

Dr. James Robinson

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Dear Professor Fox,

Please find attached our manuscript “*Habitat and fishing control grazing potential on coral reefs*”, as a resubmission to *Functional Ecology*. Our study was previously reviewed in *Functional Ecology* (FE-2019-00551), and we were invited to resubmit after addressing the comments from the second reviewer. In our revised version, we:

- Acknowledge that our findings for croppers are limited by scarcity of cropping feeding data, and place this limitation in the context of other coral reef functional ecology studies by identifying a trade-off between small- and large-scale approaches ([L432-438](#)).
- Interpret our findings in the context of Lefcheck et al. (2019, *Science Advances*), and note the potential unmeasured influence of biodiversity on grazing function in our models ([L464-470](#)).
- Improve communication of statistical approaches, specifically in 1) ensuring that models are not biased by collinearity ([L247-249](#)) and 2) outlining statistical and conceptual reasons why fishable biomass is an appropriate metric for exploitation pressure ([L208-213](#)).

We also respond to and address an issue raised by the first reviewer; that omitting fish < 8 cm from visual surveys may lead to underestimates of grazing by small-bodied fish ([L440-442](#)). As we outlined in our appeal letter, reviewer 1’s other comments either do not reflect information in our methods, or are inconsistent with the coral reef literature.

These revisions better caveat our results for cropping functions, improve communication of methodology, and place our findings in the context of a recent key reef herbivory study (Lefcheck et al. 2019). Our results and main conclusions remain unchanged. We believe that by implementing these changes our manuscript is substantially improved.

We confirm that all authors have approved this submission in its final form. Thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr James PW Robinson



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On behalf of coauthors Jamie McDevitt-Irwin, Jan-Claas Dajka, Jeneen Hadj-Hammou, Samantha Howlett, Alexia Graba-Landry, Andrew Hoey, Kirsty Nash, Shaun Wilson, Nicholas Graham.