

# User Guide

for the streamlined, less biased, but still manual  
registration of fluorescent tracks to the  
Allen mouse brain Reference Atlas

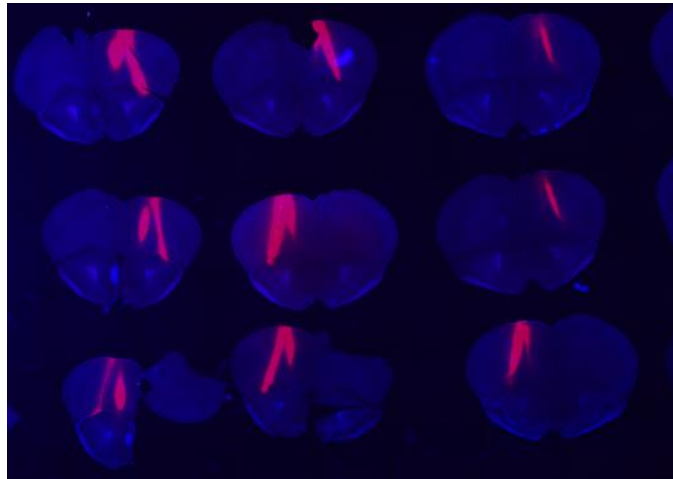
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# 1. Data to have on hand

- Imaged slides of brain slices with fluorescent track(s)



- Microns per pixel of these images
- Prior knowledge of the number, entry point, and insertion depths of all probes is highly recommended
- Have MATLAB installed (R2017 used for all testing), preferably on a Windows computer
- Have a (computer) mouse with a scroll wheel
- Get the code at [github.com/cortex-lab/allenCCF](https://github.com/cortex-lab/allenCCF)
- Additionally, download the reference atlas data at <http://data.cortexlab.net/allenCCF/> and supporting code at <https://github.com/kwikteam/npymatlab>

## 2. Pre-processing

*Go from an unprocessed image of many brain slices, to a folder of nice-looking, properly oriented, and ordered brain slice images (skip if you already have this)*

- Open *ProcessHistology.m*
- Enter the folder containing the histology slide images, the folder the processed slice images should be saved to, the name of the histology slide images in anatomical order, and a few other parameters
  - If your images are downsampled to the correct size (10 microns per pixel), set `use_already_downsampled_image = true`

```
%% SET FILE AND PARAMETERS

% directory of histology
image_folder = 'C:\subjects\Subjects\Richards\Histology\';
save_folder = 'P:\brain volumes\slices\Richards\';

% name of images, in order anterior to posterior or vice versa
image_file_names = {'Large Image 1.tif','Large Image 2.tif','Large Image 13.tif','Large Image 12.tif',...
    'Large Image 11.tif', 'Large Image 9.tif','Large Image 8.tif','Large Image 7.tif','Large Image 6.tif',...
    'Large Image 10.tif','Large Image 5.tif','Large Image 4.tif'};
% note that image 14/15/16/17, which fit inbetween 2 and 12, have no dye visible

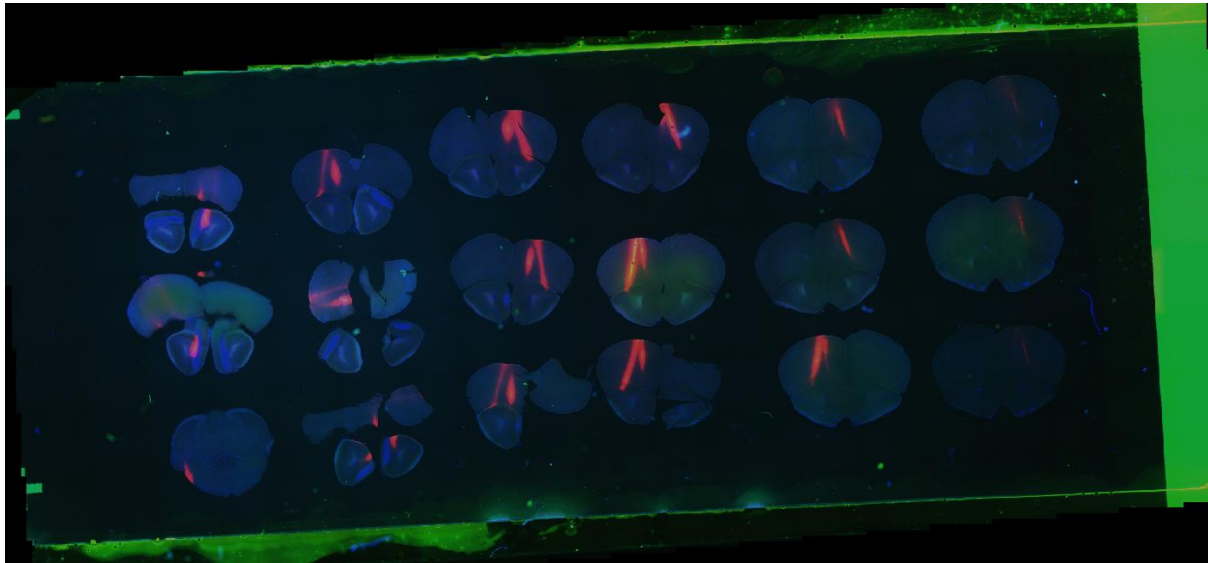
% name to save cropped slices as
save_file_name = 'Richards_';

% parameters
microns_per_pixel = 3.233; %1.62;
microns_per_pixel_after_downsampling = 10;
```

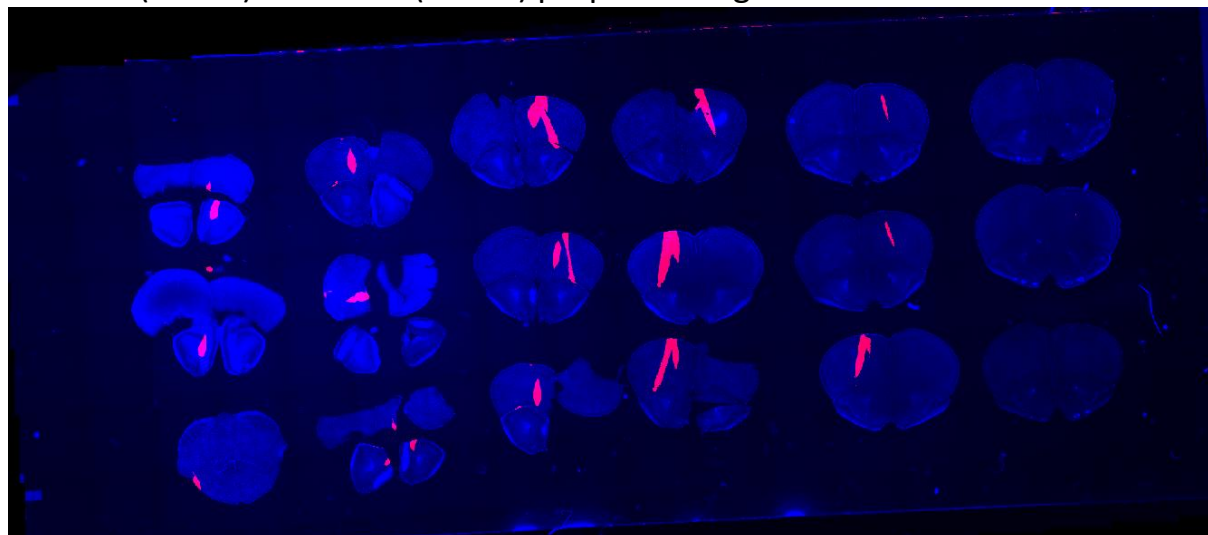
- Run this cell to initialize parameters
- Run the following *cell* to downsample and adjust the large histology images (downsampling very large images may take a minute); Instructions should appear on adjusting the image
  - Scrolling shifts the max or min pixel intensity saturation points; space bar shifts between control of the max vs. the min; 'c' shifts to the next color channel; arrows move to the next image; etc.

