

# SECR for acoustic data

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## Introduction

Sounds recorded at an array of microphones may be analysed to provide an estimate of the ‘population density’ of sound sources using an extension of the usual methods for spatially explicit capture-recapture (SECR) (Efford et al. 2009; Dawson and Efford 2009). This vignette shows how the analysis may be performed in package **secr**, using as an example the dataset **ovensong** from an acoustic survey of ovenbirds (*Seiurus aurocapilla*). Input of signal data from a text file is covered in `secr-datainput.pdf`.

More recent work (e.g., Stevenson et al. 2015) should be consulted before relying on the analyses here.

## Background to acoustic analysis with SECR

Typical SECR jointly models the 2-D distribution of animal home-range centres and the probability an animal is detected over several time intervals at multiple detectors (traps), given their location. Acoustic SECR models the instantaneous 2-D distribution of sound sources and the acoustic power received during a brief recording at multiple microphones, given their location.

The acoustic analysis differs because (i) data come from a single interval rather than several ‘occasions’ (Efford et al. 2009), and (ii) each detection has an associated continuous measurement, a measure of ‘signal strength’. Signal strength may be the average power associated with the recorded sound, as measured in software such as Raven Pro (Charif et al. 2010). A sound is considered to have been ‘detected’ at a microphone when the signal strength exceeds a threshold level. Sounds appear in the analysis only when they are detected on at least one microphone.

The acoustic model may be fitted by numerically maximizing the likelihood. As in SECR, the actual locations of the sound sources (= home-range centres) are unknown, and the likelihood is evaluated by integrating over a region containing all potential locations. The region is specified as a set of grid cells called a habitat mask.

## The ovensong dataset

Dawson and Efford (2009) used sound recording and SECR to estimate the density of singing male ovenbirds. Over five days, four microphones were placed in a square (21-m side) centred at each of 75 points in a regular 50-m grid. Recordings of 5 minutes duration were made in .wav format on a 4-channel digital sound recorder. The data are estimates of average power on each channel (microphone) for the first song of each ovenbird distinguishable in a particular 5-minute recording. At some points, no ovenbird songs were recorded, while at other points the songs of one or more ovenbirds were recorded. The timing and relative intensity of songs across the four channels (i.e., microphone-specific recordings) were used to attribute songs to ovenbird individuals. Power was estimated using a window of 0.7 s duration for frequencies between 4200 and 5200 Hz. When song in this frequency range was obscured by insect noise, power was measured for an alternative 1000-Hz range and the values adjusted by regression.

As usual in package **secr**, the data are arranged for analysis in a ‘capthist’ object. The construction of such an object from input data is described in the help page for **make.capthist**. For sound data, the core of a ‘capthist’ object is a 3-dimensional array of 0/1 codes indicating whether a sound was detected at each microphone; the ‘occasion’ (interval) dimension of the array always has length 1 because each sound is sampled only once at any microphone.

The ‘signal’ attribute of an acoustic ‘capthist’ object contains the signal strength (power) measurements in decibels as a vector with one value for each ‘detection’. A ‘detection’ occurs when the measured power on a channel exceeds the power threshold (‘cutval’). For the **signalCH** object, the power threshold (attribute ‘cutval’ = 35) is less than any signal value (range 38.4 dB to 80.4 dB) and all detection histories are complete (1,1,1,1) across microphones. Some of these ‘signal’ measurements will be largely noise.

```
library(secr)

## This is secr 4.6.0 pre-release. For overview type ?secr
setNumThreads(7) # adjust as needed

## [1] 7

summary(signalCH)

## Object class      capthist
## Detector type     signal
## Detector number    4
## Average spacing    21 m
## x-range            0 21 m
## y-range            0 21 m
##
## Counts by occasion
##               1 Total
## n              76    76
## u              76    76
## f              76    76
## M(t+1)         76    76
## losses          0     0
## detections      304   304
## detectors visited 4     4
## detectors used   4     4
## Signal threshold 35
```

```
##      Min. 1st Qu.  Median    Mean 3rd Qu.    Max.
##    38.42  50.71   54.13   55.28  59.35   80.40
```

