

Response to Anonymous Referee Comments

Dear Editors and Referee:

Thanks for your kind comments concerning our manuscript entitled “Spatiotemporal changes in the boreal forest in Siberia over the period 1985–2015 against the background of climate change”. Those comments are all valuable and very helpful for improving our paper, and we have made correction which we hope meet with approval. Revised portion are marked in the manuscript. The main corrections in the paper and the responds to the reviewer’s comments are as flowing:

Anonymous Referee #1:

The study is comprehensive with relevant details regarding research focus, methods, results, and concluding remarks presented. However, the background of the research focus could be improved to highlight the novelty of the present study. Some parts of the manuscript need improvements.

Introduction

Line 50: “Therefore, the extent of the boreal forest response to climate change is still not fully understood”. The author should point out why? What current research has been done, what are the important methods, and what main conclusions are related to this aspect?

Reply: Thanks for your suggestion. Based on your suggestion, we now added the current status of research on the response of boreal forests to climate change and also pointed out the existing challenges and main conclusions.

Line 51-66

Over the past 30 years, spring and autumn temperatures over northern latitudes have increased by about 1.1 °C and 0.8 °C, respectively (Mitchell and Jones 2005), and the thermal potential growing season has lengthened by about 10.5 days (Barichivich et al., 2013). Several studies indicate that increasing warming may result in accelerating the northward expansion of boreal forests (Veraverbeke et al., 2017), as well as the observation of a greening trend characterized by a longer growing season and greater photosynthetic activity (Piao et al., 2008). Shuman et al. (2011) showed that climate warming may convert Siberia's deciduous larch (*Larix spp.*) to evergreen conifer forests, and thus decrease regional surface albedo; At the continental scale, when temperature is increased, larch-dominated sites become vulnerable to early replacement by evergreen conifers. Ratcliffe et al. (2017) investigated a forested peatland in western Siberia and showed that climate change has caused the expansion of forested peatlands and increased tree cover. In addition, it is highly probable that the annual mean temperature in Canada's boreal forest region will increase by at least 2°C by 2050 in this century, which may lead to effects on the ecological functioning of the region's boreal forests, such as triggering a process of forest decline and re-establishment lasting several decades, while also releasing significant quantities of greenhouse gases that will amplify the future global warming trend (Price, et al., 2013). In practice, it is a challenge to quantify the effects of climate change on boreal forest because there are great uncertainties attached to possible interactions among them, as well as with other land-use pressures (Price et al., 2013). Therefore, the extent of the boreal forest response to climate change is still not fully understood.

Line 60: I guess there are studies that have used Landsat to quantify the spatiotemporal changes occurring in the boreal forests in Siberia or other places. It would be nice to see more backgrounds related to this here.

In general, the introduction needs to be improved and the contextual description is weak.

Reply: Thanks for your good suggestion. We have added background to the introduction on the use of Landsat data to quantify spatial and temporal variability in boreal forests and made it more readable.

Line 77-82

For example, White, et al. (2017) used the extensive Landsat archive to produce annual, gap-free surface reflectance composites for exploring forest disturbance and recovery characteristics in Canadian boreal forests. Sulla-Menashe, et al. (2018) used normalized difference vegetation index (NDVI) time series from Landsat to explore geographic patterns of greening and browning in Canadian boreal forests, and revealed that continued long-term climate change has the potential to significantly alter the character and function of Canadian boreal forests, with greening observed to be most prevalent in eastern Canada and browning to occur primarily in western Canada.

Study area

Adding a layer of DEM and Landsat RGB images for the study area is necessary.

Reply: Thanks. According to your suggestion, we have added DEM and Landsat RGB images layers for the study area, and also added location information for the study area. (Line 102-104)



