

1 **Commercial spruce plantations support a limited canopy fauna: Evidence from a multi taxa**  
2 **comparison of native and plantation forests**

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1 **Abstract**

2 Globally, the total area of plantation forest is increasing as deforestation and fragmentation of  
3 native forest continues. In some countries commercial plantations make up more than half of the  
4 total forested land. Internationally, there is growing emphasis on forestry policy for plantations to  
5 deliver biodiversity and ecosystem services. In Ireland, native forest now comprises just 1% of total  
6 land cover while non-native spruce forest makes up 60% of the plantation estate and approximately  
7 6% of the total land cover. The majority of plantation invertebrate biodiversity assessments focus on  
8 ground-dwelling species and consequently a good understanding exists for these guilds, especially  
9 ground-active spiders and beetles. Using a technique of insecticide fogging, we examine the less well  
10 understood component of forest systems, the canopy fauna (Coleoptera, Araneae, Diptera and  
11 Hemiptera), in Irish spruce plantations (Sitka and Norway) and compare the assemblage  
12 composition, richness and abundance to that of remnant native forest (ash and oak). In addition, we  
13 examine the potential for accumulation of forest species in second rotation spruce plantations and  
14 identify indicator species for each forest type.

15 From 30 sampled canopies, we recorded 1155 beetles and 1340 spiders from 144 species and over  
16 142000 Diptera and Hemiptera from 71 families. For all taxa, canopy assemblages of native forests  
17 were significantly different from closed-canopy plantation forests. No indicators for plantation forest  
18 were identified; those identified for native forest included species from multiple feeding guilds.  
19 Plantations supported approximately half the number of beetle species and half the number of  
20 Diptera and Hemiptera families recorded in native forests. Although assemblages in Norway spruce  
21 plantations were very different to those of native forest, they had consistently higher richness than  
22 Sitka spruce plantations. No differences in richness or abundance were found between first rotation  
23 and second rotation Sitka spruce plantations. Compared to other forest types, Sitka spruce  
24 plantations contained far greater total abundance of invertebrates, due to vast numbers of aphids  
25 and midges. Under current management, Sitka spruce plantations provide limited benefit to the  
26 canopy fauna typical of native forests in either first or second rotations. The large aphid populations  
27 may provide abundant food for insectivores but may also lead to reduced crop production through  
28 defoliation. Progressive forestry management should attempt to diversify the plantation canopy  
29 fauna, which may also increase productivity and resilience to pest species.

30

31 **Keywords:** canopy fogging, arthropod, plantation forestry, aphid, Sitka spruce, Norway spruce.

1 **1. Introduction**

2 Global deforestation continues to fragment and reduce natural forest as afforestation of commercial  
3 plantations expands (FAO, 2010). Globally, over 29% of land area is forest, of which 3% is plantation  
4 and under current trends this is expected to account for 21% by 2100 (Brockerhoff *et al.*, 2013). At  
5 present, some countries have much greater proportions of forested land comprising plantations; for  
6 example, Ireland 89%, UK 69%, India 51% and Japan 44% (FAO, 2001; Forest Europe *et al.*, 2011). As  
7 the area of plantations increases, so does the importance of management to ensure the needs of  
8 regional biodiversity are met. Concerns are often raised about the lack of biodiversity associated  
9 with plantation forest (Hartley, 2002; Brockerhoff *et al.*, 2008), and when compared to natural  
10 forest, plantations can lack specialist forest species (Helle, 1986; Niemela, 1993; Finch, 2005). In  
11 areas where afforestation has occurred on non-forest habitat, as is often the case in Western  
12 Europe, plantations may also have negative effects on the biodiversity of open habitats (Butterfield  
13 *et al.*, 1995; Brockerhoff *et al.*, 2008). However, recent studies have shown that in some situations  
14 plantation landscapes can provide conservation benefits for regionally important species (Berndt *et*  
15 *al.*, 2008; Pawson *et al.*, 2008; Pedley *et al.*, 2013). To understand and optimise plantation  
16 landscapes, there is a pressing need to examine which aspects of forest biodiversity are supported in  
17 plantation habitats.

18  
19 Forest canopies contain a large proportion of the total diversity of organisms on Earth (Lowman and  
20 Wittman, 1996), with a major part of this diversity attributed to invertebrate species. In fact, in the  
21 tropics it has been suggested that there are twice as many arboreal forest species than there are  
22 ground-dwelling ones (Erwin, 1982). Although the canopy in temperate forests may be less species  
23 diverse than in tropical forest, many species utilise temperate forest canopies for at least part of  
24 their life cycle (Ulyshen, 2011). Invertebrates are an important component of all forest ecosystems,  
25 where they have roles in food-webs and nutrient cycling, and as prey for other invertebrates, small  
26 mammals and birds (Askenmo *et al.*, 1977; Wilson *et al.*, 1999; Halaj and Wise, 2001). They are also  
27 used to monitor forest change and management (Schowalter, 1995; Ji *et al.*, 2013). Arthropods in  
28 particular are strongly influenced by the compositional and structural dynamics of their immediate  
29 habitats and the surrounding landscape, and respond quickly to brief, sudden changes in  
30 environmental conditions (Robinson, 1981; Marc *et al.*, 1999; Rainio and Niemela, 2003).

31  
32 The majority of invertebrate research comparing plantation to native forests has been carried out on  
33 the non-canopy component, predominately through pitfall trapping of ground invertebrates. Few  
34 studies have sampled both the canopy fauna of plantations and native forests in the same

1 landscape. Those studies that have compared canopies of native and plantation forest include short  
2 rotation *Eucalyptus* plantations in Australia (Cunningham *et al.*, 2005), tropical hardwood plantations  
3 in Thailand (Tangmitcharoen *et al.*, 2006) and coniferous plantations in North America (Schowalter,  
4 1995). What is lacking is an assessment of the canopy invertebrates of non-native plantations in  
5 Europe, focusing on what the closed canopy of these commercial forests provide for the regional  
6 forest biota of older native forest. It has been shown that the structurally complex canopies of old  
7 forests support more species than the relatively simple canopies of young forests (reviewed in  
8 Ulyshen, 2011). Similarly, it is likely that commercially mature plantations, which are relatively young  
9 compared with remnant old-growth forest, also support less species. However, with increased  
10 amounts of plantation forest and continued deforestation of native forest, there is a need to address  
11 the degree to which commercial forests support the canopy biodiversity of native forests  
12 (Schowalter, 1995). Identifying gaps in biodiversity protection will contribute to evidence-based  
13 conservation (Sutherland *et al.*, 2004), helping to meet national and international objectives for  
14 conservation (EPA, 2007; EC, 2011).

