Artificial Intelligence in Ecology and Evolution : potential and limits

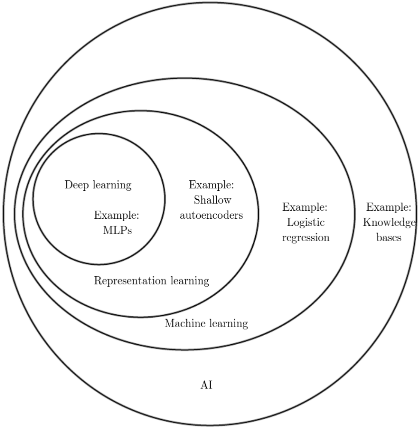
E2M2 webinar

Paul Tresson

26/06/25

Disclaimer

AI is not only deep learning



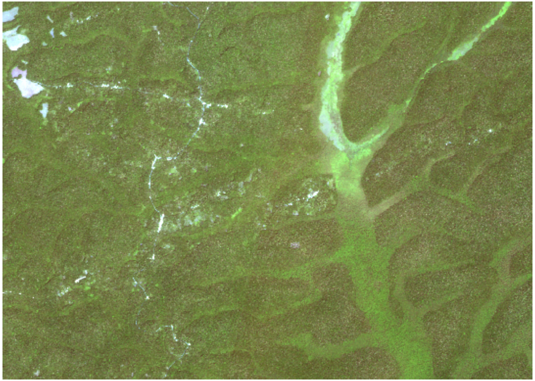
Goodfellow et al., 2016

Outline

1. Why use deep learning in ecology ?
2. What are the cases where deep learning does work ?
   and other models don't
3. What are the cases where deep learning doesn't work ?
   common traps when working with living things
4. How to sample and evaluate ?
5. Perspectives

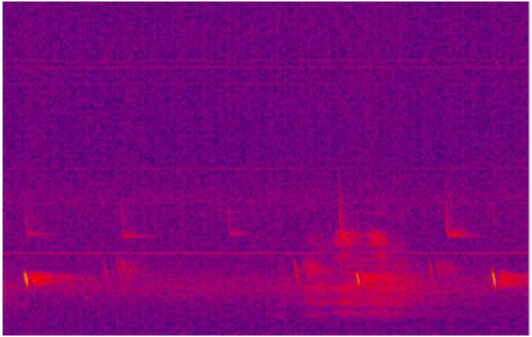
Why use deep learning in ecology ?

More and more data



- UAVs, Satellite

More and more data



Mac Aodha *et al.* 2022

- UAVs, Satellite
- Camera trap, accoustic

More and more data

plantnet.org

- UAVs, Satellite
- Camera trap, accoustic
- Citizen science

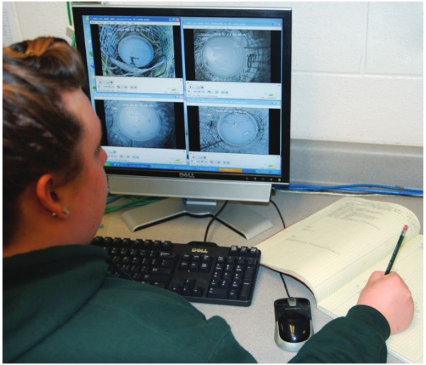
More and more data

- UAVs, Satellite
- Camera trap, accoustic
- Citizen science

➔ **Better coverage, better monitoring**

Data analysis and interpretation is time consuming

- A computer does not sleep
- A computer does not get tired



Grieshop et al., 2012

Data analysis and interpretation is time consuming

- A computer does not sleep
- A computer does not get tired

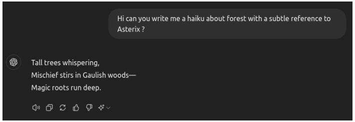
➔ **Automation now possible**

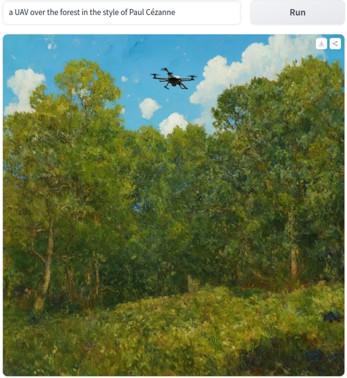
xkcd 1425, 2014

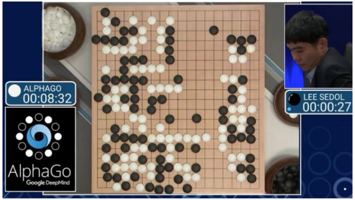
What are the cases where deep learning does work ?

and other models don't

Model complex, non-linear and abstract relationships







Interpolation and generalisation

Unonopsis stipitata Diels

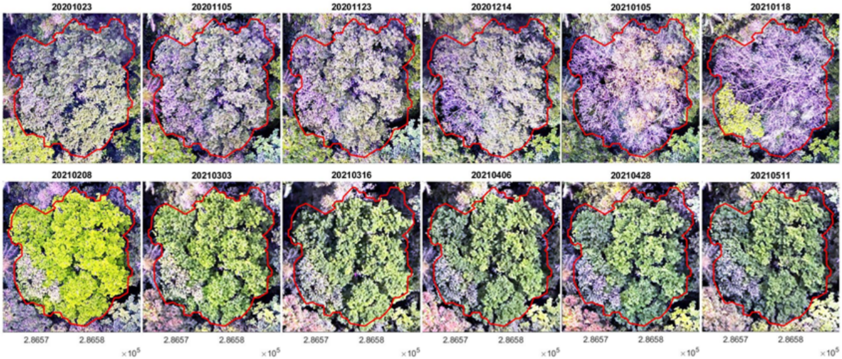
PlantClef 2020 Dataset

What are the cases where deep learning doesn't work ?

