Caroline’s Self-assessment

I was very enthusiastic from the beginning to work on a project related to birds. In my group, I proposed my idea to examine population declines of species at risk from the North American Breeding Bird Survey data set. We found it difficult to agree on a topic, so to get our project moving, I took initiative to initially download the data sets, perform some exploratory analyses, and throw together some preliminary plots.

Once we decided on a topic, we roughly split the project into three: Richard was in charge of putting the datasets together (Alex and I helped a little with that) and producing the heat maps, Alex’s role was to look at the factors that were affecting swallow declines, and my responsibility was to investigate whether swallows were indeed declining in Ontario and how quickly.

I performed multiple regression in R, checked if our data were violating any assumptions of linear regression, applied transformations when necessary, familiarized myself with the structure and quality of our data, tested interactions, and plotted results. As well, I set up the structure of our presentation and our report. I researched scientific publications related to our topic and compiled a summary table for my team members outlining key findings in the literature. In writing the final report, I wrote the introduction, future directions, and the sections in the results/discussion pertaining to my figures.

Throughout the project Richard, Alex, and I made sure to rotate roles of leader, note-taker, and organizer. As well, we kept each other motivated and on-track by assigning each other homework for next class! We shared these roles fairly equally.

I think I could have done a better job on this project by better familiarizing myself with GitHub and command line Git. As well, I wish I spent more time proofreading and coding collaboratively with my group members; throughout the project, I was quite focused on my section of the project and worked independently most of the time. I think it would have been valuable if we had verified each others’ work – this would have improved the overall quality of our analyses. In addition, I could have been more proactive about insisting that we write and complete the report earlier (instead of doing it last minute). Overall, it was a fun project to contribute to!