

1 **Title:**

2 Amazonian and Andean tree communities are not tracking current climate warming

3

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42 **Abstract**

43

44 Climate change is shifting species distributions, leading to changes in community composition  
45 and novel species assemblages worldwide. However, the responses of tropical forests to climate  
46 change across large-scale environmental gradients remain largely unexplored. Using long-term  
47 data over 66,000 trees of more than 2,500 species occurring over 3,500 m elevation along the  
48 hyperdiverse Amazon-to-Andes elevational gradients in Peru and Bolivia, we assessed  
49 community-level shifts in species composition over a 40+ year time span. We tested the  
50 thermophilization hypothesis, which predicts an increase in the relative abundances of species  
51 from warmer climates through time. Additionally, we examined the relative contributions of tree  
52 mortality, recruitment, and growth to the observed compositional changes. Mean  
53 thermophilization rates across the Amazon-to-Andes gradient were slow relative to regional  
54 temperature change. Thermophilization rates were positive and more variable among Andean  
55 forest plots compared to Amazonian plots but were highest at mid-elevations around the cloud  
56 base. Across all elevations, thermophilization rates were driven primarily by tree mortality and  
57 decreased growth of highland (cool adapted) species rather than an influx of lowland species  
58 with higher thermal optima. Given the high variability of community-level responses to warming  
59 along the elevational gradients, the high tree mortality, and the slower-than-warming rates of  
60 compositional change, we conclude that most tropical tree species, and especially lowland  
61 Amazonian tree species, will not be able to escape current or future climate change through  
62 upward range shifts, causing fundamental changes to composition and function in Earth's highest  
63 diversity forests.

64

65 **Keywords:** Global warming, range shifts, species migration, thermal niches, tropical  
66 biodiversity

67 **Significance statement**

68

69 Our study investigates how climate change affects tree species composition in tropical forests  
70 across the Amazon-to-Andes elevational gradient. Using long-term data collected over more than  
71 four decades, we found that while species from warmer climates showed some increase in  
72 relative abundance (thermophilization), the process was slower than regional temperature  
73 increases. Thermophilization was highest at mid-elevations near the cloud base and was  
74 primarily driven by tree mortality and slowed growth of highland species rather than an influx of  
75 lowland species. Given the slow rate of compositional change and high variability in community  
76 responses, our study concludes that most tropical tree species, especially those in the Amazon,  
77 are unlikely to shift upward in range fast enough to adapt to ongoing climate change.

78 **Introduction**

79

80 Tropical regions have warmed at an average of  $>0.25$  °C per decade since the mid-1970s (1), and  
81 in the Neotropics, contemporary rates of climate warming exceed those from any time in the last  
82 50,000 years (2). Moreover, temperatures in some montane tropical ecosystems (e.g., the Andes)  
83 have increased approximately 0.11 °C per decade since 1939 (3) and are predicted to increase by  
84 an additional 2 – 4 °C this century (4, 5). Changes in precipitation, drought, fire, and nitrogen  
85 deposition are also associated with changes in temperature (6–8). The rapid pace of ongoing  
86 environmental changes presents unprecedented challenges to plant and animal species across  
87 tropical ecosystems, and species responses to these challenges are just beginning to be documented  
88 and understood.

89

90 Climate change is causing the displacement of species distributions along environmental gradients,  
91 resulting in compositional shifts and the emergence of novel species assemblages (9–11). Although  
92 these shifts have been well documented in the palaeoecological record, how they occur over shorter  
93 modern timescales and how they vary between different biogeographic regions remain key  
94 questions (12, 13). Within communities, the relative abundance of species adapted to cooler  
95 temperatures is predicted to decrease with warming, while the relative abundance of species  
96 adapted to hotter temperatures is predicted to increase, a pattern known as community  
97 thermophilization (14). The thermophilization hypothesis has been previously tested across  
98 montane tropical forests in the Andes using surveys of tree populations (15) and across ecoregions  
99 in the New World using plant collections (16). These studies show an overall increase in the  
100 abundance of warm-adapted species but also high heterogeneity in thermophilization rates across

101 plant communities and regions. This heterogeneity remains unexplained. Furthermore, the  
102 thermophilization hypothesis is largely untested in lowland tropical ecosystems such as  
103 Amazonian forests (e.g., *floodplain* and *terra firme* forests), and the contributions of underlying  
104 demographic processes (growth, recruitment, mortality) to thermophilization are poorly  
105 characterized.

106

107 Differences in the thermophilization rates of forest communities along elevational gradients may  
108 result from several ecological processes. First, thermophilization rates may be faster at lower  
109 elevations due to faster rates of recruitment and mortality (i.e., faster turnover rates) (17, 18).  
110 Second, thermophilization may be influenced by differences in species' thermal tolerances. For  
111 example, species from lowland Amazonia are not only adapted to higher temperatures but also  
112 tend to have narrower thermal tolerances (i.e., smaller thermal safety margins) compared to species  
113 in the highlands (19–21). If lowland species are adapted to a smaller range of environmental  
114 conditions, they may be more sensitive to climate change (22), leading to faster thermophilization  
115 in lowland communities compared to montane forests. Third, thermophilization rates may be  
116 slower in lowland Amazonian forests than in Andean montane forests due to stronger effects of  
117 drought and biotic constraints at lower elevations. Increased drought severity and frequency in the  
118 Amazon (23) are shifting tree community composition toward more drought-tolerant species (24,  
119 25). If drought-tolerance traits are uncorrelated with thermal-tolerance traits, then we might  
120 observe slower thermophilization rates in lowland forests due to the overriding effect of drought.  
121 In addition, theory and some empirical evidence suggest that lower elevational range limits of  
122 species are shaped more by biotic interactions than abiotic factors (26–28). If this is true,  
123 populations at higher elevations will respond more quickly to climate change, causing rapid shifts

124 in species' upper range limits and increasing thermophilization of Andean communities relative to  
125 Amazonian communities. Finally, rates of thermophilization may be slower in the lowlands due to  
126 niche truncation and/or an absence of potential immigrants from hotter areas, which could allow  
127 incumbent species to persist even under suboptimal conditions (16).

128

129 Despite widespread interest in the demographic processes underlying community-level responses  
130 to climate change (29, 30), little is known about their relative importance in determining  
131 compositional change and thermophilization patterns in the Amazon and Andes.

132 Thermophilization reflects the culmination of three non-mutually exclusive demographic  
133 processes that can influence species' relative abundances within communities: 1) faster tree  
134 growth of warm-adapted than cold-adapted species; 2) faster tree mortality of cold-adapted than  
135 warm-adapted species; and/or 3) faster recruitment of warm-adapted than cold-adapted species.

