International Journal of Engineering Science Invention Research & Development; Vol. 10, Issue 6, December 2023
www.ijesird.com, E-ISSN: 2349-6185

HIGH AIR PRESSURE IS RELATED TO LOW SPECIES RICHNESS IN GNOMESKELUS ATTEMS, 1926

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***Abstract*- Air pressure was tested for a relationship with species richness in *Gnomeskulus*. There were no differences between air pressure at the distribution of high (58, n=58) and intermediate (17, n=17) species richness (Z-test: P-value=0.32, Z score=0.45, n=58, 17). Air pressure at highest species richness (57) was different to low species richness (2, n=2) (P-value=0, Z score=7.67, n=58, 2) while intermediate species richness and low species richness were also different (P-value=0, Z score=6.18, n=17, 2). This suggestes high air pressure was related to low species richness when controlling for latitude in *Gnomeskulus*.**

***Keywords:* air, diversity; gradient; latitude; pressure, richness; species.**

I. INTRODUCTION

Species richness is the number of different species represented in an ecological community, landscape, or region [1-4]. Species richness and biodiversity increase from the poles to the tropics for a wide variety of terrestrial and marine organisms and is referred to as a latitudinal diversity gradient (LDG) [1]. Inverse LDG in invertebrates is hypothesized and explained as the result of predation which plays an important "keystone" role in structuring the community [5]. As the abundance of the top predator, decreases, a greater number of taxa in lower trophic levels can persist. There is a higher predation risk for insect prey at lower latitudes [6]. Thus it is predicted there should be an inverse LDG in the (millipede) prey.

Gnomeskulus is a genus of millipedes belonging to the Order Polydesmida Leach, 1815 is distributed throughout southern Africa [7, 8]. The null historic or evolutionary hypothesis is the Tropical Conservativism Hypothesis which suggests processes of speciation, extinction, and dispersal result in higher species richness in the tropics and decline away from the equator has been tested [9,10]. The alternative is the Biogeographical Conservativism Hypothesis which suggests the processes invoked are not intrinsic to the tropics but are dependent on historical biogeography to determine the distribution of species richness was corroborated [11]. Here species richness in *Gnomeskulus* is tested for correlations with air pressure.

II. MATERIALS AND METHODS

77 valid species were identified as belonging to the genus *Gnomeskulus* Attems, 1926 [7]. These were tabulated and known localities were also listed (Table 1). Localities were obtained from the literature [7]. GPS coordinates were obtained from internet sources for known localities using the locality followed with the keyword "GPS" or http://gps-coordinates.org. Latitude and longitude coordinates were obtained. Species richness correlations with latitude were given (Cooper, 2022). Air pressure was calculated for each type locality (https://www.mide.com/air-pressure-at-altitude-calculator). P-value calculations were produced between air pressure at neighbouring species richness and between the highest species richness and the rest (Appendix 1). A test for normality of air pressure data was performed at https://www.statskingdom.com/kolmogorov-smirnov-test-calculator.html. The outcome of this test determined what P-value test would be used in comparing the data of air pressure across species richness. If the data were normal a T-test would be used while if the data were not normal a Z-test is used. The P-value calculator can be found at https://www.gigacalculator.com/calculators/p-value-significance-calculator.php.

III. RESULTS

There were no differences between air pressure between -28 and -35 degrees South latitude (high species richness) and -21 to -28 degrees South latitude (intermediate species richness) (Z-test: P-value=0.324904, Z score=0.454030, n=58, 17). Air pressure at highest species richness (58) was different to low species richness (2, n=2) (P-value=0, Z score=7.672410, n=58, 2) while intermediate species richness and low species

richness were also different (P-value=0, Z score=6.182448, n=17, 2). Results of the lilliefors test indicated that there is a significant difference from the normal distribution (D(75) = 0.16, p = 0.000116).

IV. DISCUSSION

Gnomeskelus are more temperate and show a general decline in LDG, and Dalodesmidae shows an inverse latitudinal diversity gradient showing support for the Biogeographical Conservativism Hypothesis [12]. Other groups showing an inverse LDG include aphids, European bryophytes, freshwater zooplankton, Holarctic tree frogs, ichneumonids, New World snake tribe Lampropeltini, marine benthic algae, North American breeding birds, penguins, peracarid crustaceans, pitcher plant mosquito, pond turtles, Shallow-water mollusks and shorebirds [13,14,15-17,9,18,19,20,21,22,23].

Two general explanations for the inverse trends in LDG include precipitation and predation [24]. Predation affects millipedes as all species have some form and degree of conglobation [25]. This behavior is also an adaptive response to conserve moisture [24]. Because these millipedes are shade-loving I rejected the moisture conservation hypothesis in favor of predation. There is a higher predation risk for insect prey at lower latitudes [6]. Density-dependent mortality in the millipedes is supported by differences in relative abundance, mating frequencies, and sex ratios of sympatric species [26].

There may be an evolutionary preference for temperate environments appearing to have led to climatic constraints on dispersal based primarily on precipitation or temperature seasonality gradients [11]. Air pressure variations can allude to this as LDG depends on proximate factors affecting processes of speciation, extinction, immigration, and emigration, and in millipedes, these factors are dependent on size. LDG relates to body size in millipedes which do not agree with the trends in other taxa such as birds and fishes [27]. The trend of a small body size associated with the inverse LDG is similar to the weak tendency found in mammals where there was no significant association between body mass and species-richness [28,29]. Air pressure has been associated with species richness in red millipedes [30] and no relationship was discovered in the pill millipedes [in prep.], but the *Gnomeskulus* showed two relationships with low species richness and air pressure.

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Appendix 1. Air pressure (Pa) followed by mean species richness in *Gnomeskulus.*

91075.18, 17
89442.61, 58
94441.29, 17
66812.02, 58
85449.54, 58
81714.43, 58
83968.52, 58
99635.92, 58
88323.78, 17
78958.95, 58
89871.72, 58
94571.93, 58
99832.76, 58
95857.53, 58
100823.40, 58

88323.78, 17
91133.82, 17
101220.90, 2
67737.96, 58
101149.79, 58
98589.65, 58
78958.95, 58
81296.75, 58
100906.33, 58
95190.49, 58
100126.85, 58
94638.86, 58
67993.92, 58
94638.86, 58
87697.84, 58
87697.84, 58
94638.86, 58
101220.20, 58
94571.93, 58
92686.79, 58
90485.32, 17
96591.52, 17
66812.02, 58
94571.93, 58
82997.39, 58
87697.84, 58
100688.07, 58
100988.76, 58
93338.75, 58
68885.96, 58
93558.26, 58
100138.81, 17
66321.95, 58
101185.75, 58
100823.40, 58
93558.26, 58
86725.79, 17
66812.02, 58
92642.55, 58
94571.93, 58
99930.20, 58
91133.82, 58
95857.53, 58
66812.02, 58
101218.77, 58
98134.95, 17
100688.07, 58
101243.21, 58
101220.90, 2
87043.39, 17
83952.54, 58
87527.13, 17
89384.66, 17
101052.68, 58
99009.01, 17
89092.88, 17
91774.79, 17
94638.86, 17
88323.78, 58
93897.20, 58
66018.80, 58
68885.96, 58