Species Distribution Models in Practice - A Modeler-Practitioner Roundtable

- Interactive session report -

Session organizers: Carlos Ramirez-Reyes; Kristine Evans, Garrett Street, Francisco Villella.

During the session, we have an attendance of ~25 participants and five organizers and presenters. Our session aimed to understand challenges and opportunities to increase the use of species distribution modelers in practice.

The session order was as follow:

- Introduction of the session and speakers
- Three mini-talks given by two species distribution model creators (Ken Nussear, Garrett Street) and one practitioner using these models in their work (Jennifer Wilkening). These talks helped participants to start visualizing and reflecting on the concepts of use of SDM and also some of the challenges in SDM use.
- First Breakout. Barriers for SDM adoption. We split the room in four three groups based on affinity of participants: Academics, practitioners from governmental agencies, practitioners from private organizations. We asked them to list the challenges that are preventing the adoption of SDM in practice.
- Second breakout session. For each of the groups, we ranked the identified challenges of SDM adoption in practice. This consisted on asking each participant to identify the tree challenges that are most important to improve the use of SDM.
- Closing remarks

Among participants, we had mostly a representation of academics (faculty, grad students and postdocs), comprising >50% percent of the attendance. Practitioners from government agencies was the second largest group with ~40% of participants. We only got two participants from NGOs. Many participants commented that they enjoyed the session and were happy to have this type of conversations. The list of challenges included those related to technology and personnel, such as the lack of hardware and trained personal in house. Other challenges included the mismatch between models produced for charismatic species, but without immediate use, and the need of practitioners for models for less charismatic species. Our team is evaluating whether we have sufficient information to prepare a research note with the outcomes of this session or if we are taking this approach to another professional meeting to gather more data.