15

16 In this study, we examine the canopy invertebrates (Coleoptera, Araneae, Diptera and Hemiptera) of  
17 remnant patches of native forest in Ireland and non-native spruce plantations. Native forests in  
18 Ireland, like elsewhere in Western Europe, have undergone severe reduction and fragmentation.  
19 Anthropogenic land change has severely impacted Ireland's natural biodiversity; remaining patches  
20 of native forest can now only be termed 'semi-natural' having been utilised over centuries for wood  
21 fuel and grazing (Peterken, 1996). Only 1% of the surface area of Ireland is comprised of natural  
22 forest, and most remaining patches are small (75% are less than 5 ha) and isolated in a landscape of  
23 intensive agriculture (Cross, 2012). Commercial conifer plantations form a large part of the total  
24 forested land in Ireland; approximately 10% of the surface area of Ireland has been afforested,  
25 mainly through the planting of non-native conifers. Forest expansion planned over the next two  
26 decades will see the total reach 15% (COFORD Council, 2009).

27

28 Given the extent of land that will be under plantation in the coming years, it is important to  
29 understand the biodiversity in afforested and also reforested habitat. As plantations often occur as  
30 mosaics of different aged stands, it is likely reforested stands will be colonised by species inhabiting  
31 adjacent closed-canopy habitat through metapopulation dynamics (Hanski, 1999). In addition, if  
32 permanent closed-canopy habitat is maintained within the local mosaic there is potential for  
33 accumulation of forest specialist through successive rotations. To explore the biodiversity potential  
34 of plantation forests in Ireland, two types of remnant native forest (ash and oak) were sampled as

1 reference points with which to compare the canopy invertebrates of differing types of non-native  
2 plantation forests, first and second rotation Sitka spruce and first rotation Norway spruce. We used a  
3 technique of insecticide canopy fogging to sample invertebrates from the five forest types to answer  
4 the following questions; 1) Do plantations support canopy invertebrate assemblages similar to native  
5 forests and do patterns of species richness, abundance and composition correspond for all taxa? 2)  
6 Does the canopy fauna in second rotations plantation change and do these successive rotations  
7 support increasing numbers of forest specialists than first rotations?

1 **2. Methods**

2 2.1 Study sites

3 Thirty closed-canopy forests, comprising five types, were sampled in Ireland (Figure 1); six ash  
4 (*Fraxinus excelsior*) dominated semi-natural woodlands (hereafter referred to as ash forest), six oak  
5 (*Quercus petraea*) dominated semi-natural woodlands (hereafter referred to as oak forest), six  
6 closed canopy (20-50 years old) first rotation Sitka spruce (*Picea sitchensis*) plantations (hereafter  
7 referred to as afforested Sitka plantations), six second rotation Sitka spruce plantations (hereafter  
8 referred to as reforested Sitka plantations) and six Norway spruce (*Picea abies*) first rotation  
9 plantations. Forest sites were matched as closely as possible for soil type, altitude and tree density  
10 (mean basal area per m<sup>2</sup>). All stands were a minimum of 6 ha in size and 100 m in width.

11

12 Ash and oak forests were selected as they are the most common native tree encountered in Irish  
13 semi-natural forests, 22% and 18% respectively (Higgins *et al.*, 2004). Native forest types comprised  
14 a mix of tree species, i.e. oak-dominated forests comprise oak, birch and holly, while ash-dominated  
15 forests comprised ash, oak and hazel. We defined natural forests as broadleaved forests containing  
16 tree species that are native, as specified in Kelly (1991), that are not currently intensively managed,  
17 and have been continuously present on historical maps dating from the 1830s-40s (the oldest  
18 available for Ireland). In the case of natural forests in Northern Ireland, forests were chosen based  
19 on their inclusion in a data base of ancient and long-established woodland (The Woodland Trust,  
20 2007). Both ash and oak forests were therefore at least 150 years old.

21

22 Norway and Sitka spruce were chosen for the study as they are two of the dominant species in the  
23 forest estate in Ireland, with Sitka comprising approximately 60% and Norway spruce 4% (Forest  
24 Service 2007). Sampled plantations ranged from mid rotation 20-30 year old closed-canopy stands to  
25 60 year old commercially mature stands. Although differences in age between surveyed natural and  
26 plantation forest exist it is not possible to sample older stands due to the commercial felling regime  
27 of Irish plantations. Therefore, the sampled sites represent a range of closed-canopy forests that is  
28 available to the invertebrate community.

29

30 2.2 Invertebrate sampling

31 Sampling was conducted once at each site using a thermal fogging method to capture the  
32 invertebrate component of the forest canopy. All sampling was carried out between April and  
33 August in 2008 and 2009. In 2008, three ash and three oak forests, and all Norway spruce  
34 plantations were sampled. During 2009, a further three ash and oak forests were sampled along with

1 all Sitka spruce plantations. Due to logistical and meteorological reasons it was not possible to  
2 sample all sites in a single year.

3  
4 A petrol-driven fogging machine (SwingFog SN50-PE, SwingTec Ltd, Germany) was used with a  
5 natural pyrethroid (Pybuthrin 33). Pyrethroid insecticide was chosen as it is non-persistent in the  
6 environment, with no phytotoxic effects and the levels used by this method are not harmful to  
7 mammals (Straw *et al.*, 1996). In each stand, a fogging plot was established in an area that  
8 represented the site as a whole and that was at least 50 m from the forest perimeter to reduce  
9 possible edge effects (Ozanne *et al.*, 1997). A 'target' tree was selected at the centre of each fogging  
10 plot that corresponded to the forest type being sampled. Sampling of the canopy was not limited to  
11 the target tree however, as inevitably the canopy of surrounding trees was interspersed with the  
12 target canopy and this was also sampled; this may have included understory species in the native  
13 forests.