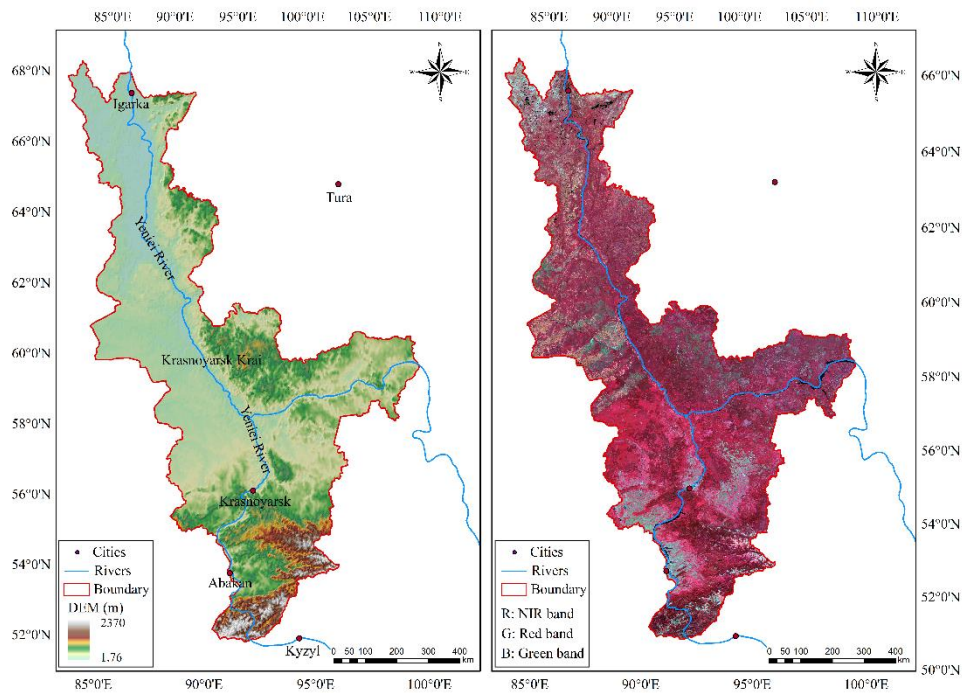


Figure 1. Location of the study area together with the DEM and false-color composite of Landsat 8 images.

Input data

How many tiles of Landsat images could cover the study area?

Reply: About 40 Landsat images are required to cover the study area.

“Mainly in the years 1985, 1995, 2005, and 2015”, Why did you use this ten years interval? Why did you choose level1 data? USGS also provides level-2 datasets that have been atmosphere corrected, which could significantly reduce the workload in data processing. Why are most of the images acquired from June to September, and what about the others? Please specify them!!

Reply: Thanks for this comment. On the one hand, changes in forests, especially in forest types, may require 10 years or even decades to be observed, and on the other hand, limited by Landsat data availability, thus we chose ten years interval data for this study.

Level 1 Tier 1 data with a spatial resolution of 30 m were used in this work. Landsat scenes with the highest available data quality are placed into Tier 1 and are considered suitable for time-series analysis. Tier 1 includes Level-1 Precision and Terrain (L1TP) corrected data that have well-characterized radiometry and are inter-calibrated across the different Landsat instruments. On this basis, we performed a series of pre-processing of the Level 1 Tier 1 data, including radiation correction, atmospheric correction and HOT algorithm to remove cloud noise (Figure 2), to ensure that the processed data could well support the subsequent forest cover and species classification. Therefore, this dataset could well support the monitoring of dynamic changes of boreal forest cover and types in this study. Certainly, we support your point of view that the atmosphere corrected level 2 dataset can significantly reduce the workload in data processing. We would consider using this dataset for the future research.

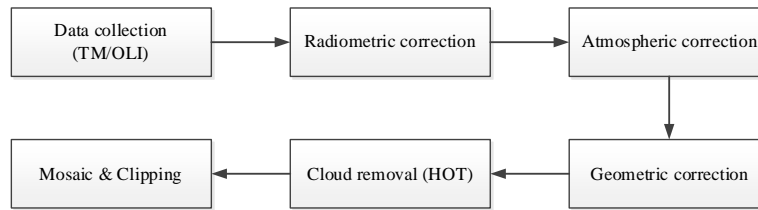


Figure 2. Preprocessing of Landsat Thematic Mapper (TM)/Operational Land Imager (OLI) scenes.

In this work, most of the images were acquired in summer seasons, mainly between June and September. Due to cooler temperatures in the other months of the study area, there may be snowfall or yellowing and shedding of broadleaf forest leaves, etc., which may lead to accuracy of forest cover and types classification. Therefore, the image time was chosen in summer. Several data acquired in October are used to make up the images due to data deficiency in the current years. In fact, there were only 3 scenes in October, and over relatively warm areas. We also checked these images with no snow. The information has been added in this manuscript. (Line 117-119)

Line 102 What is the spatial resolution of ERA5-land?

Reply: The ERA5-land data with a resolution of $0.1^\circ \times 0.1^\circ$, i.e., native resolution is 9 km.

Data processing

The description of the data processing is very shallow. Given that spatial and temporal change is the key part of this paper, how to proceed with cloud, anomalies, and alignment correction of images is very critical.

Reply: According to your suggestion, we have added a detailed introduction to the pre-processing of Landsat data, including radiometric correction, atmospheric correction, image cloud removal, etc. The information has been added in this manuscript. (Line 130-140)

Forest cover and species classification

Why not use random forest classification directly, but use rule-based classification first, and then random forest? I am very skeptical about the final classification result. Due to the large latitudinal differences in the study area, using NDVI threshold classification may result in some forests being removed incorrectly. In addition, there will be subtle differences in NDVI values over the years. Anyway, the threshold classification method should be used with caution in applying large spatial scales and change detection. How many training samples were used for the classifications? Did you use the same training samples for different years?

