Interactive comment on "Woodland survey of Great Britain 1971–2001" *by* C. M. Wood et al.

Anonymous Referee #2

Received and published: 26 April 2015

Dear Colleagues, Editors,

I appreciate having the opportunity to review the manuscript (MS) ESSD 2015-6 by Wood et al. titled 'Woodland survey of Great Britain 1971–2001'.

Right from the title over the abstract to the text, I found this MS impressive and extremely well suited for this journal.

I only have smaller comments for this nice MS:

Page 3 Line 18: please explain what foot and mouth outbreak have to do with the forest survey, or lack there of.

What I like to add is the suggestion to calibrate surveyors throughout the entire project, not just 2 days prior (and without a test or certification even).

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Page 4 line 11: It's a claim that the survey is representative, please elaborate more later in the text, and present the evidence, quantitatively ideally.

Page 5 line 13 what does mean "relocation error was not significant", was that ever tested, and if so, where and how done ? Can we express that error in meter, and with an error ellipse ? Sticking to a protocol that is 30 years old is not so good and for progress. We understand why it was done, but please elaborate more on the shortcomings, and how to update with keeping the comparability intact. Issues for assessment, update and justification are for instance square plots vs circular ones, plot radii, autocorrelation, and plot less methods etc. Secondly, this dataset suffers dramatically from old frequency statistics approaches. May I suggest to consider new analysis methods, such as Bayesian statistics and machine learning predictions (entropy, trees, carts, boosting bagging, ensembles etc). It will affect the design and some numbers and conclusions. Re. soil samples, were there any controls done, and parallel measures taken for quality control ? This applies not only to the labs and lab outcome, but also to the actual interpretation. Double-blind assessments would be ideal.

Page 8: Juniper to me is a tree, in the original state they grow high and very old! It's not just a shrub. In the MS, please mention at least once Metadata, and the ISO format styles. It's a UK requirement too.

The literature reference list is almost shorter than the number of people mentioned in the acknowledgements. Please put more context into the literature section.

Finally, I think this manuscript can benefit from more content, data analysis and context. I wonder for instance how this (national) data set fits with the EU efforts, and how it compares with US Forest Service sampling plots, and when compared to tropical survey work ?

Overall, as a reviewer, I am in big favor of the publication and wide use of these data!

Thanks, this is an anonymous review.

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Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss., 8, 259, 2015.

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