Climate and urbanization drive changes in the habitat suitability of *Schistosoma mansoni* competent snails in Brazil

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ABSTRACT

Schistosomiasis is a neglected tropical disease caused by *Schistosoma* parasites. *Schistosoma* are obligate parasites of freshwater *Biomphalaria* snails, so controlling snail populations is critical to reducing transmission risk. As snails are sensitive to environmental conditions, we expect their distribution is significantly impacted by global change. Here, we leveraged machine learning, remote sensing, and 30 years of snail occurrence records to map the historical and current distribution of competent *Biomphalaria* throughout Brazil. We identified key features influencing the distribution of suitable habitat and determined how *Biomphalaria* habitat has changed with climate and urbanization over the last three decades. Our models show that climate change has driven broad shifts in snail host range, whereas expansion of urban and peri-urban areas has driven localized increases in habitat suitability. Elucidating change in *Biomphalaria* distribution – while accounting for non-linearities that are difficult to detect from local case studies – can help inform schistosomiasis control strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Schistosomiasis is a globally distributed, debilitating, and sometimes fatal, disease of poverty caused by *Schistosoma* blood flukes: parasitic flatworms (class:Trematoda) of freshwater snails and vertebrates [1,2]. Schistosomiasis currently affects over 250 million people in tropical and subtropical regions of the Americas, Africa, and Asia [1,2]. With more than 800 million people living in regions at risk for transmission, schistosomiasis is one of the most important neglected tropical diseases, second only to malaria in disease burden. In the Americas, Brazil shoulders the largest burden of this disease with 2-6 million people currently infected [3]. The World Health Organization (WHO) includes schistosomiasis in the new neglected tropical disease roadmap for elimination and control by 2030[4]. However, changes in the distribution of the disease have made areas in need of public health interventions a moving target[5], thus investment in adaptive control efforts is increasingly needed to make progress towards this goal.

A prerequisite for schistosomiasis transmission is the presence of the obligate intermediate host of the parasite: freshwater snails of the genus *Biomphalaria* (Preston, 1910)---hosts for *Schistosoma mansoni*, the parasite causing intestinal schistosomiasis—and *Bulinus* (O.F. Müller, 1781), hosts for *S. haematobium*, the parasite responsible of uro-genital schistosomiasis. Therefore, the distribution and abundance of the snail host underlies the observed spatiotemporal variation in schistosomiasis cases where focal transmission occurs. Understanding the spatial distribution of the intermediate host snails and their environmental, ecological, and socioeconomic determinants is thus a public health priority. In Brazil, an endemic country for intestinal schistosomiasis, *S. mansoni* is transmitted via three species of *Biomphalaria* snails: *Biomphalaria glabrata* (Say, 1818)*, B. straminea* (Dunker, 1848)*,* and *B. tenagophila* (D'Orbigny, 1835) [6]*.* As ectotherms, temperature strongly influences fundamental snail biological processes, including growth rates and reproductive rates; as freshwater animals, precipitation can influence habitat availability and phenology, all of which ultimately impact snail fecundity and survival [7,8]. Further, local case studies have demonstrated that *Biomphalaria* snails can thrive in human dominated environments within urban and peri-urban areas, such as drainage ditches and irrigation systems for small-scale agriculture, which are often found in areas with marginalized populations and informal settlements with limited access to clean water, sanitation, and wastewater treatment[9]. Thus, multiple environmental features impact snail habitat suitability and, consequently, human exposure to schistosomiasis. With climate change and land-use change on the rise, we expect that the extent of snail habitat suitability has shifted through time and will continue to shift with ongoing global change – continuing to move the target for public health interventions.

In Brazil, as well as globally, schistosomiasis control has been orchestrated through preventative and reactive medical treatment via administration of the drug praziquantel [2], WASH interventions (access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene)[10], and environmental interventions (e.g., water engineering and snail control) [10–12]. These control strategies are typically enacted at municipality or regional extents, necessitating fine-scale understanding of where and when transmission may occur. Elucidating how environmental variables have influenced past changes

in snail occurrence can help to anticipate which areas may benefit from increased surveillance for disease emergence and facilitate more precise allocation of resources.

Past efforts have mapped the current climate envelope of snail habitats at the national and regional scale as well as projected the climate envelope of the *Biomphalaria* under future climate conditions[13,14]. The last publication of a national model of Brazil in 2012 included climate variables and vegetation greenness to map the static distribution of *Biomphalaria*[13]. Since then, remote sensing climate and environmental data has improved in both quality and scale (i.e., it is available at finer temporal and spatial resolutions). In particular, fine spatial and temporal resolution (e.g., 30m-1km; annual) land-use/land-cover, human population density, and hydrological variables are now available at the continental to global scale [15,16]. An increased number of spatially (100m) and temporally precise (annual) georeferenced biodiversity data for Brazil, including presence of *Schistosoma* parasite-competent snails, are now available from a number of research databases and public collections. Finally, advances in machine learning, particularly the accessibility of tree-based machine learning models, allow us to not only identify important variables, which is typical of machine learning models, but also to assess the functional form of the relationship between the environmental variable and habitat suitability (e.g, habitat suitability increases with precipitation seasonality)[17,18]. Leveraging this new wealth of data and interpretable yet innovative machine learning algorithm, it is now possible to develop species distribution models of *Biomphalaria* snails across multiple time steps across a large geographical extent—all of Brazil—but also at a fine-scale spatial resolution (1 km^2), which was not possible ten years ago.

The goal of this paper is to map the historical and current distributions of the three competent snail intermediate hosts of *Schistosoma mansoni* in Brazil using a wide range of remotely sensed climatological and land-use data, a cutting edge, powerful and highly flexible machine learning model (Extreme Gradient Boosted Regression Trees), and a unique data set of over 11,000 georeferenced records of *Schistosoma* parasite competent snail occurrences spanning over three decades. Specifically, by identifying environmental variables that most contributed to the probability of snail occurrence and using counterfactual analyses, we asked: (i) what are the key features of the environment, and their functional response, that influence snail habitat suitability? And (ii) how has the snail habitat suitability shifted with climate and urbanization throughout the last three decades?

