

1 **Large-scale features affect spatial variation in seed dispersal by birds in juniper**
2 **woodlands**

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5 Concise title: Seed dispersal by birds

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20

21 **Abstract** Fruit-frugivore interactions have received great attention from evolutionary,
22 ecological and applied perspectives. However, despite the fact that large-scale approaches may
23 offer new insights on fruit-frugivore interactions, little work has been devoted to explore the
24 factors shaping large-scale variation of seed dispersal. This paper studies the spatial variation in
25 seeds regurgitated within pellets by wintering thrushes (*G. Turdus*) in a set of 26 Spanish
26 juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*) woodlands scattered along a latitudinal gradient during two
27 winters of contrasting cone and bird abundance. It explicitly explores whether pellet rain
28 variation among woodlands was related to changes in vegetation cover, temperature, day length
29 duration and bird abundance. Top regression models in the AIC framework explained 34% and
30 70 % of variance in pellet numbers in low and high crop and bird abundance years, respectively.
31 In both winters, the spatial variation in pellets correlated to thrush abundance and day length
32 variation. Pellet abundance linked to cone distribution only in the year of high crop, in which
33 many migratory, extra-Iberian thrushes arrived to exploit the resource. Strong dependence of
34 seed dispersion on large-scale features affecting bird numbers (e.g. the arrival of extra-Iberian
35 migratory birds) and feeding behaviour (e.g. latitudinal variation in day length duration)
36 suggests a primary role for variables acting at large scales on this mutualistic interaction.

37

38 **Key-words** Frugivorous birds · *Juniperus thurifera* · large-scale fruit tracking · pellet rain ·
39 seed dispersal · *Turdus* sp.

40

41 **Introduction**

42 Fruit production is a common evolutionary strategy developed by plants to improve seed
43 dispersal by frugivorous animals. Because it affects the fitness of individual plants, fruit-
44 frugivore interactions have received great attention from evolutionary, ecological and applied
45 perspectives (Levey et al. 2002; Schupp et al. 2010). However, little work has been explicitly
46 devoted to explore the features affecting the geographical distribution of seed dispersal despite

47 large-scale approaches may offer new insights on fruit-frugivore interactions (Kollmann 2000;
48 Herrera 2002; García et al. 2011).

49 Seed dispersal depends on the abundance of fruit-producing plants, the number of
50 dispersers and their ability to move the seeds (Schupp 1993). In this process, birds are of
51 paramount importance, since they fly over large areas in the search of fruit food (Levey and
52 Stiles 1992). When they find a suitable patch, they spend a substantial proportion of time on the
53 fruiting plants producing a rain of seeds within pellets, faeces or fruit remains. In this way, birds
54 establish a dynamic link between the fruiting plants and numerous microhabitats, habitat
55 patches or other targets for seed dispersion. In addition, widespread dispersal of pellets
56 increases the chance of occupying suitable places for seedlings, a process that improves local
57 recruitment and reinforces the persistence of populations (Wenny 2001). This is a “context
58 sensitive” process dependent on the conditions of each study site (Jordano 2000) that will rely
59 on the ability of seed dispersing birds to track the patterning of fruit availability at different
60 spatial and temporal scales (Schupp et al. 2010).

61 This paper studies the spatial variation in pellets produced by wintering thrushes (*G.*
62 *Turdus*) in 26 woodlands distributed in a large area within the Iberian range of the Spanish
63 juniper (*Juniperus thurifera*; Fig.1). Pellet abundance within a woodland may be considered as
64 an index of seed dispersion activity by these birds, which are reputed as the main dispersers of
65 juniper seeds in the Mediterranean (Jordano 1993, Santos et al. 1999, Escribano-Ávila 2012).
66 More explicitly, the paper tries to show if pellet distribution follows cone abundance among
67 woodlands or is distorted by some features affecting seed dispersing thrushes. It may be
68 assumed that the variation of pellet abundance will rely, in the first place, on the ability of
69 thrushes to match the spatio-temporal distribution of this resource each winter (Tellería et al.
70 2008, 2013). But seed-dispersing birds may fail to track cone abundance if they are unable to
71 perceive food availability in the whole exploited region (Kotliar and Wiens 1990; García and
72 Ortiz-Pulido 2004; García et al. 2011), avoid some areas in spite of cone abundance (e.g., colder
73 sectors; Root 1988), or have difficulties in allocating individuals among woodlands according to
74 food availability when regional populations are small (Fretwell 1972; Gaston et al. 2000). If

75 thrushes fail to track cone abundance, they will not remove seeds according to the actual crops
76 of the juniper woodlands. This will produce an uneven contribution of these birds to seed
77 dispersal effectiveness among populations (Myers and Harms 2009; Schupp et al. 2010).

