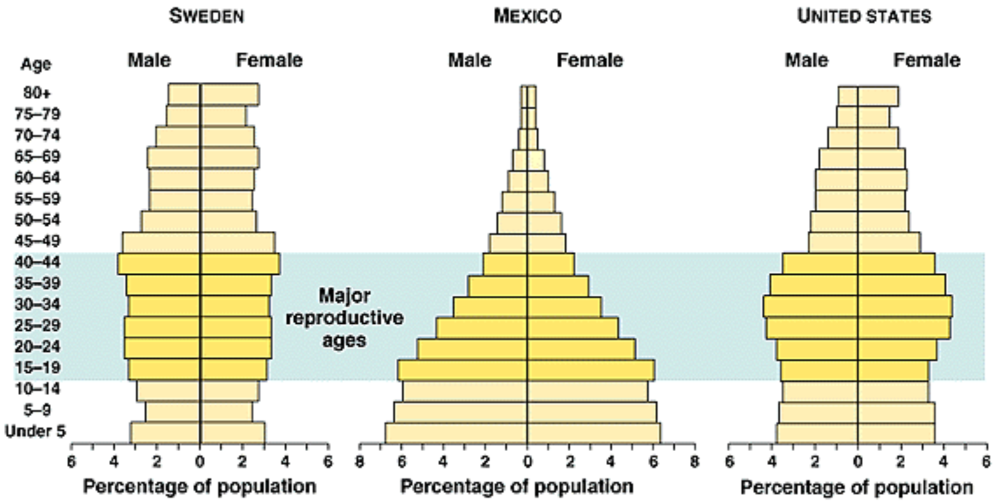
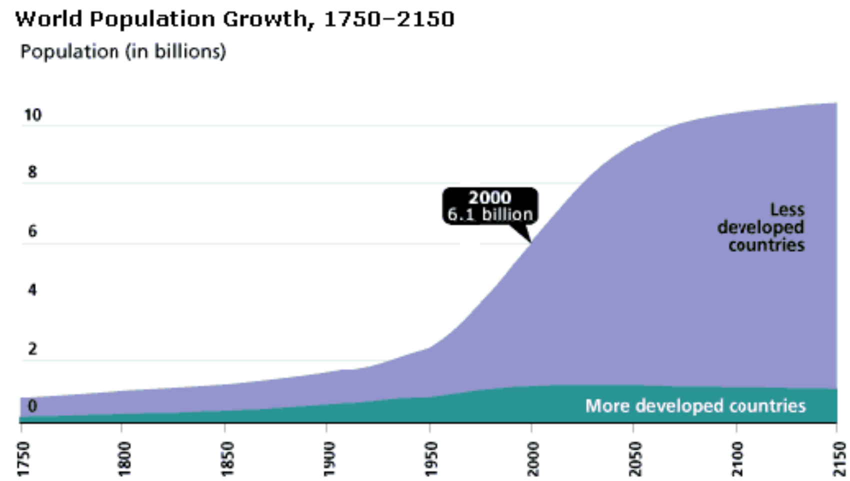





Source: United Nations, *World Population Prospects, The 1998 Revision*; and estimates by the Population Reference Bureau.

# Ecology – Population Structure

Evaluation of Population Age Structure, Survivorship Patterns and Growth

# Population Biology

- One of the most fascinating and fruitful areas to study in ecology is at the population level
- The **population *is*** the evolutionary unit and we do need to keep that in mind
- **How do we define a population**? Is the following statement "a group of individuals of the same species in a given area" sufficient for the definition of a population?
- What is missing?

# The realm of Population Ecology

- Today we are going to deal with several aspects of population biology, but we will focus much of our attention on three -
- First, Age Structure and methods of evaluating age structure in populations
- Second, we will look at general patterns of survivorship observed in natural populations and what that means to species
- Finally will look at population growth

# Before we look at our focal areas…

- Population structure has many different meanings
- Other than age structure (which will be our major focus), what **other sorts of characteristics** of populations might we consider to contribute to ***structure*** in natural systems?

# Let us consider some of the others…

- Certainly **distribution in space *and* time** (spatial and temporal distributions - dispersion)
- **Genetic variability** maintained by the population
- And we will look at **movement patterns of individuals** in the population (later in the course)

# Let us first consider dispersion

- With the concept of dispersion, really here we are addressing the issue of the **actual distribution of individuals in a given area**
- In general terms, we often talk about the **geographic range** of a species.  What does that actually mean?
- With more precision, we can look at this in terms of **where, in space, the organisms actually exist**

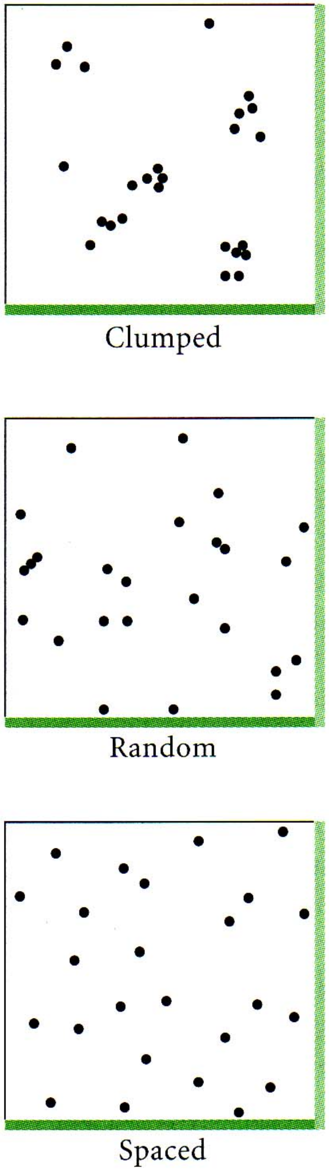



**FIGURE 14-7** Diagrammatic representation of individuals in clumped, random, and evenly spaced dispersion patterns.

# What might be the basis of different patterns of dispersion?

- That is, **why are the individuals of a population distributed in a particular way?**
- **Random** dispersion?
- What about **clumped** dispersion?
- Alternatively, what about the situation where the spacing is **uniform** among individuals?