In contrast to projections of snail distributions under future climate change, which are difficult to validate, the long time series of snail data allowed us to (i) use hindcasting—i.e., the process of testing statistical models by comparing them to actual historical observations to determine how well the models match the historical record—to validate SDMs' precision on the basis of actual field observations and (ii) counterfactual analysis to determine the relative importance of specific climatological and land-use changes in explaining the observed geographical range shift of *Schistosoma* parasite competent snails. This work will help to formulate more reliable hypotheses about how snail habitat suitability may change under current environmental trajectories, allowing us to evaluate whether future projections are in line with what we expect based on the observed change through time.

RESULTS

Model validation & hindcasting performance

We used spatial cross-validation to evaluate model performance. Performance was high for each snail species: mean AUC and sensitivity was ≥ 0.80 and model sensitivity was ≥ 0.80 for all species. Mean model specificity was ≥ 0.70 for all species (Table 1; supplement p 7). Model performance was also high for the hindcasting analysis, where we used the trained model to predict out-of-sample data collected between 1990-1999. For all species, AUC was > 0.80 (*B. glabrata* = 0.89; *B. straminea* = 0.87; *B. tenagophila* = 0.81) and sensitivity was > 0.80 (*B. glabrata* = 0.93; *B. straminea* = 0.82; *B. tenagophila* = 0.89) (Table 1; supplement p 7).

Feature contribution and functional response

Across the three species we found that, on average (i.e., across bootstrapping iterations), the features associated with climate, urbanization, and agricultural land-cover contributed the most to the predicted probability of snail occurrence, as opposed to features associated with hydrology or soil properties (Figures 1-3).

For *B. glabrata* and *B. straminea*, we found that four out of the top five predictors of snail occurrence were climate variables, with three of these variables associated with precipitation (precipitation seasonality, precipitation in the driest months, and precipitation in the wettest quarter) and the fourth variable associated with temperature (isothermality) (Figure 1a, 2a). Our model indicates that, for both species, snail habitat suitability non-linearly increases with precipitation seasonality but decreases when precipitation in the wettest quarter was high (Figure 1b, 2b). For *B. glabrata,* habitat suitability also decreases with precipitation in the driest quarter (Figure 1b), while for *B. straminea,* habitat suitability decreases when annual precipitation was high (Figure 2b). The climate profile for *B. tenagophila* significantly differed from that of *B. glabrata* and *B. straminea*. Climate variables made up only two of the top five predictors (Figure 3a). *B. tenagophila* habitat suitability non-linearly decreases with precipitation seasonality and the temperature during the driest quarter (Figure 3b).

Globally, schistosomiasis is considered a rural disease but has been observed close to or in urban areas in Brazil. To measure the impact of urbanization on *Biomphalaria* occurrence, and because an urban versus rural dichotomy does not capture the complexity of urbanization in Brazil[19], we derived an urban to rural gradient, where 0 indicated that the snail was observed in an urban area and 1 indicated the snail was in a rural area, and continuous values from 0-1 indicate the relative location of the snail along this gradient. For all three snail species, we found that location along the urban (>300 per people per km, with 2500 people in a contiguous area) to rural gradient was among the top five predictors, with location along the high density urban (>1500 per people per km^2 and > 150,000 in a contiguous area) to rural gradient also among the top five predictors for *B. tenagophila* (Figures 1a, 2a, 3a). Snail habitat suitability increased

for all snails within pixels closer to urban areas (0 = in an urban area) (Figures 1b, 2b, 3b). According to the univariate partial dependence plot (PDP), the relationship between *B. tenagophila* and the urban:rural gradient followed a pattern of exponential decay, whereas the change in probability was more gradual for *B. glabrata,* and nearly linear for *B. straminea*. Agricultural crop cover and temporary crop cover were among the top six predictors for *B. straminea* and *B. tenagopila,* respectively, with habitat suitability increasing with crop cover (Figure 2-3).

Changing snail distribution

According to model predictions, we found that habitat suitability of *B. glabrata* decreased from 1992 - 2017 throughout western Brazil, and increased towards coastal areas of the Southeast and Northeast region (Figure 3a-c). In contrast, we found that habitat suitability of *B. straminea* primarily expanded southward, whereas for *B. tenagophila* suitability contracted within the state of São Paulo (Figure 3d-i). In total, our model predicted a fairly large change in habitat suitability for each *Biomphalaria* host species: 58% (CI: 52%-66%) of the area of Brazil experienced a change in *B. glabrata* suitability, 55% (CI: 45%-64%) for *B. straminea,* and 28% (CI: 19% - 34%) for *B. tenagophila* (Table 2; supplement p 23). For *B. glabrata,* the area that decreased in suitability was equivalent to the area that increased, whereas for *B. straminea* the increase in area of habitat suitability was greater than the area decrease, and for *B. tenagophila* the decrease in the area of habitat suitability was marginally higher than the increase (Table 2; supplement p 23).

Based on our counterfactual analysis, for each species, large-scale changes in predicted habitat suitability were driven by regional variation in climate between the historical (1990-1999) and recent (2000-2020) time periods (Table 2; Figure 4). For all three species, the climate-associated increases in suitability in some areas were offset by climate-associated decreases in suitability in others (Table 2; supplement p 23), indicating broad scale shifts as opposed to net increases and decreases in suitability. Throughout the last three decades, the greatest change in urbanization was the growth of small-medium sized urban areas (300-1500 people per km^2 with > 2500 in a contiguous area) (supplement p 26). As such, in contrast to larger-scale climate-driven shifts, changes in the probability of snail occurrence associated with urbanization were highly localized at the outskirts of existing cities or new cities that emerged between the two time points (Figure 5; supplement pp 24-25), with a largely positive increase in suitability associated with urbanization (Table 2; supplement pp 23-24). For example, in the Vale do Rio Doce, a meso-region bordering Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo States where schistosomiasis is endemic, there were numerous small-medium cities that emerged (e.g., Baxio Gaundú, Inhapim), while the area of the dense cities (Ipatinga and Governador Valadares) hardly changed (Figure 5a, d). As such, our model predicts that the most notable change in *B. glabrata* habitat suitability associated with urbanization is in the northeast and south of this meso-region. In the meso-regions of the Recife Metropolitan Area, an area where *B. straminea* has been found infected with *S. mansoni* [20], and São Paulo Metropolitan area, an area where *B. tenagophila* has been associated with foci of transmission[21], the most notable changes in *B.*

straminea and *B. tenagophila* habitat suitability were at city outskirts where new urban areas had developed around the periphery of the cities (Figure 5b, c, e, f).