Controls:

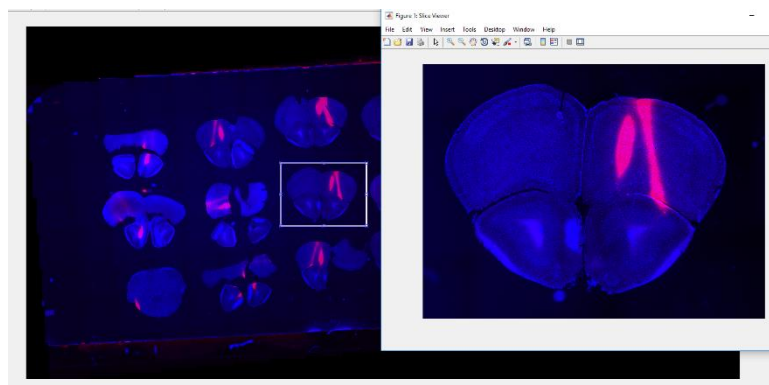
scroll: adjust contrast  
space: switch btwn adjusting upper and lower saturation points  
e: view original version  
any other key: return to modified version  
r: reset to original  
c: move to next channel  
s: save image  
left/right arrow: move to next slide image



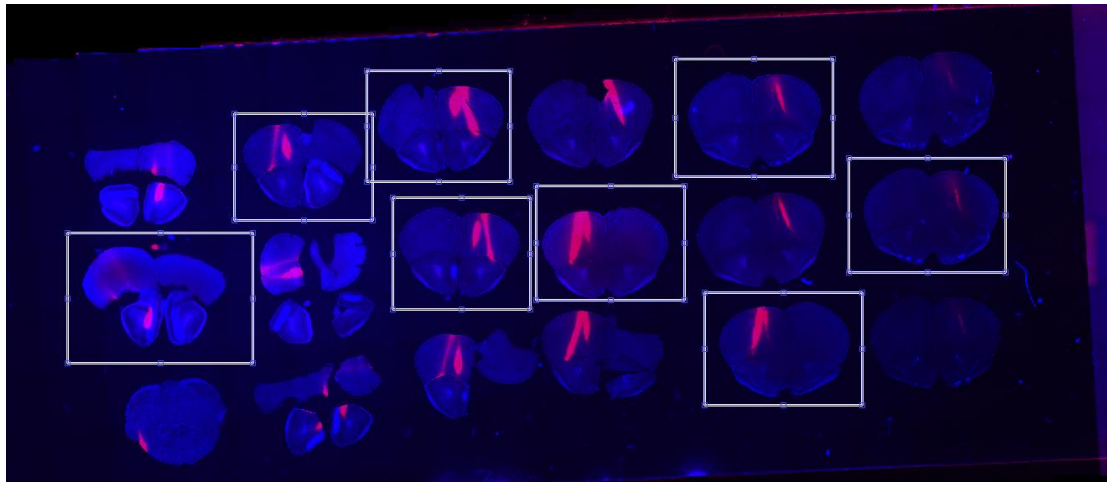
Before (above) and After (below) preprocessing



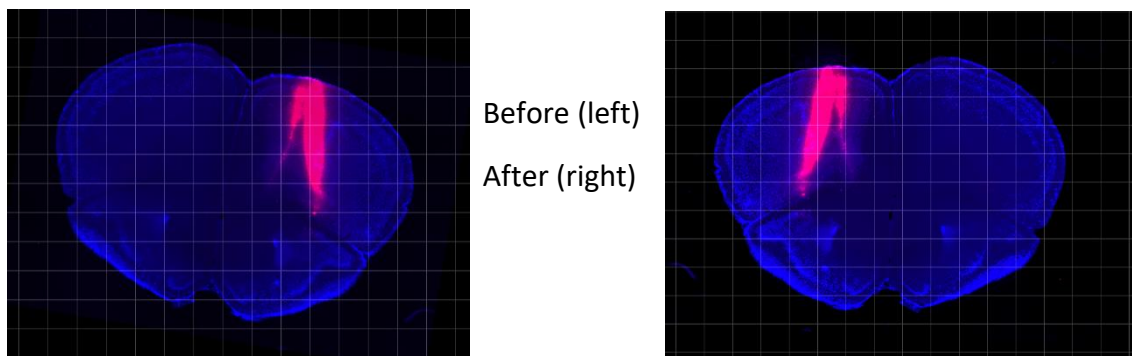
- When done with all slides, run the following cell ('CROP AND SAVE SLICES'). More instructions will appear in the console.
  - Select a slice image by clicking and dragging around it; try to go in order, either anterior to posterior or posterior to anterior
  - The slices needn't be perfect; they will be after the next, and last, pre-processing step. Cropping too big is ok.



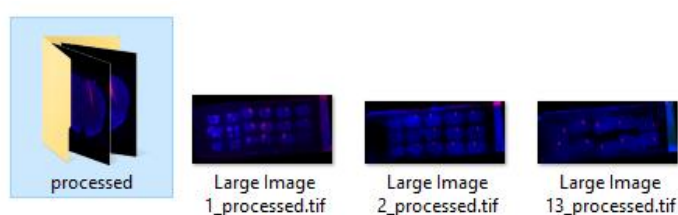
- Do so for each desired slice on the slide – for now, the most important is to crop the entire slice (and press ‘space’ to move to the next histology slide)



- Finally, run the last cell in *ProcessHistology.m*
  - Instructions appear. Most important: scroll to get the slice oriented straight, press ‘f’ to reflect the slice horizontally (so all slices are in the same orientation – a necessary step for the following steps), press ‘c’ to crop the image further (necessary if the image is larger than 800 x 1140), and left/right arrows to save and navigate between slices



- Done! Now you should have the large images saved in your designated ‘save\_folder’, as well as a subfolder in there called ‘processed’ containing the processed slices, in order.



