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ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

1 Potential influence of birds on soil testate amoebae in the Arctic

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- 14 ABSTRACT

15 Birds can be an important agent of environmental change in High Arctic ecosystems, particularly due 16 to the role of seabirds as a vector transferring nutrients from the marine to terrestrial realms. The 17 soils of bird nesting sites are known to host distinct plant communities but the consequences of bird 18 modification for microorganisms are much less clear. Our focus here is testate amoebae: a widely-19 distributed group of protists with significant roles in many aspects of ecosystem functioning. We 20 compared the testate amoeba assemblages of a site on Spitsbergen (Svalbard archipelago) affected 21 by nesting birds, with nearby control sites. We found differences in assemblage between sites, typified by reduced relative abundance of Phryganella acropodia and Centropyxis aerophila in bird-22 23 modified soils. These changes may reflect a reduced availability of fungal food sources. We found no 24 evidence for differences in assemblage diversity or test concentration between bird-modified and 25 control soils. Our dataset is small but results provide the first evidence for the potential effect of bird 26 modification of soils on testate amoebae in the Arctic. Results show only limited similarity to 27 experimental studies of nutrient addition, implying that response mechanisms may be more 28 complicated than simply additional nutrient supply through faeces.

29 Keywords: Birds; Testate amoebae; Protists; Protozoa; Svalbard

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