1	Running head: colonisation-extinction under climate and habitat change
2	Colonisation and extinction dynamics of a declining migratory bird are influenced by
3	climate change and habitat degradation
4	
5	KAREN MUSTIN, <sup>1, 2*</sup> ARJUN AMAR <sup>3, 4</sup> and STEPHEN M. REDPATH <sup>5</sup>
6	
7	<sup>1</sup> IBES, University of Aberdeen, Zoology Building, Tillydrone Avenue, Aberdeen, AB24 2TZ,
8	UK
9	<sup>2</sup> The Ecology Centre, School of Biological Sciences, University of Queensland, St Lucia,
10	QLD 4072, Australia
11	<sup>3</sup> RSPB, Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3TP, UK
12	<sup>4</sup> Percy FitzPatrick Institute of African Ornithology, DST/NRF Centre of Excellence,
13	University of Cape Town, Rondebosch, 7701, Cape Town, South Africa.
14	<sup>5</sup> ACES, University of Aberdeen and Macaulay Land Use Research Institute, 23 St Machar
15	Drive, Aberdeen, AB24 2TZ, UK
16	*corresponding author
17	Email: <u>k.mustin@uq.edu.au</u>
18	
19	Uncovering the mechanisms involved in the decline of long-distance migrants remains one of

20 the most prominent issues in European conservation. Since the 1980s the British breeding

21 population of Garden Warbler *Sylvia borin* has declined by more than 25%. Here we use data

- 22 from the Repeat Woodland Bird Survey to show that while the overall population is in
- 23 decline, the probability of occupancy for this species increased at high latitudes and
- 24 decreased at low latitudes between the 1980s and 2003-4. Range shifts such as this arise from
- a change in the ratio of colonisations to extinctions at the range margins, and we therefore

26 relate colonisation and local extinction at the patch level to concurrent changes in climate and 27 habitat. We find that the probability of patch colonisation by this species is significantly 28 lower where the percentage cover of vegetation in the understorey has declined, which 29 reduces habitat quality for this species. The probability of local extinction is significantly 30 correlated with increasing mean May temperature, which may reflect a change in phenology 31 making breeding conditions less suitable. We conclude that changed regimes of grazing and 32 woodland management could be used to increase habitat suitability and therefore increase 33 colonisation probability at the local scale, which may in turn increase the probability of patch 34 occupancy despite future climatic unsuitability.

35

36 Keywords: Garden Warbler, *Sylvia borin*, woodland management, conservation, United
37 Kingdom

39 Long-distance migrants breeding in Europe are in decline and un-covering the mechanisms 40 involved during breeding, migration and over-wintering remains one of the most prominent issues in European conservation (Thaxter et al., 2010). Climate change and habitat 41 degradation on breeding and wintering grounds have been hypothesised as key drivers of 42 43 population changes within migratory species (e.g. Both et al., 2010, Morrison et al., 2010, 44 Ockendon et al., 2012). Recent theoretical work has shown that spatial variation in both 45 habitat quality at the landscape scale and population processes are likely to be important factors in determining how a species changes its range in response to climate change 46 47 (McInerny et al., 2007, Anderson et al., 2009, Mustin et al., 2009).

48

49 Empirical work to date has identified a potential pattern of climate-induced range shifts 50 across a number of taxa (e.g. Parmesan et al., 1999, Thomas & Lennon, 1999, Hickling et al., 51 2005, Chen et al., 2009). These studies used a range of metrics including location of the 52 species range margins (Thomas & Lennon, 1999, Hickling et al., 2005), the average altitude 53 of individuals (Chen et al., 2009), probability of occupancy (Wilson et al., 2005) and the 54 balance between low and high temperature dwelling species within a community (Devictor et 55 al., 2008). Ultimately, however, range shifts arise from a change in the ratio of colonisations 56 to extinctions at the range margins, such that an advance is caused by more colonisation than 57 extinction, and a contraction by the opposite (Parmesan et al., 1999).

58

While climate change is one driver of range shifts, there is evidence that the threshold rate of climate change through which a species can persist may be lowered by changing habitat availability, and specifically that reduced habitat availability through habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation could slow or even halt climate-induced range expansions (Hill *et al.*, 1999, Travis, 2003). However, though work has begun to examine the influence

of synergistic interactions between climate change and habitat degradation on population size
and distribution (Opdam & Wascher, 2004, Brook *et al.*, 2008, Darling & Cote, 2008), there
remain very few empirical studies which consider the impact of both climate change and
changing habitat availability on observed changes in distribution.

