

JEcol-2019-0817 — Authors' response letter

November 7, 2019

To the editorial board,

Thank you for the opportunity to resubmit a revised version of our manuscript. We have made the requested changes, described in detail below, and we think that our manuscript is now suitable for peer review.

On behalf of myself and K. Czachura,
Tom Miller

Response to EIC Gibson

Comment 1: *“I concur with the AE’s recommendation that your manuscript is not suitable to send out for peer review. The AE notes that you need to write a tighter and more concise manuscript that better focuses on what’s important for the international audience of the Journal of Ecology. If you do so then we are prepared to consider a resubmission. In addition, you do need to justify the use of *three* principal component axes through the use of something like Longman’s Test or Parallel Analysis.”*

Response: We have modified our manuscript in response to Dr. Salguero-Gomez’ comments, as we describe below. Regarding the PCA, our choice of three components was, in fact, based on the results of a parallel analysis, a detail that we failed to include in our original submission. In this resubmission, we provide the parallel analysis results in Figure A2.

Response to AE Salguero-Gomez

Comment 2: *“This is an interesting paper, but the actual writing, organisation of ideas in the intro (5 pages long...), details of the model, reporting of the results, and contextualisation of the discussion reads like a doctoral thesis chapter rather than a manuscript ready for peer-review. The introduction is too long (with details that are not all that important), the methods lack detail on the demographic approach, so it is not possible to evaluate independently, the results are length too (could be shortened), and the discussion lacks the necessary contextualisation - passages of it feel like a re-do of the results, rather than the arena where the reader can understand how the findings fit into the bigger picture of the discipline.”*

Response: The AE’s comment that our paper reads like a doctoral thesis chapter (it was not) is unfortunate. As an associate editor at two journals, I strive to deliver criticism in a tone that is respectful and constructive, and I hope for the same as an author.

We have made the following changes in response to these comments:

- We have edited the Introduction to remove unnecessary material and more effectively frame the motivating questions and gaps in knowledge. The length of this section has been substantially reduced from 1049 words to 677 words.
- We understand that more details are needed in the main text for readers to assess our methodology. We have moved content describing our demographic methods

from the Appendix to the main text. We continue to rely on the Appendix for some technical details that would be of interest primarily to specialists.

- We have reduced the length of the Results section from 1747 to 1658 words by streamlining our text. Obviously, the scientific content of the paper sets a lower bound on the length of the Results, so we cannot make further cuts to this section without reviewer feedback on its scientific content.
- We have edited and reduced the Discussion section to avoid re-stating results and to provide stronger context for the ‘big-picture’ significance of our findings.
- Please note that our cuts to the Intro, Results, and Discussion were offset by the requested additions to the Methods so that our revision is approximately the same length as our original submission. We are open to moving some Methods content back to the Appendix at the editors’ discretion; for now, we erred on the side of more detail in the Methods.

Comment 3: *“As a side, the authors state novelty on their findings (wrt climatic winners), but this is by far not the case - just as an example (at the risk of sounding self-centered): see Salguero-Gomez et al. 2012 Phil Trans Royal Soc B and citations therein. Work by Tielboerger is also pertinent here. In general, I’d kindly suggest not to claim novelty even when there’s no counter examples, just to be on the safe side.”*

Response: We now include the Salguero-Gomez et al. 2012 reference that the AE suggests. We could not find a relevant article by Katja Tielboerger (besides Salguero-Gomez et al. 2012); if the AE can be more specific with their recommendation then we would be glad to add this.

We never claimed that our findings regarding climate change “winners” were novel (there are now many examples of this), so we are unsure which statement(s) the AE is referring to. If there are objections to any specific sentences we are open to further cuts. Our main statement of novelty – in our original submission and again in our resubmission (line: 397-399) – is that no previous studies, to our knowledge, have compared the magnitudes of different aspects of climate change alongside the magnitudes of demographic responses to those changes. We stand behind this statement and prefer to keep it in the paper.

Comment 4: *“I see promise in this paper, but in its current format it would not benefit from the peer-review process. I suggest for the authors to consider revisiting these points,*

which will take a considerable amount of time to do justice to, and then re-submitting if the executive editor agrees.”

Response: Thanks to the AE for investing the time to provide feedback on our submission. We believe that we have effectively addressed the AE’s concerns and that the manuscript is now ready for external review.