78 To address these questions, we explored interactions between pellet distribution and the
79 abundance of thrushes and ripe cones in the 26 study woodlands during two winters of
80 contrasting cone and bird abundance (2009-2010 and 2010-2011). In addition, we controlled the
81 effect of three additional features that might distort the ability of birds to deliver pellets
82 according to cone abundance distribution. First, vegetation structure may influence thrush
83 distribution and the abundance of perching sites, two features affecting seed rain (Hutto 1985;
84 Holl 1998; Alcántara et al. 2000; Jordano and Gody 2002; Herrera and García 2010). Second,
85 low temperatures will raise the energy demanded by birds in colder woodlands forcing thrushes
86 to increase food intake and pellet production (e.g. Calder and King 1974; Kwit et al. 2004).
87 Finally, since pellet production (the ingestion of ripe cones and the rapid elimination of non-
88 nutritional seed “ballast”; Sorensen 1984) is a time-consuming process, longer days in southern
89 woodlands will increase the time available for foraging and producing pellets (Carrascal et al.
90 2012).

91

92 **Methods**

93 The juniper-thrush system

94 Spanish juniper woodlands are the wintering grounds of many thrushes (*Turdus iliacus*, *T.*
95 *pilaris*, *T. viscivorus*, *T. philomelos*, *T. merula*, *T. torquatus*), most of which move to Spain
96 from central and northern Europe (Santos 1982; Santos et al. 1983). This juniper shows a
97 complex pattern of cone production, with sharp inter-winter and inter-site changes in crop size
98 (Montesinos 2007) that thrushes track across extensive areas (Jordano 1993). These birds
99 regurgitate pellets, which are cylinders *ca.* 1 cm long and 3 mm wide comprised of fruit fibres
100 and 2-3 seeds, inside and around the focal feeding places, including vegetation patches without
101 cones (Santos et al. 1999; Tellería et al. 2011). Although other animals (deer, sheep, carnivorous
102 mammals, rabbits, etc.) disperse juniper seeds, thrushes appear to be the most effective and

103 ubiquitous dispersers of this tree within these woodlands (Santos et al. 1999; Escribano-Avila et
104 al. 2011).

105

106 Study area

107 The study was carried out in 26 localities encompassing the main range of the Spanish juniper
108 in the Iberian Peninsula (Fig. 1). The altitude of the study localities ranged between 950
109 and 1314 m a.s.l.. This juniper forms open woodlands where dominant junipers mix with
110 isolated patches of other species (*Quercus ilex*, *Q. faginea*, *Pinus spp.*). They extend over
111 125,000 hectares, mostly between 800-1200 m.a.s.l., in areas dominated by hot summers and
112 cold winters with annual precipitation of 400-500 mm. Winter conditions are severe, with low
113 average temperatures (mean values between 1.8°C and 4°C), freezing period from mid-October
114 to late-May, and relatively frequent snowfalls (average of ten days per year; Ninyerola et al.
115 2005). The weather during the two study winters (December to 15th February, 2009-2010) was
116 characterized by frequent snowfalls (19% of the days) and low average minimum temperatures
117 (-1.2 °C). Snowfalls were associated with cold spells that affected the whole sample of
118 study localities in a similar fashion. A large proportion of days showed minimum
119 temperatures below 0°C (56% of the days; data from Instituto Nacional de Meteorología
120 averaged for Burgos -859 m.a.s.l.- and Teruel -915 m.a.s.l., meteorological stations, located at
121 both latitudinal limits of the study region).

122

123 Bird and cone abundance

124 Thrushes were counted along 0.5-km line transects located at the study woodlands in winters
125 2009-2010 and 2010-2011. We counted all the individuals without distinction of distance to the
126 line transect to collect more records and, in this way, to have a more comprehensive assessment
127 of local abundances. The counts were repeated in December, January and February to
128 encompass the main wintering period of migratory thrushes. The location of line transects was
129 recorded using a portable GPS receiver. From these three counts per winter, we obtained the

130 mean number of thrushes detected per transect, as an index of the relative abundance in each
131 locality. Abundance of ripe cones in both study winters was assessed in 20 Spanish junipers
132 spaced 25 m alongside every line transect used to count birds. The selected trees were marked
133 with numbered labels and recoded with GPS devices for easy subsequent detection. In these
134 randomly selected junipers we counted by eye, after training, the number of ripe cones, which
135 are those selected by thrushes (Tellería et al. 2011). Ripe cones were distinguished considering
136 colour and size (blue or blue-black, succulent and sweet to taste). We counted cone availability
137 each winter in the last week of November just at the start of the wintering period of thrushes.

