## Appendix A

# Required Pre-knowledge: A Linear Regression and Additive Modelling Example

This appendix introduces the essential background needed to understand the core material of this book. Using linear regression and additive modelling in R we discuss key issues such as interactions, model selection, model validation, and model interpretation. We do not deal with the underlying theory of linear regression and additive modelling in this appendix as this is discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

To illustrate the linear regression model, we use bird data originally analysed in Loyn (1987), and again in Quinn and Keough (2002). This data set is especially good for introducing linear regression and extensions like additive modelling.

#### A.1 The Data

Forest bird densities were measured in 56 forest patches in south-eastern Victoria, Australia. The aim of the study was to relate bird densities to six habitat variables; size of the forest patch, distance to the nearest patch, distance to the nearest larger patch, mean altitude of the patch, year of isolation by clearing, and an index of stock grazing history (1 = light, 5 = intensive). The variables are given in Table A.1.

Table A.1 Description of variables for the Loyn bird data

Variable name	Description	Type
ABUND AREA DIST LDIST ALTITUDE YEAR.ISOL GRAZE	Density of birds in a forest patch Size of the forest patch Distance to the nearest patch Distance to the nearest larger patch Mean altitude of the patch Year of isolation by clearance Index of stocking grazing intensity	Continuous response variable Continuous explanatory variable Nominal (ordinal) explanatory variable with levels 1 (light) to 5 (intensive)

#### A.2 Data Exploration

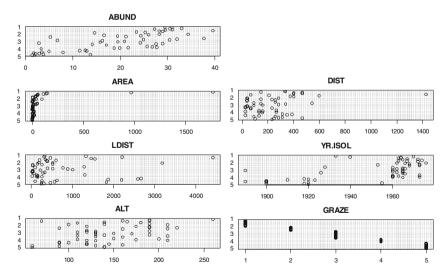
As with any analysis, before starting the linear regression, we apply a data exploration focusing on the following points:

- 1. Outliers in the response and explanatory variables.
- 2. Collinearity of the explanatory variables.
- 3. Relationships between the response variable and the explanatory variables.

The results of these three steps should guide us how to proceed with the followup analysis, e.g. a linear regression analysis or an additive model. It also indicates whether a data transformation is needed.

#### A.2.1 Step 1: Outliers

First, we look at the outliers in the response variable and the outliers in the explanatory variables. Useful tools for this are boxplots and Cleveland dotplots. Figure A.1 shows dotplots for all variables. The R function dotchart was used to make these graphs. Values of a variable can be read from the x-axis, and by default the y-axis



**Fig. A.1** Cleveland dotplots for all variables. Each panel corresponds to a variable. The *x*-axes show the values of a variable and the *y*-axes the observations, which are grouped by the values of GRAZE

shows the order of the observations in the variable (from bottom to top). However, with the group option, you can group observations, e.g. by the levels of GRAZE. The group argument must be a nominal variable.

Isolated points at the far ends, and on either side in a dotplot, suggest potential outliers. This is the case for two observations with high AREA values, one observation with a high DIST value, and a couple of observations with high LDIST values (note that these are all different forest patches). If two or three observations (the same) have larger values for *all* variables, then the decision what to do is easy, just drop them from the analysis. However, if we do this here, we lose too many observations. The alternative is to apply a transformation on AREA, DIST and LDIST. Based on the values of these three variables, a strong transformation is needed, for example, a logarithmic (base 10) transformation or a natural logarithmic transformation. Note that all three variables are related as they measure size and distance. Variables like size, distance, and volume often need a transformation. It is easier to justify a transformation on only a subset of variables if they are somehow ecologically 'related'.

The R code to produce Fig. A.1 is given below.

```
> library(AED); data(Loyn)
> Loyn$fGRAZE <- factor(Loyn$GRAZE)
> op <- par(mfrow = c(4, 2), mar = c(3, 3, 3, 1))
> dotchart(Loyn$ABUND, main = "ABUND", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> plot(0, 0, type = "n", axes = FALSE)
> dotchart(Loyn$AREA, main = "AREA", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> dotchart(Loyn$DIST, main = "DIST", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> dotchart(Loyn$LDIST, main = "LDIST", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> dotchart(Loyn$XLDIST, main = "YR.ISOL", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> dotchart(Loyn$XLT, main = "ALT", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> dotchart(Loyn$ALT, main = "ALT", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> dotchart(Loyn$GRAZE, main = "GRAZE", group = Loyn$fGRAZE)
> par(op)
```

The first four commands are used to access the data, and set up the graphical window with eight panels and the amount of white space between the panels. The rest of the code produces the seven Cleveland dotplots. We used the ordinary plot command to ensure that the ABUND dotplot is the only panel in the top row.

## A.2.2 Step 2: Collinearity

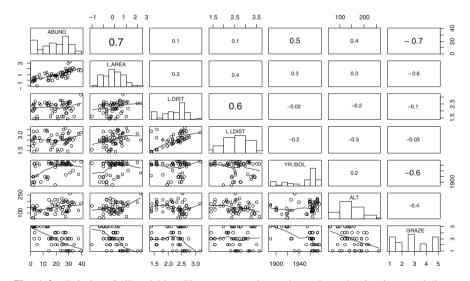
We continue by checking for collinearity (i.e. high correlation between the explanatory variables). The initial question is whether we should transform variables before or after looking at collinearity. In this particular case, it is quite obvious that we should apply the transformation on AREA, DIST, and LDIST before continuing the analysis as the large values will dominate any correlation coefficient between variables that involve them. But sometimes a Cleveland dotplot suggests that there are no outliers, and a pairplot (a typical tool used for finding relationships and detecting collinearity) shows that there are outliers. We decided to apply the transformation on AREA, DIST, and LDIST before checking for collinearity:

```
> Loyn$L.AREA <- log10(Loyn$AREA)
> Loyn$L.DIST <- log10(Loyn$DIST)
> Loyn$L.LDIST <- log10(Loyn$LDIST)</pre>
```

To assess collinearity, we will use three tools: Pairwise scatterplots, correlation coefficients, and variance inflation factors (VIF). The first two can be combined in one graph with some clever R code; see Fig. A.2.

We included GRAZE in the pairplot, but there is an argument that it should not be included as it is a nominal variable. However, it is ordinal as 2 is larger than 1, 3 is larger than 2, etc.; so, it does make some sense to include it. However, you should interpret the correlation coefficients involving GRAZE with care as the difference between 4 and 5 may not be the same as the difference between 1 and 2 (the correlation coefficient assumes it is).

We also included the response variable ABUND in the pairplot as it avoids repeating the same graph when we look at relationships between response and



**Fig. A.2** Pairplot of all variables. The upper panel contains estimated pair-wise correlations, and the font size is proportional to the absolute value of the estimated correlation coefficient. The diagonal panel contains histograms and the lower panel scatterplots with a LOESS smoother added to aid visual interpretation. The R code to generate this graph was taken from the pairs help file, and the modified code can be found in our AED package

explanatory variables in the next paragraph. However, if you have a large number of explanatory variables, you would not normally use the response variable at this stage.

The histograms along the diagonal also require some explanation. Some people are obsessed with normality, which sometimes results in making histograms of every variable, including nominal variables like sex, location, month, or in this case GRAZE. Not all these histograms make sense! A histogram of GRAZE only shows how many observations we have per level. Histograms of continuous explanatory variables also need to be interpreted with care. If, for example, altitude is normally distributed, then this implies that the majority of the observations have similar altitude values. However, we would like to have observations that cover a wide range of altitude values, not just around the average. Hence, it would be nice if the histograms of continuous explanatory variables show the shape of a uniform distribution (flat line).

Focussing only on the explanatory variables in Fig. A.2, there seems to be some correlation between L.DIST and L.LDIST; GRAZE and L.AREA; and GRAZE and YR.ISOL. However, the value of 0.6 (and -0.6) is not large enough to worry us.

The R code to generate Fig. A.2 is given below.

The functions panel.smooth2 and panel.cor are external functions that we took (and modified) from the pairs help file and are stored in our AED package.

The last tool we use for detecting collinearity is VIF values. These can be obtained by typing in

```
> corvif(Z[, c(-1, -7)])
Correlations of the variables
          L.AREA
                                L.LDIST
                      L.DIST
                                             YR.ISOL
                                                            ALT
                                                      0.2751428
       1.0000000 0.30216662
L.AREA
                              0.3824795
                                         0.27841452
L.DIST 0.3021666 1.00000000
                              0.6038664 -0.01957223 -0.2190070
L.LDIST 0.3824795 0.60386637
                              1.0000000 -0.16111611 -0.2740438
YR.ISOL 0.2784145 -0.01957223 -0.1611161 1.00000000 0.2327154
       0.2751428 -0.21900701 -0.2740438 0.23271541
ALT
                                                     1.0000000
Variance inflation factors
            GVIF
L.AREA 1.622200
L.DIST 1.622396
```

L.LDIST 2.008157 YR.ISOL 1.201719 ALT 1.347805

Again, this function uses our AED package, but you can also use the VIF values calculated by functions in the car package from John Fox. All VIF values are below 3 (see Chapter 26 in Zuur et al. (2007)), indicating there is no collinearity in these variables (at least not without GRAZE). We decided to keep all variables in the analysis.

#### A.2.3 Relationships

We now look at relationships between the response variable and the explanatory variables. The most obvious tool for this task is a pairplot that contains the response variable and a set of explanatory variables (Fig. A.2). If you have a large number of explanatory variables (10–15), then multiple pairplots may be needed. If you have more than 10–15 explanatory variables, then pairplots are less useful. However, if you have more than 10 explanatory variables, then it is very likely that there will be high collinearity.

