



Synthesizing Predictive Modeling of Forest Insect Dynamics Across Spatial and Temporal Scales Working Group

Follow-up Evaluation

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Forest Insects Working Group Follow-up Evaluation

Evaluation Design

Evaluation Questions

The evaluation of this Working Group was summative in nature, in that the data collected from participants was intended to gain feedback from participants about the quality of the current Working Group. Several questions constituted the foundation for the evaluation:

1. Were participants satisfied with the Working Group overall?
2. Do participants feel the Working Group achieved its goals? If not, why?
3. What new insights and collaborations were achieved by the group?
4. If now new insights and/or collaborations were achieved, what were the reasons?
5. How do the research collaborations happening in this working group differ from participants' other research collaborations?
6. What suggestions do participants have for improving future Working Groups?

Evaluation Procedures

Evaluation questions were developed by the NIMBioS Evaluation Coordinator in conjunction with the NIMBioS Director. The final instrument was hosted online via the University of Tennessee's online survey host mrInterview. Links to the survey were sent to 19 Working Group participants upon receipt of the Working Group's final summary report. Anyone on the roster for any given meeting of the group was considered a member of the group for evaluation purposes. Reminder emails were sent to non-responding participants at one and two weeks after initial contact. At three weeks past initial contact, nine participants had given their feedback, for a response rate of 47%.

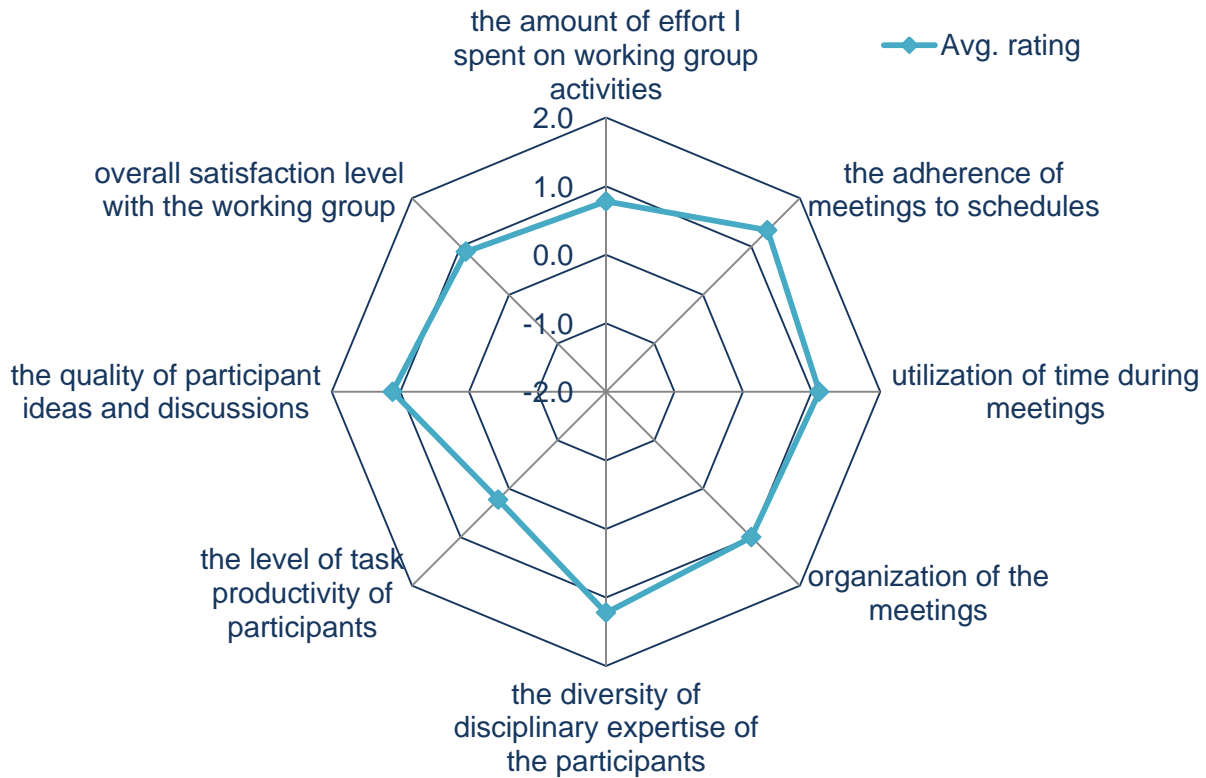
Evaluation Data

Satisfaction

Figure 1. Respondent satisfaction with various aspects of the Working Group

Rated of a scale of -2 = 'Very dissatisfied' to 2 = 'Very satisfied'

Indicate your level of overall satisfaction with the following aspects of the Working Group:



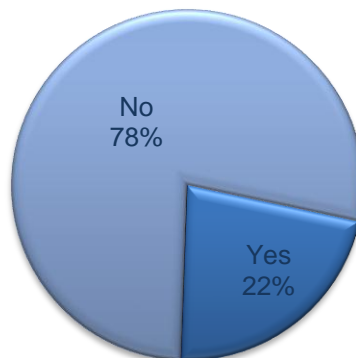
Comments:

Certain participants took leadership positions in the first meeting saying they would take responsibility for moving various projects forward, but were absent from many later meetings or were too busy to move to contribute. As a result, the productivity of the working group suffered.

