Stochasticity

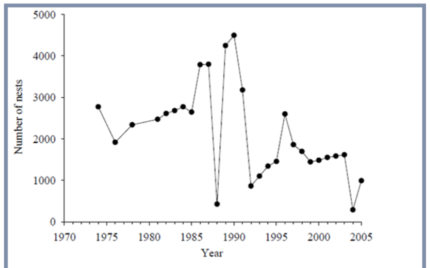


Figure 1. The population trend of Pelagic cormorants at Middleton Island, Alaska from 1974 to 2005 (Hatch et al., unpublished data).

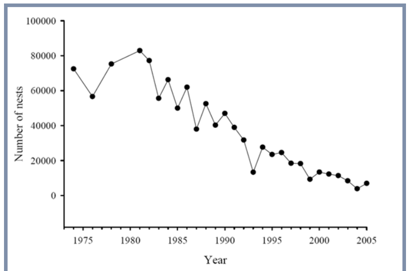


Figure 7. The population trend of black-legged kittiwakes on Middleton Island, Alaska from 1974 to 2005 (Hatch et al., unpublished data).

Today's topics

Random Variables

A random variable is a variable whose value can't be predicted with certainty.

Examples?

- Weather
- Our own behavior
- Population size

Probability distributions

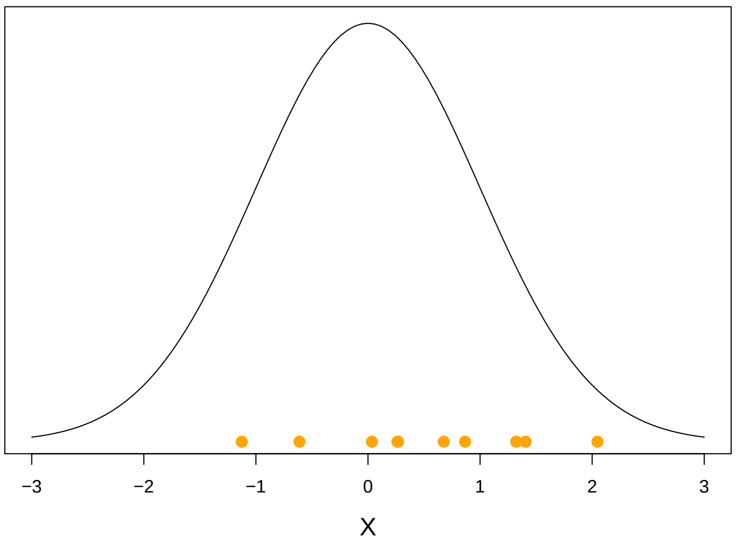
A random variable (X) can be described by a probability distribution.

There are many types of probability distributions

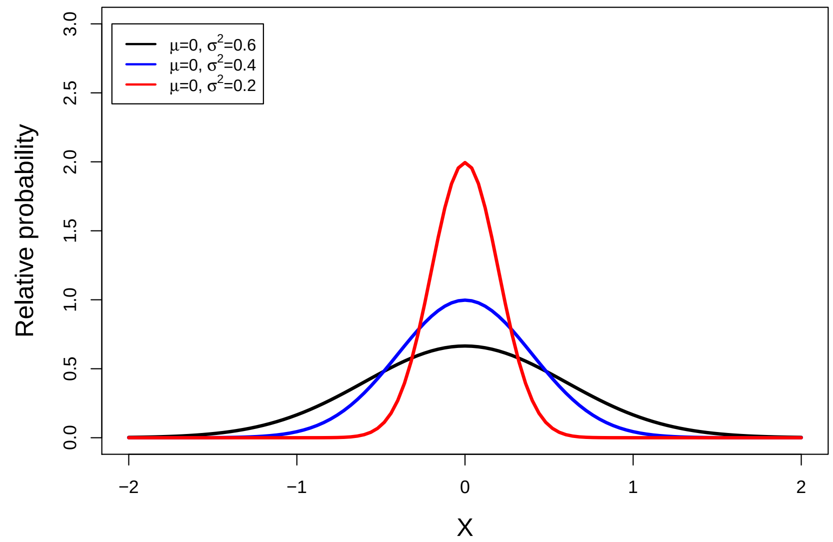
- Normal (or Gaussian)
- Poisson
- Binomial
- Multinomial
- etc. . .