DISCUSSION

Schistosomiasis snail intermediate host distributions depend strongly on climate and land-use variation and, as a result, have shifted substantially in the last 30 years in Brazil (Figure 3). Using remotely sensed data, machine learning, and a long-term dataset of expert-collected snail occurrence data, we mapped the distribution of snail habitat suitability at a fine spatial resolution ($1km^2$) and large geographic extent (national) with high accuracy (Figure 3, supplement p 7). We found that climate and urbanization features are the most important predictors of *Biomphalaria* habitat suitability across all three species, after controlling for sampling bias (Figure 1-3). Large-scale shifts in snail habitat suitability occurred due to regional changes in climatic variables, whereas urbanization influenced fine-scale, highly localized increases in habitat suitability within and around small-medium sized urban areas, including small-medium cities and peri-urban areas, perhaps due to lack of infrastructure in rapidly growing informal settlement, as people move from rural and urban areas both within and across Brazilian states[20,22] (Figure 4, Figure 5, supplement pp 23-24, 26).

With respect to climatological variables snail habitat suitability was primarily influenced by precipitation patterns for *B. straminea* and *B. glabrata* and by temperature for *B. tenagophila* (Figures 1-3). Counterintuitively, as snails inhabit freshwater habitats, *B. glabrata* habitat suitability was highest with low precipitation of the driest month (Figure 1b). Low precipitation may create small pockets of surface water ideal for snail habitat. Additionally, *B. glabrata* habitat suitability was highest in areas with high precipitation seasonality, i.e., a strong difference in precipitation between the dry season and the wet season (Figure 2b). Perhaps freshwater habitats in areas with low precipitation in the driest quarter but high precipitation seasonality accumulate enough water during the wet season to support snail survival and reproduction throughout the dry season. *B. straminea* was most likely to occur in areas with annual precipitation < 6000 kg m^{-2} $year^{-1}$(Figure 2b). Its habitat suitability is high across a large range of precipitation values but likely gets flushed out with intense precipitation. Further, *B. straminea* habitat is most suitable at high values of isothermality, suggesting that these snails are most likely to inhabit areas where seasonal temperature variation is low compared to diurnal variation (Figure 2b). Our model indicates that *B. tenagophila* has a distinct climatic niche as it is found in areas with low temperatures of the driest quarter, consistent with *B. tenagophila* almost exclusively found in the south of Brazil (Figures 3b). However, these results contrast with previously published national models, which found variables associated with temperature to be the strongest contributors to model performance. This may be related to the mismatch of *Biomphalaria* occurrence points and the climatologies used in previous studies, which were retrieved from WorldClim that spans 1960-2000[23], whereas our climatologies overlapped with the decade the snail was collected. Yet, because this analysis is correlational, we cannot rule out the influence of unobserved variables that are correlated with these climatic conditions and may drive the discrepancy between the models.

The location along the urban to rural gradient was among the top three predictors of habitat suitability for all three species (Figure 1-3). The distance to a small-medium urban area (300-1,500 people per 1km^2 with > 2,500 people in contiguous pixels) was important for all three snail species, and distance to high density urban area (>1500 people per 1km^2 with > 150,000 people in contiguous pixels) was among the top five predictors of *B. tenagophila* habitat suitability. Although the rate of change in snail habitat suitability and urban gradient differed between the three snail species, in general, habitat suitability for the three species is higher closer to urban areas than rural areas (Figure 1-3). Case studies indicate that schistosomiasis, a disease that has been historically associated with rural areas, is urbanizing in Brazil [9], with empirical evidence supporting the hypothesis that urban and peri-urban areas provide the necessary abiotic factors for snail survival, while reducing the number of snail competitors and predators, ultimately increasing snail habitat suitability[9,24]. Small scale agricultural land-use found in peri-urban and urban areas—agricultural mosaics and temporary crops—were top predictors of snail habitat suitability, providing some insight on the types of habitats that urban areas provide[25]. However, as the location along the urban to rural gradient contributed more to model predictions than agricultural land-use and land-cover, there are likely other aspects of urban and peri-urban infrastructure that provide snail habitat, such as the lack of paved roads with rainwater drainage systems and wastewater treatment facilities in rapidly growing settlements[26], which also favor the dispersion in the environment of *S. mansoni* eggs with fecal waste[20,26]. The location along the urban to rural gradient is a rough proxy for estimating the impact of urban dynamics and should be updated in future studies to better incorporate specific infrastructure and land cover composition of urban and peri-urban areas and estimate edge effects, especially as they may lag behind change in population size, and determine specific socio-ecological mechanisms predicting fine-scale snail habitat suitability.

Our models suggest that climate and urbanization have significantly contributed to a shift in *Biomphalaria* habitat suitability over the last three decades (Figure 4-5, supplement 24-25). Distributions of *B. glabrata,* the most competent intermediate host, have shifted to coastal areas, particularly of the southeast (Figure 3), with our counterfactual analysis supporting the hypothesis that this shift is driven by both climate, particularly increased precipitation seasonality and drier dry seasons, and urbanization (Figures 4, supplement p 24). Of the three host snails, the distribution of the habitat suitability for *B. straminea* has changed the most, with a large increase in habitat suitability throughout the southeast, reflective of decreasing annual precipitation and increasing isothermality within Central West and southern Brazil across the two time points, and local changes associated with urbanization (Figure 2, Figure 4-5, supplement pp 15-16). While *B. glabrata* is the most competent host, the expansive and moving habitat suitability of *B. straminea* suggests that this species may play a larger role in schistosomiasis persistence under a changing environment. In contrast, the geographic extent of *B. tenagophila* habitat suitability has decreased over the last three decades, most likely due to temporal variation in temperatures and reduced precipitation seasonality in southeastern Brazil (Figure 2, Figure 4, supplement pp 15-16).