136 Previous studies of montane tropical forests in the Colombian Andes (31) and tropical forests  
137 along an elevational gradient in Costa Rica (32) both concluded that tree mortality was the main  
138 driver of thermophilization. However, comparative studies of the demographic drivers of  
139 thermophilization across the Amazon-to-Andes elevational gradient are still lacking.

140

141 In this study, we tested the thermophilization hypothesis and the contributions of individual  
142 demographic processes to thermophilization across the hyper-diverse Amazon-to-Andes  
143 elevational gradient. We used two of the world's largest elevational transects located on the  
144 eastern slope of the Bolivian and Peruvian Andes, spanning lowland western Amazonian forests  
145 to the eastern Andean treeline. These elevational transects are represented through  
146 comprehensive networks of forest plots censused repeatedly over the last 44 years. Using long-

147 term data from a combined total of 66 permanent forest plots (totaling 72.5 ha), we addressed  
148 three questions about the pace and underlying demographic basis of observed changes in tree  
149 community composition. Specifically, we asked: (1) Does the rate of thermophilization vary with  
150 elevation? 2) Do thermophilization rates differ between Amazonian and Andean forests? and 3)  
151 What are the individual contributions of tree mortality, recruitment, and growth to observed  
152 thermophilization rates? Our study provides novel insights into the patterns and causes of  
153 tropical forest responses to climate change.

154

## 155 **Methods**

156

### 157 *Study area*

158 The study was conducted on the eastern slopes of the Bolivian and Peruvian Andes (Central  
159 Andes) along two elevational gradients extending from the Andean treeline at ~3700 m to the  
160 lowland Amazon basin at 190 m. In Bolivia, the elevational gradient encompasses mature forests  
161 ranging from 200 m to 3400 m in the Madidi region, including the protected areas of Madidi  
162 National Park (13.80° S, 67.63° W), Apolobamba (14.99° S, 68.82° W), and the Pilon-Lajas  
163 Biosphere Reserve (15.00° S, 67.33° W). In Peru, the elevational gradient spans a stretch of  
164 unbroken mature forest ranging from 300 m to 3700 m in the Manu Biosphere Reserve (11.86°  
165 S, 71.72° W) and extends to 190 m in the nearby Tambopata National Reserve (12.92° S, 69.28°  
166 W) (Fig. 1a). In the study area, mean annual temperature (MAT) decreases linearly with  
167 increasing elevation along the gradient at an adiabatic lapse rate of  $-5.5\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C km}^{-1}$  with mean  
168 annual temperatures ranging from 26.6 °C at the lowest elevations to 6.4 °C at the treeline (2, 33,  
169 34). Mean annual precipitation varies non-linearly across the gradient from 2448 to 10425 mm

170 yr<sup>-1</sup>, with significant interannual variability throughout (34, 35). The study area has high cloud  
171 frequency in all seasons, and the cloud base zone is estimated to be between 1200 to 2000 m (34,  
172 36). Temperatures in the study area have been increasing by approximately 0.03 °C y<sup>-1</sup> in both  
173 the Amazon and the Andes since 1980 (<http://berkeleyearth.org>, Fig. 1b).

174

### 175 ***Forest monitoring data***

176 Our dataset includes 66 permanent tree inventory plots (totaling 72.5 ha) from two large-scale  
177 forest plot networks in the Central Andes of Bolivia (28 plots) and Peru (38 plots) (Fig. 1a). The  
178 Bolivian elevational gradient encompasses 50 1-ha permanent plots, established and maintained  
179 by the Madidi Project at the Missouri Botanical Garden since 2002  
180 ([http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plant-science/plant-science/south-america/the-madidi-](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plant-science/plant-science/south-america/the-madidi-project.aspx)  
181 [project.aspx](http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/plant-science/plant-science/south-america/the-madidi-project.aspx)) but for this study, we used only a subset of 28 plots with repeated tree censuses  
182 ranging from 600 to 3300 m in elevation and established between 2005 to 2010. The Peruvian  
183 elevational gradient consists of 21 1-ha permanent plots established and maintained by the Andes  
184 Biodiversity and Ecosystem Research Group (ABERG; <http://www.andesconservation.org/>)  
185 located at elevations ranging from 400 to 3625 m and established between 2003 to 2017, and an  
186 additional 17 permanent plots located at 190 to 405 m elevation and established between 1979 to  
187 2014 by various investigators, including J. Terborgh, P. Nuñez, O. Phillips, and A. Gentry.  
188 These lowland plots are currently maintained and monitored by the Amazon Forest Inventory  
189 Network (RAINFOR) through ForestPlots.net (<http://www.forestplots.net/>). By including  
190 western Amazonian forests below 500 m, we were able to include the lower limit populations of  
191 Andean tree species (down to 190 m) along their full realized elevational ranges (Supporting  
192 Information, Fig. S1). The Amazonian plots included a mix of *floodplain* and *terra firme* forests.

193 *Floodplain* forests are saturated or underwater for a significant portion of each year, while the  
194 adjacent *terra firme* forests occur on older and more highly weathered soils and rarely or never  
195 flood (37).

196

197 The forest plots included in this study were established and remeasured multiple times following  
198 highly standardized protocols (38, 39). The inventory plots were censused at least two times  
199 between 1979 and 2023 (total number of tree measurements = 252,075, total number of censuses  
200 = 334, average number of censuses per plot = 5, median number of censuses per plot = 5). The  
201 oldest plot was established in 1979 in the Tambopata *terra firme* rain forest of Peru and has the  
202 most censuses (n = 13; SI Appendix, Table S1). In total, the 66 permanent plots contained  
203 66,715 stems  $\geq 10$  cm in diameter at breast height (d.b.h.).

204

### 205 ***Plant identifications***

206 All botanical collections from the permanent plots were identified *in situ* and in different  
207 herbaria and were compared and standardized across sites in each country. The vouchers were  
208 deposited in Bolivian, Peruvian, and USA herbaria (CUZ, HOXA, HUT, LPB, MOL, USM, and  
209 DAV, MO, F, WFU). Additionally, local flora and plant checklists were used as references (40–  
210 46) and taxonomic experts also confirmed plant identifications. We combined and standardized  
211 the species names from all the permanent plots and the combined species list was submitted to  
212 the Taxonomic Name Resolution Service (TRNS version 4.0, <http://tnrs.iplantcollaborative.org/>)  
213 to standardize and validate the species names (47). All taxa identified to morphospecies [e.g.,  
214 sp1(5984WFR)] or with invalid names (e.g., “indet”) were assigned as “undetermined.” We  
215 followed the APG IV plant classification for the valid species names (48). All TNRS “accepted”

216 species names with an overall TNRS-score below 0.9 were manually reviewed, and the names  
217 were confirmed on The Plant List (<http://www.theplantlist.org/>) and Tropicos  
218 (<http://www.tropicos.org>) databases. We used the valid genus names as a unique species  
219 identifier if the specific epithet was not confirmed. Species with an unassigned accepted TNRS  
220 name (e.g., “invalid,” “illegitimate” or “no opinion”) were also manually reviewed, and the  
221 species names were corrected using The Plant List and Tropicos databases. Unidentified taxa at  
222 the genus level were excluded from subsequent analysis. In total, the plots included 2,523  
223 arborescent species and morphospecies, including trees, tree ferns, and palms (hereafter, “trees”).

