**Journal**

Author et al. YEAR—Manuscript # XXX-YYYY

**Overall statement:**

This manuscript reports XYZ-what does the manuscript address? It is interesting and important research, and the study was generally thorough; the novelty lies in the\_\_\_\_\_. However, prior to consideration for publication in *Journal*, I suggest a few major/minor clarifications:

1. General criticism of experimental design. If too serious (e.g., no replication), may merit a rejection, depending on the journal
2. Did the methods address the hypotheses/question?
3. Check analyses. Are they appropriate to the system? Did they pseudoreplicate, account for correlations, use correct error and data structure?
4. Do the conclusions follow from the data? Were the data convincing?
5. Suggestions for adding more depth to the paper or discussion

I also have several suggestions for minor changes, such as wording and clarity (see in-line comments below).

**In-line comments and section-specific recommendations:**

***Abstract:***

*General comments:*

It is unclear from the outset what is the motivation of the study. I suggest adding a few more sentences to introduce the specific gap in the literature or application of the study. The “main question” sentence (lines 18-21) are a little muddy and wordy. Maybe rephrase more actively, give a tad more justification for why you hypothesized what you did, and specify what you mean by “adjacent forest edges mediate community composition”. Why did you use a trait approach? Why did you pick the particular traits you did?

*In-line comments*

34 I didn’t edit your Spanish abstract, but I would try to model it off of other published Spanish abstracts on secondary tropical forests. I think some of the words are a little different—abstract is usually *resumen*, and passive tense tends to be more common (than I use in speaking, at least).

***Introduction:***

*General comments:*

Nice setup! I really like the first paragraph on why secondary forests are so important. I would address some of my criticisms on the abstract here too—really make an argument for why this study can help us understand something important about these forests. Because you focus so much on why community composition is important, I questioned why you collected the trait data and focused on wood density, stem density, and other ecosystem process response variables rather than digging into the species.

*In-line comments*

60-64 Way too wordy, break up into 2-3 sentences (certainly at 62 after FAO citation).

84 I would wait for the land-use history until the next paragraph. Is this a central enough theme that it should be its own paragraph in the intro? Aren’t you just testing edge effects in this paper? Or is that the motivation for the dispersal traits? (If so, make it explicit).

109 Wouldn’t the remaining trees facilitate shade-tolerant trees, not pioneers? I think you need to clarify what you are comparing to (the intact forest or the far edge of the plantation?).

***Methods***

*General comments*

Pretty standard and clear. Minor suggestions below. My only major concerns are:

- What’s going on with the single datapoint (one plot)?

- How exactly did the area-proportional plot arrangement affect the analyses: wouldn’t the high-number of plots be weighed more heavily unless you had a random strata/plot factor in your analysis?

- Be careful with what you say is the “edge”. A lot of people (including me) assumed the edge was the *most* disturbed area—farthest from the intact forest (like the road), but you are saying the edge is the intact forest edge, right? This is a critical assumption for the results section and understanding the figures. Just be clear, maybe adding a few labels on your map (e.g., edge, intact forest, regenerating plantation forest), and the actual strata divisions since they were categorical in your analyses (right?): 50 100, 150, 200, 250, and 300m. Or am I misinterpreting?

*In-line comments*

142 “Following common forestry guidelines” sounds like a way out of a citation. If this is general enough to not need a citation, cut this phrase.

142 State exact number of trees censused

147 Taxa were identified by local experts

148 Did you use any trait database in particular? If so name it. If not, how did you search for the traits (e.g., typing the scientific name and the trait in GoogleScholar)? Is there an appendix listing each species with all the traits and the citation(s) used to find it? Add whether there were any missing data here (how many of each trait were missing? Were any species dropped due to missing traits?).

149 Mention here whether each species was modeled separately

161 If you didn’t use the original values, you don’t even need to mention them (sadly, since it was probably a lot of work)

169 This sentence is a little confusing (“plot of distance strata medians and subject”)—rephrase to connect directly to the data collected  
177 I bet the reviewers won’t like the single group of unidentified taxa. You might want to quick run the analysis without them to make sure they don’t affect the ultimate results.

180 [Internal comment: cool packages—I’ve never heard of any of them and will look them up]

***Results***

I feel like the composition should come first, because it seemed like the main question in the intro. I’m not sure whether I would include 3.1 in the main results or an appendix. Similar comment to in the methods: maybe say “distance to intact forest” rather than edge to clarify.

*In-line comments*

198 Interesting that the diversity also seemed to go back up right at the edge that was by the road (right?)—farthest from the forest edge. Any thoughts

219 Fig 4. Why don’t the distances overlap? If these were binned by 50m strata bands it may be useful to have that in the caption.

***Discussion***

*General comments:*

Overall I think if you are going to talk this much about biomass and ecosystem processes, it should be part of the intro and main hypothesis, rather than an interesting afterthought. I was expecting you to dig more into some of the species and say who was recruiting (or more common) where, and why that did or did not make sense. It is still interesting that dispersal did not differ (are there ample dispersers?) and I wonder if shade tolerance of the species differed, even if the actual measured light didn’t.