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. We used a hierarchical classification method for forest cover and forest species, i.e., we first used decision trees to distinguish between forested and non-forested land, and then used a random forest approach to classify forest species. This can effectively avoid the influence on the final classification results due to same object with different spectrums and same spectrum of different objects (e.g., grassland and cultivated land with very similar spectral profiles to forest).

We agree with you that the NDVI values have subtly varied over the years. We have checked the effect of NDVI thresholds on the classification of forest land and non-forest land, and the results show that the classification of forest land and non-forest land for different years using an NDVI value of 0.62 was satisfactory. Moreover, a total of 2352 training samples were used for model

training in this study. Different years used the training samples of the corresponding (different) years.

Accuracy validation

What about the accuracy for other years? Yes, I agree that the collection of validation samples is difficult in earlier years? But you only classify forest and non-forest, the collection of samples directly from Landsat images is also possible in the early years.

Reply: We selected 987 randomly distributed sampling points from the GF-2 images acquired in 2015 for the accuracy validation. The overall accuracy was found to be 90.37%, and the F1-scores for the broad-leaved, coniferous forest and non-forest land were 0.85, 0.93 and 0.91, respectively. Considering the consistency of the Landsat series of images, the above validation was still considered to be valid for the earlier years because it is difficult to obtain the measured data or the high-resolution satellite images of the study area for these times.

It is an interesting attempt to collect samples directly from early Landsat images for accuracy validation. We collected 584 sample points from 1985 Landsat images for accuracy validation, and the overall accuracy in 1985 was 89.04%, with F1 scores of 0.87, 0.89 and 0.91 for broadleaf, coniferous and non-forested forests, respectively. Considering the potential uncertainty of the sample collection process, the classification accuracy in 1985 is acceptable.

Results and discussion

Overall, the results and discussion are overloaded with descriptions of the methods and results, but lack analysis of the results. It is not recommended to put the results and discussion together. The discussion needs to be improved. The results need to be better integrated with the context of the study. E.g., what is the significance of your results? Rather than simply describing the results.

Reply: Thanks. According to your suggestions, we have improved the discussion to better integrate it with the context of the study and to highlight the research significance of this work. The information has been added in this manuscript.

Specifically,

1. Where can I find the classification accuracy?

Reply: We selected 987 randomly distributed sampling points from the GF-2 images acquired in 2015 for the accuracy validation. The overall accuracy was found to be 90.37%, and the F1-scores for the broad-leaved, coniferous forest and non-forest land were 0.85, 0.93 and 0.91, respectively. (Line 157-159)

2. Did the authors ever consider the collinearity between climate variables? From Fig 10, the curve of TEM_Growmax is very similar to the curve of TEM_Grow.

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. As you mentioned, the climate variables selected in this study are to some extent interrelated, which may lead to over-fitting of the regression model. Therefore, we chose a partial least squares regression model for assessing the response of forest change to climate variables. The PLS regression method is a robust multivariate technique that combines features of principal component analysis and multiple regression (Abdi, 2010) and is more parsimonious and statistically robust than principal components regression (Smoliak et al., 2015). Moreover, PLS regression can effectively deal with the problem of multicollinearity (Hou et al., 2020). So, PLS regression is particularly suitable for our case. The information has been added in

this manuscript. (Line 320-323)

3. From Fig 11, it seems like the relationship between the forest cover and species changes and climate variables was conducted at a regional scale, not a pixel scale. Why?

Reply: Thanks. The objectives of this work were to quantify the spatiotemporal changes occurring in the boreal forests in Siberia and then to find which climate factor was the main driver of these changes. At the regional scale, the partial least squares regression models successfully presented the response of boreal forest cover and species change to climate variables, and confirm that temperature is the main climatic factor driving the change. The holistic response of boreal forests to climate variables at the regional scale will enable a macroscopic understanding of trends in boreal forests under the context of climate change. Smaller scales, e.g., a pixel scale, the response of boreal forests to climate change needs more of our efforts to be studied.

4. Why did not contain coniferous forests in Fig 11?

Reply: Thanks. We have also conducted relevant studies on coniferous forests. However, the results show that coniferous forests are less sensitive and regular in response to climate change compared with broad-leaved forests. And the purpose of this study is mainly to focus on the changes of broad-leaved forests in Siberia. Therefore, coniferous forests are not included in Figure 11.

5. Where is the Q^2 value for each PLS regression model?

Reply: The Q^2 values for the effect of the climate variables on the forest cover and species changes in the PLS regression models for the 5-year, 10-year, and 15-year time intervals were 0.22, 0.21, and 0.20, respectively. (Line 341-342)

6. The correlation coefficients in Table 5 are too low to account for the impact of climate on forest cover changes. In the text Line, 289 is correlation coefficients, and the title of Table 5 is standardized regression coefficients, please check regression coefficients and correlation coefficients are not the same thing and should not be used in confusion, this puzzled me.