138

139 Pellet abundance and vegetation structure

140 We looked for pellets under the canopy of 10 junipers used to assess cone abundance at each
141 study site (regularly spaced 50 m alongside every line transect). We repeated the counts three
142 times each winter on the same day that bird abundance was assessed. In each counting session,
143 we removed all pellets under the canopy to prevent its repeated sampling. We used the average
144 of the cumulative number of pellets recorded under each sampling tree as the pellet rain in the
145 26 study localities. Structure of the arboreal layer was recorded in a 500 x 10 m belt (5000 m²)
146 over the 26 line transects. Tree density was estimated by counting the number of Spanish
147 junipers and other tree species > 2.5 m height. The Spanish juniper was the dominant tree (95%
148 of trees recorded), with pines (*Pinus spp.*), Holm oaks (*Quercus ilex*) and some deciduous oaks
149 (*Q. faginea*) as other scarce species in the studied woodlands. We also measured the diameter of
150 the canopy of each juniper to control for the effect of the area under which we counted the
151 pellets. Nevertheless, after exploring the data, we discarded the inclusion of tree crown diameter
152 in our analyses, as average number of pellets and juniper diameter were uncorrelated
153 (Spearman's rank correlation coefficient in 2009: $r=0.045$, $P=0.826$; in 2010: $r=0.157$, $P=0.443$;
154 $N=26$ in both winters).

155

156 Air temperature and day length duration

157 Winter air temperature was assessed at each study site with one temperature logger (HOBO
158 Pendant[®] Temperature/Light Data Logger 64K, Cape Cod, Cape Cod, Massachusetts) located
159 at the centre of each line transect. Data loggers were placed on thick juniper trunks covered by a
160 dense layer of branches, oriented to the north at approximately 1.5 m above ground, and
161 recorded air temperature every ten minutes from 1st December to 15th February of winters 2009-
162 2010 and 2010-2011. For each recording day (144 measurements) we obtained the average
163 temperature, maximum daytime temperature and the minimum night temperature. For each
164 study woodland, we averaged temperatures for the 77-day study period. These three temperature
165 measurements were highly correlated across woodlands ($r > 0.8$ in all cases). Thus, we selected
166 the average minimum night temperature considering its clear functional meaning related to
167 maximum thermoregulatory costs at night, and the long duration of winter nights. Day length
168 duration at winter solstice was obtained from Garmin MapSource 6, considering the location
169 coordinates of each study area. The latitudinal variation of the 26 study areas spanned 191 km
170 or 1°47'02" (between 41°59'32" and 40°12'30"; Fig. 1). The daytime difference at winter
171 solstice between the southernmost and northernmost localities was 12 minutes (547 vs. 559
172 minutes). These small daily differences produced 13.5 h of accumulated day length throughout
173 the study period between northern and southern localities.

174

175 Data analyses

176 We used regression analyses and paired t-tests to describe between-winter changes in the study
177 variables. Relationships between mean numbers of pellets per tree in 0.5-km transects
178 and the predictor variables (bird abundance, cone abundance, tree density, air
179 temperature, and day length) of the 26 studied juniper woodlands were explored by
180 generalized linear regression models (canonical distribution: normal; link function:
181 identity), using the information–theoretic model comparison approach. Alternative models
182 were compared with Akaike's second-order AIC corrected for small sample sizes (AICc;
183 Burnham and Anderson 2002). We introduced a quadratic term of tree cover into models to

184 check for nonlinearity in the influence of this predictor variable. Rather than base inferences on
185 a single, selected best model from an a priori set of models, inference was based on the entire
186 set of models using weights (W_i) derived from AICc figures. This approach has both practical
187 and philosophical advantages, as it is based on the Kullback-Leibler information theory. A
188 model-averaged estimator is a more honest measure of precision and reduced bias compared to
189 the estimator from just the selected best model (Burnham and Anderson 2004). Standardized
190 regression coefficients (β) were obtained in regression analyses as a measure of the sign and
191 magnitude effects of predictor variables (i.e., analyses were carried out with standardized
192 variables, such that their averages are zero and variances are 1). Parameter estimates (β and R^2)
193 were averaged using model weights (W_i) derived from all models with $\Delta AICc \leq 4$. Number of
194 thrush pellets, fruits and birds were included in analyses using ln-transformation. All the
195 statistical analyses were carried out using Statistica 10 (StatSoft Inc, Tulsa, Oklahoma).