Based on the pairplot in Fig. A.2, we expect that the variables L.AREA and GRAZE will play an important role in the analyses. Other graphical tools that can help find relationships between a response variable and multiple explanatory variables are a coplot and xyplot (from the lattice package, which is part of the R base installation) and design and interaction plots (see plot.design from the design package, which you need to download). These are all described in Chapter 4 of Zuur et al. (2007) and are also useful to explore potential interactions between the explanatory variables.

## **A.3** Linear Regression

Before enthusiastically typing in the R code for linear regression and running it, we should first think about what we want to do. The aim of the analysis is to find a relationship between bird densities (ABUND) and the six explanatory variables. But it could well be that birds perceive the AREA effect differently if GRAZE values are low compared to when GRAZE values are high. If that is the case, we have to include an interaction term between GRAZE and L.AREA. The problem is that there are a large number of potential two-way interactions. And there could also be three-way interactions; birds may respond in a different way to AREA if GRAZE values are low in combination with low values for altitude (ALT). The smaller the data set (56 observations is small), the more difficult it is to include multiple inter-

action terms, especially if there are multiple nominal explanatory variables with more than two levels involved. Sometimes, you may not have enough observations per combination. In such cases, individual observations may become particularly influential.

Many statistical newsgroups have long threads on the subject of interaction, and the most common opinions seem to fall into the following categories:

- Start with a model with no interactions. Apply the model, model selection, and model validation. If the validation shows that there are patterns in the residuals, investigate why. Adding interactions may be an option to improve the model.
- 2. Use biological knowledge to decide which, if any, interactions are sensible to add.
- 3. Apply a good data exploration to see which interactions may be important.
- 4. Identify the prime explanatory variable(s) of interest. In the bird example, this would be GRAZE and AREA as we can control them using management decisions. Include interactions between these variables and any of the other variables.
- 5. Only include the main terms and two-way interaction terms.
- 6. Only include higher interactions terms if you have good reasons (i.e. biological justification) to do so.
- 7. Include all interactions by default.

An important aspect to keep in mind is that if interactions are included, then you must include the corresponding main terms; see Underwood (1997) for a discussion on the interpretation of *p*-values of main terms if interactions are included. Which option you choose from the list above is your own choice. We prefer options one, two and three.

On research projects, where we were unable to convince the biologists to exclude 4-way interactions, we only ended up with confusing models and other misery (e.g. combinations of nominal variables with only three points and therefore large Cook distance values, non convergence, etc.).

We will start the bird data analysis with no interactions. The following R code applies a linear regression in R.

```
> M1 <- lm(ABUND ~ L.AREA + L.DIST + L.LDIST + YR.ISOL + ALT + fGRAZE, data = Loyn)
```

The question now is: Should we look at the numerical output first or the graphical output? There is no point in applying a detailed model validation if nothing is significant. On the other hand, why look at the numerical output if all the assumptions are violated? Perhaps starting with the numerical output is better as it takes less time and is easier. There are multiple ways of getting numerical output for our linear regression model:

```
> summary(M1)
> drop1(M1, test="F")
> anova(M1)
```

Each of these commands presents the output in a slightly different way, and they are all useful in different ways. The summary command gives the following output:

```
Call: lm(formula = ABUND ~ L.AREA + L.DIST + L.LDIST + YR.ISOL + ALT+
    fGRAZE, data = Loyn)
Residuals:
                 Median
    Min
              10
                              3 Q
-15.8992 -2.7245 -0.2772 2.7052 11.2811
Coefficients:
            Estimate Std. Error t value Pr(>|t|)
(Intercept) 36.68025 115.16348 0.319 0.7515
           6.83303 1.50330 4.545 3.97e-05
L.AREA
            0.33286
                       2.74778 0.121 0.9041
L.DIST
            0.79765 2.13759 0.373 0.7107
L.LDIST
          0.79765 2.13759 0.373 0.125
-0.01277 0.05803 -0.220 0.8267
YR.ISOL
            0.01070 0.02390 0.448 0.6565
AΤιΤ
            0.52851 3.25221 0.163 0.8716
0.06601 2.95871 0.022 0.9823
fGRAZE2
fGRAZE3
fGRAZE4
           -1.24877 3.19838 -0.390 0.6980
fGRAZE5
          -12.47309 4.77827 -2.610 0.0122
Residual standard error: 6.105 on 46 degrees of freedom
Multiple R-squared: 0.7295, Adjusted R-squared: 0.6766
F-statistic: 13.78 on 9 and 46 DF, p-value: 2.115e-10
```

The first part of the output tells you which model was applied and some basic information on the residuals. The part below 'Coefficients' gives the estimated regression parameters, standard errors, t-values, and p-values. The only confusing part of this output is perhaps the absence of GRAZE level 1. It is used as a baseline. Hence, a patch that has GRAZE level 2 has 0.52 birds (density) more than a patch with level 1, and a patch with GRAZE level 5 has 12.4 birds less than a patch with level 1. The corresponding p-values tell you whether a patch is significantly different from level 1. Dalgaard (2002) shows how to change the baseline and adjust for multiple comparisons. Note that you should not assess the significance of a factor by the individual p-values. We will give a better method for this in a moment. You should not drop individual levels of a nominal variable. They all go in or you drop the whole variable. The last bit of the code gives the  $R^2$  and adjusted  $R^2$  (for model selection). The rest of the output you should, hopefully, be familiar with.

The function drop1 does exactly what you think it does: it drops one variable, each one in turn. Its output is given as follows:

```
Single term deletions
Model:
ABUND ~ L.AREA + L.DIST + L.LDIST + YR.ISOL + ALT + fGRAZE
```

	Df	Sum of Sq	RSS	AIC	F value	Pr(F)
			1714.43	211.60		
L.AREA	1	770.01	2484.44	230.38	20.6603	3.97e-05
L.DIST	1	0.55	1714.98	209.62	0.0147	0.90411
L.LDIST	1	5.19	1719.62	209.77	0.1392	0.71075
YR.ISOL	1	1.81	1716.24	209.66	0.0485	0.82675
ALT	1	7.47	1721.90	209.85	0.2004	0.65650
fGRAZE	4	413.50	2127.92	215.70	2.7736	0.03799

The full model has a sum of squares of 1714.43. Each time, *one* term is dropped in turn, and each time, the residual sum of squares is calculated. These are then used to calculate an *F*-statistic and a corresponding *p*-value. For example, to get the output on the first line, R fits two models. The first model contains all explanatory variables and the second model all, but L.AREA. It then uses the residual sums of squares of each model in the following *F*-statistic.

$$F = \frac{(RSS_1 - RSS_2)/(p - q)}{RSS_2/(n - p)}$$

The terms RSS<sub>1</sub> and RSS<sub>2</sub> are the residual sum of squares of model M<sub>1</sub> and model M<sub>2</sub>, respectively, and n is the number of observations. The number of parameters in models 2 and 1 are p and q, respectively (p > q). The models are nested in the sense that one model is obtained from the other by setting certain parameters equal to 0. The null hypothesis underlying this statistic is that omitted parameters are equal to 0: H<sub>0</sub>:  $\beta = 0$ . The larger the value of the F-statistic, the more evidence there is to reject this hypothesis. In fact, the F-statistic follows an F-distribution, assuming homogeneity, normality, independence and no residual patterns. In this case, we can reject the null hypothesis.

In linear regression, the *p*-values from the drop1 function are the same as those obtained by the *t*-statistic from the summary command, but for non-Gaussian GLMs, this is not necessarily the case. The null-hypothesis underlying the *F*-statistic is that the regression parameter from the term that was dropped is equal to 0. Basically, we are comparing a full and (repeatedly) a nested model.

If the model has multiple nominal variables, the drop1 function gives one *p*-value for each variable, which is handy.

The anova command gives the following output.

```
Analysis of Variance Table
Response: ARIND
```

response:	ADUND				
	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F value	Pr(>F)
L.AREA	1	3471.0	3471.0	93.1303	1.247e-12
L.DIST	1	65.5	65.5	1.7568	0.191565
L.LDIST	1	136.5	136.5	3.6630	0.061868
YR.ISOL	1	458.8	458.8	12.3109	0.001019
ALT	1	78.2	78.2	2.0979	0.154281
fGRAZE	4	413.5	103.4	2.7736	0.037992
Residuals	46	1714.4	37.3		

R uses the mean square of the full model (37.3) and the mean square on each row in a similar F-test as above. So, 93.13 is obtained by dividing 3471.0 by 37.3, and 1.75 is equal to 65.5/37.3. The mean squares are calculated from the sum of squares divided by the degrees of freedom. The sum of squares on the first row, 3471.0, is the regression sum of squares from the model  $ABUND_i = \alpha + \beta \times L.AREA_i + \varepsilon_i$ . The 65.5 on the second line is the decrease in residual sum of squares if L.DIST is added to this model (to see this, fit a model with only the intercept and L.AREA, and a model with intercept, L.AREA, and L.DIST and compare the two residual sum of squares obtained from the anova commands; the difference will be 65.5). A theoretical justification for this table can be found in Section 1.3 in Wood (2006).

The nice thing about this approach is that the last line gives us one *p*-value for the nominal variable GRAZE (as it is the last variable that is added), and we need this to assess whether GRAZE is significant. The disadvantage of this way of testing is that the *p*-values will depend on the order the variables: Change the order and you get a different conclusion.

Note that the last line of the anova command and the drop1 are identical. That is because the same nested models are being compared.

