Gambling with Australian brachiopods

Peter D Smits

Committee on Evolutionary Biology, University of Chicago

Gambler's Ruin

Definition

Given infinite time, all gambler's go bust.

Death of a taxon

Taxa as gamblers

All taxa, given infinite time, go extinct.

Foundation

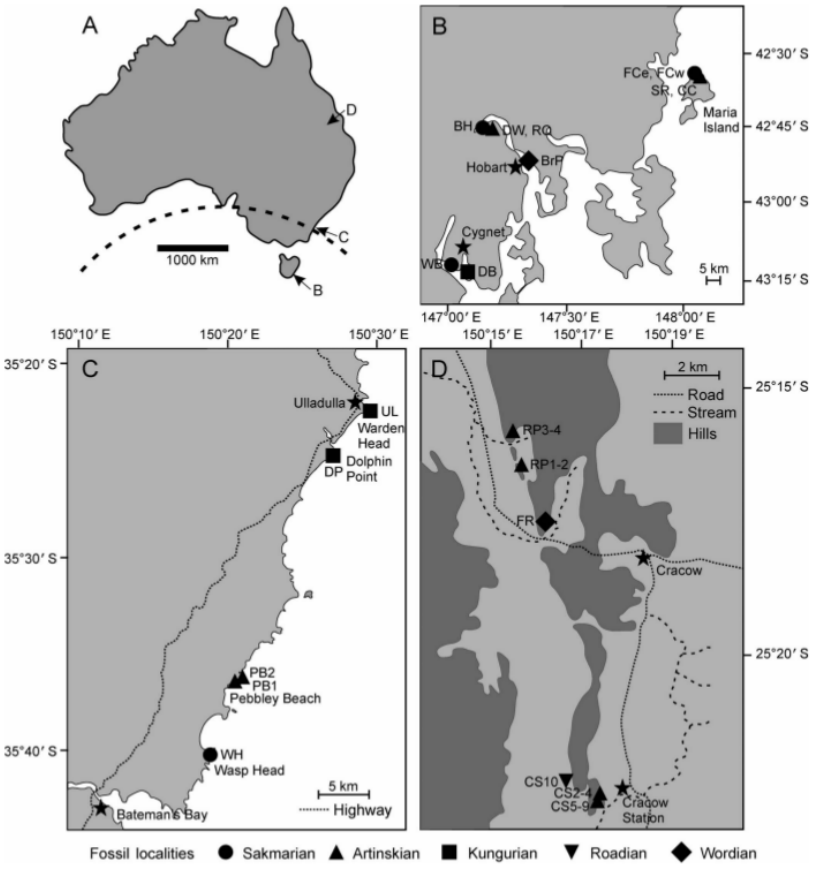
Question

Why do taxa go extinct at different rates?

Enter brachiopods

(Immersion Imagery, Shutterstock; Wikimedia)