common traps when working with living things

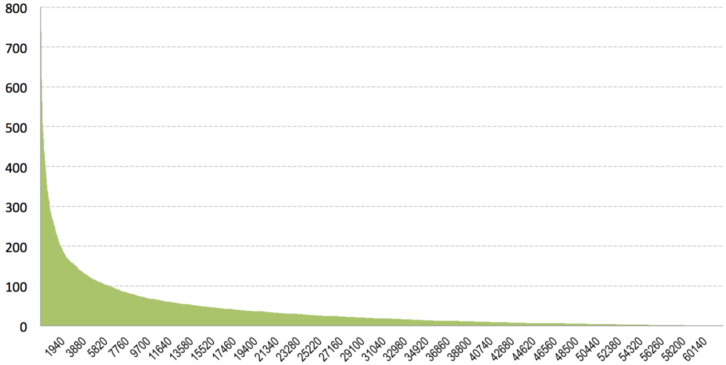
Contraints in ecology

Data from the real world is noisy,



Contraints in ecology

Data from the real world is noisy, unbalanced,

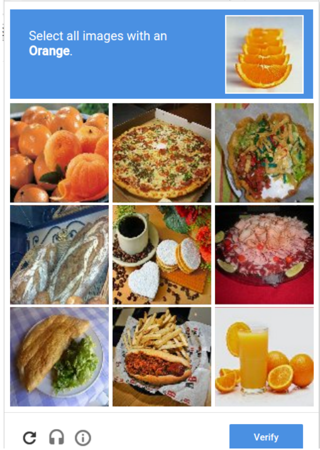


Contraints in ecology

Data from the real world is noisy, unbalanced, hard to collect,

Contraints in ecology

Data from the real world is noisy, unbalanced, hard to collect, hard to interpret.



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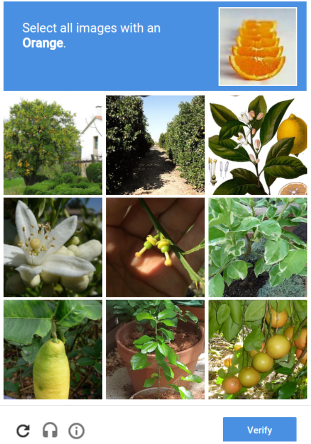

Contraints in ecology

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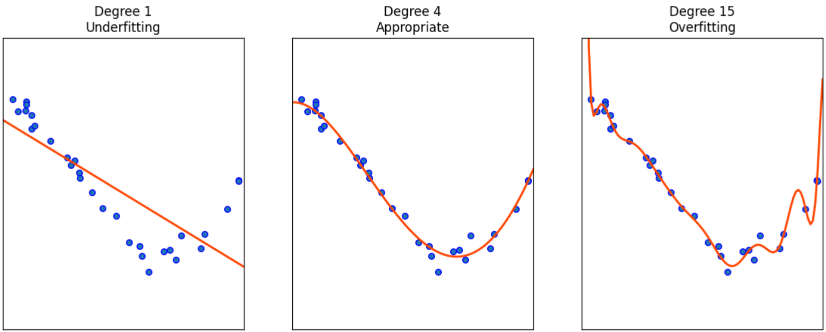
Overfitting

Overfitting



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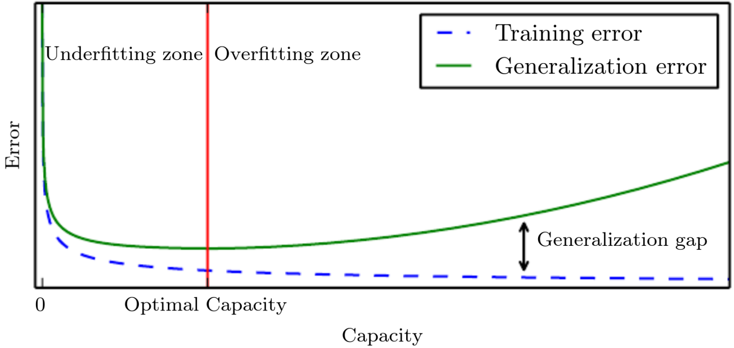
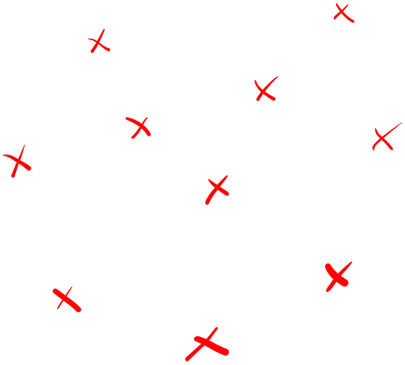
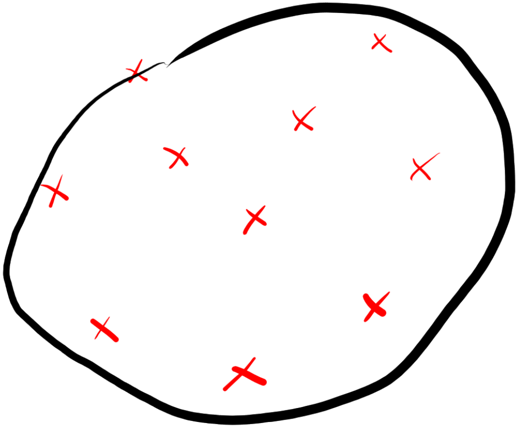