68

69 The Garden Warbler Sylvia borin is a long-distance Afro-Palaearctic migrant passerine which 70 has experienced population declines and changes in distribution throughout Europe over the 71 last 30 years (Hewson et al., 2007, European Bird Census Council, 2013). Declining species 72 often also show declines in the number of sites which are occupied, owing to the so-called 73 'Abundance-occupancy relationship' (Gaston et al., 2000). Concurrent with the population 74 declines and distribution changes, the total area of suitable habitat for this species has 75 declined in parts of its British breeding range (Hopkins & Kirby, 2007, Amar et al., 2010). 76 This species therefore provides an opportunity to explore the relative contributions of climate 77 change and habitat degradation on patch-level colonisation and extinction dynamics and 78 ultimately breeding distribution. We use bird survey data to relate changes in the distribution 79 of this population between the 1980s and 2003-4 to the changing availability of appropriate 80 habitat and suitability of the climate over the same time period. We make suggestions for 81 how this type of analysis can be useful for conservation management in the future.

#### 83 Methods

84 This study used data from the Repeat Woodland Bird Survey (RWBS), which comprises data collected by The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) and The British Trust for 85 86 Ornithology (BTO). Each woodland patch was surveyed in one year during the period 1981 87 to 1988. This broad sampling period reflects the fact that data were being collected for a 88 number of different projects and were not coordinated at the national scale in this first 89 sampling period. Re-survey data from the same 339 patches were collected in either 2003 or 90 2004. The majority of the analyses presented here used only 240 of the patches surveyed by 91 the RSPB as these have detailed habitat information associated with the bird counts during 92 both periods. The patches range from the south of England to North-West Scotland, although 93 coverage is irregular (see Fig. 1a and Amar et al., 2006).

94

### 95 Bird data

96 Study species

97 The Garden Warbler is a long-distance Afro-Palaearctic migrant which has part of its breeding range in the UK. The breeding habitat of Garden Warbler is deciduous or mixed 98 99 woodland and scrub with an open canopy and a dense understorey; they nest predominantly 100 in low vegetation, particularly bramble (Cramp, 1992). Garden Warblers are insectivorous 101 during the breeding season and forage mainly in the shrub layer below 6 m (Cramp, 1992), 102 and thus foraging efficiency is likely to be higher at patches where there is a well-developed 103 shrub layer. Therefore, local population size may be influenced by changes in vegetation 104 structure. Declines in the British population are more likely to have occurred at patches 105 which have high canopy cover, low levels of bramble and lichen, and where the surrounding 106 landscape is predominantly wooded (Amar et al., 2006).

### 108 Point count estimates of Garden Warbler occupancy

109 The methodology was the same in both sampling time periods (1980 - 1981 and 2003 -110 2004), but the timing of visits was moved one week earlier in 2003 -2004 to account for 111 potential changes in phenology. A series of randomly located points at each patch (mean  $\pm se$ 112 no. points =  $9.76 \pm 0.11$ , range = 2 - 27) were visited twice, once in April or the first week of 113 May and again in the last three weeks of May or the first half of June. Points were separated 114 by at least 100 m and were at least 50 m from the edge of the wood. Counts of all birds seen 115 or heard were recorded over a five minute period. For further details see Amar et al. (2006). 116 Garden Warbler were considered to be present at a patch in each time period if they were 117 recorded at any of the survey points at either visit, and absent if they were not recorded.

#### 118 Habitat data

119 Habitat recording was undertaken at each point count location within the survey patches.

120 Each point count location formed the centre of a 25 m-radius circle in which habitat

121 recording took place either at that level or in four 5 m radius subplots centred 12.5 m in each

122 of the four cardinal directions from the centre of the plot. A mean value for the point was

then calculated across the four sub-plots, and either these point level means or the point levelmeasures were then averaged for the patch.

125

Of the habitat variables measured, percentage vegetation cover at 0.5 - 2 m above the ground (measured at the sub-plot level and here-after referred to as vegetation cover) was selected to be used in this study. This variable was considered to be biologically significant for this species based on their known breeding and foraging associations and previous analyses (Cramp, 1992, Smart *et al.*, 2007). In order to assess the effects of change in habitat between the two time periods on patch dynamics (colonisations and extinctions) by Garden Warbler, the difference between time periods in vegetation cover at each patch was calculated and these derived variables were used in subsequent analyses. For full details on survey methodssee Amar *et al.* (2006).