Normal (Gaussian) Distribution

$$X \sim \text{Normal}(\mu = 0, \sigma^2 = 1)$$

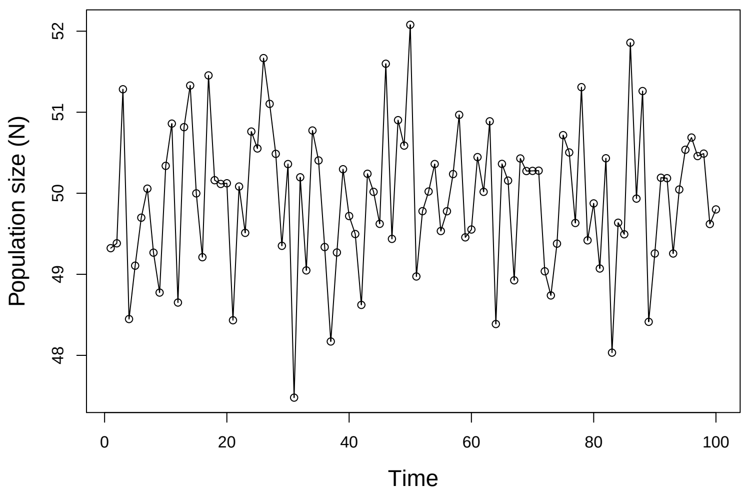


Normal (Gaussian) Distribution



A purely stochastic model

$$N_t \sim \text{Normal}(\mu = 50, \sigma^2 = 1)$$



Two important types of stochasticity

Environmental stochasticity

- Random variation in weather, habitat, etc... among years

Demographic stochasticity

- Random variation in the number of births and deaths among years

Geometric growth with environmental stochasticity

