Penguin Pursuits: Alice's Visual Adventure

Trishita Patra

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Abstract:

"Curiouser and curiouser!" In a twist of fate, if Alice ventured into the Palmer Archipelago, she would encounter the fascinating world of penguins. With a dataset at her disposal, she'd embark on a quest to explore the unique identities of three species: Adélie, Chinstrap, and Gentoo penguins. This study examines their physical characteristics, distribution, and the intriguing correlations among their measurements—an adventure through the lens of data!

Introduction:

The Palmer Penguins dataset provides a set of body size measurements for three penguin species—Adélie, Gentoo, and Chinstrap—collected from 2007 to 2009 in the Palmer Archipelago, Antarctica. It consists of 344 observations with variables such as body mass, flipper length, and culmen dimensions. This analysis aims to uncover differences between species and sex while exploring correlations among these physical measurements.Through the visual journey of data analysis, we hope to illuminate the unique characteristics of these remarkable birds, providing insights that might even help Alice make educated guesses about the species of her newfound friends. Who knows, she might even encounter some statistical paradox along the way!

Data description:

The dataset, available here, contains biological and geographical data on the three penguin species. It includes 17 columns and 344 observations, focusing on 7 variables (3 categorical and 4 numerical) corresponding to 333 observations after excluding missing values. The selected variables provide insights into the physical characteristics of the penguins and are straightforward to interpret. Additionally, the correlation matrix reveals significant correlations among these variables.

Table 1: The Penguin Dataset

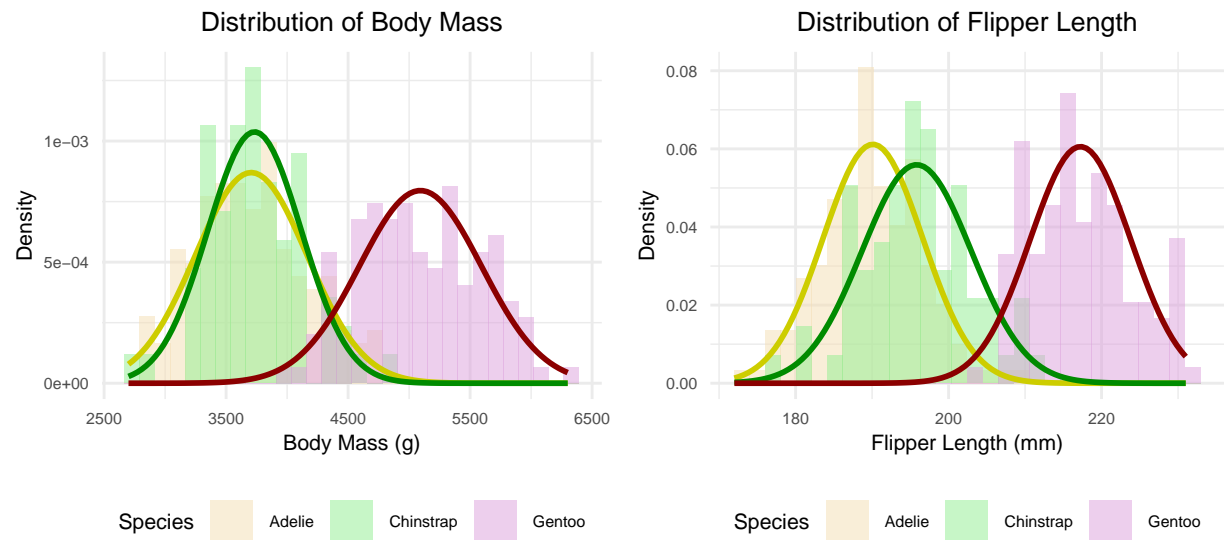| species	island	culmen_length_mm	culmen_depth_mm	flipper_length_mm	body_mass_g	sex
Adelie	Torgersen	39.1	18.7	181	3750	MALE
Adelie	Torgersen	39.5	17.4	186	3800	FEMALE
Adelie	Torgersen	40.3	18.0	195	3250	FEMALE
Adelie	Torgersen	36.7	19.3	193	3450	FEMALE
Adelie	Torgersen	39.3	20.6	190	3650	MALE
Adelie	Torgersen	38.9	17.8	181	3625	FEMALE

The **Species** variable identifies the penguin species, while the **Island** variable indicates its specific island in the archipelago (Biscoe, Dream, or Torgersen). The **Sex** variable denotes the sex of the penguin (female

or male). The numerical measurements: **Culmen Length** and **Culmen Depth** (both in millimeters) represent the bill's size, and the **Flipper Length** (in millimeters) measures the flipper's length. Finally, the **Body Mass** variable indicates the penguin's weight in grams.