While this analysis indicates large geographic shifts in snail habitat suitability, on-the-ground observations may not detect this shift because land-use, particularly urbanization, may create

localized pockets that amplify or dilute snail habitat suitability in adjacent areas (Figure 5; supplement pp 13). For example, around some new cities we observed increases, roughly 10 km wide, in suitable habitat associated with both climate and urbanization. For instance, the cities of Inhapim and Baixo Guandú grew from rural areas to small cities with >20,000 people between the historical and recent points. Both cities have reported some of the highest numbers of schistosomiasis cases between 2007-2017 in their respective states (Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo)[27,28]. Notably, our analysis shows that there has been a decrease in suitability associated with the "disappearance" of small-medium urban areas between the time points. This warrants further on-the-ground investigation and validation as this result may be reflective of change in infrastructure associated with population size or might be an artifact of our definition of urbanization, where the population size and/or density is only marginally drops below our urban population size and density thresholds, thus showing up on maps as a dissolved urban area when in reality there has been little change in infrastructure that impacts schistosomiasis risk. Overall, this analysis provides a fine scale yet bird's-eye view of changing snail habitat suitability, allowing us to tease apart these interactions and better understand change in snail distribution through time.

Despite the three intermediate host snails having distinct socio-ecological niches within Brazil, our work underscores the importance of species-specific combinations of temperature, precipitation, and urban conditions that are highly predictive of snail occurrence, and therefore important indicators of schistosomiasis risk. Proactively anticipating shifts in snail habitat suitability and schistosomiasis risk is a major priority for targeting snail control and public health services and for mitigating disease emergence. Long-term snail surveillance and control programs face shifting demands as the seasonality, intensity, and geography of snail populations change with climate, land-use, and socio-ecological conditions. Our study shows that snail habitat suitability has changed throughout the last three decades, and provides profiles of exposure risk that can help shift the spatial priorities of control efforts with changing socio-ecological conditions, land-use, and climate.

METHODS

We used machine-learning based (XGBoost) Species Distribution Models (SDMs), 30 years of expert-collected occurrence data, and remote sensing data to map the habitat suitability for each of the three *Schistosoma* parasite competent *Biomphalaria* species. SDMs use species occurrence coordinates and corresponding environmental variables to interpolate habitat suitability across large geographic extents. Machine learning SDMs are particularly flexible models that can handle non-linear relationships, collinear features (covariates), and complex interactions among features[29,30]. We trained the models on data collected from 2000-2020. Using data collected from 1990-1999 as a hold-out test set, we used a hindcasting approach to test the model.

Occurrence points and data thinning

We used a combination of snail occurrence points collected by the Brazilian government programs, Medical Malacology Collection (CMM-Fiocruz) Minas Gerais and São Paulo

Department of Public Health. In total, the programs collected 11,299 snail records that spanned 1990–2020 (supplement pp 1;8). For our analysis, for each focal species, we thinned data so that only one occurrence point was retained per 1km^2 grid cell using the R package *dismo*[31]. Thinning data is essential to control for pseudo-replication[32].

Background points

There is often a lack of true species absence data for model input and thus background points or pseudo-absences are used as a proxy for where the focal species does not occur[30]. To generate background points, we created a background mask using species records from the Global Biodiversity Information Facility (GBIF)[33] as well as expert collected snails that were not the focal species. Specifically, from GBIF, we used georeferenced records from all freshwater animals in Brazil. We downloaded 55,057 coordinates, spanning 1990-2020, from 2135 species. Records from all freshwater animals allowed us to create a landscape of freshwater animal sampling locations and, thus, where snail species could plausibly have been sampled. These methods help to account for sampling bias[30]. We first overlaid a 1km^2 resolution grid over Brazil. Each cell was then assigned a probability value based on the number of background points (records) within each grid cell. Using these probabilities, we selected the background points by probabilistically sampling twice the number of occurrence points from unique 1km^2 grid cells. This procedure was repeated for each of the three competent host snail species.

Environmental data processing

We included features related to climate, land-use/land cover (LULC), hydrology, topography, and soil properties in our distribution models (supplement pp 1-2; 4-6). We used the CHELSA v2.1 monthly products to calculate 10-year climatologies spanning four decades (1980-1989, 1990-1999, 2000-2009, 2010-2017)[34]. The CHELSA dataset occurred at the coarsest spatial resolution: 1 km^2. To minimize issues with spatial autocorrelation, we aggregated all other spatial covariates to a spatial resolution of 1 km^2.

To estimate land-use and land-cover (LULC) variables, we used the MAPBIOMAS land-cover rasters collection 7.0 v2 to calculate the percent cover of temporary crops (excluding soy, sugarcane, rice, and cotton) and mosaic of use—two land-use types associated with free standing, fresh water in urban and peri-urban farms[35]—within the 1km^2 grid cell during the year the data point was collected[16]. We also incorporated hydrology and water availability using the Global Surface Water dataset[36], MERIT Hydro data (100m resolution)[37], and WWF HydroSHEDS Free Flowing River dataset[38], topography using the NASA NASADEM Digital Elevation dataset (30m resolution)[39], and the OpenLandMap dataset (250m resolution) to calculate soil properties[40–45]. We removed highly correlated features ($r > 0.75$) (supplement pp 1-2; 4-6).

Urban-to-Rural gradient index

We defined urban and rural areas using population density and population size as a proxy. First, we defined an urban area based on an aggregation of urban definitions throughout South America: an urban area had population densities from 300-1500 people within 1 km^2 with contiguous pixels totalling at least 2500 people[46]. Next, we included high density urban areas in

both analyses: > 1500 people per grid cell with contiguous grid cells totalling more than 150,000 people[47]. As population-based definitions of urban areas are inconsistent, as a separate analysis, we repeated the analysis with alternative definitions of urbanization as described in supplement p 2, and the results yielded similar results (supplement pp 7, 17-22). We used WorldPop to estimate population size and cumulative cost mapping—where every pixel is assigned the total cost of the lowest cost path (distance) to an urban pixel—to estimate the distance to the urban pixel for points collected between 2000 - 2020[15]. WorldPop data is not available before 2000; as such, we derived population estimates from 1990 - 1999 by linearly interpolating between the 2000 WorldPop raster and the Global Human Development Layer, Population Grid 1975 raster[35]. To calculate the final variable - location along the urban to rural gradient - we divided distance to an urban area by distance to a rural area and standardized it from 0-1 using a max-min transformation. All environmental data was processed and aggregated to 1km^2 grid cells around each data point using Google Earth Engine[48] and the GEE Python API in Google Co-Laboratory, with the exception of CHELSA, which was downloaded from their AWS repository[34,49].