Reply: We have revised the “regression coefficients” to “standardized regression coefficients” in the paper. (Line 340)

7. It is possible to compare whether the local temperature exceeds the vegetation's optimum growth temperature.

Reply: Thanks for your valuable suggestion. Exploring the dynamics of optimal growth temperature of vegetation under climate change is one of our current ongoing works.

Thanks again for your constructive comments.

Anonymous Referee #2:

The manuscript by Fu et al., entitled "Spatiotemporal changes in the boreal forest in Siberia over the period 1985–2015 against the background of climate change" presents a change analysis in forest cover over a broad area in Central Siberia. The changes in forest are then examined in the context of climate change. The analysis is based on time series of Landsat TM images that are validated

with high resolution images from a satellite instrument named Gaofen-2. The specific research questions ask 1) what the extent of change in forest cover and proportions of tree species are, 2) at what latitude forest cover and tree species are most sensitive to climate change, and 3) which climate change factor is the main driver influencing the observed changes. The main findings state that the total forest cover increased over the study period, with coniferous and broadleaved forests showing different patterns of change at different latitudes. The authors identified the forest changes are driven mostly by temperature instead of precipitation.

As the authors state, global change is especially affecting and driving changes in the high latitude boreal forests. These changes are less often studied in boreal forests of northern Eurasia compared to, e.g., North America. Hence, the premise of the study is interesting and the topic merits examination. The study covers a broad area, and the quality of the technical work is very high. However, I do not think that all the conclusions of the study are credible. This concern is especially related to research question three that examines the connection between the climatic variables and forest changes. In my opinion, the changes observed in forest cover and the proportion of deciduous and coniferous forest are too easily attributed to climate change. Furthermore, the role of natural forest dynamics and disturbances is completely disregarded in the manuscript although they could have a strong explanatory power on the observed changes. I think the results need to be interpreted also in this context! I also think that the quality of the study could be increased with a more thorough examination of the used remote sensing data. For example, what is the proportion of non-forest land turning into forest dominated by broadleaved forest during the study period, what influence do major disturbances such as fire have on the results? I think the material used in this study (i.e., Landsat images) would also enable considering the role of forest disturbances. As a second major concern, I think that the text needs a thorough revision to enhance its readability. These and my other concerns are described in more detail below.

Major comments:

1. I am not convinced that the observed increase in the proportion of broadleaved forest is solely driven by changes in temperature – correlation does not necessarily mean causation. The natural succession of Siberian boreal forests typically follows a pathway where broadleaved trees or *Larix spp.* dominate the early successional stage. In later successional stages the broadleaved trees with short longevity are often replaced by conifers such as *Pinus spp.* and *Picea spp.* if stand-replacing disturbances remain absent. The disturbance regime of the area examined in this study includes both ground and crown fires, the latter occurring especially in young coniferous forests that also have woody debris that acts as a fuel load. According to Kharuk et al. 2021 (<https://doi.org/10.1007/s13280-020-01490-x>) and fire maps compiled by Global Forest Watch, large fires have occurred in the studied area, even during the study period. I would be interested to know what is the role of these disturbances and forest dynamics in, e.g., explaining the observed increases in the proportion of broadleaved trees? Similarly, cessation of anthropogenic land use, such as abandonment of agricultural land and clearcutting without reforestation may start a natural succession and increase the proportion of broadleaved trees (as hinted by the authors at L. 325). I think the role of these processes should be examined prior stating that the observed changes are driven by climate change. Maybe you could use the Landsat images to quantify the rate at which non-forest land converted to broadleaved or conifer forest during the study period, and check

whether disturbances could explain some of this conversion (see <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rse.2019.111403>)? Forest fire and climate are also interlinked as rising temperatures and potentially declining precipitation may increase the fire prevalence in Siberia. This could also be considered in the paper.

Reply: Thank you for your constructive suggestions. We agree with you that wildfire or natural succession could have an impact on changes in forest cover and forest types. This paper mainly considers the role of human factors and natural factors in the temporal and spatial changes of forests, and we consciously chose regions with less human activities, especially in high latitudes. Forest fire is indeed an important influencing factor of forest change, and we treat it as a natural factor in the research area with less human activities. In a large time space range, forest fire is also closely related to climate change, just as the referee mentioned, so the unsteady impact due to forest fire over a long period of time is also considered as part of the background of climate change in this paper.

We have added a discussion of the effects of wildfire and natural succession on changes in forest cover and forest types. Moreover, the influence of climatic variables on forest fires was also considered.