Exploratory Data Analysis:

Species Distribution With Gender Representation


Species Distribution Across Islands
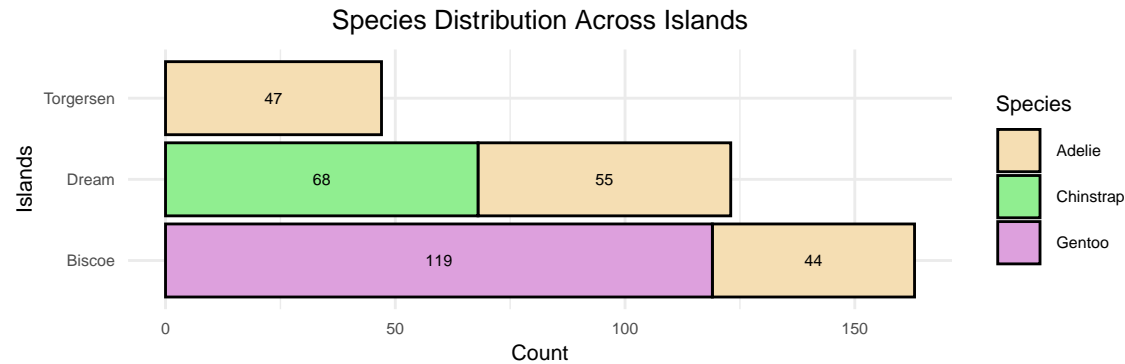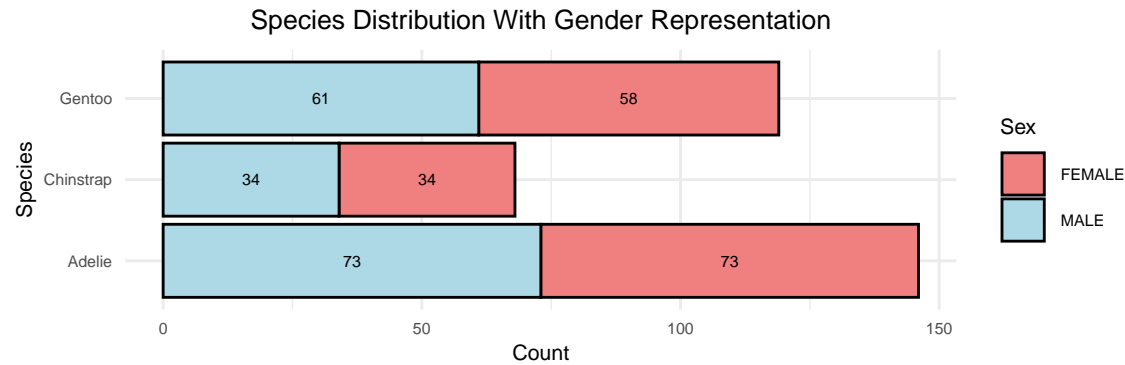
We look at the **distribution** of the four numerical variables for the three **species**, which exhibit centralization tendencies. The peak of the **Gaussian** curve represents the average (mean) value for each species, indicating where most penguins cluster regarding traits like body mass and flipper length.

