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# Mechanisms, detection and impacts of species redistributions under climate change

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40

41

42

43 **Abstract**

44 Shifts in species distributions are a common ecological response to climate change, and global  
45 temperature rise is often hypothesized as the primary driver. However, the directions and rates  
46 of distribution shifts are highly variable across species, systems and studies, complicating  
47 efforts to manage and anticipate biodiversity responses to anthropogenic change. In this  
48 Review, we summarize approaches to documenting species range shifts, discuss why observed  
49 range shifts often do not match our expectations, and explore the impacts of species range  
50 shifts on nature and society. The majority (59%) of documented range shifts are directionally  
51 consistent with climate change, based on the BioShifts database of range shift observations.  
52 However, many observed species have not shifted, or have shifted in directions opposite to  
53 temperature-based expectations. These lagging or expectation-contrary shifts might be  
54 explained by additional biotic or abiotic factors driving range shifts, including additional non-  
55 temperature climatic drivers, habitat characteristics and species interactions, which are not  
56 normally considered in range shift documentations. Understanding and managing range shifts  
57 will require increasing and connecting observational biological data, generalizing range shift  
58 patterns across systems and predicting shifts at management-relevant timescales.

## 59 [H1] Introduction

60 The varied geographic ranges of species are dynamic expressions of multiple factors. Abiotic  
61 conditions, such as temperature and light, are considered to set the bounds of a species'  
62 'potential range': the set of areas where abiotic conditions do not exceed the physiological  
63 limits of population sustainability<sup>1</sup>. Dispersal limitations, habitat availability, and biotic factors  
64 can further limit potential ranges into 'realized ranges': subsets of environmentally suitable  
65 areas in which a species actually lives<sup>2-4</sup>. Although species ranges are often illustrated as single  
66 units, additional insight can be gained by conceptualizing them as disparate populations  
67 distributed across space that experience varying levels of climatic stress<sup>5</sup>. Because temperature  
68 conditions broadly exhibit a large-scale gradient across the globe, species' ranges typically span  
69 from a 'warm edge' (normally equatorward, downslope in elevation or shallower in water) to a  
70 'cold edge' (normally poleward, upslope or deeper in water), between which conditions  
71 experienced by populations can vastly differ (Box 1). Although species ranges might not be  
72 directly limited by temperature at either edge and might not be at equilibrium with their  
73 environments, populations within a species' range experience different levels of temperature  
74 stress and can therefore have different or contrasting responses to temperature change<sup>6,7</sup>.

75  
76 Anthropogenic climate change is causing global temperatures to warm on average, shifting  
77 temperature isolines, or isotherms, across Earth's surface, and altering conditions that  
78 organisms experience<sup>8</sup>. At warm edges of species ranges, where individuals are already living  
79 near their upper range-wide temperatures, climate warming is expected to diminish  
80 populations by exceeding thermal limits for population growth or reproduction, thus  
81 contracting the range edge towards the center. By contrast, at cold edges, where individuals  
82 are living near thermal minima, climate warming can relax constraints on organisms, for  
83 example, by increasing temperatures enough for early life development<sup>9</sup>, enabling increased  
84 survival and persistence of populations and facilitating expansion of the range edge away from  
85 the center<sup>7,10</sup> (Box 1). Together, these changes suggest that species will shift their distributions  
86 towards previously cooler regions as global temperatures warm, in general, occupying higher  
87 absolute latitudes, higher elevations in mountains, and deeper waters in oceans<sup>11,12</sup>.

88

89 'Range shifts' are now recognized as common climate-driven phenomena that have varying  
90 impacts on ecosystems, economies, and people<sup>13,14</sup>, yet immense variation exists in the rates  
91 and directions of range shifts observed globally<sup>12,15–19</sup>. Although range-shifting a mechanism by  
92 which species (and biodiversity) can persist through climate change, an increasingly unstable  
93 distribution of life challenges how we interact with, plan to manage, and conserve natural  
94 systems. Anticipating range shifts in species of particular ecological, economic or health  
95 concern will be key to successfully adapting to climate change. Moreover, species  
96 redistributions and the human responses to them have been linked to a range of social equity  
97 imbalances<sup>20,21</sup>, underscoring that understanding species shifts is an important goal for a  
98 sustainable future. Improved mechanistic understanding of processes driving and limiting range  
99 shifts will increase our ability to respond to and learn from these changes.

100

101 In this Review, we draw together knowledge of species redistribution processes, summarize the  
102 history and methods of detecting species' range shifts, and review mechanisms thought to  
103 underlie variation in observed rates and directions — from ecological and evolutionary factors  
104 to detection methods. We use BioShifts<sup>22</sup>, a global database including over 26,000 empirical  
105 estimates of latitudinal and elevational range shifts compiled from published literature, to  
106 demonstrate general trends, knowledge gaps and observation biases in range shift  
107 documentations to date. We briefly summarize the effects of range shifts on natural and  
108 human systems as an update to a previous review<sup>13</sup>. Finally, we end by discussing areas for  
109 improvement in range shift detections and three exciting avenues for future research.

110

## 111 **[H1] Observations of Climate-Driven Range Shifts**

112 Connections between climate and species distributions have long been documented in the  
113 scientific literature<sup>23</sup>. Classic works by van Humboldt and Merriam hypothesized temperature  
114 as a primary driver for setting and maintaining species ranges<sup>23,24</sup>, and between 1900 and the  
115 1970s, changes in species ranges in association with local periods of warming and cooling or  
116 extreme weather events were frequently observed<sup>25</sup>. These early observations of range

117 changes shed light on when and where specific factors limit species ranges<sup>26</sup>. Decades later, the  
118 onset of increasingly rapid and consistent global warming (for example, at increased rates  
119 beginning in the early 1980s) provided a large-scale — if pseudo-replicated across Earth —  
120 experiment in which to test the effects of climate conditions on species distributions in natural  
121 environments<sup>27</sup>.

122  
123 The first contemporary observations of climate-driven range shifts were probably made in a  
124 non-scientific context; for example, by fur trappers, fishers, or people with close economic or  
125 cultural connections to species. In some cases, information from these sources, such as fur  
126 trade figures and traditional ecological knowledge, has been used to reconstruct species'  
127 historical ranges in large-scale biogeography studies<sup>28–30</sup>. Range shifts attributed to  
128 anthropogenic climate change were first widely documented in the 1990s. These observations  
129 included changes in species distributions near range edges, shifts in thermal affinities among  
130 community members at static locations, inferences based on changing biogeographic  
131 patterns<sup>29,31,32</sup>, and eventually whole ranges shifting in response to climate change<sup>11</sup>. Since  
132 then, range shifts have been observed across many taxa and environments<sup>15,19,22,27</sup>, emerging as  
133 a widespread ecological response to climate change.

134

## 135 **[H2] Measuring climate-driven range shifts**

136 Estimating species range shifts in response to climate change over time is difficult, because  
137 observing these changes requires knowledge of species' current and historical distributions as  
138 well as, ideally, climate variables over the relevant time period. In some exceptionally data-rich  
139 taxa and regions, range shifts can be estimated with relative precision by analyzing  
140 systematically monitored data of species occurrences and/or abundances from sources such as  
141 National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration fish trawls<sup>33,34</sup>, Breeding Bird Surveys<sup>35</sup>, and  
142 the UK Butterfly Monitoring Scheme<sup>36</sup>. However, observational data of species distributions at  
143 large spatial and temporal scales are not always available.

144

145 In the absence of high-resolution time series data, other methods can be used to infer species  
146 range movements. When survey data are available for the present but not in the past, natural  
147 history records and museum collections can be used to reconstruct past species ranges to  
148 estimate distributional shifts<sup>37,38</sup>. When species range survey data are available for the past  
149 only, conducting targeted re-surveys in the same regions years to decades later is a relatively  
150 common method for assessing distribution changes<sup>39,40</sup>. For cases in which data are available  
151 over broad temporal, but not spatial scales, assessing change in biogeographic communities at  
152 fixed locations can show relative abundance changes as ‘cross-sections’ of shifting species  
153 ranges<sup>31,41</sup>. Conversely, when data are available at broad spatial, but not temporal scales,  
154 comparing distributions of life stages of organisms at one point in time (for example, seedlings  
155 versus adult trees<sup>42–44</sup>) can reveal distributional changes in new versus old growth. Finally,  
156 emerging techniques such as telemetry<sup>45</sup> and citizen science observations provide new  
157 methods to help to detect range shifts<sup>46,47</sup>. These various methods have enabled rapid  
158 documentation of biogeographic change across regions and systems and together have  
159 identified range shifts as a relatively ubiquitous ‘fingerprint’ of climate change<sup>12,48</sup>, however,  
160 variation among methods has caused difficulty in synthesizing and comparing studies globally.

161

## 162 **[H2] Locations of range shift study**

163 Although range shifts have been documented across continents and ecosystems, reported  
164 observations are highly geographically skewed towards Europe and North America<sup>15,49</sup>. Indeed,  
165 among the over 26,000 latitudinal and elevational range shift estimates collated in the BioShifts  
166 database<sup>22</sup>, more studies have been conducted and more species’ ranges assessed per study in  
167 Europe and North America than in other continents (Fig. 1a,b), although the focus of this  
168 database on English-language papers could contribute to this bias<sup>50,51</sup>. Observations are also  
169 biased taxonomically, as most range shift observations are documented among terrestrial  
170 arthropods (including freshwater), vascular plants, and birds (Fig. 1a). Of all latitudinal and  
171 elevational range shifts included in the database, 84% are from these three taxonomic groups  
172 and are measured in Europe or North America (Fig. 1a), lending a disproportionate amount of  
173 our knowledge of range shift directions and speeds to a limited set of species and locations.

