I really like this contribution, and I think that you have done a good job of addressing reviewer concerns. I have several recommendations aimed at the overarching themes of the manuscript.

First, unless you’re aiming for a fish-focused journal (e.g., Ichthyology and Herpetology), I’d drop “medaka” from the title. I suggest, “Habitat structural complexity increases age-class coexistence and population growth rate through relaxed cannibalism in a freshwater fish.”

Second, the overall pitch of the manuscript “challenges” links between structural complexity and taxonomic diversity. Because the paper does not examine multiple species, I think that challenging the basis for links between habitat complexity and community-level diversity patterns is a stretch. You’ve shown that important, population-level attributes can arise based on intraspecific interactions, but extending these processes to community diversity isn’t appropriate, especially in the abstract and as a major conclusion of the paper. As you note in the introduction, one well-studied mechanism by which complexity begets diversity is via relaxation of predation. Your study highlights that this community-level mechanism can also operate at the population level. A quick fix could be to change “challenge” on Line 21 to “extend.” You’re not challenging this view – it still “works” – but you are highlighting that similar mechanisms can emerge at the population level.

Other comments:

Line 64: Suggest changing “selectively” to “disproportionately” – “selectively” makes me think of “selection” in an evolutionary context.

Line 71: Suggest rewording “with, to our knowledge, a poor consideration for intraspecific interactions.” This may trigger potential reviewers and could be softened to “with more limited consideration of intraspecific interactions.”

Line 92: Suggest changing “check that” to “evaluate the potential for”

Line 571: Suggest rewording “Our present results in medaka fish show…” to “Our results show…”.

Lines 573-574: Suggest changing “provide a substantial, but currently neglected, contribution” to “contribute” – i.e., “intraspecific processes may contribute to the positive effects…”. You cannot judge the degree to which these mechanisms contribute.

Lines 593-594: How does this interact with filamentous algal abundance? Are algae less abundant because fish are more abundant or because there is less available space for the algae to grow?