135

# 136 Climate data

137 As all climate variables were found to be collinear, May temperature was used as a proxy for 138 spring conditions. Spring conditions were considered to be biologically relevant for this 139 insectivorous species as conditions during the spring are known to influence invertebrate 140 abundance, diversity and phenology (e.g. Brakefield, 1987, Turner et al., 1987, Pollard, 1988, 141 Roy et al., 2001, Conrad et al., 2002). Data for monthly mean May temperature for the years 142 1981-1988 and 2003-2004 were obtained from the Met Office (UKCIP) for the 5 km square 143 in which each patch fell. These values were then averaged to obtain one measure of monthly 144 mean May temperature for each patch for the 1980s and for the second survey period in 145 2003-2004. Again in order to assess the effects of change in temperature between the two 146 time periods on patch level colonisations and extinctions by Garden Warbler the difference 147 between time periods was calculated and this derived variable was used in subsequent 148 analyses.

149

# 150 Statistical analyses

The main aim of these analyses was to explore how changes in temperature and habitat relate to variance in the probability of patch-level colonisation and extinction of Garden Warbler from woodland patches between two time periods, in order to infer whether changes in climate and habitat over a twenty year period may have influenced concurrent changes in Garden Warbler distribution. Data exploration, statistical analyses and model validation were carried out using R version 2.12.1 (R Development Core Team, 2009).

#### 158 Latitudinal variation in Garden Warbler occupancy

Latitude and temperature change were correlated ( $R^2 = 0.69$ ), therefore the effect of latitude was modelled separately to the effects of change in vegetation cover and mean May temperature. Binary logistic regression was undertaken to model the probability of patch occupancy in relation to latitude with an interaction with time period to test for a significant directional range change between the two time periods.

164

Influence of temperature and habitat change on Garden Warbler colonisation and extinction 165 166 Analyses were then conducted to model the probability of patch colonisation and extinction in relation to the change in climate and habitat. All explanatory variables were standardised 167 168 using the overall mean and standard deviation (Gelman & Hill, 2007). The dataset was 169 divided into i) patches which were un-occupied in the first time period (which could 170 potentially be colonised by Garden Warbler between the surveys) and ii) patches which were 171 occupied in the first time period (from which Garden Warbler could potentially go locally 172 extinct between the surveys). Both datasets translate to a binary response variable where zero 173 represents no change (patches remain un-occupied or remain occupied respectively) and one 174 represents a change in occupancy status between the time periods (colonisation or extinction 175 respectively). Each of these subsets was analysed separately.

176

In this study we aimed to explain the effect of changes in climate and habitat on the processes of colonisation and extinction, and therefore we adopted a null-hypothesis testing framework to test the significance and estimate effect sizes of explanatory variables (Shmueli, 2010), rather than an information theoretical approach that is more applicable to predictive modelling (Burnham & Anderson, 2002). A generalised linear modelling (glm) approach was used, with a binary error structure and a logit link. The full model for both colonisation and

183 extinction contained: 1) change in mean May temperature; 2) change in percentage vegetation 184 cover at 0.5-2m above ground level; and 3) an interaction between temperature and 185 vegetation change. Backwards step-wise deletion was used to remove each non-significant 186 explanatory variable in turn from the full model until only significant terms (p < 0.05) 187 remained, and this is considered to be the 'best model'. The coefficient of discrimination (D) 188 (Tjur, 2009) was calculated for each best model, as a measure of the ability of the model to 189 correctly predict higher probabilities of colonisation or extinction for patches which were 190 observed as ones (change in occupancy), compared to patches observed as zeroes (no 191 change):

$$\mathbf{D} = \mathbf{F}_1 - \mathbf{F}_0$$

193 where, F<sub>1</sub> and F<sub>0</sub> are the average fitted probability of colonisation or extinction for patches 194 which were observed to change in occupancy (ones), and patches which were not observed to 195 change in occupancy (zeroes) respectively. D varies between: minus one when all patches are 196 incorrectly assigned as zeroes and ones; and one when patches are all correctly assigned as 197 zeroes and ones. D is zero when all patches have a fitted probability of 0.5. All models were 198 checked for residual spatial auto-correlation using Moran's I.