224

### 225 *Species thermal distributions and thermal optima*

226 We used established protocols to estimate the geographic thermal distributions for all tree  
227 species occurring in the study plots (49). For each species, we downloaded all available  
228 georeferenced herbarium records from Andean-Amazonian countries (i.e., Bolivia, Colombia,  
229 Ecuador, Peru, and Venezuela) through the Botanical Information and Ecology Network (BIEN:  
230 <http://bien.nceas.ucsb.edu/bien/>). Plant records that were missing coordinates, records that were  
231 tagged by the BIEN as having coordinate errors or that had evident georeferenced errors (e.g.,  
232 falling in large bodies of water), and duplicate records were all discarded. The mean annual  
233 temperatures (MAT) of all specimens were calculated at the collection locations by extracting  
234 the temperature values from the CHELSA (v.1.2 raster) BIOCLIM1 values at 30-arcsec  
235 resolution (50). We estimated the thermal optimum for each species represented by  $\geq 10$   
236 herbarium collection records as the mean MAT ( $^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) at the collection locations. For species with  
237  $< 10$  available records or identified at the genus level (2.5%), the thermal optimum was  
238 estimated as the average collection temperature calculated from all available records of

239 congeneric individuals collected from the tropical Andean-Amazonian region (49). For a small  
240 number of species (~1.5%), there were insufficient records available at either the species or  
241 genus level; these species were excluded from relevant analyses.

242

### 243 *Community temperature index (CTI) and thermophilization rates (TR)*

244 The Community Temperature Index (CTI) was calculated for each forest plot in each census as  
245 the average thermal optimum of all the species recorded in the plot weighted by their relative  
246 abundances (49). We calculated CTI using two different metrics of relative abundances. First, we  
247 weighted CTI using just the numbers of individuals of each species, such that changes in CTI are  
248 only influenced by individuals dying or recruiting in a local population. Second, we weighted  
249 CTI using the total basal area of each species (i.e., the summed cross-sectional area of stems at  
250 1.3 m above ground) such that changes through time are affected by tree growth in addition to  
251 individual mortality and recruitment. This second metric considers tree size as being ecologically  
252 important; for instance, the death of a large tree will affect ecosystem function more than the  
253 death of a small tree.

254

255 Because the central aim of our study was to understand changes in species composition due to  
256 climatic drivers, we excluded trees that likely died from major disturbances caused by landslides  
257 or fires, as these episodic non-climatic mortality events can potentially obfuscate  
258 thermophilization. Accordingly, we excluded from our analyses of CTI any trees that died in  
259 landslides that occurred over the census period in the SPD-01, TRU-02, and TRU-06 plots and  
260 that died in fires in the CUZ-01 plot (the affected trees were removed from all censuses pre- and  
261 post-disturbance). For each forest plot, we then calculated the thermophilization rate as the

262 annual changes in CTI over all possible consecutive census intervals. The overall  
263 thermophilization rate of each plot ( $TR$ ;  $^{\circ}C\ yr^{-1}$ ) was also calculated as the slope of the linear  
264 least-square regression between CTI and the census year (CTI calculated via the individual- and  
265 basal area-weighted approaches). A positive thermophilization rate indicates an increase through  
266 time in the relative abundance or basal area of species from warmer climates.

267

### 268 *Contribution of demographic processes to community thermophilization*

269 To assess the contributions of demographic processes to observed thermophilization patterns, we  
270 partitioned the observed thermophilization rates into three components attributable solely to tree  
271 basal area growth ( $TR_{\text{growth}}$ ), tree basal area recruitment ( $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$ ), and tree basal area  
272 mortality ( $TR_{\text{mortality}}$ ) for each plot over each census interval. The  $TR_{\text{growth}}$  of a plot is the  
273 difference between the plot's CTI calculated using the initial and final basal areas of just the  
274 stems surviving through the census period. The  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$  of a plot is the difference between the  
275 CTI calculated using basal areas of all stems recorded at the end of the census interval and the  
276 CTI calculated using just the basal areas of stems that survived through the census interval.  
277 Finally,  $TR_{\text{mortality}}$  is the difference between the CTI calculated using the initial basal areas of all  
278 stems recorded in the first census and the CTI calculated using the initial basal areas of just the  
279 stems that survived through the census interval (32). Positive  $TR_{\text{growth}}$  indicates that individuals of  
280 species from warmer climates have grown faster (i.e., increased faster in basal area) than species  
281 from colder climates during the census interval. A positive  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$  indicates faster basal area  
282 recruitment rates of species from warmer climates. A positive  $TR_{\text{mortality}}$  indicates higher basal  
283 area mortality rates of species from colder climates.

284

285 *Statistical tests*

286 We calculated the overall mean TR with 95% confidence intervals across all forest plots. We  
287 used a binomial probability test to determine whether the proportion of plots with positive TR  
288 differed significantly from the null expectations of 50%. We used linear least squares regression  
289 of TR vs. plot elevation to test how TR varies with elevation. We also used the smoothing  
290 function of a generalized additive model (GAM) to fit response curves and to test the  
291 relationship between TR and elevation. To test whether TR differs between Amazonian and  
292 Andean forests, we first classified Amazonian forests as those below 500 m of elevation and  
293 Andean forests as those above 500 m (51). Then, we compared mean TR between the Amazonian  
294 and the Andean forests using a Mann-Whitney and two-tailed t-test. We also compared the levels  
295 of variability in TR between the Andes and the Amazon using Levene's test. To determine the  
296 contributions of tree mortality, recruitment, and growth to overall TR, we used the tree  
297 demographic components ( $TR_{\text{mortality}}$ ,  $TR_{\text{growth}}$ , and  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$ ) in a multiple linear regression  
298 model to explain variation in TR.

299

300 **Results**

301

302 *Community temperature index (CTI)*

303 The average CTI of the plots ranged from 13 to 25 °C and was strongly negatively correlated  
304 with plot elevation (Individual-weighted CTI:  $r = -0.97$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; basal area-weighted CTI:  $r =$   
305  $-0.96$ ,  $p < 0.0001$ ; Supporting Information Fig. S2). Although the use of herbarium records may  
306 introduce biases in estimating the thermal niches of tree species, the strength of the CTI vs.  
307 elevation relationship demonstrates the efficacy of the method and the importance of the thermal

308 niche in controlling the geographic distributions of species and community composition across  
309 elevational gradients.