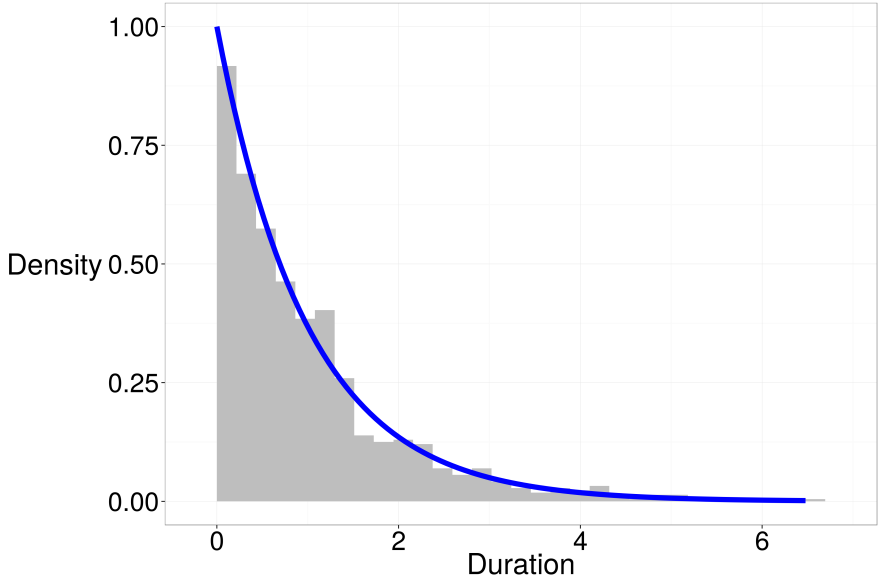
System details

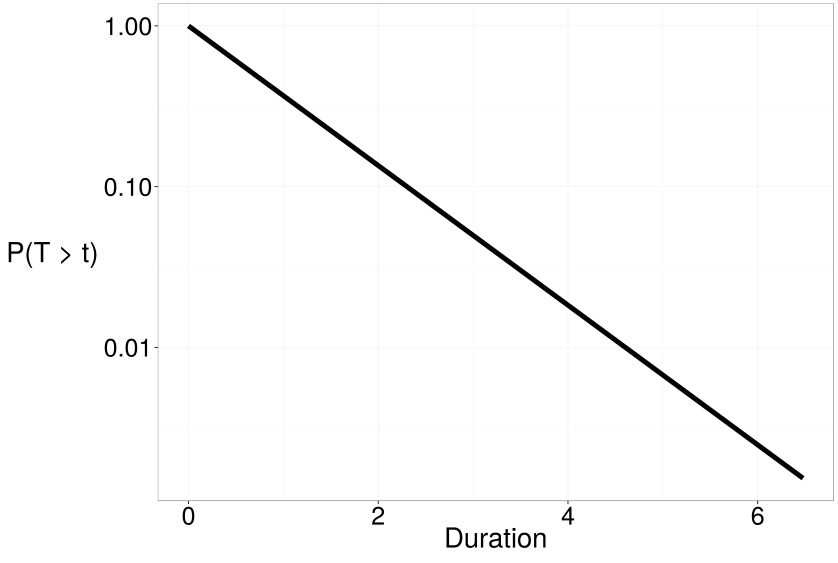


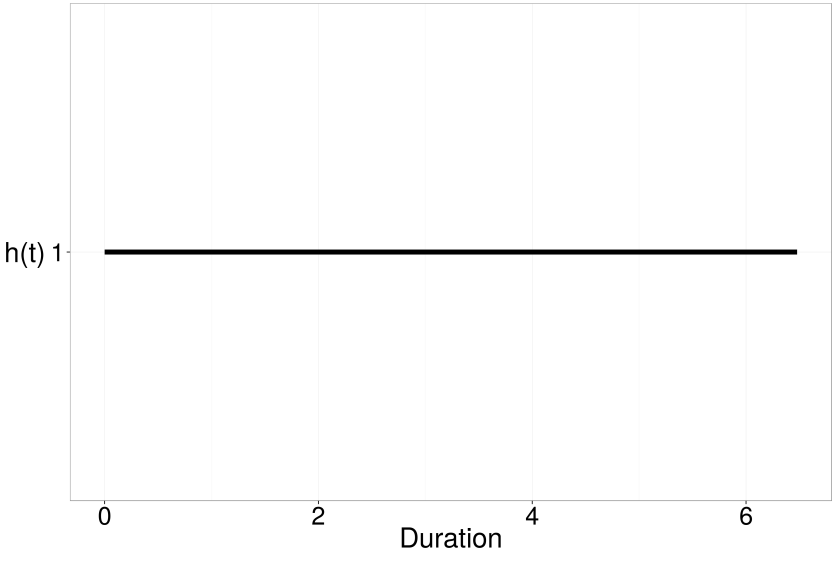
(Clapham and James 2008 *Palaios*)

- genus durations
- Australian Permian
  - range in/out taxa right censored
- predictors
  - substrate probability
  - onshore/offshore probability
  - body size (Payne *et al.* 2014 *Proc. B*)
  - occupancy (see Vilhena *et al.* 2014 *Nature Com.*)