I really gained a lot from the working group. I cannot rate it highly enough.

Meeting Attendance

Figure 2. Were you able to attend all of the working group's meetings? (n = 9)



What prevented you from attending all of the meetings (e.g. scheduling conflicts, childcare)?

A recent move and new job made it impossible to attend one meeting.

Fieldwork.

I attended all the meetings with the exception of one. My flights were delayed and then cancelled for a day, making my attendance difficult.

I joined the group after it had a couple of meetings.

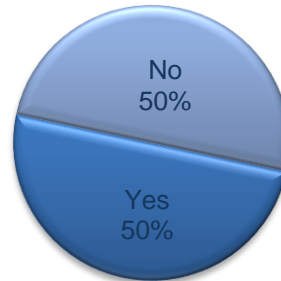
I merged with the group while I was at NIMBioS on sabbatical, so I missed their first meeting. I also could not attend the last meeting that was held outside of Knoxville, as at the same time I was responsible for my son and could not bring him with me the research station.

Scheduling conflicts with teaching at my home institution.

Sick.

Group Progress

Figure 3. Do you feel the working group achieved its goals? (n = 9)



Comments:

The initial ambitions were rather grand and had to be scaled back. Now that the WG is over we are still waiting for manuscripts to come out of the WG. Several of the milestones we set out to achieve never materialized.

This is always hard to answer, because there are multiple goals. Some of the goals have a time horizon that is still out of sight, like the goal of developing productive collaborations. The productivity from the direct activities from the group were not large, but I suspect there is a longer-term impact that we will not be able to assess for a few years.

We definitely were productive, although I think we deviated from some of the original goals of the group, but I guess that is the nature of research.

We started with a wide range of ambitious, interesting projects. Some of those projects were carried through to completion, and others were not. Generally, projects led by a post-doc or grad student were completed. Perhaps a few more post-docs or grad students to actually get work done would be useful.

Well, at present I do not know as it is somewhat unclear what the outcomes are.

Group Function

Figure 4. In your opinion, did the efforts of the working group lead to new insights and collaborations? (n = 9)

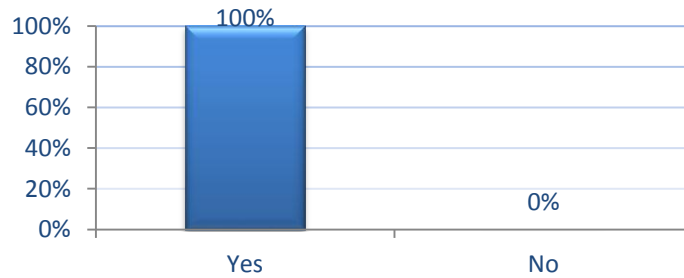
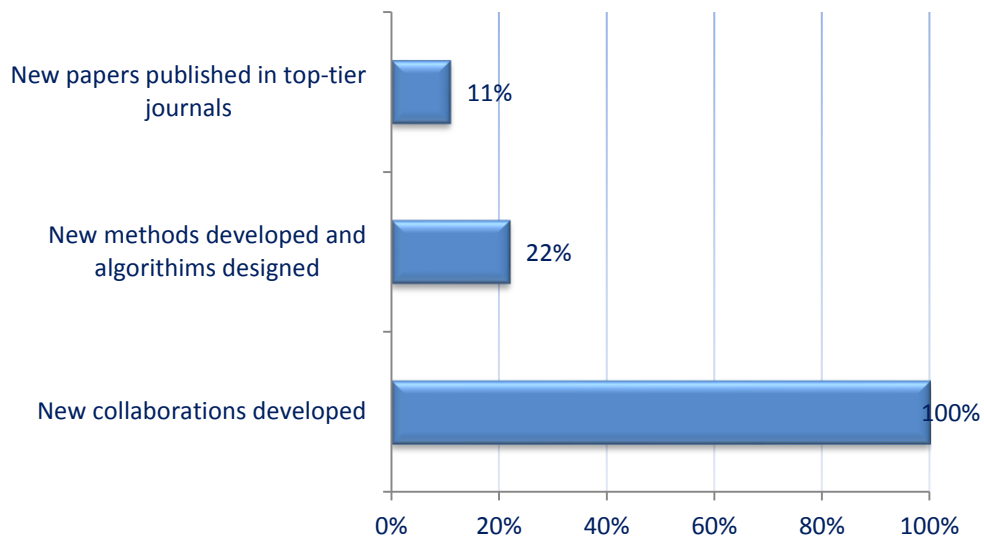


Figure 5. What evidence is there of new insights and/or collaborations? (n = 9)



Other evidence and/or comments on your selections above:

I am currently a co-author on 4 manuscripts in preparation that have directly emerged from the working group. At least 2 of these should be submitted in the next 2 months.