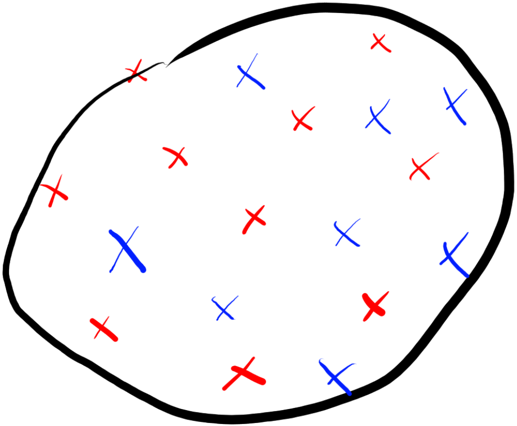
Goodfellow et al., 2016



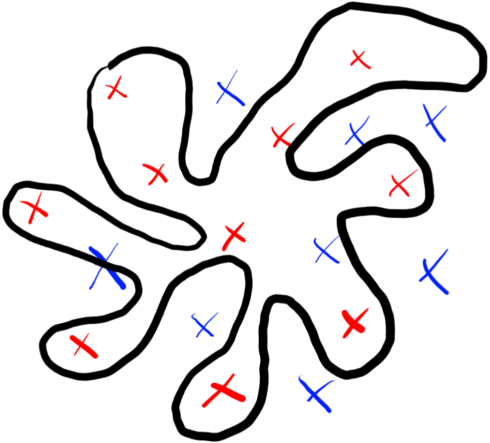
Train set



A good fitted model



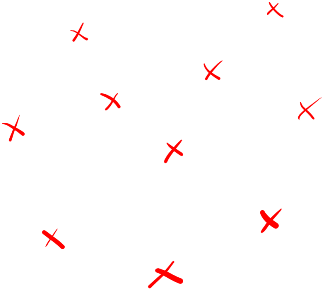
Test set



Overfitting

Biases

Biases in the train set



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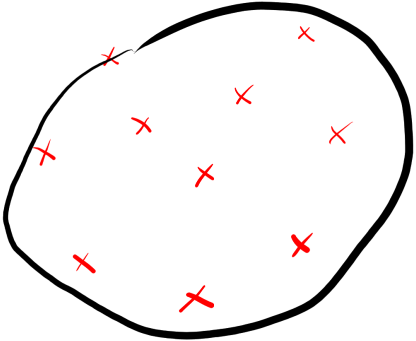

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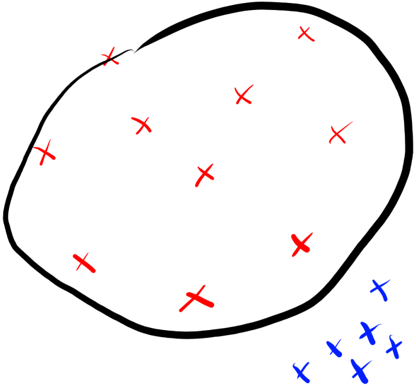

Biases in the train set - autocorrelation

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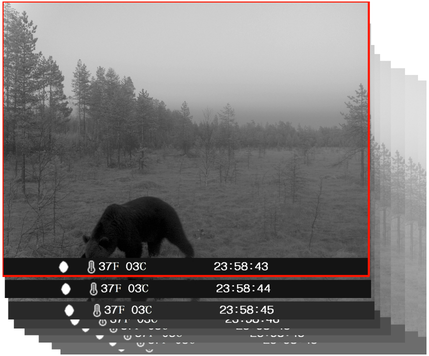

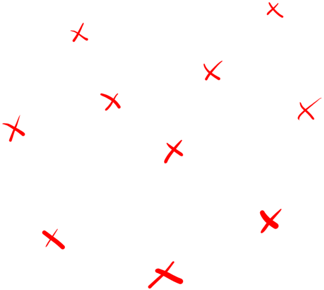

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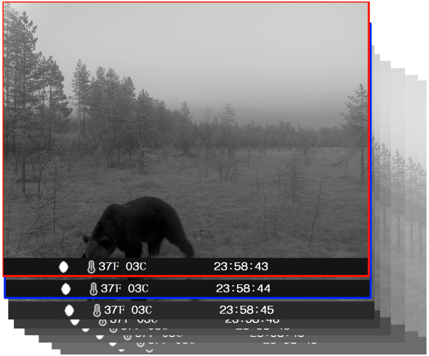