310

### 311 *Thermophilization rates across the elevational gradient*

312 CTI varied over time within the plots and along the gradient; however, some plots showed  
313 consistently positive (e.g., CUZ-04) or negative (e.g., TAM-02) changes in CTI since 1979 (Fig.  
314 2a, b; Supporting Information, Fig. S3a, S3b). Annualized rates of thermophilization varied  
315 widely along the Amazonian-Andean elevational gradient, ranging from  $-0.019$  to  $+0.023$   $^{\circ}\text{C yr}^{-1}$   
316 when using CTI based on the number of individuals and from  $-0.019$  to  $+0.025$   $^{\circ}\text{C yr}^{-1}$  when  
317 using CTI based on basal areas (Fig. 3a, b; Supporting Information, Table S2). The overall  
318 annual community TR across all forest plots was  $0.0025$   $^{\circ}\text{C yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI =  $0.0004$  -  $0.0045$   $^{\circ}\text{C}$   
319  $\text{yr}^{-1}$ ) for the individual-weighted metric and  $0.0022$   $^{\circ}\text{C yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI =  $-0.0001$  -  $+0.0043$   $^{\circ}\text{C yr}^{-1}$ )  
320 for the basal area-weighted metric. Thermophilization rates were not significantly correlated with  
321 either the number of censuses or the number of years between censuses (Individuals-weighted:  $r$   
322 =  $-0.05$ ,  $p = 0.78$ ; basal area-weighted:  $r = -0.02$ ,  $p = 0.89$ ; Supporting Information, Fig. S4).

323

324 Given the measured regional adiabatic lapse rate of  $5.5$   $^{\circ}\text{C km}^{-1}$  (2), the thermophilization rates  
325 reported here correspond to a plot-level mean upward elevational migration rate of  $0.45$   $\text{m yr}^{-1}$   
326 (95% CI =  $0.04$  -  $0.85$   $\text{m yr}^{-1}$ ) using the individual-weighted metric; and  $0.40$   $\text{m yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI = -  
327  $0.04$  -  $+0.75$   $\text{m yr}^{-1}$ ) using the basal area-weighted metric (Supporting Information, Table S2). Of  
328 the 66 plots, 62% and 59% had positive thermophilization rates using the individual-weighted ( $n$   
329 = 41) and basal area-weighted ( $n = 39$ ) metrics, respectively. However, the overall number of  
330 plots with positive thermophilization rates along the gradient was not more than expected under

331 the null expectation (binomial probability;  $p = 0.06$  and  $p = 0.18$  for individual and basal-area  
332 metrics, respectively).

333

### 334 *Differences in thermophilization rates between Amazonian and Andean forests*

335 Along the elevational gradient, thermophilization rates were fastest and consistently positive at  
336 mid-elevations around the cloud base between 1200 m - 2000 m asl (Fig. 3, Supporting  
337 Information, Fig. S5). In contrast, the plots with negative TR were mainly located in the lowland  
338 Amazonian (< 500 m) and at higher elevations in upper montane forests (> 2500 m) (Fig. 3a, b  
339 Supporting Information, Table S2, Fig. S5). Because of the fast thermophilization at middle  
340 elevations, there was a non-linear relationship between thermophilization rates and elevation  
341 (Individuals-weighted:  $r = -0.01$ ,  $p = 0.75$ ; basal area-weighted:  $r = -0.006$ ,  $p = 0.44$ ; Fig. 3a, b).

342

343 The Amazonian tree communities are not changing directionally with regards to species' thermal  
344 niches [Amazon TR =  $0.0007 \text{ }^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI =  $-0.0008 - +0.0023 \text{ }^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$ ) for individuals, and -  
345  $0.0007 \text{ }^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI =  $-0.0027 - +0.0013 \text{ }^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$ ) for basal area-weighted], while Andean tree  
346 communities had very slow and heterogeneous rates of thermophilization [Andean TR =  $0.0031$   
347  $^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI =  $-0.0001 - +0.0060 \text{ }^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$ ) for the individual-weighted metric and  $0.0032 \text{ }^\circ\text{C}$   
348  $\text{yr}^{-1}$  (95% CI =  $0.0001 - 0.00005 \text{ }^\circ\text{C yr}^{-1}$ ) for the basal area-weighted metric]. Mean  
349 thermophilization rates in lowland Amazonian plots (elevation < 500 m;  $n = 17$  plots) were  
350 significantly slower than their Andean counterparts (elevation > 500 m;  $n = 49$  plots) for the  
351 basal area-weighted metric (Two-tailed t-test,  $p = 0.04$ ; Fig. 4), but were not significantly  
352 different for the individual-weighted metric (Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test;  $p = 0.26$ ; Fig. 4).

353 Finally, TR was much more variable in the Andes than in the Amazon (Levene test;  $p < 0.001$  for  
354 both individual and basal area metrics; Fig. 4).

355

### 356 *Mortality, growth, and recruitment effects on community thermophilization*

357 Across all plots along the Amazon-to-Andes elevational gradient, changes in plot-level TR were  
358 driven primarily by differential tree mortality ( $TR_{\text{mortality}}$ ) as opposed to differential growth  
359 ( $TR_{\text{growth}}$ ) or tree recruitment ( $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$ ) (Fig. 5). In 61% of the forest plots,  $TR_{\text{mortality}}$   
360 accounted for the largest proportion of observed thermophilization. In contrast to  $TR_{\text{growth}}$  and  
361  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$  were dominant drivers in just 26% and 13% of the plots, respectively.  $TR_{\text{mortality}}$   
362 showed strong positive correlations in plot-level thermophilization.  $TR_{\text{growth}}$  was also positively  
363 correlated with overall TR, whereas the  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$  showed no relationship with TR (Supporting  
364 Information, Table S3, Fig. S6). When analyzing Amazonian and Andean plots separately, we  
365 did not observe significant correlations between TR and  $TR_{\text{mortality}}$ ,  $TR_{\text{growth}}$  or  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$  in the  
366 lowland Amazonian plots. In the Andean plots, in contrast,  $TR_{\text{mortality}}$  had a strong positive  
367 correlation with TR.  $TR_{\text{growth}}$  had a significant positive correlation with TR, and  $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$  had a  
368 significant negative correlation with TR (Supporting Information, Table S4, S5; Fig. S7, S8).