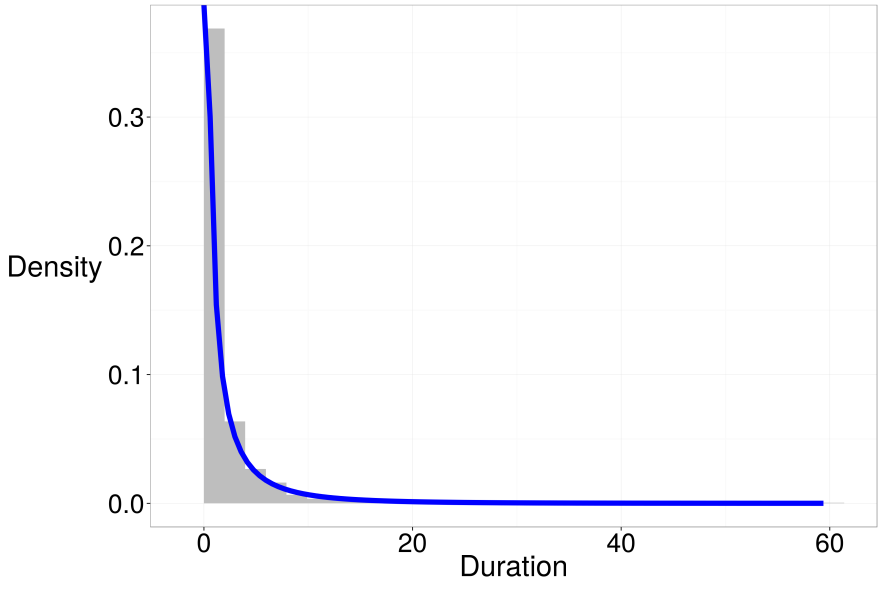
Survival analysis: constant extinction

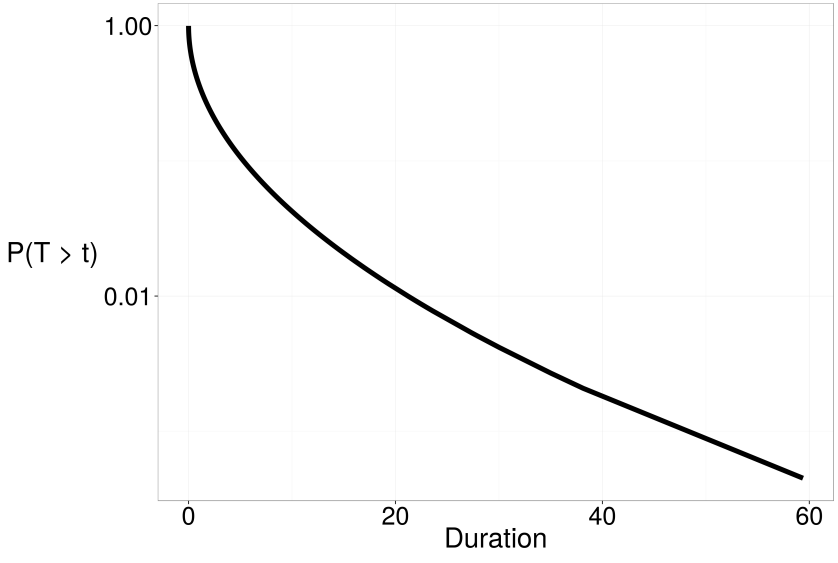


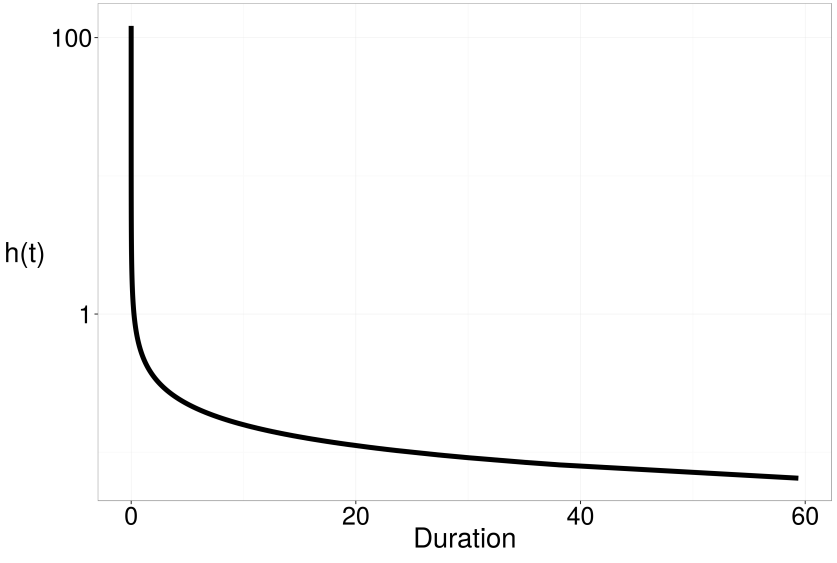




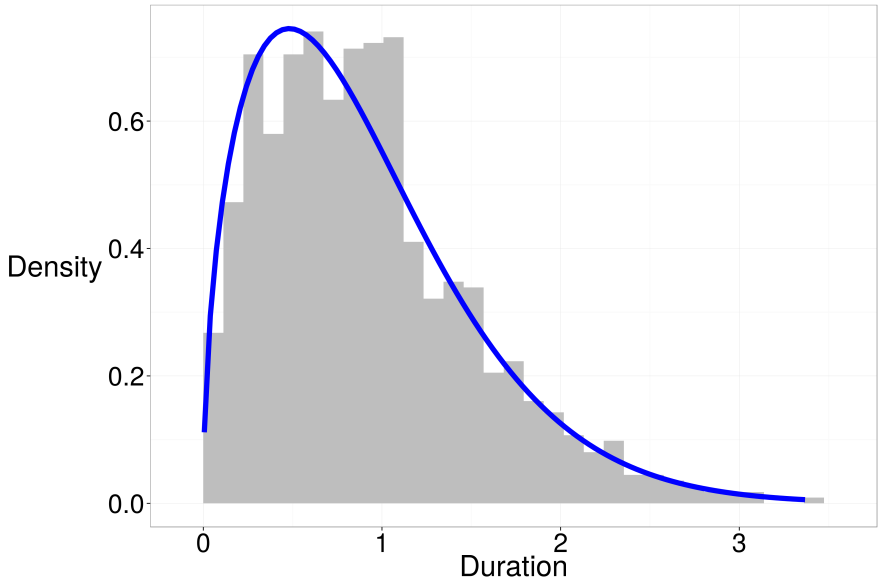