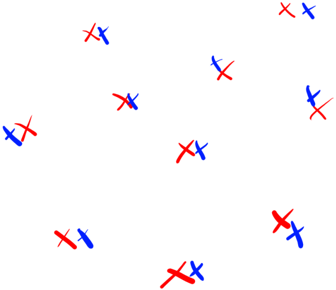

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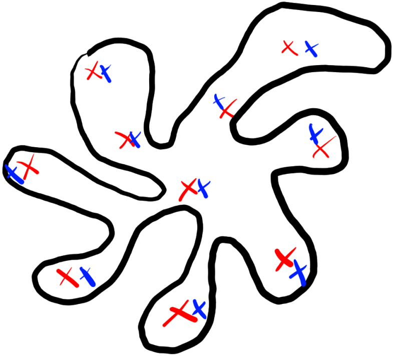

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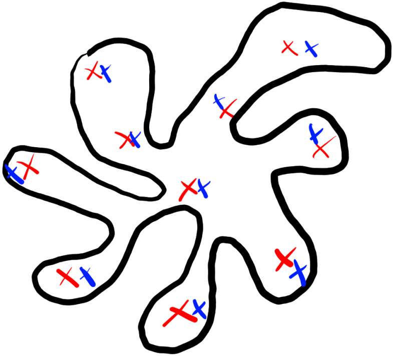
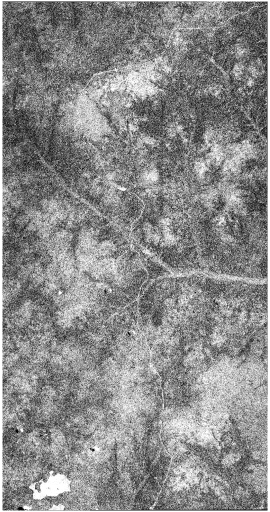


Biases in the train set - Spatial autocorrelation



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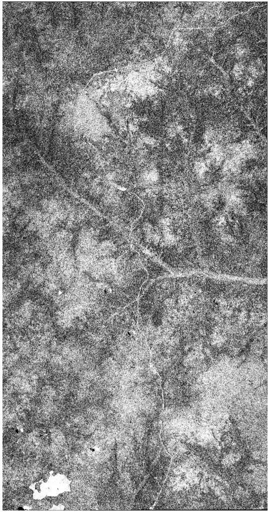

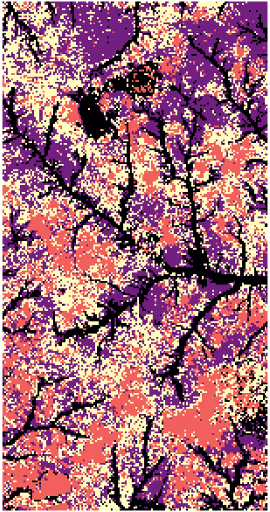

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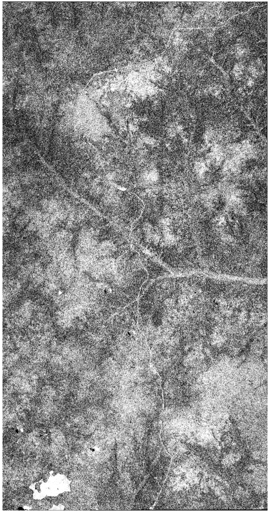

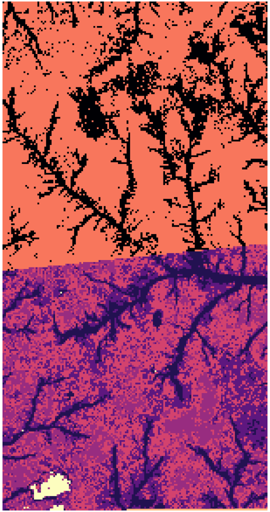

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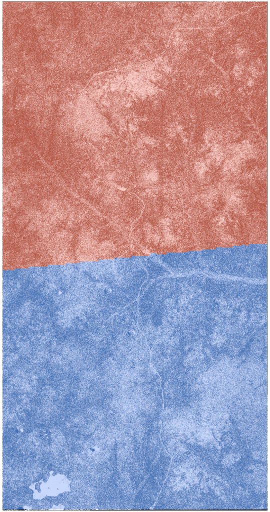

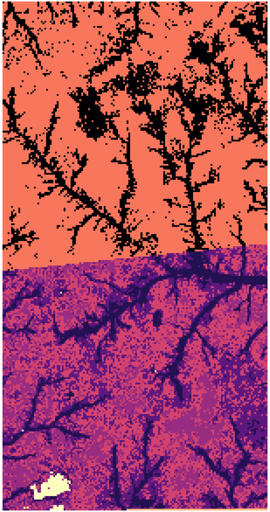

Unbalanced data

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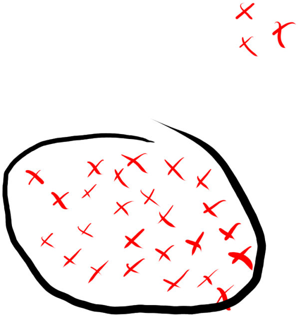

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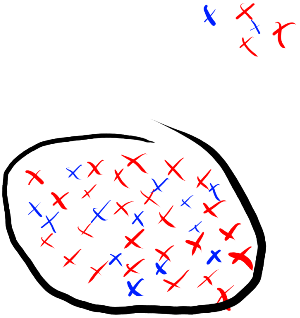

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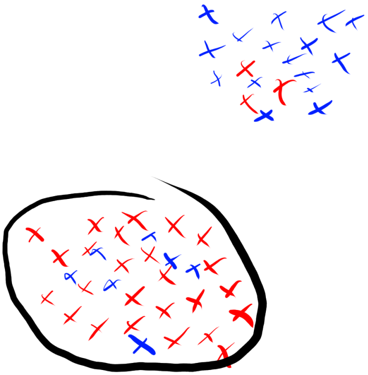

Deal with unbalanced data

- Oversample ?