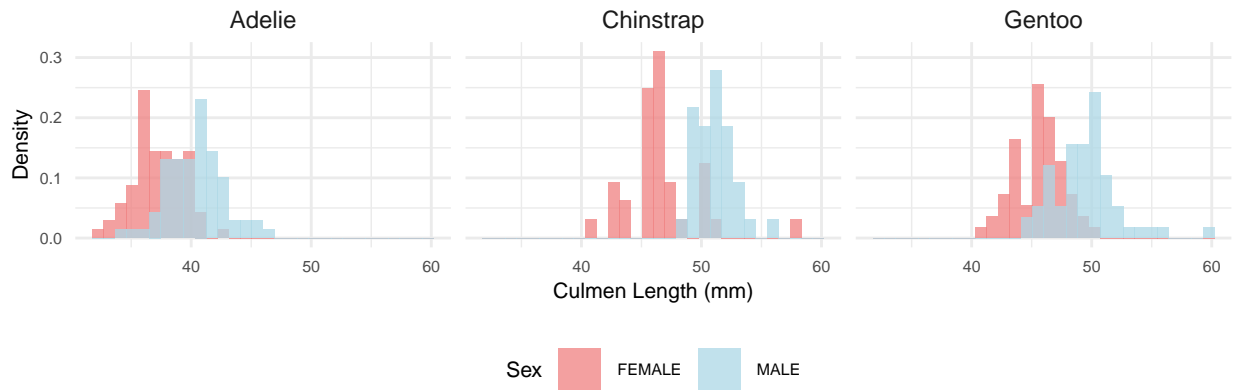Distribution of Culmen Length / Distribution of Culmen Depth
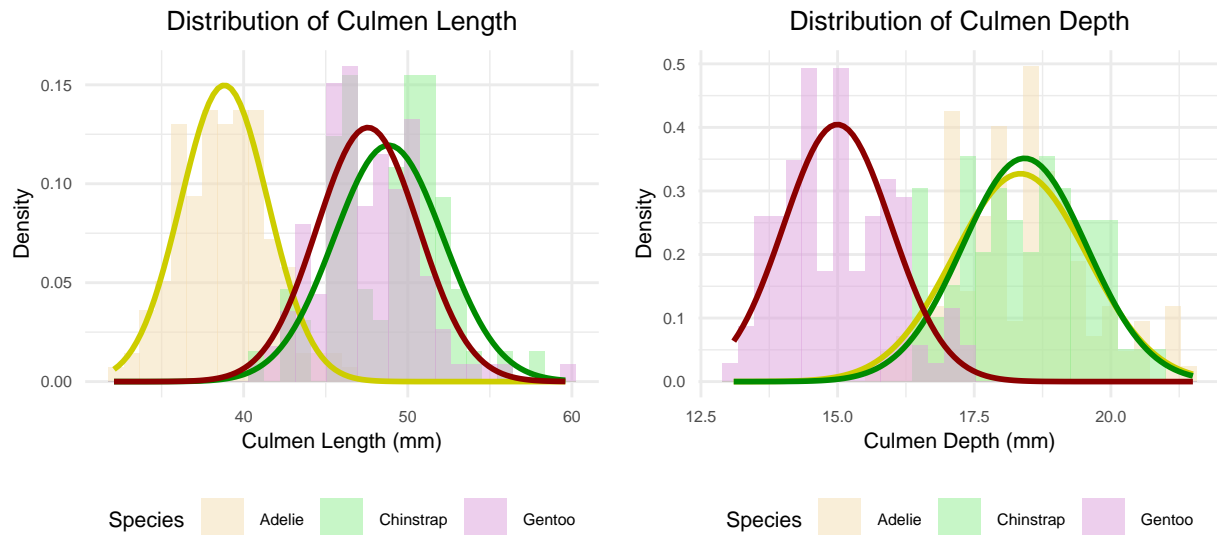
Now we examine how each numerical trait—body mass, flipper length, culmen length, and culmen depth—is distributed across sexes within each species. The presence of separate Gaussian curves for males and females highlights differences in central tendencies, with peak positions indicating the average values and revealing subtle or pronounced **dimorphism** in these physical characteristics.