Survival analysis: decelerating ($k < 1$)

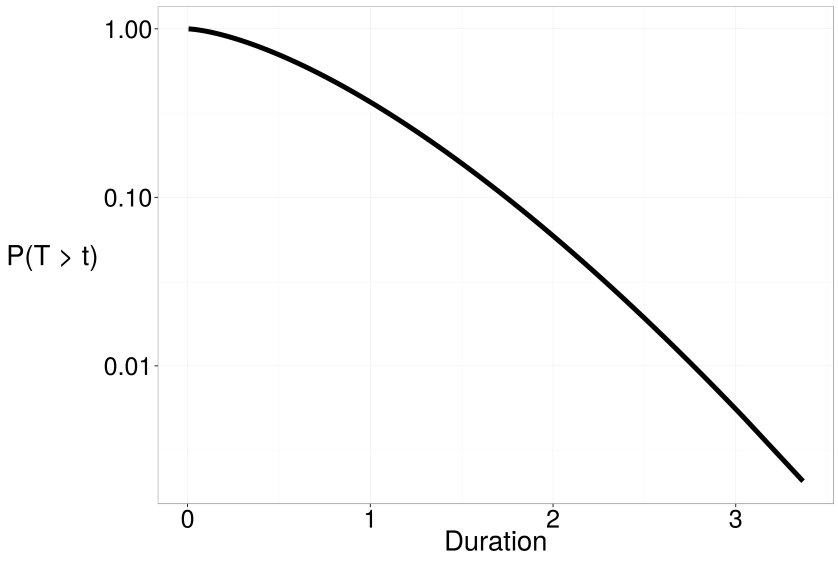


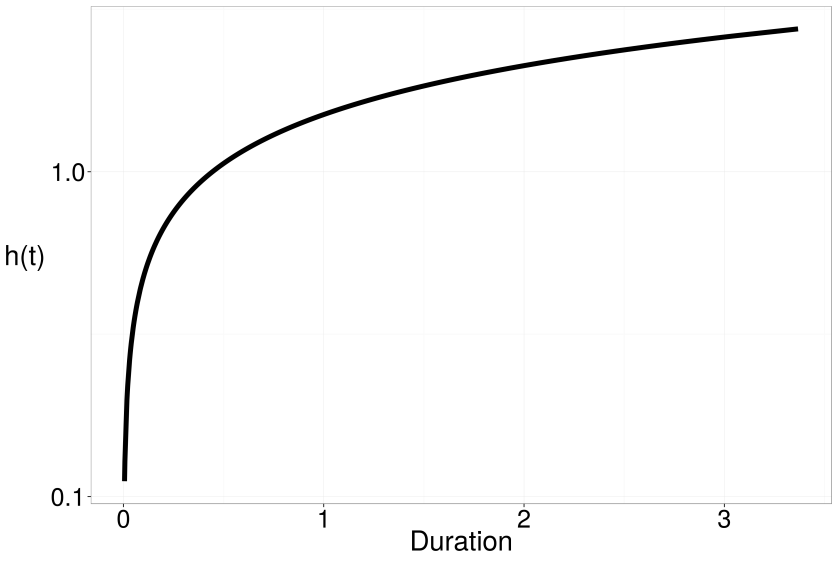




Survival analysis: accelerating (k > 1)



