

# <sup>1</sup> glscalibrator: An R Package for Automated Calibration and Analysis of Light-Level Geolocation Data

<sup>3</sup> **Fabio Favoretto**  <sup>1</sup>, **Jorge Cisterna**<sup>2</sup>, **Gemma Abaunza**<sup>3</sup>, **Yuri V.**  
<sup>4</sup> **Albores-Barajas**<sup>2</sup>, and **Cecilia Soldatini** 

<sup>5</sup> 1 Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California San Diego, CA United States  
<sup>6</sup> Departamento de Ciencias Marinas y Costeras, Universidad Autónoma de Baja California Sur, 23080, La  
<sup>7</sup> Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico 3 Centro de Investigación Científica y de Educación Superior de  
<sup>8</sup> Ensenada (CICESE), La Paz, Baja California Sur, Mexico

DOI: [10.xxxxxx/draft](https://doi.org/10.xxxxxx/draft)

## Software

- [Review](#) 
- [Repository](#) 
- [Archive](#) 

---

Editor: [Open Journals](#) 

Reviewers:

- [@openjournals](#)

Submitted: 01 January 1970

Published: unpublished

## License

<sup>18</sup> Authors of papers retain copyright  
and release the work under a <sup>19</sup> Creative Commons Attribution 4.0  
International License ([CC BY 4.0](#))<sup>21</sup>

## <sup>9</sup> Summary

<sup>10</sup> Global Location Sensors (GLS) are miniature archival light-level loggers widely used to track  
<sup>11</sup> long-distance movements of seabirds, migratory birds, and other wildlife. These devices record  
<sup>12</sup> ambient light levels over time, which can be analyzed to estimate geographic positions based  
<sup>13</sup> on day length (latitude) and timing of sunrise/sunset (longitude). However, processing GLS  
<sup>14</sup> data has traditionally been a manual, time-consuming process requiring expertise in multiple  
<sup>15</sup> R packages and custom scripting for each study. *glscalibrator* addresses this challenge by  
<sup>16</sup> providing a fully automated workflow that processes entire datasets with a single command,  
<sup>17</sup> from raw light data to calibrated position estimates and diagnostic visualizations.

## <sup>18</sup> Statement of Need

<sup>19</sup> Light-level geolocation is a crucial tool in movement ecology, enabling researchers to track  
animals over months to years without the size, cost, and battery limitations of GPS devices  
([Lisovski et al., 2020](#)). However, the analytical workflow presents significant barriers to entry  
<sup>22</sup> and reproducibility. Existing R packages such as SGAT ([Wotherspoon et al., 2016](#)), GeoLight  
<sup>23</sup> ([Lisovski & Hahn, 2012](#)), and TwGeos ([Lisovski, 2019](#)) provide excellent tools for individual  
<sup>24</sup> components of the analysis, but researchers must:

- <sup>25</sup> 1. **Manually specify calibration periods** - determining when the device was at a known  
location requires examining data and ecological knowledge
- <sup>26</sup> 2. **Write custom scripts for batch processing** - processing multiple individuals requires loops  
and custom code
- <sup>27</sup> 3. **Manually create standardized outputs** - combining results and generating consistent  
visualizations is left to the researcher
- <sup>28</sup> 4. **Individually troubleshoot failures** - identifying and resolving issues requires examining  
each device separately

<sup>29</sup> These requirements create several problems:

- <sup>30</sup> ▪ **High barrier to entry** for new researchers and students
- <sup>31</sup> ▪ **Time-intensive workflow** - processing 25 birds can take several days
- <sup>32</sup> ▪ **Reduced reproducibility** - custom scripts vary between studies and researchers
- <sup>33</sup> ▪ **Inconsistent quality control** - manual processes are prone to errors and oversights

<sup>34</sup> *glscalibrator* fills this gap by providing an end-to-end automated solution that:

- <sup>35</sup> ▪ **Auto-discovers** all GLS devices from directory structures

- 40     ▪ **Automatically detects** calibration periods from the first days of deployment
  - 41     ▪ **Batch processes** multiple individuals without manual intervention
  - 42     ▪ **Generates standardized outputs** including position estimates, diagnostic plots, and quality
  - 43        control metrics
  - 44     ▪ **Implements proven methods** from TwGeos, GeoLight, and SGAT packages
- 45    This automation transforms a multi-day manual process into a single-command workflow,
- 46    making GLS analysis more accessible, reproducible, and efficient.

## 47    Features and Functionality

### 48    Core Workflow

49    The `calibrate_gls_batch()` function implements a complete automated workflow:

```
results <- calibrate_gls_batch(  
  data_dir = "data/raw/birds",  
  output_dir = "data/processed/calibration",  
  colony_lat = 27.85178,  
  colony_lon = -115.17390  
)
```

50    This single command:

- 51    1. **Auto-discovers** all `.lux` files in the data directory
- 52    2. For each device:
  - 53        ▪ Reads and parses light intensity data
  - 54        ▪ Auto-detects calibration period (first 1-5 days)
  - 55        ▪ Detects twilight times using threshold-crossing method
  - 56        ▪ Filters spurious twilights using temporal and quality criteria
  - 57        ▪ Performs TwGeos gamma calibration (Lisovski, 2019)
  - 58        ▪ Calculates positions using threshold method (Hill & Braun, 1994)
  - 59        ▪ Generates diagnostic plots (calibration and track maps)
- 60    3. **Combines results** into standardized formats (`GLSmergedata.csv`)
- 61    4. **Creates quality control metrics** including hemisphere checks and summary statistics

### 62    Intelligent Auto-Calibration

63    A key innovation is automatic detection of calibration periods. The function searches the

64    first 1-5 days of data for stable periods where the device was at the known colony location,

65    automatically identifying sufficient twilight events for calibration. This eliminates the need for

66    manual data inspection while ensuring robust calibration.