### 3. Navigate to the appropriate slice in the Allen reference atlas

*With the folder of processed images, find each corresponding slice in the reference atlas; or search the atlas without the slice images in a simpler GUI*

- Open the file *AlignHistologyToProbe.m* and enter the folder with the ordered, processed slices.
  - if you did not process the images through the above process, you may still need a similar naming convention (*Name of Animal\_slide number.slice number.tif*) – e.g. ‘Richards\_2.12.tif’
  - You will need to first download the reference atlas structural volume, annotation volume, and annotation data. This can be done on <http://data.cortexlab.net/allenCCF/>
    - Download the structure tree ending in ‘2017.csv’
  - You must also download and add to your path the following repository: <https://github.com/kwikteam/npv-matlab>
  - Enter the file paths of the annotation volume in the line starting ‘av = ...’; of the structural volume in the line starting ‘tv = ...’; and of the annotation data in the line starting ‘st = ...’
  - Run the file. The first time, it will take a while to load the reference brain data.
- Note that the simpler function *allenAtlasBrowser(...)* can be used to find slices in the reference atlas, without any accompanying GUI that uses the histology images (Slice Viewer). It is not compatible, however, with sections 4 -6.
- Basic instructions appear.
  - On the Slice Viewer, press ‘left’ or ‘right’ to switch slices.
  - On the Atlas Viewer, scroll to move through coronal slices. Press ‘up’ to make scrolling now adjust the angle of the slice, along the dorsal-ventral axis or press ‘right’ to make scrolling now adjust the angle of the slice, along the medial-lateral axis. Using these features, navigate to the approximately correct slice as seen in the Slice Viewer



## Controls:

-----

scroll: move between slices

g: add/remove gridlines

o: add/remove overlay of current region extent

h: add/remove overlay of current histology slice

a: switch to viewing annotations (or switch back)

p: enable/disable mode where clicks are logged for probe or switch probes

t: enable/disable mode where clicks are logged for transform

x: save transform

l: load transform for current slice

n: trace a new probe

b: trace a previous probe

s: save current probe

w: enable/disable probe viewer mode for current probe

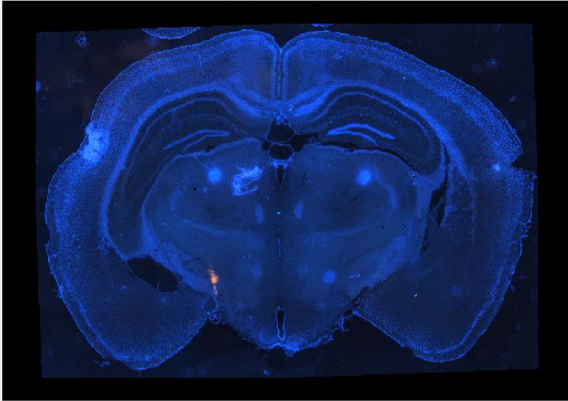
d: delete most recent probe point or all transform points

up: scroll through A/P angles

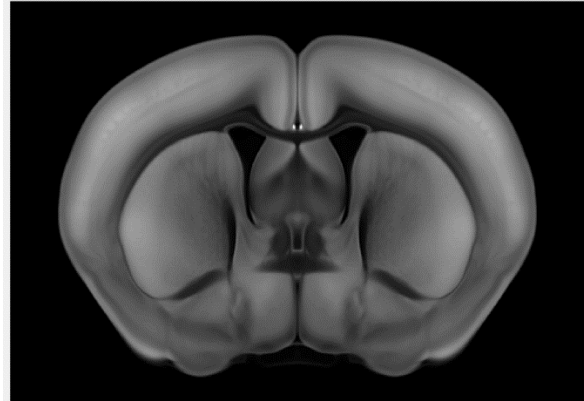
right: scroll through M/L angles

down: scroll through slices

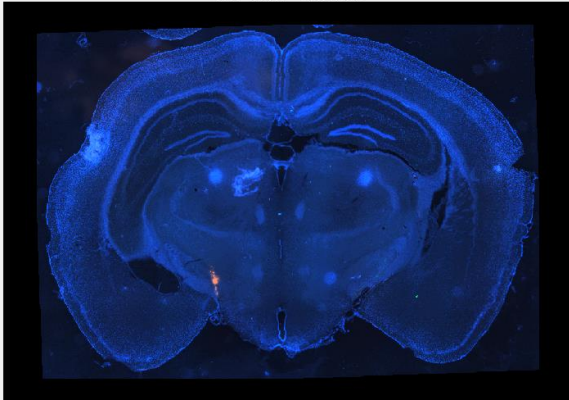
Slice Viewer -- Slice 13/13



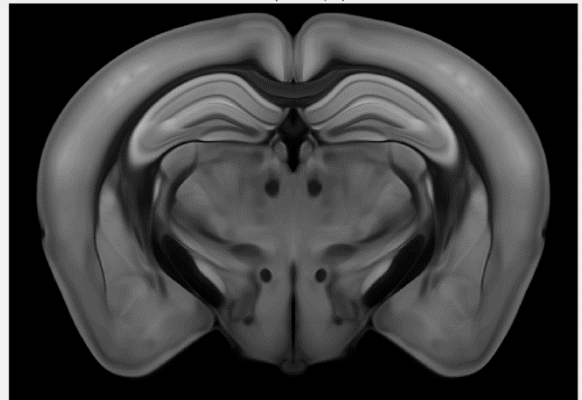
Caudoputamen (CP)



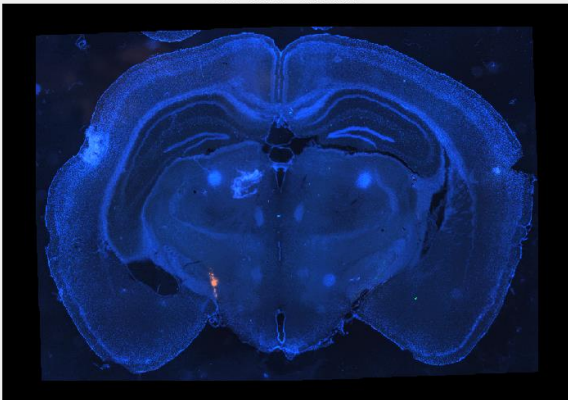
Slice Viewer -- Slice 13/13



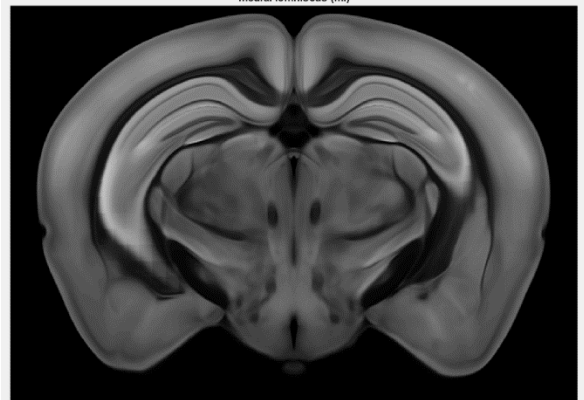
Caudoputamen (CP)