Note that for the `signalCH` object the number of detections is 4 times the number of different sounds ( $n$ ) because every sound is detected on every microphone. For analysis we choose a higher threshold that treats weaker signals as ‘not detected’. The choice of threshold is somewhat ad hoc; we use 52.5 dB because this excludes 95% of false positive signals (e.g., background noise) while discarding few genuine ones (Dawson and Efford 2009).

```
signalCH.525 <- subset(signalCH, cutval = 52.5)
summary(signalCH.525)
```

```
## Object class      capthist
## Detector type     signal
## Detector number   4
## Average spacing   21 m
## x-range           0 21 m
## y-range           0 21 m
##
## Counts by occasion
##                   1 Total
## n                   60    60
## u                   60    60
## f                   60    60
## M(t+1)              60    60
## losses              0     0
## detections          180   180
## detectors visited    4     4
## detectors used       4     4
## Signal threshold    52.5
##      Min. 1st Qu.  Median    Mean 3rd Qu.    Max.
##    52.59  55.01   58.04   59.60  62.99   80.40
```

By applying this threshold we lose 16 of the 76 original sounds (those that did not exceed the `cutval` on any microphone) and some of the remaining 60 sounds are undetected on some microphones.

The ‘traps’ attribute of `signalCH` and its offspring `signalCH.525` holds x-y coordinates for the relative positions of the microphones. In this example each 5-minute recording used the same array layout (a 4-microphone square centred on each point) and data are pooled across the 75 points.

```
traps(signalCH.525)
```

```
##      x  y
## 1  0  0
## 2  0 21
## 3 21 21
## 4 21  0
```

`signal(signalCH.525)` displays a vector of signal strengths, one for each detection. The data become more intelligible if we collapse the detection histories to a matrix and replace 1’s with the matching signal strengths:

```
temp <- signalCH.525[,1,]
temp[temp>0] <- round(signal(signalCH.525),1)
head(temp,8)
```

```
##      [,1] [,2] [,3] [,4]
## 1055B 63.8 57.1 56.3 64.4
## 1055D 68.6 66.4 74.4 74.1
```

```
## 1155A 70.3 63.6 67.7 71.6
## 1155B 57.0 53.6 0.0 55.0
## 1250A 0.0 0.0 0.0 54.2
## 1250B 76.0 70.3 67.3 80.4
## 1250C 0.0 0.0 0.0 54.0
## 1255A 67.0 66.2 60.4 60.4
```

Each row corresponds to a sound, identified by the point number and individual ovenbird it's associated with (A, B, etc.), and each column to a microphone (we display just the first 8 sounds). Signals below the threshold appear as '0'.

## Fitting the basic model

Now we can try fitting a model with `secr.fit`. First we define a habitat mask and starting values. We use a 200-m buffer rather than the default (100 m) to ensure that sounds at the edge of the mask are very unlikely to be detected (given what we eventually learn about attenuation). We use `trace = FALSE` to suppress output of the log likelihood during numerical maximisation. Fitting is straightforward:

```
omask <- make.mask(traps(signalCH), buffer = 200)
ostart <- c(log(20), 80, log(0.1), log(2))
```

```
setNumThreads(7)
```

```
## [1] 7
```

```
sound.1 <- secr.fit(signalCH.525, mask = omask, start = ostart,
                    model = list(beta0 ~ 1, beta1 ~ 1), trace = FALSE)
```

```
## Warning in secr.fit(signalCH.525, mask = omask, start = ostart, model =
## list(beta0 ~ : detectfn not specified; using signal strength (10)
```

(We could have dropped the `'mask'` argument of `secr.fit` and set its `'buffer'` argument to construct a habitat mask `'on the fly'` rather than as a separate step. In this case we could also have omitted `'start'` and used the default starting values.)

A warning message reminds us that we have fitted the default model for sound attenuation. This is a log-linear decline with distance from the sound source  $S = \beta_0 + \beta_1 d + \epsilon$  where  $S$  is the signal strength in decibels,  $d$  is distance from the source in metres, and  $\epsilon$  is a random normal error term with variance  $\sigma_s^2$  dB. Detection probability is given by  $g(d) = F((c - (\beta_0 + \beta_1 d))/\sigma_s)$  where  $F$  is the standard cumulative normal distribution,  $c$  is the signal threshold.