199

# 200 Results

Between 1980 and 2004, Garden Warblers colonised 46 patches and went extinct from 75 of the 339 patches. This represents 13.6% and 22.1% of patches respectively, and is comparable to the changes observed in the restricted dataset (240 patches) upon which subsequent more detailed analyses were conducted (15% and 22.5%). The pattern of colonisation and extinction of patches by Garden Warblers was directional (Fig. 1b). Although low latitude

patches were always more likely to be occupied than high latitude patches (Fig. 1 c, 1d, 2a and 2b), between the 1980s and 2003-2004 there was a decrease in the probability of patch occupancy at lower latitudes from approximately 80% to approximately 60%, and an increase in the probability of patch occupancy at higher latitudes from approximately 15% to approximately 35% (Fig. 2; significant interaction with time period: *z-value* = -3.396, *p* < 0.001).

212

# Relationship between habitat and climate change and patch level colonisations and extinctions

215 The change in vegetation cover was the only explanatory variable retained in the 'best model' 216 distinguishing between patches that were colonised and those which remained unoccupied. 217 The mean vegetation cover at 0.5 - 2 m above ground level had, on average, increased 218 between the two time periods (Fig. 3a - solid line, *mean* = +6.3%). This increase was higher 219 at patches which had been colonised by Garden Warbler (Fig. 3a - short dashes, mean of 220 12.89%) than at those which had remained unoccupied (Fig. 3a – long dashes, mean of 221 2.81%). The probability of colonisation by Garden Warbler increased significantly where the 222 vegetation cover had increased (Fig. 4 - p < 0.01; D = 0.08;  $\beta = 1.42$ ,  $se = \pm 0.52$ ).

223

Change in mean May temperature (°C) was the only explanatory variable retained in the 'best model' distinguishing between patches from which Garden Warbler went extinct and those which remained occupied. Mean May temperature had increased at all 136 patches between the 1980s and 2003-4 (Fig. 3b - solid line, *mean* = +1.45°C). Patches from which Garden Warbler had gone locally extinct had warmed slightly more, on average, than those which had remained unoccupied (Fig. 3b - short dashes, *mean* of +1.5°C; and Fig. 3b - long dashes, 230 *mean* of +1.41°C respectively). The probability of local extinction of Garden Warbler 231 increased significantly for patches where average temperatures had increased the most (Fig. 5 232  $-p < 0.01; D = 0.08; \beta = 1.51, se = \pm 0.49$ ).

233

# 234 Discussion

Our results suggest that changes in climatic and habitat conditions have contributed to the colonisation and extinction dynamics of a declining long-distance migrant in the UK. As range dynamics are ultimately driven by the ratio of colonisations to extinctions at the range margins, we suggest that taking this approach, as opposed to modelling presence/absence or abundance, can be a powerful tool for understanding the processes through which climate change and other threatening processes impact on range shifts and contractions.

241

For Garden Warbler in the UK, in general, more colonisations than extinctions have occurred at high latitudes, and more extinctions than colonisations have occurred at low latitudes between the 1980s and 2003-4 (Fig. 1b and 2). While this pattern fits with the expectation for a climate-induced range shift, we find that the probability of colonisation of a site by Garden Warbler is not significantly related to temperature change, but is highest where sites have shown larger increases in vegetation cover at 0.5-2m above ground level (Fig. 4). Extinctions however are more likely to have occurred where temperatures have increased more (Fig. 5).

In the UK, changes in woodland management (Morecroft *et al.*, 2001, Gill & Fuller, 2007) and the increasing numbers of native and non-native deer over the past 30 years (Ward, 2005) have contributed to a shift from coppice and scrub towards high forest, with 97% of broadleaved woodlands falling in to the latter classification by 2002 (Hopkins & Kirby, 2007).

