

# Discontinuity of diurnal temperature range along elevated regions

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## Abstract

Low-clouds and fog moderate the diurnal temperature range (DTR) through radiative effects. Consequently, frequent foggy events make montane cloud forests (MCFs) stable and unique. However, observations in the understory of the forest are rare. To investigate the DTR variation in elevations, we surveyed the Central Cross-Island Highway in central Taiwan transects with MCFs. The results from paired weather stations revealed that the DTR increases significantly with altitude in open fields but not in the forest's understory. Furthermore, the continuous observations in altitude across non-cloud forest and MCFs indicate that DTR decreases in both the open field and understory of MCFs. The DTR discontinuity highlights the indispensability of MCF for the mountain ecosystem. Further simulating the integrative effect of the climate and land-use change on fog is crucial for the ecoclimate in mountainous regions.

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1           **Discontinuity of diurnal temperature range along elevated regions**

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7  
8   **Key Points:**

- 9       • A relatively great variance of daily temperature range between the open fields and  
10       understory at high altitudes.
- 11       • Canopy shade efficiently moderates the diurnal variability and the elevational variation of  
12       daily temperature range.
- 13       • The fog and low-clouds create altitudinal discontinuities in daily temperature range.

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15

## 16 **Abstract**

17 Low-clouds and fog moderate the diurnal temperature range (DTR) through radiative effects.  
18 Consequently, frequent foggy events make montane cloud forests (MCFs) stable and unique.  
19 However, observations in the understory of the forest are rare. To investigate the DTR variation  
20 in elevations, we surveyed the Central Cross-Island Highway in central Taiwan transects with  
21 MCFs. The results from paired weather stations revealed that the DTR increases significantly  
22 with altitude in open fields but not in the forest's understory. Furthermore, the continuous  
23 observations in altitude across non-cloud forest and MCFs indicate that DTR decreases in both  
24 the open field and understory of MCFs. The DTR discontinuity highlights the indispensability of  
25 MCF for the mountain ecosystem. Further simulating the integrative effect of the climate and  
26 land-use change on fog is crucial for the ecoclimate in mountainous regions.

## 27 **Plain Language Summary**

28 The diurnal temperature range (DTR), regulated by canopy and fog, is critical to the ecosystem.  
29 During the day, fog and the canopy block downward solar radiation to prevent the increase in  
30 temperature. At night, fog and the canopy trap long-wave radiation to reduce the rate of  
31 temperature decline. Observational data indicate that DTR increases significantly with altitude in  
32 open fields but not in the understory. Therefore, the difference in DTR between open fields and  
33 the understory is more significant at a higher altitude. Furthermore, the difference in the DTR is  
34 lower at midaltitude, which is most likely related to the presence of montane cloud forests. DTR  
35 discontinuity at high altitudes highlights the value of montane cloud forests.

## 36 **1 Introduction**

37 Mountains provide essential, diverse habitats and elevational gradients that critically  
38 enable species to respond to the crisis of migration or extinction. Previous studies have explored  
39 the effect of increasing average temperature on the survival and distribution of organisms (Chen  
40 et al., 2009; Kerr et al., 2015; Rumpf et al., 2018). In fact, in addition to temperature, other  
41 environmental variations cause critical stress to living organisms. The diurnal temperature range  
42 (DTR), which is a relatively short temporal variation, can greatly influence species distribution  
43 (W.-P. Chan et al., 2016). The DTR is defined as the range enclosed by the daily maximum and  
44 minimum temperatures ( $T_{\max}$  and  $T_{\min}$ , respectively), and a key indicator that provides more  
45 information than the mean temperature in determining the effect of climate change (Braganza et  
46 al., 2004; Easterling et al., 1997). Forests cover about a quarter of the global mountain area and  
47 is the most diverse terrestrial system, but in the meantime, the most threatened ecosystem  
48 worldwide (Körner, 2004). Biotic and abiotic features, for example, the canopy and topography,  
49 create a unique microclimate and exert moderating effects that encourage species abundance (De  
50 Frenne et al., 2013; Zellweger et al., 2019). Particularly, the disparate shade and canopy  
51 modulation intercepting the downward radiation cause thermal variations in space (Klinges &  
52 Scheffers, 2021). However, traditional weather stations are located on flat terrain with uniform  
53 grass, and observational data from mountainous regions are rare (Nicolas Pepin et al., 2015; Nick  
54 Pepin et al., 2019). Even though the contrast between open field and understory had been  
55 mentioned in the previous study, two stations were located more than 100 km away with various  
56 synoptic environmental conditions (Rapp & Silman, 2012). Therefore, high-resolution in-situ  
57 observations in the understory and open fields within a reasonably close distance in mountainous  
58 regions are crucial for studying the critical role of forest in the micro-eco-climatological systems.