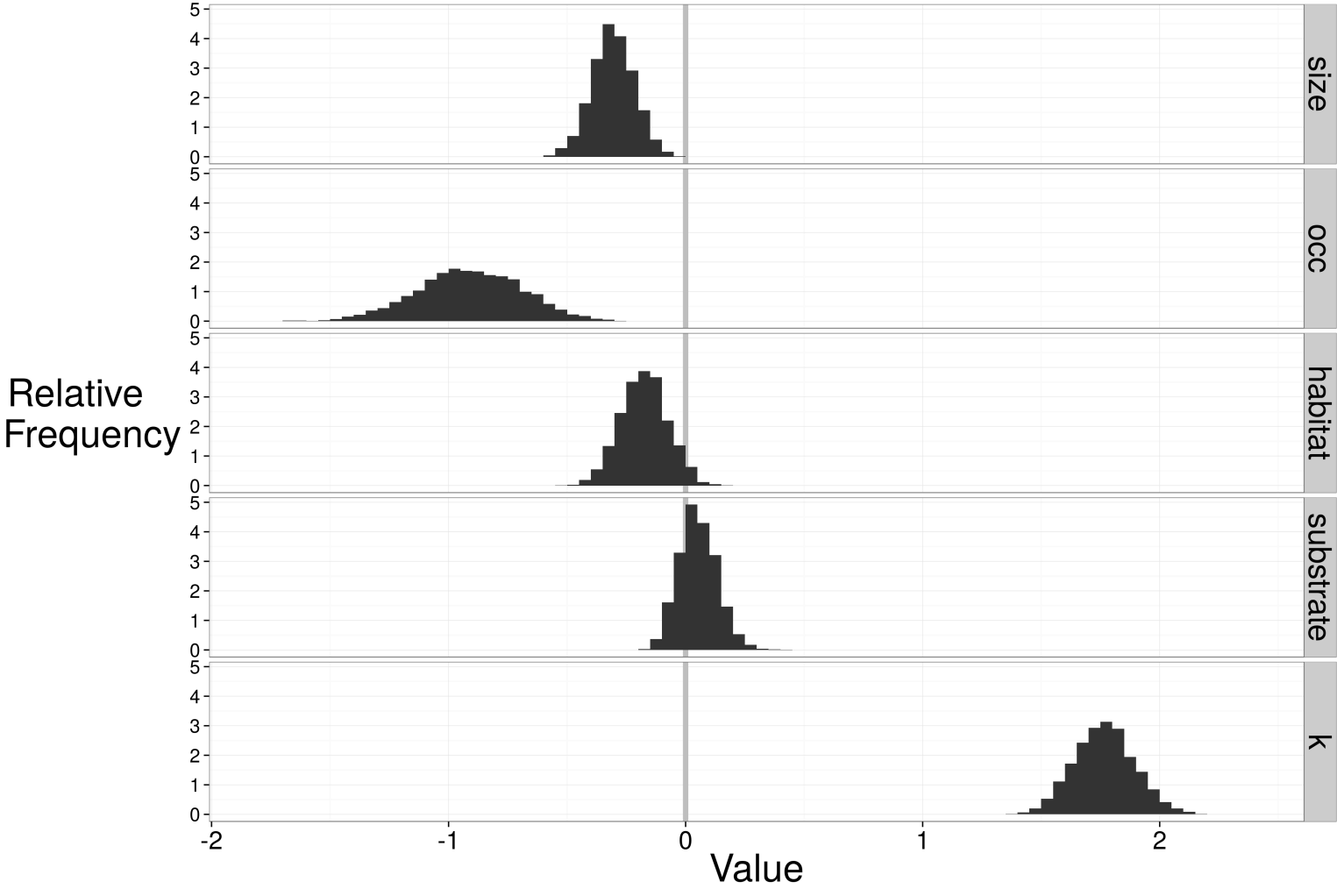




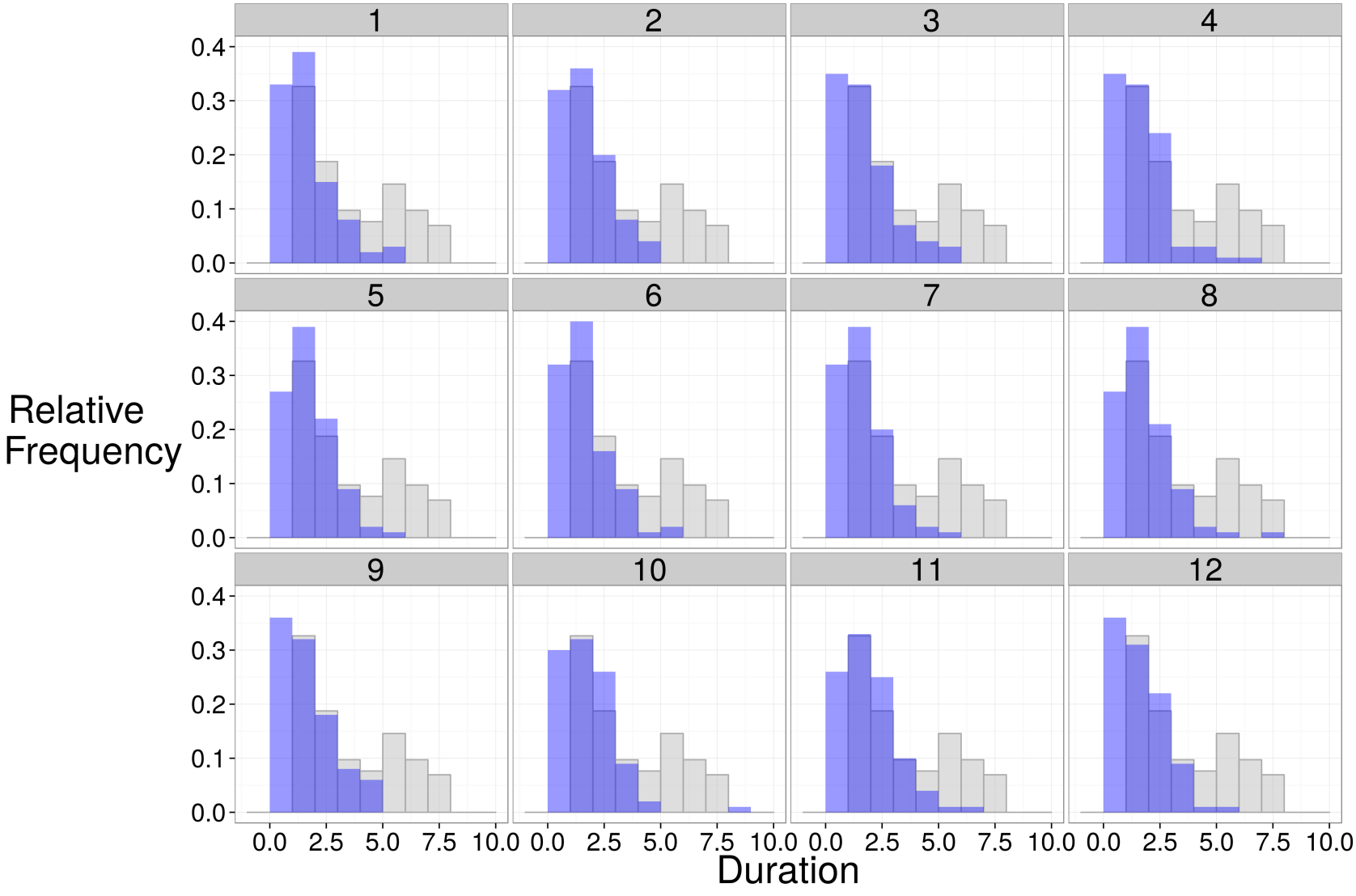
Fit a statistical model in a Bayesian framework.