# From a genetic perspective…

- We can look at this from the perspective of distinctness of populations and/or movement among populations and the coincident ***gene flow***
- One very important measure of a population is the **amount of genetic variability** maintained in a natural population (this is of primary importance for a population)
- This measure is an evaluation of the **amount of variation present in the population**

# Methods to Evaluate Variability

- We talked about variation and its sources when we looked at evolution. **The phenotypic variability displayed by individuals is a result of the interaction between genetic features and environmental influences**
- However, **to accurately evaluate variation in the gene pool**, we need to employ methods that look at genetic features – e.g.?

# When evaluating any feature of a population – **is it a *closed* entity**?

- That is, for many analyses, we want to evaluate that population, or at least the group of individuals that we **think** is a population
- Many times the terms **source and sink populations** are used to describe such situations.  Here, there is essentially one-way movement of individuals (*and genes*) from the source population or populations to other subpopulation(s)
- This obviously can create difficulties in the analysis of a population

# Why is assessment of variation important information?

- These analyses give us a feel for **population boundaries**
- This can **identify patterns in geographic variation**, subpopulations, and even contribute to our understanding of historical events influencing this population – **How?**

# Another Measure is Estimation of Density in a Geographic Area

- In looking at the dispersion of individuals in a population, it is important to be able to **evaluate the density of organisms** in that habitat.  Why might this be of value?
- Generally, **a complete census is not practical or even possible**, rather we use estimating tools
- What is the **most common estimating technique?**

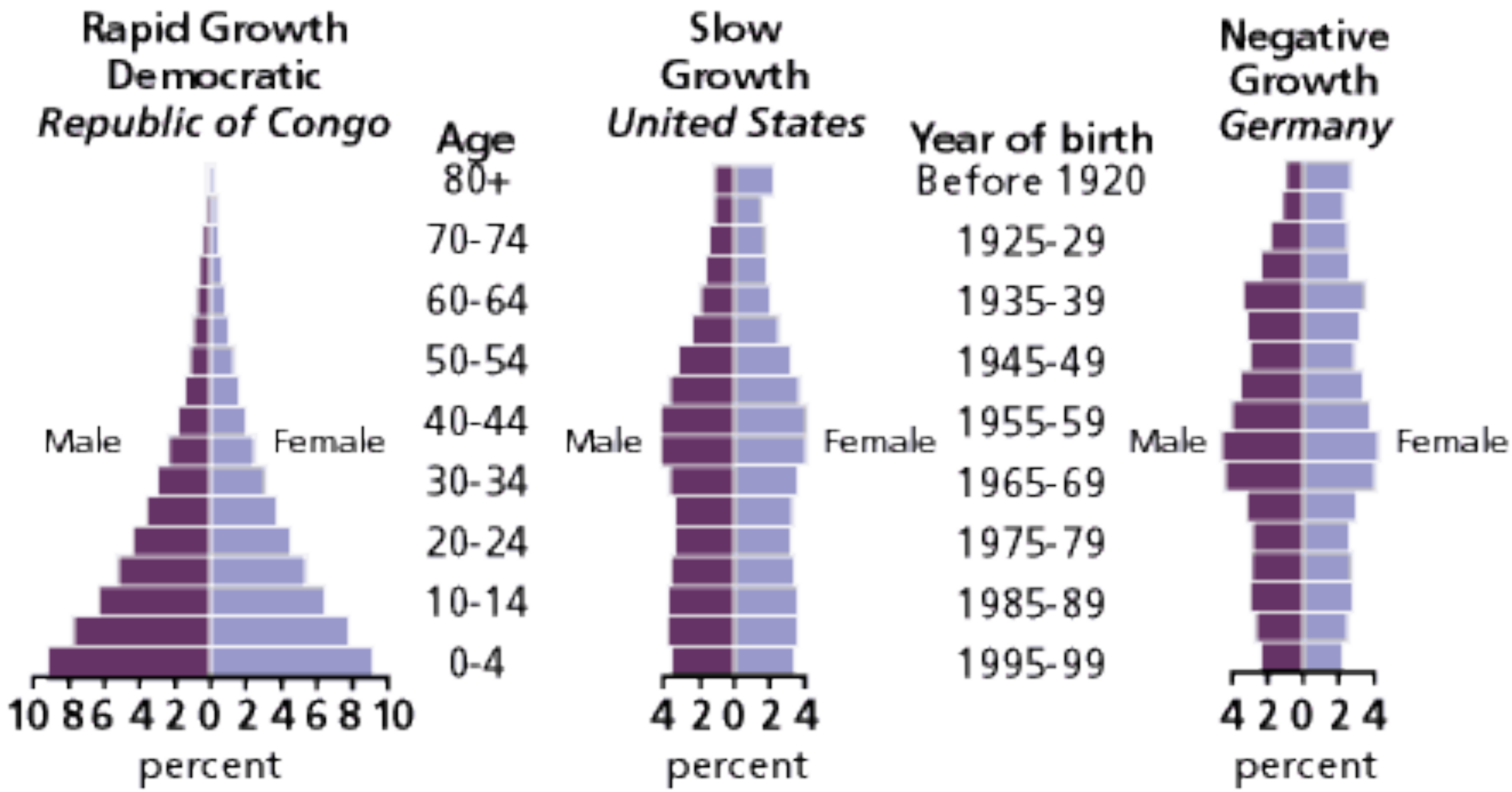
# Mark – Recapture Methods

- This is a very **effective and common technique** used to estimate population size and often times a realistic measure of a ***closed*** **system**
- The **calculation is simple:**
  ***$x/n = M/N$ (we will not be using this formula)***
- This procedure gives us a quick **measure of the population size** in that area

# Age Structure in Populations

- Basically, this is a **function of the age or age class distribution in a population**
- There are **several ways** to evaluate this:
  - **Follow a cohort of individuals through time** and obtain direct measurement of number of individuals at each age class (this is ideal)
  - Look at the **entire population** and measure the percentage of individuals in each age class
  - Look at the **age at which individuals die**

# These data can be used to construct Age Class Distributions



# What do the three types mean?

- The previous figure displays **human sample populations derived from the horizontal method of analysis**
- **Can we say anything** about the stability of the populations? How are these data most useful?
- As an example, what if we measured the age structure distribution of a population of fish. **What can we say about the population stability of a single population?**

# Other uses of this information

- Detailed **analysis of life history characteristics**, such as the age at which individuals die, can be used to construct life tables
- Let us look at these features from a study of a population of Darwin's ground finches
- We can obtain this type of data only by **following a cohort through time**. (But, as you can imagine, this is not simple and often involves estimation of several parameters to reach our life table estimates.)