59 Most previous studies have focused on how the DTR varies over time (Easterling et al.,  
60 1997; Jaagus et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 1994; Nick Pepin et al., 2019; Shekhar et al., 2018; Shen  
61 et al., 2014; Vose et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2021). Comparatively, the trends of DTR in altitude  
62 were not consistent both in the open field (Gheyret et al., 2020; Rapp & Silman, 2012) and  
63 understory(Rapp & Silman, 2012; Wang et al., 2017; Xue et al., 2020). The occurrence of  
64 dynamic clouds, fog, and rainfall might have a narrow DTR(Dai et al., 1999; Hansen et al., 1995;  
65 Jackson & Forster, 2010; Karl et al., 1993; Rapp & Silman, 2012) and cause the uncertainty of  
66 elevational trends in DTR. Nevertheless, those studies usually focused on either single-point in-  
67 situ observations or regional data with a coarse resolution. Thus, to understand the altitudinal  
68 gradient of the DTR along the continuous mountain range, a comparison of low-clouds and fog  
69 in montane cloud forests (MCFs) is necessary (Myers et al., 2000). Additionally, the steep  
70 terrain, surrounding ocean, and prevailing seasonal winds make Taiwan have the highest  
71 percentage of cloud forest in the world (Bruijnzeel et al., 2011; Schulz et al., 2017). Thus, this  
72 study used in-situ paired weather station observations in open fields and the understory to  
73 explore how the canopy shade influences the altitudinal gradient of diurnal variation across non-  
74 cloud forests and MCFs in Taiwan.

