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Perspective

Conservation of Biodiversity and its Influence on the Environment

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the impact of the environment on species assemblages is crucial for the conservation of biodiversityand this needs a thorough understanding of trait-environment interactions. The characteristics and roles of saproxylic insects in forest ecosystems are diverse. Thus, knowing how they react to their surroundings helps us identify habitats that need to be preserved or repaired. We looked at possible interactions between environmental factors (deadwood, kind and age of surrounding forest) and ecological traits in saproxylic beetles (feeding guilds and habitat preferences).

For three years in a row, we collected beetle samples from 78 plots in Sweden's boreal forest landscapes that contained recently formed high stumps of Silver birch and Scots pine. Our goal was to investigate possible interactions at close and distant scales (20 m and 500 m radius) between ecological features and the surrounding environment using a model-based approach. We discovered that local broadleaf-originated deadwood and broadleaf-rich woods in the surrounding landscapes are positively related with beetle species that like leaves.

Positive correlations exist between conifer-preferring species and the quantity of coniferous deadwood and old and young forests in the surrounding area. The surrounding landscapes' old forests are strongly correlated with fungivorous and predatory beetles. Our findings show that the types of forests in the landscape and the quantity of deadwood present locally both have an impact on the composition of saproxylic beetle groups. The study of trait responses in saproxylic beetles sheds light on the importance of dead wood and broadleaf forests as key components of restored boreal forests, aiding in the planning and management of conservation efforts in forest landscapes.

DESCRIPTION

Around each high stump sample point, there were 20 m radius rings in which local environmental factors were measured. A 20-meter radius is a practical and efficient scale for manual measurements, while also providing a good depiction of the surrounding environment. In 2019, the summer and autumn seasons saw the collection of local environmental factors.

Data were gathered on all deadwoods larger than 4.5 cm in diameter, taking into account the type of tree, its height and length, its diameter, its stage of decay and its posture (e.g., standing or laying). The diameter of standing dead trees was measured at Breast Height (DBH) and the diameter of deadwood logs was measured in two places: At the top (to a minimum of 4.5 cm) and at the base. A deadwood log's 20-meter radius plot was the only area that was measured.

The landowner, Sveaskog AB, a state forest corporation, provided the landscape data, which was created by extracting information from buffers with a 500 m radius surrounding each plot. The data included the types and ages of woods. We selected 500-meter buffers because they adequately depict the diversity of forests found in a significant portion of the area around the plots. A map showing the locations of Sweden's study landscapes (A). A black dot represents an example of where the plots are placed in the landscapes, with a 500 m radius buffer (B). The utilization of data on forest structures owned by forest owners is made possible by the presence of two flight intercept traps per pair of high stumps of silver birch and scots pine in each plot.

According to the definitions provided by the Swedish National Forest Inventories (NFI), forests were divided into five categories: Mixed coniferous forest (≥ 65% conifers),

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broadleaved forest (≥ 65% broadleaves, ≤ 45% noble broadleaves), pine forest (≥ 65% pine), spruce forest (≥ 65% spruce) and mixed coniferous forest (≥ 65% conifers). Clear-cut (0-2 years), young (3-30 years), middle-aged (31-80 years), mature (81-120 years) and old (>120) were the five groups used to categories forest age. For every age class and kind of forest, the total hectares (10,000 m^2) within each buffer with a 500 m radius were determined. 2.4. Examining data statistically throughout the whole sample period (2010-2012), all saproxylic beetles obtained from a single high stump were combined for statistical analysis. Hence, one tall stump in a sampling plot serves as the replication unit.

The analyses were performed for pooling landscapes, but for feeding guilds and habitat preference, as well as for pine and birch traps, individually. Only one of these tall stumps was randomly selected for analysis in plots with two pines or two birches and stumps with missing trap collections were not included in the studies (NBirch=65, NPine=73). Using rarefaction and extrapolation curves (R-package "iNEXT") with 95% confidence intervals, the total species richness (pooled landscapes) per ecological trait group that is, one regarding feeding guilds and one regarding habitat preference was calculated for pine and birch high stumps in order to compare the gamma diversity of beetles across different functional guilds. We applied a model-based method to the fourth corner problem to investigate relationships between various feeding guilds or habitat preferences and environmental variables.

The purpose of the fourth corner problem is to investigate the relationships between traits and environment. The model creates a fourth matrix containing interaction coefficients between characteristics and environmental variables using a set of three matrices: Environmental data (R), species abundance data (L) and species trait data (Q).

The amount that units (1 SD) change in the trait variable alters the slope of the connection between abundance and a particular environmental variable is known as the magnitude of the coefficients, which serve as a measure of relevance.

We utilised a LASSO-penalized negative binomial regression (R package "mvabund") to estimate these coefficients. Interpretation is aided by the LASSO penalty, which completes model selection by setting to zero any model terms that do not reduce BIC or explain any variation in species response. The model incorporates a species effect, meaning that distinct intercept terms are included for every species.

This means that characteristics, rather than absolute abundance patterns, are responsible for explaining patterns in relative abundance among taxa. Pseudo-R^2 was computed as the R^2 of the predicted against the observed abundance values for each species at each location using the function "predict.traitglm" (R package "mvabund") for the purpose of model evaluation or to gauge the amount of variance explained by the regression models. Local and landscape environmental factors were examined for collinearity using Pearson correlations prior to analysis.

CONCLUSION

Pesticides are the primary cause of the population decreases of countless vertebrate and invertebrate species connected to agricultural environments. The fact that these ecosystems, which are continuously treated with a wide range of chemical pesticides, are not being adequately protected indicates that the risk assessment techniques now in use are insufficient to assess the ecological effects of these chemicals. Not only are the techniques flawed, but so is the ERA's current framework.