174



175 Range shifts are most often assessed over latitudinal gradients on land, latitudinal gradients in  
176 the ocean, or elevation gradients in montane systems, but estimation effort has been unequal  
177 across these three groups. The vast majority of estimates have been made in terrestrial systems  
178 — fewer than 5% of all shifts estimated in the BioShifts database are in marine systems, while  
179 terrestrial shifts across latitude and elevation are more well-represented (44% and 51% of all  
180 estimates in BioShifts, respectively) (Fig 1b, 2). Because species in these three ecological  
181 gradients interact differently with their environments, insight gained by synthesizing shifts  
182 within these groups likely has limited applicability to generalizing between them. Furthermore,  
183 freshwater species could respond differently to climate change than their fully terrestrial  
184 counterparts; however, the distinguishing between terrestrial and freshwater species can be  
185 difficult since many terrestrial species rely on freshwater environments for certain life stages or  
186 behaviors but are not necessarily bound to them for movement. For this reason, all species that  
187 live all or part of their life cycle in freshwater are considered terrestrial in the BioShifts  
188 database and throughout this review, but further distinguishing freshwater from terrestrial  
189 species could be beneficial in future research.

190

191 Within species ranges, range shift estimates are made far more rarely at warm range edges  
192 than at cold edges or range centers (11%, 41%, and 48% of all shift estimates, respectively) (Fig  
193 2). This bias might limit our understanding of mechanisms, since the processes driving range  
194 changes are expected to differ between sections of a range<sup>7</sup>. Assessments of range shifts  
195 encompassing both range edges within single studies are exceptionally rare — for example,  
196 accounting for only 2% of range shift estimates in Australia<sup>52</sup> — and the vast majority of our  
197 observations capture only glimpses of full-range responses to climate change.

198

## 199 **[H2] General findings on range shifts**

200 The directions of collated latitudinal and elevational range shift estimates in the BioShifts  
201 database are remarkably variable. Within the database, most range shift estimates (59% of all  
202 estimates) are in the direction expected based on local temperature change (here defined as  
203 the direction of isotherm shifts over time in the study region). However, a high proportion of

204 shift estimates (35%) are in the opposite direction to expected (opposite to the direction of  
205 local isotherm shifts; Fig. 2), and a portion (6%) of species were not found to shift at all. These  
206 tallies of raw change in range position over time do not take into account uncertainty or  
207 distance of range shifts, and make null shifts methodologically unlikely to detect; nevertheless,  
208 even in this coarse tally, the proportion of estimates matching the direction of temperature  
209 change is greater than those opposing temperature change in all gradients and range sections  
210 (Fig. 2).

211  
212 Along both latitudinal and elevational gradients, shifts at the cold edge and range center are  
213 more often directionally consistent with climate expectations than shifts at the warm edge (Fig.  
214 2). Although fewer shift estimates have been made at warm edges in general (Fig 2), and  
215 extinction processes are more difficult to detect than range expansion<sup>53</sup>, the greater  
216 inconsistency of range shifts with temperature shifts at warm edges compared to cold edges  
217 could indicate that extirpation processes adhere less closely to temperature change than range  
218 expansion processes perhaps owing to factors including long life histories or compensatory  
219 processes<sup>54,55</sup>, although empirical evidence has not yet been able to support this hypothesis<sup>56</sup>.

220  
221 The magnitudes of range shifts display further consistencies with climate warming. Despite  
222 wide variation between individual range shift magnitudes, in general, range shifts have  
223 occurred faster in regions with higher rates of climate warming than in regions with lower  
224 rates<sup>16,17,57</sup>. Although a basic tabulation indicates that marine species range shifts show less  
225 directional consistency with climate change than terrestrial species (Fig 2), an analysis of range  
226 shift velocities that accounted for methodological variation and non-random taxonomic  
227 sampling found that marine species adhere to isotherm shifts more closely than terrestrial  
228 species, and shift more than five times faster on average in the poleward direction ( $5.9 \pm 0.9$   
229  $\text{km}\cdot\text{yr}^{-1}$  for marine vs  $1.1 \pm 1.0 \text{ km}\cdot\text{yr}^{-1}$  for terrestrial)<sup>15</sup>. These patterns might be related to the  
230 tighter thermal niche 'filling' of marine organisms<sup>58</sup>, the relative unavailability of microclimate  
231 refugia in marine habitats<sup>59</sup>, the relative lack of human-created barriers in the ocean<sup>60</sup> and the

232 faster climate velocities in marine habitats than on land<sup>8</sup>, and suggest climate and non-climatic  
233 mechanisms for slower or delayed range shifts on land.

234  
235 Despite these generalized global patterns of species redistributions showing consistency with  
236 climate warming, a substantial portion of range shift estimations do not match the rate or even  
237 direction expected from temperature shifts alone<sup>15,18,49,61</sup>. The proportion of estimates  
238 consistent with the direction of temperature change across all realms is not overwhelmingly  
239 high (59%) (Fig 2), and some range shift estimates vary in rate by an order of magnitude from  
240 their corresponding temperature shifts<sup>16,19</sup>. Although some of these inconsistencies could result  
241 from methodological limitations or random variation<sup>18</sup>, others might be due to ecological  
242 processes that affect species ranges over and above temperature. Identifying these non-  
243 intuitive responses could be especially valuable to improving our understanding of factors that  
244 limit and alter species distributions.

245

#### 246 **[H1] Why observations deviate from expectations**

247 Several potential mechanisms could explain why species ranges don't keep pace with changing  
248 isotherms, and why 'naïve' isotherm-tracking hypotheses might be insufficient for  
249 understanding and predicting species redistributions. These mechanisms can be classified into  
250 three categories: climate drivers other than (average) temperature; non-climatic drivers of  
251 species ranges; and low signal to noise in range shift detections.

252

#### 253 **[H2] Climate drivers other than (average) temperature**

254 There are multiple approaches to deriving climate-based expectations of the direction and  
255 velocity of species shifts, and mismatches in scale between predictions and observations can be  
256 influential. In some cases, range shift expectations are derived from broad hypotheses based on  
257 global-scale temperature patterns, in which species are expected to move towards higher  
258 latitudes, higher elevations and deeper waters without explicit consideration of the actual  
259 climate gradient in the study region<sup>27,48</sup>. These global-scale expectations can misrepresent local-  
260 scale changes experienced by organisms, since microclimates and climate refugia can misalign

261 local gradients with global gradients; in other words, local isotherms might not be shifting  
262 polewards or upslope<sup>17,62,63</sup>. Omission of local processes in favor of global-scale expectations  
263 can increase the proportion of detections that appear to defy expectations<sup>49</sup>. However,  
264 methods for including micro-scale changes are being developed<sup>64,65</sup> and data to do so are  
265 increasingly available<sup>62,66,67</sup>. These advances can even allow for *a posteriori* reassessment of  
266 range shift studies<sup>68</sup>; for example, when local isotherm velocities were calculated for range  
267 shifts in the BioShifts database<sup>15</sup> following methods for calculating climate velocity from <sup>8</sup>,  
268 isotherm velocities in approximately 2% of elevational study areas and 5% of latitudinal study  
269 areas were in directions opposite to global gradients (that is, downslope or equatorwards). If  
270 species perfectly tracked temperature changes and only global gradients were used to form  
271 expectations, situations like these would manifest as expectation-contrary shifts.

272  
273 Even at relevant spatial scales, temperature is not the only climatic variable limiting species  
274 ranges. Because different climate variables can show contrasting patterns of change through  
275 time<sup>69</sup>, a species might show shifts contrary to temperature-based expectations if it is  
276 responding to changes in an abiotic dimension other than temperature. For example, some  
277 species shifts have more closely tracked changes in precipitation or water balance than  
278 temperature, even when those environmental changes are directionally misaligned with  
279 temperature shifts<sup>70,71</sup>. In other cases, species range shifts have been more closely correlated  
280 with niche-tracking (over multiple abiotic dimensions) than isotherm-tracking alone<sup>72,73</sup>. Still,  
281 non-temperature variables are rarely incorporated when forming expectations of climate-  
282 driven range shifts, and likely explain a portion of the temperature-contrary shifts seen in global  
283 estimates. Moreover, constraints imposed by abiotic gradients that are not changing with  
284 climate change can be important<sup>74</sup>. For example, day length can constrain photosynthetic  
285 processes of plants and corals from shifting across latitudes<sup>75,76</sup>, and atmospheric pressure and  
286 oxygen availability can constrain animals from shifting up elevations<sup>74,77</sup>. Interactions between  
287 variables and warming might also lead to expectation-contrary shifts, such as the link between  
288 temperature and oxygen demand driving oxygen-supply limitations downslope on warming  
289 mountains<sup>77</sup> or offshore in marine coastal systems<sup>78</sup>.

290

291 Even for cases in which temperature is the primary driver of species' responses and the variable  
292 forming expectations, the chosen metric of temperature (for example, annual mean, annual  
293 max or number of days over temperature threshold) might not best represent the limiting  
294 factor for the species. Temperature extremes, growing degree days, duration of summer, or  
295 temperature-related landscape variables such as spring snow cover can variably be more direct  
296 drivers of ecological responses to climate change than long-term averages<sup>79-81</sup>. Any of these  
297 variables can affect species differently throughout their life histories, rendering average  
298 temperature a coarse predictor of species responses<sup>82</sup>. Temperature anomalies that are not  
299 resolutely captured by average trends can also acutely affect species over and above long-term  
300 changes. For instance, marine heatwaves over the past decade have exacerbated poleward  
301 range shifts in shallow reef species in addition to gradual change through time<sup>83</sup>. Long-term  
302 temperature averages might therefore serve as a useful proxy to capture species responses to  
303 many correlated temperature variables in large-scale studies, but might not drive responses of  
304 individual species.