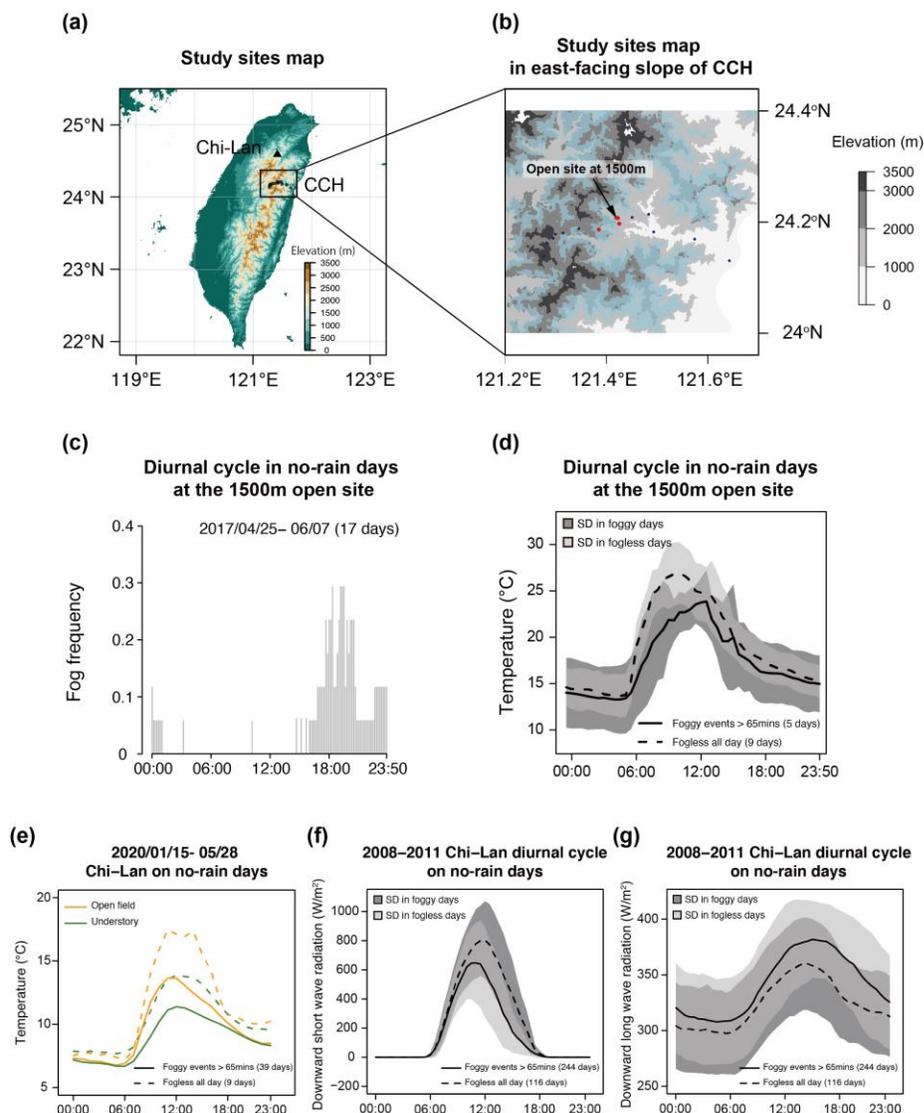
75

## 76 2 Data and Methods

### 77 2.1 Study sites

78 The study region was selected over the east-facing slope of the Central Cross-Island  
79 Highway (CCH) from 100 to 3250 m a.s.l. (Fig. 1a) in 2018–2019. The 15 study sites  
80 were along the CCH with an elevation interval of approximately 250 m (Fig. 1b). Eleven  
81 paired meteorological stations were installed on opposite sides of the road to demonstrate  
82 the microclimate contrasts between the understory and open fields. The paired stations  
83 are as close as possible (10–500 m apart) in order to eliminate the effect of synoptic  
84 weather conditions and landscapes. Four additional unpaired meteorological stations were  
85 also installed along the study transect to increase the spatial resolution. All sites were  
86 placed around 1–2 m away from the road to constrain the edge effect.

87 The transect crosses the non-cloud forest and the MCFs. The characteristic features of  
88 MCFs in Taiwan are distributed from 1500 to 2000 m a.s.l., whereas in some monsoon-  
89 affected areas, the MCFs might extend down to 1000 m a.s.l.(Schulz et al., 2017).  
90 Therefore, based on the MCF map stated by Schulz et al. (2017), we extracted four study  
91 sites, located in the MCFs region from 1250 to 2000 m a.s.l. (Fig. 1b), to represent the  
92 microclimate of MCFs in the mid-elevational region in CCH. Furthermore, before  
93 conducting the formal integrated observation, we carried out observation over an  
94 intensive observing period (IOP) to explore the effect of fog on the east-facing slope of  
95 the CCH. The study site of IOP was located in the open fields at 1500 m a.s.l. from  
96 2017/04/25–2017/06/07. In addition to air temperature, the relative humidity (RH) and  
97 visibility data were recorded during the IOP.



98

99 **Figure 1.** (a) Locations of Chi-Lan and the Central Cross-Island Highway (CCH) in  
 100 Taiwan. (b) A closer look of CCH with sites along an elevation gradient. The light blue  
 101 area is the MCF by Schulz et al. (2017). (c) The diurnal cycle of fog frequency at CCH  
 102 1500 m a.s.l. in IOP. The gray bars represent the probability of fog occurrence for each  
 103 hour. (d) The diurnal cycle air temperature during IOP (e–g) Diurnal cycles on no-rain  
 104 days in Chi-Lan during 2020/01/15–05/28 and 2008 to 2011. The orange line represents  
 105 the mean observational air temperature every hour in the open field, and the green line  
 106 represents the understory. Solid lines represent the mean of the observational data every  
 107 half hour in the foggy days as fog events span > 65 minutes. Dashed lines represent the  
 108 fogless days. The grey shaded areas represent the mean  $\pm 1$  standard deviation.

109 To understand the distinctive features of MCFs, we also selected Chi-Lan, a typical MCF  
 110 in northeastern Taiwan (Fig. 1a). In Chi-Lan, frequent fog events occurred approximately  
 111 33% of the time during 2008–2011 (Gu et al., 2021). To compare the effect of fog on the  
 112 DTR in open fields and the understory, we paired sites in Chi-Lan within 300 m

113 horizontally. The paired meteorological stations in Chi-Lan were installed at 1.5 m above  
114 the ground in the understory of forest (1650 m a.s.l., 24°35'N, 121°25'E) and on a flat  
115 grassland without tree canopy (canopy, hereafter) cover (1711 m a.s.l., 24°35'N,  
116 121°24'E), respectively.