The anova function can also be used to compare models that are nested. Suppose we fit a linear model with all explanatory variables, and a model with all explanatory variables, except GRAZE. These models are nested as the second model is a special case of the first, assuming all four regression parameters for the GRAZE levels are equal to zero (see below). The R code and its output are

The null-hypothesis underlying the F-statistic is that the four regression parameters for GRAZE (levels 2–5) are equal to 0, which is rejected at the 5% level. Note that the p-value is identical to the p-value obtained for the same test with the anova (M1) command. Then why do the comparison? The advantage of the anova (M1, M2) command is that we can control which terms are dropped. This is especially useful with multiple interaction terms.

#### A.3.1 Model Selection

Not all explanatory variables are significantly different from 0 as can be seen from the p-values of the t-statistics (summary command) or the p-values of the F-statistic (drop1 command) presented above. If the aim of the analysis is

to understand which explanatory variables are driving bird abundances, then we could decide to drop explanatory variables that are not significant. Note this is again a subject that statisticians disagree about. There are basically three main approaches:

- 1. Drop individual explanatory variables one by one based on hypothesis testing procedures.
- 2. Drop individual explanatory variables one by one (and each time refit the model) and use a model selection criteria like the AIC or BIC to decide on the optimal model
- 3. Specify a priori chosen models, and compare these models with each other. This approach is further discussed in Appendix A.6.

An example of approach three is given in the Koala case study chapter. Approach one means that you drop the least significant term, either based on the t and p-values obtained by the summary command or the anova command for comparing nested models if there are nominal variables and/or interactions. In the second approach, we use a selection criterion like the Akaike information criteria (AIC). It measures goodness of fit and model complexity. The advantage of the AIC is that R has tools to apply an automatic backwards or forwards selection based on the AIC, which makes life easy! The disadvantage is that the AIC can be conservative, and you may need to apply some fine tuning (using hypothesis testing procures from approach one) once the AIC has selected an optimal model. A backwards selection is applied by the command step(M1), and its output is given as

```
Start: AIC=211.6
ABUND ~ L.AREA + L.DIST + L.LDIST + YR.ISOL + ALT + fGRAZE
          Df Sum of Sq
                            RSS
                                    AIC
- L.DIST
           1
                  0.55 1714.98
                                209.62
- YR.ISOL
           1
                  1.81 1716.24
                                209.66
- L.LDIST
           1
                  5.19 1719.62
                                209.77
- ALT
           1
                  7.47 1721.90
                                209.85
<none>
                        1714.43
                                211.60
- fgraze
           4
                413.50 2127.92
                                 215.70
- L.AREA
           1
                770.01 2484.44
                                 230.38
Step: AIC=209.62
ABUND ~ L.AREA + L.LDIST + YR.ISOL + ALT + fGRAZE
          Df Sum of Sq
                           RSS
                                    AIC
- YR.ISOL
          1
                  1.73 1716.71
                                 207.68
           1
                  7.07 1722.05
                                207.85
- ALT
- L.LDIST
           1
                  8.57 1723.55
                                 207.90
                        1714.98
<none>
                                209.62
- fgraze
                413.28 2128.25
                                213.71
           4
- L.AREA
           1
                769.64 2484.62
                                 228.38
```

```
Step: AIC=207.68
ABUND ~ L.AREA + L.LDIST + ALT + fGRAZE
          Df Sum of Sa
                            RSS
                                     AIC
- L.LDIST
           1
                   8.32 1725.03
                                  205.95
- ALT
           1
                   9.71 1726.42
                                  205.99
                        1716.71
                                 207.68
<none>
- fgraze
           4
                 848.77 2565.47
                                  222,17
- L.AREA
                790.20 2506.90
                                  226.88
           1
      AIC=205.95
Step:
ABUND ~ L.AREA + ALT + fGRAZE
         Df Sum of Sa
                                    AIC
          1
                  5.37 1730.40
- ALT
                                 204.12
<none>
                       1725.03
                                 205.95
- fgraze
                914.23 2639.26
                                 221.76
          4
- L.AREA
          1
              1130.78 2855.81
                                 232.18
Step: AIC=204.12
ABUND ~ L.AREA + fGRAZE
         Df Sum of Sa
                           RSS
                                    AIC
                       1730.40
                                 204.12
>none>
- fGRAZE
                                 224.40
              1136.54 2866.94
- L.AREA
          1
              1153.85 2884.24
                                 230.73
```

The first part of the code shows that the model containing all explanatory variables has an AIC of 211.6 before each term is dropped. The lower the AIC, the better is the model, *as judged* by the AIC. Hence, we should drop L.DIST. The procedure then goes on by dropping YR.ISOL, L.LDIST, and ALT. At this stage, no further terms are dropped; the model with both L.AREA and fGRAZE has an AIC of 204.12, and dropping any of these terms gives an higher AIC. This means that the optimal model based on the AIC contains fGRAZE and L.AREA. You should reapply this model and see whether both terms are significant. Note that both the summary command and the anova command are needed for this. Both terms are significant at the 5% level.

You could also try to see whether adding interaction between L.AREA and fGRAZE improves the model. You should be able to get one *p*-value for this interaction term.

#### A.3.2 Model Validation

Once the optimal model has been found, it is time to apply a model validation. This process consists (as a minimum) of the following steps:

- Plot (standardised) residuals against fitted values to assess homogeneity.
- Make a histogram of the residuals to verify normality. You can also use a QQ-plot.

- Plot the residuals against each explanatory variable that was used in the model. If you see a pattern, you are violating the independence assumption.
- Plot the residuals against each explanatory variable not used in the model. If you see a pattern, include the omitted explanatory variable and refit the model. If the residuals patterns disappear, include the term, even if it is not significant.
- Asses the model for influential observations. A useful tool is the Cook distance function.

Note that most bullet points use graphical tools to assess the underlying assumptions of homogeneity, normality, and independence. Statisticians tend to use graphs, but non-statisticians seem to prefer tests. Care is needed with tests as some tests that are used to assess homogeneity heavily depend on normality. In Chapter 3, we show that without a large number of replicate samples, you cannot test for normality or homogeneity.

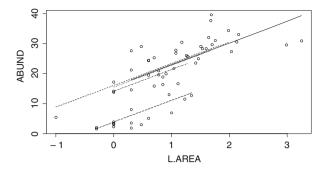
The following R code provides just a small selection of possible graphs.

```
> M3 <- lm(ABUND \sim L.AREA + fGRAZE, data = Loyn)
> op <- par(mfrow = c(2, 2))
> plot(M3) #standard graphical output
> win.graph(); op <- par(mfrow = c(2, 2))
> #Check for normality
> E <- rstandard(M3)
> hist(E)
> qqnorm(E)
> #Check for independence and homogeneity: residuals
> #versus individual explanatory variables
> plot(y = E, x = Loyn$L.AREA, xlab = "AREA",
       vlab = "Residuals")
> abline(0,0)
> plot(E ~ Loyn$fGRAZE, xlab = "GRAZE",
       ylab = "Residuals")
> abline(0, 0)
> par(op)
```

We have not presented the graphs here, but there is some evidence of heterogeneity (as can be seen from the graph with residuals against fitted values) and non-normality. It seems that there is less spread at sites with GRAZE level 5. Based on the graph that shows residuals versus L.AREA, we seem to have some violation of independence.

## A.3.3 Model Interpretation

Sometimes it is useful to include a graphical presentation of your model; one graph can tell more than many lines of text. Hence, we have given a graph that shows what



**Fig. A.3** Observed bird abundance versus L.AREA with fitted values per GRAZE level. The lower line corresponds to GRAZE level 5. See the help file of predict how to obtain confidence intervals (either for the mean or the population) around the predicted values

the model is doing, see Fig. A.3. Observed abundances are plotted against L.AREA. Each line represents a grazing level and the lowest line is level 5. It is also possible to use different colours for the lines or different symbols for the points. The R code for this graph looks complicated, but it is really fairly simple. The first block of code is given by

The first line makes a scatterplot of bird abundance and L.AREA. D1 is a data frame that only contains L.AREA for which grazing equals 1. This is due to the L.AREA = L.AREA[GRAZE == 1]argument. Furthermore, in the data frame D1, GRAZE is set to 1. We added the symbols " " around 1 because fGRAZE is defined as a categorical variable. The values of D1 are as follows.

```
> D1

L.AREA fGRAZE

1 0.301030 1

2 0.698970 1

3 1.414973 1

4 1.505150 1
```

```
5
   1.531479
                   1
6
   1.690196
                   1
7
   1.698970
                   1
8
   1.755875
                   1
9
   2.033424
                   1
10 2.127105
                   1
11 2.158362
                   1
12 2.988113
                   1
13 3.248219
                   1
```

D2 to D5 are defined in a similar way. The second block of R code is

```
> P1 <- predict(M3, newdata = D1)
> P2 <- predict(M3, newdata = D2)
> P3 <- predict(M3, newdata = D3)
> P4 <- predict(M3, newdata = D4)
> P5 <- predict(M3, newdata = D5)</pre>
```

The predict function takes as input the object from the linear regression function lm, (see above where the object M3 is created) and newdata specifies the values for the explanatory variables for which abundance predictions should be made. For the first line, this means that a prediction is made for GRAZE = 1, and those L.AREA values for which GRAZE equals one. This means that the fitted lines only cover that part of the gradient for which there are observed measurements for that particular grazing level. It is also possible to use

```
> D1 <- data.frame(L.AREA = Loyn$L.AREA,fGRAZE = "1")
> P1 <- predict(M3, newdata = D1)</pre>
```

But now it will predict abundances for GRAZE = 1 and *all* L.AREA values; including those L.AREA values that are outside the range of observed values, which would result in lines that cover the entire L.AREA gradient. The last bit of the R code draws the lines:

```
> lines(D1$L.AREA, P1, lty = 1)
> lines(D2$L.AREA, P2, lty = 2)
> lines(D3$L.AREA, P3, lty = 3)
> lines(D4$L.AREA, P4, lty = 4)
> lines(D5$L.AREA, P5, lty = 5)
```

In this particular case, the code produces straight lines because the L.AREA was sorted from small to large in a spreadsheet before importing into R. If this is not the case, you may end up with a spaghetti plot as the lines command connects consecutive points. If this happens, you should determine the order of the continuous variable, sort it from small to large, order the nominal variable accordingly, and then run the code for the data frame. Something along the lines of

```
> I1 <- order(L.AREA)
> SGRAZE <- GRAZE[I1]  #Use this in remaining code
> SL.AREA <- sort(L.AREA)  #Use this in remaining code</pre>
```

The lines in Fig. A.3 are parallel because there is no interaction term between L.AREA and fGRAZE in the model. If an interaction term is significant, then the lines would have different slopes. We advise you try and plot the results of a linear regression model whenever possible as it makes the interpretation much easier.