$$N_{t+1} = N_t + N_t r + X_t$$

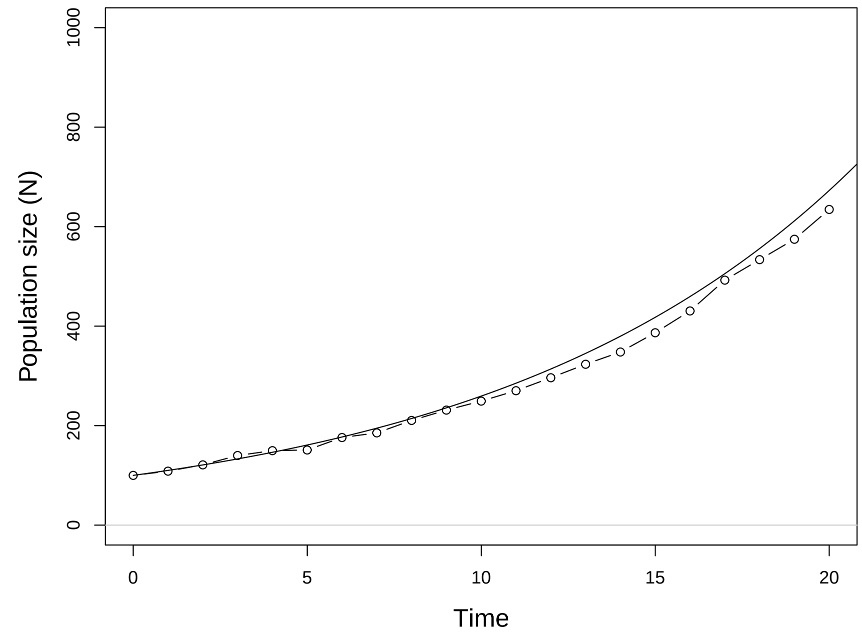
where

$$X_t \sim \text{Normal}(0, \sigma_e^2)$$

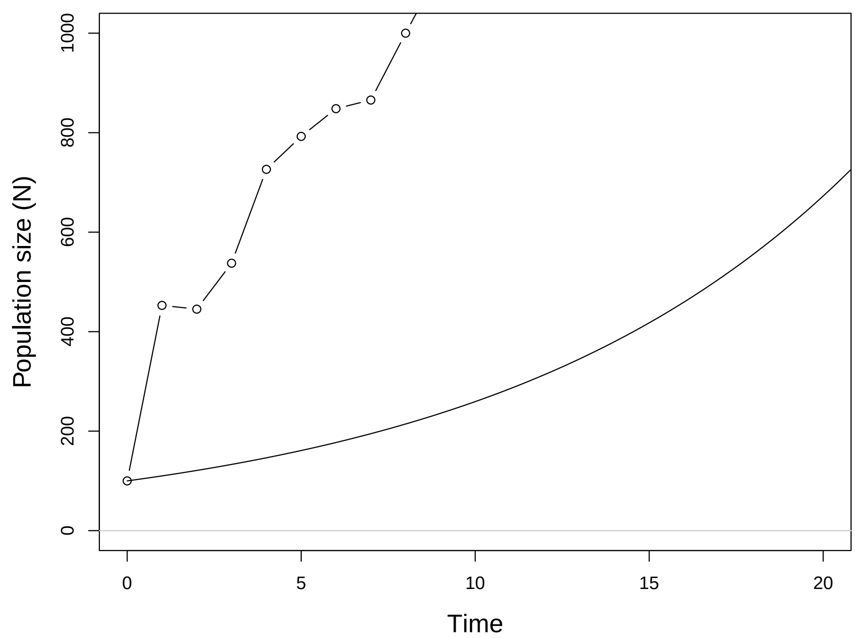
R code:

```
r <- 0.1
sigma.e <- 10
for(t in 2:nYears) {
    X[t-1] <- rnorm(n=1, mean=0, sd=sigma.e)
    N[t] <- N[t-1] + N[t-1]*r + X[t-1]
}
```


Example $N_0 = 100,\ r = 0.1,\ \mu = 0,\ \sigma_e^2 = 100$



Example $N_0 = 100,\ r = 0.1,\ \mu = 0,\ \sigma_e^2 = 10000$



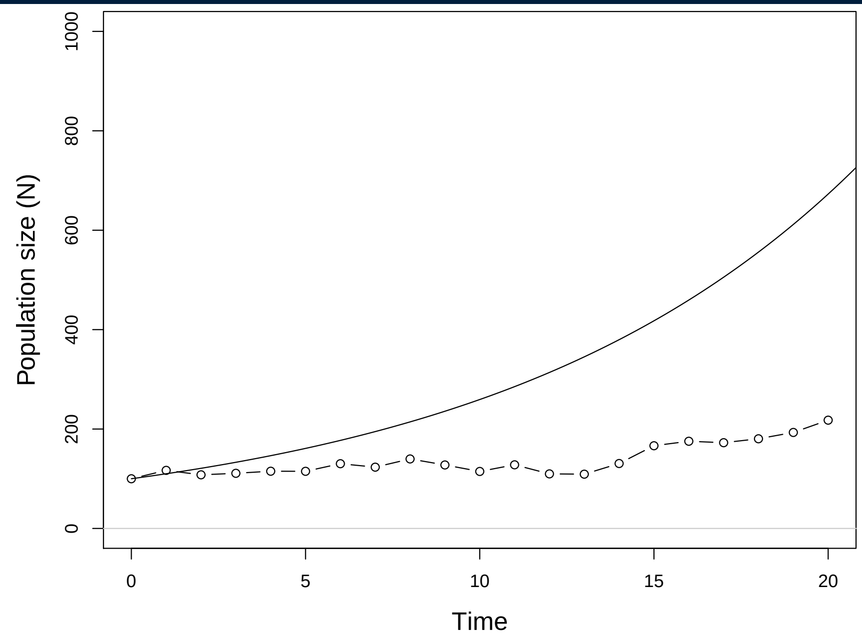
Geometric growth with demographic stochasticity

