

Interactive comment on “Simulated climate variability in the region of Rapa Nui during the last millennium” by C. Junk and M. Claussen

Anonymous Referee #1

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This paper reports some possible climate scenarios for Easter Island. These are based on simulations. The results are not surprising given previous statements published on the subject, but they do address work by Nunn and others who have called upon climate to be a significant causal factor in Pacific Islands history and ecological change.

The authors should consider Melinda Allen (Current Anthropology) on climate proxies, particularly between northern and southern hemispheres.

Two particular points for clarification:

1. The date of colonization of Rapa Nui is hardly controversial. The issue comes down to standards of evidence. Those arguing for colonization prior to around 1200 AD are basing their arguments almost entirely on suspect or even missing evidence (i.e., faith

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or an argument of convention). Such an approach is less than scientific. A recently published paper by Wilmshurst et al (PNAS 2010) makes the case even better established when the entire region's chronology forms a highly consistent pattern. While the age of colonization is not central to the paper's objectives, the authors should show good scholarship and standards of science.

2. The authors cite sources on deforestation and make a false dichotomy of human use of fire and clearing for agriculture versus the impacts of rats. These impacts would not be mutually exclusive, and need not be framed as such; it only simplifies the case for ecological change. Flenley, Diamond, and Hunt have each hypothesized the potential (major) role of rats in Pacific Island ecosystems. Perhaps only Mieth and Bork (various) have insisted that it was all or nothing, and ignored ecological and palaeo-ecological research elsewhere.

Interactive comment on Clim. Past Discuss., 7, 381, 2011.