



VIRTUAL BIOLOGY COLLOQUIUM

Friday, 13 May 2022 | 4 pm | Online Zoom Session

Hosted by Dr Nalini Puniamoorthy

Fertility in a warming world

By Rhonda Snook

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About the Speaker

Rhonda R Snook is a Professor of Ecology at the Department of Zoology, Stockholm University. She is an evolutionary ecologist with particular interests in the evolution of reproductive strategies, local adaptation, and speciation and their intersection. Recently her work has expanded into how climate change may affect these topics, which is the focus of her talk today. Snook uses a wide variety of techniques from experimental evolution to phylogenetic comparative analyses, DNA and RNA sequencing to confocal microscopy.

Future projections of climate change indicate that both mean temperature and temperature variability will increase. In particular, thermal extremes such as heatwaves are predicted to become more frequent, of longer duration, and more severe. Current forecasts of how organisms will respond to such environmental change focus on how temperatures affect survival. However, it has long been known that reproduction is more thermally sensitive. Yet, until recently, little systematic work has been done to assess: 1) the extent to which reproduction and survival differ in response to increasing temperature, 2) whether thermal sensitivity of reproduction varies among and within species, 3) what the consequences of such variation may be for forecasting future responses to increasing temperatures, and 4) any underlying genetic basis of thermally induced sterility. Answers about the plasticity and genetics of reproductive responses to climate change will help improve understanding how organisms may cope with increasing temperatures. In this presentation, I address these points using insects, which as ectotherms may be particularly sensitive to thermal effects on reproductive performance.

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