1

We’ve said all of this in the introduction. I think here we need a powerful opening sentence about how the prevailing paradigm of habitat management and restoration has come to assume that all NNI plants are of little to no value to wildlife and should be targeted for removal, when for most NNI plants, there is an absence of science on which to base that decision/approach/strategy/management action. Then say something to the effect of “Here, for the first time and in direct comparison to coexisting native plants they threaten to displace, we evaluated the quantity and quality of arthropods supported by four of the most widespread, invasive plants of a major region of North America, and their relative use by forest insectivores as a food source. We found invasive plants to support similarly abundant and protein-rich arthropod prey for insectivores, and consequently receive similar levels of foraging intensity by insectivorous birds as native plants. We therefore call for a reexamination of the common direction.

Few studies have evaluated the abundance or quality of foods for higher trophic level organisms provided by NNI plants in the context of cooccurring natives, or the degree of use of NNI vs native plants by wildlife. We’ve done all of those things for 4 of the most notorious invasives of the northeastern US. and at the end of the day, we found those invasives to (1) support similar total arthropod biomass for insectivores, (2) support similar and in some cases more protein-rich arthropod prey for insectivores, and (3) be as intensively foraged on by insectivorous birds as native plants. As such, we call for a rethinking of the common practice of directing significant conservation resources towards NNI plant removal without first gaining a better understanding of how the resources provided by those plants compare to the native species with which they are competing. These are the big take-home findings we should hit readers with in the opening paragraph before delving into the more nuanced results about spiders

2

As we know, birds eat a lot more than just caterpillars so just because caterpillars were rarer on NNI I don’t think that means there’s less food on NNIs. Ornithologists usually just lump all arthropods together into one big pot of “bird food” so what I’m most interested in is how total arthropod biomass compared between natives and nonnatives.

3

Overall for this opening paragraph and like I said above, I think the summary of our findings is a little too specific and actually not quite in line with what I think the big takeaways are. Our results suggest that common NNIs in our study system do not support less or lower quality insect prey for insectivores than native plants in the same habitat, and are used as a foraging substrate by a major group of forest insectivores, birds, just as intensively. Boom. Not what everyone would expect, and therefore big findings. That’s how we sell this thing as a big deal.