Mary O’Connor and Gary Bradfield are the most recent reviewers of the manuscript; each provided comments on version 3.3 in mid-November. I have summarized their critiques and my revisions by each manuscript section, below.

I reference line numbers in version 3.3, as annotated by each reviewer. Co-authors/reviewers are referenced by their initials as follows: GB – Gary Bradfield, MD – Madlen Denoth, SLL – Stefanie Lane, MOC – Mary O’Connor, TGM – Tara Martin, NAS – Nancy Shackelford.

All revisions to produce manuscript version 3.4 can be traced by viewing Track Changes > All Markup.

# General

GB pointed out ‘exotic’ may not be an appropriate term for species that have naturalized in our ecoregion, and the term is incongruous with ‘non-native’ used in supplemental tables. I’ve standardized all instances to ‘non-native’ for consistency.

MOC had several comments in Methods & Results about study design/analyses chosen, specifically about whether all individual species were recorded within the plot. I’ve tried to emphasize in the methods that all species were recorded, so measures using presence/absence and compositional abundance should be appropriate. No statistical models were used, and therefore I have not addressed model assumptions.

# Introduction

Line 3-5 (second sentence), MOC pointed out species dominance may shift by interspecific interactions such as facilitation (Bruno, 2000). I’ve broken down this statement to address concepts of interspecific interaction and community stability separately.

Line 44, GB correctly suggested I meant to indicate “within and **between**” assemblages, not “within and across” assemblages.

# Methods

Lines 68-82: MOC suggested recounting previous studies’ methods in Ladner Marsh reads more like literature review, and is not directly informative of this study’s methods. I’ve moved some content about the previous study’s goals to the Introduction where co-authors’ studies are introduced. I’ve condensed survey method details entirely within the context of how the 2019 sampling was conducted for this manuscript.

Line 95-96: MOC pointed out bias is introduced by placing sampling plots within patches subjectively assessed as dominated by one or two species. I agree method does introduce bias, however the method described was used in order to repeat the sampling as closely as possible to methods used in 1979, and to make comparisons between datasets. I have acknowledged the bias in line 70 of v. 3.4, and proposed that within the context of this bias meaningful comparisons can still be made about changes in floristic diversity and compositional abundance.

Lines 142-147: GB suggested omitting supplemental references to Bray-Curtis results; I’ve left them to indicate presence of further supplemental materials.

# Results

GB pointed out that data limits significant digits to one decimal place – corrected in all tables.

GB pointed out that because cover abundance was reported as cover classes, calculating percent change isn’t an accurate representation of change in cover abundance in the assemblage/community. Ex: if a species’ cover dropped from 4 to 2, I reported a 50% loss of mean cover. However, actual cover could have changed from 76% to 50%, which would not be a 50% loss. Therefore, I’ve amended language around loss of cover to reflect cover classes (not raw percentages). Same critique applies to Table 7; I’ve taken Gary’s advice to use +/- for gain/loss, blanks for species not recorded.

MOC’s comments that analyses may not be appropriate for data may be resolved by clarification of methods/analyses used in Methods section. That is, violations of ‘model’ assumptions don’t necessarily apply.

MOC suggested evidence for species loss was not strong, SLL suspects that in the context of turnover, loss of 1-2 species per sampling period is not enough to state (line 244) “our results present a compelling example of …native species biodiversity loss…. SLL removed ‘compelling,’ although SLL maintains that there is still an overall trend of species loss in the data.

# Discussion

GB had minor comments: characterizing Ladner Marsh as ‘pristine’ (line 328) inappropriate; restructured sentence to get main point across that there is a trend of biodiversity loss in conservation management area.