#### A.4 Additive Modelling

The scatterplot of ABUND against L.AREA in Fig. A.2, the residuals against L.AREA (not shown here), and the fit of the lines in Fig. A.3 all suggest that imposing a linear L.AREA effect may be incorrect. From a biological point of view, it also makes more sense to assume that the larger the forest patches, the higher the number of birds, but only up to a certain level. A generalised additive model (GAM) is a method that can be used to verify the type of model required. If the GAM indicates that the smoother is a straight line, then we know that the linear regression model is correct.

We will use a GAM with a Gaussian distribution and apply the following model:

$$ABUND_{i} = \alpha + f_{1}(L.AREA_{i}) + f_{2}(L.DIST_{i}) + f_{3}(L.LDIST_{i}) + f_{4}(YR.ISOL_{i}) + f_{5}(ALT_{i}) + f_{actor}(GRAZE_{i}) + \varepsilon_{i}$$

By default, the smoothing functions  $f_j$  are estimated by a thin plate regression spline (Chapter 3), but various alternatives like cubic regression splines exist; see the help file ?s. It is not essential to know the difference between all these smoothers, but it becomes an issue for very large data sets. The R code to run the GAM is

We deliberately started with a model that contains all explanatory variables and not with the subset of explanatory variables (L.AREA and GRAZE) that were selected in the optimal linear regression model. The reason for this is that some variables may have a non-linear effect, which may cause them not to be significant in a linear regression model. However, if our question is: 'Is the L.AREA effect in the optimal linear regression model really linear?' as compared to 'What is the optimal model?', we could compare the optimal linear regression model containing only L.AREA and GRAZE with a GAM model that only contains a smoothing function of L.AREA and GRAZE (as a nominal variable).

The anova command does not apply a sequential *F*-test as it did for the linear regression model. Instead, it gives the Wald test (approximate!) that shows the significance of each term in the model. Its output is given as

```
v: gaussian
Link function: identity
Formula:
ABUND ~ s(L.AREA) + s(L.DIST) + s(L.LDIST) +
        s(YR.ISOL) + s(ALT) + fGRAZE
Parametric Terms:
              df
                     F p-value
               4 3.348 0.0184
fGRAZE
Approximate significance of smooth terms:
             edf Est.rank
                               F p-value
           2.749
                    6.000 5.703 0.000221
s(L.AREA)
           2.531
                     6.000 1.151 0.350929
s(L.DIST)
s(L.LDIST) 1.000
                    1.000 0.107 0.745803
s(YR.ISOL) 2.650
                     6.000 1.425 0.228513
           1,000
                    1.000 0.510 0.479027
s(ALT)
```

The summary command will give the estimated values for the regression parameters for each level. Note that various smoothers are not significant at the 5% level. This means that we are back to the data selection process. Again, there are various approaches, see also the linear regression section above. We can either compare a priori selected models (not discussed here), use hypothesis testing procedures or a model selection tool like the AIC. And, in this case, there is a further option, which we mention at the end of this section.

The hypothesis testing approach is the easiest; just drop the least significant term from the model, refit the model, and repeat this process until all terms are significant. This is a bit a quick and dirty approach, but is useful if computing time is long.

You can also use the AIC obtained by the AIC (AM1) command, but in gam there is no function step that will do the work for you; you have to drop each term in turn, write down the AIC, and choose the variable to drop from the model, and repeat this process a couple of times. This can be a time consuming process.

There is one other option. The optimal amount of smoothing is estimated with a method called cross-validation (Wood, 2006), where one degree of freedom produces a straight line and 10 degrees of freedom is a highly non-linear curve. In linear regression, a non-significant term is still consuming one degree of freedom. The gam function is able to produce smoothers with 0 degrees of freedom, which basically removes the need to refit the model without the terms. It only works with thin plate regression splines and cubic regression spline. The code is

```
> AM2 <- gam(ABUND ~ s(L.AREA, bs = "cs") +
        s(L.DIST, bs = "cs") + s(L.LDIST,bs = "cs") +
        s(YR.ISOL, bs = "cs") + s(ALT, bs = "cs") +
        fGRAZE, data = Loyn)
> anova(AM2)
```

The new bit is the bs = "cs" part. It tells R to use the cubic regression spline with shrinkage. Again, it is not that important for you to fully understand the differences between these different types of smoothers. In practise, they look similar. Thin plate smoothers tend to be slightly more linear.

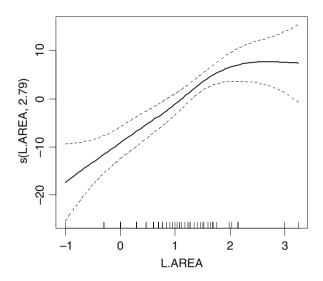
The relevant output of the anova command is

```
Family: gaussian
Link function: identity
Formula:
ABUND \sim s(L.AREA, bs = "cs") + s(L.DIST, bs = "cs") + s(L.LDIST,
   bs = "cs") + s(YR.ISOL, bs = "cs") + s(ALT, bs = "cs") +
   fGRAZE
Parametric Terms:
      df F p-value
fGRAZE 4 13.06 3.9e-07
Approximate significance of smooth terms:
                 edf Est.rank
                                   F
                                       p-value
s(L.AREA) 2.160e+00 5.000e+00 16.336 3.66e-09
s(L.DIST) 2.499e+00 5.000e+00 1.790
                                         0.134
s(L.LDIST) 4.077e-11 1.000e+00 0.161
                                         0.690
s(YR.ISOL) 2.218e+00 5.000e+00 1.442
                                         0.228
          7.437e-11 1.000e+00 0.673
s(ALT)
                                         0.416
```

Note that the smoothers for L.LDIST and ALT have 0 degrees of freedom. However, there is still some work to be done as the L.DIST and YR.ISOL smoothers are not significant at the 5% level. If you drop these two variables (one by one), you will see that the optimal model only contains an L.AREA effect and a GRAZE effect. The smoother for L.AREA of this model is presented in Fig. A.4, and the following R code is used:

The model validation process should follow nearly the same steps as in linear regression. The only differences are that the residuals are obtained by the command

**Fig. A.4** Smoothing function of L.Area in the optimal GAM. The estimated degrees of freedom is 2.79



resid (AM3) and there is no function that plots residuals against fitted values. You have to do this manually using the following code:

Again, it is important to plot the residuals against each individual explanatory variable! If any of these graphs show a pattern, you have to find a solution.

The final thing we need to ask is whether the GAM was necessary. We ended up with the same set of explanatory variables, and one can imagine a straight line within the 95% confidence bands in Fig. A.4. The estimated degrees of freedom of 2.79 also indicate a nearly linear L.AREA effect. In fact, we can test whether the GAM is any better than the linear regression model because both models contain the same set of explanatory variables. The R code, and the output, is

The underlying null-hypothesis is that both models are the same or formulated more mathematically that the smoother is a straight line (1 df). In this case, we can reject this null hypothesis as the more complicated model from the GAM; it is significantly better at the 5% level, even though it has a fairly unconvincing *p*-value of 0.04. But, we also prefer the GAM as it shows no residual patterns. However, the non-linear L.AREA effect is mainly due to two large patches. It would be useful to sample more of this type of patch in the future.

#### A.5 Further Extensions

Using the knowledge from Chapter 4, you may try extending the linear regression model with different variances per GRAZE level using the gls function from the nlme package (part of the base installation) with the varIdent variance structure. The same can be done for the additive model using the gamm function from the mgcv package. Examples and R code is given in Chapter 4.

Other model extensions you can try are interactions with a continuous variable and a smoother via the by option in the gam function (see also the bioluminescent case study chapter) and 2-dimensional smoothers (which models the interaction between two continuous terms). However, these extensions may cause numerical problems for this particular data set as there are only 56 observations.

#### A.6 Information Theory and Multi-model Inference

There has been an increasing movement away from the 'all or nothing' use of null hypotheses and p-values in the statistical community. Rather than thinking simply in terms of significance or non-significance with respect to an arbitrarily chosen threshold (usually 5%), it would seem more appropriate in many situations to think in terms of effects sizes and corresponding uncertainty. This has been one of the main reasons for the growth in popularity of Bayesian methods, which focus on parameter distribution (expressed in the posterior) as opposed to assessing whether a parameter is 'significant' or not.

This rejection of hypothesis testing has concentrated attention on alternative approaches. One such framework advocated by, amongst others, Burnham and Anderson is based on so-called information theory. All inference in this paradigm stems from a result derived by Kullback and Leibler (the Kullback–Leibler information, KL for short) such that (for continuous data – an alternative expression exists for count data)

$$I(f,g) = \int f(x) \log \left(\frac{f(x)}{g(x/\theta)}\right) dx$$

This quantity expresses the information lost when a chosen model 'g' is used to approximate absolute reality (denoted 'f' in the above formulation). Of course, absolute reality is not within our reach; so this quantity is not attainable in a

statistical setting. However, it is this concept of information loss which leads to the derivation of Akaike's information criterion (AIC =  $-2 \times \log L(\theta; x) + 2 \times K$ ). This expresses the *relative expected KL information* between competing models.