196 Residuals of regression models for both winters showed non-significant patterns
197 of spatial autocorrelation ($P > 0.2$) for between-woodland distances shorter than 48 km
198 or longer than 101 km, with relative Moran's I figures (I/I_{\max}) ranging between [-0.32,
199 0.27] and [-0.25, 0.2] respectively (analyses carried out with SAM package, Rangel et
200 al. 2010). There was a significant negative autocorrelated pattern in the residuals of the
201 regression model of the first winter between 48-75 km ($I/I_{\max} = -0.36$, $P = 0.015$), and in
202 the residuals of the second winter between 75-101 km ($I/I_{\max} = -0.37$, $P = 0.030$).

203 Therefore, there was not a clear spatial structure in the data after considering the
204 ecological predictors we can link to functional hypotheses regarding the biological
205 processes under study, and we can assume that the 26 woodlands are nearly independent
206 samples with a complete lack of spatial autocorrelation among nearer woodlands.

207 Day length was not significantly correlated with any other explanatory variable
208 (absolute value of r with the other seven predictors < 0.3 , $P > 0.15$). Altitude showed a
209 relatively low variation among localities (maximum of 364 m; Table 1) and was only

210 significantly correlated with thrush abundance during winter 2009-2010 ($r = -0.446$, $P =$
211 0.022), although its significance faded after applying Bonferroni's correction for
212 multiple p 's estimations. Therefore, both altitude and day length were loosely related to
213 other explanatory variables. We decided to remove altitude from statistical analyses in
214 order to avoid the expected collinearity with temperature.

215

216

217 **Results**

218 The winter of 2009-2010 was colder than the winter 2010-2011, with average minimum
219 temperatures below zero in both cases (Table 1). Both winters also differed in cone crop, with
220 the second winter having six times more ripe cones than the first one (Table 1). In the winter
221 2010-2011, many migratory thrushes arrived at the range of the juniper woodlands (e.g. *T.*
222 *pilaris*, *T. iliacus*, *T. philomelos*) where increased local populations of blackbirds (*T. merula*)
223 and Mistle thrushes (*T. viscivorus*). Globally, the increase in thrush and pellet numbers was two-
224 times lower than the increase recorded in cone abundance (Table 1). Cone and thrush
225 abundance were only significantly correlated in the second winter 2010-2011 of high
226 fruit availability ($r = 0.463$, $P = 0.017$); the association between these two variables was
227 considerably lower in the first winter with six times less ripe cones ($r = 0.172$, $P =$
228 0.400).

229 The Akaike multimodel inference supported a prominent role for thrush abundance and
230 day length in the geographical distribution of pellet abundance during the two study winters
231 (Table 2, Fig. 2). In addition, cone abundance correlated with pellet abundance during the
232 second winter and, in the colder winter 2009-2010, minimum temperatures depicted a weak,
233 negative relationship with the spatial patterning of pellets (Table 2). The remaining predictor
234 variables had a low strength of evidence and magnitude effects (sum of Akaike weights < 0.27
235 and absolute values of weighted standardized β regression coefficients < 0.10 ; Table 2). The

236 percentages of explained variance in pellet abundance were 34% and 70%, respectively, in
237 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 winters (weighted average of R^2 using model weights W_i in Table 2).

238

239 **Discussion**

240 Effect of thrush abundance on pellet rain

241 Thrushes tracked inter-winter changes in ripe cones, but their ability to adjust numbers
242 to fruit resources seemed rather crude during the study period. Despite there being a six-fold
243 average increase in ripe cones in the second winter, there was a three-fold increase in thrush and
244 pellet numbers (Table 1). This decoupling may result from asynchrony between some intrinsic
245 (e.g., annual conditions affecting flowering and cone production of juniper woodlands) and
246 extrinsic, large-scale features affecting the Spanish juniper woodlands. For instance, uncoupling
247 between cone and bird abundance in juniper woodlands may result from annual variations in the
248 breeding success of thrushes in nesting areas, or unexpected weather hazards (e.g., cold waves)
249 affecting the displacements of migratory birds at the scale of Western Europe (Herrera 1998).
250 Interestingly, the breeding populations of migratory thrushes arriving to winter in Iberia did not
251 show any increase in 2010 (European Bird Census Committee, (<http://www.ebcc.info/bcn.html>)
252 and the only continental cold-wave detected during the period occurred in winter 2009-2010
253 (Cohen et al. 2010). Therefore, it seems less likely that annual variations in the breeding success
254 and weather hazards caused the sharp increase of wintering thrushes in the winter 2010-2011.