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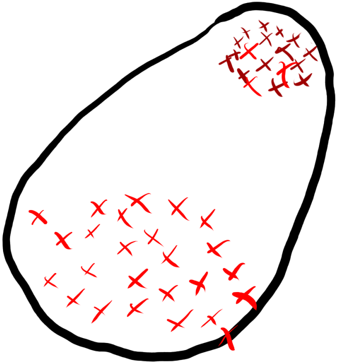

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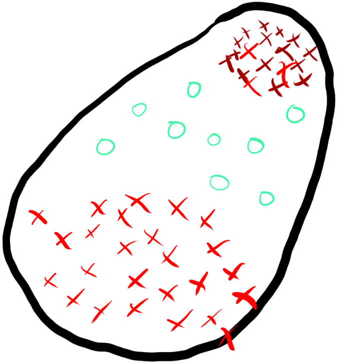

Deal with unbalanced data

- Oversample ?
- Undersample/saturate ?

Deal with unbalanced data

- Oversample ?
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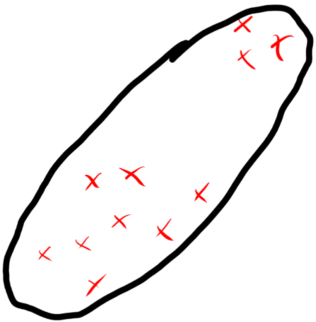

Deal with unbalanced data

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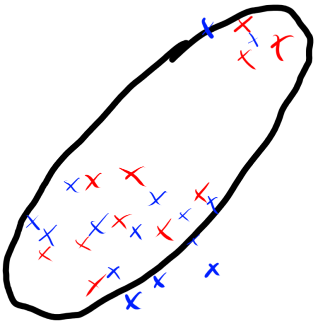
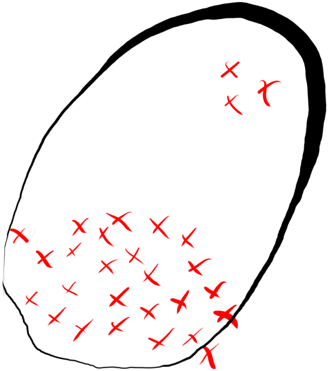


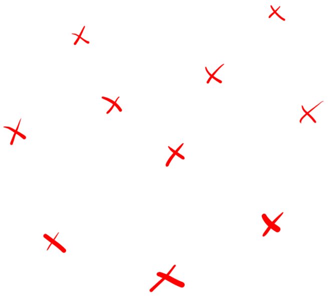
Deal with unbalanced data

- Oversample ?
- Undersample/saturate ?
- Adapt loss ?



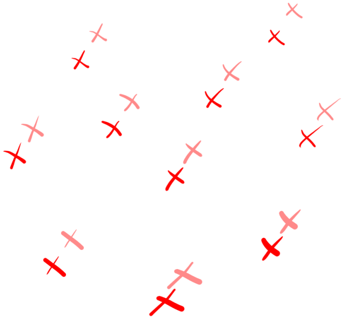
Deal with lack of data

- Data augmentation



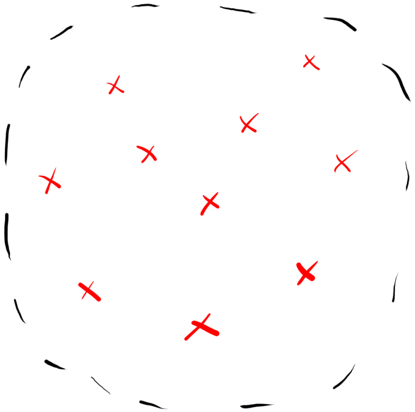
Deal with lack of data

- Data augmentation



Deal with lack of data

- Data augmentation
- Pretrained model

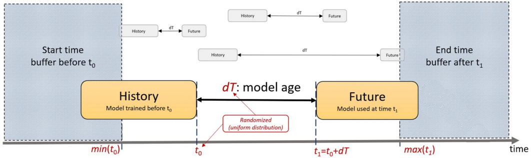


Deal with lack of data

- Data augmentation
- Pretrained model
- **... collect more data**

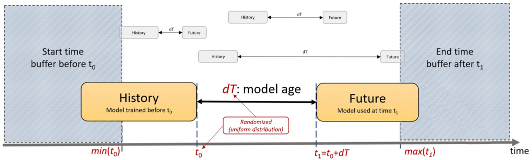
Out of distribution

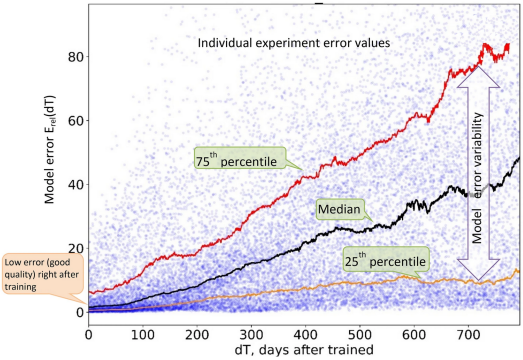
Out of distribution : Evolution with time