Distribution of Body Mass by Sex and Species

Distribution of Flipper Length by Sex and Species
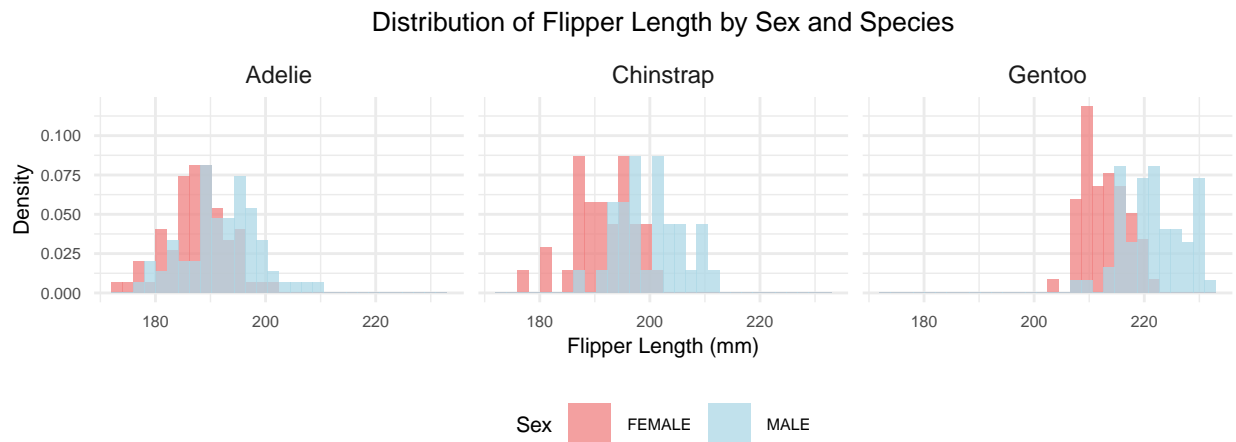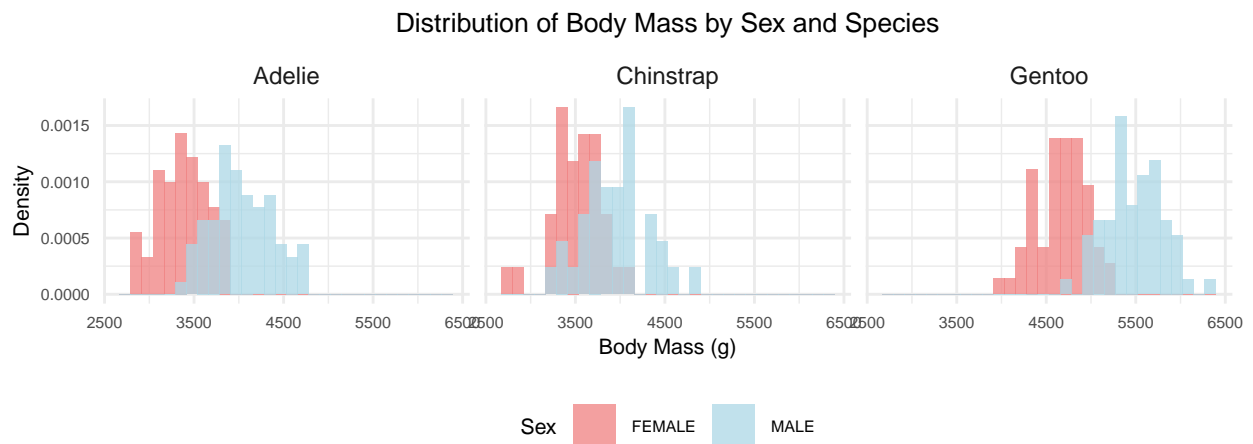
## Distribution of Culmen Length by Sex and Species

