Exercises

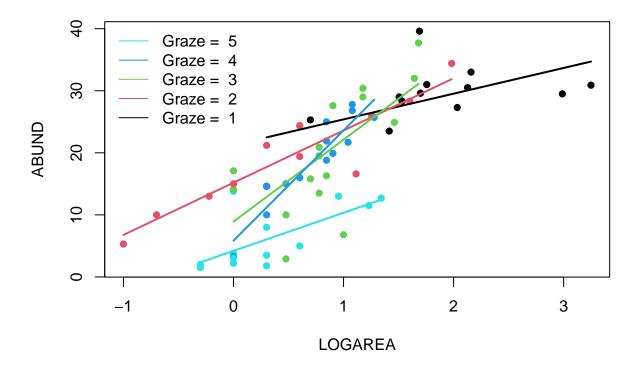
Linear model with an interaction between a continuous and a categorical variable

This exercise builds on the previous exercises where you fitted a linear model with either a single continuous explanatory variable or a single categorical explanatory variable. In this exercise you will fit a model with both a continuous and categorical explanatory variable and allow their effects to interact (i.e. the effect of one explanatory variable on the response variable changes with the value of the another explanatory variable). This is the third of four complementary exercises, based on the loyn data set.

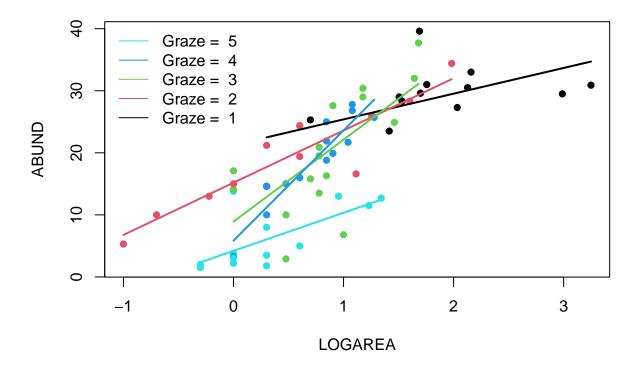
- 1. As in previous exercises, either create a new R script (perhaps call it linear_model_3) or continue with your previous R script in your RStudio Project. Again, make sure you include any metadata you feel is appropriate (title, description of task, date of creation etc) and don't forget to comment out your metadata with a # at the beginning of the line.
- 2. Import the data file 'loyn.txt' into R and take a look at the structure of this dataframe using the str() function. We know that the abundance of birds ABUND increases with the log₁₀ transformed area of the forest patch (LOGAREA variable). We also know that bird abundance changes with the grazing intensity (FGRAZE variable) with forest patches with higher grazing intensity having fewer birds on average. But how do these effects combine together? Would a small patch with low grazing intensity have more birds than a larger patch with high grazing intensity? Could the fit of the ABUND ~ LOGAREA model for the large patches be improved if we accounted for grazing intensity in the patches?
- 3. As previously we want to treat AREA as a log_{10} -transformed area to limit the influence of the couple of disproportionately large patches, and GRAZE as a categorical variable with five levels. So the first thing we need to do is create the corresponding variables in the loyn dataframe, called LOGAREA and FGRAZE.
- 4. Explore the relationship between bird abundance and log transformed forest patch area for each level of grazing. You could manually create a separate plot for each graze level but it's more efficient to use a conditional scatter plot (aka coplot, see section 4.2.6 of the R book or the help page for the function coplot()). A coplot lets you visualise the relationship between ABUND and LOGAREA for each level of FGRAZE, with FGRAZE levels increasing from the bottom-left panel (Graze level 1) to the top-right panel (Graze level 5). What patterns do you see? Is it okay to assume that the relationship between ABUND and LOGAREA is the same for all grazing levels or does the relationship change? This is effectively asking if the slopes of the relationship between ABUND and LOGAREA are different for each FGRAZE level this is called an interaction.