So AIC quantifies the relative proximity to absolute reality amongst a candidate set of models, ideally chosen a priori. A number of refinements to the AIC have been proposed since Akaike first published this result in 1973:  $AIC_c$  (second-order AIC), advocated when sample size is relatively low; BIC (sometimes called SIC), the Bayesian information criterion; QAIC based on quasi-likelihood and preferred when overdispersion is observed in the response; and DIC (deviance information criterion), which is again used in a Bayesian setting.

Proponents of information-theory emphasise the importance of proposing a handful of scientifically meaningful models a priori. It is important to bear in mind that no statistical model will exactly represent reality. But a carefully chosen model based on sound science can lead to a close enough approximation of absolute reality to afford valuable insight. In fact, it may be that better understanding can be achieved by considering the relative performance of some or even all of the candidate models (this re-emphasises the previous point that we don't want to specify too many models at the outset, most of which may in any case be wholly implausible).

It is computationally straightforward to estimate AIC, and there are a number of other useful quantities (similarly easy to derive) that follow.  $\Delta_i$  is simply the difference between AIC for model i and the lowest AIC from the set (so 0 for the 'best' model and all others referenced to). The Akaike weight  $w_i$  is a very useful quantity; it is a number between 0 and 1 reflecting the relative strength of model i relative to the other candidates. This could be interpreted in a frequentist sense as the estimated expected proportion of times that this model would turn out to be the 'best' according to the criteria chosen (AIC etc). Thus, the higher this value, the more 'weight' we put on the associated model in comparison to the others. This leads to the concept of the 'evidence ratio'  $(w_i/w_j)$  expressing the relative weight of models i and j.

A nice result of this multi-model approach is that we can base parameter inference on some or all of the models based on their relative performance (or weight). This idea becomes particularly compelling if the 'best model' is not obvious (from consideration of, for example, Akaike weights) – especially if parameter estimate  $\theta$  is very different in competing models. This also leads to different quantification of error than if we were to look at one model in isolation.

This information-theoretic approach lends itself to bootstrapping too, although this is more computationally intensive.

It is not within the scope of this book to dissect this subject in detail (a good text with nice examples is *Model Selection and Multi-model Inference: A Practical Information-theoretic Approach* by Burnham and Anderson), but it is important that the reader is aware of this increasingly popular approach to statistical inference and the accompanying rationale, which represents an appealing alternative to straightforward null-hypothesis testing.

## A.7 Maximum Likelihood Estimation in Linear Regression Context

Before considering this, it is worth for a moment re-visiting the mathematical form for the Normal distribution, which is used to model the random component in linear regression, namely,

$$f(y_i) = \frac{1}{\sqrt{2\pi\sigma^2}} e^{\frac{-(y_i - \mu)^2}{2\sigma^2}}$$

The first thing to do to put this in a maximum likelihood setting is to express this as a likelihood function as a product of all the individual observations. For mathematical convenience, this is then transformed to the log-likelihood which is easier to work with.

Linear regression turns out to be a special case of GLM, namely, we can obtain so-called *closed-form solutions for the maximum likelihood* estimates for the regression parameters. For other distributions this is not possible, hence the need to express in terms of a likelihood function and solve the equations iteratively. But it is not necessary in the linear regression context and we spare the reader the full forms of the likelihood and log-likelihood.

After deriving first-order equations for the 2 parameters in the linear regression equation  $y_i = \alpha + \beta \times x_i + \varepsilon_i$ , where  $\varepsilon_i \sim N(0, \sigma^2)$ , we have the following optimal solutions for both  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  (the constant and slope in the linear regression equation, respectively)

$$\hat{\alpha} = \overline{y} - \hat{\beta} \times \overline{x}$$

$$\hat{\beta} = \frac{\Sigma(x_i - \overline{x}) \times (y_i - \overline{y})}{\Sigma(x_i - \overline{x})^2}$$

These are the optimal estimates through the least squares algorithm, and if we apply a maximum likelihood approach, we will default back to these very same solutions. An estimate of variance can be obtained by dividing the total sum of residual squares by n-2, i.e.

$$\hat{\sigma}^2 = \frac{\sum (y_i - \hat{y})^2}{n - 2}$$

Note that it is n-2 because we have estimated 2 parameters. In matrix notation, this equates to maximum likelihood estimates of all model parameters of

$$\hat{\boldsymbol{\beta}} = (\mathbf{X}^T \times \mathbf{X})^{-1} \times \mathbf{X}^T \times \mathbf{y}$$

The divisor for the estimate of variance will depend on how many parameters have been estimated.

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Additive modelling, 36 GAM in gam and GAM in mgcv, 37 with LOESS, 38–42 and GAM in mgcv cubic regression splines, 42–44 LOESS smoother and observed data, 37 with multiple explanatory variables, 53 Adelie penguin time series, R code, 356–357 AED package, 10 Agarwal, D. K., 262 Agresti, A., 200, 204, 209, 234, 246 Akaike, H., 2, 41, 61, 120, 274, 482–484, 486, 543, 553 Akaike information criteria (AIC), 61, 170 American Foulbrood (AFB), 447–448 Amphibian roadkills, 383 data exploration, 385–389 R code, for sampling positions, 385–386 VIF values, calculation of, 386–387 explanatory variables, identification and list of, 384–385 GAM, use of, 389	linear regression model and AR-1, 152 numerical output for smoothing model, 154 smoother for, 156 time series for, 153 Antarctic birds and impact of climatic changes on, 343–344 data exploration, 345–350 explanatory variables, 344–345 sea ice extent as, 352–354 SOI and arrival and laying dates difference, 354–359 results obtained, 360–361 trends and auto-correlation, 350–352 Apis mellifera, see Honeybees, and AFB disease Aptenodytes forsteri, see Penguin AR-1 Correlation structure, 150–152 Austin, M. P., 270 Auto-regressive moving average (ARMA) model error structure, 351–352 R code, 355–356 for residuals, 150 error structure, 151 parameters of, 152 structure, 351–355
forward selection approach, 391 negative binomial, 390	structure, 351, 355 Azzalini, A., 36
R code for, 390 residuals vs. explanatory variables and	В
spatial coordinates, plotting of, 392–393 shrinkage smoothers, use of, 390 Variogram function, use of, 396–397 Analysing Ecological Data, 11 ANCOVA model, 25 Anderson, D. R., 482–484, 487, 491, 550, 552, 553 Annual rainfall and bird abundances heterogeneity and, 157	Badger activity, data on, 495–497 data exploration, 495–497 number of missing values per variable, 496 explanatory variables, 496 GEE approach, 499–500 GLM, application of, 497–499 GLMM results, 500–501 Bagley, P., 30, 420, 421 Bagley, P. M., 401, 421

Balguerias, E., 73	Bodie, J. R., 348, 384
Barbraud, C., 343, 344	Book outline
Barralb, M., 246, 254, 300, 324	case studies, 4
Barry, S. C., 262, 264	GLM and GAM, 3–4
Bartlett, M., 25, 400, 421	for instructor guidelines, 6
Bartlett test for homogeneity, 20	R
Bates, D., 1, 7, 8, 71, 80-82, 104, 107, 125,	and associated packages, citation
145, 148, 151, 171, 308, 355, 384,	of, 7–8
402, 431, 481	getting data into, 9–10
Bathyphotometers, 400	programming style, 8–9
Bayesian statistics, 510–511	software packages, 5–6
Benthic biodiversity experiment data	Booth, G. D., 473, 475, 478
GLS applied on, 89–90	Bosker, R., 72, 101, 114, 324
linear regression for, 86–89	Boveng, P. L., 292
protocol, 90–91	Bowman, A., 36
application of, 92–100	Boxplot, 15
Bernoulli and binomial distributions, 202, 204	Bradner, H., 400, 421
density curves, 203	Braun, J., 11
Bernstein, S. A., 400	Brødsgaard, C. J., 447
Bersier, L. F., 129-131, 139, 333	Broström, G., 8
Bett, B. J., 401	BRugs Packages, 8, 513–520
Bevers, M., 491	Bryk, A. S., 72, 101, 324
Bird data analysis, 531, 551–552	Burnham, K. P., 482–484, 487, 491, 552, 553
additive modelling, 548–552	
anova command, output of, 550	C
cross-validation, use of, 549-550	California bird data
GAM with Gaussian distribution, use	GEE for, 314–316
of, 548	GLM, 295, 297–298
model validation process, 551–552	R code, 297
R code, for GAM, 548	xyplot of, 296
smoothing function of, 551	Callaghan, J., 471, 484, 491
data exploration, 532	Cameron, A. C., 206, 263, 276, 277, 288
collinearity, of explanatory variables,	Cape Petrel time series
533–536	R code, 357–358
outliers, in response and explanatory	car Package, 255
variables, 532–533	Carrivick, P. J. W., 262
relationships, between response	Carroll, R. J., 11, 36, 71, 209
variable and explanatory	Case, J. F., 400
variables, 536	Cetaceans, age determination techniques for
linear regression, 536–540	data analysis
drop1 function in, 540-541	explanatory variables, as fixed part of
<i>F</i> -statistic and <i>p</i> -value, calculation of,	model, 462
541–542	intraclass correlations, calculation of,
model interpretation, 545–548	466–467
model selection, 542–544	likelihood ratio test, use of, 464–465
model validation, 544–545	model with two random effects, 463
summary command, for numerical	multiple variance structure, use of, 464
output, 540	summary command, for numerical
variables, description of, 531	output of model, 465-466
Bissonette, D., 383	data exploration
Bivariate linear regression model, 17–19	age conditional of species/animals, plot
Bjørnstad, O. N., 480	of, 460–461
Blackinton, G., 400, 421	R code used, 461–462

