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# Program

## Day 1

* 9-10am, registration & coffee
* 10-10.30am, welcoming
* 10-11.30am, talks 1-5
* 11.30-12am, coffee break
* 12am-1pm, talks 6-10
* 1-2.30pm, lunch break
* 2.30-3.30pm, talks 11-15
* 3.30-4pm, coffee break
* 4-5pm,talks talks 16-20

## Social diner

The social diner will be in Tribeton at 6.30pm

## Day 2

* 10-12am, TMB workshop
* 12-1.30pm, lunch break
* 1.30-2.15pm, long talk 1
* 2.15-3pm, long talk 2
* 3-3.30pm, coffee break
* 3.30-4pm, meeting debriefing and next steps

# Abstracts

## Modelling the effects of mesh size on gillnet selectivity in the hake fishery to the South and West of Ireland

* Mikel Aristegui-Ezquibela (Marine and Freshwater Research Centre, Galway-Mayo Institute of Technology (GMIT), Dublin Road, Galway, Ireland.)
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Recent changes to the European Common Fisheries Policy, including the Landing Obligation (LO), require a reduction in discarding. Selectivity of fishing gear has a large influence on the retention of fish of varying sizes with the potential to partly mitigate for the impacts of the LO. Here, the effects of different mesh sizes (80, 100, 120, 140mm) on the retention of hake were investigated from a gillnet selectivity trial conducted by Bord Iascaigh Mhara in the south and west of Ireland. Selectivity models for the data were compared, including: traditional logistic regression models, additive variants, alternative distributional assumptions and an exploration of the application of a recently developed multinomial catch comparison method. Considerable differences in estimated selectivity were found under fixed or varying spread normal selectivity function assumptions. Similar selectivity curves were estimated from lognormal and gamma functional forms. Results suggest that mesh sizes of 80 or 100mm caught large quantities of non-marketable fish less than 60cm length. The 120 or 140mm mesh size caught very few hake under 60cm. A multinomial catch comparison method may be more appropriate for these data than selectivity models as assumptions on geometric similarity were not fully met. We discuss the advantages and disadvantages of selectivity or catch comparison of these data and resulting inference.

Keywords:selectivity, gillnet, modelling, multinomial, Landing Obligation

## An EM algorithm to estimate inter-annual variation in fish growth from length-frequency data

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Fish growth is a fundamental component of many commonly used fisheries stock assessment techniques. Obtaining accurate estimates of growth parameters can be key to the reliability of these assessments. Analysis of length frequency distributions from surveys is one well known method for obtaining growth parameter estimates and is often used where other methodologies are not practical or feasible. Length frequency distributions were modelled using mixture models, where the means of the components (normal distributions within the mixture model) were constrained to follow a re-parameterised von Bertalanffy growth function. An Expectation- Maximisation (EM) algorithm with an adapted M step was used to find maximum likelihood parameter estimates iteratively. The methodology incorporates bivariate random effects into the model. This allows for inter-annual variation in the first and final components for each year, accommodating some of the natural variation that occurs in spawning and growth of fish. Cohorts of fish are then grown through the years, according to the cohort specific random effects on the means of the first and final components and an overall growth rate. Testing on two fish species, haddock (Melanogrammus aeglefinus) and white-bellied anglerfish (Lophius piscatorius), we were able to successfully model and identify cohorts, as well as obtaining reasonable estimates of growth parameters. As often found, estimation is sensitive to starting values. Unrealistic parameter values (that give reasonable component means) are occasionally estimated - methods used to treat these cases are discussed.