14  
15 Prior to fogging, 16 plastic sheets, with a combined area of 24 m<sup>2</sup>, were suspended 1 m above the  
16 ground; this sized area is known to adequately sample canopy invertebrates (Stork and Hammond,  
17 1997; Guilbert, 1998). Suspended sheets are more suitable than ground sheets, as they reduce the  
18 risk of contamination by 'tourist' insects from the ground. Sampling sheets were arranged around  
19 the central tree on the eight cardinal and ordinal compass bearings, separated by 0.5 m from each  
20 other and all trees. Each canopy was fogged until fully covered in insecticide (typically 6-9 minutes  
21 duration). Canopy fogging was only carried out in dry, calm conditions (wind-speeds of less than 8  
22 km h<sup>-1</sup>) and after a dry, calm night to minimise fog dispersion. Sample sheets remained in place for  
23 three hours after fogging to adequately collect the falling invertebrates (Stork and Hammond, 1997).  
24 Catches from the 16 sample sheets from one site were pooled. Samples were collected *in situ* using  
25 soft paintbrushes to transfer invertebrates into bottles containing 70% alcohol.

26  
27 Adult spiders and beetles were identified to species level following relevant taxonomic keys (see  
28 Appendix A for details). Beetle and spider species found were assigned to categories based on their  
29 known feeding guild, rarity and habitat preferences (Appendix A). As there are currently no  
30 comprehensive designated species lists for the Irish invertebrate fauna, UK designations were  
31 applied. Species-level identification of all individuals was not possible due to time taken to identify  
32 the large numbers of specimens sampled, therefore, in order to assess other dominant invertebrate  
33 groups, adults from the orders Diptera and Hemiptera were identified to family or super-family level.

34

## 1 2.3 Analysis

2 Abundance was measured by the numbers of individuals per canopy plot. Sampling effort and  
3 species richness were compared among forest types with sample-based rarefaction using the rarefy  
4 function in the vegan package (Oksanen *et al.*, 2010) in the statistical software R (R Development  
5 Core Team, 2012).

6 Indicator species analysis was conducted to determine species affinity to forest types for the spider  
7 and beetle assemblages using the function multipatt in the R package indic-speices (De Caceres *et al.*,  
8 2010) to calculate indicator values (Dufrene and Legendre, 1997), and permutation (999) to test the  
9 significance of the relationships. To avoid selecting species with weak indicator capacity, we only  
10 considered those species where  $P \leq 0.01$ .

11 For each taxonomic group, assemblage composition across the forest types was examined using  
12 non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS), performed on a matrix of Bray-Curtis dissimilarities of  
13 abundance data (square root transformed and Wisconsin double standardization) using the vegan  
14 package (Oksanen *et al.*, 2010) in R. Centroids for each forest type were plotted to visualise  
15 assemblage differences. Stress values were examined to assess the accuracy in representation: <  
16 0.05 excellent; < 0.1 good; < 0.2 potentially useful; > 0.3 close to arbitrary (Clarke and Warwick,  
17 1994).

18 To examine the stability of sampled communities between the two sampling years, and therefore  
19 verify differences in composition were not merely a factor of inter-annual weather variation, we  
20 separately tested the ordination placement of ash and oak sites over the two years with t-test.  
21 NMDS axis one and two scores for ash and oak indicated stable invertebrate compositions between  
22 years (t tests:  $P > 0.05$ ). Therefore, the large differences between forest types sampled in  
23 subsequent years in the ordinations are unlikely to be an artefact of inter-annual variation in  
24 weather.

25 To test the difference in community composition between forest types for each taxa we used the R  
26 package mvabund (Wang *et al.*, 2012), which allows hypothesis testing by multivariate  
27 implementation of generalised linear models. Unlike dissimilarity-matrix-based methods, mvabund  
28 does not confound location with dispersion effects (a change in the mean-variance relationship),  
29 which can lead to misleading results and inflation of type 1 and 2 errors (Warton *et al.*, 2012). Using  
30 likelihood-ratio-tests (LR) in the summary.manyglm function, we tested for significant differences  
31 between native (ash and oak combined) and plantation forests.



1 Species richness, family richness and abundance were compared among forest types using  
2 generalised linear models (GLMs) in R. The appropriate error term (normal, Poisson, negative  
3 binomial, quasipoisson) for each analysis was selected by comparing Akaike's Information Criterion  
4 (AIC) and examining the ratio of deviance/residual degrees of freedom. Differences among forest  
5 type means were examined by Tukey pairwise comparisons using the glht function in the multcomp  
6 package (Hothorn *et al.*, 2008); pairwise comparisons are calculated using single-step p-value  
7 adjustments for multiple comparison tests. GLMs used sampling year as a covariate but was non-  
8 significant in all models ( $P > 0.05$ ). Spatial autocorrelation of GLM residuals was examined by  
9 Moran's I in the ape package v.3.0-6 (Paradis *et al.*, 2004) in R. In all instances, Moran's I was not  
10 significant ( $P > 0.05$ ).

11 To test for spatial autocorrelation in the community data, NMDS ordinations were first carried out  
12 for the combined spider and beetle species data and separately for the combined family level data  
13 (Diptera and Hemiptera). Axis scores for the two separate ordinations were tested against latitude  
14 and longitude with Mantel tests (Legendre and Legendre, 1998) using the mantel.rtest function in  
15 the ade4 package (Dray and Dufour, 2007) in R. For both species level and family level data, spatial  
16 autocorrelation was not significant on either axis one or two ( $P > 0.05$ ).