Line 267-280

There are a variety of evidence points to complex connections (and changes) in the relationship between disturbance regimes and climate change in boreal forest (Kasischke and Turetsky 2006; Balshi et al., 2009; de Groot et al., 2013). In particular, studies have found that warming and drying trends in Canada's boreal regions favor higher frequency of both fire and insect disturbance (Sulla-Menashe, et al., 2018). While in Siberia, Warming has led to an increase in the frequency and area of wildfires that have reached the Arctic Ocean shore, which is the most important factor in taiga dynamics; furthermore, larch and Scots pine have evolved under conditions of periodic forest fires, thereby gaining a competitive advantage over non-fire adapted species (Kharuk et al., 2021), which may affect forest cover and forest type change in the region. It can be seen from Figure 9(c) that, in the zone 57°N–63°N, ΔR_{bf} is above 3.8%. Meanwhile, as discussed above, the absolute increase given by ΔR_{cl} is negative whereas ΔR_{bl} is positive in this zone. Also, as R_{bf} had a value of 35.08% in 2015 in the zone 57°N–59°N, at the current rate of change, broad-leaved forest will replace coniferous forest as the dominant tree species in this zone in about 120 years. In general, species will be more resilient at the centers of their present-day distributions, while changes in succession and species composition will be most rapid at the boundaries. Based on current knowledge, the boreal climate zones are expected to shift 5–10 times faster than the speed of natural range expansion achievable by most tree species (McLachlan et al., 2005; McKenney et al., 2007; Aitken et al., 2008; Loarie et al., 2009).

Line 285-292

Previous studies have shown that early northward colonization of tundra ecozones may be dominated by black and white spruces, which are often already established at the treeline. Where soil conditions permit (or where they are improving as a result of warming and drying), air-borne seeds from birch and aspen are likely to arrive and germinate success fully, leading gradually to a forest with significantly greater deciduous content (Price et al., 2013). However, in the 51°N–61°N and 67°N–69°N zones, the values of ΔR_{bl} , ΔR_{cl} and ΔR_{bf} are relatively stable, which shows that the

rate of increase in these forest type did not change much over the period studied. Therefore, the key to the validity of the response of boreal forests to climate change is to determine whether climate warming is driving significant expansion beyond the present-day forest extent, or faster stand growth and replacement (Zhu et al., 2013).

Line 383-388

Additionally, forest fires and climate are interrelated, and increasing temperatures and potential decreases in precipitation possibly increase the frequency of wildfires in Siberia, which will inevitably result in changes in forest cover and forest type dynamics (Kuaruk et al., 2021). Most importantly, given the projected rate of climate change in the Siberian boreal forest, continued research is necessary to more fully understand how future changes in temperature and precipitation regimes in the boreal region will affect coupled patterns of forest cover and forest type change in this vulnerable, geographically extensive biome.

2. How were coniferous and broadleaved trees separated in the study? According to the paragraph title this should be explained in the paragraph starting at L. 110, but I do not find the information from therein. According to Hovi et al. 2017 (<https://doi.org/10.14214/sf.7753>), *Larix spp.* and certain deciduous trees have similar spectral characteristics. Is it possible that certain *Larix spp.* stands were falsely classified as broadleaved trees, influencing the obtained results?

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. We used a hierarchical classification method for forest cover and forest species, i.e., we first used decision trees to distinguish between forested and non-forested land, and then used a random forest approach to classify coniferous and broadleaved forests. This can effectively avoid the influence on the final classification results due to same object with different spectrums and same spectrum of different objects (e.g., *Larix spp.* and certain deciduous trees have similar spectral characteristics (Hovi et al., 2017)).

Line 157-161

We selected 987 randomly distributed sampling points from the GF-2 images acquired in 2015 for the accuracy validation. The overall accuracy was found to be 90.37%, and the F1-scores for the broad-leaved, coniferous forest and non-forest land were 0.85, 0.93 and 0.91, respectively. Considering the consistency of the Landsat series of images, the above validation was still considered to be valid for the earlier years because it is difficult to obtain the measured data or the high-resolution satellite images of the study area for these times.

It is an interesting attempt to collect samples directly from early Landsat images for accuracy validation. We collected 584 sample points from 1985 Landsat images for accuracy validation, and the overall accuracy in 1985 was 89.04%, with F1 scores of 0.87, 0.89 and 0.91 for broadleaf, coniferous and non-forested forests, respectively. Considering the potential uncertainty of the sample collection process, the classification accuracy in 1985 is acceptable.

3. I would be interested to know if the observed changes in forest cover are due to forests with open canopy structure becoming denser or conversion of previously non-forested land into forests? These two processes have very different significance for forest dynamics. Including results of this examination in the study would increase its information content and general interest.

Reply: Thanks for your suggestion. The change in forest cover over the study time period was due

to the conversion of previously non-forested land to forested land. We carefully checked the classification results for forested and non-forested lands to ensure the reliability of the results (overall accuracy of 90.37%).

Minor comments:

L. 1 (title): In the manuscript text the authors state that the study area ranges from temperate to boreal forests. If that is the case, I suggest rephrasing the title of the study.