Extreme Gradient Boosted Regression Tree SDMs

We used extreme gradient boosted regression tree models, using package *Xgboost* [50], for each SDM as boosted regression models were determined to yield the best performance and interpretability for modeling snail habitat in Brazil[29]. Extreme gradient boosted regression is a machine learning algorithm that creates an ensemble of weak decision trees to form a stronger prediction model by iteratively learning from weak classifiers and combining them into a strong classifier (i.e., boosting)[17]. Gradient boosted regression is flexible in that it allows for non-linearity, both among features (i.e., interactions) and between features and the response variable, higher collinearity among features than statistical models, and non-random patterns of missing data, characteristics frequently observed in ecological data. Spatial cross-validation (5-fold), using the R package *blockCV*[51], was used to estimate the model's predictive power in geographic regions not used for training so to minimize inflating model performance values due to spatial autocorrelation of environmental predictors[51]. Model parameters were tuned and trained using Bayesian optimization via the R package *bayesianOptimization*[52]. The suite of tuned hyperparameters are described in supplement pp 2. Model sensitivity (i.e., the proportion of occurrences the model correctly identifies as occurrences), model specificity (i.e., the proportion of background points that the model correctly identifies as background), and model area-under-the-curve (AUC; i.e., a measure that calculates how well the model correctly distinguishes occurrence points from background points, where AUC ≤ 0.5 indicates the model performs no better than a coin flip) were calculated using the R package *pROC*[53] and *caret*[54]. Model training and validation was conducted using data from 2000-2020.

To evaluate the average contribution of each covariate to model predictions, we first identified important features using SHAP (Shapley Additive Explanations) Values calculated via the R package *SHAPforxgboost*[55] (supplement p 3). Next, to generate environmental profiles for each

snail, we constructed partial dependence plots (PDPs) using the R package *pdp*[56]. PDPs illustrate the average relationship between habitat suitability and the feature of interest. The average relationship is calculated by fitting models with all combinations of the non-focal variables for each value of the focal feature. To account for uncertainty in the model, feature contribution (SHAP Values) and PDPs were calculated 25 times, where, for each iteration, the model was trained on a randomly selected 80% of the data (bootstrapping). Data and code are available at https://github.com/ckglidden/biomphalaria-sdm-brazil.

Hindcasting & Counterfactuals

Our ultimate objective was to use historical information to estimate how *Biomphalaria* species distributions have changed with land-use and climate. To evaluate whether our model could track changes in snail distribution through time, we trained the model on all data from 2000-2020 and tested the model on data collected from 1992-1999. We calculated model sensitivity, specificity, and AUC to evaluate how well the model could predict suitable snail habitats on historic out-of-sample data.

We then conducted a counterfactual analysis to examine how changes in climate and urbanization contributed to observed changes in *Biomphalaria* distribution over time. First, using the model trained on 2000-2020 data, we created prediction maps for the historical distribution of each snail (using data from 1992) and the current distribution of the snail (using data from 2017). We then created a climate counterfactual map by estimating model predictions using current data for all variables except climate, for which we used historical data (i.e., predicted what the current distribution would be if all variables but climate changed between the two time points). We repeated this process for urban variables to create an urban counterfactual. Finally, we compared the observed change in distribution between 1992-2017 with the observed change in distribution using the counterfactual scenario to estimate the change in distribution that was correlated with each set of features (i.e., climate or urban). For example, in a given location, if the change of probability of occurrence in the observed map is higher than change in probability in the counterfactual map (when climatology remained at historical values), then we infer that change in climatology is, at least in part, correlated with the increased probability observed between the two observed time periods. We created prediction maps for each of the 25 iterations described in the bootstrapping protocol above.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

CKG, ALS, AC, RT, RP, MM, EM, SHS, GADL conceived and designed the analysis; RT, RP, RLC collected the data; KML, PL, VS, TSA contributed data or analysis tools; CKG, ALS, AC performed the analysis; CKG, ALS, RT, RP, MM, EM, GADL wrote the paper.

DATA & CODE AVAILABILITY

https://github.com/ckglidden/biomphalaria-sdm-brazil/

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Table 1. Model performance metrics for the three *Biomphalaria* species. The results for 5-fold cross validation include the mean, with the 95% confidence interval in parentheses. For model validation (5-fold cross validation), the number of background points were 2x the number of occurrence points. The number of background points used for hindcast testing, which were based on retaining one point per 1km^2 grid cell, was 1688, 1691, and 1684 for *B. glabrata*, *B. straminea*, and *B. tenagophila,* respectively. Notably, these points were not used to train the model but only to test model predictions, therefore, class imbalance does not impact results.

Species	**No. occurrence points**	**AUC**	**Sensitivity**	**Specificity**
Model validation: 5-fold spatial cross-validation				
B. glabrata	165	0.85 (0.76 - 0.94)	0.85 (0.79 - 0.92)	0.80 (0.71 - 0.89)
B. straminea	283	0.91 (0.88 - 0.95)	0.85 (0.74 - 0.95)	0.86 (0.79 - 0.92)
B. tenagophila	173	0.80 (0.64 - 0.95)	0.92 (0.85 - 0.99)	0.66 (0.40 - 0.92)
Hindcasting: testing model on 1990-1999 data				
B. glabrata	40	0.83	0.75	0.77
B. straminea	33	0.87	0.82	0.86
B. tenagophila	28	0.83	0.93	0.68

Table 2. The proportion of the area of Brazil that is predicted to have experienced a change in habitat suitability between 1992-2017. The counterfactuals indicate the percent of area change associated with those features. The table presents the mean values, with the 95% confidence intervals in parentheses
across 25 bootstrap iterations.

predicted distribution (proportion of change in area)			
	total change	**positive change**	**negative change**
B. glabrata	0.58 (0.52-0.66)	0.29 (0.36-0.34)	0.29 (0.24-0.36)
B. straminea	0.55 (0.4-0.64)	0.31 (0.27-0.34)	0.24 (0.16-0.30)
B. tenagophila	0.28 (0.19-0.34)	0.12 (0.08 - 0.16)	0.25 (0.11-0.19)
climate counterfactual (proportion of change in area)			
	total change	**positive change**	**negative change**
B. glabrata	0.54 (0.46-0.62)	0.25 (0.21-0.30)	0.29 (0.23-0.37)
B. straminea	0.45 (0.33-0.56)	0.24 (0.17-0.30)	0.21 (0.12-0.29)
B. tenagophila	0.18 (0.13-0.24)	0.07 (0.04-0.10)	0.11 (0.08-0.16)
urban counterfactual (proportion of change in area)			
	total change	**positive change**	**negative change**
B. glabrata	0.16 (0.12-0.20)	0.11 (0.08-0.14)	0.05 (0.03-0.07)
B. straminea	0.20 (0.15-0.24)	0.14 (0.11-0.18)	0.06 (0.04 - 0.07)
B. tenagophila	0.04 (0.02-0.07)	0.03 (0.05-0.04)	0.01 (0.006-0.024)

