

Interactive comment on “Ecological landscape elements: long-term monitoring in Great Britain, the Countryside Survey 1978–2007 and beyond”

by Claire M. Wood et al.

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This is a detailed and comprehensive review and description of the evolution of the Countryside Survey (CS) of Great Britain. CS has been operating for 30 years and this review is a timely reminder of the critical importance of systematic, long –term monitoring of our environment. Whilst the paper is necessarily detailed and, for readers unfamiliar with CS, some of this detail may be difficult to follow in places, the paper repays careful reading as the level of detail and explanation is sufficiently clear for a good understanding. The paper is well-written and structured with only minor errors/lack of clarity. The authors make the point that this type of long-term monitoring, with only

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minor modifications to the method of sampling and the techniques of field recording, ensures the comparability of results over time. The breakthrough was the ITE (now CEH) Land Classification system that provided the strata from which a stratified random sample of 1km squares was selected. The Land Classification and its evolution is described in detail with references to the way in which this has enabled robust estimates of habitat area, point and liner features with associated standard errors to be made. As such the paper is not strongly theoretical and the majority of references are associated with work conducted by the authors or others as significant users of the data. In particular, the paper provides the references (DOIs) to enable users to download and inspect the archived data. Perhaps most interesting is to have a detailed history of CS from its inception to the present, providing a useful insight into the complexity of developing and implementing a national-wide system at a time when this sort of long-term monitoring is 'out of fashion'.

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