

Dear Facundo Barba and co-authors,

I enjoyed reading your interesting research study investigating the influence of an exotic introduced prey species on the spatial distribution of eagle nesting habitat in, *High abundances and breeding spatial aggregation of eagles driven by an exotic lagomorph: a field study and meta-analysis on Nearest Neighbor Distances*. (#23439).

I found your research study design and hypothesis to be well designed and relevant- it is important to know if introduced exotic prey species are influencing the spatial distribution of nesting eagles, as this ecological information will be important for protection and management of both predator and prey.

In general, your study design and subsequent analyses were well defined and robust, however there are a number of significant issues that will need to be addressed before this manuscript can be published. We have therefore decided that your manuscript needs major revisions (needs significant work and re-writing and will require a 're-review' to assure issues have all been addressed). We are providing the detailed comments and suggestions from two reviewers and strongly encourage you to carefully follow their suggestions and address all of their concerns.

We describe below the major issues that will need to be addressed in order for your manuscript to be accepted for publication:

- 1) The authors need to consider other determinant landscape components (besides hare abundance), such as the availability of suitable nesting sites. In your study you describe two areas that were selected and examined taking into account the availability of cliffs (Line 170) and a pre-existing high abundance of eagle nests. It is possible that the observed spatial arrangement and density of BCB eagle's nest may be the result of other habitat features (e.g. topography) rather than prey abundance. Other major considerations that need to be addressed when investigating BCB eagle nest site selection are species-specific social traits and behavior, intraspecific competition, site fidelity, habitat quality, human disturbance, and other species-specific sources of variability on NND statistics should be considered.
- 2) Research design: ideally the best way to test the authors hypothesis is to have compared the abundance and breeding spacing of eagles in areas with high and low abundance of hares. Is there any way to reanalyze your data focusing on areas with low vs. high hare abundance?
- 3) Reassess and confirm that you are using appropriate statistical methods: the authors use correspondence analysis to examine the relationship between abundance of the raptors and the abundance of hares per site-correspondence analysis provides a graphic method of exploring the relationship between categorical variables in a contingency table. In this study the authors examine the relationship between continuous variables (species density: species abundances per unit area).

Minor edits that also need addressing (besides all of the edits and comments provided by 2 formal reviewers (see 2 formal reviews provided):

Abstract:

Line 18: remove "the" in line and replace *figures* with *numbers*: European hare has *the* one of the highest numbers recorded...

Line 29: remove “that” in line: ...and apparent competition alter entire communities.

Line 39: replace *on* with *in*: Changes in food sources...

Line 166: Subtitle: Should it be Nearest Neighbor ***Nest?***

Line 190: replace *used* with *using*: ...preliminary literature search using Scopus...

Line 193: replace *firsts* with *first*: ...we used the same first terms...

Line 201: should be random-effects model (not random-effect)

Line 203: provide a definition for I^2 – quantifying heterogeneity-the degree of inconsistency...

Line 277: should be *From* our meta-regression...

Your research is very interesting and your findings will provide important information about dynamic food webs and associated communities to conservation biologists and environmental managers. We look forward to your revised submission of this article in the near future. Thank you for your submission.

Sincerely,

Anne Kuhn

JPeer Academic Editor (Environmental Science)