## 117 2.2 Meteorological Data

118 In the CCH, we acquired air temperature and RH by using a HOBO microstation data  
119 logger (U21-002; Onset, Cape Cod, MA, USA) with a 12-bit Temperature Smart sensor  
120 (S-THB-M002) and iButton® devices (Maxim Integrated Products, Sunnyvale, CA,  
121 USA). The iButton® device is an autonomous system with a data logger and temperature  
122 sensor that measures temperature and records the data in a 512 bytes memory section. A  
123 polyvinyl chloride shield was used to prevent exposure to solar radiation (S. Chan et al.,  
124 2019; Tsai et al., 2020). The data logger was nailed to a tree trunk 120–150 cm above the  
125 ground in the open field. Air temperature was recorded every 30 minutes by using  
126 iButton® devices and every 10 minutes by using the HOBO microstation data logger.  
127 After averaging raw data to hourly data, the data quality was checked by removing the  
128 spikes beyond the triple standard deviation of each hour. The daily DTR was derived  
129 from the difference between daily maximum and minimum temperature. We note that  
130 only the data with missing value less than 4 hours in one day were obtained. In IOP,  
131 visibility was measured with a MiniOFS sensor (Sten Löfving, Optical Sensors,  
132 Göteborg, Sweden) every 10 min at 1500 m a.s.l. in the open site. We adopted the World  
133 Meteorological Organization's definition of a foggy event as one where visibility < 1000  
134 m. The definition of foggy days without rain during IOP in CCH was the total occurrence  
135 of fog events more than 65 minutes, the third quantile of the daily duration of foggy  
136 condition.

137 In Chi-Lan, air temperature in the understory were obtained from the weather station  
138 (EM50, METER Group, Pullman, WA, USA), which comprised a humidity and  
139 temperature sensor (ATMOS 14, METER Group). We use the Yuanyanghu weather  
140 station (C0UA1) of Central Weather Bureau in Taiwan, which was located 300 m away  
141 from the understory site. In addition, solar radiation, longwave radiation, and visibility  
142 (Mira 3544, Aanderaa Data Inst., Bergen, Norway) measurements were obtained from the  
143 top of the Chi-Lan flux tower (Chu et al., 2014).

## 144 2.3 Leaf Area Index

145 In addition to the dynamic variations in clouds and fog, the complicated topographic  
146 shade and diverse dense canopy might exert a complex influence on the spatial variation  
147 in the DTR. The canopy efficiently prevents heating caused by solar radiation, reducing  
148 the  $T_{\max}$  during the day (Scheffers et al., 2014; Zellweger et al., 2019). Thus, to evaluate  
149 the effect of canopy cover on the DTR, we applied the leaf area index (LAI), defined as  
150 the one-sided green leaf area per unit ground surface area, to represent the canopy cover  
151 density at every site. The LAI data were extracted from the LAI product (MCD15A3H)  
152 of the Moderate Resolution Imaging Spectroradiometer (MODIS) for 2018–2019 by  
153 using the R package MODIS tools (Hufkens et al., 2018).

## 154 2.4 Aspect

155 Due to the probability of higher daytime temperature at the east-facing side, the effect of  
156 aspect on daytime temperature should also be considered. We used the following formula  
157 for transforming the aspect along the north to south-facing slope in the linear regression  
158 analysis (Beers et al., 1966):

$$159 \quad A_t = \cos (A_{\max} - A) \quad (1)$$

160 After transforming,  $A_t$  represents effective exposure to the solar radiation, rescaled to  
161 from -1 to 1. The maximum exposure to solar radiation,  $A_{\max}$ , is  $90^\circ$  for the east-facing  
162 side.  $A$  is the original aspect, computed from a 20 m gridded digital elevation model  
163 provided by the Ministry of the Interior in Taiwan  
164 ([https://www.tgos.tw/TGOS/Web/MetaData/TGOS\\_Query\\_MetaData.aspx?key=TW-06-301000000A-612640](https://www.tgos.tw/TGOS/Web/MetaData/TGOS_Query_MetaData.aspx?key=TW-06-301000000A-612640)). We computed the aspect of each site by using the R package  
165 raster (Hijmans et al., 2015) with eight neighboring grids.  
166

## 167 2.5 Data Analysis

168 We took that information apart from the effect of elevation by following steps to  
169 emphasize the unique features in the mid-elevational regions. First, we interpolated the  
170 DTR in the midpoint of each elevational region by the linear regression of DTR and  
171 elevation, as the predicted DTR. The detrended DTR were obtained by subtraction the  
172 actual DTR from the predicted DTR in every elevational region to conclude the effect of  
173 fog and cloud without accounting for the elevational impact. We compared the difference  
174 of detrended DTR between mid-elevation and other elevated to determine whether the  
175 elevational trend of DTR is influenced by fog and low-clouds.

176 To examine the different trends in altitude of  $T_{\max}$  and  $T_{\min}$ , we performed an analysis of  
177 covariance (ANCOVA) using the R function `anova_test()` function from the package  
178 "rstatix" of R (Kassambara, 2020). In the analysis, a multiple regression was created with  
179 an interaction term between  $T_{\max}$  or  $T_{\min}$  and elevation to examine the homogeneity of  
180 regression slopes. The significance of the coefficient of the interaction term represent  
181 whether the slope among the elevational trends of  $T_{\max}$  and  $T_{\min}$  is heterogeneous.