369

## 370 **Discussion**

371

### 372 *Thermophilization rates are slower than warming rates*

373 Using comprehensive long-term (40+ years) monitoring datasets from 66 forest plots spanning 3  
374 degrees of latitude, 3500 m in elevation, and  $\sim 19$  °C of temperature, we found little or no  
375 evidence of thermophilization of tree communities in both the lowland Amazonian or the high

376 Andes, but a strong signal of thermophilization in mid-elevation forests (~1200 – 2000 m). We  
377 find that mean observed thermophilization rates were more than an order of magnitude slower  
378 than regional warming rates, indicating that changes in community composition are not keeping  
379 pace with temperature increases, at least in the life-stages examined in this study. The overall  
380 rates of thermophilization averaged 0.0025 °C yr<sup>-1</sup> (individual-weighted) to 0.0022 °C yr<sup>-1</sup> (basal  
381 area-weighted). When viewed in the context of predicted climate change, our results suggest that  
382 by ~2100 the community temperature index (CTI) of Amazonian and Andean tree communities  
383 will only change by less than a quarter degree Celsius (0.19 - 0.17 °C, based on our current  
384 migration rates), while the ambient temperatures in this region are predicted to increase by 2 - 4  
385 °C (4, 5), depending on the location along the elevational gradient. Slow thermophilization will  
386 increase the “climatic debt” of forest communities, potentially reducing the ecosystem services  
387 they can provide and putting them at greater risk of collapse (52, 53), especially as compositional  
388 changes are driven by increased mortality of species along the lower portions of their ranges (i.e.,  
389 range contractions).

390

391 ***Thermophilization is largely absent in the Amazon and highly variable in the Andes***

392 Thermophilization rates in Andean forests were, on average, higher and more variable than in  
393 lowland Amazonian forests (Fig. 3, 4). These results indicate that tree community responses to  
394 climate warming are absent (in terms of thermophilization) in the Amazon, but slow and highly  
395 variable among plots in the Andes. Indeed, the signal appears to reflect more of a climatic  
396 disruption (via increased mortality rates) than a climatic migration (via increased recruitment  
397 rates). Although our study is one of the first to compare thermophilization between Amazonian  
398 and Andean tree communities based on plot census data, the findings broadly mirror those of a

399 large-scale study using herbarium collection records (16). In their study, Feeley et al. (2020)  
400 found slower thermophilization rates in the lowland tropics compared to higher latitudes and  
401 elevations.

402

403 Several factors may explain the lack of thermophilization in Amazonian tree communities  
404 compared to Andean forests. First, compensatory changes in tree demographic rates (54) in the  
405 Amazonian forest may buffer population dynamics against temperature warming. Higher growth  
406 of individual trees can compensate for lower survival and recruitment rates, allowing for the  
407 persistence of Amazonian populations, though this depends critically on tree fecundity, whose  
408 response to climate change remains unknown in the tropics. For example, plots located in  
409 *floodplain* forests often showed negative thermophilization rates mainly driven by differential  
410 stem growth (Fig. 5, Supporting Information Table S2). Second, lowland Amazonian tree species  
411 may have greater tolerance to climate warming through local historical adaptation with  
412 persistence over time (21, 55). Also, it is possible that our characterization of thermal optima in  
413 Amazonian trees is inaccurate for species with truncated thermal niches (20). Finally, lowland  
414 species may be able to persist longer than predicted under increasing temperatures due to the  
415 lack of immigration from hotter areas and an absence of competition with species that are better  
416 adapted to the new conditions.

417

418 Positive rates of thermophilization in some lowland habitat types may also be counterbalanced  
419 by negative rates of thermophilization in other local habitat types. In Amazonian forests,  
420 physiographic differences between *floodplain* and *terra firme* forests may explain contrasting  
421 relationships between demographic processes and thermophilization. We found that

422 thermophilization was positively correlated with tree mortality in 73 % of the *terra firme* plots.  
423 In contrast, thermophilization was negatively associated with growth in 50 % of the *floodplain*  
424 plots (Supporting Information, Fig. S9). This can be explained by the increase in tree mortality of  
425 wet-affiliated taxa (25) in *terra firme* forests. In addition, flooded areas could buffer the negative  
426 effects of droughts, decreasing tree mortality and increasing tree growth. Finally, multiple  
427 droughts in the last three decades are driving slow but directional shifts in species composition  
428 toward more drought-tolerant species across the Amazon (25). The lack of thermophilization in  
429 the Amazon suggests weak relationships between drought-tolerance traits and thermal-tolerance  
430 traits. Alternatively, these drought events could also promote longer periods of tree growth in  
431 *floodplain* forests because the roots will potentially be closer to the water table, extending the  
432 growing season. This current inertia of Amazonian tree communities in response to climate  
433 warming could lead to future lowland biotic attrition (56) if the thermal niches of the lowland  
434 species modeled here reflect likely climatic tolerances of species.

435

436 ***Thermophilization is driven primarily by differential tree mortality***

437 Among the three demographic processes examined in our study (growth, mortality, recruitment),  
438 rates of thermophilization were most strongly determined by patterns of tree mortality and  
439 growth. There are several possible explanations for this result. First, mortality and recruitment  
440 could be decoupled in time, especially since we only considered trees with diameters  $\geq 10$  cm.  
441 Trees reaching the minimum measurable size of 10 cm d.b.h. can be decades to centuries old  
442 (57), having recruited in cooler than current temperatures. In this case, thermophilization  
443 resulting from growth may be a good indicator of future plant performance, particularly as  
444 mortality is a fast demographic process, while recruitment is inherently slower. If this is true, an

445 examination of juvenile size classes (seedling and small saplings) should show accelerated  
446 thermophilization rates, with changes concentrated in recruitment as opposed to mortality.  
447 Second, our results suggest that warming may be driving elevated mortality of the cold-adapted  
448 less-thermophilic species compared to warm-adapted thermophilic species, consistent with  
449 findings from Colombia and Costa Rica (31, 32). High tree mortality, particularly in the Andes,  
450 can be explained by the incapability of species to persist in areas where temperatures increase  
451 exceed species' thermal tolerances, causing dieback along the lower hotter portions of species'  
452 ranges. Finally, the observed positive effect of tree growth on thermophilization may be due to  
453 the accelerated growth of warm-adapted species along the gradient.

454

455 Drought-induced tree mortality could also be causing shifts in species composition and function  
456 in Andean forests by disproportionately killing trees in the warmer (lower) portions of their  
457 ranges. This is supported by the fact that there have been three major drought events in the  
458 Amazon basin in the last two decades, increasing tree mortality and reshuffling species  
459 composition (25, 58, 59). In our study, the highest thermophilization rates were found around the  
460 cloud base (~1200-2000 m, Fig. 3a, b), where high tree mortality was reported (18). These results  
461 contrast with those of Fadrique *et al.* 2018, who reported negative thermophilization at  
462 elevations corresponding to the cloud base and suggested that the cloud base may be a barrier to  
463 species migrations. Our results suggest that the cloud base zone is shifting in species  
464 composition to greater relative abundances of more heat-tolerant species, potentially due to the  
465 interplay of drought events and heat stress increasing the potential for a future forest die-off in  
466 response to climate change (60) and, therefore to a high risk for biotic attrition.