Keywords:EM algorithm, length frequency analysis, inter-annual growth variability

## Coupling seasonal weather forecasts with long term ecological data to inform water management

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* Eleanor Jennings
* A.N. Other

Water resources are closely dependent on the services supplied by ecosystems that maintain both water quantity and quality. Climate Extreme Events (CEE), like heat waves, droughts and floods, stress ecosystems and compromise their capacity to provide key services related to water. This implies huge economic and social impacts, which are expected to be even more relevant in the future. There has been limited development of solution-oriented tools integrating climate services (CS) and ecosystem impacts modelling for efficient adaptation to CEE. Here, we present the intila work of the WATExR project, which aims to integrate state-of-the-art seasonal climate predictions and water quality simulations, enabling efficient decision making and adaptation of water resources management to an increasing frequency of CEE. The work will be carried out in seven representative catchments across Europe. In each case study, WATExR will build an original, standardized modelling workflow system programmed as a QGIS plug-in. The Irish case study is based in the Burrishoole catchment, Co. Mayo, where the Marine Institute manage one of the key index sites in the north Atlantic for diadromous fish stocks. As a stakeholder in this project, the MI seeks to couple fish production and phenological models with seasonal forecasts to aid management and conservation goals.

Keywords:Cimolate forecasts, extreme events, diadromous fish

## Species Distribution Modeling Using Biological Records Data: The effect of uneven sampling in Irish National Biodiversity Data Centre datasets

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Opportunistic biological records datasets, such as those held by the National Biodiversity Data Centre (NBDC), can be successfully used in species distribution modeling. However, spatially uneven sampling is expected to introduce bias into models, especially when the intensity in sampling effort is correlated with important environmental gradients. We first describe the geographic and environmental sampling biases present in NBDC records. We then use simulations to test the effect on model performance of varying amounts of spatial sampling bias using several species distribution modeling methods. The different intensities of spatial bias used for simulation scenarios are empirically derived from the NBDC datasets, giving simulation results that can directly inform the use of NBDC datasets for species distribution modeling.

Keywords:biological records, spatial bias, species distribution model, citizen science, virtual ecology

## A stock assessment model for anglerfish using the Assessment For All (a4a) framework.

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The a4a model is an age-based fisheries stock assessment model; it based on the standard Baranov catch equation and tuned with survey indices of abundance. A large number of age-based stock assessment models exist, but a4a has very low parametrization requirements and is easy to specify. There are 5 submodels (specifying: fishing mortality at each age and year; the initial age structure; recruitment; catchability of the abundance indices and observation variance). Each of these submodels are specified using R linear model formulas e.g. for GLMs, GAMs etc. This opens the possibility of using the linear modelling tools available in R.  
Monkfish are a tricky species to assess; they are difficult to age; males and females have very different growth rates and possibly different natural mortality; two similar species are often reported together in the landings records. However they have one thing going for them: the recruitment success varies very strongly from year to year, resulting in very strong and very weak cohorts that can be tracked over time.   
Earlier this year, the International Council for the Exploration of the Sea (ICES) accepted an a4a assessment model for white anglerfish in the Celtic Sea and Biscay. This is the first 4a4 assessment that will be used to set advised Total Allowable Catches (TACs). It is also the first robust age-based assessment for anglerfish.

Keywords:fisheries, stock assessment, anglerfish

## Adaptive management for the recovery of the highly threatened Curlew in Ireland: assessing conservation management, population dynamics and land use change

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Populations of Eurasian Curlew Numenius arquata are declining across the species’ entire range, from the British Isles to Russia. This trend reflects the current global decline of wader (shorebird) populations. In recent decades, breeding populations of Curlew in Ireland have declined by 86% and contracted in range by 78%. With fewer than 150 breeding pairs remaining, Curlew represents one of Ireland’s most pressing conservation concerns. In 2017, the National Parks & Wildlife Service began implementing a Curlew Conservation Programme aimed at conserving remaining pairs and promoting population recovery. Complementary to this, our research programme aims to inform optimal management for breeding Curlew in terms of on-the-ground management and national policy. Combining data on Curlew breeding productivity, land use, predation threat and predator control, our research will assess the efficacy of the existing conservation programme to determine if and how it can be improved. Using current data on breeding productivity, we will also model future Curlew population dynamics under various management scenarios. We will determine minimum productivity thresholds required to maintain or grow populations and the minimum viable population for Ireland. Furthermore, combining data on land use and the occurrence of breeding pairs, we aim to assess the impacts of land use change in recent decades on the decline of breeding Curlew in Ireland. These analyses will inform evidence-based conservation management and influence policy for the benefit of Curlew and other ground-nesting birds of conservation concern.