nested structure, of data, 459–460	upper.panel and lower.panel in
staining methods, use of, 459, 465–466	pairs Command, 348
step-down approach, use of, 460	varFixed, 75
Chambers, J. M., 11, 36, 219	varIdent,77
Chatfield, C., 145	varwidth = TRUE, 15
Chatterjee, S, 475, 477, 478	WinBUGS, 512
Chi-square distribution, 222	Constant plus power of variance covariate
Clarke, K. R., 423	function, 80
Clem, J., 400, 421	Cook, A. J. C., 159
Cleveland dotplot for Nereis concentration,	Cook distance, 27
12–13	Coplot of wedge clam data, 22
Cleveland, W. S., 39	corAR1 Correlation argument, 150
Clevenger, J., 383	Coronella girondica, see Snakes
Cliff, A. D., 480	Correlograms, 482
Climate change and phenology, relationships	corvif Function, 255
between, 343–344	Crawley, M. J., 11
Cloern, J. E., 425	Cronin, M., 9, 503–506
Clog-log link, 248, 251	Cruikshanks, R., 177
Collet, D., 209	Cunningham, R. B., 262, 264
Collins, M. A., 30, 401, 420, 421	Cutshall, A., 383
Coluber hippocrepis, see Snakes, N days	D
response variable	Dale, C. V., 383
Commands	Dalgaard, P., 7, 8, 11, 77, 243, 253, 540
abline, 28	Daption capense, see Penguin
abline(0, 0),131	Data exploration
AIC, 61	boxplot, 15
attach, 10	Cleveland dotplots, 12–14
cbind, 269	pairplots, 14–15
center = TRUE and scale	xyplot from lattice package, 15-17
= FALSE, 139	Davis, I. M., 198, 239, 242, 243
coef, 268	Davison, A. C., 67, 177
colnames, 269	Deep-sea pelagic bioluminescent organisms,
dotchart function, 12-13	400
factor, 139	additive mixed modelling and smoothing
gam.check, 58, 60	curve
header = TRUE, 10	data collection, procedure of
library (VGAM), 268	ISIT free-fall profiler, use of, 401
na.action option, 145, 150	station, location of, 401
negative.binomial(1), 390	model selection, 419–420
par, 58	multi-panel graphs for grouped data,
1-pchisq, 222	construction of, 401
plot, 57	clustering on correlation matrix, use of,
predict, 39, 219	408–409
predict.gls function, 99	Euclidean distances between 16
print.trellis, 369	stations, calculation of, 407–408
rowSums, 297	use of, one smoother, 406
split option in print, 370	varPower method, 405–406
stats::resid, 268	xyplot, for multi-panel figure, 404 Deer data, 300
stats::lesid, 206 step or stepAIC, 235	
step of stepAic, 233 strip and strip.default	binary data, 313 GEE for, 319–320
options, 389	
	GLMM predicted probabilities of parasitic

Deer data (cont.)	F-Ratio test, 25
GLM on, 327–328	Frequentist statistics, 510
probabilities of parasitic infection, 326	
Demetrio, C. G. B., 262	G
Design Package, 8	Gamma distribution, density curves for $\mu$ and
Deviance information criterion (DIC), 528	v values, 201
Diggle, P. J., 8, 71, 121, 145, 147, 171,	
307, 430	gam Package, 8, 37
Dique, D. S., 479, 492	Garrido, J. M., 246, 254, 300, 324
Dobson, A. J., 204, 209, 209	Gaussian linear regression
Donnelly, C. F., 262, 264	Gaussian quadrature, 341
Draper, N., 11, 49, 66	as GLM, 210–211
drop1 Command, 29, 221, 253, 256	artificial data with, 212
	model formulation for, 211-212
The Dumont d'Urville research station, 343	probability curves, 213
E	geepack Package, 8
E	Gelfand, A. E., 262, 512
Effective degrees of freedom (edf), 52–53	Gelman, A., 233, 511, 517, 529
Efron, B., 177, 490	Gelman-Rubin statistic, 517
Eilers, P. H. C., 48	Geman, D., 512
Elaphe scalaris, see Snakes	Geman, S., 512
Elaphostrongylus cervi parasite, 254	Generalised additive mixed models
in deer, 255	
count data into presence and absence,	(GAMMs), 2 Generalised additive modelling (GAM), 1,
301	2 \ , , ,
R code, 257	238, 258
Elith, J., 292	larval sea lice around Scottish fish farms,
Ellis-Iversen, J., 159	distribution of
Elphick, C. S., 143, 152, 295, 297	backward selection, 242
Emmerson, M. C., 86	Cleveland dotplot of, 240
	likelihood ratio test, 242–243
F	R code, 241
Fahrig, L., 383, 469, 475, 491	smoothing curves for, 243
Falck, W., 480	in mgcv package, 44–46
family Commands	additive models with multiple
family = binomial, 251	explanatory variables, 53–55
family = poissonff, 268	backwards selection methods, 49
family = posnegbinomial	bioluminescent data for two stations,
argument, 268	53–55
family = quasibinomial, 256	collinearity and, 63–66
Faraway, J. J., 11, 21, 25, 36, 201	cross-validation (CV), 51–53
	interaction between continuous and
Fernández-de-Mera, I. G., 246, 254,	nominal variable, 59–62
300, 324	knots, values of, 48–49
Fernández-Nùñez, M. M., 73	
Ferrier, S., 490	penalised splines and smoothing, 50–51
Field, S. A., 270, 271	regression splines and cubic regression
Fine, J. P., 8, 270, 271	spline, 46–47
Fisher's iris data, 4	for presence–absence data
Fitzmaurice, G. N., 19, 102, 113, 246, 295,	gam commands, 259
303, 312, 313, 324, 341, 430	smoothing function of Length, 258
Flather, C. H., 491	Generalised cross-validation (GCV), 51–52
Ford, R., 86	See also Generalised additive modelling
Forman, R. T., 383	(GAM)
Fox, J., 2, 11, 27, 36, 39, 209, 351, 536	Generalised estimation equations (GEEs),
France, R., 383	2, 302

AR-1 correlation, 306–307	He, B., 262
association structure, 304–305	Hediste diversicolor and wedge clam data sets,
exchangeable correlation, 307–308	12, 72, 86
and link function, 303–304	Heger, A., 421
stationary correlation, 308-309	Herring, P. J., 30, 401, 420, 421
unstructured correlation, 305-306	Heterogeneity
variance structure, 304	graphical model validation, 84–86
Generalised least squares (GLS), 1, 75	linear regression applied on squid, 72–74
Generalised linear mixed models (GLMMs), 2	variance structure
scene for binomial, 324–325	fixed, 74–75
Generalised linear modelling (GLM), 1	varcomb, 81–82
for presence–absence data	varconstpower, 80–81
parasites in cod, 252–254	varexp, 80
R code, 249–251	1 '
	varident, 75–78
tuberculosis in wild boar, 246	varpower, 78–80
for proportional data, 254	Hilbe, J. M., 194, 204, 234, 251, 263, 265, 295,
Genersch, E., 447	315, 320, 321
Gibbs sampler, 512	Hilborn, R., 484
Giller, P. S., 177	Hinde, J., 262
Gillibrand, E. J. V., 30, 401, 420, 421	Hindell, M. A., 469
Ginsberg, J. R., 469	Hinkley, D. V., 67, 177
glmmML Packages, 8	Höfle, U., 246, 254, 300, 324
gls Function, 75	Honeybees, and AFB disease
Godwits	data analysis
data	explanatory variables, in fixed part of
coplot of intake rate and time, 183	model, 451
description of, 182	intervals command, use of,
linear regression, 184–186	457–458
xyplot from lattice package, 184	linear mixed effects models, selection
Goh, T. N., 262	approach for, 451–458
Goldman, C., 383	linear regression model, use of,
Goldstein, H., 72, 324	450–451
Gortazar, C., 246, 254, 300, 324	optimal fixed structure, 454-455
Graham, M. H., 473	REML estimation, use of, 455–458
gstat Package, 8	selected random structure, 454–456
Guthery, F. S., 484	data exploration
	Cleveland dotplot, for untransformed
Н	spores, 448, 449
Hansen, H., 447	logarithmic transformation, use of,
Hanski, I., 469	448–449
	model used, interpretation of, 458
Harbour seals, 503–504	Paenibacillus larvae, as causative
See also Seal abundance data	agent, 447
Hardin, J. W., 194, 204, 234, 251, 263, 265,	spores, detection of, 447–448
295, 315, 320, 321	Hornitzky, M. A. Z., 447, 448
Harrell, F. E. Jr., 8	2.
Harrison, A., 177	Hosmer, D. W., 209, 478, 487
Hartl, M. G. H., 177	Hothorn, T., 8
Harvey, A.C., 176, 177	
Hastie, T., 36, 37, 39, 42, 62	I
Hastie, T. J., 11, 36, 219	Ieno, E. N., 1–12, 22, 33, 35–69, 86, 143, 152,
Hastings, W. K., 512	182, 421, 459, 469, 493, 503
Hawaiian bird data set, 171–172	Independence violation, tools for
Heanue, K., 383	detection, 161