305

## 306 **[H2] Non-climatic drivers of species ranges**

307 Species can be excluded from portions of their climatically suitable niches for many reasons,  
308 and the extent to which species' ranges are in equilibrium with their environments can affect  
309 the predictability of their responses to climate change<sup>58,84</sup>. Limitations indirectly or completely  
310 unrelated to climate change can pose constraints on species' realized ranges (Fig 3) and result  
311 in ranges that display inertia or climate-change-contrary shifts. Non-climatic range-limiting  
312 factors can be classified into four categories — habitat limitations, dispersal constraints, biotic  
313 interactions, and contemporary evolution — and each can alter leading or trailing range shift  
314 rates against temperature-based expectations.

315

### 316 *[H3] Habitat Limitations*

317 Habitat limitations caused by fragmentation, geographic barriers and human activity can either  
318 prevent or facilitate range shifts. Geographic barriers such as mountain ranges, valleys and

319 coastlines can present obstacles for range-shifting species, regardless of climatic suitability  
320 beyond these barriers<sup>39</sup>. For species that are bound to geographically constrained habitats such  
321 as rivers, coastlines, or alpine environments (i.e. 'sky islands'), landscape connectivity can be far  
322 more influential than climate in determining distribution ranges<sup>85</sup>. Constrained species ranges  
323 can result in overall range reductions in response to climate change if ranges are able to  
324 contract at one edge but cannot expand past geographic barriers at the other<sup>39</sup>. When habitat  
325 availability does not align with latitudes, elevations, or climatic gradients over which range  
326 shifts are expected, species might be unable to keep pace with shifting isotherms (for example,  
327 fish in an east-to-west river are unable to migrate north)<sup>86</sup> and thus might exhibit little or no  
328 range shifts in the directions expected as a result of climate change.

329  
330 Even when a habitat generally extends in the direction of climate velocity, habitat  
331 fragmentation and land use change can inhibit range expansions at the cold edge or amplify  
332 range contractions at the warm edge<sup>87-89</sup> (Fig. 3b). Human activity such as forest clearing can  
333 change the overall permeability of landscapes, which can slow or stop range shifts of forest  
334 species through cleared areas<sup>90,91</sup>; landscapes with higher conductance are more quickly shifted  
335 across than fragmented landscapes<sup>92</sup>. Alternatively, conserving habitat through establishing  
336 protected areas can facilitate species range shifts compared with surrounding areas<sup>93</sup> (Fig. 3b).  
337 By contrast, for species that specialize in human-modified landscapes (such as, farmland-  
338 associated birds or mussels on man-made offshore structures), human modifications might  
339 represent increased connectivity and actually facilitate range shifts<sup>94,95</sup>. Some projections of  
340 climate-driven range shifts account for geographic barriers by including landscape connectivity  
341 in models or projecting range-shift corridors<sup>96,97</sup>, but such considerations are normally not  
342 addressed in range shift detections and might present as unexplained lags or advances with  
343 climate tracking.

344

### 345 *[H3] Dispersal Constraints*

346 Climatically suitable areas unobstructed by physical barriers can remain inaccessible to species  
347 that lack a mode of dispersal to reach them, thus slowing range shifts from temperature-based

348 expectations. Dispersal of sessile or slow-moving species such as benthic marine invertebrates  
349 and wind-dispersing plants relies on external directional forces (ocean currents or prevailing  
350 wind directions), and these forces can be misaligned with the direction of isotherm shifts (Fig.  
351 3b). Misaligned dispersal processes can impede species from tracking changing environments,  
352 particularly at the leading edge<sup>98,99</sup>. Animal-assisted dispersal can also impede range shifts of  
353 seed-bearing plants as animal vectors do not always disperse in the direction of climate  
354 shifts<sup>100,101</sup>. Among actively dispersing organisms, such as most terrestrial vertebrates, dispersal  
355 abilities can vastly differ, in some cases limiting species' ability to track environmental change<sup>91</sup>.  
356 In addition, when few dispersers exist, Allee effects and inbreeding depression can limit the  
357 success of early arrivals, leading to lags between species responses and climate shifts<sup>102</sup>.

358

359 The role of dispersal ability is typically assessed using various proximal traits such as body size  
360 and reproductive mode<sup>103–106</sup>. Although strong relationships between these traits and range  
361 shift rates are not commonly found, these expectation-contrary results could be a greater  
362 reflection of inadequate estimates of dispersal ability (in which proxies can perform poorly)  
363 than a true absence of effect<sup>107</sup>. Dispersal and species traits and their relation to range shifts  
364 are reviewed in further detail elsewhere<sup>105,107</sup>.

365

### 366 *[H3] Biotic interactions*

367 Biotic interactions can affect a species' ability to redistribute under climate change, causing lags  
368 or unexpected range shifts relative to climate expectations. Species interactions are expected  
369 to affect leading and trailing range edges differently according to whether they are positive  
370 (such as food, mutualism or commensalism) or antagonistic (such as predation, parasitism or  
371 competition)<sup>108</sup>.

372

373 Positive interactions can result in reduced or delayed range shifts at either range edge. At the  
374 leading edge, a species might be unable to shift in response to climate change if its distribution  
375 is bound through an obligate positive interaction with another species (for example, a specific  
376 habitat, host, or food resource species) that cannot expand at the same pace. Such limitations

377 have been demonstrated in butterflies shifting up mountain slopes being limited by  
378 distributions of host plants which are shifting at a slower rate<sup>109,110</sup>. At the trailing edge,  
379 positive interactions such as fungal mutualists on plant roots can broaden the environmental  
380 tolerance of the interacting species such that populations with mutualists contract more slowly  
381 than populations without mutualists in response to environmental change<sup>111,112</sup>. Positive  
382 interactions can also manifest as a direct alteration of climate conditions, such as when desert  
383 plants create microclimates for associated species; these can appear to alter the rate of climate  
384 responses, particularly when expectations are built on macro-level climate patterns that don't  
385 capture the microclimate conditions experienced by organisms.

386  
387 Antagonistic interactions can lead to slower range shifts than expected. If a species has a  
388 trailing edge limited by antagonistic interactions (but not by climate), the trailing edge shift of  
389 the focal species could be driven by the speed of the leading edge shift of the antagonistic  
390 species, which, depending on the climate-tracking ability of the antagonistic species and the  
391 time-course of the interaction, might be slower than that expected as a result of climate  
392 change<sup>29,113-115</sup>. The reverse is also possible, in which a species' leading edge is limited by an  
393 antagonistic species' trailing edge that is not (or is slowly) responding to climate change. This  
394 phenomenon has been observed in intertidal habitats in which mussels and barnacles shifting  
395 towards deeper, cooler waters have their leading edge (the deeper edge) limited by the  
396 presence of sea star predators<sup>116</sup>. In this scenario, the sea stars' trailing edge (the shallower  
397 edge) is determined by a non-temperature constraint (high-tide desiccation stress), which is not  
398 responding to warming, and therefore the edge remains stable in response to warming while  
399 mussels and barnacles attempt to shift.

400  
401 In some cases, climate-consistent shifts of one species could lead to climate-contrary shifts of  
402 an interacting species. For example, if two competing species had overlapping ranges, but only  
403 one was sensitive and responded to temperature change, warming could lead to an expected  
404 range shift in one species and an increase in abundance near the warm range edge of the other  
405 species (where the competitor vacated)<sup>117</sup>. This scenario, and many of those previously



406 mentioned, hinges on differences in the climate responsiveness of interacting species, the  
407 frequency of which is plausibly high but generally unknown. Methods to model distributions of  
408 interacting species are becoming increasingly common and might be able to disentangle some  
409 of these nuances<sup>118–120</sup>.

410

411 Although mechanisms by which biotic interactions alter range shift rates compared to climate  
412 expectations have been theorized<sup>121</sup>, they are difficult to observe. In these examples, species-  
413 interaction-driven range shifts (or lack thereof) were identified through careful natural history  
414 observations and/or directed research. However, most large-scale range shift studies assess  
415 many species' ranges at once and typically lack the context of species-specific climate  
416 tolerances or community interaction webs. Without independent knowledge of species'  
417 interactions, these examples could have presented as species responding in unexpected ways  
418 to climate change driven by unrecognized underlying mechanisms. Thus, unidentified biotic  
419 mechanisms are likely responsible for a portion of the expectation-contrary shifts that have  
420 been documented.

421

### 422 *[H3] Contemporary evolution*

423 Contemporary evolution can affect the rate of species range shifts in response to climate  
424 change<sup>122–124</sup>, although a full summary of the theoretical directions and mechanisms is beyond  
425 the scope of this review. Briefly, evolution of dispersal ability can increase the rate of range  
426 expansions if previously unsuitable areas become suitable beyond the species range<sup>125,126</sup>, just  
427 as evolution of any trait that alters the role of range-limiting factors (desiccation resistance,  
428 species interactions, heat tolerance) can affect the response of ranges away from  
429 expectations<sup>127,128</sup>. The challenge of invoking trait or niche evolution during range shifts is  
430 explaining why these traits would evolve more readily during a range shift when they could  
431 have been under selection in previous climatically-stable periods<sup>129</sup>, that is, ultimately  
432 understanding the limits to niche width evolution at all range edges.