Keywords:Conservation management, ground-nesting birds, Curlew, land use change, population dynamics, adaptive management

## Disentangling the relationships between plant traits, environmental conditions and demographic strategies.

* Ruth Kelly
* Yvonne Buckley

A key assumption of the use of ‘functional traits' in plant ecology is that these traits can be used to predict the fitness of species in terms of demographic rates and population performance. Thus, functional traits are often used to make predictions about how species will respond to environmental change, and about their capacity to recover following catastrophic events. However, the link between functional traits and demographic rates across plant species is by no means fully understood. Whilst associations between individual plant traits and vital rates have been previously demonstrated, these relationships explain relatively little of the observed variation in vital rates across species and environments.  
  
Our research differs from previous work by focusing on the association between multivariate ‘trait syndromes’ and complete demographic strategies (i.e. combined schedules of growth, survivorship and reproduction) across a global suite of plant species. Using a multivariate modelling framework we assess the extent to which life-history parameters derived from matrix population models can be predicted by combinations of plant traits and their relationship with the environment.   
  
This talk will focus on the application of modern multivariate approaches to understanding the relative influences of multiple multivariate drivers on population performance, whilst accounting for the inherent phylogenetic structuring of species data. Given the inherent complexity of ecological systems, we suggest that these multivariate modelling approaches are an invaluable tool-set for addressing a wide range of environmental research questions.

Keywords:Botany, demography, functional traits, multivariate analyses, environmental filtering

## Integrating GIS and modelling approaches for precise assessment of organic carbon stocks and changes in Irish agricultural soils

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The Paris Agreement emphasises enhanced mitigation measures, reducing GHG assessment uncertainties, better quantified sinks, and the tailored use of different offsetting mechanisms. The SOC pool has the potential to act as a major source or sink of GHGs. Due to the lack of spatially explicit activity data, Ireland is mainly using the IPCC Tier-1 methodology for inventory reporting. To attain Tier-2, data generated previously through overlaying land use (LU) and soil maps using ArcGIS were reprocessed to develop depth-distribution models and pedotransfer functions (R2=0.53-1.00) for estimation of SOC concentrations and bulk densities. Then, databases/maps for two soils and a historical agricultural LU (2000-2014) were overlaid to categorize key LUs on mineral, organo-mineral and organic soils. Empirical approaches and IPCC default density change factors (DCFs, %) were applied to calculate SOC density/stock (SOC<U+03C1>/s) and their changes. The range of SOC<U+03C1> was in the order, rough grazing (R)>grassland (G)>rotation/ley (GT)>tillage (T), and was highest in the organic soils. For the 0-30cm soil layer, the SOC<U+03C1> (t-C-ha-1) measured in 2006 was 242 (R), 207 (G), 162 (GT) and 80 (T). The reference year (1990) value (SOC<U+03C1>ref), predicted using two-phase models, was 238 (R), 198 (G), 166 (GT) and 99 (T), t-C-ha-1. Based on the SOC<U+03C1>ref values, G and R were sinks, whilst T and GT were sources. The DCFs overestimated the SOC<U+03C1> change by 42-156% and the corrected one for the four LUs combined, over 25 years, was 0.23, 0.42 and 0.53 t-C-ha-1 yr-1 for the 0-10, 0-30 and 0-100cm layers. The corresponding national agricultural SOCs measured in 2006 were 316, 838 and 1679 Tg. An estimated potential of offsetting GHGs through SOC sequestration was 24, 59 and 106% of the total emitted from Irish agriculture. The findings imply that the integrated approaches can provide robust estimates of SOC<U+03C1>/s and their changes overtime.

Keywords:GIS, Empirical modelling, SOC density/stocks, agricultural land uses, Ireland

## Including unclassified individuals in sex-specific life-history models

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Estimating sex-specific life-history models typically proceeds by fitting to individuals recorded as male or female. Yet, for many animal species sex may not be apparent until the onset of maturation. As a result, sex-specific life-history models are often only fit to known-sex individuals that occupy a limited region of the fitting space. This results in biased parameter estimates. We propose an alternative approach whereby the sex of the unclassified individuals is treated as a classification problem to be estimated simultaneously with the sex-specific life-history models.

