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ABSTRACTS - Oral Presentations

Minimal communities as novel systems for studying ectomycorrhizal community function: examples and future directions

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Ectomycorrhizal fungi (EMF) are mutualistic associates of some of the most dominant and speciose trees on the planet, including pines, oaks, and eucalypts. Typically, an ectomycorrhizal plant species will host up to hundreds of different EMF species. However, there are cases where a restricted community of EMF can be found in specific ecological contexts such as with weakly ectotrophic hosts or in extreme environments. We will showcase instances where we see minimal communities and discuss the factors that may be driving this reduction in diversity. We propose minimal communities as ideal instances for developing and testing evolutionary hypotheses about diversification, co-evolution, and community function.