Parameter posteriors

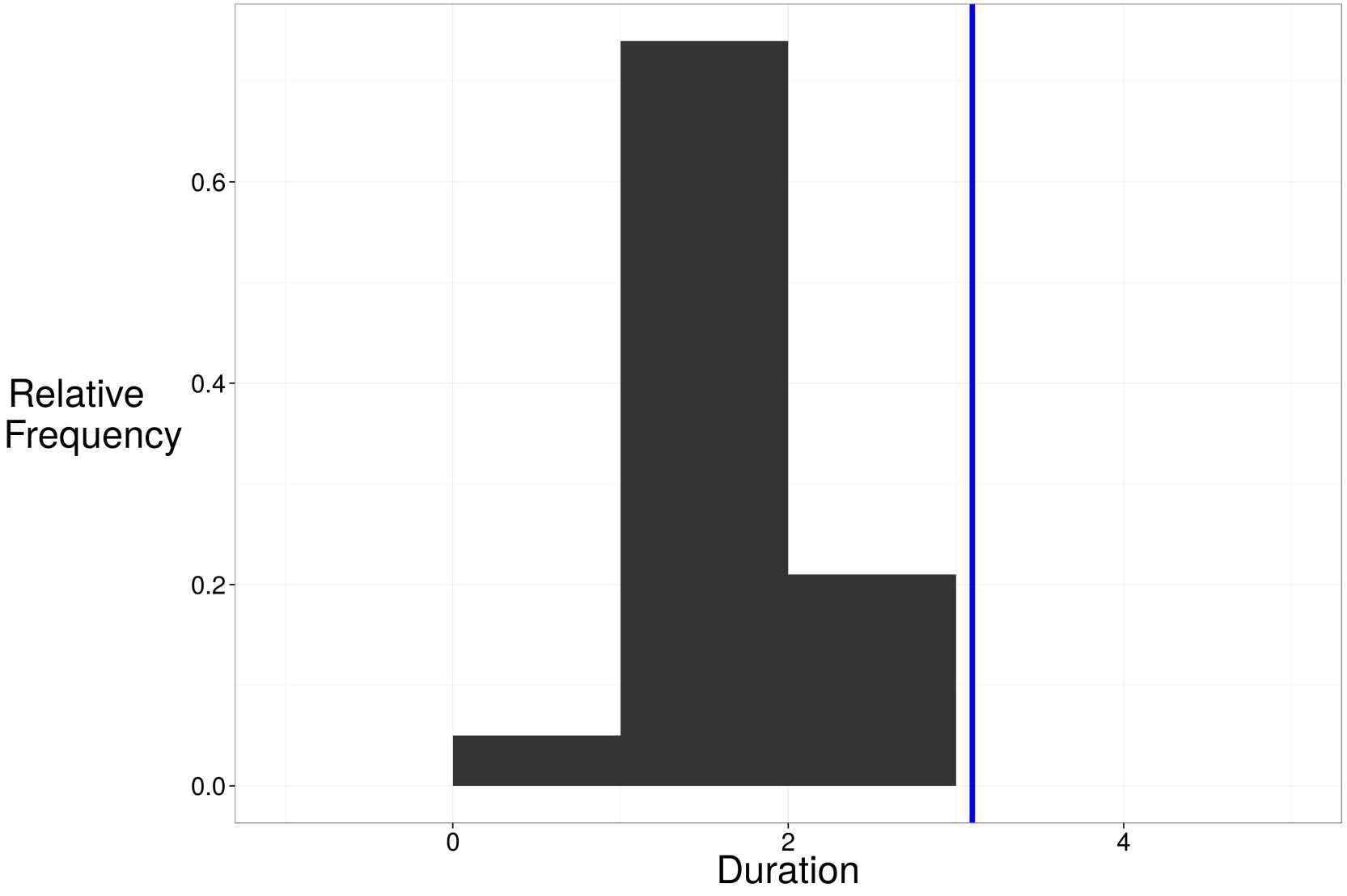
For all but k, if farther to left then $\uparrow$ trait $\propto \uparrow$ duration.