433

434 **[H2] Low signal to noise in range shift detections**

435 Methodological differences can greatly influence estimates of range shifts from empirical data.  
436 Two separate syntheses of species range shifts have made similar conclusions that  
437 methodological factors are better predictors of estimated range shift rates than ecological traits  
438 or climate variables<sup>15,18</sup>. As range shift detections often rely on sparse or opportunistically  
439 collected data, researchers often have little choice in methodology applied within individual  
440 studies. This range of methodologies adds noise that can impede our ability to detect  
441 meaningful signals of change or draw synthetic conclusions between systems<sup>18</sup>. As species  
442 ranges are naturally variable from year to year<sup>7</sup>, and are themselves observed imperfectly<sup>53,130</sup>,  
443 low sampling frequency or spatial coverage can result in estimates that misrepresent or are  
444 even contrary to long-term trends<sup>33</sup>.

445  
446 High noise in range shift estimates can be expected when the temporal extent of a study is  
447 small (that is, a short total duration of observations). Even if the pace of climate change has  
448 been fast within this time frame, life-history constraints and stochasticity likely affect range  
449 edges in the short term. Therefore, time can be required for robust changes to be detected at  
450 range edges. Indeed, both latitudinal and elevational shifts of range edges from the BioShifts  
451 database show patterns of high variability around the temperature-based expectation in short-  
452 duration studies. Variability around temperature-based expectations diminishes towards zero  
453 (matching expectations) as study duration increases (Fig. 4), suggesting that, at least among  
454 long-term studies, temperature is a main direct or indirect driver of range shifts. This trend is  
455 promising but unfortunate, as reconstructing high-resolution biogeography information for the  
456 past to increase study duration is difficult, leaving few avenues for long-term studies except the  
457 continued monitoring of biodiversity into the future. Nevertheless, these findings lend support  
458 to the value of reassessing documented range shifts in cases where sampling can be continued  
459 after an initial study is completed.

460  
461 Related to the role of time, estimates made from too few observations can carry both process  
462 and sampling error, affecting their accuracy. Range edges are particularly prone to low-accuracy

463 shift estimates based on the likelihood of both types of error. Process error can greatly  
464 influence range edge identifications when stochastic events and idiosyncratic biological  
465 processes vary their positions from year to year (for example, higher than normal wind  
466 dispersal in some years). Moreover, as edges normally contain lower population densities of  
467 focal species<sup>131</sup>, position estimates can be substantially affected by sampling effort such that  
468 low sampling can add noise to already variable range edges<sup>130</sup>. Although studies with many  
469 observations of range edge positions through time might be able to cut through this error to  
470 detect biological signal, those with sparse data will likely be confounded by these issues to  
471 some extent.

472  
473 Statistical limitations can further complicate range shift detections and are often unaddressed  
474 in range shift detection studies<sup>132</sup>. For example, when range edge estimates are expected to be  
475 variable across observations (either because of natural range edge variability or observer error),  
476 the ‘regression towards the mean’ effect can lead to an apparent range shift in which an  
477 estimated range edge is shifted towards the location of the true range edge (the expected  
478 sample mean), even in the absence of a true biological change<sup>133,134</sup>. In addition, because  
479 sampling of species range position occurs over a finite sampling domain (for example, transects  
480 up mountains or across latitudes), range shifts that surpass the domain will necessarily be  
481 underestimated. Unless removed from the study, these ‘observation domain crossers’ will lead  
482 to predictable correlations between the starting range edge relative to the domain edge and  
483 the magnitude of the detected shift<sup>133</sup>. Despite these potential sources of error, fewer than 2%  
484 of range shift detections are tested against null models<sup>132</sup>, resulting in an inability to distinguish  
485 whether range shift detections differ from range shifts due to chance alone.

486  
487 Detecting range edge shifts based on the furthest occurrence of a species at only two points in  
488 time without comparison to a null model is one situation in which noise might particularly  
489 outweigh biological signal. Yet due to understandable limitations in data availability, such  
490 scenarios are quite common; of the latitudinal range shifts in the BioShifts database, 10% of  
491 cold edge and 20% of warm edge estimates used furthest-occurrence detections to establish

492 range edge positions (see Box 2), and two syntheses of range shift estimates reported that 38%  
493 and 85% of range shift estimates were made using two time-point data<sup>18,22</sup>. Various approaches  
494 can be taken to reduce the influence of these sources of noise when comparing range positions  
495 between few time periods or with sparse data<sup>38,135</sup>. Common strategies include aggregating  
496 observations across multiple years to reduce the influence of natural variation and observer  
497 bias, accounting for sampling effort and detectability in occupancy models, and aggregating  
498 error-prone shifts across multiple species to form an understanding of community shift rate  
499 among noisy individual estimates. Future work should consider estimating error in range edge  
500 detections, including meta-analytic methods and null models that account for variation in  
501 precision among studies.

502

### 503 **[H1] Impacts on natural and human systems**

504 Range shifts and their cascading effects will lead to both positive and negative outcomes for  
505 species, ecosystems, and people. Range-shifting towards suitable habitats is an adaptation that  
506 enables persistence in the face of ongoing climate change. Therefore, climate-driven leading-  
507 edge shifts have broadly positive effects for individual species and for maintaining biodiversity  
508 at large. Yet, rapid changes in species ranges have led to corresponding needs for adaptation in  
509 natural and human systems that were established under previously stable conditions. Among  
510 social–ecological coupled systems, range shifts are expected to have an increased impact on  
511 those that lack the financial or political capacity to quickly adapt<sup>20,21</sup>, creating possible equity  
512 imbalances that should be addressed in future research.

513

514 Species shifting into new areas at their leading edges occupy a unique position in science, policy  
515 and management. Although climate-induced shifts of species' 'native' ranges fundamentally  
516 differ from the spread of invasive alien species, existing policies are not consistently or  
517 decidedly equipped to manage them. Owing to the vast potential impacts of newly arriving  
518 species, understanding and predicting range shifts has been increasingly prioritized by  
519 governmental research agencies<sup>136–138</sup> and the perception of these species by resource  
520 managers has varied from new exploitable resources to dangerous invaders<sup>139,140</sup>. Range-

521 shifting species have already had major cascading effects on ecosystems and people<sup>13</sup> although  
522 future projections of their impacts is beyond the focus of this review.

523

## 524 [H2] Impacts on Natural Ecosystems

525 Redistributions of species can lead to changes in community composition and dynamics or  
526 otherwise alter natural ecosystems, and leading edge shifts, wherein species enter new  
527 environments, can have effects akin to those caused by non-native biological invasions<sup>14,115</sup>.

528 Range shifts of multiple species in a region can result in cold-adapted species being replaced by  
529 warm-adapted species, referred to as ‘thermophilization’, thus altering the historical structure  
530 and function of the community<sup>141–145</sup>. Despite changes in distributions of individual species, the  
531 ecosystem as a whole might maintain function if species lost due to range shifts are functionally  
532 replaced by species entering, or if species change their functional contributions as communities  
533 change<sup>146</sup>. Range shifts can also lead to loss of specialist species in favor of generalists,  
534 potentially reducing biodiversity at regional scales<sup>147,148</sup>. The magnitude and rate of  
535 thermophilization can vary between taxonomic groups, biogeographic contexts, or species  
536 traits related to persistence and mobility<sup>145</sup>, but changes in thermal affinities of communities  
537 tend to lag behind climate warming in general<sup>41,149</sup>, possibly leading to changes in the stability  
538 of communities as they become increasingly out of sync with their environments.

539

540 Some species range shifts can have disproportionate impacts on natural ecosystems, such as  
541 changes in habitat-forming foundation species or species that interact with them. For example,  
542 the barren-forming urchin, *Centrostephanus rodgersii*, has exhibited a poleward expansion  
543 along the south-eastern coast of Australia in the past 4-5 decades, leading to overgrazing of  
544 large areas of kelp forests and removing key habitat for kelp-associated species including those  
545 comprising major fisheries exports of the region<sup>150–153</sup>. Alternatively, global mangrove species  
546 have exhibited poleward shifts between historical distributions (1950-1990) and present  
547 distributions (1991-2019)<sup>154</sup> that could disproportionately change the composition of  
548 communities in areas in which they have established, given that mangroves provide essential  
549 habitat for a wide range of species<sup>155</sup>. Shifts of species that shape their environments can open

550 niche spaces and promote shifts of other species, resulting in increased species richness or  
551 phase changes to new ecological communities<sup>144,156</sup>.

552

## 553 **[H2] Impacts on Humans**

554 Climate-mediated shifts in species distributions can have direct consequences for human  
555 communities, affecting the economic and cultural systems with which they are connected.  
556 Shifting ranges of food species can lead to positive or negative outcomes for human  
557 communities, and require adaptation in order to begin harvesting and managing newly-arrived  
558 species or transition away from reliance on outward-bound species. For example, distributional  
559 shifts of commercially important fisheries species have created opportunities to open  
560 commercial and recreational fisheries as new species arrive in some locations<sup>157</sup>, but have  
561 reduced fishing employment<sup>158</sup> and necessitated increased travel for harvesting as target  
562 species shift in other locations<sup>159</sup>. Similarly, crop harvest areas have shifted ranges since the  
563 1970s<sup>160</sup>, leading to economic opportunities in areas that have become more favorable and  
564 necessity for adaptation in places that have become less favorable; crop pests and pathogens  
565 have also shifted, changing the spatial distribution of some food security threats<sup>161</sup>.

566

567 The effects of species redistributions on human cultural systems can be considerable. For  
568 indigenous communities, species range shifts can threaten the abundance of culturally  
569 important resources<sup>157</sup>, access to traditional foods<sup>162</sup>, and traditional knowledge systems built  
570 around natural ecosystems<sup>20,162</sup>. Range shifts can also occur in species emblematic of the places  
571 where they were historically found<sup>163</sup>, potentially altering societal connections with local  
572 ecosystems.