255 Spanish juniper woodlands are just one of the several possible wintering habitats
256 occupied by thrushes in the Iberian Peninsula, where they move in search of food over large
257 distances (Santos 1982; Jordano 1993; Rey 1995). This means that the selection by most
258 thrushes of alternative wintering habitats at the scale of the Iberian Peninsula might produce an
259 unbalanced bird distribution with regards the extant annual cone availability of the Spanish
260 juniper woodlands. However, despite these contingent large-scale effects on thrush abundance,
261 results suggests that the large production of cones during the second winter attracted many
262 thrushes and that this increase in thrush regional population resulted in thrushes producing seed
263 rain according to spatial variation in cone abundance among juniper woodlands. This suggests a

264 density-dependent process of habitat occupation in which thrushes increased their ability to
265 track variation in cone abundance when the regional populations were large enough to allocate
266 individuals according to their extant availability of ripe cones (Tellería et al. 2008, 2013).
267 Therefore, at the scale of the Spanish juniper-thrush system of the Iberian highlands, the call
268 effect of high cone production on migratory thrushes may be interpreted as a driver of their
269 ability to disperse seeds according to the geographical patterning of ripe cone abundance (see,
270 however, Kelly and Sork 2002).

271

272 Effects of vegetation structure, temperature and day-length on pellet rain

273 Tree cover and temperature showed little effects on seed rain produced by thrushes.

274 Despite the broad range in tree density (46 to 440 trees / ha; Table 1) no significant effect was
275 detected during the two study winters suggesting that seed dispersion by thrushes within the
276 range of the Spanish juniper woodlands was not related at all with tree cover. Temperature
277 depicted a similar result (low sum of Akaike weights and standardized regression coefficients,
278 Table 2), despite the fact that they were under the lower critical temperature for birds (around
279 20°C; Calder and King 1974; Table 1). The detected variation of around 2.5 °C among localities
280 was not enough to produce changes in pellet deposition resulting from potential changes in food
281 requirements (Kwit et al. 2004).

282 Daylight was a main correlate of pellet abundance during the two study winters (Table
283 1). The most parsimonious explanation for the effect of day length on pellet rain abundance is
284 that it depicts geographical differences in the time available to feed (Sanz et al. 2000; Carrascal
285 et al. 2012). In our study area, the average difference in day length between the northern- and
286 southern-most localities is 10.5 minutes per day. This average difference accumulated over 90
287 winter days (December-January-February) amounts to 16 h of daytime that is available for
288 foraging in southernmost localities if compared to the northernmost ones. Thrushes are able to
289 regurgitate seeds shortly after ripe cones are ingested by rapid elimination of non-nutritional
290 remains that occupy space in the gut (Sorensen 1984; Levey 1987). This means that if they use
291 most of this additional time to feed (e.g., to cope with energy requirements of long winter

292 nights), they will produce a significant increase in pellets delivered in those woodlands with
293 longer day lengths (i.e., southern localities). Active search for ripe cones could be related to
294 their high content of metabolized nonstructural carbohydrates (Herrera 1987), one of the most
295 suitable foods to face energetic requirements (Jordano 1993). Consequently, geographical
296 variation in day length introduces a time budget component of bird biology associated with
297 latitude (Carrascal et al. 2012) whose explicit effect and frugivore-fruit interactions merit
298 further investigation.

299

300 Conclusions

301 This study is a snapshot of a large-scale process related to the role of thrushes in the
302 reproductive biology of the Spanish juniper. It shows that the links between the spatial
303 variation of cone production and the distribution of seed dispersion activity by thrushes,
304 as reflected by pellet abundance within the woodlands, may be distorted by their
305 inability to track cone abundance in a year with less cones. Lack of dispersal activity
306 may disrupt the transition from fruit to seedling within the reproductive cycle of
307 junipers and may affect, along other features (e.g., microsite quality for germination and
308 growth, seed predation, etc.) seed dispersal effectiveness of plant populations (Schupp
309 et al. 2010). It is important to realize, however, that dispersal effectiveness of the
310 Spanish junipers is far from being controlled by the thrushes alone, since other
311 vertebrates (e.g. mammals) may also feed on ripe cones and disperse the seeds (e.g.
312 mammals; Santos et al. 1999, Escribano-Ávila et al. 2012).