The `print` method for `secr` objects displays data summaries and parameter estimates and other useful results:

```
sound.1
```

```
##
## secr.fit(capthist = signalCH.525, model = list(beta0 ~ 1, beta1 ~
##      1), mask = omask, start = ostart, trace = FALSE)
## secr 4.6.0, 17:03:41 21 May 2023
##
## Detector type      signal
## Detector number    4
## Average spacing    21 m
## x-range            0 21 m
## y-range            0 21 m
##
## N animals          : 60
## N detections        : 180
## N occasions         : 1
```

```

## Mask area      : 17.7241 ha
##
## Model          : D~1 beta0~1 beta1~1 sdS~1
## Fixed (real)   : none
## Detection fn    : signal strength
## Distribution    : poisson
## N parameters   : 4
## Log likelihood  : -566.7545
## AIC            : 1141.509
## AICc           : 1142.236
##
## Beta parameters (coefficients)
##      beta      SE.beta      lcl      ucl
## D      2.6378555 0.17550979 2.293863 2.9818484
## beta0 78.1648007 1.35818643 75.502804 80.8267971
## beta1 -1.3782941 0.05813555 -1.492238 -1.2643506
## sdS    0.6386267 0.08282639 0.476290 0.8009635
##
## Variance-covariance matrix of beta parameters
##      D      beta0      beta1      sdS
## D      0.0308036851 -0.08370857 0.0046641352 -0.0002065171
## beta0 -0.0837085701 1.84467037 0.0221276410 -0.0265022643
## beta1 0.0046641352 0.02212764 0.0033797421 -0.0008674607
## sdS -0.0002065171 -0.02650226 -0.0008674607 0.0068602112
##
## Fitted (real) parameters evaluated at base levels of covariates
##      link      estimate SE.estimate      lcl      ucl
## D      log 13.9831845 2.47320707 9.9131548 19.7242405
## beta0 identity 78.1648007 1.35818643 75.5028042 80.8267971
## beta1 neglog -0.2520081 0.01466302 -0.2248689 -0.2824227
## sdS      log 1.8938783 0.15713252 1.6100899 2.2276862

```

The fitted density D is the estimated density of sound sources inflated by the number of replicate points in the pooled dataset. We therefore divide by 75 to get the estimated density per hectare (0.186, SE 0.033).

The fitted parameters beta0, beta1 and sdS correspond to the parameters  $\beta_0$ ,  $\beta_1$  and  $\sigma_s$  and define the detection function (see Dawson and Efford 2009 for more on this). The ‘link’ column reminds us that the ‘beta’ parameters (all 4 of them) are maximized on their transformed (link) scales; the confidence limits (lcl, ucl) are also computed on that scale and back-transformed. The default link for beta1 is the unorthodox  $\text{neglog}(x) = \log(-x)$ ; this imposes the intuitively sensible constraint that acoustic power should decline with distance from the source ( $\beta_1 < 0$ ).

## Adding spherical spreading

Log-linear sound attenuation ( $x$  dB per 100 metres) is only a rough approximation. For greater realism we can ‘hardwire’ the inverse-square reduction in sound energy with distance that is expected when a sound radiates from a point source. This is termed ‘spherical spreading’ and results in 6 dB loss for each doubling of distance. When attenuation includes spherical spreading we measure distances relative to a point 1 m from the sound source, rather than true zero.

To fit a model with spherical spreading we specify ‘detectfn = 11’, rather than the default ‘detectfn = 10’ (numeric codes for detection functions are listed on the ‘Detection functions’ help page).

```

sound.2 <- secr.fit(signalCH.525, detectfn = 11, mask = omask, start = ostart,
                    model = list(beta0 ~ 1, beta1 ~ 1), trace = FALSE)

```

We can compare the fit of the models with the AIC method for secr objects:

```
AIC (sound.1, sound.2)

##              model              detectfn npar    logLik
## sound.2 D~1 beta0~1 beta1~1 sdS~1 signal strength spherical    4 -561.5102
## sound.1 D~1 beta0~1 beta1~1 sdS~1          signal strength    4 -566.7545
##              AIC      AICc  dAICc AICcwt
## sound.2 1131.020 1131.748  0.000      1
## sound.1 1141.509 1142.236 10.488      0
```

The spherical spreading term substantially increases the log likelihood and reduces AIC without adding any parameters. What effect does this have on the density estimates? The `collate` function in **secr** is a convenient way to compare parameter estimates. Here we select density estimates from the first session (there's only one) and adjust for replication:

```
collate(sound.1, sound.2)[1,, 'D']/75

##      estimate SE.estimate      lcl      ucl
## sound.1 0.1864425  0.03297609 0.1321754 0.2629899
## sound.2 0.2144519  0.03267731 0.1593569 0.2885951
```

The effect of spherical spreading on  $\hat{D}$  is minimal, just a slight narrowing of the confidence interval. We consider the different fitted attenuation curves in the next section.