What are the features we want to measure?

| TABLE 14-4 | Summary of life table variables |
| --- | --- |
| $l_x$ | Survival of newborn individuals to age $x$ |
| $b_x$ | Fecundity at age $x$ (female offspring produced per breeding season or age interval) |
| $m_x$ | Proportion of individuals of age $x$ dying by age $x + 1$ |
| $s_x$ | Proportion of individuals of age $x$ surviving to age $x + 1$ |
| $e_x$ | Expectation of further life of individuals of age $x$ |
| $k_x$ | $-\log_e s_x$, the exponential mortality rate between age $x$ and $x + 1$ |

**TABLE 14-5** Life table of the 1978 cohort of Darwin's ground finch *Geospiza scandens* on Isla Daphne Major, Galápagos

| Age ($x$)* | Number alive | Survivorship ($l_x$) | Mortality rate ($m_x$) | Survival rate ($s_x$) | Expectation of life ($e_x$) | Exponential mortality ($k_x$) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 0 | (210)† | 1.000 | 0.566 | 0.434 | 2.84 | 0.835 |
| 1 | 91 | 0.434 | 0.143 | 0.855 | 4.91 | 0.157 |
| 2 | 78 | 0.371 | 0.102 | 0.898 | 4.64 | 0.107 |
| 3 | 70 | 0.333 | 0.072 | 0.928 | 4.11 | 0.075 |
| 4 | 65 | 0.309 | 0.045 | 0.955 | 3.39 | 0.046 |
| 5 | 62 | 0.295 | 0.322 | 0.678 | 2.53 | 0.389 |
| 6 | 42 | 0.200 | 0.455 | 0.545 | 2.50 | 0.607 |
| 7 | 23 | 0.109 | 0.349 | 0.651 | 3.11 | 0.429 |
| 8 | 15 | 0.071 | 0.056 | 0.944 | 3.50 | 0.057 |
| 9 | 14 | 0.067 | 0.224 | 0.776 | 2.71 | 0.266 |
| 10 | 11 | 0.052 | 0.077 | 0.923 | 2.32 | 0.070 |
| 11 | 10 | 0.048 | 0.604 | 0.396 | 1.50 | 0.926 |
| 12 | 4 | 0.019 | 0.263 | 0.737 | 2.00 | 0.305 |
| 13 | 3 | 0.014 | (0.004) | 0.714 | (1.50) | 0.337 |
| >14 | (3) | (0.000) | (1.000) | 0.000 | . . . | . . . |

*Age in years

†Estimated

(After Grant and Grant 1992.)

# Graphically, we can just look at survivorship in various species

- From natural populations, we can identify **three general trends**
- These are expressed as a **plot of the log of the number of individuals surviving as a function of the percent of normal life span of an individual**

# The three general patterns are…

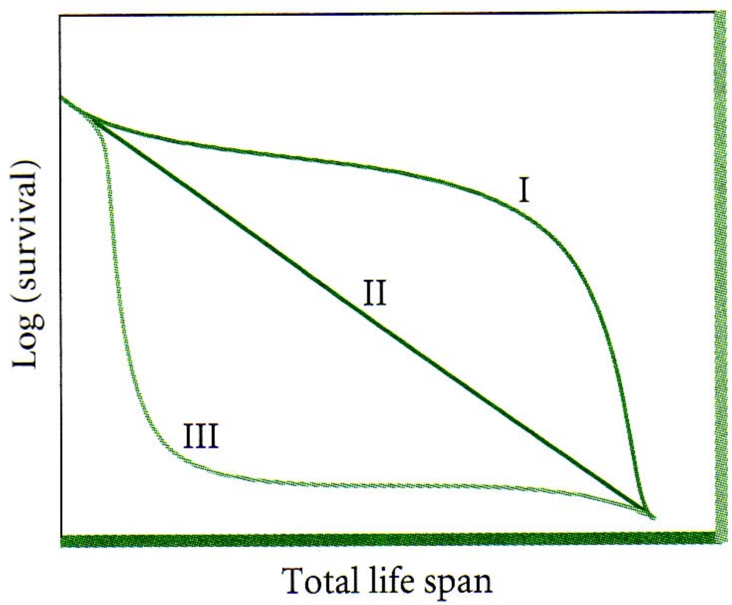



**FIGURE 14-17** Depiction of three idealized survivorship curves. Populations with a type I survivorship curve have more mortality in the older age classes, whereas a considerable amount of mortality occurs among the youngest individuals in populations with type III curves.