254 Canopy closure and browsing by deer have acted to reduce vegetation cover, particularly of 255 species such as bramble and other tall-growing herbs, and open up the understorey (Cooke & 256 Farrell, 2001, Kirby, 2001, Morecroft et al., 2001, Gill & Fuller, 2007, Amar et al., 2010). 257 Declines in woodland birds of conservation concern have been linked to changes in habitat 258 resulting from increases in deer populations in lowland England (Newson et al., 2012). 259 Given their dependence on low vegetation cover, the low probability of colonisation of a site 260 by Garden Warblers where vegetation cover has declined is not unexpected. However, it does 261 highlight a potentially useful management option, as our results indicate that increasing low 262 vegetation cover – either through direct management such as coppicing and pollarding 263 (Plantlife, 2011), or by management of deer numbers where deemed appropriate – should 264 increase the likelihood that Garden Warbler will colonise, or re-colonise woodland sites. This 265 could also be important for other declining woodland birds such as Willow Tit Poecile 266 montanus, Marsh Tit Poecile palustris and Common Nightingale Luscinia megarhynchos 267 which nest and forage in the under-storey (Cramp, 1992, Hinsley et al., 2007, Lewis et al., 268 2009). However, it is important to note that management strategies must take into account a 269 whole suite of plant and animal species with differing requirements, and management for 270 woodland birds is only one aspect of an overall management plan.

271

The relationship between the probability of site-level extinctions and larger increases in temperature implies that some sites are warming to an extent that they are outside the suitable range for this species. However, notwithstanding the fact that in more extreme parts of its range this species may be confined to microclimates, for example high altitudes in southern Europe, the broad geographical extent of this species' European range means that climatic conditions within the UK are unlikely to exceed those within which this species can breed. However, the timing of spring migration and laying dates for several bird species have been

279 shown to advance in line with climatic changes (e.g. Crick et al., 1997, Jonzén et al., 2006). 280 The extent of these changes may differ from other environmental events at different trophic 281 levels, potentially leading to a phenological mis-match (e.g. Both *et al.*, 2009) which may 282 affect reproductive success or survival at higher trophic levels, leading to population declines 283 (e.g. Møller et al., 2008). An example for insectivorous species such as Garden Warbler is the 284 timing of invertebrate emergence. Spatial variation in the extent of such phenological mis-285 matching could help to explain the increased extinction risk with greater changes in 286 temperature observed for this species (Fig. 5), for example if mis-match is more extreme at 287 lower latitudes where more extinctions have occured. Indeed, this same pattern has been 288 observed at a European-scale in a study by Both et al. (2010). They found that declines in 289 long-distance migrant species, including Garden Warbler, were significantly greater in 290 Western Europe, where spring temperatures have shown considerable increases, than in 291 Northern Europe where temperatures during spring arrival and breeding have not increased to 292 the same extent. They suggest that this is driven by trophic mis-matches resulting from 293 temperature increases in the Spring. They highlight that such mis-matches will affect long-294 distance migrants to a greater extent than other species owing to their complex annual life-295 cycle.

296

While our results suggest significant relationships between changes in climate and habitat and extinction-colonisation dynamics for Garden Warbler it is important to note that the effect sizes are relatively small, and the coefficients of determination, while positive (indicating that zeroes and ones are correctly assigned more often than not), are also very small. The processes of colonisation and extinction are complex, and likely governed by numerous factors which we were unable to include in our models. For example, the probability of colonisation is related to habitat suitability of the focal patch, and dispersal pressure from the

304 surrounding patches, which means that some sub-optimal patches may be colonised. 305 Furthermore, in the present study we have only considered conditions on the breeding 306 grounds, though it is possible that if migratory connectivity (the extent to which individuals 307 which breed in the same or a different location within the breeding grounds also over-winter 308 in the same or a different location within the wintering range (Marra et al., 1998, Gill et al., 309 2001)) is strong then environmental change in the non-breeding season, such as drought in 310 the Sahel region could create small-scale variation in breeding season population trends as a 311 result of reduced over-winter or passage survival (Morrison et al., 2010).

312

313 Additionally, the spatial distribution of sampling sites is not continuous, but rather consists of 314 two large study regions, one in the south and one in the north (Fig. 1a). These types of 315 limitations may be commonly encountered when using data which were not collected with 316 the specific question in mind, as was the case here. However, The uneven spatial distribution 317 of sites was to some extent compensated for in the analysis of the effect of latitude on the 318 probability of occupancy in each time period (Fig. 2) as a larger dataset was available (339 319 patches, c.f. 240 patches) which gave a more continuous coverage. However, owing to the 320 availability of habitat data the restricted dataset had to be used for all subsequent analyses. As 321 the available data actually represent the geographic extremes of the United Kingdom (Fig. 1a) 322 this uneven coverage is unlikely to have biased the results to a great extent, and as previously 323 stated, if anything it is expected that a more even spatial coverage would strengthen the 324 relationships detected here

325

A more serious limitation to the analyses presented here is that each survey only consists of one visit to each site in each time period. Analyses of changes in occupancy would ideally be carried out in an occupancy modelling framework (MacKenzie *et al.*, 2005), which uses