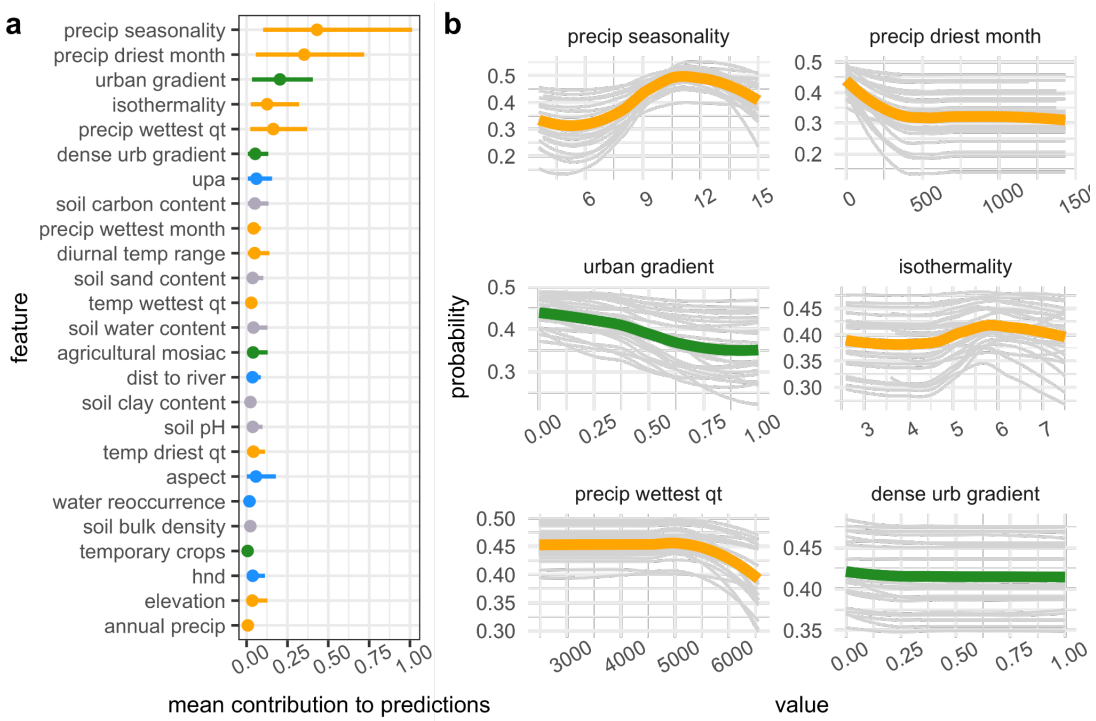

Figure 1. *B. glabrata* habitat suitability is most sensitive to climate and urbanization variables. (a) Feature contribution for each feature. Points are the absolute value of the mean contribution to predictions (mean |SHAP Value|) for the covariate across all data points (i.e., global feature contribution), bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Climate variables are displayed in orange, land-use/land-cover in green, water in blue, and soil type/cover in light purple. **(b)** Response of snail occurrence to top six contributing variables. For each univariate plot, light gray lines represent the probability of occurrence after controlling for all other covariates for each bootstrapping iteration and green (land-use variable) or orange (climate variable) represent the average across all iterations.

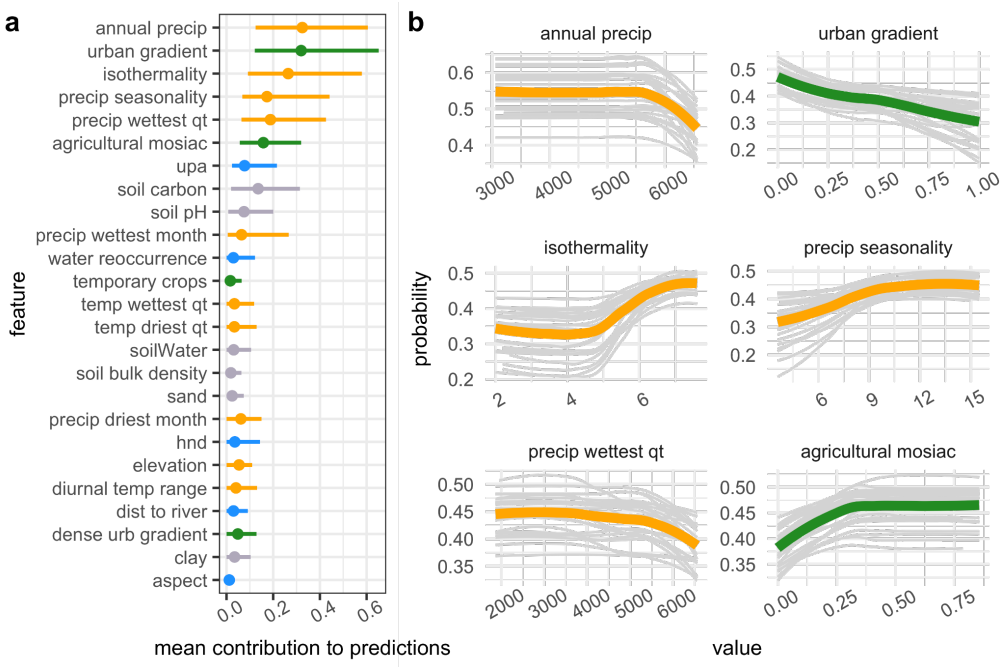

Figure 2. *B. straminea* habitat suitability is most sensitive to climate and land-use. (a) Feature contribution for each feature. Points are the absolute value of the mean contribution to predictions (mean |SHAP Value|) for the covariate across all data points (i.e., global feature contribution), bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Color coding as described in Fig. 1. **(b)** Response of snail occurrence to top six contributing variables. For each univariate plot, light gray lines represent the probability of occurrence after controlling for all other covariates for each bootstrapping iteration and green (land-use variable) or orange (climate variable) represent the average across all iterations.

