extinctions. The link between $B_{CR}$ biomass ratios and stability may allow ecologists to identify vulnerable ecosystems a priori by quantifying biomass ratios across food webs. This quantification has been done to explore trophic structure and stability (Cebrían et al. 2009; Rip & McCann 2011), but has yet to be undertaken to generate predictions about sensitivity to climate change.

The explicit linking of dynamic outcomes (relative biomass and stability) with aggregate parameters ($\Delta K, \Delta RG$) also allows for greater synthesis parameters to aggregate parameters and biomass distributions (eqn 3 and 4; Appendix S1). Studies often measure either vital rates (Dell et al. 2011) or changes in abundance and stability (Barton 2010; Kratina et al. 2012), but rarely both. Translating parameters to $B_{CR}$ and vice versa (Tables 2 & S1) creates a common currency for such studies. Moreover, because the $B_{CR}$ framework clarifies the relationship between these measures in terms of temperature-dependent asymmetries, ecologists are now in a position to determine which asymmetries are shared by specific ecosystems. Effects that initially appeared idiosyncratic may actually be generalisable across systems as the numbers of studies that test relationships between temperature and food webs grow.

The third insight to emerge from the $B_{CR}$ framework is that short-term, transient dynamics following warming will often differ from long-term trajectories. The question of the appropriate timescales for experiments is longstanding in ecology, as is the relevance of transient and equilibrium dynamics in different communities (Hastings 2004). Although our empirical measure of $B_{CR}$ focuses on equilibrium conditions, our approach also allows ecologists to quantify $B_{CR}$ by directly measuring ecological rates (Table 2). This relationship between equilibrium conditions and rates allows for a more complete scaling between transient and long-term trajectories, and therefore has the potential to clarify when different temperature responses among experiments are due to differences in timescales or the temperature sensitivities of organisms.

Finally, the $B_{CR}$ framework provides the cornerstone for a modular theory of the temperature dependence of food webs. Just as our results highlight that a combination of high resource biomass accumulation and high consumer relative growth leads to unstable interactions (eqn 5, Fig. 2), previous research has shown that this combination can also decrease the stability and diversity of food webs (Rooney & McCann 2012). Although considerable work is required to develop a full food web model based on the consumer–resource interaction of two functional groups, the $B_{CR}$ framework nonetheless highlights important future areas of research. For example, because temperature can increase or decrease $B_{CR}$ in a single consumer–resource interaction (Fig. 3), food webs will contain numerous links that vary in the consistency of their temperature responses. If different consumer–resource interactions within food webs tend to behave similarly, we would expect the effects seen in single interactions to multiply through the food web. In contrast, modules within a food web that show opposite trends with temperature may dampen the overall effect of any single interaction.

In summary, our $B_{CR}$ framework links the functioning of trophic dynamics to temperature changes using general, aggregated terms that translate across experimental systems and conditions. It clarifies that temperature is likely to change...
the outcomes of interactions in most communities because of asymmetries in temperature dependencies, such as an asymmetry in biotic and abiotic processes. It also highlights discrepancies between short- and long-term dynamics that likely arise in warming experiments. Finally, this general framework provides a foundation for understanding and predicting the effects of temperature on entire food webs, and provides clear directions for empirical and theoretical ecologists.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS
This article was generated as part of the Canadian Institute of Ecology and Evolution (CIEE) working group ‘Thermal Scaling and Body Size: the next frontier in climate change’ and as part of the working group ‘Synthesising theory and databases to advance a general framework for how warming affects trophic interactions’ held at the National Center for Ecological Analysis and Synthesis (NCEAS), funded by NSF (Grant #EF-0553768), the University of California, Santa Barbara, and the State of California. MIO and HSG initiated and organised these working groups.

AUTHORSHIP
BG led the article; JPD, BG, KSM, VS, TDT & DAV developed the modelling framework; JPD, BG, KSM, MIO, VS, JBS, TDT & DAV were the main writers; JLB, BTB, CC, AID, JPD, BG, HSG, CDGH, HMK, PK, KSM, MIO, VS, JBS, TDT, DAV & MW were involved in discussions and editing, and HSG & MIO initiated the NCEAS and CIEE working groups.

REFERENCES