467

468 In conclusion, slow thermophilization rates for Andean forests and the absence of  
469 thermophilization from lowland Amazonian forests indicate that they are likely to fall out of  
470 equilibrium with climate over the coming decades, if not sooner. As warming continues in  
471 tropical forests, long-term monitoring of growth, mortality, recruitment, and fecundity will be  
472 imperative for understanding the future population and community dynamics of Amazonian and  
473 Andean forests.

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- 644

645 **Figure legends**

646

647 Figure 1. (a) A map of the 66 permanent forest plots along the Amazon-to-Andes elevational  
648 gradient in Bolivia and Peru. The green circles represent the Amazonian forest plots (<500 m  
649 asl), and the orange triangles represent the Andean plots ( $\geq 500$  m asl). (b) Temperature  
650 anomalies compared to 1980 in the Amazon (climate stations in Puerto Maldonado) and in the  
651 Andes (climate stations in Cusco) downloaded via Berkeley Earth Surface Temperature  
652 (<http://berkeleyearth.org>). Temperatures increased by  $\sim 1.17$  ( $\sim 0.0292$  °C  $y^{-1}$ ) in Puerto  
653 Maldonado and by  $\sim 1.17$  °C ( $\sim 0.0291$  °C  $y^{-1}$ ) in Cusco since 1980.

654

655 Figure 2. The estimated community temperature index (CTI) anomaly for the 66 permanent  
656 forest plots. The CTI anomaly was calculated as the difference between a plot's CTI in year  $i$  and  
657 the plots' initial CTI along the Andes-to-Amazon elevational transects in Bolivia and Peru over  
658 44 years (range of time intervals = 2 to 10 years per plot). Increases in CTI (i.e., positive CTI  
659 anomaly) indicate an increase in the relative abundance or basal area of more-thermophilic  
660 species from warmer climates over time-based on the (a) individual-weight CTI and (b) basal  
661 area-weighted CTI. The black horizontal line represents no change in CTI. Colored lines  
662 correspond to each plot at different time intervals along the elevational gradient.

663

664 Figure 3. The estimated plot-level thermophilization rates (TR) for the 66 Amazonian and  
665 Andean forests plots with multiple censuses based on the (a) individual-weighted community  
666 temperature index (CTI) and (b) basal area-weighted CTI. TR was calculated as the slope of the  
667 linear least-square regression between CTI and census year. Each circle (Amazon) or triangle

668 (Andes) represents one forest plot; solid green and orange colors represent positive TR and  
669 empty green, and orange colors represent negative TR. Error bars represent the 95% confidence  
670 intervals based on the linear least-square regressions of the CTI versus the census year of each  
671 plot. Circles and triangles with no error bars represent plots with one census interval. The dashed  
672 vertical line indicates the approximate transition from Amazonian to Andean forests at 500 m.  
673 The solid green line is the generalized additive model (GAM) fit using the smoothing function  
674 with 95% confidence limits. Vertical rectangles represent the approximate position of the cloud  
675 base along the gradient.

676

677 Figure 4. Violin plots showing variation in estimated plot-level thermophilization rates (TR) for  
678 the Amazonian ( $n = 17$ ) and Andean ( $n = 49$ ) forests plots based on the (a) individual-weighted  
679 community temperature index (CTI) and (b) basal area-weighted CTI.

680

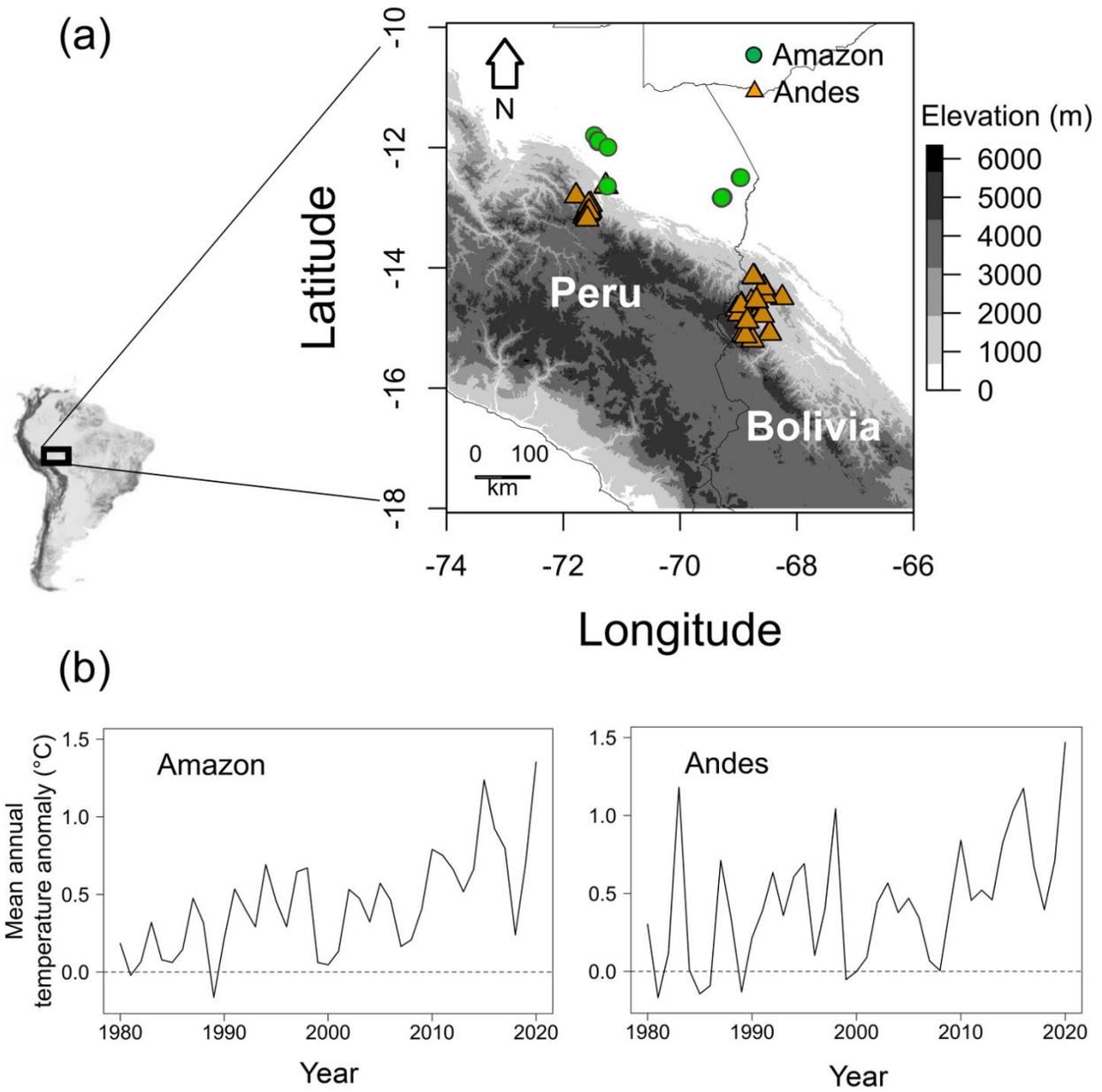
681 Figure 5. Estimated changes in plot-level thermophilization rates ( $TR_{\text{plot}}$ ) due to tree mortality  
682 ( $TR_{\text{mortality}}$ ), tree recruitment ( $TR_{\text{recruitment}}$ ), and stem growth ( $TR_{\text{growth}}$ ) along the Amazon-to-  
683 Andes elevational gradient. Forest plots are ordered from the low to high elevation. The dashed  
684 vertical lines indicate the approximate transition from Amazonian and Andean forests at 500 m.  
685 Positive changes (solid green and orange bars) indicate increased abundances of taxa from  
686 relatively warmer climates.

