15 November 2016

Professor Kerry Woods

Academic Editor PeerJ

Dear Professor Woods,

I thank you and the reviewer for the helpful comments and suggestions on my manuscript “Changes in understory species occurrence of a secondary broadleaved forest after mass mortality of oak trees under deer foraging pressure” (#2016:07:11860:1:0:REVIEW). I revised the manuscript based on these comments and suggestions. I hope that the revised manuscript is now suitable for publication in *PeerJ*.

Changes in the manuscript are denoted with underlines (but they are not shown on the citations for technical reasons). My responses to the questions and suggestions (in italics) are given below:

Editor’s comments

REPLY:

* I appreciate your helpful comments and corrections, and I have revised the manuscript base on the editor’s comments.
* All the corrections written by the editor in the PDF file were incorporated into the manuscript.

*L287: "estimated" might be more easily interpreted than "expected", if you think it is not inappropriate in statistical context.*

REPLY:

* According to your suggestion, I replaced the word “expected” with “estimated”. (L285)

*L356: Could this be interpreted as a gap effect?*

REPLY:

* I think this may be mainly due to the differences in overall species composition. I modified the description and added an example. (L354–356)

*L360: I think this should be "exclosures"? This is the term most frequently used for fenced areas from which herbivores are excluded…*

REPLY:

* Yes. I corrected it with “exclosures”. (L364, 366)

Reviewer 1 (Anonymous)

REPLY:

* I appreciate the helpful suggestions. I have revised the manuscript base on the reviewer’s comments.

*Lines 360 - 361: Fencing that keeps deer away from vegetation are termed exclosures, whereas enclosures usually refers to fences that keep deer in a plot. Double check the meaning of these sentences.*

REPLY:

* This was a mistake, and the term “exclosures” is correct. I corrected the sentence. (L364, 366)

*Line 379: Consider reading and citing Horsley et al. (2003) here. They did an excellent study with controlled deer densities over several years, and showed a causal relationship between deer density, deer browsing, and shifts in future forest composition through altered recruitment patterns. This seems highly relevant to your own findings, and puts your work in a more global context.*

*Horsley et al. (2003). DOI: 10.1890/1051-0761(2003)013[0098:WTDIOT]2.0.CO;2*

REPLY:

* I cited Horsley et al. (2003) and added descriptions based on their study in the Discussion section. (L357–361)

Other changes

* Errors pointed out by an English native checker were also corrected (L60, 96, 213, 293, 298, 299, 307, 394, Legend of Fig. 3).

Sincerely yours,

Hiroki Itô