# Patterns indicate many features – much more than just survivorship

- Conceptually, **what does each curve tell us?**
- We start to see **patterns emerge**, particularly with regard to strategies of reproduction
- We find suites of coincidental features. We can divide the organisms into either ***r*** strategists or ***K*** strategists
- We will develop this in detail when we look at population growth patterns

# Break time!

# The various population measures

- These features identified so far all contain valuable information regarding the population under study
- We still have a very important component of population biology to address – **growth**
- We will look at **population growth models and make some generalizations about organisms and their reproductive strategies**

## TABLE 14-4 Summary of life table variables

| | |
|---|---|
| $l_x$ | Survival of newborn individuals to age $x$ |
| $b_x$ | Fecundity at age $x$ (female offspring produced per breeding season or age interval) |
| $m_x$ | Proportion of individuals of age $x$ dying by age $x + 1$ |
| $s_x$ | Proportion of individuals of age $x$ surviving to age $x + 1$ |
| $e_x$ | Expectation of further life of individuals of age $x$ |
| $k_x$ | $-\log_e s_x$, the exponential mortality rate between age $x$ and $x + 1$ |

# We can evaluate reproductive rates

- Simplistically, we can evaluate the **rate of increase** as ***B – D*** (on a population level)
- But population level measures are often difficult to determine. Alternatively, with our data we can predict the **average output of an individual and the average death rate of an individual** (from our $b_x$ and our $l_x$). Simply put, the individual birth rate – the individual death rate ***(b – d)*** or ***r*** (it is not quite that simple, but we will treat the details in a few)

# Mathematically, what is ***r***?

- ***r*** is a very important variable for our consideration as much of population growth modeling and theory is based upon this value
- By definition, ***r*** **is the intrinsic rate of increase or the rate of increase in a population under ideal conditions with a stable age distribution – simply put, the birth rate minus the death rate**

# Estimation of ***r*** from other data

- This estimation is based upon the **probable output of all age classes** to arrive at a particular estimate. It is, in effect, an estimation of rate from the data that will give us a population level characteristic or feature
- We can then use this information to calculate **population size over time**, **e.g.** $\mathbf{N_t = N_0 e^{rt}}$ (continuous reproductive output)

# Look at this formula more closely

- The predictions here are **the result of the capacity of the individuals to reproduce – *without other restrictions.*** This formula describes exponential growth in a population (continuous addition of offspring) or geometric growth (for seasonally defined addition of offspring on a periodic basis)

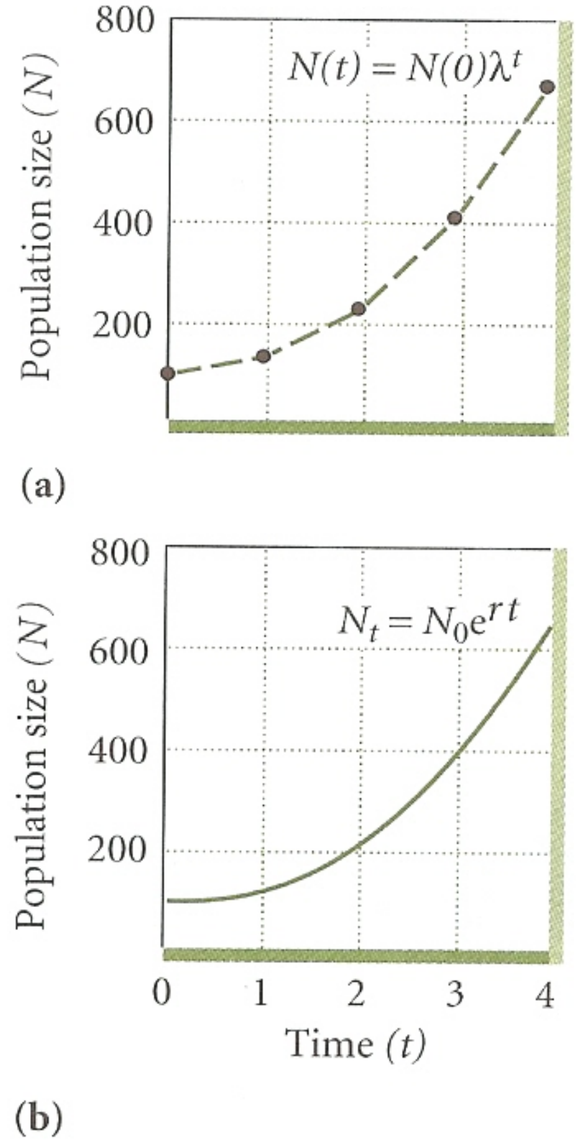
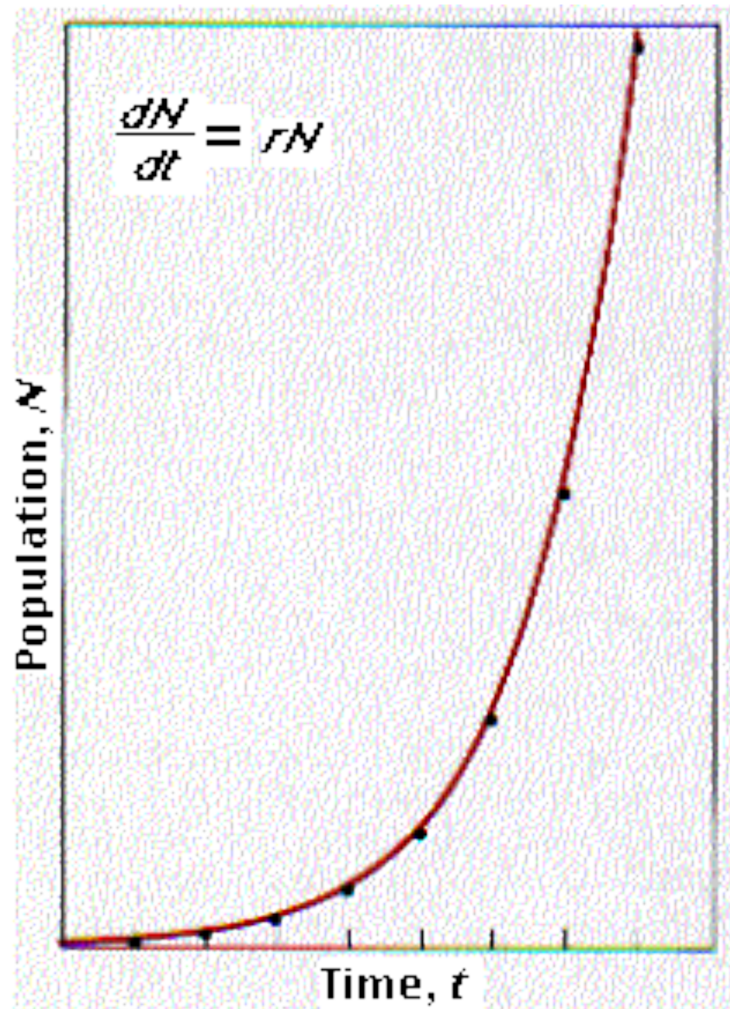



**FIGURE 15-4** Increase in the number of individuals in populations undergoing (a) geometric growth and (b) exponential growth at equivalent rates ($\lambda = 1.6$, $r = 0.47$).

