

# Ecology Letters

## Decision Letter (ELE-01100-2023.R1)

**From:** ecolets@cefe.cnrs.fr

**To:** jcf3@rice.edu

**CC:** hanb@caryinstitute.org, jcf3@rice.edu, shaun.ziegler@gmail.com, whitneyk@unm.edu, jrudgers@unm.edu, Tom.Miller@rice.edu

**Subject:** Ecology Letters - ELE-01100-2023.R1 - Letter

**Body:** Dr. Joshua Fowler University of Miami 1320 S Dixie Hwy  
Coral Gables  
Florida  
United States  
33124-6914

Millbrook, 01-Apr-2024

Dear Dr. Fowler,

Manuscript number: ELE-01100-2023.R1

Title: Microbial symbionts buffer hosts from the demographic costs of environmental stochasticity

Author(s): Fowler, Joshua; Ziegler, Shaun; Whitney, Kenneth; Rudgers, Jennifer; Miller, Tom

We have now received the Referees' reports on your manuscript. You will find them below. As you will see, the Referees make a number of comments with the aim of improving the manuscript. We anticipate that your paper can prove acceptable for publication in Ecology Letters after further modification. Before the manuscript can be accepted for publication:

(1) The modifications listed by the editor and reviewers need to be completed to our satisfaction

Your revision should include a point-by-point list of replies to all of the reviewers' comments. We strongly suggest that you carefully lay-out your point-by-point replies (each referring to page and line numbers in the revised manuscript), since they will be provided verbatim to the ensemble of the Reviewers on your submission.

It is our expectation that revisions will not make the manuscript exceed the permitted maximum number of words. Authors should use concise writing, avoid giving several duplicate citations to support the same statement, and consider moving to Supplementary Information materials that are beyond the interest of most general readers who wish to understand what was done in general terms.

Please upload a tracked-changes version of your manuscript as a supporting document, in addition to the clean version uploaded as the main body (required).

(2) You need to comply with the data and code availability conditions for publication (as specified in our guidelines for authors).

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It is the policy of Ecology Letters that revised manuscripts be resubmitted (see instructions below) within 2 weeks of the date of receipt of this letter. Please contact the Editorial Office if you are unable to submit your revision before the option expires.

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Thank you for considering Ecology Letters for the publication of your finest and most exciting work.

Yours sincerely,

Barbara A. Han, PhD  
Senior editor, Ecology Letters  
Staff Scientist, Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies

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Referees' comments to the author(s):

Referee: 1

Comments for the Authors

I thank the reviewers for the clarifications, new analyses and added discussion points. I only have some small remaining comments on the revised manuscript.

Comment 4

I really like the new Fig. 1. Can the authors come back to this figure in the discussion section a bit more, explicitly discuss which of these different hypotheses are supported by the data of this study?

Comment 7

I also appreciate the updated figure 2 (previously figure 1). I do find it a bit confusing that blue and red are used in panels D-E, similar to the color scheme used in panel A, although the colors indicate something completely different in these panels. Would it help to use the same colors as in Fig. 1 to indicate S- and S+ hosts in panels D-E?

Comment 9

Thank you for doing this analysis. Please verify that all references to the figure that show these results are correct throughout the main text and SI (Fig. S53? S82? S72?)

Related, the SI needs a table of contents at the start of the SI (ideally with links to relevant sections), and perhaps a list of all figures.

Referee: 2

Comments for the Authors

I thoroughly enjoyed the new version of this manuscript. As the manuscript currently stands, the paper describes a cutting edge research question - i.e., what is the role of microbial symbionts on demographic variance/buffering in stochastic environments? The methods are clearly laid out and the data represent a gold mine of hard-fought data - used in this analysis and I am sure many more in the future. I am also especially impressed with how the authors have integrated the numerous comments from all reviewers - this is no small feat.

All in all, I look forward to citing this paper and the many more that will come from this dataset in the future.

Samuel Gascoigne

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Editor's comments to the author(s):

Editor

**Editors Comments for the Author(s):**

The two contacted reviewers highly appreciate your thorough revision of your interesting contribution. One of these reviewers has three more useful suggestions based on your new and updated figures, and I would like to give you the opportunity to further revise your manuscript accordingly.

While I had hoped that the reviewer who commented on standardizing lambda-s across variance treatments early on would have explained their comment more in this new round of revisions, no such explanations were received. I'm assuming that your revised manuscript has made the earlier suggestion obsolete.

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**How to submit your revised manuscript:**

- Log on to Ecology Letters ScholarOne Manuscripts at: <https://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ele>
- Enter the Author Center
- Since the handling Editor has recommended your manuscript for a revision, click on "Manuscripts with decisions"
- The decision letter and link to submitting a revision is displayed

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**Date Sent:** n/a

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