Slice Viewer -- Slice 13/13



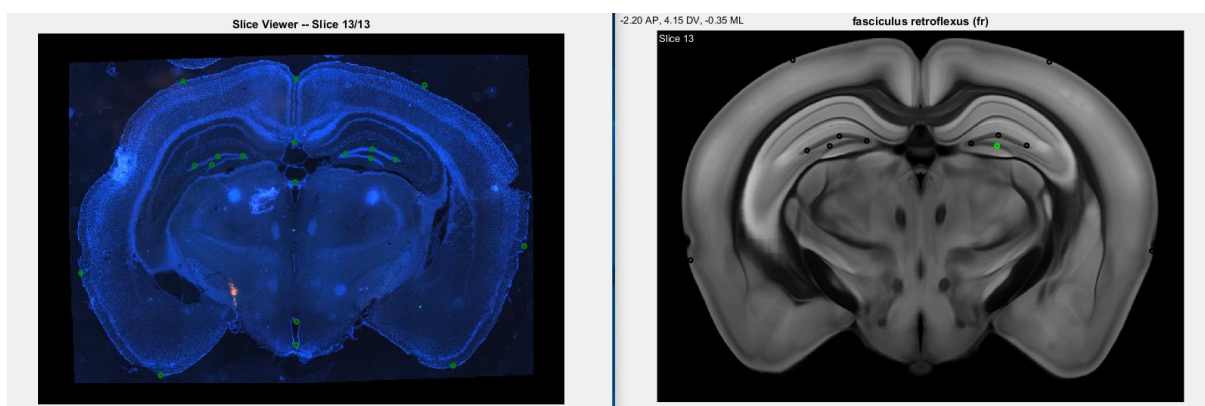
medial lemniscus (ml)



## 4. Transform and overlay histology to match reference

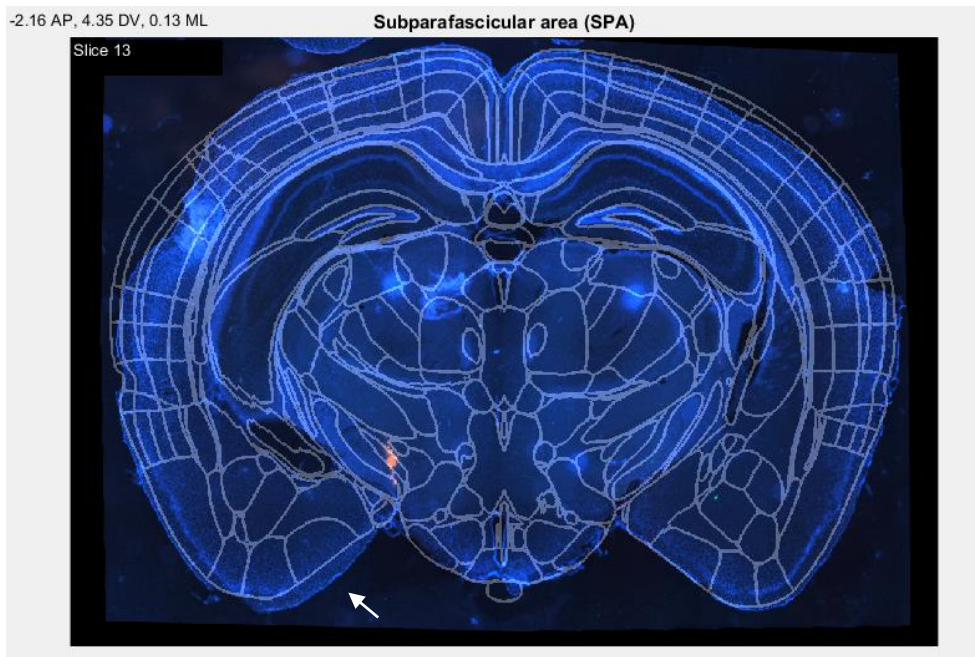
*We've found a similar slice in the reference atlas, but room for error remains – transform and overlay the slice with the reference to get even more exact*

- When you're done exploring the brain regions on this slice with the mouse pointer, or by pressing 'o' to highlight regions (and pressing 'o' again to turn that off for this next bit), press 't' on the Atlas Viewer to initialize a transform
- Also press 't' with the Slice Viewer figure selected, so that both figures are in transform mode.
- Select salient points on one figure, and then the corresponding point on the other. 10-20 points should do, depending on the slice.
  - You can always add more points later
  - Press 'd' to erase the current transform and start over

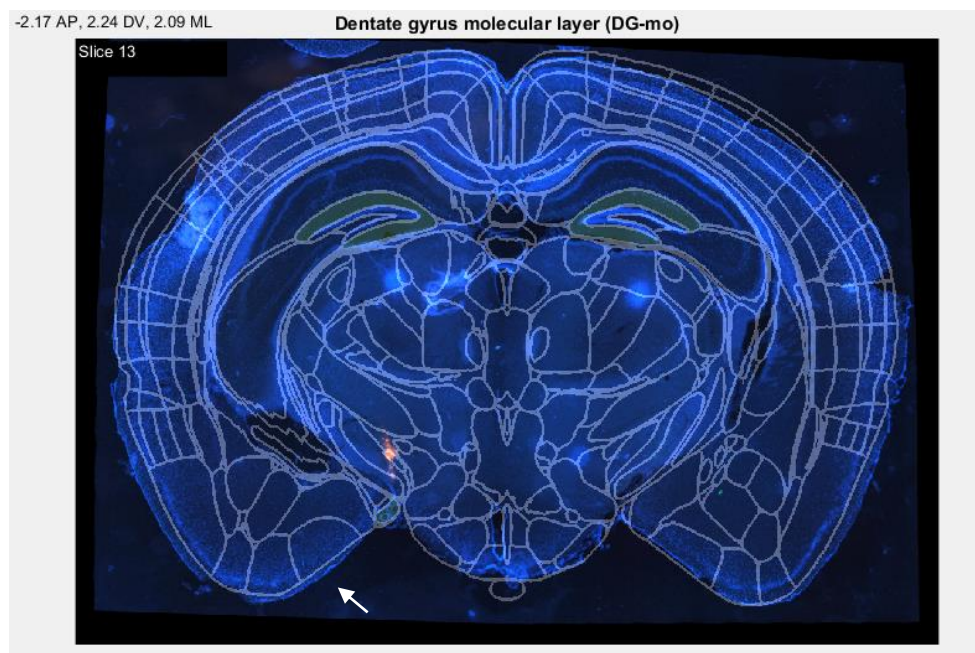




- Press 'h' to transform and overlay the histology, and thereafter switch between 3 viewing modes. This also saves the transform.
  - Press 'a' to toggle region annotation outlines. Now you can slightly alter the reference outlines position (using the scroll bar and arrow keys as before) and/or alter the transformation by clicking more points in both figures and pressing 'h' again
    - Press 'h' 3 times to return to present view
    - While pressing 'h' saves the transform, after changing the atlas position or angle, you can press 'x' to save that change



