PROBLEM C - CHEMICAL ESPIONAGE

A SOLUTION BY:
ROXANNE ATKINS
BRET TIMME
AUSTIN SIMMS
COACHED BY DR. PAUL SCHRADER
SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY

INTRODUCTION

- The male cabbage white butterfly (Pieris Brassicae) uses chemical signals, called anti-aphrodisiacs, to help ensure the monogamy of females during a particular mating period. This allows the females to focus more so on selecting a location to build their nests, rather than having to entertain other interested males. However, parasitic wasps are able to detect the anti-aphrodisiac, making it easier for the wasps to locate a nesting female. This increases the probability of predation on the butterfly eggs by wasp larvae. Theoretically, there is an optimal percentage of female butterflies that would need to be affected by the anti-aphrodisiac to maximize the growth rate of the population. Our goal was to find said percentage.

SOLUTION

- Population growth equation: $$\frac{dP}{dt} = \mathrm{rP}(1 - \frac{P}{K})$$
- We chose this equation to model the population growth of the white cabbage butterfly because In general, population growth is proportional to the current population as well as the difference between the carrying capacity and the current population (*K - P*)

POPULATION EQUATION VARIABLES

- ***Population growth equation:*** $\frac{dP}{dt} = rP(1 - \frac{P}{K})$
- P is a function of time representing the current population
- $\frac{dP}{dt}$ is the current rate of growth in the population
- *r* is the rate of increase of the population per capita
- K is the carrying capacity for the given species in a particular ecosystem

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

- Of course, exponential growth is expected. We argue that the rate of increase per capita, r, will vary with the number of affected white cabbage butterfly females.
- For example, if no females are affected by the anti-aphrodisiac, they all theoretically would be distracted by competing males for a greater portion of the mating period, making it more difficult to optimize their nests or location of the nests, increasing the probability of predation and consequently lowering the butterfly population growth.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN? (CONT.)

- Similarly, if all females are affected, there may be competition amongst the females for potentially limited superior nesting locations, or there would be such a high density of nests in what would otherwise be considered advantageous areas that the probability of the nests being found by the wasps would go up, given they are able to detect the anti-aphrodisiac.
- Therefore, *r* will be a function of *x* given by the function, $r(x) = \xi e^{-\beta(a-\frac{x}{p})^2}$

RATE OF INCREASE OF BUTTERFLY POPULATION

- **The function used to measure this is modeled by** $\mathbf{r(x) = \xi e^{-\beta(a-\frac{x}{p})^2}}$
- *x* represents the number of females affected by the anti-aphrodisiac
- *p* represents the current population of mature females
- ξ represents the real maximum growth rate per capita
- $\boldsymbol{\beta}$ will be a real number such that $\boldsymbol{\beta}\geq 1$ to expand the lower bound of *r*
- *a* represents the percentage of the given area that is considered to be superior for nesting

RATE OF INCREASE OF BUTTERFLY POPULATION

- Analysis shows that if the percentage of females ($\frac{x}{p}$) falls below or above the percentage of area that is advantageous for nesting significantly, the growth rate per capita will fall.
- The theoretical optimal percentage of affected females should equal *a*, we argue, assuming the significance of the density of nests in a given section of the total area regarding predation.
- In this case, the real maximum growth rate per capita will be achieved, as $e^{-\alpha^2}$ has a maximum of 1 at $\boldsymbol{\alpha} = 0$.

OTHER VARIABLES TO CONSIDER

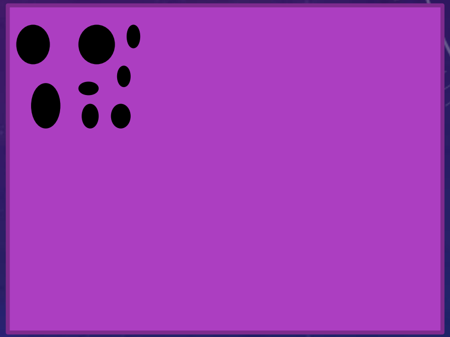
- The distribution of advantageous locations in a given area
- Function that models the rate of predation
- Death rate contributing to the rate of growth/decay in the population
- Growth of the wasp population yielding a lower rate of growth in that of the butterflies

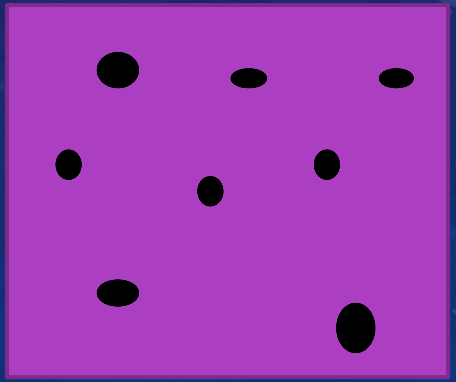
OTHER VARIABLES TO CONSIDER

- The absence of these other potentially significant contributing factors seems to make the solution a bit more trivial of an approximation.
- Varying wasp population, for example, would have an effect on *r*, specifically on e and β which would theoretically decrease and increase respectively with a growing wasp population.