Adapted from Vela et al., 2022

Out of distribution : Evolution with time





Adapted from Vela et al., 2022

Out of distribution : Global changes

Conditions will evolve in never seen before conditions:

- Given ecosystem in unprecedented climatic conditions

Out of distribution : Global changes

Conditions will evolve in never seen before conditions:

- Given ecosystem in unprecedented climatic conditions
- Species migrate/invade in new territories

Out of distribution : Invasive species

New unknown species in the training test appears in a region.

- False Positive : confusion with known species

Out of distribution : Invasive species

New unknown species in the training test appears in a region.

- False Positive : confusion with known species
- False Negative : model misses the new species

Out of distribution : Invasive species

New unknown species in the training test appears in a region.

- False Positive : confusion with known species
- False Negative : model misses the new species
- Handmade check on model confidence

Need to be very careful on how to evaluate

How to sample and evaluate ?

Random split ?

"random split training validation 80/20"

Random split ?

"random split training validation 80/20"

For the uncurated dataset, we randomly sample 142 million images

Oquab et al., 2023

Random split ?

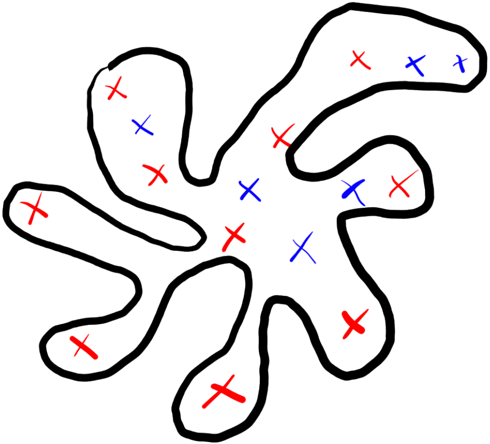
"random split training validation 80/20"

For the uncurated dataset, we randomly sample 142 million images

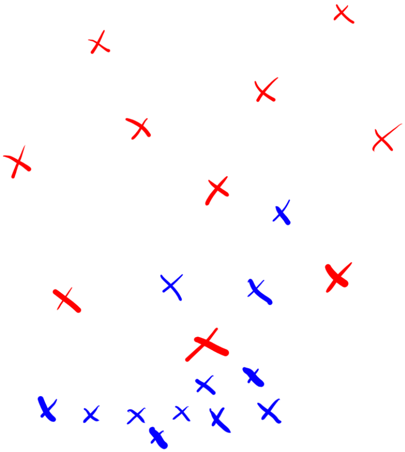
Oquab et al., 2023

Works for huge DL papers, maybe not for you

Overfitting the test set



Overfitting the test set



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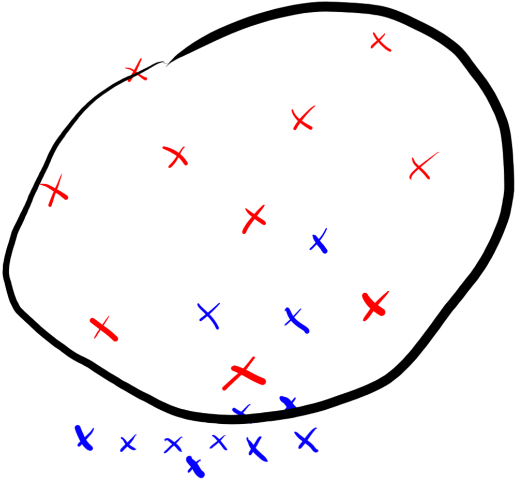

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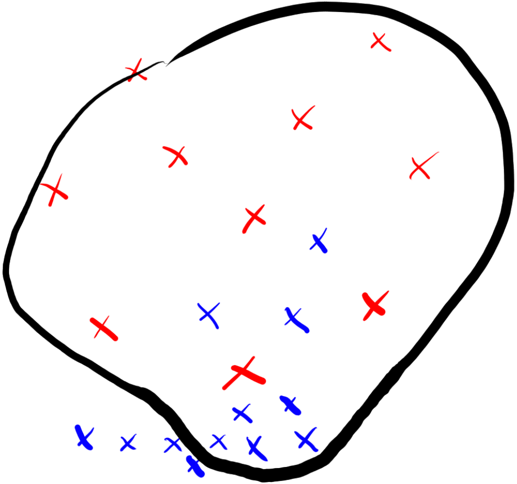