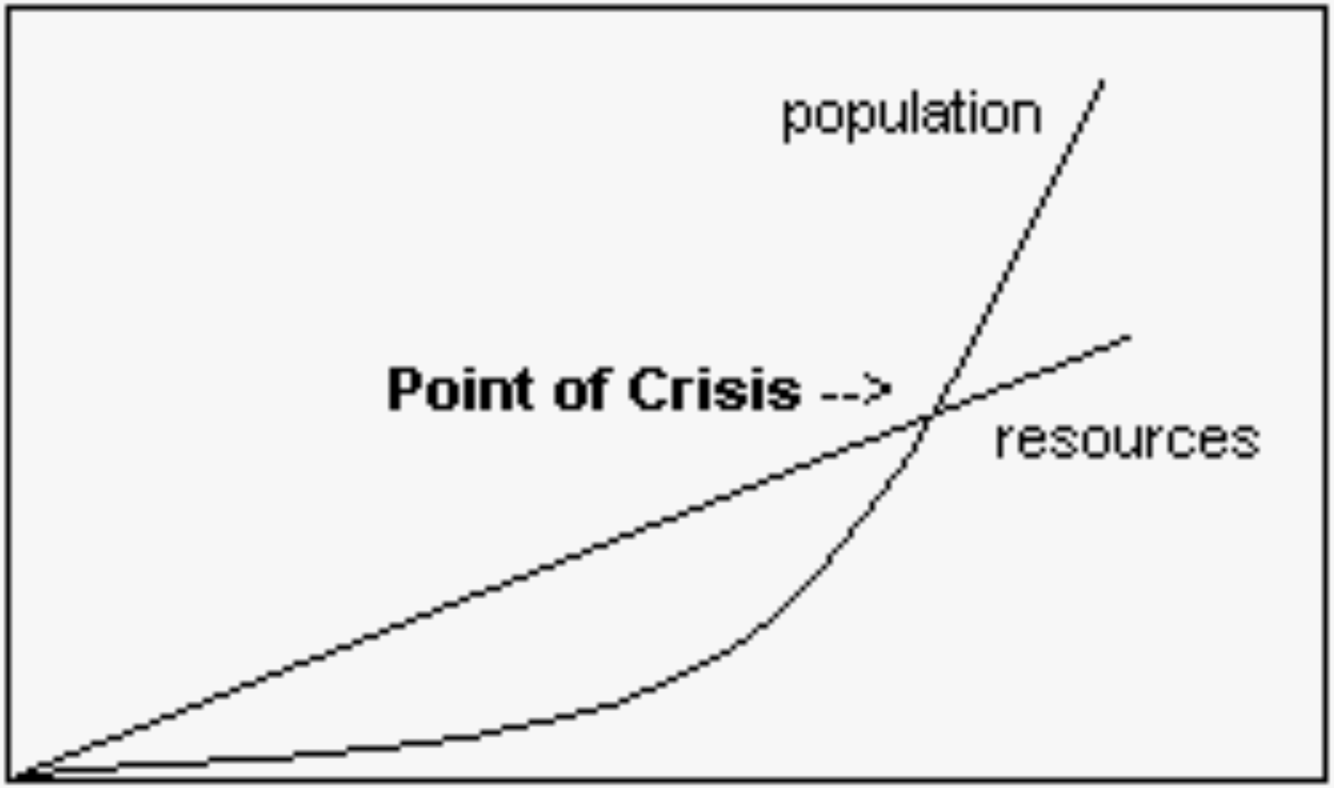
# Exponential growth in a population

The formula that represents the slope of this line, **dN/dt=rN, is the instantaneous rate of increase** for this population. That is, this formula tells us the rate of increase for the population at any population size for groups exhibiting exponential growth.



# Now, let us do a reality check

- **What does exponential growth suggest**? Is that the situation we see under most natural conditions?
- One of the primary contributions to the thinking of Charles Darwin was an essay written by Thomas **Malthus** regarding population growth
- Although Malthus predicted an outcome for humans, it is applicable to all organisms under consideration – **the struggle for resources**