329 multiple visits to the same site to account for detection probability, or the probability that a 330 species which is present is not detected on a given visit and is therefore recorded as absent. 331 This could be particularly problematic at sites where habitat has changed as it may be 332 expected that the ability to detect the species could have been affected. The data presented 333 here consist of two visits to each patch per sampling period. However, the timing of these 334 visits was planned to detect early and late arriving migrants, and as such the first visit 335 recorded almost no Garden Warbler because they had not yet returned from their African 336 wintering grounds. To check for a possible change in detection probability we compared the 337 number of point counts at which Garden Warbler were detected within occupied patches 338 between the two time periods, and found no systematic differences, which increases our 339 confidence that changes in occupancy are true changes in occupancy. However, it is still 340 possible that false negatives, where Garden Warbler were actually present but went un-341 detected, occurred during both sampling periods. We recommend that the design of any 342 future studies of this nature ensure that repeat visits are made to each site in such a way that 343 detection probabilities could be estimated.

344

345 Given the complex nature of the impacts of climate change on animal abundance and 346 distribution (e.g. Mustin et al., 2007), together with the well recognised limitations of climate 347 envelope models (for review see Hampe, 2004) a more robust approach might be to base 348 management decisions on inferences made on a smaller spatial scale but incorporating more 349 detailed information on factors involved in species distribution. Range shifts arise from the 350 balance of colonisations and extinctions towards the range margins; therefore we recommend 351 that where possible this is the metric used to quantify range shifts, and to explore potential mechanisms of range change. By examining habitat and climate relationships of an organism 352 353 at different parts of its distribution, and in different time periods, we have been able to infer

that while climate change may be reducing the suitability of some woodland patches for this
declining species, increasing habitat suitability through management actions can increase
colonisation probability at the local scale. It may therefore be possible to halt or even reverse
the declines at low latitude patches by changing grazing regimes and woodland management
practices, which may in turn increase the probability of patch occupancy despite future
climatic unsuitability.

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#### 513 **Figure legends**

Figure 1: Maps to show: a) the location of all 240 patches surveyed in the RSPB dataset; b)
the patches which were colonised by Garden Warbler between the two survey periods (blue
squares) and those from which Garden Warbler went locally extinct (red circles); c) the
distribution of occupied (black squares) and unoccupied (grey circles) patches in 1981 –
1988; and d) the distribution of occupied (black squares) and unoccupied (grey circles)
patches in 2003 - 2004.

Figure 2: The fitted probability of Garden Warbler occupancy of 339 woodland patches in 1981-88 (a) and in 2003-4 (b) at differing latitudes within the UK. Histograms show the number of occupied and unoccupied woodland patches. Figure c shows the change in predicted probability of occupancy between 1981-88 and 2003-4 against latitude, and the dashed line shows no change.

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527 Figure 3: Change, at varying latitudes between the 1980's and 2003-4, in (a) vegetation 528 cover at 36 patches which were colonised by Garden Warbler during that period (closed 529 squares), compared to 68 patches which remained unoccupied (open squares); and (b) mean 530 May temperature at 54 patches from which Garden Warbler went locally extinct (closed 531 triangles), compared to 82 patches which remained occupied (open triangles). Solid line = 532 mean change across all patches; long dashes = mean change across patches which remained 533 unoccupied (a) or occupied (b) by Garden Warbler; short dashes = mean change across 534 patches which were colonised by Garden Warbler (a) or from which Garden Warbler went 535 locally extinct (b).

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Figure 4: The predicted probability of colonisation of 104 woodland patches by Garden Warbler between the 1980's and 2003-4 as a function of change in mean % vegetation cover at 0.5-2m above ground level (p < 0.01; D = 0.08;  $\beta = 0.04$ ,  $se = \pm 0.01$ ). Histograms show the number of colonised (n = 36) and unoccupied (n = 68) woodland patches.

Figure 5: The predicted probability of local extinction of Garden Warbler from 136 woodland patches between the 1980's and 2003-4 as a function of change in mean May temperature (p< 0.01; D = 0.06;  $\beta = 3.23$ ,  $se = \pm 1.25$ ). Histograms show the number of woodland patches which remained occupied (n = 82) and from which Garden Warbler went extinct (n = 54).









549 Figure 1









591 Figure 4



594 Figure 5