### 1 3. Results

2 We identified 1155 beetles and 1340 spiders from 30 canopy fogged forests to species level. In total,  
3 144 species were recorded, of which 42 (18 spiders and 24 beetles) were unique to plantation  
4 forests and 59 (13 spiders and 46 beetles) were unique to native ash and oak forests. Additionally,  
5 we identified to family level over 142000 Diptera and Hemiptera from 71 families. Insecticide  
6 fogging effectively sampled the canopy invertebrates in the five forest types (Fig. 2). Significant  
7 differences in assemblage composition were identified for all sampled groups, although differences  
8 in the spider assemblage were less pronounced than for the other groups (Fig. 3).

9

#### 10 3.1 Beetles

11 Significant differences in beetle assemblage composition were recorded between forest types  
12 (Deviance=312.6,  $P<0.001$ ); compared to native forests all plantation forest types had significantly  
13 different species compositions ( $P<0.001$ ). NMDS showed strong differences in assemblage  
14 composition, with ash and oak forests separated from plantation sites and distinct from each other  
15 (Fig. 3a). The three plantation types in the ordination have much larger polygons (standard deviation  
16 of centroids) than the two native forest types, indicating greater assemblage variation between  
17 replicate sites of the same type.

18

19 Both ash and oak forests contained significantly greater species richness of beetles than any of the  
20 plantation types, and this pattern was also consistent for forest specialist species (Fig. 4, Appendix  
21 C). The native forest samples also contained a greater abundance of beetles than plantations; the  
22 beetle abundance in both ash and oak was significantly greater than afforested and reforested  
23 plantations (Fig. 5, Appendix C). The abundance of forest specialists was also highest in ash and oak  
24 but only oak had significantly greater abundance than afforested and reforested Sitka spruce  
25 plantations. Although Norway spruce plantations contained significantly fewer forest specialist  
26 species than ash and oak, the abundance of forest specialists was not significantly different from  
27 native forests.

28

29 Indicator species analysis identified indicators for ash and oak forests only (Table 1). For ash forest,  
30 a mixture of herbivores, detritivores and mycetophagous species, but no predatory species, were  
31 found to be indicators. The three species with the highest ash indicator values are all associated with  
32 broadleaf forest (Appendix A) and included two weevils and one Nationally Notable B (UK  
33 designation) species, the false darkling beetle *Orchesia (Clinocara) minor*. Indicators in oak forest  
34 included carnivores, herbivores and mycetophagous species. Again the three species with the

1 highest indicator values were associated with broadleaf forests and the fourth was associated with  
2 deadwood.

3

4 The species richness of different beetle feeding guilds was also significantly different between forest  
5 types. Richness of detritivore and mycetophagous species was significantly greater in ash forest than  
6 in Sitka spruce and herbivore species richness was significantly greater in ash than any plantation  
7 forest (Fig. 6, Appendix D). Species richness of herbivores was also significantly greater in oak forests  
8 than in any plantation, whereas mycetophagous species richness was only significantly lower in Sitka  
9 spruce forests.

10

### 11 3.2 Spiders

12 Although differences were not as strong as those reported for beetles, spider assemblage  
13 composition was significantly different between forest types (Deviance=220.9,  $P=0.003$ ), and again  
14 all plantation forest types were significantly different to native forest assemblages ( $P<0.001$ ). The  
15 NMDS plot shows a similar pattern of site centroids to that shown for beetles, however, the  
16 separation between centroid polygons is not as distinct, indicating closer assemblage similarities  
17 (Fig. 3b). Ash and oak forests separate from the three plantation types and there is substantial  
18 overlap between the plantation forests. The dominant species in all three plantations types was  
19 *Pelecopsis nemoralis*, while in ash and oak forests *Theridion pallens* and *Tetragnatha montana* were  
20 the dominant species.

21

22 No difference in spider species richness or forest specialist species richness was found between the  
23 five forest types (Fig. 4). The same was also true for spider abundance and forest specialist  
24 abundance (Fig. 5). Large variations in richness and abundance were found within forest replicates,  
25 especially for plantation sites where spider abundance was an order of magnitude different in  
26 afforested Sitka spruce replicates.

27

28 Indicator species analysis identified one spider species, *Tetragnatha montana*, as an indicator of ash  
29 forests. This common orb web spider was the most abundant spider species recorded in ash forest  
30 and recorded only once from plantations forests.

31

32 No active hunting spiders were record in Sitka spruce plantations in either rotation (Fig. 6). Ash  
33 forests had the highest mean species richness of active hunters and orb web spinners. Species

1 richness of sheet web spinners was greatest in plantation forest, but only reforested Sitka spruce  
2 plantation had significantly greater richness than ash forests (Fig. 6, Appendix D).

3

### 4 3.3 Diptera and Hemiptera

5 Assemblage composition of Diptera and Hemiptera (family level data) was also significantly different  
6 between the five forest types (Deviance = 718.3,  $P < 0.001$ ), and all plantation forest types had  
7 significantly different compositions compared to both native forests combined ( $P < 0.001$ ). Again, the  
8 native ash and oak forests were separated from the plantation forests in the ordination (Fig. 3c).  
9 However, the family level data also separates Norway spruce plantations with no overlap among any  
10 other forest types. Afforested and reforested Sitka spruce assemblages are almost indistinguishable  
11 in the ordination, as are the two native forest types.

12

13 Family level richness and abundance differed significantly between the forest types (Fig. 7). Native  
14 ash and oak samples contained significantly more Diptera and Hemiptera families than any of the  
15 plantation sampled (Fig. 7a). However, the total abundance of individuals from these groups was  
16 significantly higher in plantations, although the samples from these forest types showed much  
17 greater variation in abundance (Fig. 7b).

