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Dear editor,

We are pleased to submit our manuscript *Major interaction reorganizations punctuate the assembly of pollination networks* for consideration as a Letter in *Ecology Letters*.

As the world continues to lose species at an alarming rate, it has become increasingly imperative to aid the recovery of lost interactions and component biodiversity through ecological restoration. When a species goes extinct, its interactions are also lost. We know little, however, about how to re-assemble interacting communities through restoration, or the process of ecological network assembly more generally. Our research deals with two fundamental aspects of the ecological theory that underlie restoration ecology: understanding how species-rich communities assemble, and how these assemblages change through time. Our work uses a novel method to examine the temporal changes in networks, represents the first long-term study of temporal assembly of ecological networks, and challenges the currently accepted community assembly theory of preferential attachment.

Preferential attachment predicts that species entering a network are more likely to interact with species that are already well-connected — and is well-supported in the network literature to date. We analyzed plant-pollinator interaction data comprising eight years and ~20,000 records at native plant restorations in the Central Valley of California. We find that species are highly dynamic in their network position, causing community assembly to be punctuated by major interaction reorganizations. The most persistent and generalized species are also the most variable in their network positions, challenging what is expected through preferential attachment theory. Our results are compelling and provide empirical evidence that fundamentally alter our understanding of how communities assemble and how species interactions change through time. Our insights will help to inform efforts to re-assemble robust communities through restoration. We believe that these exciting results linking three major ecological fields (interaction networks, community assembly dynamics and restoration ecology) will be of broad interest to the readership of *Ecology Letters*.

Thank you for reviewing our manuscript and we hope you will find it suitable for consideration in *Ecology Letters*.

Regards, Lauren C. Ponisio, PhD
Claire Kremen, Professor