$$N_{t+1} = N_t + N_t r_t$$

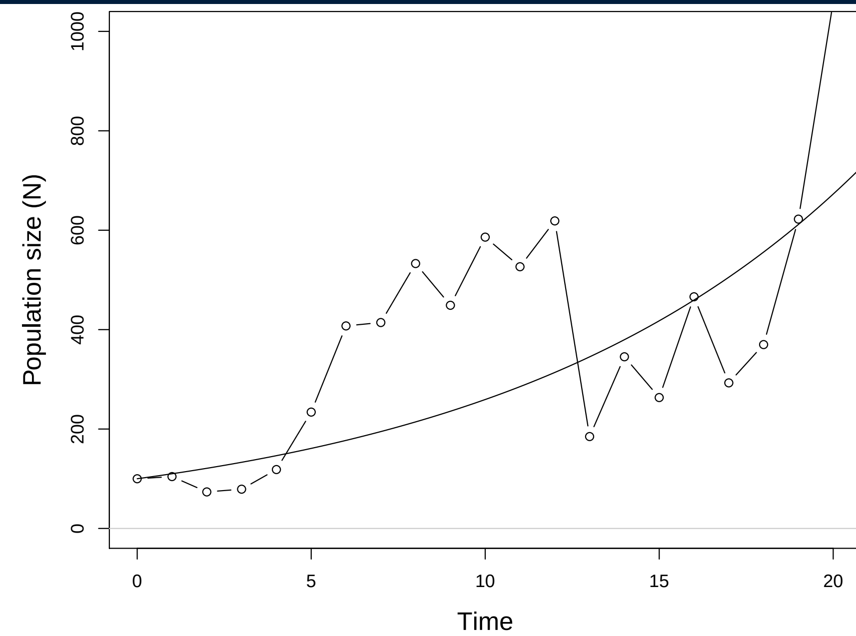
where

$$r_t \sim \text{Normal}(\bar{r}, \sigma_d^2)$$

Example $N_0 = 100,\ \bar{r} = 0.5,\ \sigma_d^2 = 0.01$



Example $N_0 = 100,\ \bar{r} = 0.5,\ \sigma_d^2 = 0.25$



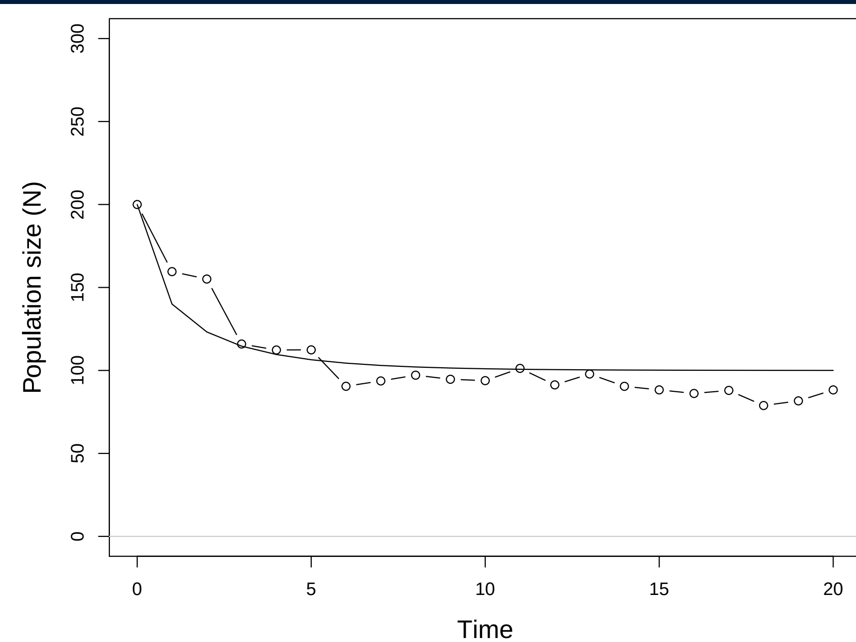
Logistic growth with stochastic carrying capacity

$$N_{t+1} = N_t + N_t r_{max}(1 - N_t/K_t)$$

where

$$K_t \sim \text{Normal}(\bar{K}, \sigma_e^2)$$

Logistic example, $r_{max} = 0.2,\ \bar{K} = 100,\ \sigma_e^2 = 400$



Purely deterministic models are too rigid

Purely stochastic models don't tell us much

The goal is to develop a mechanistic model that represents our biological understanding while allowing for stochasticity