18

19 Major differences in assemblages were demonstrated by comparisons of the abundance of  
20 individuals from the dominant Diptera and Hemiptera families (Fig. 8). For the Hemiptera, afforested  
21 and reforested Sitka spruce were strongly dominated by the aphid family; the average aphid  
22 abundance was recorded an order of magnitude higher in Sitka plantations than Norway spruce or  
23 native forest types. There were also differences in the dominant Diptera families between forest  
24 types. Ceratopogonidae (biting midges) and Chironomidae (non-biting midges) were an order of  
25 magnitude higher in afforested Sitka spruce and reforested Sitka spruce respectively, compared to  
26 Norway spruce and native forests. The abundances of individuals within families had a more even  
27 distribution in the two native and Norway spruce forests compared to the Sitka plantations. Notably  
28 missing from the Sitka plantations were many Hemiptera families, such as the leafhoppers  
29 (Cicadellidae) and minute pirate bugs (Anthocoridae), which made up a considerable proportion of  
30 the native forest assemblage.

## 1 4. Discussion

### 2 4.1 Canopy fauna of native and plantation forests

3 The canopy fauna of native forests were significantly different from closed canopy plantation forests  
4 for all sampled taxa. Independently, beetle assemblages and family level Diptera and Hemiptera  
5 assemblages showed large differences in richness and abundance between forest types. Plantation  
6 forests supported approximately half the number of species or families recorded in the native  
7 forests. Although assemblages in Norway spruce were very different to those of native forests,  
8 assemblages in Norway spruce plantations had consistently higher richness than Sitka spruce  
9 plantations across all taxa, which may reflect the non-European native range of Sitka spruce. No  
10 differences in richness or abundance were found between first rotation and second rotation Sitka  
11 spruce plantations. Sitka spruce plantations of both rotations contained far greater total abundance  
12 of invertebrates than any of the other forest types, although this was a result of the vast numbers of  
13 aphids (Aphididae) and midges (from the families Ceratopogonidae and Chironomidae). Under  
14 current management, plantation forests in Ireland provide limited benefit to the canopy fauna of  
15 native forests, and our results show that this is unlikely to change in successive rotations of Sitka  
16 spruce, as second rotation plantations did not accumulate additional native canopy biodiversity.

17

18 No indicator species for plantation forest were identified from the canopy sampling. From this,  
19 combined with the low species richness in Sitka spruce, we conclude that the canopy community in  
20 Sitka spruce plantations is a depauperate one, heavily dominated by just a few groups. In contrast,  
21 two sets of indicators were identified for ash and oak forests, both including beetle species from  
22 several feeding guilds. The dissimilarity between native and plantation canopy beetles implies that  
23 many species are either unable to disperse to plantations or are unable to utilise the plantation  
24 habitat. This corresponds with what has previously been found for ground-dwelling beetles  
25 (Carabidae) in closed canopy conifer plantations, both in Ireland and elsewhere in Europe  
26 (Butterfield *et al.*, 1995; Fahy and Gormally, 1998; Finch, 2005; Fuller *et al.*, 2008). Greater beetle  
27 richness in Norway spruce compared to Sitka spruce may reflect differences in specific secondary  
28 metabolites produced by both these non-native spruce species. Although Norway spruce is not  
29 native to Ireland, plant feeding/phloem sucking species, such as many of the herbivorous beetles  
30 and Hemiptera, may be better adapted to contend with plant defences of European species than the  
31 North American Sitka spruce. Nevertheless, previous research has shown that indigenous  
32 herbivorous insects can readily adapt from native conifers to exotic conifers (Bertheau *et al.*, 2009),  
33 and that resource relatedness (e.g. bark thickness) was important in determining host colonisation.  
34 Likewise, Roques *et al.* (2006) showed that colonisation of exotic plantation by indigenous insects

1 may be more successful if that exotic species has a native congener. Adaptability from native to  
2 exotic host may not transfer as readily from broadleaf species to conifers given, the fundamental  
3 differences in resources. Gossner *et al.* (2009) found that exotics shared more phytophages with  
4 natives from the same major plant lineage (angiosperms vs. gymnosperms) than with natives from  
5 the other lineages. In regions such as Ireland, where native conifers were absent for thousands of  
6 years (Roche *et al.*, 2009), the ability of indigenous fauna to exploit exotic conifer plantation may be  
7 limited.

8

9 For canopy spiders, ordinations showed less divergence between forest types compared with the  
10 other groups sampled. In addition, no differences in spider species richness or abundance were  
11 found between forest types. This is somewhat surprising given the large differences found for other  
12 groups, especially as spiders are known to be particularly sensitive to environmental conditions and  
13 habitat structure (Entling *et al.*, 2007; Muff *et al.*, 2009; Buchholz, 2010), which differ between forest  
14 types (Ziesche and Roth, 2008). However, given the large abundance of prey available, especially in  
15 the form of aphids, plantation forests may be particularly suited to generalist predators, such as the  
16 majority of spider species. The ability of spiders to colonise new habitat via passive aerially disperse  
17 (ballooning) may further explain why this taxa is able to exploit plantations. Ballooning dispersal is  
18 thought to give spiders a colonisation advantage, enabling them to exploit new or frequently  
19 disturbed habitat (Crawford *et al.*, 1995; Nyffeler and Sunderland, 2003). Given the fragmented  
20 nature of Ireland's forest estate, the ability to passively disperse on air currents via ballooning may  
21 give spiders an advantage when colonising plantation patches compared with those species  
22 restricted to ground movements and/or active flight. Orb web hunters, active hunters and scaffold  
23 web spinners were found in greater richness in native forests, whereas sheet web hunters  
24 (consisting of spiders from the Linyphiidae family) were found in greatest richness in the Sitka  
25 spruce. Linyphiidae are one of the few spider families capable of ballooning as adults, for most  
26 families this type of dispersal is restricted to young instars (Bell *et al.*, 2005). These very small bodied  
27 spiders are dominant invertebrate predators in crop fields, consuming high numbers of crop pests,  
28 especially aphids (Sunderland *et al.*, 1986; Schmidt and Tschardt, 2005). Furthermore, the majority  
29 of Linyphiidae in Britain are not habitat specialists (Pedley *et al.*, 2013) and this is also likely to be  
30 true for the Irish population. Therefore, species recorded in the current study may not necessarily be  
31 colonising from forested habitats and could be migrating from the adjacent agricultural landscapes,  
32 taking advantage of the abundant aphid populations in both habitats.

