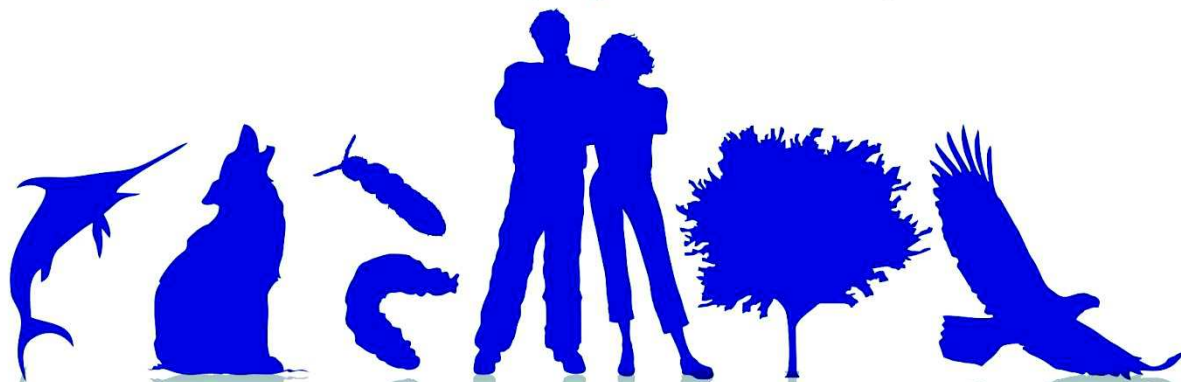


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S4. Oral

Successional dynamics in inland dune shrub communities drive changes in functional diversity

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Communities can be defined as assemblages of species coexisting under particular environments. The relationship between environment and species are regulated by both environmental requirements –which ultimately determine the species capacity to establish and survive in a particular environment– and the ecological interactions occurring during assembly processes –which also determine community composition by conditioning species coexistence. In this context, plant functional traits are attributes that represent ecological strategies and determine how plants respond to environmental factors and interact with other species. Therefore, the analysis of how traits vary through the dynamics of communities, such as along successions, can give insights about how environmental requirements and species interactions may determine the composition and functional structure of these communities. The xerophytic shrub communities inhabiting inland sand dunes in SW Portugal are characterized by successional processes that are mainly driven by local (edaphic gradients and human disturbance) and regional (climate) processes. Therefore, they constitute an appropriate system for studying species interactions and environment-community co-variations based on functional terms. Using these communities as a model, we evaluate the hypothesis that successional community changes in species composition of xerophytic shrub communities can result in concurrent changes in functional diversity