After pressing 'h' and 'a';  
 Arrow shows a minor  
 improvement made by  
 adding 2 points to the  
 transform and modifying  
 the angle of the slice in  
 the reference atlas



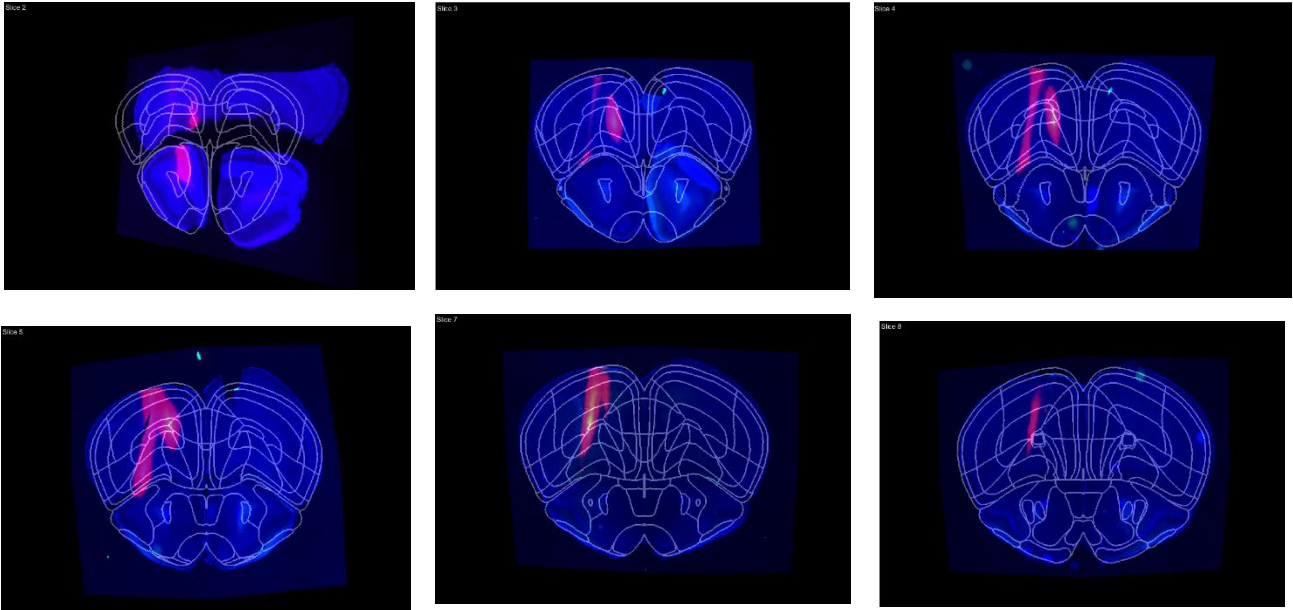
After improving the fit

- To move on to the next slice, use the left/right arrows on the Slice Viewer.
- Then, you can press 'h' to get to reference move, scroll to the slice in the atlas corresponding to your new histology, and repeat the process.
- However, there is a more streamlined way to move between slices on the Atlas Viewer: press 'left', and then you can scroll between the slices you've transformed! If a slice is not yet transformed, it will take you to the reference view so that you can do so.
  - It is not necessary to transform every slice, if for example two slices show redundant information about the probe
- Or, to bring up a particular transform that has been saved, navigate to that slice in the Slice Viewer and press 'l' after selecting the Atlas Viewer

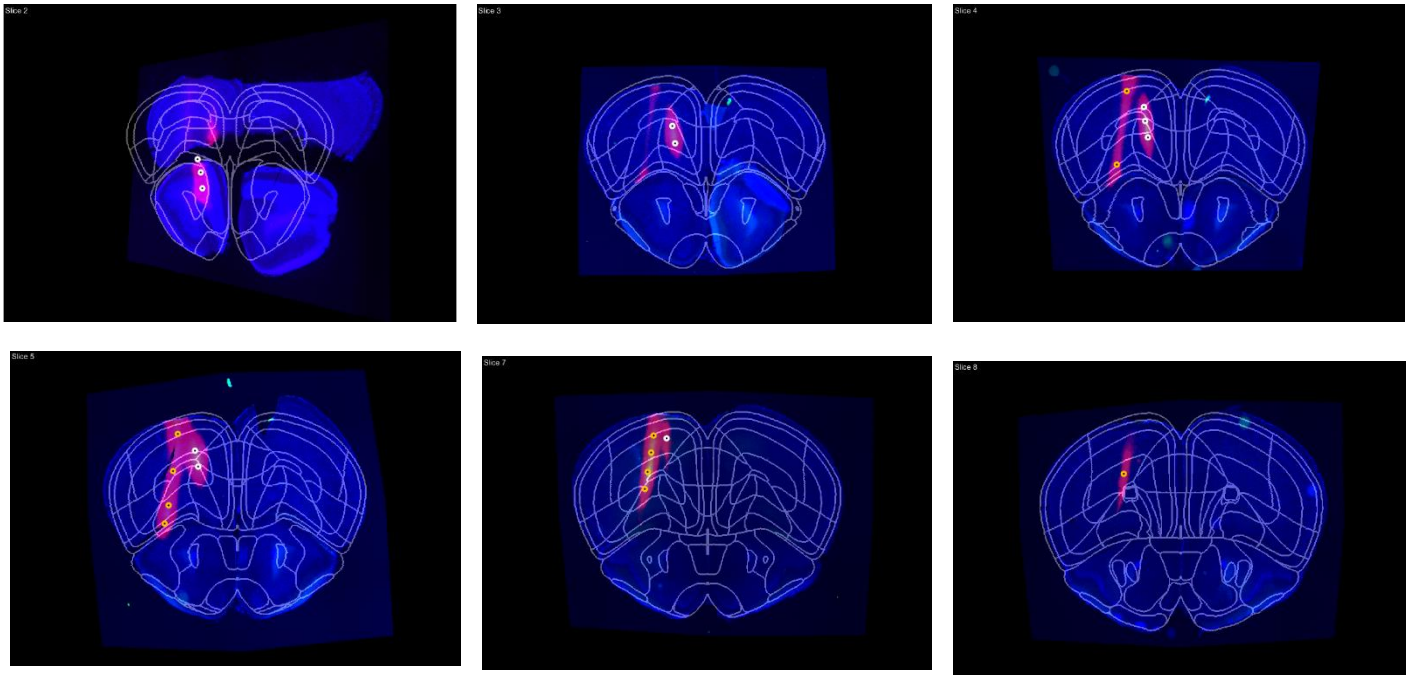
## 5. Select dye track locations

*Localize the dye track(s) in the histology*

- Navigate through transformed slices on the Atlas Viewer by pressing 'left' and then scrolling. Press 'a' to see the region boundaries