33

1 The dominance of some groups, such as the Linyphiidae and Aphididae, in plantations could prevent  
2 establishment or breeding success of other species through interference and resource competition.  
3 Although species distribution patterns are often assumed to be ordered by abiotic factors such as  
4 temperature, shade and moisture, interspecific competition has also been proposed as an  
5 alternative mechanism shaping population dynamics and distributions (Connell, 1983). Spiller (1984)  
6 found evidence of exploitative and interference competition with two common orb-weaving spiders.  
7 Removal of the smaller species in experimental plots led to an increase in body size and fecundity of  
8 the larger species, whereas removal of the larger species increased the abundance and altered web  
9 position of smaller species. In crop fields, Linyphiidae are able to dominate, with webs covering half  
10 the surface area of a field (Sunderland *et al.*, 1986). In the current study, Linyphiidae comprised 88%  
11 and 83% of the total spider abundance in Sitka and Norway spruce respectively, whereas in ash and  
12 oak Linyphiidae represented only 25% and 52%. Given the dominance of Linyphiidae in plantations  
13 and the potential for dense web coverage, competitive exclusion of other species could contribute  
14 to the low species richness in these forests. Although competition has been shown in specific  
15 systems, the importance of interspecific competition and the magnitude of the effects in field  
16 situations have been disputed (Shorrocks *et al.*, 1984; Gurevitch *et al.*, 1992). To test competition  
17 effects, observational and distributional studies, such as the current canopy study, need to be  
18 followed by detailed experimental field studies (Niemela, 1993).

19

20 Differences in sampling times between forests may have partially confounded our results. Hsieh and  
21 Linsenmair (2012) have shown that significantly different canopy spider compositions are obtained  
22 from early, mid and late season sampling. Although we attempted to temporally stratify sampling for  
23 each forest type, it was not possible to obtain samples from all sites in a single year or across the  
24 entire season. However, for the forest type with the most seasonally restricted sampling (ash forests  
25 sampled in June and July only) we recorded consistently high species and family richness, indicating  
26 that differences between native and plantation forests may have been underestimated. Future  
27 canopy invertebrate studies should attempt to control for within-season variation (Hsieh and  
28 Linsenmair, 2012).

29

30 The potential for plantations to contribute to biodiversity conservation depends heavily on the pre-  
31 plantation habitat (Brockhoff *et al.*, 2008). Plantations may not provide a simple replacement  
32 habitat for native forest biodiversity but, compared to intensive or abandoned agricultural land, they  
33 offer a less hostile landscape that can support large abundances of less specialist forest species.  
34 Large invertebrate populations, such as the aphid populations found in the current study, may have

1 both positive and negative consequences for the forested landscape. For example, dense  
2 populations of herbivorous invertebrates can be detrimental to timber production by reducing  
3 growth rates through excessive defoliation (Straw *et al.*, 1998; Eyles *et al.*, 2011). Conversely, a large  
4 biomass of invertebrates may be beneficial as prey items for insectivores, such as Coal Tit (*Periparus*  
5 *ater*) and Goldcrest (*Regulus regulus*) found in high densities in Irish Sitka spruce plantations  
6 (Sweeney *et al.*, 2010b). The interactions of prey abundance and insectivorous birds in plantation  
7 canopies is not well understood. In one study, managed spruce plantations have been implicated in  
8 the loss of passerine birds in boreal forests in Northern Sweden (Pettersson *et al.*, 1995). Pettersson  
9 *et al.* (1995) found that a decline in epiphytic lichens was related to reduced invertebrate diversity,  
10 abundance and number of large invertebrates in managed forests compared to natural forest,  
11 suggesting that this reduced the quality of foraging habitats for birds, especially during winter when  
12 food is scarce.

13

#### 14 4.2 Habitat structure and heterogeneity

15 Compared to plantations, both native ash and oak forest had greater species richness of beetles,  
16 increased diversity of arthropod feeding guilds, increased richness of Diptera and Hemiptera families  
17 with more even assemblage structures indicating a more diverse trophic structure. High species  
18 richness or diversity is often attributed to greater habitat heterogeneity, which provides a greater  
19 variety of niches (Niemela, 2001; Benton *et al.*, 2003; Jimenez-Valverde and Lobo, 2007). Creating  
20 more complex understory vegetation and increasing the amount of dead wood and snags (standing  
21 dead trees) are key management objectives to increase diversity, and promoting habitats for native  
22 forest biodiversity (Hartley, 2002; Lindenmayer and Hobbs, 2004; Sweeney *et al.*, 2010a). In addition  
23 to saproxylic species, many others utilise deadwood indirectly or as a secondary resource, e.g.  
24 mycetophagous beetles that feed on the saproxylic fungi or detritivores that use deadwood in an  
25 advance stage of decay as an additional food source. Increasing management intensity in  
26 plantations, such as short rotation lengths, management to reduce windthrow, thinning operations  
27 and brash removal, all limit the volume, diversity and decay stages of deadwood, which are  
28 commonly cited as reason for reduced biodiversity in managed forests (Simila *et al.*, 2002; Muller *et*  
29 *al.*, 2008). Siitonen (2001) estimated that reduced amounts of deadwood in managed Fennoscandia  
30 boreal forests could reduce saproxylic species by > 50% in the landscape. Although not tested in this  
31 study, reduced abundance and diversity of deadwood may contribute to differences in faunal  
32 composition and, in particular, the reduced number of detritivore and mycetophagous beetle  
33 species found in these plantation forests.



