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PREDATION RISK BALANCES HABITAT SUITABILITY AMONG HABITATS WITH HETEROGENEOUS RESOURCE LEVELS

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The ability of organisms to move across ecosystems or habitats within the same environment affects species persistence in disturbed environments and interspecific interactions, leading to improvements of their fitness. In this context, the evaluation of foraging behavior helps us to understand how prey choose habitats, how they trade off food and survival and allow us to compare the role of different types of biotic processes, such as predation and habitat selection. Assuming the ideal free distribution applied to predator-prey populations, we proceeded with an experimental microcosm approach, evaluating if the prey *Rhinella schneideri* tadpoles actively choose to forage in habitats with higher resource availability and if they avoid such habitats when dragonfly larvae predators are present. We also evaluated if prey responded morphologically when exposed to predation risk. Tadpoles avoided habitat with predators cue and chose habitats with more food resources when the predator was absent, besides increasing the swimming activity when exposed to predation risk. Tadpoles also developed deeper tail fins and higher body dimensions when submitted to risk. We highlight the adaptive responses by tadpoles demonstrating evidences of within and among habitat predator-avoidance. Tadpoles prey perceived predation cues and altered their behavior and morphological traits. Our results corroborate the notion that prey can evaluate and establish their space use through emergent and correlated behavioral and morphological responses under predation risk.

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