Keywords:Dimorphism, EM algorithm, missing data, partial classification

## PROGNOS: Predicting In Lake Responses Using High Frequency Near Real Time Models

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Lakes and reservoirs are under continuous pressure from urbanization and agricultural intensification, and from changes in climate, including an increasing occurrence of extreme climatic events. These pressures can reduce water quality by promoting the occurrence of nuisance algal blooms and higher levels of dissolved organic carbon (DOC), two issues that can substantially increase the costs for water treatment. To monitor such changes in water quality, automated high frequency (HF) monitoring systems are increasingly being adopted for lake and reservoir management across Europe. These HF data are mostly used to provide near real time (NRT) information on the present lake state. An even more valuable tool for water management, however, would be to use HF data to run computer models that forecast the probability of a change in lake state in the coming weeks or months. In PROGNOS, we will develop an integrated approach that couples HF lake monitoring data to dynamic water quality models to forecast short-term changes in lake water quality. This will potentially provide a greater window of opportunity over which to make water quality management decisions, and will increase the value of HF monitoring data, ensuring that their potential to guide water quality management is fully realized. This project will promote innovative solutions for water-related challenges across Europe. It will develop, demonstrate and disseminate forecast based adaptive management solutions for two specific water quality threats: nuisance algal blooms and the production disinfection by-products from DOC. The technology demonstrated here has the potential to transform water management and foster the growth of European companies that specialize in adaptive water management and water quality forecasting systems. The project consortium includes expertise from European sites that have been involved in the forefront of HF monitoring systems since the late 1990s, expertise in modelling algal blooms and DOC levels, and expertise in assessing societal benefits from changes in water management.

Keywords:Water Quality, Modeling, High Frequency Monitoring, DIssolved Organic Carbon

## "Unlocking the Archive" - Using advanced statistical techniques to investigate drivers of Atlantic Salmon and European Eel growth.

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Investigations of both intrinsic and extrinsic drivers of fish growth require detailed long-term datasets. The Newport Research Facility (NRF) holds an extensive collection of Atlantic Salmon scales and European Eel otoliths collected as part of national and international monitoring programmes. The NRF has been monitoring the Burrishoole Catchment for over 55 years and detailed meteorological data is available over this time period. The “Unlocking the Archive” project aims to develop advanced statistical techniques to analyse these datasets efficiently and in doing so build capacity for future research endeavour. More specifically it aims:   
  
- To use scale growth trajectories from Atlantic Salmon to investigate declines in marine growth and survival and potential climate impacts.  
- Relate patterns in annual growth increments of European eel to temperature, productivity and meteorological conditions within the Burrishoole catchment.   
  
Available datasets will be reviewed and built upon. Time series data of fish growth and environmental conditions will be combined and analysed to make inferences on how individuals and populations respond to environmental change. Results from the “Unlocking the Archive” project will be used to develop recommendations for future management plans of Atlantic Salmon and European Eel.

Keywords:Atlantic Salmon, European Eel, Climate Change, Fish Growth,

## Biodiversity and resilience at the macro-scale

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Investigating the resilience of ecosystem functions is vital for informing management so that we can adapt to minimise the impact of ongoing environmental change on ecosystem functioning. It has been established that biodiversity promotes resilience at local scales. Studying this relationship at larger scales could enable the investigation of landscape biodiversity effects on resilience, however, this has proved problematic due to the challenges of measuring both biodiversity and resilience at large spatial scales. Using remotely-sensed data allows us to obtain time-series data of a vegetation index (EVI) at these large scales and can be used to quantify multiple components of resilience. We present methods to calculate the resistance, variability and recovery (three components of resilience) of a particular ecosystem function, productivity, across the island of Ireland. We use a temporal moving window algorithm on EVI anomalies to account for seasonal cycles and noise within the community-level measure of productivity which can be used to identify periods of environmental perturbations. The relationship of resilience with biodiversity was investigated using biological recordings data of vascular plants to estimate species richness using statistical methods to account for variation in recorder effort. Although investigating resilience and biodiversity at large scales presents unique challenges with regards to the spatial and temporal accuracy of the data, using statistical methods to account for these show that the biodiversity-resilience relationships previously observed at small, experimental scales are maintained at large spatial scales.