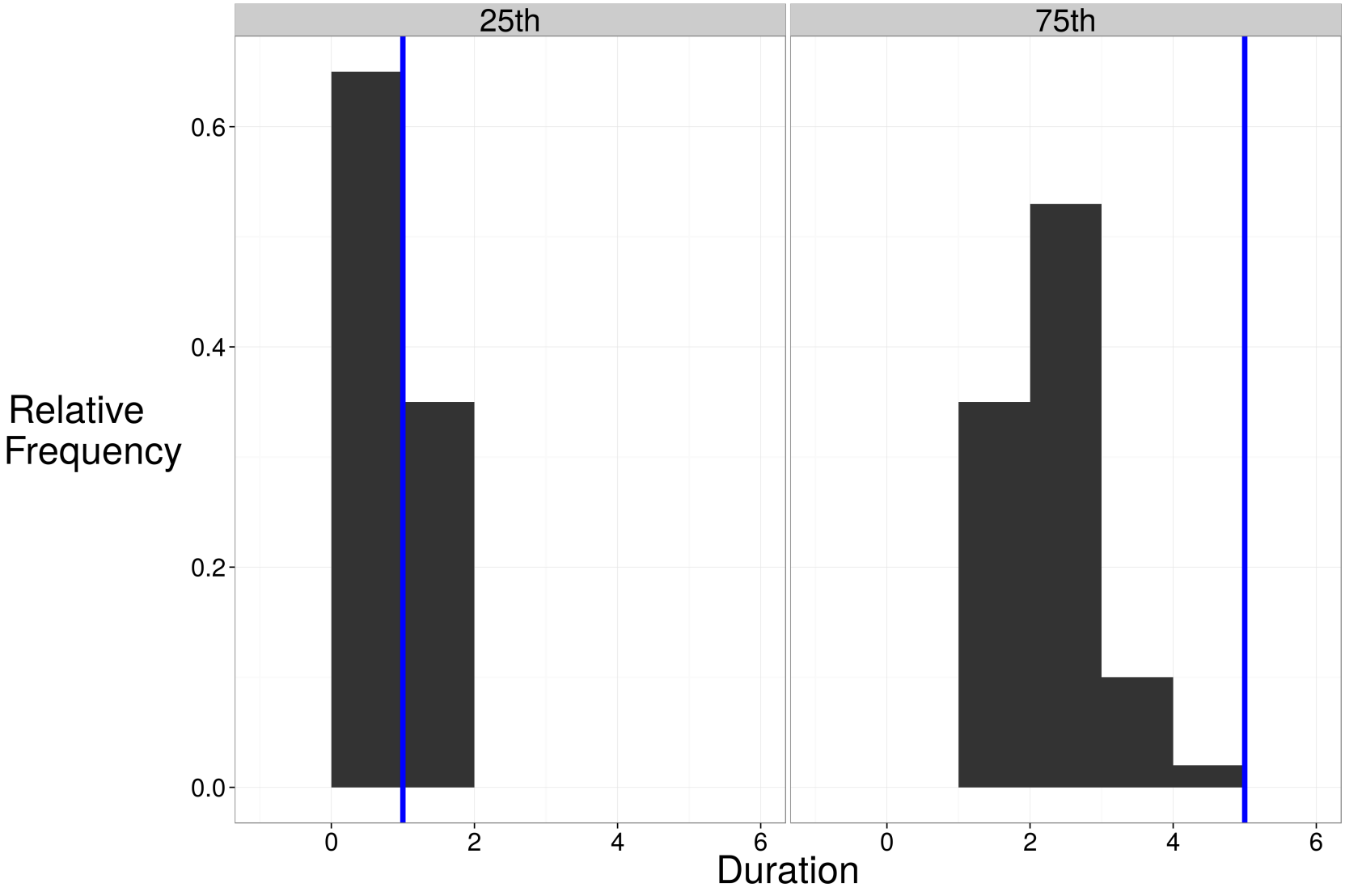
Estimated versus observed: duration frequency



Estimated versus observed: mean duration



Estimated versus observed: quantiles



State of knowledge

Preliminary conclusions

Little evidence for single, age-independent pattern.

Occupancy has largest effect.

Substrate affinity $\approx$ no effect.

Modeling improvements

Major roadblock

HEAVY RIGHT TAIL: more long-lived genera observed than model predicts.

- sampling distribution
- different priors
- larger dataset, more traits
- sampling effect?

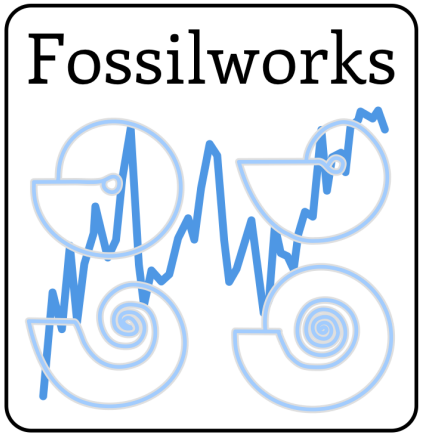
Remember. . .

Analysis is a narrative

- fit model
- evaluate model
- improve model/include more information

Acknowledgements

- Advising
  - Kenneth D. Angielczyk, Michael J. Foote, P. David Polly, Richard H. Ree
- Discussion
  - David Bapst, Marites Villarosa Garcia, Gene Hunt, Nadia Pierrehumbert



The Paleobiology Database
revealing the history of life