182 **3 Results**

183 From the observed results on no-rain days during IOP, the probability of a foggy event  
184 lasting more than one hour is approximately 30% (Fig. 1c), and the DTR was smaller  
185 during the foggy days at 1500 m in CCH (Fig. 1d). Consequently, we applied  
186 observational data from Chi-Lan using the same definition of foggy days in CCH to  
187 determine how the foggy events influence the diurnal radiation. In Chi-Lan, the DTR was  
188 narrower during foggy days both in the open field and understory sites during the  
189 observational period of 2011 (Fig. 1e). During foggy days, low solar radiation penetration  
190 (Fig. 1f) limited the increase in daytime temperature, and downward longwave radiation  
191 (Fig. 1g) caused an increased nighttime temperature. Fog might efficiently narrow the  
192 DTR of MCFs, resulting in a unique and stable elevational region in the mountain forest  
193 ecosystem.

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## 3.1 Canopy Shade Moderates Spatial Variance in the Understory

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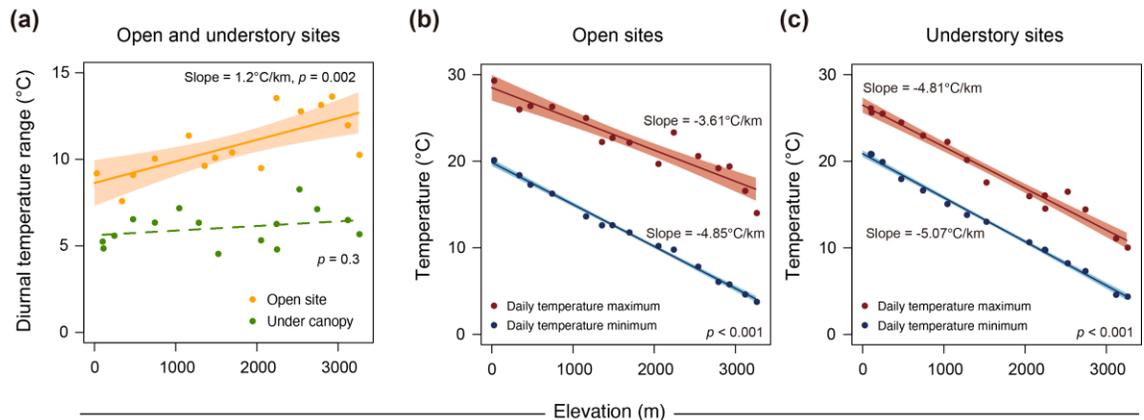
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To comprehend the difference in microclimates between the traditional meteorological observation and realistic habitat, we compared the observations of the open field and understory. We found that the DTR was positively correlated with the elevation in open sites (slope =  $1.25^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{km}$ ,  $R^2 = 0.48$ ,  $p < 0.002$ ; Fig. 3a). Nevertheless, no significant elevational trends of the DTR were observed in the understory. The elevational trends of the DTR were determined based on variation in the  $T_{\text{max}}$  and  $T_{\text{min}}$  in altitude. In the open field, the  $T_{\text{min}}$  ( $T_{\text{min}}^{\text{open}}$ , hereafter) declined more substantially than the  $T_{\text{max}}$  ( $T_{\text{max}}^{\text{open}}$ , hereafter) in altitudes ( $p < 0.02$ ), which contributed to an increase in the DTR ( $T_{\text{max}}^{\text{open}}$ : slope =  $-3.61^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{km}$ ,  $R^2 = 0.87$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $T_{\text{min}}^{\text{open}}$ : slope =  $-4.85^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{km}$ ,  $R^2 = 0.99$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 2b). In the understory, the decreasing rate of the  $T_{\text{max}}$  ( $T_{\text{max}}^{\text{under}}$ : slope =  $-4.81^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{km}$ ,  $R^2 = 0.97$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and  $T_{\text{min}}$  ( $T_{\text{min}}^{\text{under}}$ : slope =  $-5.07^{\circ}\text{C}/\text{km}$ ,  $R^2 = 0.99$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; Fig. 2c) at elevated regions were similar ( $p = 0.301$ ), resulting in insignificant trend ( $R^2 = 0.08$ ,  $p = 0.30$ ) of the DTR at elevated regions.