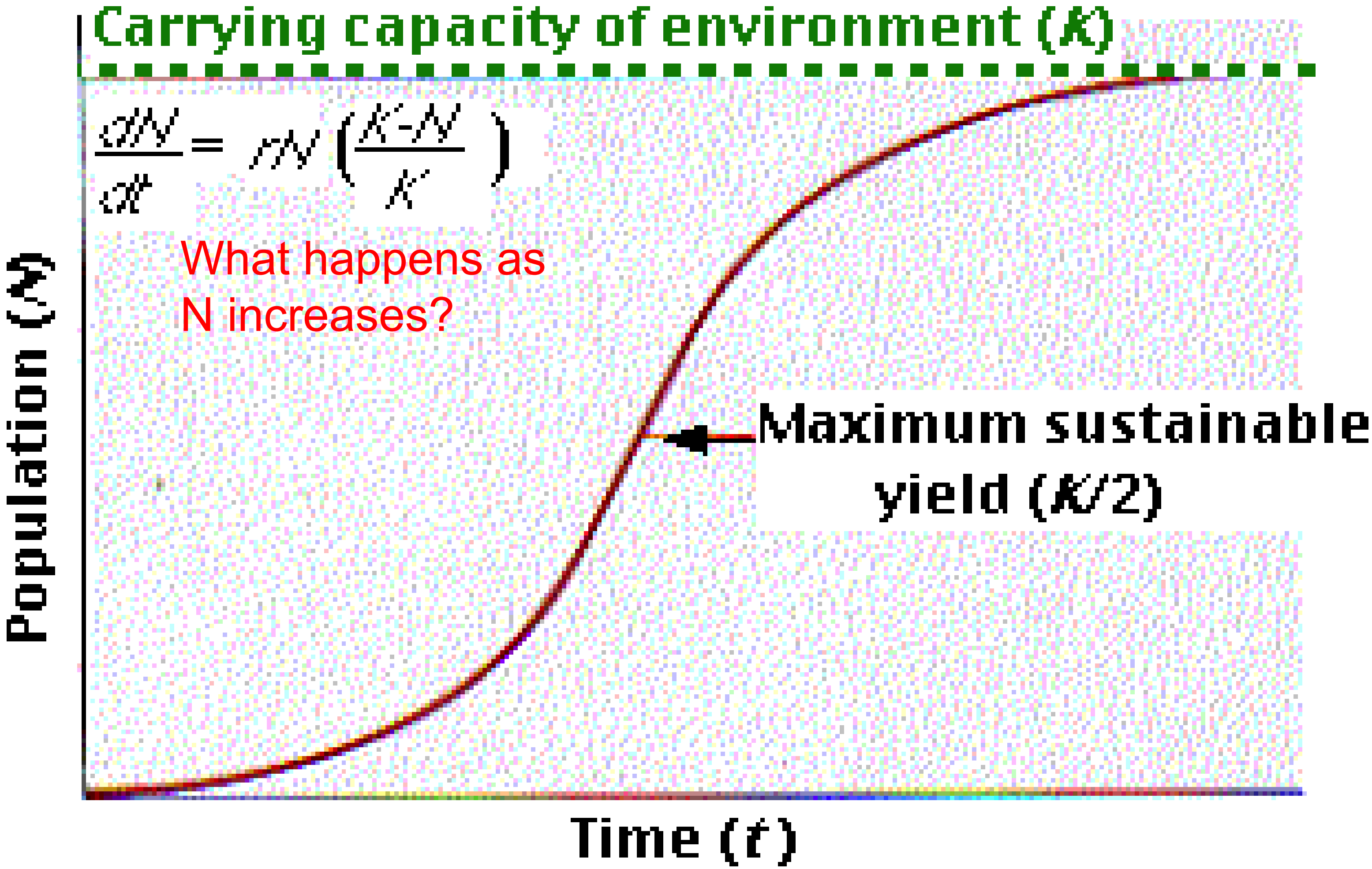

**Malthus' Basic Theory**

# How can we apply this?

- Very early in the study of population ecology, the **recognition of limited resources** was considered when modeling population growth
- A term was devised, called the **environmental resistance to growth**
- Mathematically, the term is

$$\frac{\mathbf{(K - N)}}{\mathbf{K}}$$

# Graphically, this is logistic growth

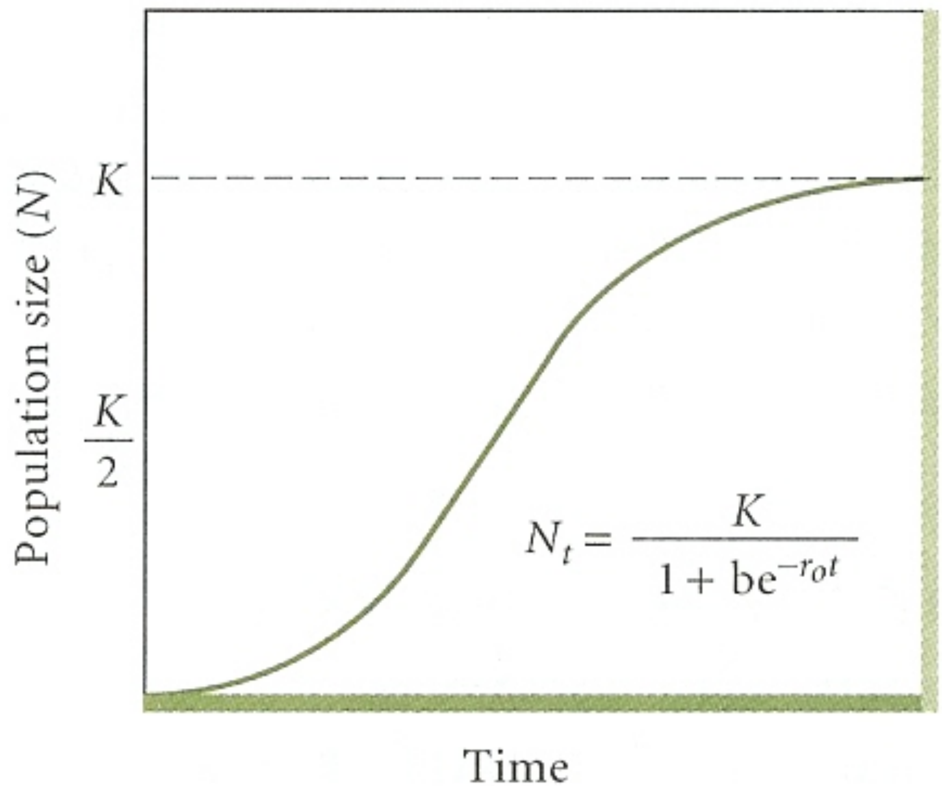


# Predictions of Logistic Growth

- The reality of nature dictates that organisms will not exhibit exponential or geometric growth for extended periods of time
- That is, $dN/dt=0$ at $N=K$ (remember the environmental resistance to growth)
- This is Logistic Population Growth

# Look at the shape of that curve

- This curve is picture-perfect.  A well-behaved population of organisms
- **What directly influences the shape of this curve,** and more importantly, the rate associated with the logistic population growth model?
- What happens when we **change those parameters**?