- 5. Fit an appropriate linear model in R to explain the variation in the response variable ABUND with the explanatory variables LOGAREA and FGRAZE. Also include the interaction between LOGAREA and FGRAZE. Hint: is the interaction symbol! Remember to use the data = argument. Assign this linear model to an appropriately named object, like birds.inter.1. Optional: Can you remember how to specify the model using the 'shortcut' version (with *) instead?
- 6. As conscientious researchers, let's first check the assumptions of our linear model by creating plots of the residuals. Remember, that you can split your plotting device into 2 rows and 2 columns using the par() function before you create the plots. Check each of the assumptions using these plots and report whether your model meets these assumptions.
- 7. Use the anova() function to produce the ANOVA table of your linear model. Remember, this ANOVA table is based on sequential sums of squares (the order of the explanatory variables matters). The only P value that we should interpret is the one that occurs in the second to last row of the table (the one above 'Residuals'). This is the interaction term between FGRAZE and LOGAREA (FGRAZE:LOGAREA). What is the null hypothesis associated with this interaction term? Do we reject or fail to reject this hypothesis? What is the biological interpretation of this interaction term? Can we say anything about the hypotheses for the main effects of FGRAZE or LOGAREA?
- 8. OK, now for the part you all know and love! Use the summary() function on your model object to produce the table of parameter estimates. Using this output, take each line in turn and answer the following questions: (A) what does this parameter estimate? (B) What is the biological interpretation of the corresponding estimate? (C) What is the null hypothesis associated with it? (D) Do you reject or fail to reject this hypothesis? Also compare the multiple R² from this model the models you created in the previous two exercises. I encourage you to get someone to discuss your answers with you if you are confused:).
- 9. Right, now hang onto your hat! Let's plot the predictions from your model to figure out how it really fits the data (and help us understand the output from the summary() function:). Here's a general recipe, using the predict() function.
 - plot the raw data, using a different colour for points from each FGRAZE level
 - for each FGRAZE level in turn:
 - create a sequence of LOGAREA from the minimum value to the maximum within the grazing level (unless you wish to predict outside the range of observed values, probably best not too!).
 - store it in a data frame (e.g. dat4pred) containing the variables FGRAZE and LOGAREA. Remember that FGRAZE is a factor, so its value need to be placed in quotes.
 - Create a vector of predicted bird abundances using our new dataframe using the predict() function.
 - Add the predicted to your plot using the lines() function with the appropriate colours.

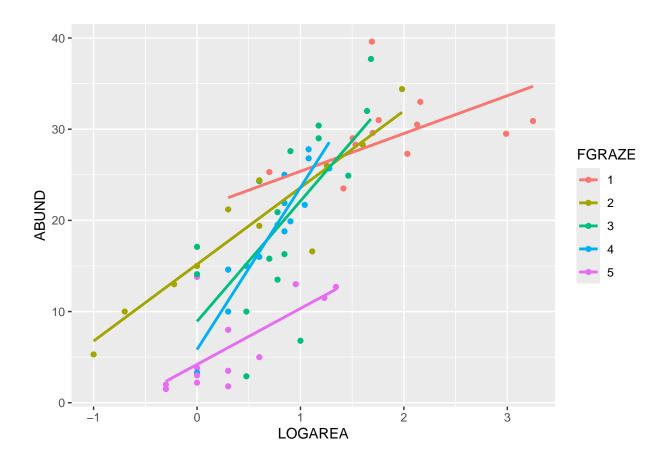
See the script below, for one of many ways of doing this. Now this might seem like a huge amount of code just to plot your predicted values (and admittedly it is!) but most of the code is just repeated for each level of graze. Just work through it slowly and logically and hopefully it will make sense (please ask if you are confused). I will also show you some alternative (easier?) ways to do this below.



(Optional, for the geeks) Alternative method, using a loop. Just keep this code in case you ever want to do something like this in the future.



(Optional, for the lazy!) And, if you want an even easier way, then we can use the ggolot2 package. Note: you will need to install the ggplot2 package first if you don't already have it.



End of the Linear model with continuous and categorical explanatory variables exercise