Drs. Daniel Simberloff and Laura Meyerson

Editors-in-Chief

Biological Invasions

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Dear Drs. Daniel Simberloff and Laura Meyerson,

We are submitting our manuscript titled “Are native plants always better for wildlife than invasives? Insights from a community-level bird-exclusion experiment” for consideration as an Article in *Biological Invasions*. 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 revaluating longstanding assumptions in invasive plant management in *Biological Invasions* like Schuster et al. 2023, “No evidence of a long-lived seedbank in a common buckthorn, *Rhamnus cathartica* L., within Minnesota deciduous forests”.

As scientists involved in songbird 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 provide lower food resources to birds compared to native plants, does the comparison still hold in all management scenarios? 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 invasives encompassed the range of values seen on natives. In other words, some invasive plants were worse than nearby native plants, but others were not.

We believe this result to be incredibly important for habitat improve since it suggests that invasive plant removal could be detrimental in habitats where a dominant invasive plant species may not be poorer foraging opportunities for songbirds. Conversely, for low-quality invasive plants, 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 *Biological Invasions.*

Sincerely,

Robert Clark &

Chad Seewagen

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