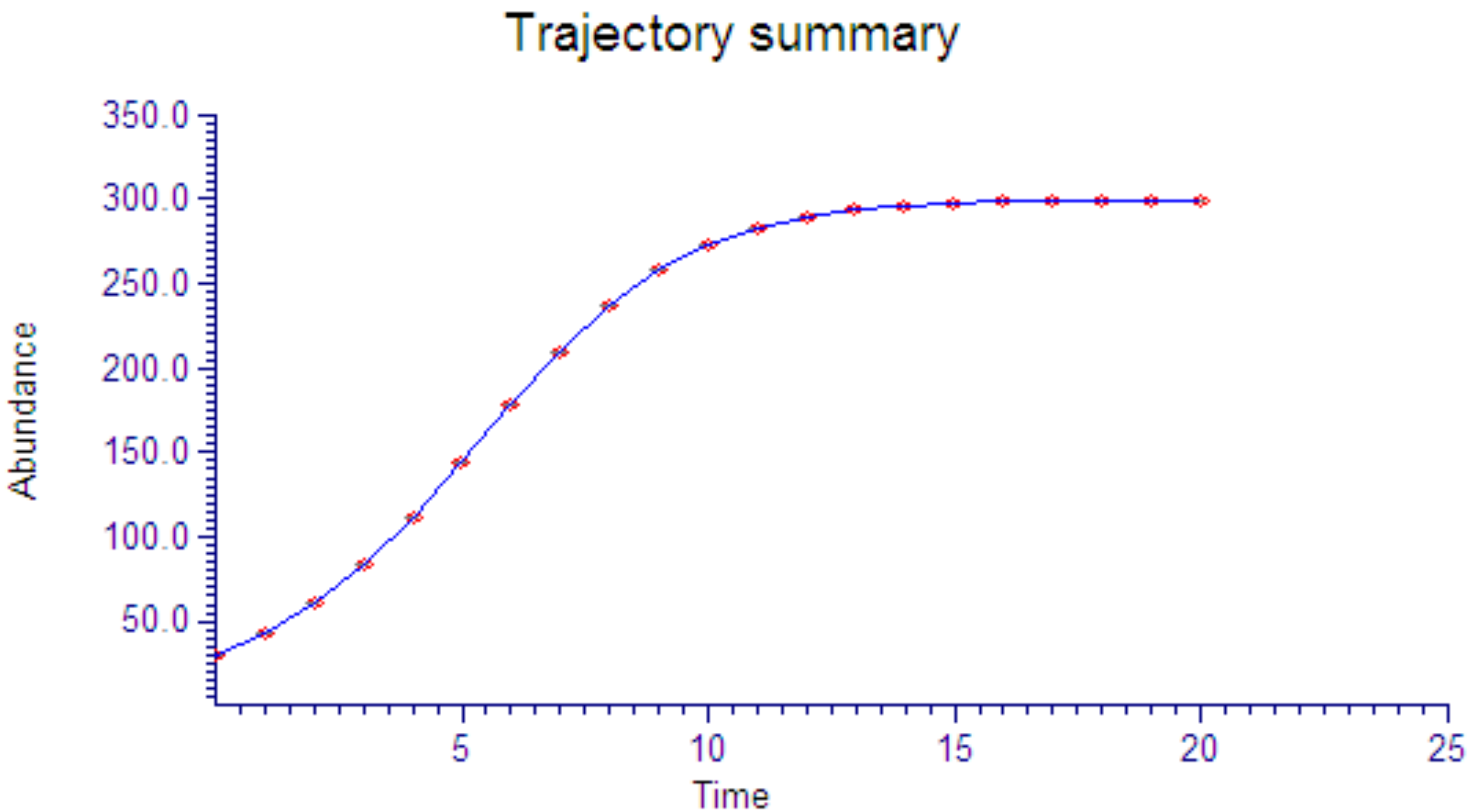

We can calculate the population size at some point in time *t* and the quantity *b* is basically the starting population size for the specific situation.

**FIGURE 16-4** According to the logistic growth equation, increase in numbers over time follows an S-shaped curve that is symmetrical about the inflection point ($K/2$). That is, accelerating and decelerating phases of population growth have the same shape.