687

688 Figure 1

689

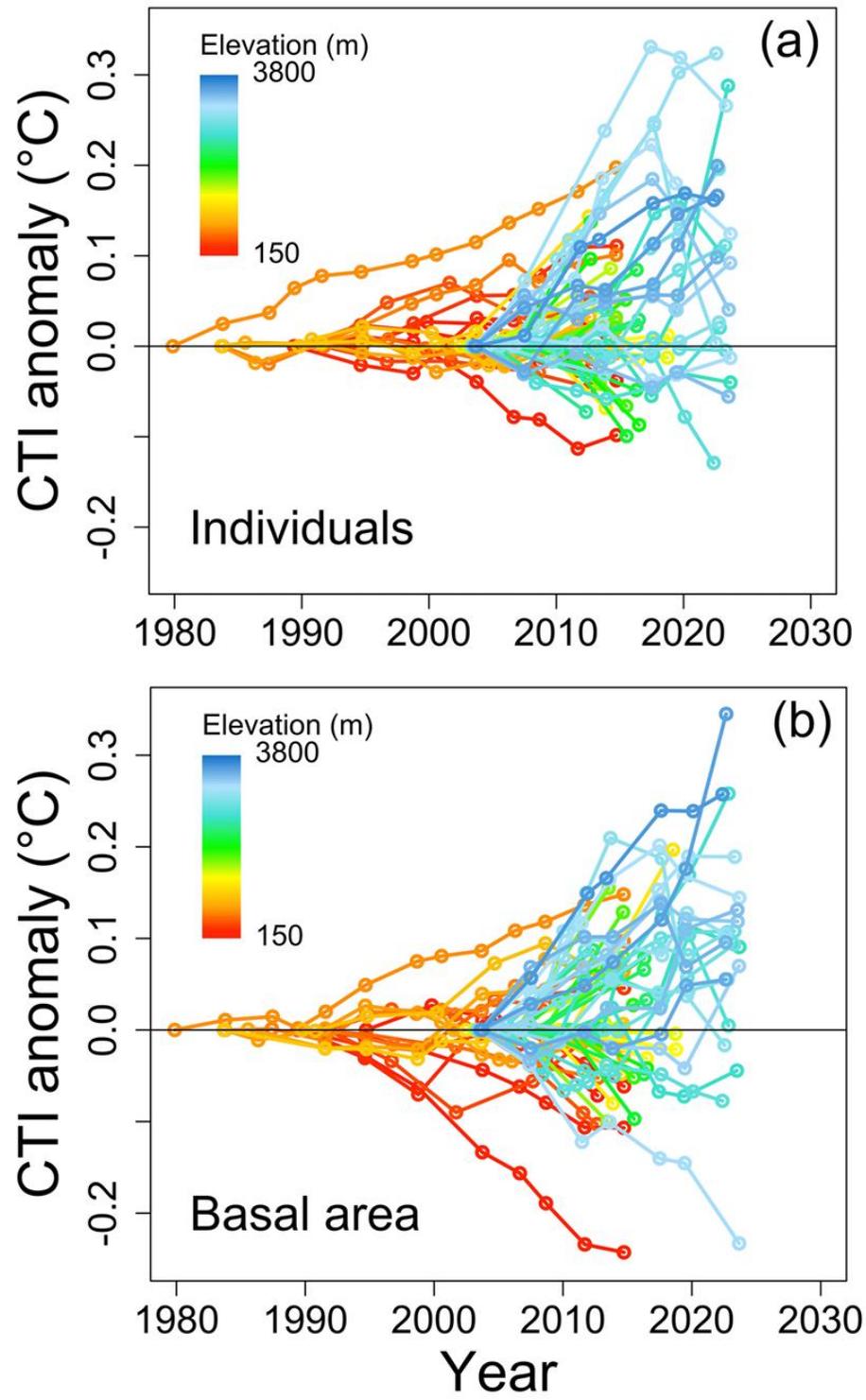
690

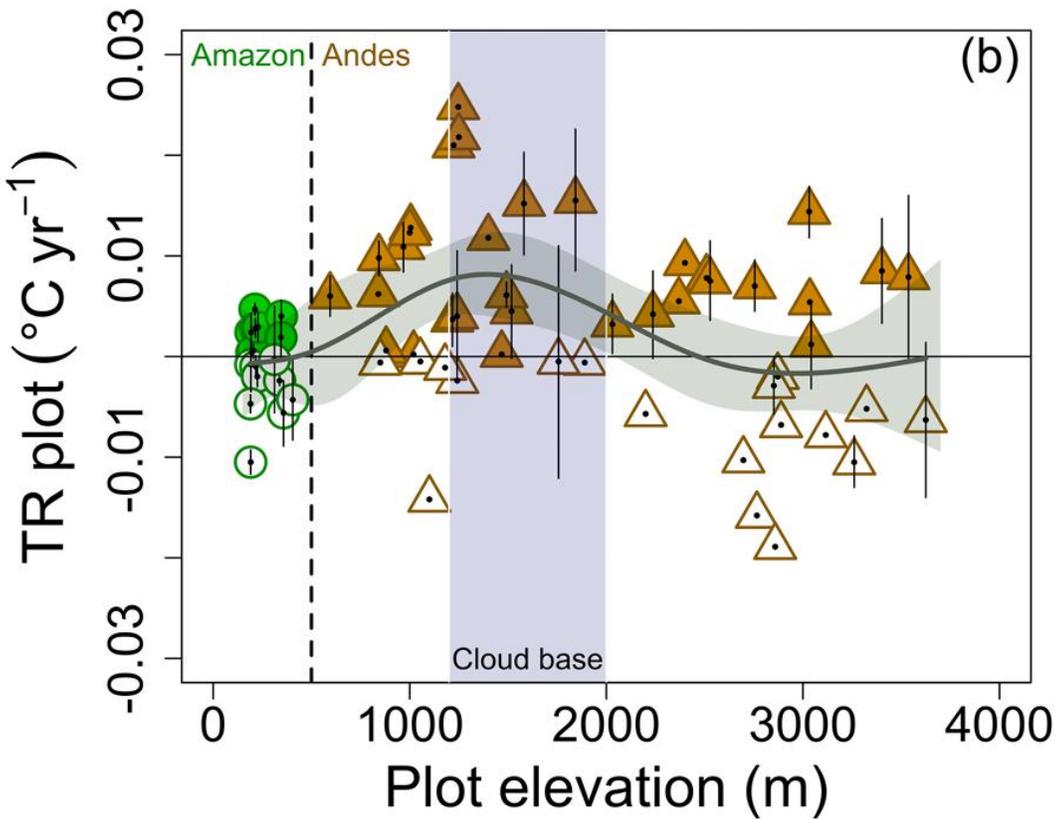
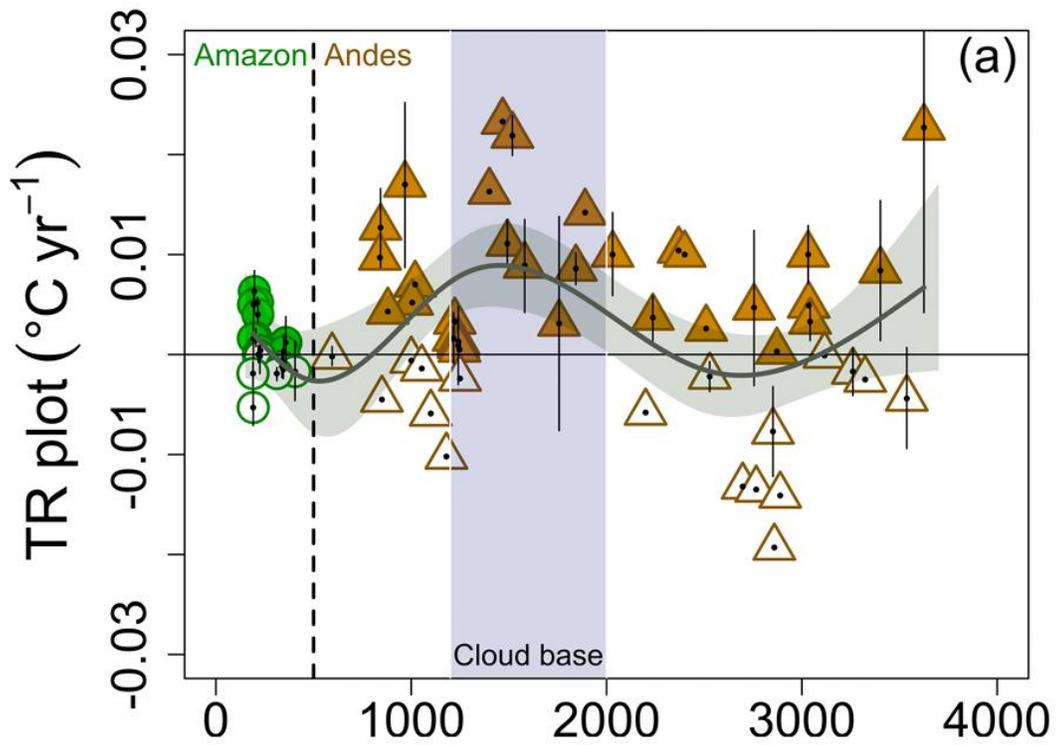


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