313 Despite the need for long-term investigations on this topic within a more complex
314 conceptual framework (seed dispersal effectiveness must be quantified as the
315 number of seeds dispersed by dispersal agents multiplied by the probability that dispersed seeds
316 produce a new adult; Schupp et al. 2010), empirical evidence provided in this study suggests
317 three main conclusions that may be used to launch further approaches to this process. First,
318 results clearly report the changing role of thrushes on the geographical distribution of seed rain

319 within the range of the Spanish juniper (Myers and Harms 2009). Second, seed dispersion
 320 among woodlands appears strongly dependent on some large-scale features affecting bird
 321 numbers (e.g. the arrival of extra-Iberian migratory birds) and feeding behaviour (e.g. day
 322 length duration), a pattern that shows a primary role for variables acting at larger scales on local
 323 fruit-frugivore interaction (García et al. 2011). Finally, these results also support the promising
 324 perspectives of considering large-scale approaches to exploring the drivers of some ecological
 325 processes (Jenkins and Ricklefs 2011).

326

327 **Acknowledgements** This paper, funded by project CGL2008-2011/BOS of the Spanish
 328 Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness, is a contribution to the International Campus of
 329 Excellence launched by Complutense University of Madrid (UCM), Polytechnic University of
 330 Madrid (UPM) and the Spanish Council for Scientific Research (CSIC). Two anonymous
 331 reviewers considerably improved an early version of this paper. We are grateful to Claire
 332 Jasinski and Sarah Young for improving the English of the manuscript.

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438 **Table 1** Mean (\pm SE) of the study variables in 26 juniper woodlands in Spain during two consecutive winters.

	Winter 2009-2010	Winter 2010-2011	Paired t-tests
	mean \pm se (min-max)	mean \pm se (min-max)	
Number of birds per transect			
Blackbird (<i>Turdus merula</i>)	0.5 \pm 0.1 (0-2.3)	0.8 \pm 0.1 (0-2.3)	t = 2.10 P = 0.046
Mistle thrush (<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>)	2.4 \pm 0.8 (0-17.3)	2.7 \pm 0.4 (0.3-8.3)	t = 1.75 P = 0.093
Fieldfare (<i>Turdus pilaris</i>)*	0.3 \pm 0.2 (0-6.0)	2.9 \pm 2.5 (0-64.3)	t = 1.25 P = 0.222
Redwing (<i>Turdus iliacus</i>)*	0.6 \pm 0.3 (0-7.0)	2.9 \pm 1.5 (0-39.0)	t = 2.60 P = 0.016
Ring ouzel (<i>Turdus torquatus</i>)*	-	0.1 \pm 0.1 (0-1.0)	-
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)*	0.0 \pm 0.0 (0-0.3)	1.8 \pm 0.5 (0-8.7)	t = 4.75 P < 0.001
Total number of thrushes per transect	3.6 \pm 1.1 (0.0-18.7)	11.2 \pm 4.0 (1.0-107.7)	t = 3.50 P = 0.002
Number of pellets	10.4 \pm 3.4 (0-63.9)	34.9 \pm 5.9 (1.7-108.5)	t = 5.41 P < 0.001
Number of ripe fruits per tree	102.5 \pm 42.4 (0-1018.6)	611.1 \pm 150.3 (2.1-3098.0)	t = 6.06 P < 0.001
Minimum night temperature (°C)	-1.7 \pm 0.1 (-3.2/-0.8)	-1.1 \pm 0.2 (-3.2-0.3)	t = 5.07 P < 0.001
Day length (minutes)	553.1 \pm 0.8 (547-559)		
Tree density (ha-1)	197.0 \pm 19.8 (46-440)		
Altitude (m)	1176 \pm 19.8 (950-1314)		

439 *Notes:* Relative abundance of thrushes refers to the average number of birds counted in three 500 m transects without detection distance limits per
440 winter. Number of pellets: average number of pellets found under the tree crown of ten junipers in each woodland. Number of ripe fruits per tree:
441 average number of ripe fruits in 50 (2009-2010) and 20 (2010-2011) randomly selected juniper trees in each woodland. Values for temperatures are
442 averages for 77 days (1st December to 15th February) in the two consecutive winters. Day length and tree cover are variables that did not change
443 between years. Paired t-test: results of paired t-tests comparing the two winters using the 26 juniper woodlands (d.f. = 25 in all tests). Asterisks (*) show
444 those species without breeding populations in juniper woodlands.