Figure 6. Were there research issues that you considered important to the proposed effort, and expected this group to address, that were not dealt with? (n = 9)

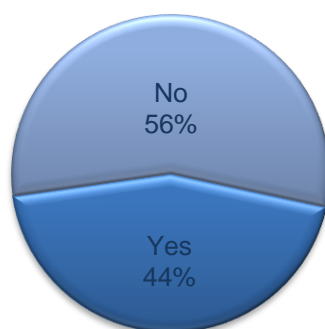
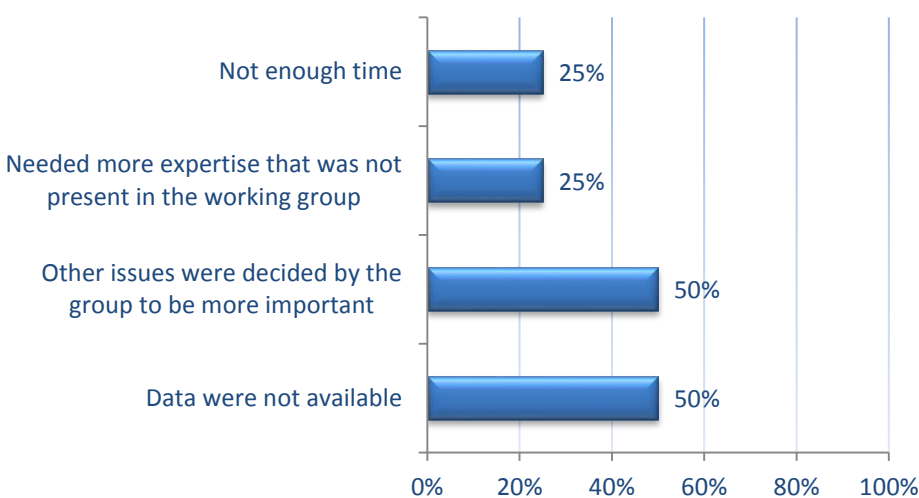


Figure 7. What were the reasons that you feel these research issues were not addressed? (n = 4)



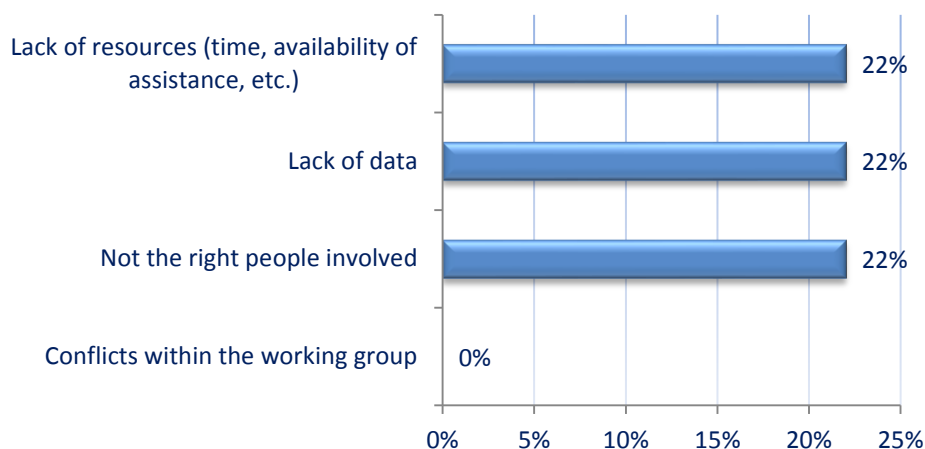
Please list other reasons not mentioned above, and/or to elaborate on your selected answers:

It would have been good to have linked the models to data more closely, but the data that was available wasn't really comprehensive enough to test some of the models. We also would have needed to take a more statistical approach from the outset and the statisticians in our group were not able to attend the first meeting so this may have influenced the direction the group too.

Key people leading some of the research areas I was interested in stopped participating in the working group after the first or second meeting.

People did not follow through on projects they had committed to.

Figure 8. What do you feel limited the working group's efforts? (n = 9)



Other limitations and/or comments on your selections above:

Fragmentation into sub-groups between which there was virtually no communication.