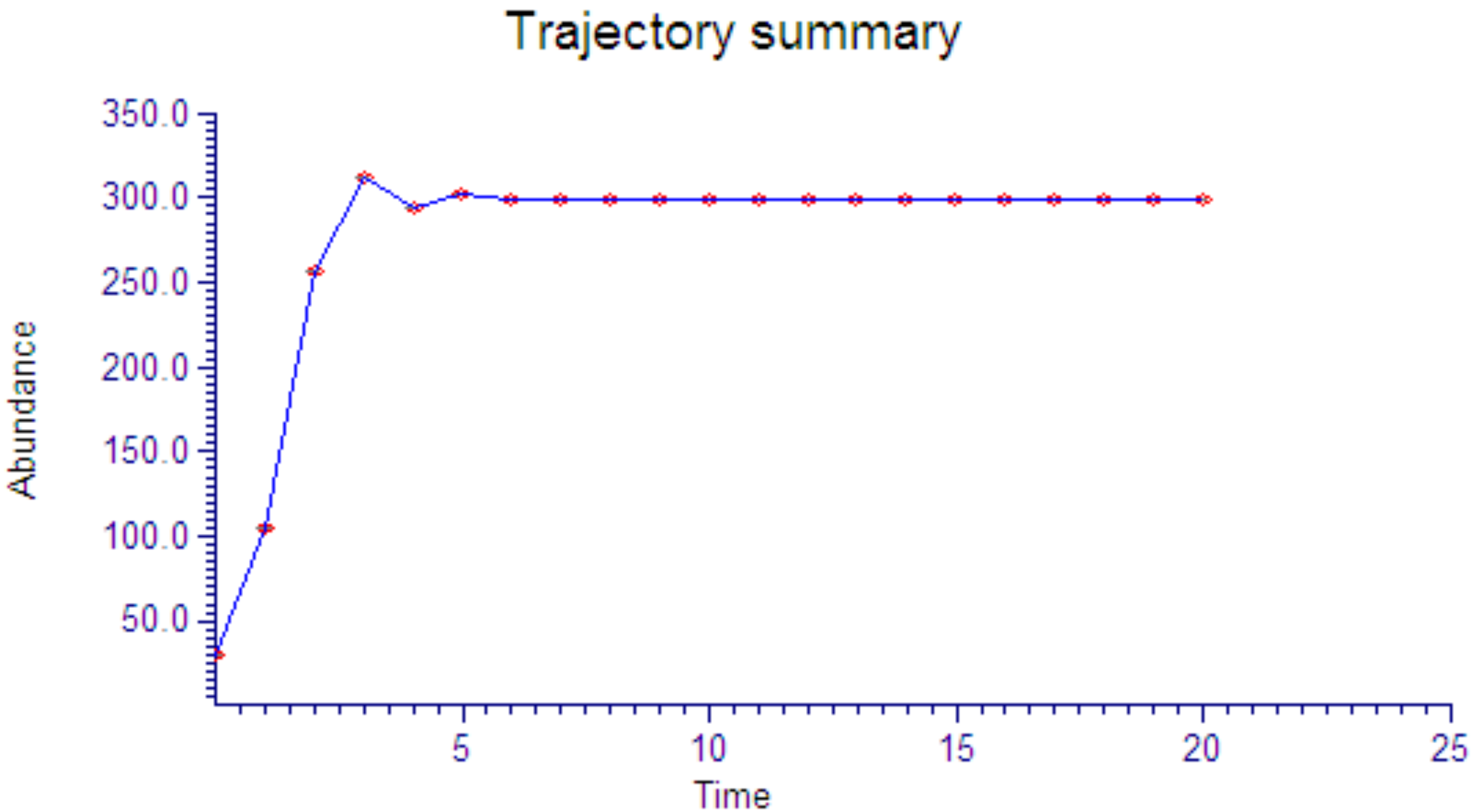
# These curves are predictions

- This curve is a prediction of a "well-behaved population" of organisms
- The most important factor influencing this curve is the value of ***r*** (the difference between the birth rate and death rate)
- What happens when we change those parameters?

# When *r* is small, ~1.5

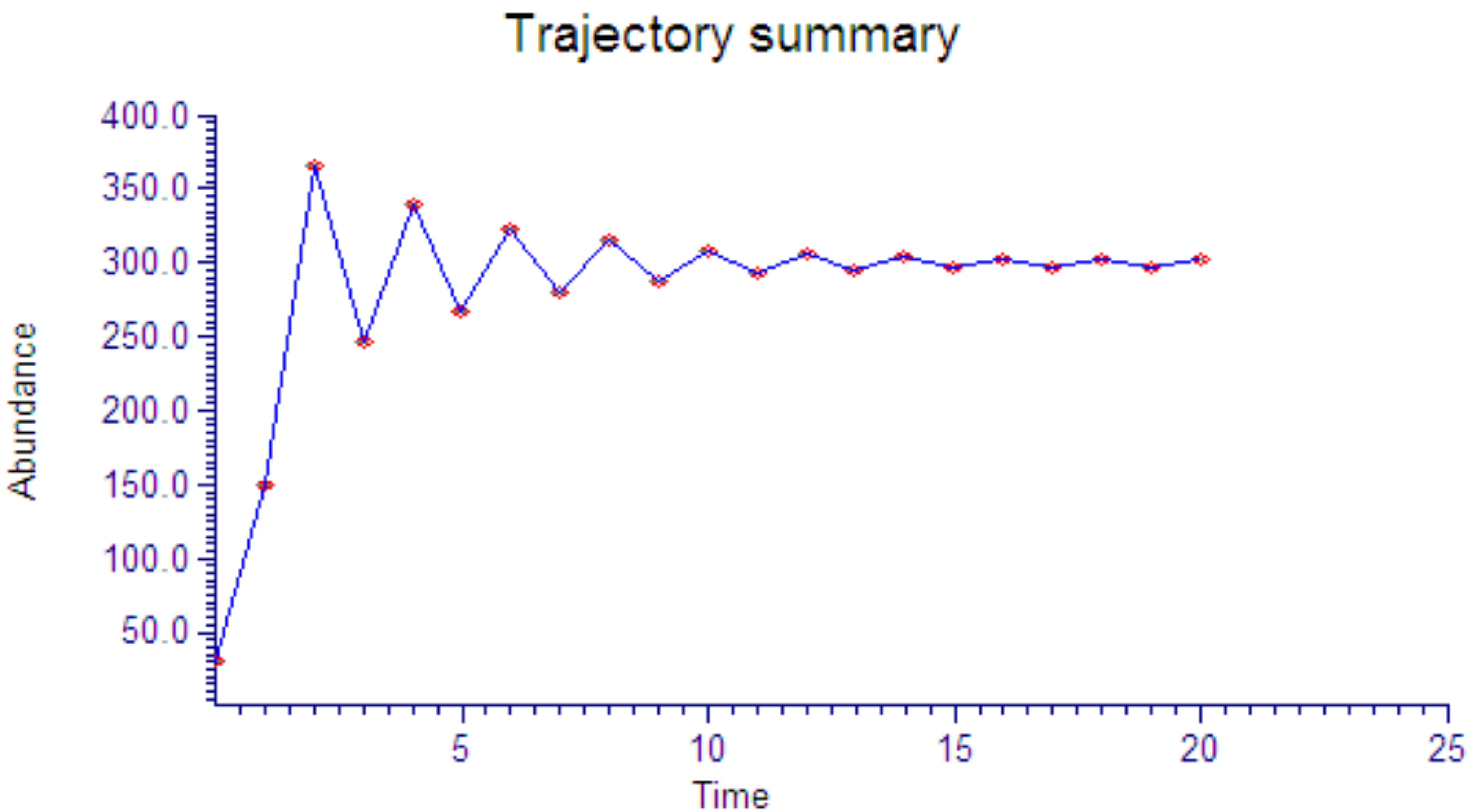


# $r = 4.0$



Trajectory summary
Abundance
350.0
300.0
250.0
200.0
150.0
100.0
50.0
5
10
15
20
25
Time

## $r$ = 6.0


Trajectory summary
Abundance
400.0
350.0
300.0
250.0
200.0
150.0
100.0
50.0
5
10
15
20
25
Time

# When *r* gets very large, ~ 10