445 **Table 2** Alternative models for the relative abundance of thrush pellets in juniper woodlands of
 446 Spain during the winters of 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 ordered by the value of the AICc
 447 criterion (AIC corrected for small sample sizes).

Winter 2009-2010										
model	W_i	AICc	R^2	regression coefficient (β)						
				Day length	Tree density	Tree density ²	Tmin	#Fruit	#Thrush	
1	0.231	83.98	0.33	0.43	-	-	-	-	-	0.53
2	0.132	85.09	0.37	0.40	-	-	-0.21	-	-	0.50
3	0.085	85.98	0.35	0.39	-	-	-	0.15	-	0.49
4	0.084	85.99	0.35	0.34	-0.15	-	-	-	-	0.52
		mean R^2	0.34							
		mean β		0.32	-0.10	0.05	-0.10	0.04	0.48	
		ΣW_i		0.82	0.26	0.18	0.42	0.20	1.00	
Winter 2010-2011										
model	W_i	AICc	R^2	regression coefficient (β)						
				Day length	Tree density	Tree density ²	Tmin	#Fruit	#Thrush	
1	0.312	56.94	0.71	0.62	-	-	-	0.34	0.29	
2	0.135	58.62	0.66	0.51	-	-	-	0.50	-	
3	0.121	58.83	0.73	0.59	-0.12	-	-	0.33	0.30	
4	0.119	58.88	0.72	0.56	-	-0.12	-	0.33	0.30	
		mean R^2	0.70							
		mean β		0.58	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	0.36	0.22	
		ΣW_i		1.00	0.17	0.17	0.15	0.93	0.70	

448
 449 *Notes:* Although multimodel inference has been carried out considering models with $\Delta AICc \leq 4$
 450 (15 models for winter 2009-2010 and 9 models for winter 2010-2011), only models with
 451 $\Delta AICc \leq 2$ are shown for the sake of brevity. β : standardized regression coefficients
 452 obtained in generalized linear model (beta figures inform about the magnitude and sign
 453 of the partial relationships of the standardized figures of predictor variables with the
 454 abundance pellets). W_i : model weight; ΣW_i : sum of Akaike weights for each variable
 455 considering those models where they were selected. mean β : weighted averages of standardized
 456 regression coefficients considering model weights W_i . R^2 : variance explained by each model.
 457 Tmin: average minimum night temperature in the time span 1st December to 15th February.
 458 #Fruit: average number of ripe fruits in 20 randomly selected juniper trees. #Thrush: number of
 459 thrushes counted in three 500 m transects.

460

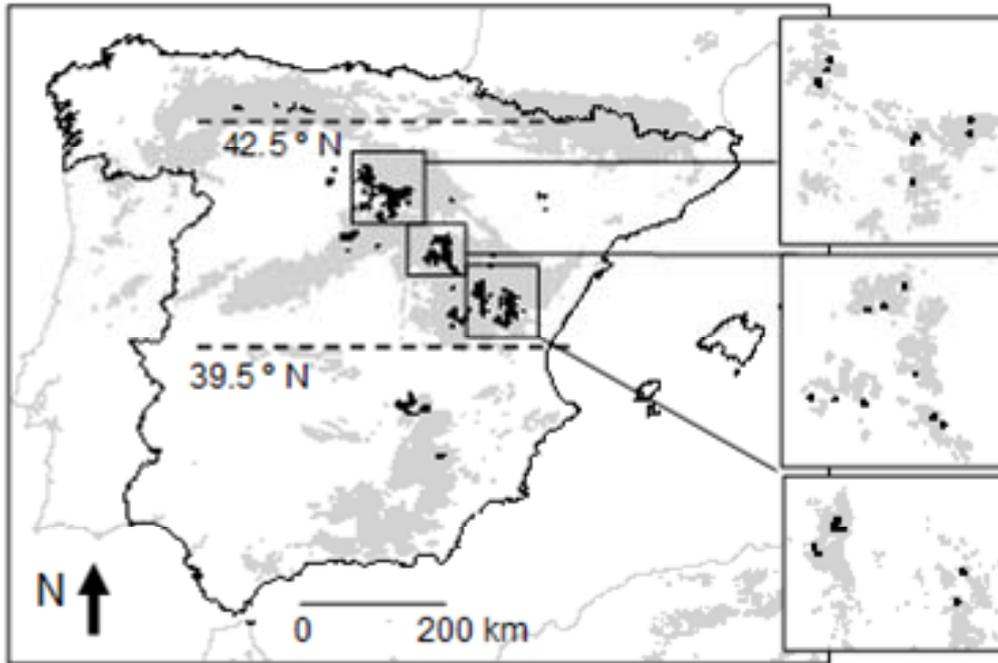
461 **Fig. 1** Distribution of Spanish juniper woodlands and location of the study sites. Grey
462 tones depict areas over 1000 m above sea level and black patches show the actual
463 distribution of the Spanish juniper woodlands. Boxes show the distribution of the study
464 sites (black points) within the expanses of juniper woodlands (grey).