573

574 Species range shifts can also present threats for human health. Documented range shifts of  
575 disease-vector species owing to climate change have resulted in spatial changes to health risks  
576 for human communities. Malaria-vector mosquitoes in Africa have shifted upslope by  
577 approximately 6.5 m per year and poleward by about 4.7 km per year since the late 1800s<sup>164</sup>.  
578 Similar shifts of mosquitos and other disease-bearing species such as ticks and bats have been

579 documented around the world<sup>165–167</sup> and are expected to continue in the future<sup>168,169</sup>. Ciguatera  
580 poisoning, caused by eating certain types of reef fish found typically in warm tropical water, has  
581 expanded geographically since 2000 as warm-water fish shift polewards along the east  
582 Australian coast<sup>170</sup>. Public-health-relevant range shifts have direct implications for human  
583 wellbeing, introducing regions and human populations to risks for which they are historically  
584 not prepared and requiring preparation from healthcare systems to manage these risks.  
585 Meanwhile, range shifts of disease-bearing species could theoretically relieve human  
586 populations from diseases that have historically been prevalent as trailing edges of their ranges  
587 contract upslope or away from the equator. Some such cases have been observed<sup>171</sup>, and  
588 others are predicted in coming decades<sup>168,172</sup>. In addition to direct range shifts of diseases and  
589 their established vectors, novel species interactions from range shifts are one factor leading to  
590 an increase in risk of zoonotic spillover of pandemic-causing viruses, and a majority of these  
591 novel interactions to come in the next century might have already occurred<sup>173</sup>.

592

## 593 **[H2] Impacts on resource management and conservation**

594 Most conservation decision-making processes have been built around assumptions of relative  
595 stationarity – that is, assuming current ranges will persist into the future<sup>139</sup>. The global  
596 redistribution of species in response to climate change breaks this assumption, and  
597 management actions (including land acquisition, habitat management and direct population  
598 management) will need to incorporate projected impacts of range shifts in order to achieve  
599 optimal or workable outcomes. Protected areas, for example, have been useful tools for  
600 preserving biodiversity, abundance and assemblage structure<sup>174</sup>, but risk losing their  
601 effectiveness (depending on their stated goals) when species shift away and new species  
602 enter<sup>175,176</sup>. In anticipation of species range shifts, conservation managers have needed to re-  
603 evaluate their goals and adapt their strategies to preserve biodiversity into the future.

604

605 One approach to conservation management that aims to address anticipated range shifts  
606 involves supplementing permanent protective measures with temporary efforts as needed,  
607 effectively increasing connectivity where existing protective networks are insufficient<sup>177</sup>. This

608 strategy has been implemented in marine environments by adding temporary protective  
609 measures to increase connectivity between permanent sites or to protect new marginal  
610 populations<sup>178</sup>, adapting protected areas to shift over time in accordance with gradual shifting  
611 of species<sup>179</sup>, designing protected areas as stepping stones across climatic gradients<sup>180</sup>, and  
612 streaming low-latency (“real-time”) data to project species distributions and guide harvesting  
613 and management<sup>181,182</sup>. Although less common in terrestrial settings, similar dynamic  
614 conservation goals have been achieved by implementing short-term conservation areas for  
615 migratory species through ‘rentals’ of private land<sup>183,184</sup>. Despite the stated fundamental  
616 objectives of most conservation programs appearing to be at odds with time-limited protected  
617 status, combining temporary conservation areas with traditional permanent protected areas  
618 might help to maximize conservation benefit with limited funds.

619

620 A related strategy is targeting establishment of new protective measures within ‘climate  
621 corridors’ in which species range shifts are likely to occur. For example, The Nature  
622 Conservancy (USA) implemented the Cumberland Forest Project in 2019<sup>185</sup> — one of its largest  
623 land acquisition projects to date — specifically intended to protect key ‘climate escape routes’  
624 for range-shifting species. Priority for range-shift corridors has also already been integrated in  
625 the biodiversity guidelines of the US Department of Agriculture’s National Agroforestry  
626 Center<sup>186</sup>.

627

628 Climate-driven range shifts have also spurred novel strategies in biodiversity conservation. In  
629 light of shifting climatic suitability, assisted migration has emerged as a conservation strategy  
630 wherein individuals are transplanted either within or outside of their current geographic range  
631 with the intention of situating them in locations to which they are more climatically adapted<sup>187</sup>.  
632 Although controversial<sup>188</sup>, some assisted range migration efforts have already begun<sup>189–192</sup>. To  
633 facilitate persistence at the warm edge, conservation efforts that protect genotypes pre-  
634 adapted to future conditions are particularly effective<sup>193</sup>. These efforts facilitate evolutionary  
635 rescue, a process likely to be particularly important to maintain biodiversity in the tropics<sup>194</sup>,



636 but raise ethical considerations regarding where and for which species such efforts should be  
637 applied.

638

639 Given their importance to human systems, range shift projections have highlighted the need for  
640 transboundary management strategies as species shift across political or jurisdictional  
641 borders<sup>195</sup>. Transboundary conflicts have already arisen when commercially important species  
642 have shifted to neighboring jurisdictions<sup>196</sup>, and have been addressed as a priority in  
643 international resource management in the Anthropocene<sup>139,197</sup>. The need for proper  
644 transboundary strategies will only increase, given that models predict vast swaths of future  
645 habitat for many species to emerge across jurisdictional borders, in many cases to countries  
646 where those species are not currently found<sup>198-200</sup>, and many of these changes will  
647 disproportionately impact countries with high reliance on resource species and low capacity to  
648 adapt<sup>20</sup>. Without proactive management and transboundary agreements in place, species  
649 shifting from one historical jurisdiction to another might result in an incentivized depletion of  
650 the resource by the country the species is shifting away from that stands to lose future  
651 access<sup>201</sup>.

652

### 653 **[H1] Summary and Future Perspectives**

654 Species' range shifts are a ubiquitous response to climate warming. Despite considerable  
655 advances in understanding mechanisms by which species redistribute in response to climate  
656 change, vast room for progress in the field remains. Here we outline three key priority areas to  
657 advance how we understand and predict biodiversity redistribution and improve our ability to  
658 make sound management decisions about shifting species and their associated impacts.

659

### 660 **[H2] Increased effort in monitoring and harnessing of data**

661 Existing monitoring programs have contributed greatly to observations of climate-driven range  
662 shifts, but are often limited to specific ecosystems, geographical areas, or taxa. Although  
663 funding agencies can be hesitant to prioritize monitoring programs as their benefits largely  
664 accrue over longer time frames, increased support for these efforts will improve our ability to

665 observe, attribute, and anticipate species responses to climate change<sup>202</sup>. Increased monitoring  
666 could be particularly valuable for establishing baselines in systems or locations where current  
667 data are limited, or for testing and improving model prediction skill in areas in which species  
668 ranges are already predicted to shift<sup>57,203</sup>. Furthermore, efforts to integrate disparate existing  
669 monitoring programs and introduce comparable and pertinent indicators of biodiversity change  
670 (such as Essential Biodiversity Variables<sup>204</sup>), can help up-scale existing monitoring investments  
671 for inference at larger scales, such as whole-range biogeographical shifts<sup>205</sup>.

672

673 When systematically surveyed 'gold standard' datasets aren't available, range shift research  
674 could benefit from increased use of publicly available citizen and community science data. Such  
675 volunteer-driven data are collected around the world and already account for over half of  
676 biodiversity occurrence records in the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)  
677 database<sup>206</sup>. These records have already shown applications in biogeography research<sup>52,207–209</sup>,  
678 and ongoing citizen science monitoring programs having contributed greatly to our  
679 observations of range shifts within systems (for example, the Christmas Bird Count, used  
680 in<sup>35,210–212</sup>). Outstanding barriers to further integrating citizen science data into climate change  
681 biogeography research include the strong spatial and temporal biases of data collections, the  
682 statistical measures needed to account for unstructured data collection (although efforts are  
683 being made to address these statistical challenges<sup>213</sup>), and the validation of data from non-  
684 expert contributors (although robust post-hoc verification measures are possible<sup>207</sup>). Further  
685 research into how to control for these variables to best apply public data sources will open  
686 research pathways in the field.

687

## 688 **[H2] Understanding mechanisms to increase generalizability**

689 Synthesis of range shift studies has offered valuable insight into general trends and variability in  
690 observed species range shifts, but better understanding of the sources of variability between  
691 studies and the influence of data biases are needed to make generalizations. Identifying  
692 organism-specific or environment-specific factors that make range shifts likely will improve our  
693 ability to anticipate them in cases where observational data is limited.

694

695 Assessing the influence of species traits on range shifts, for example, should help to generalize  
696 the types of species most likely to shift at their leading and trailing edges. Intrinsic factors such  
697 as a species' ability to move, its level of generalism or its lifespan could influence its ability to  
698 shift in response to climate change, and theory suggests varying mechanisms by which these  
699 factors should explain range shift rates<sup>10,107,214–216</sup>. Yet, evidence to date suggests fairly weak or  
700 variable explanatory power of traits in relation to observed range shift patterns<sup>107</sup>, suggesting  
701 the methods and perhaps quality of data used to assess their influence have been lacking<sup>107</sup>.

702 Further research into intrinsic sources of variation could benefit from simulations and  
703 theoretical models to understand the influence that traits might have on range shifts within  
704 biological communities<sup>217</sup>, combined with data synthesis to test theories against empirical data.