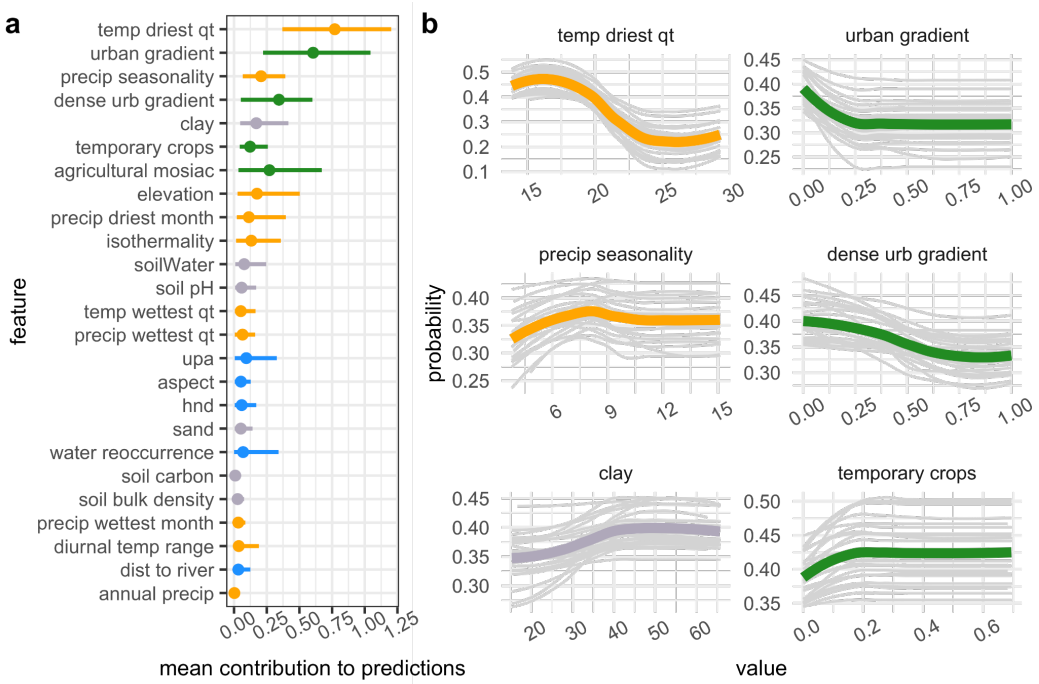

Figure 3. *B. tenagophila* habitat suitability is most sensitive to climate, land-use, and soil clay. (a) Feature contribution for each feature. Points are the absolute value of the mean contribution to predictions (mean |SHAP Value|) for the covariate across all data points (i.e., global feature contribution), bars represent the 95% confidence interval. Color coding as described in Fig. 1. **(b)** Response of snail occurrence to top six contributing variables. For each univariate plot, light gray lines represent the probability of occurrence after controlling for all other covariates for each bootstrapping iteration and green (land-use variable) or orange (climate variable) represent the average across all iterations.