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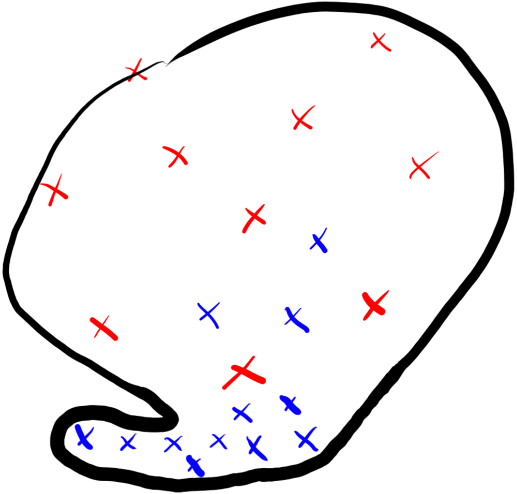

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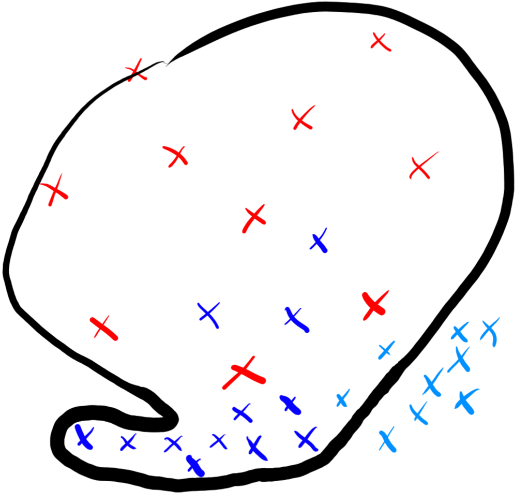


Cross-validation

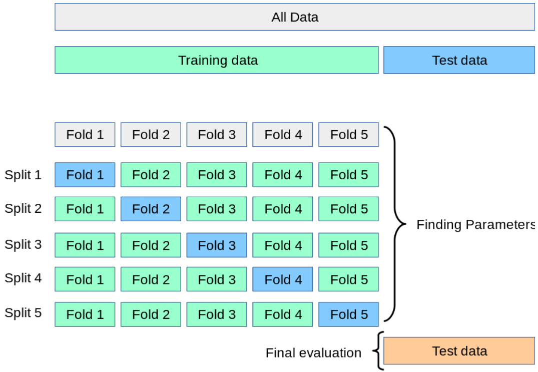


Figure from scikit-learn docs

Cross-validation

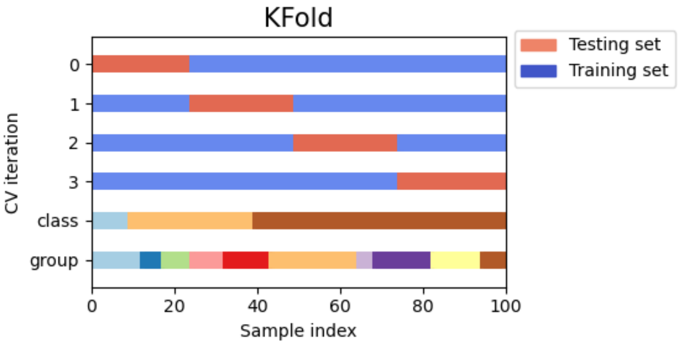


Figure from scikit-learn docs

Cross-validation

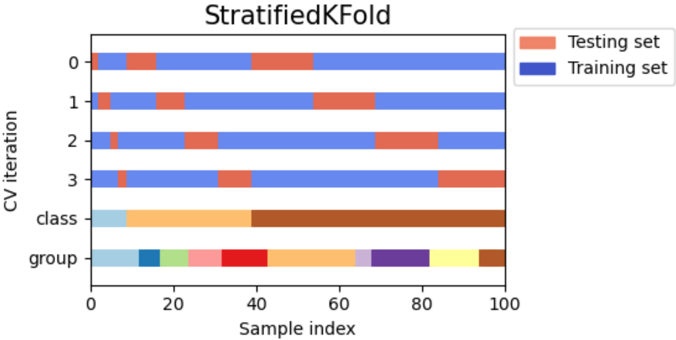
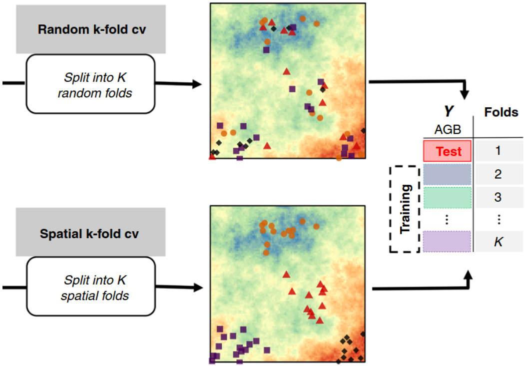