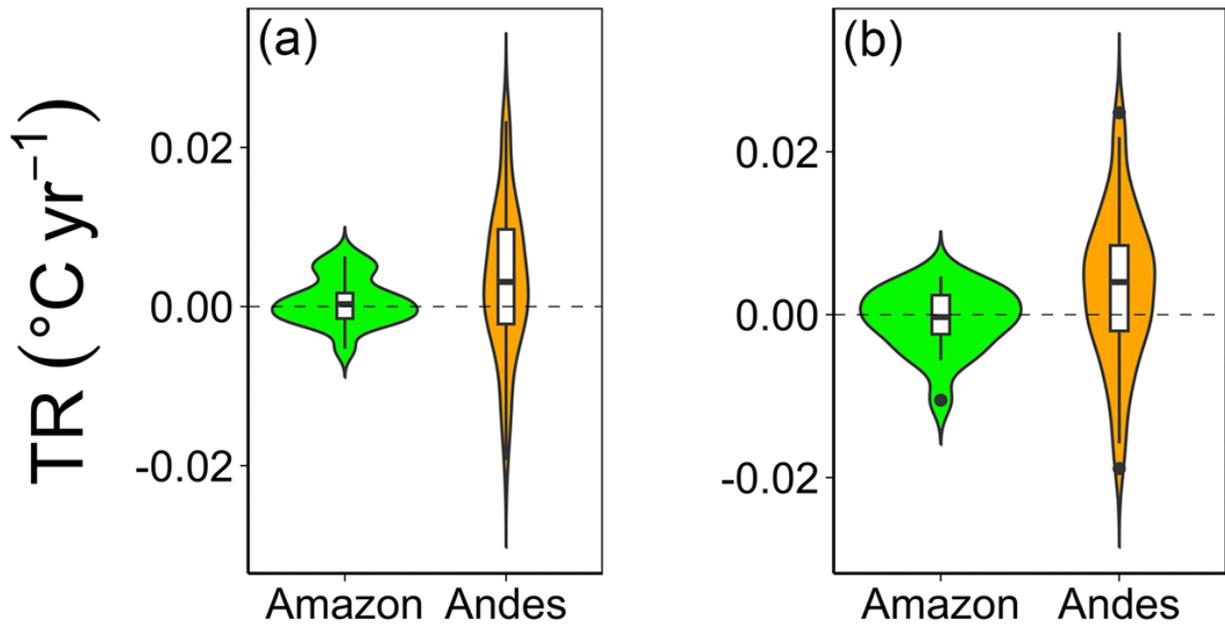
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697 Figure 4



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