Reply: Thanks. According to Brandt (2009), the boreal zone was defined as the broad, circumpolar vegetation zone of high northern latitudes covered principally with forests and other wooded land, includes the temperate zone. Therefore, we contained the temperate zone in the boreal forest in this paper.

L. 10: At a faster rate compared to where?

Reply: Thanks. Climate change has been proven to be an indisputable fact and to be occurring at a faster rate (compared to the other regions at the same latitude of the world) in boreal forest areas. We have revised the relevant expressions. (Line 10-11)

L. 11 – 12: I would argue that there is quite a lot of evidence on how the climate change is changing boreal forests. This view is shared by the authors as the introduction at L. 45 states that “There has been much research on the effect of climate change on boreal forest”. I think that in this context there has been limited focus on Central Russian boreal forests. Please rephrase the introduction.

Reply: Thanks for your valuable suggestion. According to your suggestion, we have added research on how the climate change is changing the boreal forests in central Russia.

Line 51-63

Over the past 30 years, spring and autumn temperatures over northern latitudes have increased by about 1.1 °C and 0.8 °C, respectively (Mitchell and Jones 2005), and the thermal potential growing season has lengthened by about 10.5 days (Barichivich et al., 2013). Several studies indicate that increasing warming may result in accelerating the northward expansion of boreal forests (Veraverbeke et al., 2017), as well as the observation of a greening trend characterized by a longer growing season and greater photosynthetic activity (Piao et al., 2008). Shuman et al. (2011) showed that climate warming may convert Siberia's deciduous larch (*Larix spp.*) to evergreen conifer forests, and thus decrease regional surface albedo; At the continental scale, when temperature is increased, larch-dominated sites become vulnerable to early replacement by evergreen conifers. Ratcliffe et al. (2017) investigated a forested peatland in western Siberia and showed that climate change has caused the expansion of forested peatlands and increased tree cover. In addition, it is highly probable that the annual mean temperature in Canada's boreal forest region will increase by at least 2°C by 2050 in this century, which may lead to effects on the ecological functioning of the region's boreal forests, such as triggering a process of forest decline and re-establishment lasting several decades, while also releasing significant quantities of greenhouse gases that will amplify the future global warming trend (Price, et al., 2013).

L. 15: At first, I did not know what was meant by the term “forest species”, but after reading on I understood that they refer to broadleaved and coniferous forests. I would not call these “forest

species” but forest types. I would change “forest species” to “forest type” and explicitly say that by forest type you mean coniferous and broadleaved forests.

Reply: Based on your suggestion, we have revised the term "forest species" to "forest types".

L. 31 – 32: What is “geographical footprint”? Largest area?

Reply: Thanks. The sentence means that the boreal forest biome has one of the largest geographic footprints of any terrestrial biome on the planet (Olson et al. 2001). (Line 30-31)

L. 32: Remove “and encircles the globe at northern latitudes” as circumpolar distribution is already mentioned at L. 30.

Reply: Thanks. We have deleted the sentence.

L. 32 – 35: I find the ending of this sentence paradoxical. It reads that research of range shifts in boreal forests has focused on species-specific responses on temperate tree species (i.e., different biome). Please rephrase what is meant by this.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “To date, research into shifts in the range of this biome has predominately focused on the advance of boreal tree species into tundra or alpine habitats (i.e., treeline advance; see Harsch et al. 2009), or on the species-specific responses of temperate tree species (Zhu et al. 2012)”. (Line 31-33)

L. 40 – 41: Could you be a bit more specific – what kind of changes in biodiversity are expected due to climate change?

Reply: Thanks. We have added the corresponding expression.

Changes to biodiversity are one of the expected responses to climate change, for example, some of the most important conifer species in British Columbia are expected to lose a large portion of their suitable habitat (Hamann and Wang, 2006). (Line 38-40)

L. 42 – 44: The message of this sentence is very difficult to understand. Please clarify the point that the sentence tries to make.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence based on your suggestion.

Most importantly, climate change is expected to reduce climatic constraints on plant growth (Nemani et al, 2003): warmer, wetter conditions will result in increased vegetation productivity, which has been shown to be an indirect indicator of biodiversity, correlated with geographic variation in species richness (Coops et al., 2008; Nelson et al., 2014). (Line 41-44)

L. 46 – 47: Could you give an example of the spatiotemporal differences in tree growth in the boreal biome that are caused by climate change?

Reply: Thanks. We have added the corresponding expression.

However, there are clear spatiotemporal differences in these effects (Alibakhshi et al., 2020). For example, Hou et al. (2020) found that vegetation phenology indicators in Finland's boreal forests showed spatiotemporal differences in response to climate variables in different months, i.e., vegetation in different regions showed different patterns of response to climate variables. (Line 48-50)

L. 49: White spruce (*Picea glauca*) is a species that is native to boreal North America. Changes in growth of white spruce are then hardly relevant in the context of Eurasian boreal forest, right? Could this be replaced with an example from the same study region?

