Dr. Jaun Corley

Editor-in-Chief

Ecological Applications

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Dear Dr. Jaun Corley and Editors at Ecological Applications,

We are submitting our manuscript titled “Are native plants always better than invasive plants? Insights from a multitrophic experiment across ten forest plants” for consideration as a Research Article in *Ecological Applications*. Non-native woody plants represent one of the most challenging issues in habitat restoration, with significant resources expended on control these invasives to improve outcomes for wildlife. Our submission fits with other recent articles in *Ecological Applications* which inform invasive plant management, including Eppinga et al. 2020, *Spatially explicit removal strategies increase the efficiency of invasive plant species control*, and Cadotte 2021, *Quantifying and linking mechanism scenarios to invasive species impact*.

As scientists involved in wildlife habitat improvement projects, we noticed a significant gap in the assumptions underlying invasive plant management in forests of the northeastern US. While there is ample evidence that invasive plants have lower food quality and quantity compared to native plants, does the comparison still hold for *all* native plants? To this end, we employed a predator exclusion experiment comparing bird predation effects across four non-native shrubs and locally abundant native trees and shrubs in the same habitat. This realistic comparison emulates the conditions in which local land trusts are pursuing invasive species control programs. To our surprise, native trees and shrubs experienced similar rates of bird predation effects. Variation in the quantity and quality of arthropod prey of non-native invasives encompassed the range of values seen on natives. In other words, some native plants were superior to invades while others were actually poorer food sources.

We believe this result to be incredibly important for habitat improve since it suggests that invasive plant removal could be detrimental in habitats where dominant native plants are actually poorer food resources for songbirds, while invasive plant removal would be suggested in habitats where native plants are higher quality. This more nuanced understanding of invasive plant management is important to our region, but also could inspire a similar perspective in other systems. We therefore believe the results reported in this manuscript will be engaging for the readership of *Ecological Applications.*

Sincerely,

Robert Clark &

Chad Seewagen

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