NEWS for VAST 3.7.0

Purpose of document:

This document lists substantial changes in R package VAST for each numbered release starting at 3.5.0. VAST depends upon utility functions within package FishStatsUtils, and this document therefore lists new features, bug fixes, deprecated features, and other changes occurring via edits to both VAST and FishStatsUtils.

CHANGES IN VAST 3.7.0

CHANGING DEPENDENCIES

- Requires FishStatsUtils version >= 2.9.0

NEW FEATURES

- Integrate package `effects` to plot covariate-response curves based on user-specified formulae for density and catchability covariates (including basis-spline, polynomial, interaction or other basis-expansion methods) along with confidence intervals.

BUG FIXES

- Update `plot_quantile_residuals` to ensure that a residual >0.5 corresponds to data above the median from the predictive distribution, and a residual <0.5 corresponds to data below the median from the predictive distribution (the previous version had that swapped due to the sign-change caused by using a uniform-to-chi-squared function for aggregating quantile residuals).

CHANGES IN VAST 3.6.1

BUG FIXES

25 • Update `map` object which was generated incorrectly for several topics related to

26 backwards compatibility, as well as for some types of spatially varying coefficient

27 model.

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29 **CHANGES IN VAST 3.6.0**

30 **CHANGING DEPENDENCIES**

31 • Requires FishStatsUtils version >= 2.8.0

32 **NEW FEATURES**

33 • Expanding use of formula interface to specify covariates. A separate formula is now

34 specified for each linear predictor for density (X1_formula/X2_formula) or

35 catchability (Q1_formula/Q2_formula). Catchability formulas are parsed by user-

36 supplied data frame `catchability_data`. However, the user can still use previous

37 interface, either by passing X_itp / X_gtp directly, or by passing a single formula.

38 • Allowing user to specify spatially varying coefficients for each density linear

39 predictor separately (X1config_cp / X2config_cp), and adding new feature to allow

40 users to specify a spatially varying catchability covariate (Q1config_k / Q2config_k).

41 This allows users to, for example, estimate a differences in gear performance between

42 two surveys where gear performance varies spatially as a random field.

43 • Adding generic predict function for S3 class `fit_model`; the function is very slow

44 but could be expanded in the future to be similar to predict functions for other

45 common regression packages.

46 **ISSUES RESOLVED**

47 • Identify issue whereby VAST was giving different results when run using R version

48 >= 4.0.0, compared with earlier R versions. This occurred due to changes in base-R

49 with how integers are sampled, as documented in issue #244. A new option

50   `calculate_kmeans( …, backwards_compatible_kmeans=FALSE)` has been added for

51   users wanting to generate an identical k-means object to previous R versions; this is

52   used e.g., in integrated-tests to ensure that results from prior versions can be

53   replicated exactly.

54   **BUG FIXES**

55   • Update `projargs` strings passed to package sp / RGDAL, to keep up with changes to

56   using PROJ6. The previous use of projargs strings was throwing annoying warning

57   messages, but the change did not appear to impact functionality.

58   **CODE AND STABILITY IMPROVEMENTS**

59   • Omega (spatial random effects), Epsilon (spatio-temporal random effects), and Delta

60   (overdispersion random effects) are now built to have zero-length when these features

61   are not needed (by making one dimension have length-0). This is intended to (1)

62   decrease memory required in the former approach of mapping these off, and (2)

63   eliminating the chance that users might inadvertently set starting values to non-zero

64   values, which would previously have resulted in incorrect results.

65   • `make_covariates(.)` has been re-structured to change the order of operations,

66   resulting in a more stable implementation for use with factors and interactions

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68   **CHANGES IN VAST 3.5.1**

69   **BUG FIXES**

70   • Fix error in compiling CPP version 9.3.0 and 9.4.0, which occurred using rtools40 as

71   required by R version >= 4.0.0. This involved change function `abs(.)` to `fabs(.)` in

72   these CPP files.

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74   **CHANGES in VAST 3.5.0**

CHANGING DEPENDENCIES

- Requires FishStatsUtils version >= 2.7.0

- Requires R package DHARMa

NEW FEATURES

- Added a feature for barrier-SPDE, where vertices of the SPDE mesh that occur over land have a correlation of zero with nearby vertices.

- Changed density covariates to index by X_gctp (rather than X_gtp), so that manual editing can be used to implement cohort effects.

- Allows probability-integral-transform (PIT) residuals for delta-models, using DHARMa for plotting tools.

DEPRECATED AND DEFUNCT

- Eliminated deprecated and generally unused feature for seasonal modelling, whereby input t_iz is now replaced by t_i. This change simplifies code in CPP files in multiple places. Seasonal modelling is still feasible using the spatially-varying-coefficient features involving covariates.