DISTRIBUTION OF ADVANTAGEOUS LOCATIONS

- In our solution, the percentage of advantageous area for nesting, represented as *a,* was considered to be a constant.
- This is true when an area of land has constraints on its perimeter, but another factor to consider would be the distribution of the advantageous area.
- For example, you could have square surface area with 20% on it representative of superior nesting area and have practically an infinite amount of ways to distribute it.





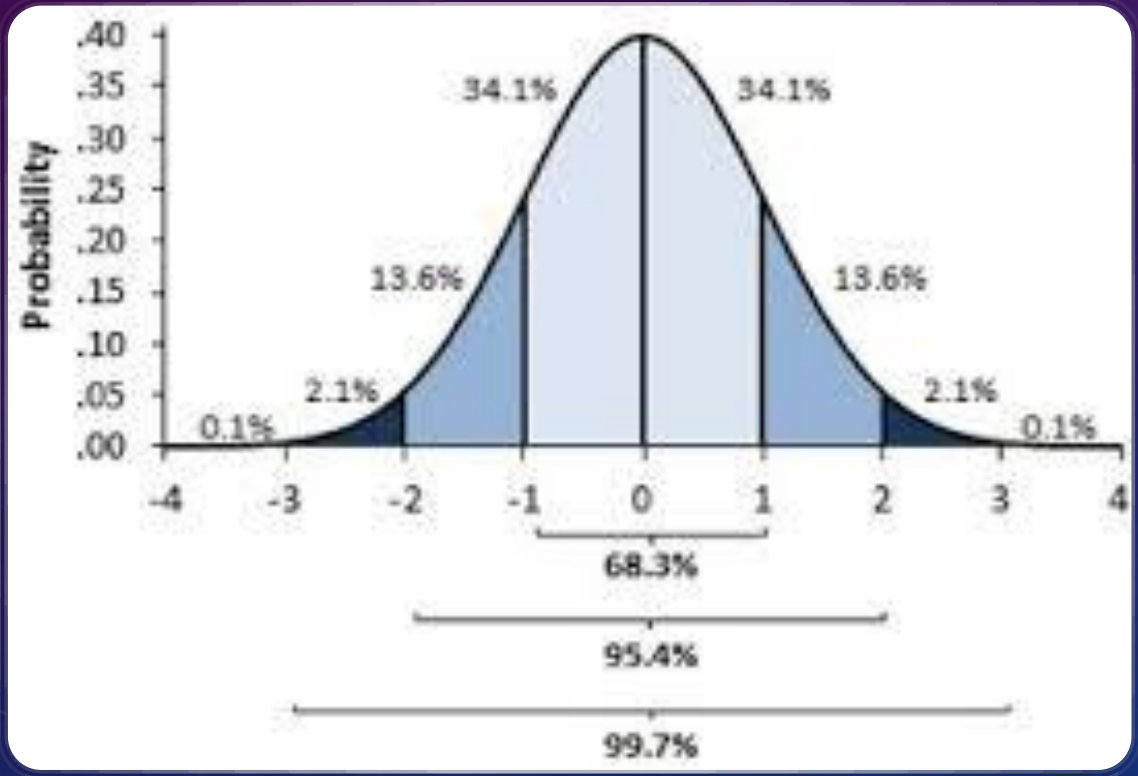
DISTRIBUTION OF ADVANTAGEOUS LOCATIONS (CONT.)

- Mathematically speaking, they are all the same at 20%. But in a real world situation, the distribution makes a world of a difference.
- If the superior area was all located all in the same place versus it being evenly distributed, this could have a huge impact on the growth rate of the population.
- For a more accurate approach, one should not only consider the percentage of the advantageous area, but how it is distributed throughout the system.

CONCLUSIONS

- The mathematical model presented accurately predicts the current rate of growth of the population, while also countering for the fluctuation in the rate of increase per capita of the cabbage butterfly population.
- For even further accuracy, we recommend consideration of the variable for the distribution of the advantageous area, a function depicting the rate of predation and growth rate of the wasp population, and the death rate of the butterflies.
- The current model is not perfect, but actively attempts to solve the issue at hand.

ADDITIONAL PROBLEM #3



- How would your model change if the effectiveness of the anti-aphrodisiac depends on the time of the day? For example, the anti-aphrodisiac might not be as effective in lower temperatures in the early morning as opposed to mid day.
- Our probability of a female butterfly being affected by the anti-aphrodisiac would change with respect to time, rather than remaining a constant as it is now in our equation.
- Our mean would be peak time, middle of the day with a standard deviation being an arbitrary time increment.