705

706 Another promising direction is generalizing how the spatial pathways of species shifts interact  
707 with properties of the landscape. For instance, global climate velocities can be used to identify  
708 regions where range shifts might be expected<sup>218</sup>, global ocean and wind currents can identify  
709 areas where these forces will facilitate or impede shifts of passively dispersing species<sup>98,99</sup>, and  
710 landscape quality maps can estimate potential routes through which range shifts have an  
711 increased likelihood of occurring<sup>219</sup>. Such area-based approaches could aid in management  
712 efforts to facilitate climate-driven range shifts even in systems where species-specific data are  
713 unavailable.

714

715 Once mechanisms have been identified that can explain variation in species' range shifts, a  
716 promising avenue will be to integrate these into mechanistic or process-based models that  
717 simulate the eco-evolutionary response of species to climate change<sup>220–222</sup>. Integrating variables  
718 such as dispersal, evolutionary potential, or demographic processes into models can improve  
719 model fits and extrapolations over correlative approaches<sup>223,224</sup>, and have the advantage of  
720 flexibility as key parameters can be estimated or imputed when species-specific data is  
721 unavailable<sup>225</sup>. Reliance on underlying mechanisms (such as species traits or landscape habitats)  
722 makes models of this type transferable to systems where statistical models might be limited by

723 data scarcity. Moreover, mechanistic models can be used in simulation experiments to better  
724 identify specific drivers of range shifts when other factors are held constant. Process-based  
725 simulations can control for intrinsic and extrinsic factors affecting range shifts, as well as natural  
726 variation and detection error to assess the effects of potential drivers of range shifts<sup>194,226</sup>, and  
727 can even be used to assess effects of management interventions on species distributions<sup>227</sup>.  
728 The theoretical relationships that arise from simulations experiments can then inform data  
729 collection needs, which can circularly aid in improving *in situ* range shift observations.

730

## 731 **[H2] Improving range shift predictions at usable scales**

732 Although observing and detecting impacts of climate change is a necessary step in  
733 understanding processes, projections of range shifts into the future are necessary to inform  
734 mediation and management strategies to avoid or adapt to severe ecological impacts of climate  
735 change. In range shift research, projections are often made in the long-term (for example, up to  
736 2100) using tools such as species distribution models or other correlative models of range  
737 position based on environmental variables, rather than predicting range shifts in near-term,  
738 management-relevant timescales. This dearth of near-term predictions is one barrier to  
739 implementation of effective management strategies for species redistributions, since  
740 management strategies more often operate on seasonal-to-decadal scales than to long-term  
741 trends.

742

743 Near-term forecasting has grown in popularity and priority in the past decade across subfields  
744 in ecology<sup>228,229</sup>. In some data-rich systems with direct applications, near-term forecasts of  
745 species distributions have already been implemented to support dynamic management  
746 strategies<sup>230-234</sup>. However, in most systems, such efforts have not been implemented. We  
747 suggest predictive efforts focus on systems in which predictions can occur in tandem with  
748 ongoing monitoring systems to ensure that near-term predictions can be tested, falsified  
749 and/or validated, and improved as monitoring continues<sup>228</sup>. Focus on statistical tools that can  
750 accurately characterize and project uncertainty, as well as those that can integrate multiple

751 processes from environmental suitability to landscape connectivity will be an important step in  
752 improving the predictive power of the field.

753

754 **[H1] Conclusion**

755 Despite substantial strides in our understanding of climate-driven species redistributions since  
756 the 19990s, much remains to be understood and discovered in the field. Since the field began,  
757 observations of climate-driven range shifts have been made around the world<sup>22</sup>, revealing both  
758 clear trends in observed responses and high variation due to observational, methodological and  
759 biological factors<sup>15,18,132</sup>. Given the growth of the field of climate change biogeography in the  
760 last 3 decades and the urgency to predict climate change responses globally, projections,  
761 models, and theory seem to have outpaced empirical observations and our collective  
762 knowledge and prediction abilities stand to benefit from further efforts to augment empirical  
763 data for testing and validation. Expanding research efforts to increase monitoring, deepen our  
764 understanding of mechanisms underlying range shifts, and improve near-term predictions will  
765 help identify range shifts in the present, anticipate range shifts in the future, and use this  
766 knowledge to inform strategies for preserving biodiversity through climate change.

767

768

769

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771

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1365

1366 **Author contributions**

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1373 **Competing interests**

1374 The authors declare no competing interests.

1375

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1379

1380 **Figure legends**

1381

1382 Figure 1. Geographical and taxonomic biases in range shift detections. a) Taxonomic and  
1383 geographical breakdown of latitudinal and elevational range shift estimates in the BioShifts  
1384 database<sup>22</sup>. Each tile represents 10 empirically estimated range shifts of a given taxonomic  
1385 group, always rounded up. b) Geographic bias of range shift studies in the BioShifts database.  
1386 Each circle represents one range shift estimation study; circle sizes and inset numbers  
1387 represent the number of species ranges assessed in each study, and color represents the type  
1388 of shift estimated (marine latitudinal, terrestrial latitudinal and terrestrial elevational shifts).  
1389 Note that one species might appear multiple times in a study if the study assesses multiple  
1390 parts of the species range, or estimates shifts over multiple time periods, and a study might be  
1391 represented in multiple continents.

1392

1393 Figure 2. Proportion of elevational (a) and latitudinal (terrestrial and marine) (b) range shift  
1394 estimates consistent with temperature-based expectations (that is, direction of isotherm shifts)  
1395 in the BioShifts database. Green and orange arrows signify range shift observations (raw  
1396 changes in range positions over time) in agreement and opposition (respectively) to the  
1397 direction of isotherm shifts in the study area, and tan segments show number of observations  
1398 that estimated no range shift. Bars (excluding arrow heads) are sized by the total number of  
1399 detections in each group. Note that only agreement between biological and climate shifts, but  
1400 not the direction of the shift, are shown; (for example, in some cases climate change yields a  
1401 downslope expectation for elevational shifts, but are portrayed as part of the upward arrow  
1402 here if the detected biological shift matches the isotherm shift).

1403

1404 **For new Fig 3 including numbered annotations:**

1405 Figure 3. Factors driving range shifts. Solid and dotted outlines show the thermally-suitable  
1406 habitat ('potential range') of a species in T1 and T2; blue and red shapes show the areas where  
1407 the species is present ('realized range'). A) If temperature is the only driver of range shifts, a  
1408 species' range is expected to shift from T1 (blue) to T2 (red), expanding at the cool edge and

1409 contracting at the warm edge owing to temperature-driven changes in performance of  
1410 populations (inset graphs). B) Additional factors can deviate and/or diverge range shifts and  
1411 range shift estimates from temperature-based expectations, including climate drivers other  
1412 than temperature (1), non-climatic factors (2-5), and imperfect detection methods (6).

1413

1414 **For new Fig 3 including in-figure text boxes and side legend:**

1415 Figure 3. Factors driving range shifts. A) If temperature is the only driver of range shifts, a  
1416 species' range is expected to shift from T1 (blue) to T2 (red), expanding at the cool edge and  
1417 contracting at the warm edge owing to temperature-driven changes in performance of  
1418 populations (inset graphs). B) Additional factors can deviate and/or diverge range shifts and  
1419 range shift estimates from temperature-based expectations, including climate drivers other  
1420 than temperature, non-climatic factors, and imperfect detection methods.

1421

1422 Figure 4. Lag between isotherm shifts and range shifts across study durations in the BioShifts  
1423 database. Lag is calculated as shift velocity minus isotherm velocity; a perfectly isotherm-  
1424 tracking shift would have a lag of zero. Purple dots signify range shifts estimates of trailing  
1425 edges, green of leading edges for both elevational and latitudinal range shifts. Dashed lines  
1426 show the 5th and 95th quantile regressions of all points in each plot.

1427

1428

## 1429 **Boxes**

### 1430 **Box 1. Key terms**

1431 [bH1] Isotherm

1432 Isolines connecting areas of equal temperature conditions across space, either at a given  
1433 instance or as a summary of conditions over time (for example, annual mean temperature).

1434

1435 [bH1] Range edge

1436 Peripheries of a species' geographic distribution. Range edges (also called range margins, or  
1437 limits) move across space in response to environmental change, and this process is termed

1438 range shifting. Range edges can be difficult to define in space (Box 2) and might not be set by  
1439 current climate conditions, but denote the distributional limit for the species.

1440

1441 [bH1] Cold Edge

1442 The edge of a species distribution range located at the colder end of the temperature gradient,  
1443 often the poleward or upslope edge.

1444

1445 [bH1] Warm Edge

1446 The edge of a species distribution range located at the warmer end of the temperature  
1447 gradient, often the equatorward or downslope edge.

1448

1449 [bH1] Leading Edge

1450 Of a shifting range, the edge experiencing expansions, thus leading a range shift. Under climate  
1451 change, this is normally expected to be the cold edge of the species range, where abiotic  
1452 constraints will ease with warming.

1453

1454 [bH1] Trailing Edge

1455 Of a shifting range, the edge experiencing contractions, thus trailing a range shift. Under  
1456 climate change, this usually refers to the warm edge of the species range, where warming  
1457 makes regions of the past range increasingly unsuitable for the species.

1458

1459 [bH1] Range Expansion

1460 Dispersal and establishment of populations in areas where individuals were not consistently  
1461 present. Climate change is expected to cause expansions when areas beyond the cold limit  
1462 warm above the suitable threshold for the species. Also commonly termed range extension.

1463

1464 [bH1] Range Contraction

1465 Population declines or extirpations (that is, local extinction processes) at the edge of a species  
1466 range, causing the edge to contract towards the center. In climate change scenarios,

1467 contractions are expected to occur; for example, when environments at the warm edge of a  
1468 species range warm past the upper temperature threshold of the species such that populations  
1469 are no longer viable.