## 2018–2019 East-facing slope of CCH in Taiwan



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## 3.2 Discontinuous Trend of DTR at High Altitudes

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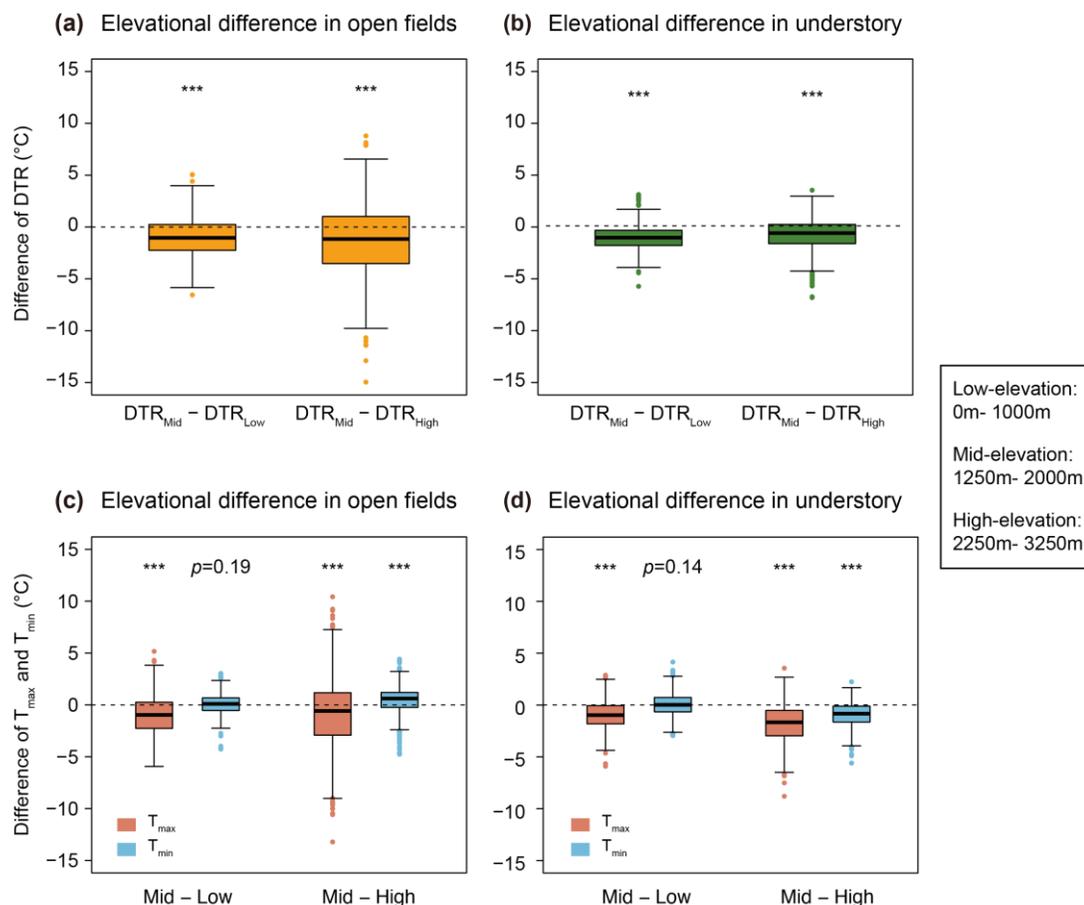
In addition to indicating the effect of the forest on the elevational variation of the DTR, our result further suggested a discontinuous feature of the DTR along the elevation in both the open field and understory (Fig. 2a). We compared the difference in the DTR between MCF and other elevational regions to investigate the unique characteristics of MCFs. After eliminating the elevational trend, whether in the open field or understory, the DTR in MCFs was significantly smaller than that at low and high elevations (Fig. 3a,

223 b). The discontinuous changes of DTR in altitude or the elevational trend of DTR  
224 changes drastically in the mid-elevational region determined the distinctive microclimate  
225 in MCF.

226 Besides the visibility measurement during IOP, to demonstrate that the persistent humid  
227 conditions events at mid-elevation, we further utilized the RH measurement along the  
228 elevation as the proxy for the environment's wetness. As shown in Table 1, the daily and  
229 daytime mean of RH in the understory in CCH were significantly wetter at mid-elevation  
230 than other elevation on no-rain days. The remarkably humid characteristic at mid-  
231 elevation validates the unique feature of MCF and the discontinuous change of DTR in  
232 altitude.

233 Seasonal variations in DTR occurred along the elevation, but the discontinuity in DTR  
234 was still evident in every season (Fig. S1). In mountainous regions, the complicated  
235 topographic shade and diverse dense canopy might exert a complex influence on the  
236 spatial variation in the DTR. Accordingly, we further investigate the seasonality of  
237 elevational discontinuity in DTR and RH. From the results in the open field, a slight  
238 seasonal influence of fog and low-clouds on DTR in the spring (Fig. S2a). Still, the mid-  
239 elevational region's DTR (Fig. S2) is narrower and RH (Table S1) is higher than that in  
240 other elevational areas in all seasons. Moreover, no consistent effects of topographic  
241 aspect and LAI was observed on the DTR along the observational transect (Fig. S3).  
242 Therefore, fog might be a primary reason explaining the discontinuity in the DTR at high  
243 altitudes of the CCH.

