Establishing critical pest density at V&A South Kensington

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Building in Focus

V&A South Kensington as a site has many of the challenges around pest populations synonymous with historic sites.

But why:

- Large scale
- Architectural challenges
- Environmental control
- Attractive and varied collection

| High-risk materials | Low-risk materials |

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Determining Native Populations

- Despite best efforts – our spaces are the homes to populations of pest that live there regardless of the collection the spaces hold.
- Removal or curtailment of these populations, although ideal for risk management, is not a realistic aim for our gallery spaces.

- However, defining and monitoring these endemic populations allows us to quantify what the critical levels of populations that signify object related pest population growth

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Initial Findings

- Comparable low pest-risk areas (1 and 2) had an average of 4.19 pests found on blunder monitors.

- This would suggest that in our gallery spaces we should consider up to 4 to likely be a native population – this is a critical level we can work off for our gallery spaces.
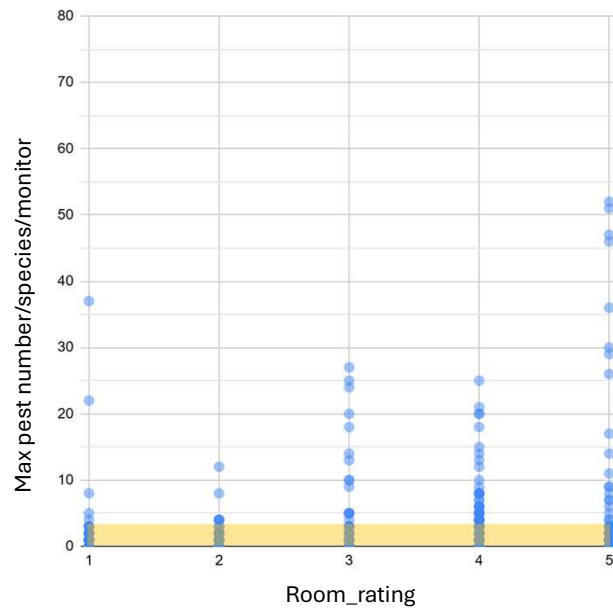

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Balancing Risk

A useful metric – but lacking in nuance.

Using only pest counts as a metric does not take into account the relative risk of different pest species. As a collection with a large amount of textiles – Case Bearing Clothes Moths offer more of a risk than Silverfish.

By rating relative risk of pests and using that to weight the risk calculation we can reveal wider trends and allow outliers can be easily identified.

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April 2025   July 2025
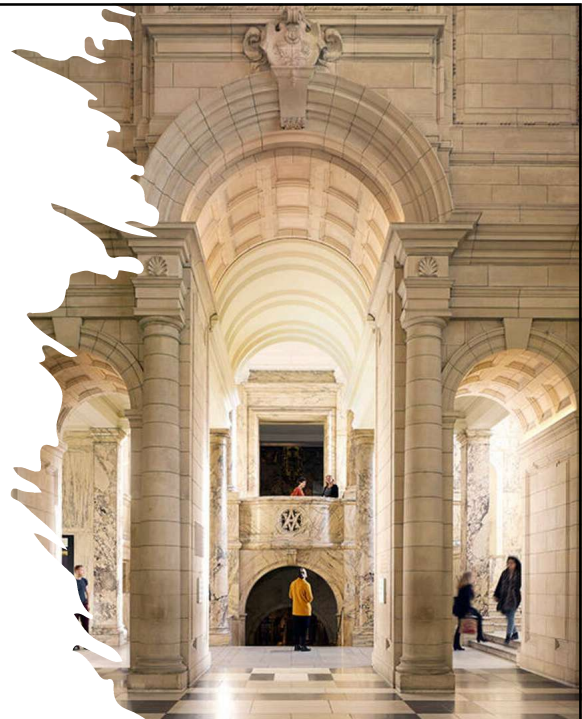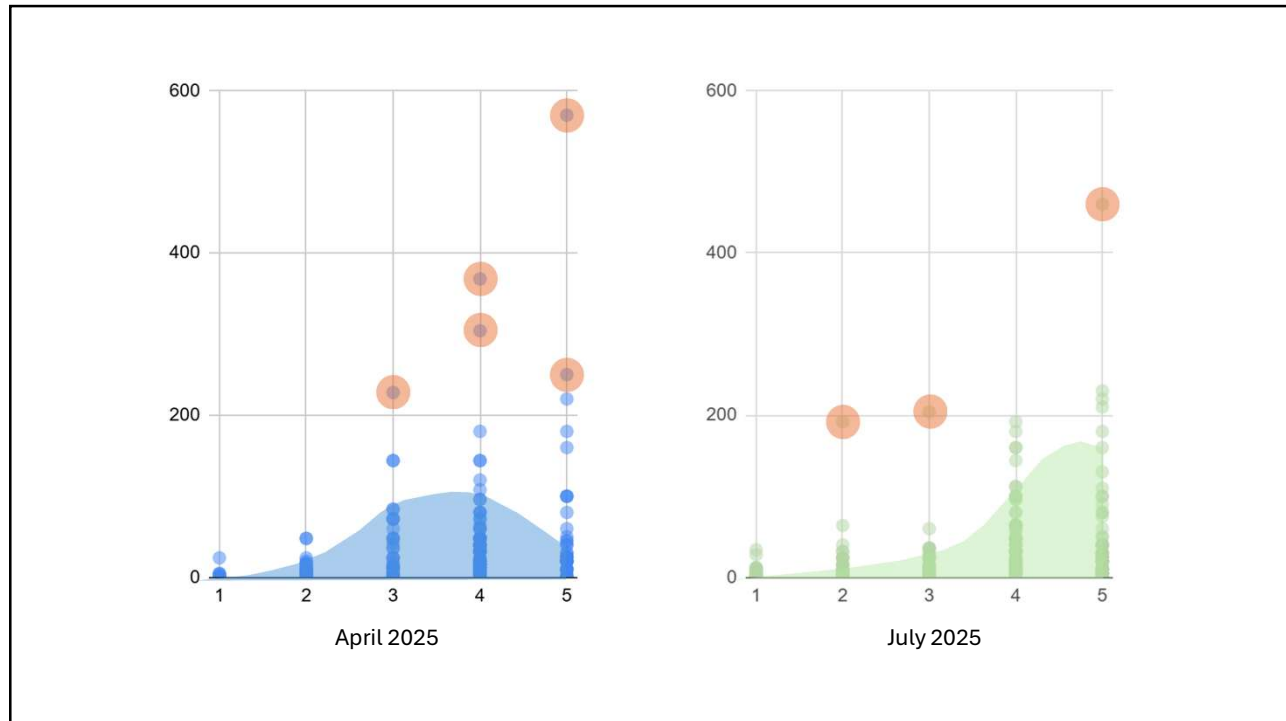
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Conclusions

- Weighting IPM data with relative risk can allow us to identify areas in the most need of attention.
- When looking at resourcing this is a useful tool.
- It also has potential for reporting on trends across years – looking at shifts and drifting trends.

High-risk materials   Low-risk materials

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Future Steps

- Looking at the weighting
- Historic data analysis – larger data set to define critical value
- Look at whether critical value has shifted historically.

High-risk materials	Low-risk materials

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Many thanks

V&A

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