1470

1471 Box 2.

1472 Range shift studies have taken a practical yet varied approach to defining range limits and  
1473 centers despite an extensive literature on how species ranges could be defined<sup>235–238</sup>, and these  
1474 variations could influence downstream comparisons. Methods commonly used to define  
1475 species ranges in biogeography research include mapping based on gridded occurrence records,  
1476 creating convex polygons or linear extents along a transect from irregular observation points  
1477 and using species distribution models to infer distributions based on environmental parameters  
1478 when observational data are limited or disparate<sup>239</sup>. Each of these methods are further affected  
1479 by the definition of viable occurrences which are used as input data. For example, depending  
1480 on the resolution of the underlying data, the edge of a species range might be defined as the  
1481 furthest straying individual at any life stage, the mean among multiple extreme individual  
1482 observations, a high percentile among all observations, or the furthest known reproductively  
1483 viable population (see figure). In addition, depending on the location and spatial extent of the  
1484 study, the ‘range edges’ or ‘range centers’ defined within the study do not always represent the  
1485 range edge or center of the global distribution. These varied definitions can cause problems  
1486 when comparing findings between studies or even between sampling periods within studies,  
1487 and can have a greater effect on range edges (that are defined by a lack of observations) than  
1488 on range centers<sup>130</sup>.

1489

1490 Practicality often calls for different definitions of range edges and centers for different data  
1491 types. If a study relies on data from only a few sampling locations over a large timescale, a  
1492 range edge defined as the furthest sampling location where the species is found might be  
1493 appropriate. Alternatively, if a study uses high-resolution data such as regularly sampled grid  
1494 cells over a continental scale, the authors might define the range edge as the average position  
1495 of some percentile of occupied cells. In over 16,000 latitudinal range shift estimates included in

1496 the BioShifts database<sup>22</sup>, a diversity of definitions have been used for each range section, and  
1497 some tendency of consensual definitions across studies (see figure). Although consistency in  
1498 the definition within taxa or studies can still provide estimates of shifts within studies (for  
1499 example, the location of the 95% percentile of occurrences moved polewards), differences in  
1500 definitions among studies can limit the interoperability of range shift data when combining  
1501 them — for example, if some range definitions are more responsive to climate change than  
1502 others.

1503

1504

1505 **Box 3. Human range shifts.**

1506 Shifting isotherms across Earth’s surface are also changing climate conditions experienced by  
1507 humans. Despite our great powers of niche construction and climate buffering compared with  
1508 many other species, human distribution for centuries has clustered in a surprisingly narrow  
1509 envelope of climatic conditions<sup>240</sup>. Anthropogenic climate change is shifting this climatic  
1510 envelope away from existing human population centers, especially those in tropical climates,  
1511 and creating novel challenges, opportunities, and ethical considerations regarding ‘range shifts’  
1512 of our own occupancy patterns and activities in a warming world<sup>241</sup>.

1513

1514 Range shifts of human activities due to climate warming have already begun, both at  
1515 contracting warm margins and expanding cold margins. Warming temperatures over the past 5  
1516 decades have already led to poleward and upslope shifts of agricultural activities, including  
1517 latitudinal shifts of ‘breadbasket’ and ‘rice bowl’ crops across continents<sup>160</sup> and upslope shifts  
1518 of mountain crops such as coffee<sup>242,243</sup>. In the ocean, historical patterns of human ocean use  
1519 have expanded concurrently with warming, as fishing fleets are shifting polewards by almost 1  
1520 degree latitude per year<sup>244</sup> and trans-Arctic shipping routes have greatly expanded in  
1521 navigability since the 1980s<sup>245</sup>. Warming conditions have also changed spatial patterns of  
1522 scientific pursuit, resource extraction, and even recreation and tourism across latitude and  
1523 elevation<sup>246–252</sup>. These changes to human behaviors might already be having downstream

1524 effects on natural environments, adding additional pressures to systems already facing stress  
1525 from changing climates.

1526

1527 Whereas climate-driven range shifts of human activities have been documented, direct climate-  
1528 related changes to human distributions are more difficult to attribute and predict because  
1529 many factors, including politics, wealth distribution, infrastructure and cultural ties, influence  
1530 people’s decisions and ability to migrate. Shifting human climate envelopes underscore the  
1531 need for robust adaptation strategies when climate-tracking migration is not possible. Models  
1532 developed in the past 5-10 years predict large areas of extreme and unprecedented climates  
1533 emerging as soon as 2030 that are projected to expand rapidly throughout the 21<sup>st</sup>  
1534 century<sup>240,241</sup>, even surpassing hypothesized human physiological tolerance thresholds by 2080  
1535 in some scenarios<sup>253</sup>. Moreover, these trends call attention to the global ethical considerations  
1536 of shifting climate regimes, as many regions at the warm margin of the shifting human niche  
1537 are those contributing the least to global climate change<sup>241</sup>.

1538

1539 **ToC blurb**

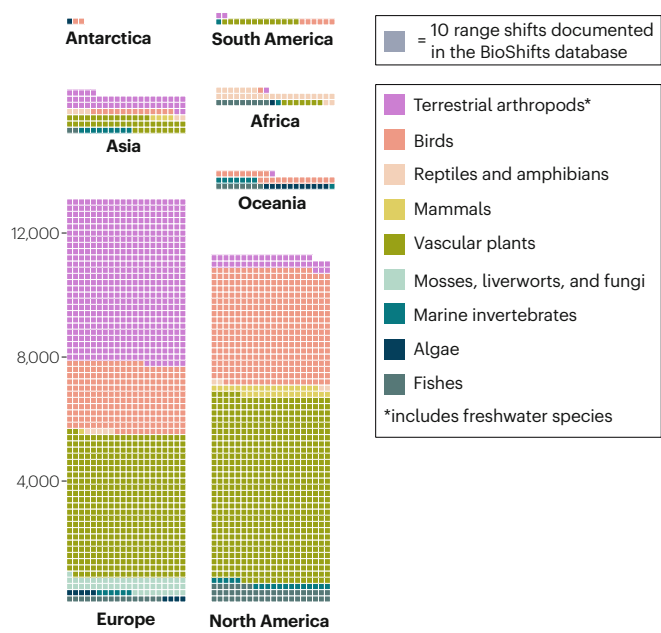
1540 Warming temperatures driven by climate change are causing species’ geographic ranges to shift,  
1541 but factors such as habitat characteristics and species interactions impact these changes. This  
1542 Review examines empirical documentations of species’ range shifts, the mechanisms by which  
1543 shifts differ from temperature-based expectations, and the effects of range shifts on natural and  
1544 human systems.

1545



Fig 1

**a Taxonomic and geographic bias in range shift estimates**



**b Geographic bias in range shift detection studies**

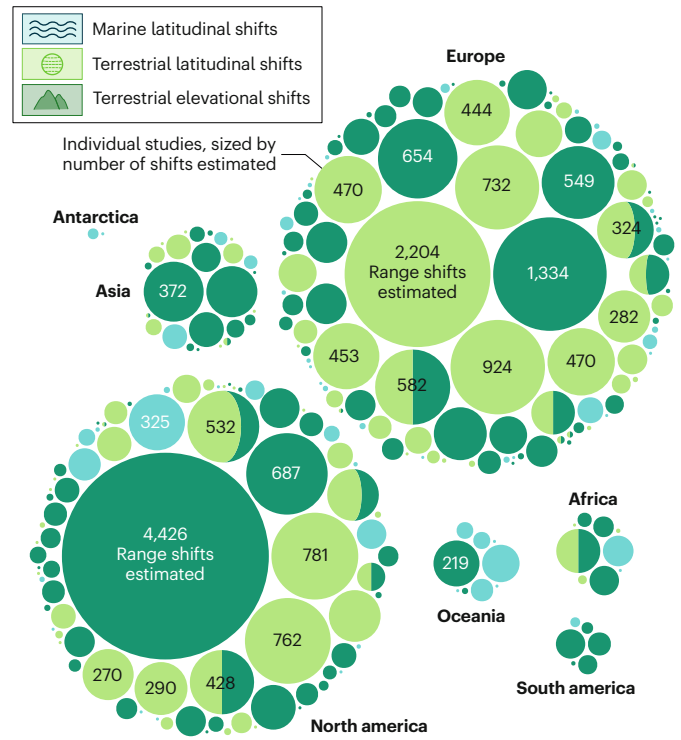
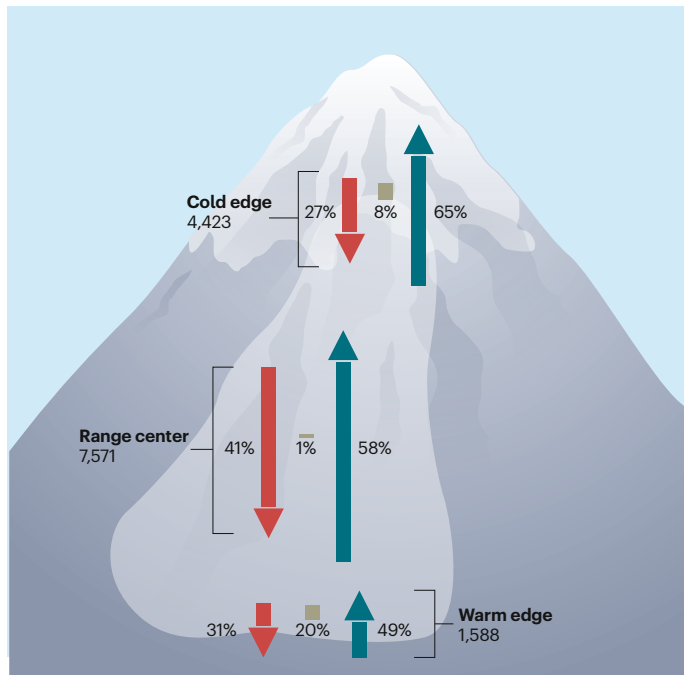
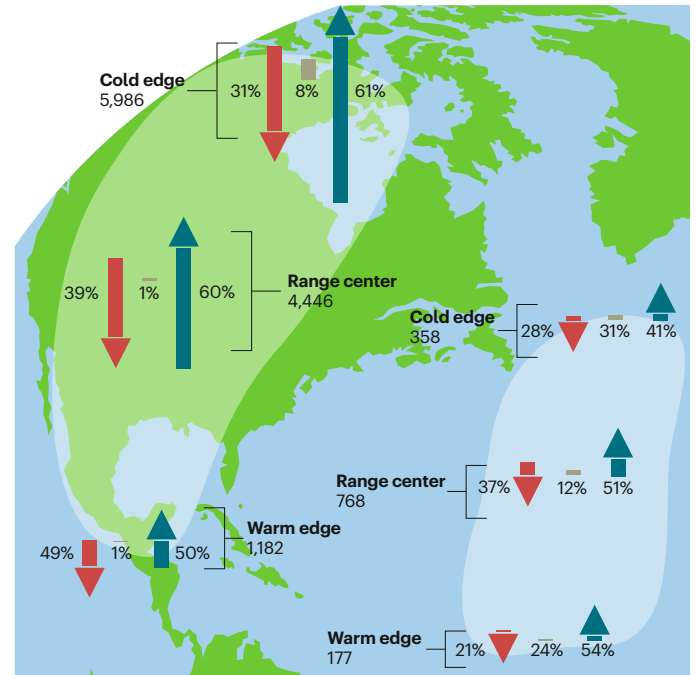


