



Přírodovědecká  
fakulta  
Faculty  
of Science

University of South Bohemia  
in České Budějovice

**PROF. VOJTECH NOVOTNY**

Professor of Ecology

DEPARTMENT OF ZOOLOGY, FACULTY OF SCIENCE, UNIV. OF SOUTH BOHEMIA  
Branisovska 31, CZ 370 05 Ceske Budejovice, CZECH REPUBLIC

Ph (+420) 385 310 350, Fax (+420) 385 310 354, Email novotny@entu.cas.cz

Ceske Budejovice, 16 March 2019

Re: Supervisor's Thesis evaluation for Conor Redmond

**Conor Redmond: Plant-herbivore interactions along ecological gradients in tropical rainforest: Drivers of network structure and specialization**

Conor Redmond's PhD Thesis examines plant – herbivore foodwebs in tropical rainforests of Papua New Guinea along two principal ecological gradients – successional and elevational. It is an exemplary scholarly work in its approach to the analysis of quantitative foodwebs, combining tests of their structural parameters with phylogenetic perspectives to answer important questions about the maintenance of extreme complexity in tropical ecosystems. The Thesis brings some surprising, therefore important, insights, including unexpected stability of the structure, but not species composition, in plant-herbivore food webs in the course of rainforest secondary succession.

The Thesis comprises a paper published in *Ecography*, a leading ecological journal, and three manuscripts that have potential for similarly high-quality publication. C. Redmond was the lead researcher for the *Ecography* paper and two other chapters. The methodological Chapter 4 outlines a new plot-based sampling approach to tropical foodwebs that relies on forest felling. C. Redmond (as the second author on the multi-authored manuscript) played an important role in implementing and refining this methodology. His long-term field research in PNG included work in remote field and leadership of large groups of locally recruited field assistants, paraecologists and students that cut down and sampled rainforest plots. C. Redmond performed excellently also in this managerial role. Such experience will undoubtedly serve him well later in his career, when managing his own laboratory. C. Redmond has cut down a lot of tropical forest for his Thesis. As explained in the Chapter 4, it was all for the benefit of rainforest conservation, indigenous people and humanity at large, although arguably it would have been worth it for this Thesis alone.

C. Redmond has produced a scientifically interesting and methodologically refined Thesis. He has also demonstrated, during the five years of his tenure as a PhD student, that he has the combination of personal qualities required to become a successful scientist. He has shown independency, intellectual gravitas, as well as practical and social skills needed for a career in research, which is of course the primary goal of PhD education.

In summary, it is my opinion that Conor Redmond has very convincingly demonstrated his capacity for conducting high-quality research, and shows an excellent promise as a scientist.

Vojtech Novotny  
PhD supervisor