465

466 **Fig. 2** Relationship between the partial residuals of standardized values of pellet
467 abundance and thrush abundance, ripe cone abundance, temperature and day length
468 during the two study winters. Residual plots show the relationship between a given
469 independent variable and pellet abundance given that the other three independent
470 variables are also in the model, therefore partialling out their effects (i.e., building a
471 model with pellet abundance as the response variable and thrush abundance, ripe cone
472 abundance, temperature and day length as predictors). The linear and quadratic terms of
473 tree density were excluded from the analyses of partial residual plots because their ΣW_i
474 were lower than 0.3 in both years (see Table 2). Dashed and solid lines represent the
475 regression lines for the first (2009-2010) and second (2010-2011) winters, respectively.

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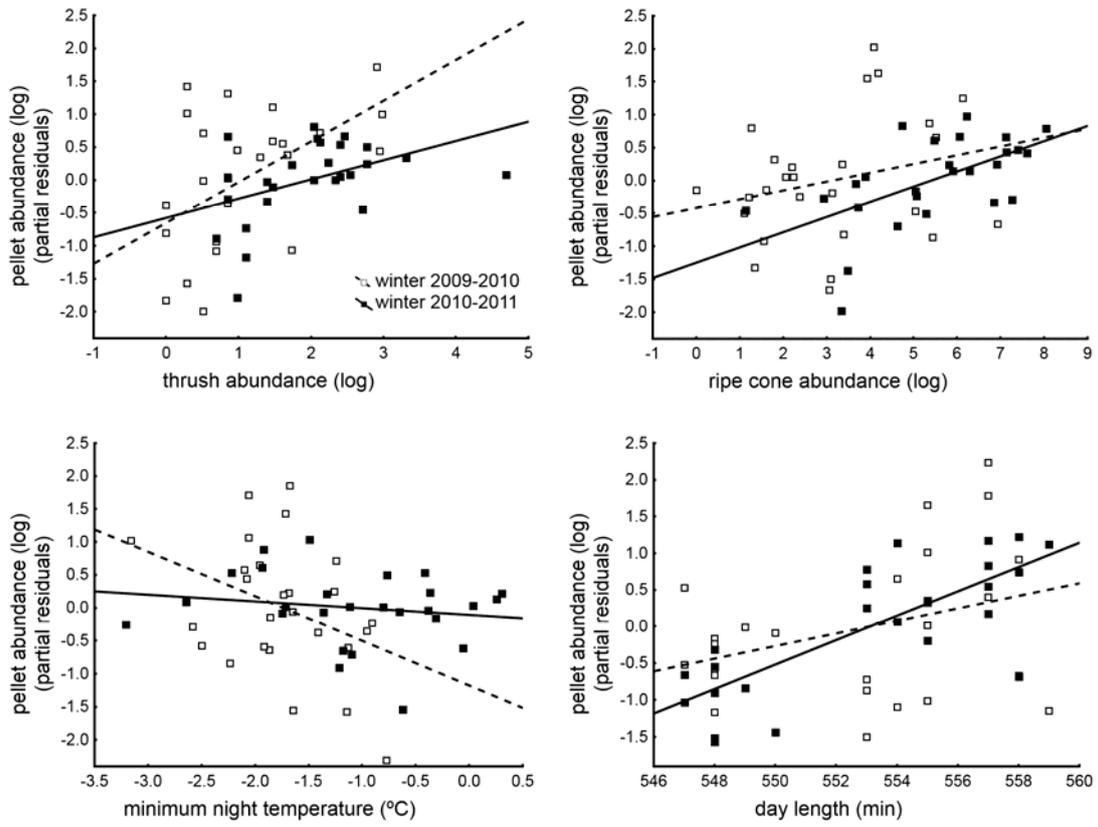
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480 Fig.1

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485 Fig.2