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Dear Claude-Hillaire-Marcel,

We sincerely apologise to Olivia Johnston and colleagues for discussing the contents of her embargoed MSc thesis abstract in our recently published paper. This error on our part reflects a genuine mistake in failing to realise that the publicly available abstract was actually under an embargo. Indeed, we haven't seen or read the full content of Olivia's thesis. Notwithstanding the embargo, we feel the abstract content was referenced and acknowledged in the standard way for an unpublished thesis.

We cited the abstract of Olivia's thesis to provide broad context for our paper – rather than as a source of any detailed data underpinning our study. Thus Olivia's study in no way formed the foundation or rationale for our own study, which could easily have been published in *Quaternary Science Reviews* without it. Certainly our intention was never to compromise the publishable nature of Olivia's data. Indeed, our study is primarily based on our own novel data collected from extinct moa coprolites (ancient DNA, plant macrofossils, pollen; e.g. Wood *et al.* 2014 *PNAS*) and bones (isotopes from our own unpublished data and those previously published by Holdaway *et al.* 2014 *Nat. Comm.*), distinct from the ancient and modern plant isotopic research presented by Olivia in her MSc thesis. In our recent paper we specifically reference Olivia's thesis in relation to aridity effects on foliar $^{15}\text{N}/^{13}\text{C}$ isotopic values, canopy effect on ^{13}C , and broad reference to temporal changes in foliar isotope values. The values in question were sourced from the publicly available abstract.

Although the full thesis of Olivia's MSc project was embargoed at the time of our submission, we note that it is now freely available online. We trust that the results of Olivia's MSc thesis will still be publishable in a high impact journal. We apologise once again for our inadvertent failure to recognise the embargo on Olivia's thesis abstract.

Please let us know if any further clarification or action is required.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nic Rawlence

cc. Jamie Wood, Herve Bocherens, Karyne Rogers

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