1 Obligate invertebrate-host interactions may result in assemblage differences between forests types.  
2 In addition, differences in plant structural complexity, foliage density and subsequent microclimate  
3 may also result in different assemblage compositions between forest types (Halaj *et al.*, 2000; de  
4 Souza and Martins, 2005). Ash and oak forests, comparable in invertebrate composition, were  
5 relatively similar in terms of structural complexity; both are broadleaves with relatively large gaps  
6 between leaves, in contrast to the more pronounced differences in structure between coniferous  
7 and broadleaf trees. The spider species with the greatest association with any forest type was the  
8 orb spinner *Tetragnatha montana*, having a strong association with ash forests. Although *T.*  
9 *montana* is a ubiquitous habitat generalist, this species was not sampled in Sitka spruce plantations  
10 and only once in Norway spruce. Being relatively large-bodied (average female body length 8.75  
11 mm) and hunting via a delicately spun web, this species may be unable to utilise the small gaps  
12 between conifer needles. In contrast, the dominant spider in all plantation forests was the Linyphiid  
13 *Pelecopsis nemoralis*, with an average female body length of 1.8 mm. This relatively small species  
14 may be less confined by the denser foliage of the spruce plantations compared with the generally  
15 larger orb web and active hunting species. By manipulating the fractal dimensions of both natural  
16 and artificial broadleaf and conifer vegetation, Gunnarsson (1992) demonstrated that the structure  
17 of vegetation affected the size distribution of spiders; increased fractal dimension, and hence  
18 greater complexity of leaf space, resulted in reduced spider body size within habitats. Contrastingly,  
19 Halaj *et al.* (2000) showed experimentally that foliage complexity in Douglas-fir had a positive  
20 correlation with the average spider body size. Although differences in community composition  
21 recorded in the current study likely result from a combination of factors, structural complexity and  
22 the subsequent differences in microclimate are likely to be important given the very different types  
23 of forested surveyed.

24

#### 25 4.3 Successive rotations

26 Understanding the biodiversity effect of reforesting commercial sites is increasingly important given  
27 the maturing age of many European plantations. There is potential for management to ensure  
28 permanent closed-canopy is maintained locally, which could benefit forest specialist. Findings from  
29 the current study indicate that Sitka spruce plantations show very little difference in terms of the  
30 invertebrate biodiversity they support through successive rotations, corresponding with what has  
31 been found for ground invertebrates (Oxbrough *et al.*, 2010). In the current study, richness and  
32 abundance of invertebrates in first and second rotations were not significantly different and there  
33 were large overlaps in community composition. Although not significant, our data did suggest that  
34 beetle species richness and abundance was lower in reforested sites. Oxbrough *et al.* (2010) also

1 found fewer forest associated ground spiders and beetles in second rotation plantations but, like the  
2 canopy beetles in our study, these differences were small. Corresponding responses of ground and  
3 canopy invertebrates in rotations highlights the fact that without targeted management of  
4 reforested sites, such as leaving over-mature stands, brash and deadwood and reforesting areas  
5 adjacent to mature forest, successive plantation stands may continue to be depauperate of forest  
6 specialists. As many species utilising the canopy in temperate forests will also utilise the ground for  
7 some part of their development (Ulyshen, 2011), differences in fauna between forest rotations could  
8 be related to accumulative litter layer and associated environmental factors. The litter layer has  
9 been shown to be a key factor determining dissimilarities in fauna between stand types for ground  
10 spiders (Ziesche and Roth, 2008). An historical lack of natural coniferous forest in Ireland could mean  
11 the majority of Irish forest fauna may find a thick layer of non-native pine needles unsuitable; if so,  
12 this problem will be exacerbated in successive rotations.

13

#### 14 4.4 Conclusions

15 The majority of research assessing plantation invertebrate assemblages in temperate and boreal  
16 regions shows a lack of forest specialists and, when comparing the whole plantation landscape  
17 (including clearfell and young restocks), relatively high species richness often results from the  
18 inclusion of open-habitat species (Spence *et al.*, 1996; Fahy and Gormally, 1998; Finch, 2005;  
19 Oxbrough *et al.*, 2005; Fuller *et al.*, 2008; Mullen *et al.*, 2008). These studies all compare ground  
20 invertebrates assemblages to assess closed-canopy forests, ignoring the three-dimensional element  
21 of the forest biodiversity. We have shown that canopy fogging clearly delineates the invertebrate  
22 communities between forest types and concurs with studies focussing on the better understood  
23 ground fauna. Explicitly, this study has demonstrated that plantation forest canopy fauna is not  
24 comparable to native Irish forests and contains a species-poor assemblage dominated by aphids and  
25 midges. Furthermore, the use of multiple taxa in this study provides a robust description of  
26 community composition within plantations, compared to those based on single taxa.

27

28 Given the increasing global ratio of plantation over native forest (Brockhoff *et al.*, 2013),  
29 progressive plantation management must aim to incorporate species of regional vulnerability rather  
30 than increasing species richer *per se*. Where afforestation occurs onto open habitat, such as  
31 heathland, moorland or coastal dunes, incorporating complex mosaics of connected open habitat,  
32 avoiding large contiguous even-aged stands and preventing successional processes by providing  
33 periodic disturbance to open patches, should be included in management plans (Pedley *et al.*, 2013).  
34 Where regional conservation policies look to consider forest biodiversity into commercial forestry,

1 then management should seek to provide those elements that are missing from the plantation  
2 landscape, such as over-mature trees, increased volume and diversity of deadwood, and more open  
3 canopies that incorporate mixed tree species and increased understory diversity. While these  
4 ecological actions often seem in direct opposition to commercial timber extraction, such measures  
5 to increase biodiversity in plantations are also likely to benefit timber production through increased  
6 pest resilience (Jactel and Brockerhoff, 2007) and forest productivity (Thompson *et al.*, 2009).

7  
8

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1 Table 1. Beetle and spider indicator species identified from the sampled forests. Asterisk indicates a  
 2 species with a UK designation.