Distribution of Culmen Depth by Sex and Species
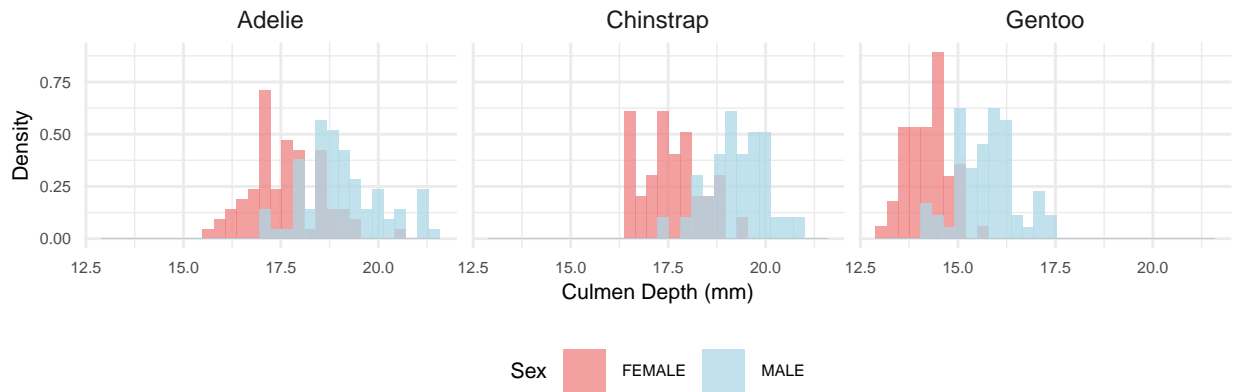
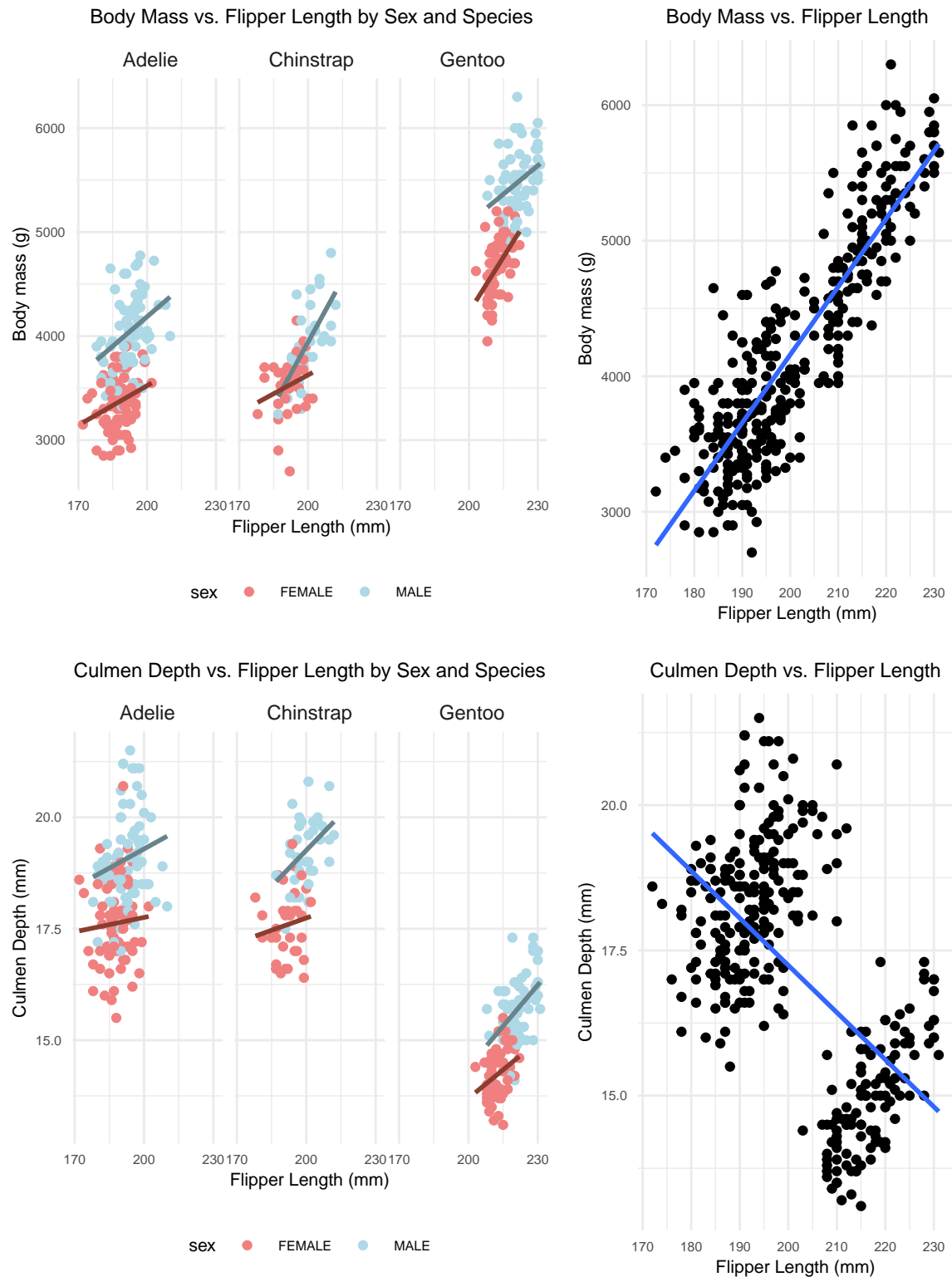We examine the correlation between numeric variables, specifically focusing on easily interpretable body measurements. From the following matrix, Strong positive correlations are observed among flipper length ~ body mass, as well as flipper length ~ culmen length, and culmen length ~ body mass. Additionally, there is a notable negative correlation between flipper length ~ culmen depth.