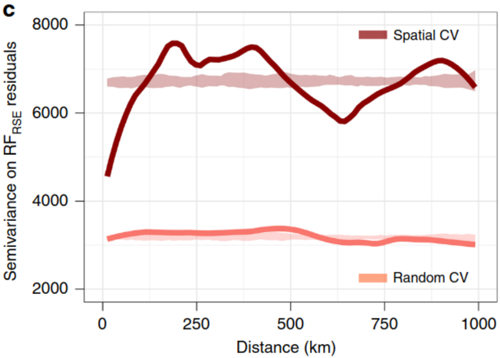
Figure from scikit-learn docs

Spatial cross-validation



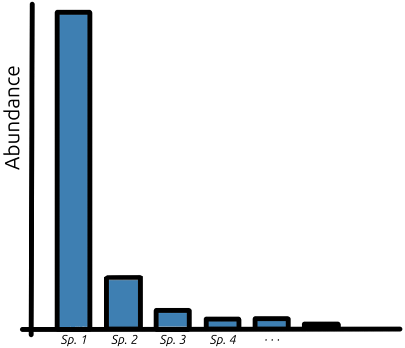
See. Ploton et al., 2020

Spatial cross-validation

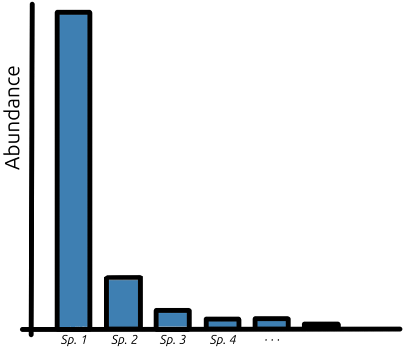


See. Ploton et al., 2020

Choosing the right metric



Choosing the right metric

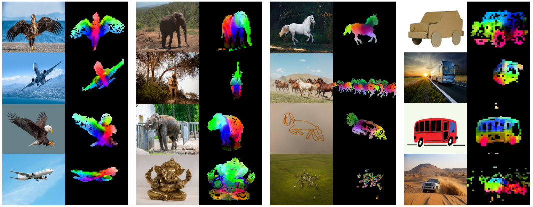


If we predict Sp. 1 all the time:

Accuracy	=	0.75
Average precision	=	0.05

Perspectives

Models are more robust and generalist

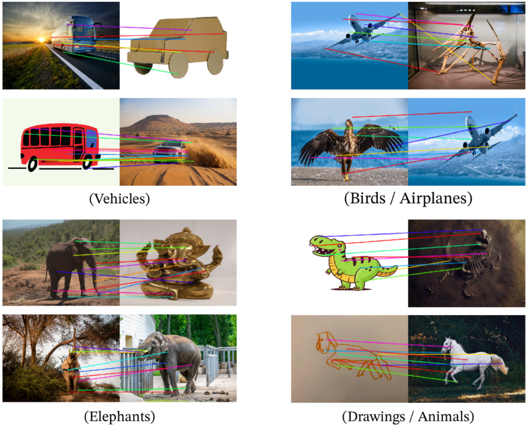


(a) (b) (c) (d)

- Self-supervised Learning (Pre-training)

Oquab et al., 2023

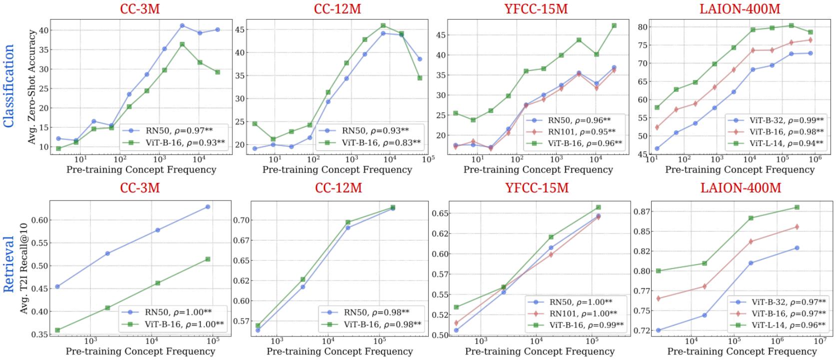
Models are more robust and generalist



Oquab et al., 2023

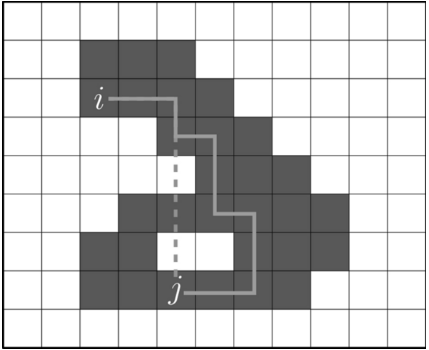
- Self-supervised Learning (Pre-training)
- Better performances and robustness

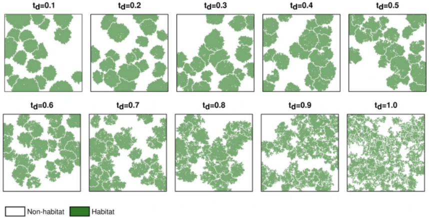
Zero-shot at a cost



Udandarao et al., 2024

Not only deep learning





Justeau-Allaire et al., 2024

Conclusion

Should I use deep learning in my research ?

- ✓ Lot of incoming data
- ✓ Low-level data
- ✓ Cumbersome but (relatively) easy to analyse

- × Need for explainability
- × **Need for certainty**
- × **Need for reliability**

Thank you for your attention !

Any questions?

Useful ressources

State of the art

- Huggingface
- PapersWithCode

Getting started

- Pytorch
- Keras

Understanding papers

- Yannic Kilcher
- AI coffe break

Understanding visually

- 3blue1brown
- deepia

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