Forest type	Taxa	Family	Species	Feeding guild	Indicator value	P-value
Ash	Coleoptera	Curculionidae	<i>Acalles (Acalles) misellus</i>	Herbivorous	0.974	<0.001
	Coleoptera	Melandryidae	<i>Orchesia (Clinocara) minor</i>	Mycetophagous	0.913	<0.001
	Coleoptera	Curculionidae	<i>Polydrusus (Eustolus) pterygomalis</i>	Herbivorous	0.816	0.002
	Coleoptera	Elateridae	<i>Athous (Athous) haemorrhoidalis</i>	Herbivorous	0.803	0.002
	Coleoptera	Coccinellidae	<i>Halyzia sedecimguttata</i>	Mycetophagous	0.77	0.008
	Araneae	Tetragnathidae	<i>Tetragnatha montana</i>	Orb web	0.769	0.005
Oak	Coleoptera	Salpingidae	<i>Salpingus ruficollis</i>	Carnivorous	0.833	<0.001
	Coleoptera	Curculionidae	<i>Polydrusus (Polydrusus) tereticollis</i>	Herbivorous	0.816	0.003
	Coleoptera	Tenebrionidae	<i>Nalassus laevioctostriatus</i>	Herbivorous	0.816	0.006
	Coleoptera	Ciidae	<i>Cis boleti</i>	Mycetophagous	0.745	0.010

3

1 Fig. 1. The distribution of sampled forest sites across Ireland.

2 Fig. 2. Sample-based rarefaction curves of the five forest types, sampled with canopy fogging for  
3 beetles and spiders. Forest types are Ash = native ash, Oak = native oak, NS = Norway spruce  
4 plantations, Affor = first rotation Sitka spruce plantations and Refor = second rotation Sitka spruce  
5 plantations. Dotted line indicates the smallest sampled abundance of the five forest groups (beetles,  
6 first rotation Sitka spruce n=60; spiders, ash n=197). See Appendix B for expanded rarefaction plots  
7 showing confidence intervals.

8 Fig. 3. Non-Metric Multidimensional Scaling (NMDS) ordination comparing assemblage composition  
9 of a) beetles (stress=0.22), b) spiders (stress=0.19) and c) family level Diptera and Hemiptera  
10 (stress=0.13) assemblages among five forest types. Points are canopy fogged sites with lines  
11 connecting to habitat centroids (see Fig. 2 for definition of forest types). Polygons represent  
12 standard deviation of forest type centroids.

13 Fig. 4. Species richness of spiders and beetles shown separately for forest species and all sampled  
14 species. Results of generalised linear models comparing forest types are presented; means that  
15 share a superscript (homogenous sub-sets, a–c, ranked highest to lowest) do not differ significantly  
16 (Tukey pairwise comparisons  $P < 0.05$ ).  $\chi^2$ , F and p-values can be found in Appendix C. Dotted line  
17 separates native from plantation forest, see Fig. 2 for definition of forest types.

18 Fig. 5. Abundance of spiders and beetles shown separately for forest species and all sampled species.  
19 Results of generalised linear models comparing forest types are presented; means that share a  
20 superscript (homogenous sub-sets, a–c, ranked highest to lowest) do not differ significantly (Tukey  
21 pairwise comparisons  $P < 0.05$ ).  $\chi^2$ , F and p-values can be found in Appendix C. Dotted line separates  
22 native from plantation, see Fig. 2 for definition of forest types.

23 Fig. 6. Means and se for all beetle and spider feeding guilds. Asterisks indicate significant differences  
24 from the forest type with the greatest species richness in each plot as derived from generalised  
25 linear models (Tukey pairwise comparisons  $P < 0.05$ ). See Appendix D for model statistics and p-  
26 values. Dotted line separates native from plantation, see Fig. 2 for definition of forest types.

27 Fig. 7. Family level richness and abundance of Diptera and Hemiptera for the five forest types.  
28 Results of generalised linear models comparing forest types are presented; means that share a  
29 superscript (homogenous sub-sets, a–c, ranked highest to lowest) do not differ significantly (Tukey  
30 pairwise comparisons  $P < 0.05$ ).  $\chi^2$ , F and p-values can be found in Appendix E. Dotted line separates  
31 native from plantation, see Fig. 2 for definition of forest types.

- 1 Fig. 8. Mean (square root transformed) and se of the 16 most abundant families from the Diptera
- 2 and Hemiptera family level data. Each family represent at least 5% of the abundance recorded in any
- 3 one site.

1 Appendix A. Species and families identified together with their habitat association, feeding guild,  
2 rarity status and sampled abundance.

3 Appendix B. Sample based rarefaction curves showing 95% confidence intervals of the five forest  
4 types sampled with canopy fogging for beetles and spiders. Native forest types are Ash = native ash  
5 and Oak = native oak, Plantation forest types are NS = Norway spruce plantations, Affor = first  
6 rotation Sitka spruce plantations and Refor = second rotation Sitka spruce plantations.

7 Appendix C. Results of Generalised Linear Models ( $\chi^2$ , F and p-value) comparing abundance and  
8 species richness of 'forest species' and 'all species' among the forest types. Tukey pairwise  
9 comparisons were used to define homogenous sub-sets (a-c ranked highest to lowest); means that  
10 share a superscript do not differ significantly ( $P > 0.05$ ). Forest types are Affor = first rotation Sitka  
11 spruce plantations, Refor = second rotation Sitka spruce plantations, NS = Norway spruce  
12 plantations, Ash = native ash and Oak = native oak.

13 Appendix D. Results of Generalised Linear Models ( $\chi^2$ , F and p-value) comparing the species richness  
14 of beetle and spider feeding guilds among the forest types. Tukey pairwise comparisons were used  
15 to define homogenous sub-sets (a-c ranked highest to lowest); means that share a superscript do not  
16 differ significantly ( $P > 0.05$ ). Forest types are Affor = first rotation Sitka spruce plantations, Refor =  
17 second rotation Sitka spruce plantations, NS = Norway spruce plantations, Ash = native ash and Oak  
18 = native oak.

19 Appendix E. Results of Generalised Linear Models ( $\chi^2$ , F and p-value) comparing abundance and  
20 family richness of Diptera and Hemiptera among the forest types. Tukey pairwise comparisons were  
21 used to define homogenous sub-sets (a-c ranked highest to lowest); means that share a superscript  
22 do not differ significantly ( $P > 0.05$ ). Forest types are Affor = first rotation Sitka spruce plantations,  
23 Refor = second rotation Sitka spruce plantations, NS = Norway spruce plantations, Ash = native ash  
24 and Oak = native oak.

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