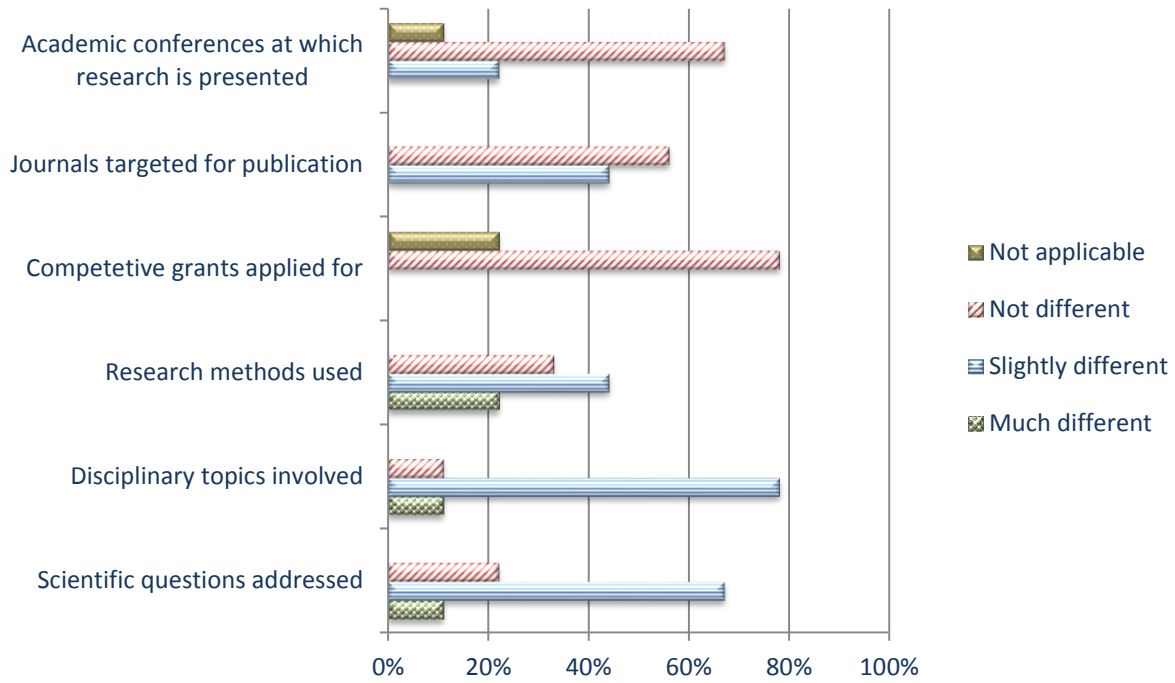
I feel like we lacked a "final push" to get papers out the door. I still have an incomplete paper from this project and suspect that there may be others.

I think we could have actually benefitted from one more meeting where we could have got back together as a big group and looked at what the open questions were and how we could proceed in future. We did this a little bit, but time was a big pressure.

We had plenty of good ideas that were not pursued because participants had limited time to devote to the work.

Uniqueness of Working Group Collaborations

Figure 9. Ways in which working group research collaborations differ from participants' other collaborations (n = 9)



Looking back, is there anything you would have changed about the working group format or content?

Fewer people and more focused.

I notice that attendance decreased in successive meetings. I've been trying to think of ways to overcome this problem. I liked the idea of a final meeting in the Smokies and would consider reducing the number of meetings. Another possibility... though one that would be a bit extreme is to tell people that we expect attendance or a clear contribution to get authorship.

I think the group would have benefited from a few more biologically-oriented applied mathematicians who were devoted to the working group.

I was a little disappointed that some members didn't participate as much as they could have, although this is likely common when trying to assemble good people with diverse interests.

More participants attending more regularly.

More participants with time available for leading projects.

No, it was great.

Please provide any additional comments about your overall experience with the working group:

I am just sorry it is over. I really looked forward to the working groups. They were incredibly productive.

I enjoyed the meeting, learned a great deal and made excellent connections. I feel like we didn't quite develop the right formula to produce earth shattering science. I think that part of this is just a result of NIMBioS continuing to adjust the formula for projects. Overall though my experience was quite positive and I'd be happy to attend/recommend similar groups.

I was disappointed by a lack of leadership within the working group.

The group consisted of a bunch of very bright socially adept individuals that had great ideas, lots of skills and knowledge and the ability to "play well" with each other. All required resources were made promptly available by NIMBioS. Despite this I feel the success of the working group was hampered by the very rapid fragmentation into subgroup (by the end of the first meeting) that ended up having little or no communication between them. Because of this many of the potential benefits of such a multidisciplinary group of bright minds was lost.

This working group was an incredibly useful, important experience for me. I gained invaluable contacts, insight, confidence, and encouragement. Thanks.