### 67    Quality Control

68    The package implements multiple quality control steps:

- 69     ▪ **Twilight filtering:** Removes events < 1 hour apart and with unusual intervals
- 70     ▪ **Position filtering:** Excludes impossible coordinates and optionally removes equinox
- 71        periods
- 72     ▪ **Hemisphere validation:** Checks that positions fall in expected hemisphere
- 73     ▪ **Diagnostic visualizations:** Generates plots showing light curves, twilights, and tracks
- 74     ▪ **Processing logs:** Records successes, failures, and error messages for troubleshooting

## 75 Modular Design

76 While the batch function provides full automation, individual functions can be used for custom  
 77 workflows:

- 78   ■ `read_lux_file()`: Parse .lux files
- 79   ■ `detect_twilights()`: Threshold-crossing twilight detection
- 80   ■ `filter_twilights()`: Quality filtering of twilights
- 81   ■ `auto_detect_calibration()`: Automatic calibration period detection
- 82   ■ `convert_to_glsmerge()`: Standardize output format
- 83   ■ `plot_calibration()` and `plot_track()`: Generate visualizations

## 84 Implementation and Performance

85 `glscalibrator` is implemented in R and builds on established packages:

- 86   ■ **TwGeos**: Gamma calibration and light data processing ([Lisovski, 2019](#))
- 87   ■ **GeoLight**: Position estimation via threshold method ([Lisovski & Hahn, 2012](#))
- 88   ■ **SGAT**: Reference implementations for twilight analysis and manual workflows ([Wother-](#)  
 89 [spoon et al., 2016](#))
- 90   ■ **tidyverse**: Data manipulation and workflow management

91 The package has been validated on datasets of 25+ seabirds, successfully processing 96% of  
 92 devices (25/26) with appropriate error handling for the remaining cases. Processing time is  
 93 ~30-60 seconds per bird on a laptop, making batch processing of large datasets practical.

## 94 Use Cases and Impact

95 `glscalibrator` is designed for:

- 96   ■ **Seabird researchers** tracking albatrosses, petrels, shearwaters, and other pelagic species
- 97   ■ **Migration ecologists** studying migratory birds and bats
- 98   ■ **Marine ecologists** investigating animal-environment interactions
- 99   ■ **Students and early-career researchers** learning GLS analysis
- 100   ■ **Large-scale studies** requiring consistent processing of many individuals

101 The package has been successfully applied to studies of tropical seabirds in the Eastern  
 102 Pacific, processing deployment and recovery data from multiple years and species. By au-  
 103 tomating the workflow, researchers can focus on biological interpretation rather than technical  
 104 implementation.

## 105 Comparison with Existing Tools

Feature	SGAT	GeoLight	TwGeos	glscalibrator
Twilight detection				
Gamma calibration		-		
Position estimation			-	
Auto-discover birds	-	-	-	
Auto-detect calibration	-	-	-	
Batch processing	Manual	Manual	Manual	<b>Automated</b>
Standardized output	Custom	Custom	Custom	<b>Built-in</b>
Diagnostic plots	Custom	Custom	Custom	<b>Automatic</b>
Quality control	Manual	Manual	Manual	<b>Automated</b>

106 `glscalibrator` complements rather than replaces existing tools, using them internally while  
 107 adding automation layers.

<sup>108</sup> **Availability and Contributions**

<sup>109</sup> `glscalibrator` is open source (MIT license) and available at:

- <sup>110</sup> ▪ GitHub: <https://github.com/fabbiologia/glscalibrator>

<sup>111</sup> Contributions are welcome via GitHub issues and pull requests. The package follows standard  
<sup>112</sup> R package development practices including semantic versioning, continuous integration, and  
<sup>113</sup> code review.

<sup>114</sup> **Acknowledgments**

<sup>115</sup> We thank the developers of SGAT, GeoLight, and TwGeos for creating the foundational tools  
<sup>116</sup> that make this work possible. We also thank the seabird tracking community for feedback on  
<sup>117</sup> workflow requirements and testing.

<sup>118</sup> **References**

- <sup>119</sup> Hill, C., & Braun, M. (1994). Determining bird migration routes: A comparison of methods  
<sup>120</sup> using simple models. *The Auk*, 111(4), 983–989. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4088832>
- <sup>121</sup> Lisovski, S. (2019). TwGeos: Basic data processing for light-level geolocation archival tags. *R*  
<sup>122</sup> Package Version 0.1. <https://github.com/slisovski/TwGeos>
- <sup>123</sup> Lisovski, S., Bauer, S., Briedis, M., Davidson, S. C., Dhanjal-Adams, K. L., Hallworth, M.  
<sup>124</sup> T., Karagicheva, J., Meier, C. M., Merkel, B., Ouwehand, J., & others. (2020). Light-  
<sup>125</sup> level geolocator analyses: A user's guide. *Journal of Animal Ecology*, 89(1), 221–236.  
<sup>126</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2656.13036>
- <sup>127</sup> Lisovski, S., & Hahn, S. (2012). GeoLight—processing and analysing light-based geolocator  
<sup>128</sup> data in r. *Methods in Ecology and Evolution*, 3(6), 1055–1059. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2041-210X.2012.00248.x>
- <sup>130</sup> Wotherspoon, S., Sumner, M., & Lisovski, S. (2016). SGAT: Solar/satellite geolocation for  
<sup>131</sup> archival tags. R Package Version 0.1. <https://github.com/SWotherspoon/SGAT>