- Press 'p' to toggle probe point mode. Now you can click points on the figure corresponding to the probe track.
- Press 'n' to add a probe (up to 11 probes), and press 'p' to toggle between them (check the console to see which probe has been selected)
- Press 'd' to delete the most recent probe point from the currently active probe.
- **Press 's' to save the probe points for probe visualization**
- Press 'l' twice (once loads a transform) to load saved probe points (or 'w' to launch probe view mode – see below)



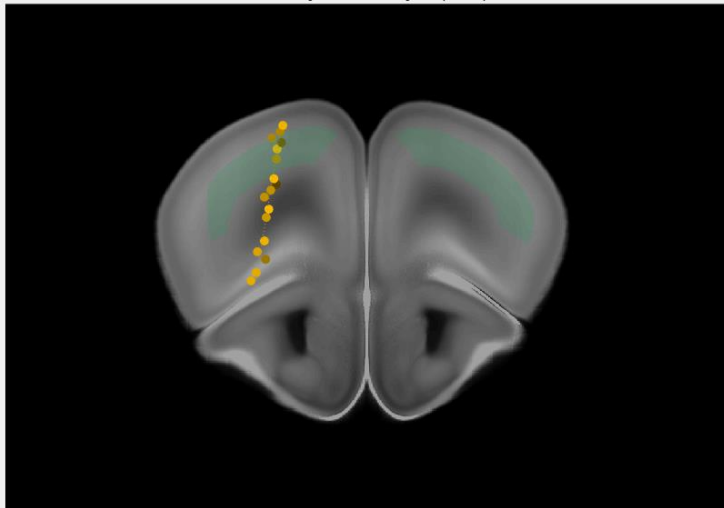
- Pressing 'p' will also bring up a third window: the Transformed Slice & Probe Point Viewer. Pressing left and right will move through the slice images (transformed, if applicable)
  - This allows you to see surrounding slices with their probe points, to help determine which probe a particular fluorescent track belongs to

## 6. Visualize Probe Track

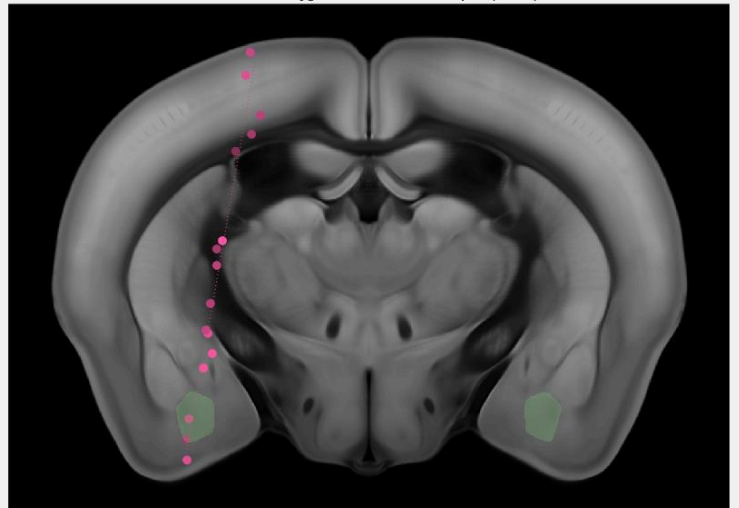
*See the fruits of your labour*

- Load saved probe points by pressing 'l' twice, and toggle between the probe of interest by pressing 'p'
- Press 'w' to toggle probe viewer mode for the currently selected probe (will load probe 1 if none is selected or loaded).
  - This will show a best fit line, the slice that this line lies along, all the clicked probe points (with proximity from the best fit indicated by brightness)
  - Feel free to press 'o' to see the probe intersects, or to scroll and explore nearby slices

Secondary motor area layer 5 (MOs5)

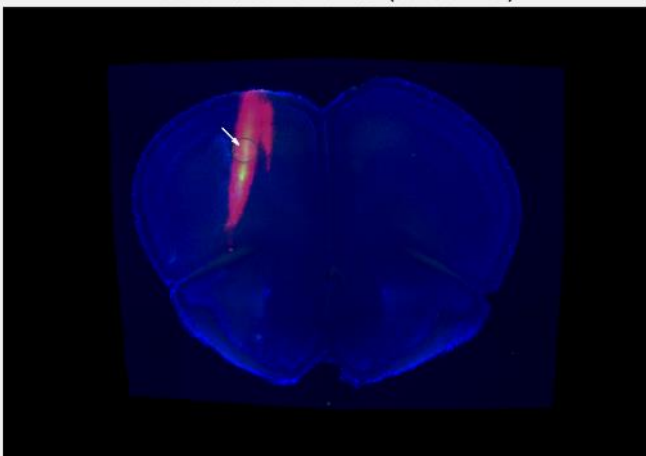


Basomedial amygdalar nucleus anterior part (BMAa)

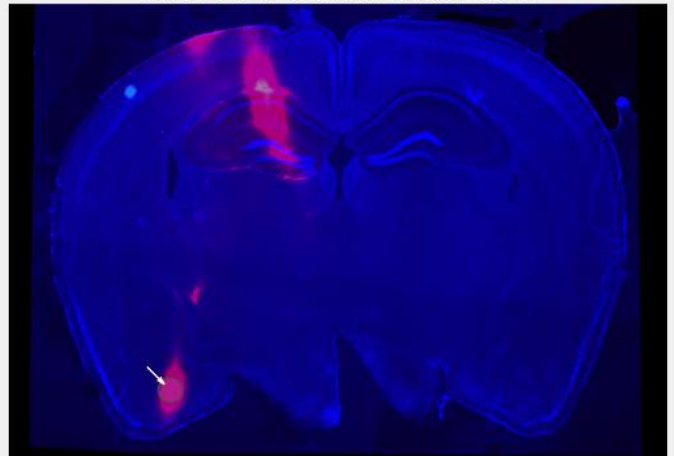


- Clicking on or around the probe track will find the point in the *histology images* closest to the clicked point, and display it in the Transformed Slice & Probe Point Viewer window

Probe on Slice Viewer 7/54 (transformed)



Probe on Slice Viewer 31/54 (transformed)





