Flocking

CS289

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Flocking

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Also People

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Agenda

- Why is Flocking useful?
- What makes a "good" flock?
- Alternatives to decentralized flocking?
- How does one "prove" a flocking algorithm?

Related Topics: Formation control (flocks with shapes), Obstacles and goals (partial information), Predators (speed of reaction, manuevers), Flocking gone bad (ant mills), Human flocking (panic), etc.

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Why is flocking useful?

- In Nature?
- In Engineering?

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Why is flocking useful?

- In Nature?

- **Safety** (many eyes hypothesis, intimidation/defense, evasion)
- Increased success at **Migration** (information transfer), **Foraging** (collaborative search)
- **Hunting; Aero/Hydrodynamics** (efficient in formations)
- **Keeping colony together** for other reasons (reproduction, caring of young)

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What makes a good flock?

Ways to interpret that question

- How do you "identify" a flock?
- What are important properties a flock must have in order to be useful?

A first step towards formalizing/proving that some algorithm produces flocking…

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What makes a good flock?

LIST A

- Alignment: match velocity and heading
  - Velocity similar to natural velocity of individual (not a slow march)
  - Velocity is seemingly independent of flock size
- Cohesion/Separation: maintain some desired distance between nearest neighbors
  - Cohesion is a Very loose definition (flock could take on many shapes? Who is a neighbor?)
  - Collisions are extremely rare (allow tight inter-agent distances while maintaining speed)
- Connectedness
  - Everyone is part of the moving flock (don't accidently lose members along the way)

LIST B

- Recovery
  - Always a force towards getting into a flock; small perturbations should not cause flock to fall apart
  - Big Obstacles: maybe flock splits temporarily but comes back together…
- Reactivity
  - Fast ability to change direction without losing flock properties (alignment, cohesion, connected)
- Scalability
  - Same behavior is observed regardless of swarm size (e.g. flock velocity, connectedness, reactivity)

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Flocking and Formation Control

Lots of potential algorithmic approaches

- Prescribed Paths (blue angels, sync swimming)
- Leader-Follower (or a tree of relations)
- Explicit management of connectivity
- *… Or decentralized flocking*

Lots of alternatives to decentralized.
How do these compare ?

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What makes a good flocking algorithm?

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LIST C

- **Compatible with sensing available to agents**

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Analyzing Decentralized Flocking

- **Models in Biology**
  - Biological empirical studies date back long time
  - Current new approach: Reverse engineer from tracking data!
    - Fish Schooling (e.g. Couzin at MPI Germany), Starling Flocks (EU project in Rome)
    - The "real" local rules remains unknown and variable (e.g. Do all neighbors matter?)
- **Agent-based Models:** Two Influential papers
  - Craig Reynolds, SIGGRAPH, 1990
  - Tamas Viscek, Physical Review letters, 1995
    - Many modern papers and open questions (rules, obstacles, formations; ML)
- **Control Theory Models**
  - Use flocking for scalable formation control on unmanned vehicles
    - Biology suggests that nature has some powerful and effective solutions
    - Emphasize on "Provable" properties: (huge parameter space)
    - Examples: Tanner-Jadbabaie-Pappas and OlfatiSaber-Murray

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Analyzing Decentralized Flocking

- Tanner, Jadbabaie, Pappas
  - **Formalize:**
    - cohesion (potential field, desired "r" < R)
    - alignment (averaging neighbor velocity headings)

$\Delta v_i =$ align-with-nbrs + maintain "good" dist to nbrs

$\Delta v_i = \sum [v_k(t) - v_i(t)] + \sum$ gradient $f(r_{ik})$

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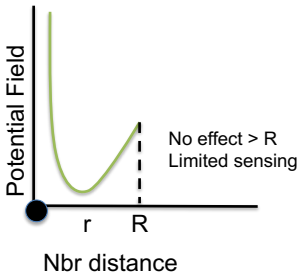

Potential Field
$f(r_{ik})$ = infinity if too close,
0 if perfect, higher if far,
0 if not in range

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Analyzing Decentralized Flocking

- Tanner, Jadbabaie, Pappas
  - **Formalize:**
    - cohesion (potential field, desired "r" < R)
    - alignment (averaging neighbor velocity headings)
  - **Properties:**
    - End state puts everyone in minimal energy for cohesion
    - End state puts everyone in same alignment
    - End state is stable *(fixed point < stable to small perturbations < attractor)*
    - Avoid collisions (~proven by making potential very high between neighbors)
    - Fast and Scalable (convergence time as function of flock size)
    - *Did not prove: Stays Connected (but maybe possible)*
    - *Does not always generate "good" flocks (e.g. is a Line a flock?)*
  - **Challenges:**
    - Network changes all the time (makes math extra hard)
      - PART I: used fixed neighborhood relations
      - PART II: neighborhood relations were induced by position graph

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Many more complex behaviors! beyond flocking

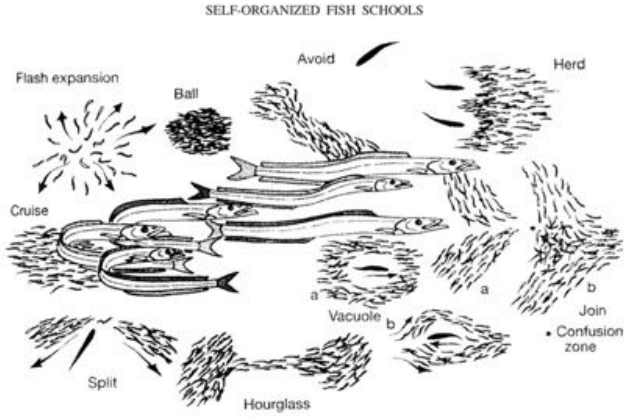

Figure 2. Examples of coordinated movement and directed activity, both emergent properties of fish schools, which are also commonly cited defense tactics against predatory attack. Fig. 12.8. from Pitcher and Parrish 1993. Reprinted with permission from the author and Kluwer Academic Publishers.

Parrish et al, **Self-Organized Fish Schools: An Examination of Emergent Properties,** 2002

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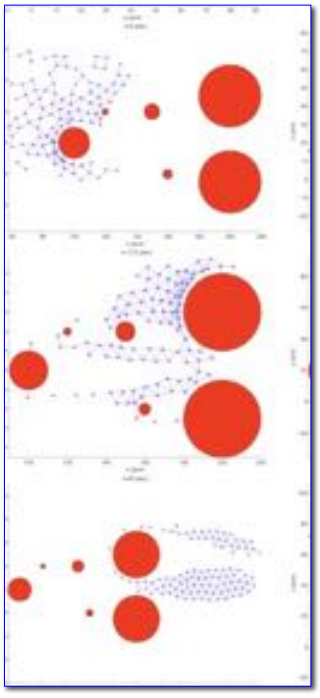
Analyzing Decentralized Flocking



Olfati-Saber and Murray

- Cohesion as a hexagonal lattice (alpha-net)
- Steady state: 6 neighbors

Extended idea to flocking with

- Goals (everyone knows)
- Obstacle avoidance (gamma-agents)
- Split, join, squeeze maneuvers

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