

We thank the Associate Editor, Dr. Benjamin Stocker, for the careful assessment of our revised manuscript and the constructive suggestions to improve figure clarity and publication quality. We have addressed all comments as detailed below.

Editor Comment: Fig. 2: 'DRYAD' should be avoided and instead the data product or author name be used as label

Response: We have revised Fig. 2 accordingly. The label “DRYAD” has been removed and replaced with the appropriate data source attribution. The figure caption and legend now clearly identify the data product and its origin following journal conventions for dataset citation.

Editor Comment: Fig. 3: “Please revise the form of the visualisation such that an average metric and range is legible for both observed and simulated. The form of the points (star indicated in the legend) is not legible and therefore simulated values not immediately identifiable.”

- We replaced star markers in with clearer and more distinguishable point symbols and change legend to point with colour bar representing patch age.
- We now show mean values with associated variability ($\pm$ SD) for both observed and simulated datasets.
- Visual separation between observed and simulated data has been improved using consistent color mapping and line/marker differentiation.

Editor Comment: (Fig. 4 and Fig. 9) “The figures appear pixelated. Please upload a vector graphic and mark all panels with letters.”

- Re-exporting Fig. 4 and Fig. 9 as vector graphics (PDF and SVG formats).
- Adding consistent panel labels (a, b, c,) across all subplots.
- Vector graphics (SVG) files of each figure are uploaded as separate folder as all figure in high resolution was not possible in word file.

Editor Comment: (Fig. 5) “Please label panels with letters.”

Response: We have updated Fig. 5 to include panel labels (a), (b).

Editor Comment: (Fig. 6): “Looks vertically stretched. Please adjust.”

Response: We have corrected the aspect ratio of Fig. 6.