Independence violation (cont.)	explanatory variables, 472–473
linear regression model, 162	exploration and preliminary
R code	analysis, 473
gstat package, 162	generalised linear mixed-effects models
summary command, 162	(GLMM), use of, 471, 481–483
standardised residuals, 163	AIC, use of, 483–484
variogram, 164–165	Akaike weight calculation, 484
Induced correlations, 112–113	alternative models, construction of,
intraclass correlation coefficient, 114	484–485
Inference, 66–67	95% confidence set of models, 486
information theory and multi-model,	glmmML function use, 482
552–553	information-theoretic approach, to
Intensified silicon intensified target (ISIT), 400	model selection, 483–484
free-fall profiler, 401	adequacy, methods for assess, 487–490
International Polar year 1957–58, 343	averaged predictions, use of, 487
Inverse Gaussian distribution, 204–205	simulation approach, for quantile-
Iteratively reweighted least squares (IRWLS)	quantile plot, 487–488
algorithm, 214	
aigoranni, 21 i	spline correlogram of Pearson residuals,
J	code for, 482–483 standardised variables, use of, 485
Jackman, S., 8, 262, 278	
Jamieson, A., 30, 420, 421	uncertainty, presence of, 486–487
Jamieson, A. J., 401	koala conservation, implications of results
Jansen, J. K., 293	for, 491–492
Jiang, J., 72, 324	Koala habitat, 471
Johanssonia arctica, see Leech	Noosa Local Government Area (LGA), as
Johnsen, S., 400	study area, 470–471
Johnson, D. H., 484	spatial auto-correlation, 479–481
Jones, J., 383	Pearson residuals of, logistic regression
Juste, R., 246, 254, 300, 324	model, 483
Juste, R., 240, 254, 500, 524	spline correlogram, use of, 480–481
K	Krill abundance and sea ice, 344
Karl, D., 400, 421	Kuhnert, P. M., 262, 270, 271
Karlovskis, S., 447, 448	
Keele, L. J., 36, 39, 40, 49, 67, 177, 209, 504	L
Keitt, T. H., 481	Laird and Ware model formulation, see Linear
Kelly-Quinn, M., 177	mixed effects model
Keough, M. J., 2, 11, 21, 36, 531	Laird, N.M., 19, 102, 113, 246, 295, 303, 312,
King, N. J., 421	313, 324, 341
Kiriakoulakis, K., 401	Lambert, D., 262
Kleiber, C., 8, 262, 278	Lampitt, R. S., 401
Koalas distribution, impact of landscape	Land-use changes, impacts in Ythan
pattern on, 469–471	catchment, 363
collinearity, between explanatory variables	birds
landscape variables, 473–475	and explanatory variables, 378–380
linear combinations of variables,	time series, trends in, 365–366
475–479	Common Agriculture Policy, 363
reduction in collinearity, 475–476	data
Spearman rank correlations matrix, 473	exploration, 364–367
strategies for, high collinearity between	source, 363–364
explanatory variables, 475	independence, dealing with, 374–377
variance inflation factors (VIFs),	model validation, 368–372
calculation of, 478–479	Landwehr, J. M., 487–489
	Langton, A. E. S., 384
data, 471	Langion, A. E. S., 304

latti an Dodroga 9	Mollow's C. non un. 51
lattice Package, 8	Mallow's $C_p$ pop up, 51
Laursiden, R., 177	See also Generalised additive modelling
Learned, J., 400, 421	(GAM)
Lee, A. H., 262	Mangel, M., 484
Lee, A. K., 469	Marginal model
Leech, 252	compound symmetric structure, 115
Legendre, L., 176, 423	corCompSymm, 116
Legendre, P., 176, 423, 473	general correlation matrix, 115
Lemeshow, S., 209, 478, 487	R code for, 116
Lewitus, A., 400, 421	Marine biodiversity, and eutrophication, 424
Liang, K. Y., 8, 71, 121, 145, 147, 171, 307	Marine biological monitoring programme, by
library Command and mgcv package, 57	Rijkswaterstaat, 424, 424
Lichstein, J. W., 481	Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC),
Ligges, U., 8	511–512
Likelihood criterion, 213–215	Martin, T. G., 262, 270
Limosa haemastica, see Godwits	Marx, B. D., 48
Lindenmayer, D. B., 262, 264	MASS Packages, 8
Lindstrom, A., 447	Matsuno, S., 400, 421
Linear mixed effects model	Matthews, A., 469
random effects model, 111–112	Maui time series, 157
random intercept and slope model	Maximum likelihood estimation and REML
within-group fitted curves, 111	estimation, 116–119
random intercept model	difference between
fitted command, 109	R code for, 119–120
population fitted curve, 108	in linear regression, 555
in R, 107–109	McAlpine, C. A., 471, 487
summary command, 107	McCarthy, M. A., 504
Linear regression model, 17–19	McCullagh, P., 194, 204, 209, 215, 218, 230,
and multivariate time series, 152–157	246, 253, 478
1lines Function, 30	
ImeControl Settings, 169	McCulloch, C. E., 324, 341, 481
	McKay, M., 471
LOESS smoother, 345–347	Melosira nummuloides, 424
F-statistics and p-values, 42	Melzer, A., 469
and R code, 38–39	Mendes, S., 16, 176
smooth = FALSE, 169	Mengersen, K., 262, 270
for span values, 41	Metropolis, N., 512
Logit link, 248, 251	Metropolis-Hastings algorithm, 512
Log likelihood ratio test, 83	mgcv Package, 37
Log-log link, 248, 251	nlme packages, 8
Log odds, 248–249	Millar, C.P., 198, 239, 242, 243
Loligo forbesi and dorsal mantle length	Miller, J., 481, 491
(DML), 72–73	Milne, R., 30, 401, 420, 421
Longhurst, A. R., 400	Mixed effects model, 107, 120-121
Loyn, R. H., 531	Moby's data, 26
Lukacs, P. M., 484	Model selection approach, 92–93
Lunn, D. J., 512	in GLM
Luque, P. L., 459	anova command, 223
	drop1 command, 222
M	optimal model, 221
Mächler, M., 8	R code and output, 220–221
Macroprotodon cucullatus, see Snakes, N days	Model validation, 128–129
response variable	heterogeneity, 20–21
Maindonald, J., 11	independence, 21–22
Manuonaid, J., 11	mucpendence, 21-22

Model validation (cont.)	nlme Packages, 8
normality, 19–20	Nordström, S., 447, 448
in Poisson GLM, 228	Normal distribution
deviance residuals, 229-230	histogram of weight, 194
Pearson residuals, 229	probability function, 195
in quasi-Poisson GLM	R code for, 195–196
R code, 231	Null hypothesis, 25
response residuals, 232	See also Bartlett test for homogeneity
wedge clam data, 22	,
model validation graphs, 23–25	0
Molenberghs, G., 71, 107, 121, 123, 125	Oahu time series, 155
Montgomery, D. C., 2, 11, 49, 117	Oceans, distribution of living organisms in,
Moore, B. D., 469	399–400
Morris, K. J., 421	O'Connor, D., 400, 421
Multinomial distribution, 204–205	Odds, concept, 248
Multinomiai distribution, 204–203	odTest from pscl package, 238
	offset command, 241
N	O'Halloran, J., 177
National Institute for Coastal and Marine	O'Hara, B., 8
Management (RIKZ), 427	O'Neil, R. V., 477
Naves, J., 469	Ordinary crossvalidation (OCV), 51–52
Negative binomial distribution, 199	See also Generalised additive modelling
density curves, 200	(GAM)
geometric distribution, 200	Ormerod, S. J., 490
mathematics for negative binomial	Outer iteration, 53
truncated model, 265	
Negative binomial GLM, 233	See also Generalised additive modelling
backward/forward selection based on AIC,	(GAM)
235–236	Overdispersion 224
explanatory variables, 234-235	causes and solutions, 224
log likelihood test, 238	model selection in quasi-Poisson, 227–228
probability function, 234	in Poisson GLM, 225–226
R code, 236–237	R code and, 226–227
validation tools for, 237	Owl data
Neilson, D. J., 400	GEE for, 316
Nelder, J., 194, 204, 209, 215, 218, 230, 246,	R code, 317
253, 478	Wald test, 318
	Poisson GLMM for, 333
Nereis data set, 16, 28–30	R code, 333–334
Nested models, 93, 221	R code, 299
Nestling barn owls, begging behaviour, 128	sibling negotiation data
anova command, 133	corAR1 structure, 159
boxplot and plot commands, 134–135	correlation structure with R code,
optimal model, 136–137	158–159
R code, 130, 138–142	
axes = FALSE and text	P
commands, 131	Paenibacillus larvae, 447–448
gls function, 132	Paiba, G. A., 159
REML and, 137	Pairplots, 14–15
variance structure, 132–133	penguins, arrival and laying dates of,
Neter, J., 473, 475, 478	348, 349
Newton, J., 16, 176	panel Commands
Nitrogen	panel.grid,30
concentration in teeth and age for whales	panel.smooth and panel.cor, 348
stranded in Scotland, 16	panel = superpose, 404

