Response to Recommender's Comments (Finishing Touches)

Dear authors,

thanks a lot for submitting your revised version of your ms. It is really good and I'll be delighted to recommend it soon. In the meantime, I pass you a commented/corrected version of the pdf so that you can make the paper "perfect" for the recommended version (you should have ~135 comments in the pdf; if not, please email me so that I can pass it on to you in another way).

We got them!

On top of the comments in the pdf, here are some thoughts I jotted while reading:

1. A comment:
"However, it is unlikely any statistical approach can ever solve the problem of an unmeasured explanatory variable." (page 33, in the discussion)
This is the purpose of some latent variable or latent factor models, but it's true it is not always very well done. The literature on Structural Equation Models could be enlightening regarding this aspect. For a very general introduction to plausible causality inferred from observational data, I'd suggest reading the book of Pearl:
Pearl, J. (1988) Probabilistic Reasoning in Intelligent Systems: Networks of Plausible Inference, Morgan Kaufmann.

Oh, good call! That's very true! I even have a good reference with Bart/Myco…. I've added it, though I needed to move some sentences around to do so. Hope it makes sense/flows.

2. General suggestions on typos, formatting, etc.
* check some statistical terminology (e.g. "marginal means" in place of "contrasts"), I have pointed out some places in the text where it sounded weird, but you might also check for other terms (it never hurts);

So, I did check and modified a term or two, but the suggestion with Figure 2 to use "marginal contrasts" doesn't appear to be correct. The y-axis is indeed the marginal mean of the outcome for each group. The x-intercept is zero, not the mean of a reference group. Hope that makes sense.

* words in figures look misplaced sometimes -- check that the change from doc to pdf does not add some jittering of letter location;

This was an issue with the PDF, and as far as we can tell, we have managed to solve the problem.

* formatting of refences: remove double brackets, and if necessary insert square brackets inside normal ones (but not for references, use commas instead) -- this is easy to deal with this issue in some softwares (like endnote), but there's always the last resort possibility of transforming "code" (such as citation insertions) into pure text to format it as you wish;
* also regarding formatting references: no need to call for first names (or abbreviations of first names) when citing papers;

This was an issue with the reference manager. I've updated the format so that these weird things are fixed. However, I will wait for the final formatting to Journal format to fix the double-brackets because as soon as you modify manually, the software no longer manages those references.

* (language) beware of the among/across difference. Among = between entities that are part of an identified group; across = throughout a whole range of (heterogeneous) entities. You could write "among host species" or "across the range of host species", but probably not "across host species". I've pointed some places where this is misused, but I certainly have missed issues like these.

We fixed this in several places, but this issue is sometimes ambiguous. In some instances, "across host species" refers to the group of host species, so using 'among' would have been confusing. But in general, I think we've got most of the issues fixed.

Thanks again for all the work you have done.

Sincerely,

François Massol

Thank you!