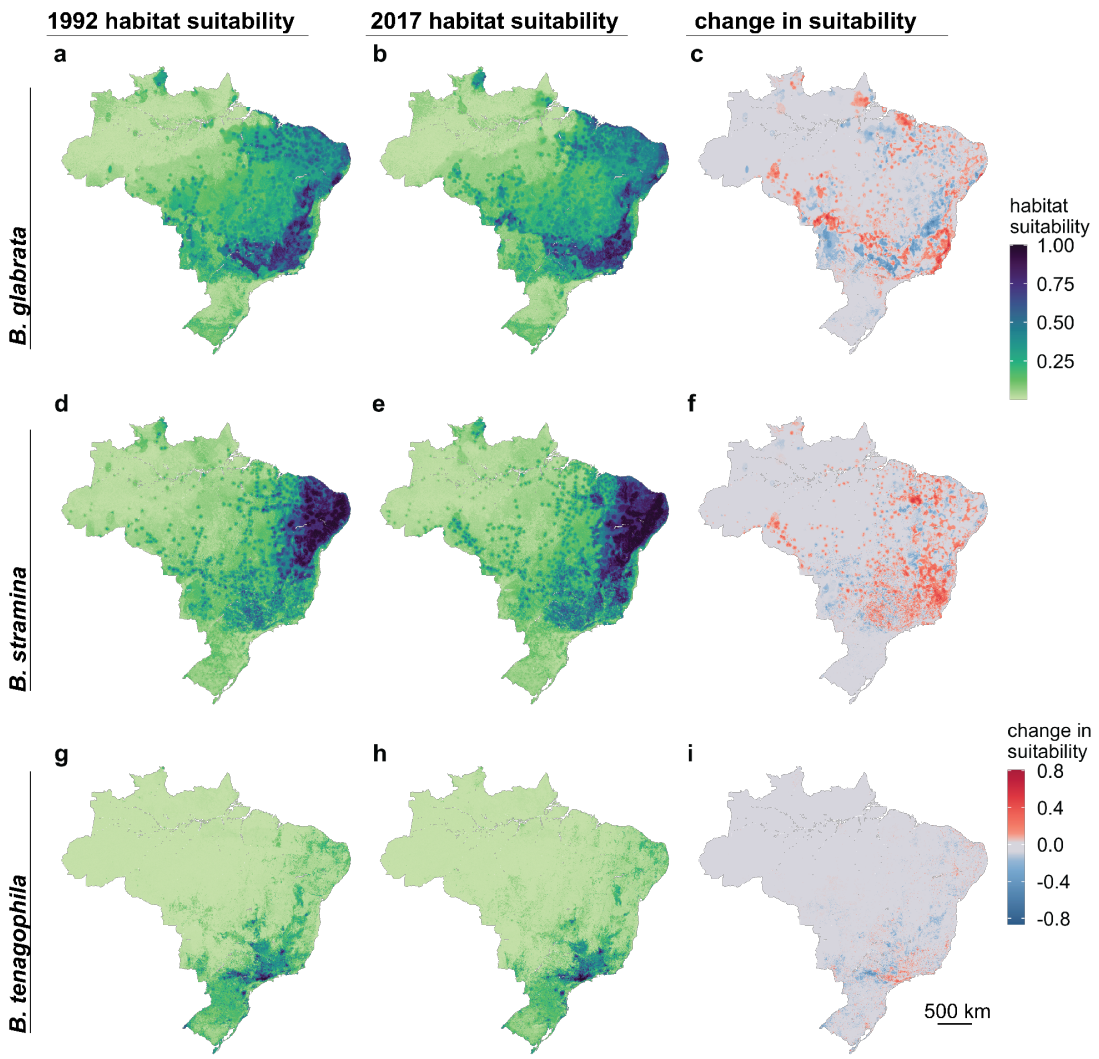

Figure 3. Predicted habitat suitability of the three competent snail hosts shifted over 25 years. The figure includes the distribution of each snail species in 1992 (first column), 2017 (second column), and the change in habitat suitability between the two time points (third column; red indicates an increase in habitat suitability and blue indicates a decrease in habitat suitability). Spatial resolution is 1km^2. Figures are mean values per pixel across 25 bootstrapping iterations. For each species, predicted values are scaled from 0 to 1 using a min-max transformation.

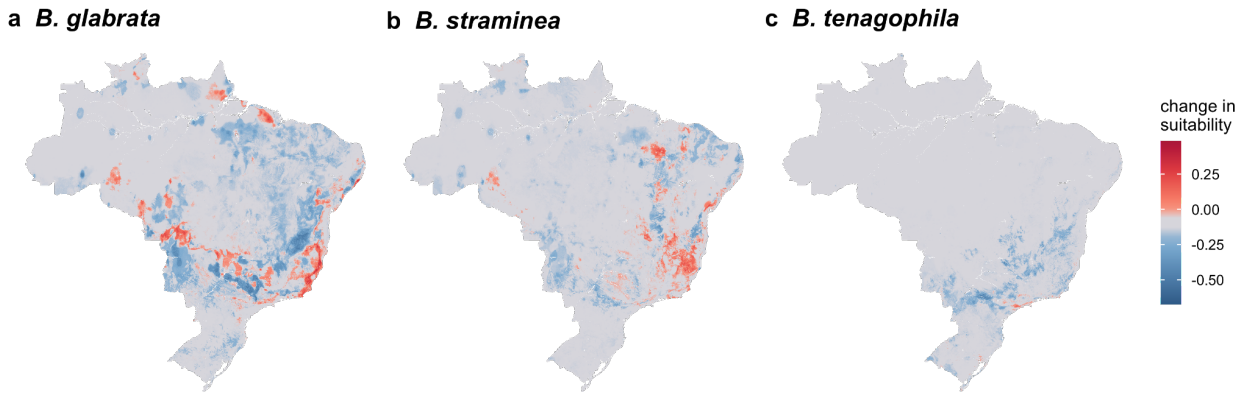

Figure 4. Climate drives large scale changes in suitability for all three species. The difference in distribution between the predicted distribution of 2017 and the counterfactual: the 2017 prediction estimated when holding climate features as they were observed in 1992. Red indicates the habitat that became more suitable with change in climate and blue indicates the climate became less suitable with the observed change in climate (i.e., the change in predicted distribution is due to the change in climate). Figures are mean values per pixel across 25 bootstrapping iterations.

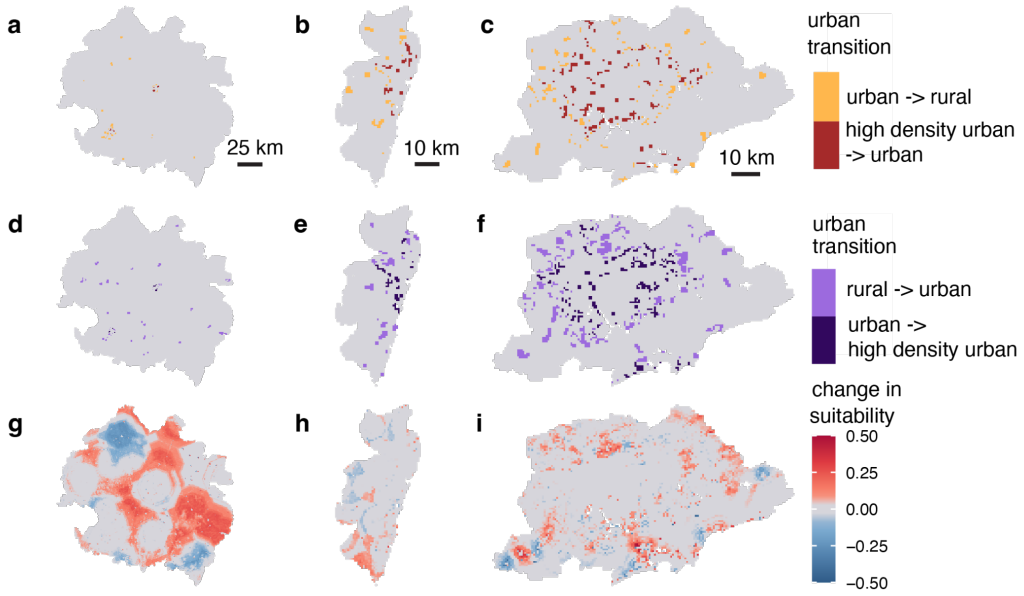

Figure 5. An example of how urbanization affects habitat suitability on small scales. (a-f) The change in urban extent for the Vale do Rio Doce **(a, d)**, Recife Metropolitan **(b, e)**, and São Paulo Metropolitan **(c, f)** mesoregions between 1992 and 2017. **(g-i)** The difference in snail probability for 2017 when using urban-rural gradient values for 2017 versus 1992 (i.e, the change in snail probability attributed to change in urban distribution and extent) for *B. glabrata* in Vale do Rio Doce **(g),** *B. straminea* in Recife **(h)**, and *B. tenagophila* in São Paulo **(i)**. The Vale de Rio Doce region is much larger than the other two mesoregions, but the change in urban extent highlights that there was a significant amount of emergence of small-medium cities (300-1500 people per 1km^2 pixel, with >2500 people in contiguous pixels) and this is associated with a significant change in habitat suitability. We chose the mesoregion for each snail based on evidence that the species is associated with foci of transmission and/or have been found infected with *Schistsoma mansoni* in that area. Figures **(g-i)** are mean values per pixel across 25 bootstrapping iterations.