## Attenuation curves and detection functions

In acoustic SECR, the detection model (probability of detection as a function of distance) follows from the model for sound attenuation, so it makes sense to start by examining the fitted attenuation model. We extract the real coefficients of the log-linear and spherical-spreading models and then plot the respective attenuation curves. We also show the effect of spherical spreading alone by setting `beta1` to zero (dashed line).

```
pars1 <- predict(sound.1)[c('beta0', 'beta1'), 'estimate']
pars2 <- predict(sound.2)[c('beta0', 'beta1'), 'estimate']

par(mar=c(5,5,2,2), bty = 'l')
attenuationplot(pars1, xval=0:150, spherical = FALSE, ylim = c(40,110))
attenuationplot(pars2, xval=0:150, spherical = TRUE, add = TRUE, col = 'red')
pars2[2] <- 0
attenuationplot(pars2, xval=0:150, spherical = TRUE, add = TRUE, lty = 2)
```

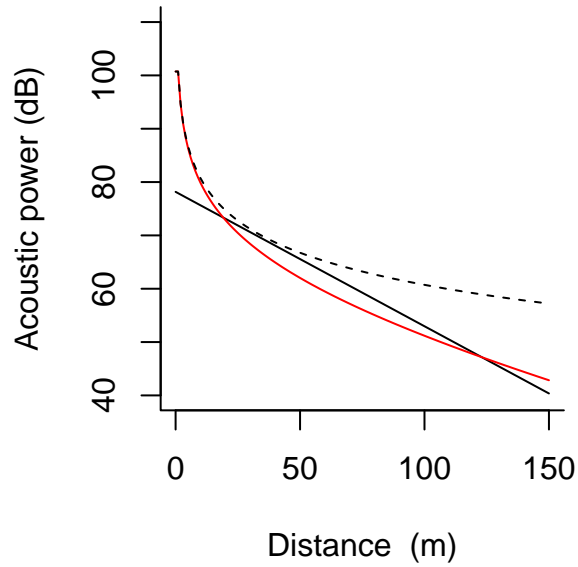


Fig. 1 Attenuation model fitted to ‘ovensong’ data.

The `plot` method for `secr` model objects is a direct way to display the detection function. With `limits = TRUE`, `plot.secr` also shows 95% confidence limits for the detection function. These use the asymptotic variance estimates and a first-order delta-method approximation.

```
par(mar=c(5,5,2,2), bty = 'l')
plot(sound.2, limits = TRUE, col = 'blue')
```

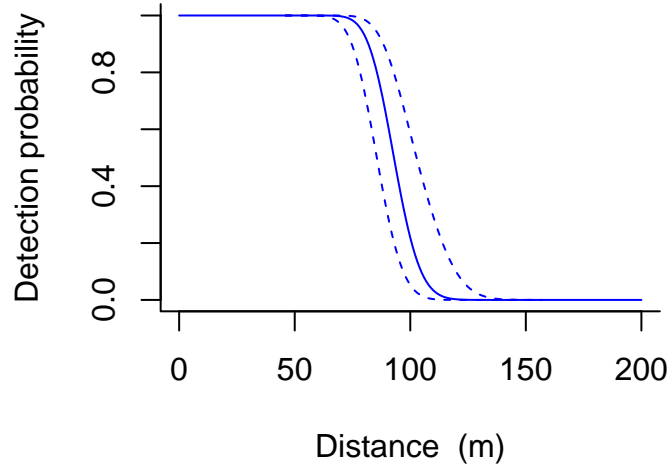


Fig. 2 Detection function resulting from attenuation model fitted to ‘ovensong’ data.

