

ANIMAL COMMUNICATION: A NETWORK PERSPECTIVE

Communication underlies all important aspects of animals' lives. The most common natural context for communication is a network of several individuals because signals usually travel further than the average spacing between individuals. Some of these individuals – eavesdroppers – may gather information from signalling interactions without taking part in them. Also the presence of an audience (such as eavesdroppers) may alter the nature of signalling interactions.

I will begin by briefly presenting the perceptual background to communication networks, before focussing on the experimental evidence for network effects in fiddler crabs, fish and birds in contexts of aggressive and sexual interactions. I end with some recent developments, including how a network perspective can integrate information from several scientific disciplines.

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