- Open *displayProbeTrack.m* and enter some parameters
  - *processed\_images\_folder* and *probe\_save\_name\_suffix* should be the same as those used in *AlignHistologyToProbe*
  - *probes\_to\_analyze*: a list of the probes you would like to analyze found in the file set by the two aforementioned variables. 'all' will analyze all saved probes; [1, 5] will analyze the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> probes
  - *probe\_lengths* is a list of the known insertion depths of all probes saved in this file (if you are not analyzing some probes, you can set their depths to 0). Setting it as one number sets all probes to that depth.
  - *active\_probe\_lengths* is the distance from the bottom tip of the electrode that contains recording sites
  - *probe\_radius* is the range in microns around the best fit line corresponding to the probe that will be queried to estimate a confidence metric (distance from best fit line to nearest different brain region – see plot below)
  - *show\_parent\_category* will also include a confidence metric for 2<sup>nd</sup>-order parent regions (e.g. prelimbic area vs. prelimbic area layer 6a) – this feature is slow.
  - *probe\_past\_tip\_to\_plot*: how far past the estimated tip of the probe should be plotted? (see plot below)
  - *scaling\_factor*: set the scaling between the probe length that you know from the insertion depth and the depth in the reference atlas brain. 1.0-1.2 is a reasonable range. Aligning the electrophysiology to known landmarks (e.g. white matter) can also help to estimate this value. Set this variable to 'false' to use the most ventral clicked point as the expected electrode tip, and to then derive the scaling factor automatically.
  - *show\_region\_table*: output and show a *borders\_table* with data on the regions displayed in the plot (see below): their upper and lower borders in microns from the surface, acronym, name, area index as represented in the downloaded annotation volume
    - see all abbreviations and hierarchical region structure in the downloaded csv file 'structure\_tree\_safe\_2017.csv'

# %% ENTER PARAMETERS AND FILE LOCATION

```

% file location
processed_images_folder = 'P:\brain volumes\slices\Richards\processed\';
probe_save_name_suffix = '';

probes_to_analyze = 'all'; % either set to 'all' or e.g. [2,3]

% probe parameters
probe_lengths = [3.0, 2.5, 3.8, 5.5, 6.5, 3.8, 5.2, 5.2, 5, 4.2, 4]; % in mm -- how far into the brain did you go, for all probes or just one num.
active_probe_length = 3.84; % in mm
probe_radius = 100; % in um -- error range queried for confidence metric
show_parent_category = false; %true; % overlay in gray distance between parent regions (takes a while)

probage_past_tip_to_plot = .3; % in mm -- plot this far or to the bottom of the brain, whichever is shorter

scaling_factor = 1.1; % set scaling e.g. based on lining up with ephys, or set to *false* to get scaling automatically from histology

show_region_table = true;

```

example parameters for a brain with 11 probe tracks

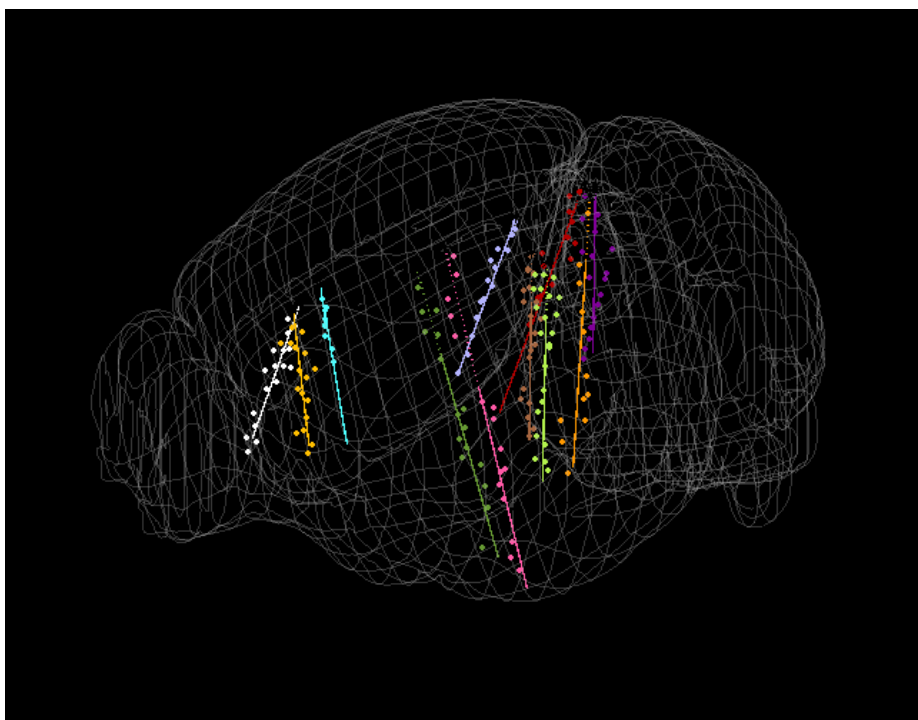
probe scaling of 1.1 determined by user input

borders\_table =

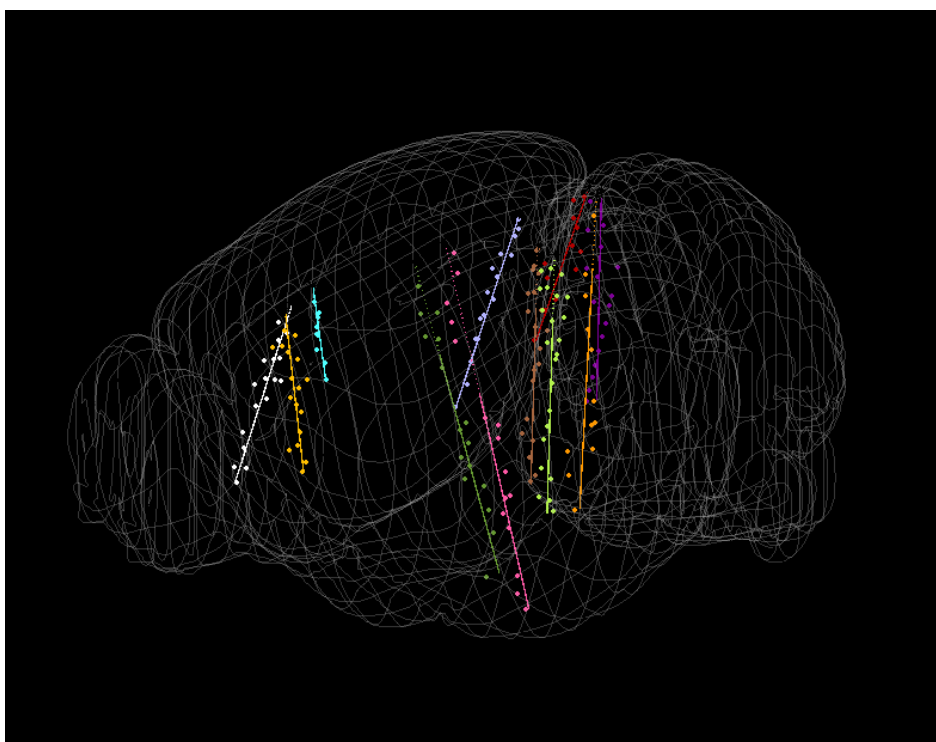
21x5 [table](#)