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. This paragraph is to support the statement that “It has been observed that the growth of boreal forest has been influenced by global warming in the past decade or more”. Based on your suggestion, we have added the example of larch (*Larix spp.*) in Siberia.

Line 56-58

Shuman et al. (2011) showed that climate warming may convert Siberia's deciduous larch (*Larix spp.*) to evergreen conifer forests, and thus decrease regional surface albedo; At the continental scale, when temperature is increased, larch-dominated sites become vulnerable to early replacement by evergreen conifers.

L. 59 – 61: This statement is not true. See, e.g., <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10980-020-00979-w> on the use of multispectral aerial photographs for this purpose.

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. We have revised the statement that the Landsat series data are the most widely used multispectral dataset for monitoring natural and human-induced landscape changes at the scale of tens of meters over periods of years or decades (Matasci et al., 2018; Hadi et al., 2016; Hermosilla et al., 2019). (Line 72-75)

L. 70 – 71: What is meant by “from the temperature to the frigid zones”?

Reply: Thanks. This word “temperature” is a misnomer, we revised “temperature” to “temperate”. In addition, Brandt (2009) defined the boreal zone as the broad, circumpolar vegetation zone of high northern latitudes covered principally with forests and other wooded land, includes the temperate zone. The study area of this work, Krasnoyarskiy Kray, encompasses the temperate to frigid zones.

L. 83 (Fig. 1): An inset map would be helpful in locating the study region.

Reply: According to your suggestion, we revised Figure 1 to locate the study area. (Line 102-104)



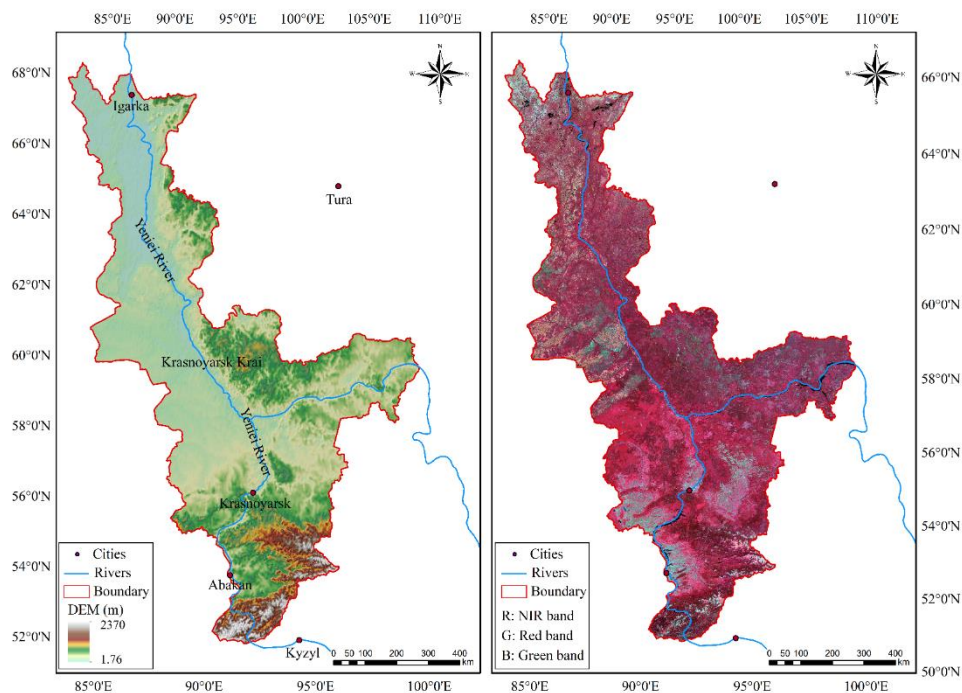


Figure 3. Location of the study area together with the DEM and false-color composite of Landsat 8 images.

L. 111 – 118: Why is discriminating forested/vegetated areas from non-vegetated areas presented twice in these paragraphs?

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. We have revised the paragraph to correctly express that “Finally, a random forest (RF) algorithm was used to discriminate coniferous and broadleaved forests from areas of vegetation (Breiman 2001; Strobl et al., 2007; Cutler et al., 2008; Svetnik et al., 2003; Rodriguez-Galiano et al., 2013; Assiri 2021; Climent et al., 2019)”. (Line 149-151)

L. 126: Did you visually classify the sampling points based on GF-2 images?

Reply: Yes. In this study, we selected the sample points used for the classification based on Landsat images refer to GF-2 images and Google Earth images (Gong et al., 2013).