Fig 2

**a Elevational shifts**



**b Latitudinal shifts**



Shift opposite of climate expectations   
 Shift consistent with climate expectations   
 No shift

Fig 3

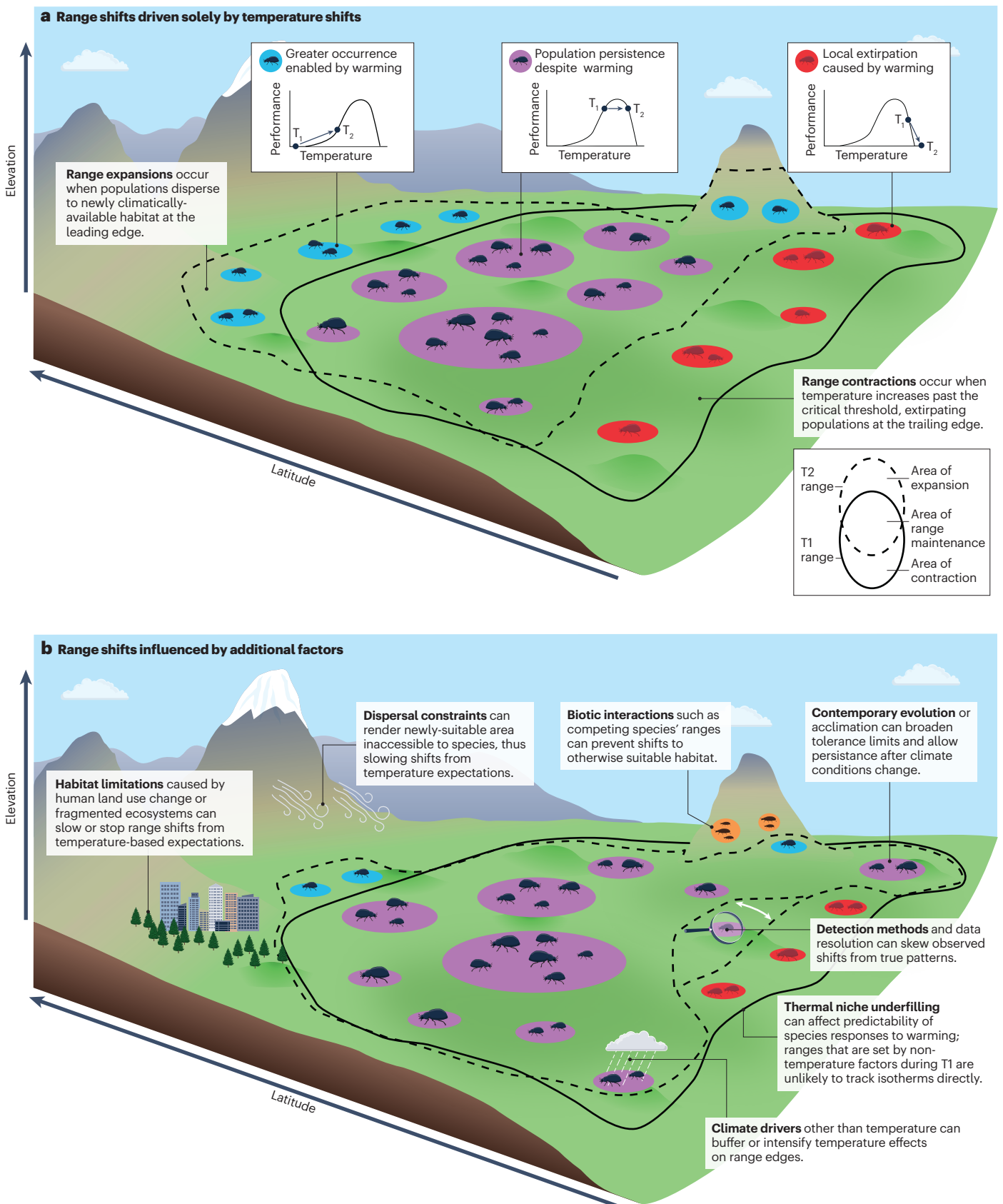
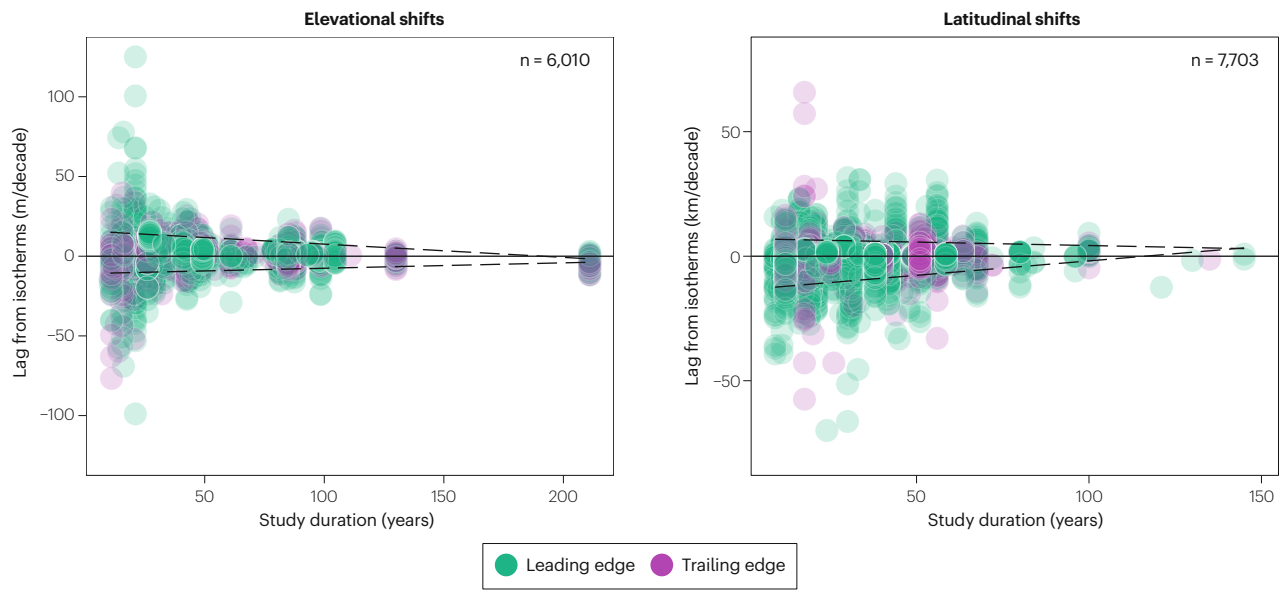
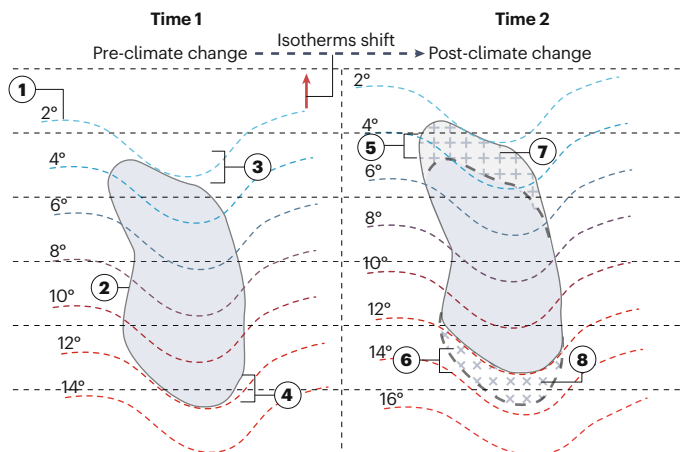


Fig 4



Box 1



Box 2