## Local maxima in likelihood surface

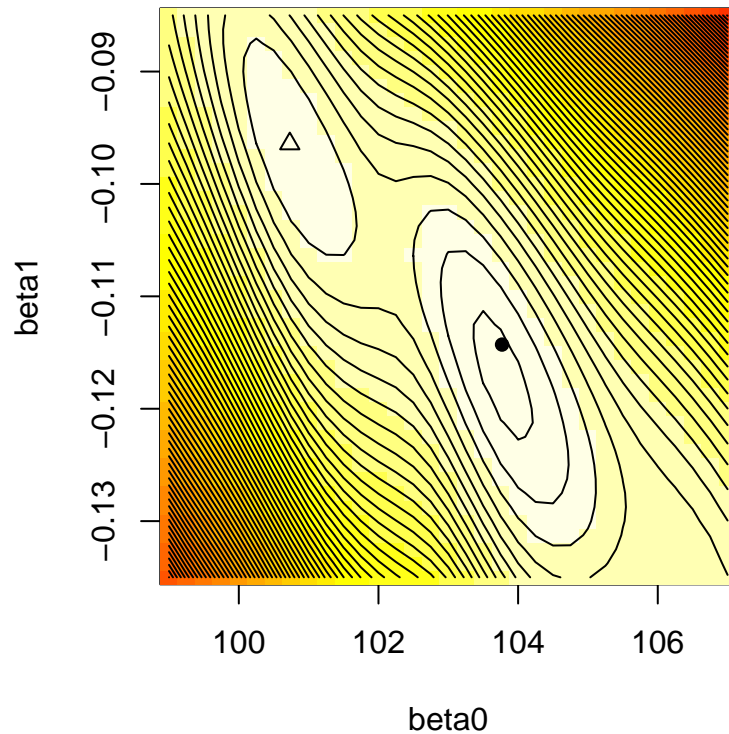
Including a spherical spreading term in the sound attenuation model causes the likelihood surface to become multimodal, at least in this example. Newton-Raphson, the default maximization method in `secr.fit`, is particularly inclined to settle on a local maximum, so care is needed. In the example above we cheated by specifying starting values for  $(D, \beta_0, \beta_1, \sigma_s)$  on their respective link scales that had been found by trial and error to yield the global maximum of the likelihood surface. Here we investigate the issue further by plotting the log likelihood surface for the spherical spreading model.  $D$  (0.191 / ha) and  $\sigma_s$  (1.68 dB) are

held constant while  $\beta_0$  and  $\beta_1$  are varied. We use the `LLsurface` method for `secr` objects to generate a data matrix that we then use for a customised plot.

```
beta0 <- seq(99, 107, 0.25)
beta1 <- seq(-0.135, -0.085, 0.00125)
LL <- LLSurface(sound.2, betapar=c('beta0','beta1'), xval = beta0, yval = beta1,
                plot = FALSE)

## Evaluating log likelihood across grid of 1353 points...

par(mar=c(4,4,1,1))
image(LL, x = beta0, y = beta1, breaks = c(-610, seq(-600, -560, 2)), col =
      heat.colors(21))
contour(LL, x = beta0, y = beta1, add = TRUE, levels = seq(-610, -560, 0.5),
        drawlabels = FALSE)
points(103.77, -exp(-2.169), pch=16)
points(100.73, -exp(-2.339), pch=2)
```



**Fig. 3** Likelihood surface for spherical signal strength model of `ovensong` data. Contours are at spacings of one half a log-likelihood unit. The plotted points correspond to the global maximum likelihood (solid dot) and a local maximum (triangle).

## Other approaches to acoustic analysis with SECR

Our example used measurements of relative acoustic power. The same method may be used with signal strength defined in other ways, so long as the measure is expected to decline steadily with distance from the source. For example, spectrogram cross correlation scores may be suitable.

One can also model signal attributes that encode source location in ways other than scalar ‘signal strength’. Time of arrival of sounds at different microphones is one such attribute, and the intersection of bearings to each source is another (bearings may be obtained from multiple arrays of closely spaced microphones, under some conditions).



Time delays and bearings can readily be included in the likelihood, but models for these data types are not provided in **secr**. Ben Stevenson’s package **ascr** is recommended for fitting such models (<https://github.com/b-steve/ascr/>). Some questions remain. In a sense, models using times and bearings are less elegant than those based on signal strength because an additional component is needed to explain detection and nondetection as a function of distance (the signal strength model serves both purposes). The ease with which time and bearing data may be collected varies with the recording technology and quality, as well as the study species.

## References

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- Efford, M. G., Dawson, D. K. and Borchers, D. L. (2009) Population density estimated from locations of individuals on a passive detector array. *Ecology* **90**, 2676–2682.
- Stevenson, B. C., Borchers, D. L., Altwegg, R., Swift, R. J., Gillespie, D. M. and Measey, G. J. (2015) A general framework for animal density estimation from acoustic detections across a fixed microphone array. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution* **6**, 38–48.