Keywords:resilience, macroecology, productivity,

# Abstracts long presentations

## Tracking Ecological Perturbations Through Stable Isotope Analysis

* Jackson, A.L.
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* Donohue, I.

Ecosystem-based approaches that consider more than just the target species are becoming the norm in the management of harvested ecosystems such as fisheries or forestry. Indeed, the approach is growing in popularity for managing and restoring impacted ecosystems in general. A major challenge we face is collecting sufficient data on the non-target (or less charismatic) species in order to elaborately describe the dynamics of the wider community and to judge our management strategies. Monitoring directly the abundances of all the species in the community in response to perturbations such as harvesting (but more generally to any perturbation) is the ideal, but likely impossible, approach. Stable isotopes move through ecological communities and are predictably altered by key trophic ecological processes of consumption and assimilation. Using a mathematical framework of Lotka-Volterra community dynamics coupled with models of stable isotope dynamics, we show that the effects of perturbations are theoretically detectable in the stable isotope data alone. This opens up the possibility that, with further understanding and validation, resource-efficient stable isotope analysis could be deployed to act as a near-real-time method for monitoring impacted systems at community or ecosystem scales.

Keywords:population dynamics, food webs, stable isotopes

## Macroalgae modelling for nutrient load allocation in the Tolka estuary

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The occurrence of macroalgae blooms in the intertidal zone of estuaries subjected to nutrient enrichment from point and diffuse pressures is a persistent issue nationally and internationally. In response to the issue, modelling and management tools are necessary to determine the conditions which may lead to restoration of good status.   
A pre-existing high resolution finite difference hydrodynamic, solute transport and water quality model has been adapted to include macroalgae growth and decay, alongside the existing trophic status parameters of pelagic chlorophyll\_a as a proxy for phytoplankton, inorganic N and P and dissolved oxygen. Macroalgae growth has been modelled as a function of temperature, tissue N and P, salinity, bed stress and proximity to an upper bed capacity limit, whilst macroalgae decay comprises a baseline rate and a DO stress component. The resultant model was applied to the system comprising the Tolka estuary and the adjoining Liffey estuary and Dublin Bay.   
Here, we compare the results of high resolution water quality model with results generated by applying the DCPM tool (Aldridge et al., 2010), developed for the UK Environment Agency, to the same system.

Keywords:Macroalgae, eutrophication, growth model, nutrient load allocation

## Assessing the optimal input data frequency for the GOTM Lake Physical Model

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Dynamic water quality models are dependent on the physical lake model. The GOTM (General Ocean Turbulence Model) physical lake model requires high quality and high resolution meteorological data to increase the accuracy of this model. The PROGNOS project aims to develop a predictive water quality model. This model will take data in near real time from high frequency monitoring buoys and runs the water quality model using weather forecast data and outputs water quality information. The focus is to predict Dissolved Organic Carbon (DOC) and algal blooms. Information that is relevant to water resource managers is how to make this process most efficient and a key part of this is identifying the temporal frequency that is the most cost-effective but still maintain a high degree of accuracy with the model. The impact of differing temporal resolution of water temperature validation data was assessed with recommendations for optimal performance for water quality forecasts.

Keywords:Water Quality, Modeling, High Frequency Monitoring, DIssolved Organic Carbon

# TMB workshop

## What is TMB and what can it do for me

Template Model Builder is an exciting analytical tool for fitting high-dimensional,   
potentially non-linear statistical models. Inspired by ADMB,   
TMB is written in C++ and automatically differentiates the objective function, thus providing gradients that result in fast and stable optimization. This workshop will provide a practical introduction to TMB for ecological modelling,   
including a hands-on tutorial.)

## TMB setup

Please install TMB on your laptop before the workshop. Information on installation can be found here:

[***https://github.com/nwfsc-assess/geostatistical\_delta-GLMM/wiki/Steps-to-install-TMB***](https://github.com/nwfsc-assess/geostatistical_delta-GLMM/wiki/Steps-to-install-TMB)

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