244 Furthermore, in MCFs, the  $T_{\max}^{\text{open}}$  and  $T_{\max}^{\text{under}}$  were significantly lower than in other  
245 elevated regions, which might be remarkably affected by the fog (Fig. 3c, d). However,  
246 the  $T_{\min}^{\text{open}}$  and  $T_{\min}^{\text{under}}$  in the MCFs were similar with low elevations, and its variations  
247 diverged. The  $T_{\min}^{\text{open}}$  in the MCFs was warmer compared with that in high altitude  
248 regions, probably due to the warming effect of the downward longwave radiation by fog.  
249 The  $T_{\max}^{\text{under}}$  in the MCFs was much lower, and even if a nighttime warming effect of fog  
250 existed in the MCFs, the  $T_{\min}^{\text{under}}$  was frequent cooler than that at a high altitude. Thus, a  
251 significant discontinuity of the DTR along the altitude was most likely due to a smaller  
252  $T_{\max}$  in the MCFs of the CCH.



253

254 **Figure 3.** Elevational difference of detrended DTR,  $T_{max}$ , and  $T_{min}$  between mid-elevation and  
 255 low-elevation (left) and between mid-elevation and high-elevation (right) in (a, c) open fields  
 256 and (b, d) understory. The box represents the 25th and 75th percentile along with the median of  
 257 2018–2019 daily data. The upper and lower fences represent 1.5 times the interquartile range.  
 258 Solid dots represent potential outliers. The p values were obtained from one-tailed tests, and \*\*\*  
 259 indicates a 0.1% significant difference.

260 (mean  $\pm$  std)

Site	Plot	Daily mean of RH in foggy days	Daily mean of RH in clear days	Daytime mean of RH in foggy days	Daytime mean of RH in clear days
Chi-Lan	Understory	98.8% $\pm$ 3.5%	93.3% $\pm$ 9.6%	98.4% $\pm$ 4.2%	91.5% $\pm$ 10.1%
Site	Elevational region	Daily mean of RH		Daytime mean of RH	
CCH	High	87.2% $\pm$ 12.4%*		85.3% $\pm$ 12.5%*	
	Mid	93.6% $\pm$ 6.8%		91.6% $\pm$ 7.3%	

Low

87.3% ± 10.6%\*

80.8% ± 10.1%\*

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\*Significant difference from mid-elevation at the 1% significance level (one-tailed t test)

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Table 1. The daily and daytime (6:00–18:00) average of the RH in the understory at CCH (IOP, 2017/04/25– 06/7) and Chi-Lan (2020/01/15– 04/30) on no-rain days. In Chi-Lan, we separated foggy and clear days utilizing visibility data.

#### 4 Discussion

This study shows that a significant elevational trend of the DTR is apparent over open fields but not in the understory. The variation of the DTR at an altitude between two fields demonstrates a substantial modulation by the canopy for the microclimate at a high altitude (Fig. 2). Solar radiation is usually the dominant factor affecting the  $T_{\max}$ , which is competently reduced by canopy cover. Due to the shadowing effect and the heat storage of the crown, the canopy cover effect could smoothen the elevational heterogeneity of the DTR, reducing climatic variability with altitude in the understory. The non-significant elevational trend of DTR in the understory was mentioned, but the effect of canopy shape on the DTR cannot be determined clearly by the comparison in coarse resolution (Rapp & Silman, 2012). Our in situ paired experiments emphasized the contrast elevational trend of DTR within a short distance (< 500 m) between the understory and open field. The impact of canopy shape differed with respect to DTR, particularly at high elevations. As the elevation increased, the DTR significantly increased in the absence of forest cover. This considerable difference underscores the importance of observing the understory microclimate. Furthermore, in mountainous regions, the elevation provides a continuous altitudinal gradient of mean temperature and regulates deforestation-induced warming (Zeng et al., 2021). Even in MCFs, changes in land use could irretrievably affect the functions of the local ecosystem (Hamilton, 1995; Ledo et al., 2009).

