

Ecology: Data Paper

Demography of the understory herb *Heliconia acuminata* (Heliconiaceae) in an experimentally fragmented tropical landscape

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Author Note

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Abstract

Habitat fragmentation remains a major focus of research by ecologists decades after being put forward as a threat to the integrity of ecosystems. Decades of research have documented myriad biotic changes in fragmented landscapes, including the local extinction of species from fragments. The demographic mechanisms underlying these extinctions are rarely known. However, many of them – especially in lowland tropical forests – are thought to be driven by one of two mechanisms: (1) reduced recruitment in fragments resulting from changes in the diversity or abundance of pollinators and seed dispersers or (2) increased rates of individual mortality in fragments due to dramatically altered abiotic conditions, especially near fragment edges. Unfortunately, there have been few tests of these potential mechanisms due to the paucity of long-term and comprehensive demographic data collected in both forest fragments and continuous forest sites.

Here we report 11 years (1998-2009) of demographic data from populations of the Amazonian understory herb *H. acuminata* (LC Rich.) found at Brazil's Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments Project. The dataset comprises >67,000 plant×year records of >8500 plants, including >3400 seedlings established after the first census. The thirteen populations were in permanent plots located in experimentally isolated fragments (one in each of four 1-ha fragments and one in each of three 10-ha fragments) as well as in six continuous forest sites. Each plot was 50 × 100m, with the distance between plots ranging from 500 m-60 km. The plants in each plot were censused annually, at which time we recorded, identified, marked, and measured new seedlings, identified any previously marked plants that died, and recorded the size of surviving individuals. Plots were also surveyed during the flowering season to identify reproductive plants and record the number of inflorescences each produced.

These data have been used to investigate topics ranging from the way fragmentation-related reductions in germination influence population dynamics to statistical methods for analyzing reproductive rates. This breadth of prior use reflects the value of

these data to future researchers - an invaluable resource for studies of plant responses to habitat fragmentation, but also also an exceptional one with to address fundamental questions in plant demography, the evolutionary ecology of tropical plants, and for developing and testing demographic models and tools. There are no restrictions on the use this data set, but we do ask that those using the data for teaching or research inform us of how they are doing so and cite this paper and the data archive if appropriate. Any publication using the data must also include a BDFFP Technical Series Number in the Acknowledgments. Authors can request this series number upon the acceptance of their article by contacting the BDFFP's Scientific Coordinator or E. M. Bruna.

Keywords: Amazon, Brazil, deforestation, demography, edge effects, forest fragments, habitat fragmentation, integral projection models, matrix models, population dynamics, vital rates