Correlation Heatmap
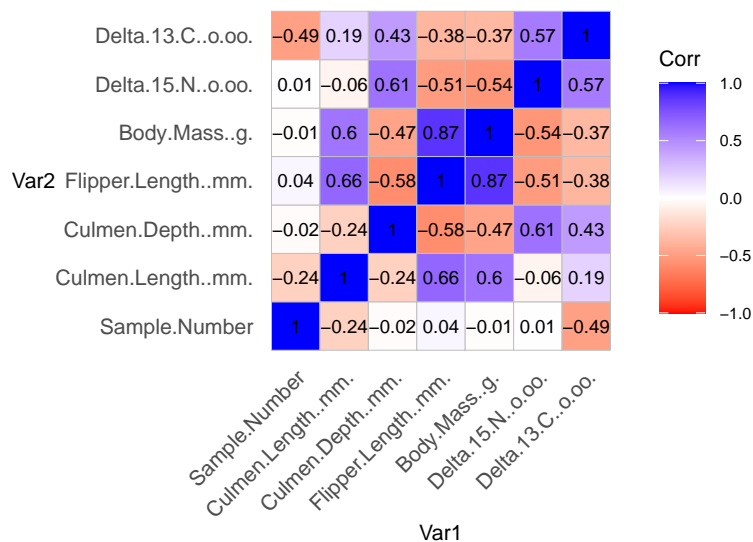
We will visualize the relationships between body mass and flipper length, as well as flipper length and culmen depth, both overall and faceted by species. Coloring by sex helps differentiate between the characteristics of males and females.Faceting by species allows for easy comparison between subsets of the data, showing how the traits differ across groups (Adelie, Gentoo, Chinstrap).

Body Mass vs. Flipper Length by Sex and Species

Body Mass vs. Flipper Length

Culmen Depth vs. Flipper Length by Sex and Species

Culmen Depth vs. Flipper Length

Results and Discussion:

From the EDA, we observe the following:

- The sex ratio across species is nearly 1:1.

- The sex ratio is also nearly identical for each species in each island, when viewed using a 3D bar plot structured along the Species × Island × Sex dimensions.[1]

- The Adélie species is present on all three islands, while the Chinstrap and Gentoo are found only on Dream and Biscoe islands, respectively.

- The centralization tendency of the numerical variables is insightful. For example, body mass distribution shows that most individuals are around an average mass, with fewer being very light or heavy; one species tends to be heavier (i.e., a higher mean).

- In our sample, the number of penguins is: Adélie > Gentoo > Chinstrap.

- Average flipper length order: Adélie < Chinstrap < Gentoo.

- Average body mass order: Adélie ∼ Chinstrap < Gentoo.

- Average culmen length order: Adélie < Gentoo < Chinstrap.

- Average culmen depth order: Gentoo < Adélie ∼ Chinstrap.

- **Sexual dimorphism** is evident across all species for the four key body measurements: on average, male penguins have greater body mass, flipper length, culmen length, and culmen depth compared to females.

- The correlation matrix reveals the highest positive correlation between body mass and flipper length, and the highest negative correlation between flipper length and culmen depth. The plots illustrate these correlations, but when faceted by species (and applicable for each sex), a positive correlation between flipper length and culmen depth emerges, illustrating **Simpson's paradox**.

Conclusion:

The analysis shows that, in addition to inter-species differences, the data reveals clear sexual dimorphism: males tend to be larger than females across all four measured traits and all three species. Through visualizations, we confirmed a correlation between body measurements. Interestingly, we observe Simpson's Paradox in the scatter plot for Culmen Depth vs. flipper length when viewed across species and sex. While individual species show positive trends, the overall correlation across all penguins might give the false impression of a weaker relationship due to differences between species. This emphasizes the importance of analyzing data by subgroups to avoid misleading conclusions. Hopefully both Alice and the reader enjoyed the exploration!

Referances:

1. Gorman, K. B., Williams, T. D., & other collaborators. (2019). Palmer Penguins: A dataset for the study of penguins in the Antarctic. Retrieved from here.
2. Palmer Archipelago Penguins Data in the palmerpenguins R Package - An Alternative to Anderson's Irises.

Dashboard:

Here is the dashboard.

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[1]Though seemingly harmonious in concept, the dimensions proved less cooperative in presentation—or rather, too time-consuming to reconcile. My aesthetic judgement is to be blamed for the exclusion of the discordant 3D plot from this report. However, the informative—and admittedly cool, at least to a novice—3D visualization is available on the interactive dashboard.