The application of population modeling techniques to the development of Non-Detriment Findings for *Galanthus*

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Modelling is a typical part of ecological investigations and PVAs

• One issue with some current NDFs is that the assumptions made in their formulation are not transparent – especially levels of uncertainty
• Models allow us to objectively summarise what we think are the important processes determining the dynamics of the system we are interested in
• They can potentially lead to useful quantitative predictions – conservative quotas
The Turkish *Galanthus* system works – but we’re not precisely sure why

- The Turkish NDF system is based on experience of what are and are not sustainable harvest levels and methods.
- For outsiders it is difficult to learn from the example – what is generally relevant?
- What is it about *Galanthus elwesii* that allows these NDFs to be made in this way?
- If we understood the underlying processes more we could apply this knowledge to other systems.
We investigated the *Galanthus* dynamics using a population model

- In a perfect environment, what would be sustainable harvesting methods?
  - Extraction quantities?
  - Rotation periods?
- Does the model support the observation that current methods are sustainable?
- How hard could the system be pushed before harvesting is detrimental?
- What do we expect to differ between habitats or for different taxa?
An initial modelling investigation based on no data but expert knowledge

- This life history diagram summarises our knowledge of the *G. elwesii* life cycle in optimum habitats in Turkey.
The model suggests practical ways to develop future predictive models

- An individual based model is usually a big computer program that has rules of interaction for each individual – they are often quite difficult to assess as an “outsider”
The model predicts that the current harvest methods are sustainable.
We can identify several reasons why harvesting is non-detrimental

- High potential birth rates
- Harvest after reproduction has occurred
- High survival throughout life
- What if these are not true? – e.g. collection of some juveniles, higher mortality, habitat heterogeneity?
- Stochasticity is a key unknown
  - how variable are environmental conditions and demographic parameters?
The model allows us to compare harvest methods – wild population
The model allows us to compare harvest methods – e.g. yield.
The model suggests other metrics to monitor to ensure sustainable harvests

- Land area required to achieve quota
The model indicates the parameters that might be most important to obtain

- Viable seed production
- Asexual bulb production
- Density dependent mechanisms
- Mortality rates
- Age specificity
- Stochasticity

- We can also perform data gathering experiments
Age/stage structured population models are the standard method

Seedling

Yearling

Juvenile

Adult_1

Adult_2

Adult_3

Adult_4

Seed production: 17 viable seeds per individual

Seedling → Yearling 100%

Yearling → Juvenile 100%

Juvenile → Adult_1 100%

Adult_1 → Death 50%

Adult_1 → Adult_2 100%

Adult_2 → Death 50%

Adult_2 → Adult_3 100%

Adult_3 → Death 50%

Adult_3 → Adult_4 100%

Adult_4 → Death 100%

Asexual bulb production

1 bulb → 2 bulbs

2 bulbs → 3 bulbs

3 bulbs → 4 bulbs

Seed production

17 viable seeds per individual

\[ S_{T+1} = \sum_{j=1,2,3,4} A_{j,T} r_j (1 - N / K) \]

\[ Y_{T+1} = S_T + \sum_{j=1,2,3,4} A_{j,T} b_j (1 - N / K) \]

\[ J_{T+1} = Y_T \]

\[ A_{1,T+1} = J_T \]

\[ A_{2,T+1} = A_{1,T} \]

\[ A_{3,T+1} = A_{2,T} \]

\[ A_{4,T+1} = 0.5 A_{3,T} \]
The matrix model can be fit to the dynamics and does a good job.
Summary and recommendations

• Population modelling provides a formal information processing framework to aid in making NDFs.
• A sufficiently accurate population model for making NDFs will require adequate data collection.
• Modelling without data still helps us identify plausible key components in the system that determine sustainable harvest levels.
• Data quantity and quality could be assessed by incorporating uncertainty into the model – what can we effectively predict?
Summary and recommendations

• Is modelling a realistic goal for NDFs?
• I recommend that Scientific Authorities produce a preliminary model even in the absence of data.
• Having a parameterised and tested model to accompany the NDF would increase its transparency and transferability.
• Problem – how generally relevant is any given NDF model?
A vision of the future

• “Our field and harvest inspections and validated population models make us confident that this level of harvesting will not be detrimental to the survival of the taxon (<0.1% chance of reducing the population by >5% over 10 years).”

• Our population model, and field experiments, indicate that twice as many plants could be removed on a 3-year rotation and still be non-detrimental, provided all other conditions remain unchanged (<5% chance of reducing the population by >5% over 10 years).”