L. 153 – 154: That the forest cover has not changed much over the study period does not mean that the forests are not significantly affected by climate change but that the influence does not manifest as changes in forest cover. Please rephrase.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “Taking into account the accuracy of the forest cover retrieval, it can be considered that the forest coverage in this zone has not changed over the study period, which means that the cover of boreal forest in this zone has not been significantly affected by climate change”. (Line 183-185)

L. 157 – 158: Similar to the previous comment, from the fact that the strongest change in forest cover was observed in the northernmost zone it does not follow that the forests in these areas were mostly affected by climate change (see also my comment on forest dynamics). Rephrase “The fastest change was observed in the northern zone from 63°N–69°N, which means that this is the area where

the forest has been most affected by climate” for example to “The fastest change was observed in the northernmost zone (63°N–69°N) that is also the zone where the climate warming is also projected to be the highest”.

Reply: Thanks. According to your suggestion, we have rewritten the sentence that “The fastest change was observed in the northernmost zone (63°N–69°N) that is also the zone where the climate warming is also projected to be the highest”. (Line 187-188)

L. 187: Change to “not found north of the latitude 67°N in the studied region.

Reply: Thanks. we have rewritten the sentence that “In the northernmost zone (67°N–69°N), R_{cl} is still above 25% whereas R_{bl} is only about 5%, which indicates that coniferous forest is more resistant to cold and that broad-leaved forest is essentially not found north of latitude 67°N in the studied region”. (Line 217-219)

L. 202: Change “increase” to “change” as the forest cover may also decrease, right?

Reply: Yes. Based on your suggestion, we have revised the word “increase” to “change”. (Line 235)

L. 217 – 219: As I have stated in my previous comments, the fact that the coverage of broadleaved forests has increased in the study region is not necessarily only due to climate change. Please revise.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “Overall, it can be seen that the broad-leaved forest coverage increased in every latitude zone, which means that the climate change that has been occurring may have promoted the growth of broad-leaved species across the study area during the three decades of the study”. (Line 249-251)

L. 228 – 229: Also, other drivers than climate change may explain the decrease in the cover of coniferous forest. Please revise.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “However, the area of coniferous forest in the medium latitude zone 57°N–63°N has declined slightly over the three decades of the study with a value of ΔR_{cl} of about –2.3%; in comparison ΔR_{bl} is about 3.9%, which means that climate change may have had a negative impact on coniferous forest growth in this zone”. (Line 259-261)

L. 254 – 255: See the previous two comments.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “Given that the amount of human activity in the study area is limited, it is reasonable to assume that the changes in the forest may be driven mainly by climate variables”. (Line 301-302)

L. 318 – 320: For me it is uncertain if the author suggest that the results indicate a northwards shift in the range of temperate biome. Such range shifts occur during longer time scales than those considered in this study. Please clarify what is meant by this sentence.

Reply: Thanks. This sentence is to support the statement that “In addition, it can be seen from Figure 12(d) that ΔR_{bl} responds positively to an increase in temperature, which indicates that broad-leaved forest is sensitive to warming and benefits from higher temperatures”, not to suggest that “the northwards shift in the range of temperate biome”.

L. 319: Replace “temperature” with “temperate”.

Reply: Based on your suggestion, we have revised the word “temperature” to “temperate”. (Line 373)

L. 320: Are you suggesting that the southernmost forests of the study region are transforming into subtropical or tropical forests? Please rephrase.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “Moreover, it has been found that the distribution of many forest types is beginning to expand towards the poles, with temperate forests gradually shifting into areas previously covered by boreal forests; the southern parts of these temperate forests will be replaced by subtropical or tropical forests. The northern boundary of temperate forests is also shifting towards the poles (Hirota et al., 2010; Parmesan and Yohe, 2003)”. (Line 370-373)

L. 324: Also other drivers than climate change may explain the identified patterns.

Reply: Thanks. We have rewritten the sentence that “Furthermore, warming has a positive effect on ΔR_{bl} , meaning that the observed increase in ΔR_{bl} may be caused by a rise in temperatures”. (Line 376-377)

L. 333 – 334: The term “significant difference” refers to differences that are statistically significant. However, the significance of the changes in forest cover was not statistically tested in the study. Please rephrase.

Reply: Thanks for your careful suggestion. we have rewritten the sentence that “In this study, changes in the area of the Siberian boreal forest and the forest species in Krasnoyarskiy Kray, Russia, were quantified using remote sensing data covering the period 1985 to 2015. The results show that there are differences in the changes that were observed across the study area”. (Line 390-392)

L. 335 – 336: That the forest cover changed increased the most in the northernmost latitudes does not automatically mean that this region is the most sensitive to climate change. Instead, these forest might be – for example – recovering from a major disturbance. Please revise.

Reply: We have rewritten the sentence that “Overall, the total forest area increased continuously over the three decades of the study, particularly in the high-latitude part of the study area, which may indicate that the boreal forest in this region is the most sensitive to climate change”. (Line 392-394)

All above revisions are highlighted in the manuscript information. We hope you will be satisfied with our changes. Thanks again for your good suggestions.

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