Accepted Manuscript

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PII: \$0367-2530(18)30041-0

DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.flora.2018.08.016

Reference: FLORA 51303

To appear in:

Received date: 19-1-2018 Revised date: 20-8-2018 Accepted date: 24-8-2018

Please cite this article as: Cito Nettesheim F, Garbin ML, Gervasio Pereira M, de Araujo DSD, de Viveiros Grelle CE, Local-scale elevation patterns of Atlantic Forest tree community variation and assembly drivers in a conservation hotspot in southeastern Brazil, *Flora* (2018), https://doi.org/10.1016/j.flora.2018.08.016

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Local-scale elevation patterns of Atlantic Forest tree community variation and assembly drivers in a conservation hotspot in southeastern Brazil

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Highlights

- Focus on the richest section of a larger tropical elevational gradient.
- Elevational patterns typical to large spatial distances also occur in a local-scale.
- Tree community displays local-scale continuous gradual changes of dominant species.
- The environment is a main driver of local-scale tropical tree community assembly.

Abstract

Understanding natural community assembly along elevational gradients has long attracted the attention of ecologists and botanists. Here, we study a tropical local-scale elevational gradient at a dissected mountainous terrain to understand if drivers of tree community variation and assembly patterns are similar to those reported for greater spatial distances and elevational gradients in Atlantic Forest region. We inventoried trees with Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) \geq 5.0 cm in 154 plots (10 x 10 m; 1.54 ha) systematically distributed along a local-scale (< 1 km 2) steep

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