Paralithodes camtschaticus, see Red king crab	Poisson distribution
Parmesan, C., 343	function for, 196
Partridge, J. C., 30, 401, 420, 421	in GLM, 198
Pearce, J., 490	probabilities for, 197
Pearson residuals, 229	R code, 197–198
Peatman, W., 400, 421	GLM with real example
Pebesma, E. J., 8, 162, 307	deviance, 217–218
Peck, E. A., 2, 11, 49, 117	predicted values of, 218-219
Penalised quasi-likelihood (PQL) methods,	R code and, 216–217
341	Popova, E. E., 401
Penguin	Potts, J. M., 292
Adelie Penguin	Presence–absence data, 193
auto-correlation function of laying	Priede, I. G., 30, 401, 420, 421
dates of, 346	Probit link, 248, 251
Emperor and Cape Petrel, 344	pscl Packages, 8
library and data commands, 347	Pygoscelis adeliae, see Penguin
pairplot, for arrival and laying dates, 349	20
R code	Q
for differences between arrival and	Quasi-Poisson distribution, 226
laying dates against time, 350	GLM
for laying dates, 347	R code, 299–300
for linear regression model, 353	Quinn, G. P., 2, 11, 21, 36, 531
time series of arrival and laying dates, 346	Quini, 6. 1., 2, 11, 21, 30, 331
xyplot function, 348	R
See also Antarctic birds and impact of	
climatic changes on	Raffaelli, D. G., 86 Ragueneau, O., 401
Penston, M. J., 198, 239, 242, 243	Random effects model, 111–112
Phascolarctos cinereus, see Koalas	Random intercept model
distribution, impact of landscape	1
pattern on	fitted command, 109
Phillips, S. S., 469, 471, 484, 491	population fitted curve, 108
Phoca vitulina L, see Harbour seals	in R, 107–109
Phytoplankton time series data, 423–424,	and slope model
445–446	within-group fitted curves, 111
environmental variables in, 426	summary command, 107
marine biodiversity and	Raudenbush, S. W., 72, 101, 324
eutrophication, 424–425	Raya, C. P., 73
monitoring programme, 424	R commands, 12
temperature data analysis, 440–442	code, 62
	auto-correlation function (ACF) for,
long-term trends, by area, 440	146–147
seasonal components, by area, 440 spatial trend, 441	exponential variance structure, 80
±	and homogeneity, 73
temperature per month for each	for NB GLM, 267
area, 439	random intercept model in, 107, 109
water samples, collection of, 425	standardised residuals, 85–86
Pierce, D. A., 71, 147, 151, 167, 230, 324	variogram, 167–169
Pierce, F. J., 147, 151, 167	dotchart, 13
Pierce, G., 16, 176	function loess, 40
Pierce, G. J., 12, 22, 73, 182	gam function, 42–43
Pinheiro, J., 1, 7, 8, 71, 80–82, 104, 107, 125,	interaction in mgcv package, 60
145, 148, 151, 171, 308, 355, 402,	panel function, 30
431, 481	Red king crab, 252
Plummer, M., 8, 517	Reed, J. M., 143, 152

Regression splines and technical information,	overdispersion, assessment of, 519
46–49	Poisson model
Reichle, M., 400, 421	with auto-correlated random effects,
Reid, R., 16, 176	525-528
Rhodes, J. R., 270, 271, 469-492	with random effects, 520-523
Ribeiro, P. J., 8, 307	Poisson model in BRugs, fitting of, 513
Ricketts, T. H., 491	burn-in period, 516
Ridout, M., 262	code in R, 513–514
RIKZ data, 102	Gelman-Rubin statistic test, 517
and model selection, 122	inference, 518–520
protocol for, 123–128	initialising chains, 515–517
Ripley, B. D., 8, 11, 13, 36, 233, 328, 332	InitializeParam3.txt, 515-516
Rohlf, F. J., 18–20, 25	Modelglm1.txt file, as model code,
Roos, C., 400, 421	514–515
Roulin, A., 129–130, 139, 333	posterior distributions, summarising of,
Royal Research Ship Discovery, 401	517–518
Ruppert, D., 11, 36, 71, 209	Searle, S. R., 324, 341, 481
	Season explanatory variables, 266–267
S	Semlitsch, R. D., 384
Sarkar, D., 1, 7, 8, 16, 71, 104, 107, 125, 145,	Shimanuki, H., 447
148, 151, 171, 308, 355, 369, 370,	Shorebirds, 364–365
376, 402	birds and explanatory variables, 378–380
Saveliev, A. A., 503-529	independence over time, 374–377
scale Function, 139	LOESS smoother, 365
scatterplot3d Package, 8	model on, shape of trends for birds, 367
Schabenberger, O., 147, 151, 167	R code
Schafer, D. W., 71, 147, 151, 167, 230, 324	for additive mixed model, 367–368
Scheffé-Box test, 25	levels option and xyplot function,
Schimek, M. G., 36	366
Seabrook, L., 471	panel.text function, 366
Seal abundance data, 503–504	residuals vs. fitted values, 368-369
additive mixed modelling, with Gaussian	residuals vs. time, plot of, 370, 371
distribution, 504–507	square root transformation, use of, 378
auto-correlation, calculation of, 520	variance structure, and heterogeneity, 371
Bayesian statistics, components of,	xyplot function, graph with, 365
510–511	See also Land-use changes, impacts in
correlation between model parameters, for	Ythan catchment
Poisson model, 518	Sikkink, P. G., 63
DIC for model selection, 518, 528	Smith, A. F. M., 512
frequentist statistics, characteristics of, 510	Smith, G. M., 1–33, 35–69, 447–458, 469, 493,
GAM, application of	503
season, as variable, 506	Smith, H., 11, 49, 66
two-dimensional smoother, for month	Smith, R.P., 159
and time of day, 507	Smoothing models, 145
GLM application of, 507	Snakes, 266
Pearson residuals plotted against time,	Snijders, T., 72, 101, 114, 324
	Snow, L. C., 159
graph of, 509–511	Sodium dominance index (SDI) for acid
scale function, use of, 508	
Markov Chain Monte Carlo (MCMC)	sensitivity of rivers, 177
techniques, 511–512	Ireland
negative binomial distribution, with	geographical position of sites in, 178
auto-correlated random effects,	R code for, 179
525–528	variogram for pH data, 179–180

normalised residuals of linear regression	Variance inflation factors (VIF), 386
model, 181	Variogram function from nlme
R code for, 179	package, 167
bubble plot, 182	varPower Function, 79
corRatio and corExp	Vaughan, I.P., 490
structures, 180	Vector generalized additive models (VGAM),
experimental variogram, 181	package with code, 8, 268
xyplot from lattice package, 178	Venables, W. N., 8, 11, 13, 36, 233, 328, 332
Sokal, R. R., 18–20, 25	Verbeke, G., 71, 107, 121, 123, 125
Solan, M., 12, 22, 86, 182	Ver Hoef, J. M., 292, 293
Southern oscillation index (SOI), 345, 348,	Verzani, J., 11
354–359	Vicente, J., 246, 254, 300, 324
Special areas of conservation (SACs), 503	Vicente, 3., 240, 254, 500, 524 Villard, M. A., 475
Species explanatory variables, 266–267	vis.gam Function, 58
Sperling, T., 383	VIS. gaill Fullction, 36
2-Stage analysis method anova command, 104–105	W
	Walker, N. J., 493–502
lmList command from nlme	Wand, M. P., 11, 36, 71, 209
package, 104	Waters, J., 400, 421
stats Packages, 8	Watson, E., 159
step Function, 253	Webster, M., 400, 421
Stephens, P. A., 484	Wedge Clam Data, 22–23
Stone, M., 490	Welsh, A. H., 262, 264
Sturtz, S., 8	West, B., 5, 116, 121, 125, 459, 460, 462, 463
summary Command, 8	466
summary, 28	White book on S language, 219
summary, 141	Widder, E. A., 400
Sus scrofa, see Wild boar	Wild boar
Swanson, F., 383	tuberculosis-like lesions in, 246
	Wildlife conservation, management strategies
T	for, 469
tapply Option, 373-374	See also Koalas distribution, impact of
Temporal correlation and linear regression,	landscape pattern on
143–149	Winter, T., 383
auto-regressive moving average (ARMA)	Wintle, B. A., 270, 271
model for residuals, 150-152	Wolff, G. A., 401
Tibshirani, R., 42, 62, 177, 490	
Tobler, W., 161	Wood S. N. 1. 7. 8. 11. 36. 37. 45. 47. 55
Trzcinski, M. K., 475	Wood, S. N., 1, 7, 8, 11, 36, 37, 45, 47–55,
Turrentine, T., 383	62, 67, 71, 120, 175, 209, 242, 324
	336, 337, 339, 350, 431, 542, 549
U	Wooldridge, J. M., 72
Unbiased risk estimator (UBRE), 51	
See also Generalised additive modelling	X
(GAM)	xyplot from lattice package, 15–17,
	345–348, 365
V	
Vangriesheim, A., 401	Y
Van Winden, S., 159	Yan, J., 8, 270, 271
varComb Function, 81	Yarbrough, M., 400, 421
varConstPower Function, 80-81	Yau, K. K. W., 262
varExp Function, 80	Yee, T. W., 8, 268
varFixed Model, 83	Yellowstone National Park data, 63
and varident Variance structures, 78–79	Ythan catchment, 363–364
and variation variance structures, 70-77	1 dian catellinent, 505 507

77	: 0 + 1 CLM 2
Z	zero-inflated GLM, 3
Zar, J. H., 19, 473	zero-inflated negative binomial (ZINB)
Zeger, S. L., 8, 71, 121, 145, 147, 171, 307	explanatory variables, 278-284
Zeileis, A, 8, 262, 278	interpretation models, 286
Zero number	mathematics of, 274–276
models comparisons, 291-292	mean and variance, 277
sources of, 270	validation models, 284-286
for cod parasite data, 271	zero-inflated Poisson (ZIP), 262
two-part models and mixture models, and	GLMs and GAMs, 3-4
hippos, 270–274	zero-truncated data, 261
zero-altered negative binomial (ZANB)	mathematics for, 263
mathematics of, 287–288	maximum likelihood criterion, 264
models, 262	zero truncated distributions for count
R code, 268, 289–290	data, 206
zero-altered Poisson (ZAP), 262	and Poisson distribution and, 207-208
mathematics of, 287–288	probability of sampling 0 count, 207
R code, 288	Zuur, A. F., 1-33, 35-69, 459-468, 469,
zero-inflated count data, 261	493, 503