upperBorder	lowerBorder	acronym	name	avIndex
0	140	'MOp1'	'Primary motor area Layer 1'	20
140	160	'MOp2/3'	'Primary motor area Layer 2/3'	21
160	170	'SSp-112/3'	'Primary somatosensory area lower limb layer 2/3'	68
170	190	'MOp2/3'	'Primary motor area Layer 2/3'	21
190	540	'SSp-112/3'	'Primary somatosensory area lower limb layer 2/3'	68
540	720	'SSp-114'	'Primary somatosensory area lower limb layer 4'	69
720	890	'SSp-115'	'Primary somatosensory area lower limb layer 5'	70
890	1130	'SSp-ul5'	'Primary somatosensory area upper limb layer 5'	84
1130	1620	'SSp-ul6a'	'Primary somatosensory area upper limb layer 6a'	85
1620	1650	'SSp-ul6b'	'Primary somatosensory area upper limb layer 6b'	86
1650	1740	'scwm'	'supra-callosal cerebral white matter'	1190
1740	1800	'ccb'	'corpus callosum body'	1199
1800	1830	'ccb'	'corpus callosum body'	1199
1830	5100	'CP'	'Caudoputamen'	574
5100	5280	'CEAc'	'Central amygdalar nucleus capsular part'	597
5280	5350	'ec'	'external capsule'	1194
5350	5570	'BLAa'	'Basolateral amygdalar nucleus anterior part'	564
5570	5700	'CTXsp'	'Cortical subplate'	556
5700	6020	'EPv'	'Endopiriform nucleus ventral part'	561
6020	6100	'EPv'	'Endopiriform nucleus ventral part'	561
6100	6320	'PIR'	'Piriform area'	417

Example table output from probe 4 (the dark green probe below)



All probes overview output (Brain View), using `scaling_factor = 1.1`



Same data, using `scaling_factor = false` (get probe scaling from histology)

Probe 4 (dark green track in Brain View above)

Plot starts at brain surface

Region abbreviations, as defined in *borders\_table* and the downloaded .csv

Confidence in parent region (here, somatosensory cortex) shown in dark gray

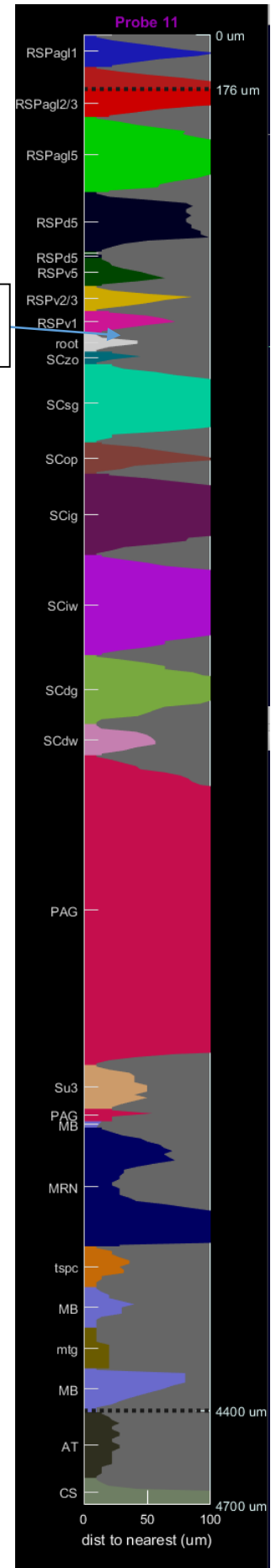
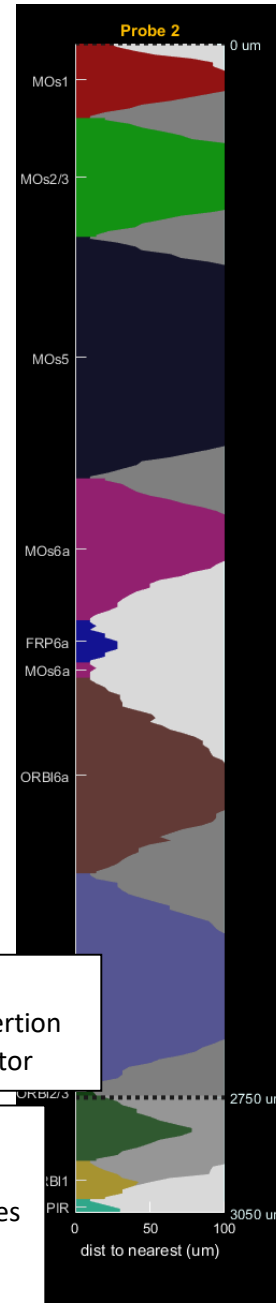
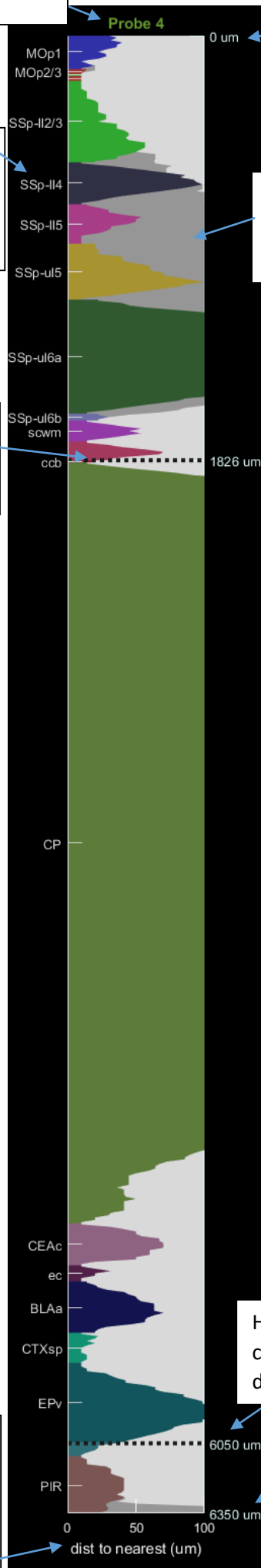
Start of active recording sites on the probe

*show\_parent\_category* set to false for this plot

Distance to the nearest brain region in um along the plane orthogonal to the probe, as a measure of confidence

Here, probe tip was calculated by the insertion depth and scaling factor

Here, 300 um past probe tip plotted (distances are in reference atlas space)



## 7. FAQ

### *Frequently asked questions*

- There's a bug or error – what should I do?
  - Close all the figures and re-start the file
- That doesn't work – what should I do?
  - Feel free to raise an issue at [github.com/philshams/allenCCF](https://github.com/philshams/allenCCF)
- Is there a tool to know how I should orient my probe, before I do the recording?
  - Andrew Peters crafted one called *allen\_atlas\_probe.m*, using the same reference data as above (arrays called *tv*, *av*, and *st*). This file can be found in the repository.