In addition to the aforementioned biotic factors, abiotic factors severely influence the microclimate in mountainous regions. From our results, fog and low-clouds create altitudinal discontinuities in DTR and highlights the irreplaceable microclimatological characteristics of MCFs through the high-resolution continuous observation in altitude across non-cloud forest and MCFs. The DTR significantly becomes narrower at MCFs in both the understory and open field. Hence, species at the MCFs necessarily encounter greater climate variability if they shift to a higher altitude for cooler habitats. The discontinuity of the DTR makes mid-elevational habitats particularly crucial because species cannot find such an environment with a small DTR along the elevation. If environmental changes along the elevation are assumed to be linear or if the weather conditions of open fields are used for the forest understory ecosystem, the distribution or behavior of species might be misinterpreted. In addition, most previous studies focused on the temporal variation of DTR or conducted integrated analyses on large spatial scales. Only a few studies have analyzed high-resolution spatial variability of the DTR, in which they have demonstrated that the elevational trends of DTR exhibit unimodal curves or nonlinear patterns along the elevation gradients in open fields (Gheyret et al., 2020; Rapp & Silman, 2012; Wang et al., 2017; Xue et al., 2020). Observations in the CCH at >3000 m a.s.l. also demonstrated the unimodal distribution of the DTR. Yet, the mechanisms behind the diverse trends of DTR in

302 altitude were not clarified in previous studies. Overall, the continuous observation with high-  
303 resolution we conducted in CCH demonstrated the dynamic fog and low-clouds were the primary  
304 contributors to the nonlinear changes in the DTR along the elevation in the understory and open  
305 fields.

306 Based on Schulz et al. (2017), our results explicitly infer the frequent foggy events  
307 generate the elevational discontinuity in the DTR using continuous in-situ observations along an  
308 elevation gradient. Fog efficiently mitigates the increasing temperature during daytime by  
309 increasing the albedo. Furthermore, the considerable radiative warming effect by the emitted  
310 downward longwave radiation from fog would even be comparable with that from the cloud  
311 (Guo et al., 2021). In addition to the topography, vegetation, and precipitation, fog occurrence is  
312 a critical factor that alters the elevational variation in the DTR. However, with the increasing  
313 temperature caused by global warming and urbanization, the altitude and frequency of fog  
314 occurrence and cloud base might be altered due to the lack of water vapor condensation (Foster,  
315 2001; Still et al., 1999). Thus, variation in fog and cloud dynamics under climate change might  
316 complicate predictions of how changes in DTR and DTR pose a threat to species in mountainous  
317 regions. Therefore, we should further explore how the fog affects microclimate and species in the  
318 MCF under climate change.

## 319 **5 Conclusions**

320 Biotic and abiotic factors jointly influence the spatial heterogeneity of the microclimate.  
321 The tree canopy's shade effectively prevents the heating effect by solar radiation, decreasing the  
322  $T_{\max}^{\text{under}}$  and  $T_{\min}^{\text{under}}$ . The DTR significantly increases at higher altitudes in open sites.  
323 Nevertheless, no significant elevational trends of DTR were observed in the understory. Due to  
324 differing elevational trends of the DTR, canopy mitigation is broader at high elevations;  
325 therefore, the forests are vital for the species living in stable and comfortable habitats at high  
326 elevations. Furthermore, the elevational trends of the DTR are discontinuous both in the  
327 understory and open fields. The discontinuity of elevational trend in DTR caused by the  
328 narrower DTR in the MCFs. The reduction of downward solar radiation by fog significantly  
329 reduces the  $T_{\max}$  in the mid-elevation than at other elevational regions at both sites. Besides, fog  
330 traps the longwave radiation to reduce the cooling rate in the mid-elevation and keep the  $T_{\min}$  at a  
331 warmer level relative to those at other elevational ranges. The discontinuity of DTR makes mid-  
332 elevation home to irreplaceable and valuable habitats. This study highlights the essential and  
333 considerable effect of fog and canopy on climatic variability, particularly in the mid- and high-  
334 elevational regions. Because of unique characteristics of the microclimate in MCFs, the complex  
335 hydro-climatological cycle in montane regions must be urgently evaluated.

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### 347 **Open research**

348 The near-surface air temperature in the open field of Yuanyanghu weather station (C0UA1) is  
349 able to be downloaded from the Data Bank for Atmospheric and Hydrologic Research  
350 (<https://dbar.pccu.edu.tw/>) after registration (Only available in Traditional Chinese). The  
351 elevation data from 30-meter Advanced Spaceborne Thermal Emission and Reflection  
352 Radiometer Global Digital Elevation Model version 2.0 are download from Center for GIS,  
353 Research Center for humanities and Social Sciences, Academia Sinica data server  
354 (<http://gis.rchss.sinica.edu.tw/qgis/?p=1619>). All results were analyzed and visualized by using  
355 R version 3.6.3. The data and the codes for analyses are compiled on the Zenodo data repository  
356 (<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5864982>).  
357

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