

Visualizing Data in R

A primer on `ggplot2`

 [steffilazerte](#)

 @steffilazerte@fosstodon.org

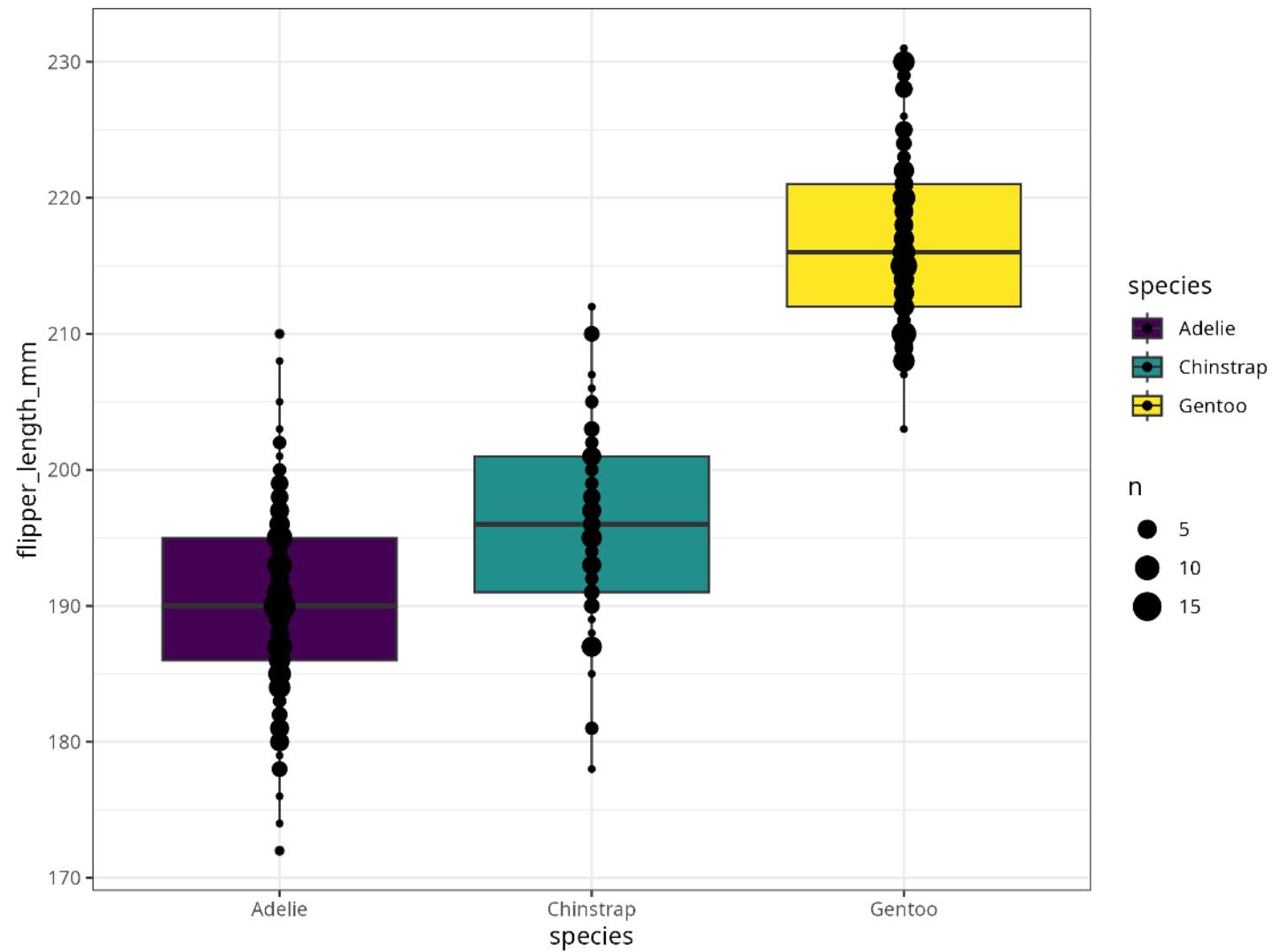
 [@steffilazerte](#)

 [steffilazerte.ca](#)

Dr. Steffi LaZerte



Analysis and Data Tools for Science



Compiled: 2025-01-12

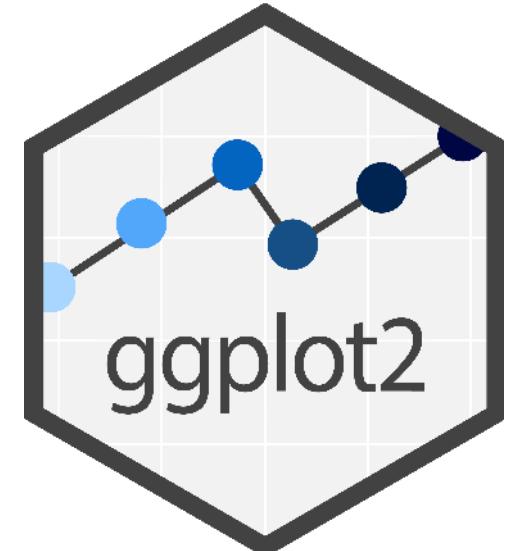
First things first

- ⌚ Save previous script
- 📁 Open New File
 - (make sure you're in the RStudio Project)
- ✍ Write `library(tidyverse)` at the top
- ⌚ Save this new script
 - (consider names like `figs.R` or `2_figures.R`)

Outline

1. Figures with `ggplot2` (A `tidyverse` package)

- Basic plot
- Common plot types
- Plotting by categories
- Adding statistics
- Customizing plots
- Annotating plots



2. Combining figures with `patchwork`

3. Saving figures



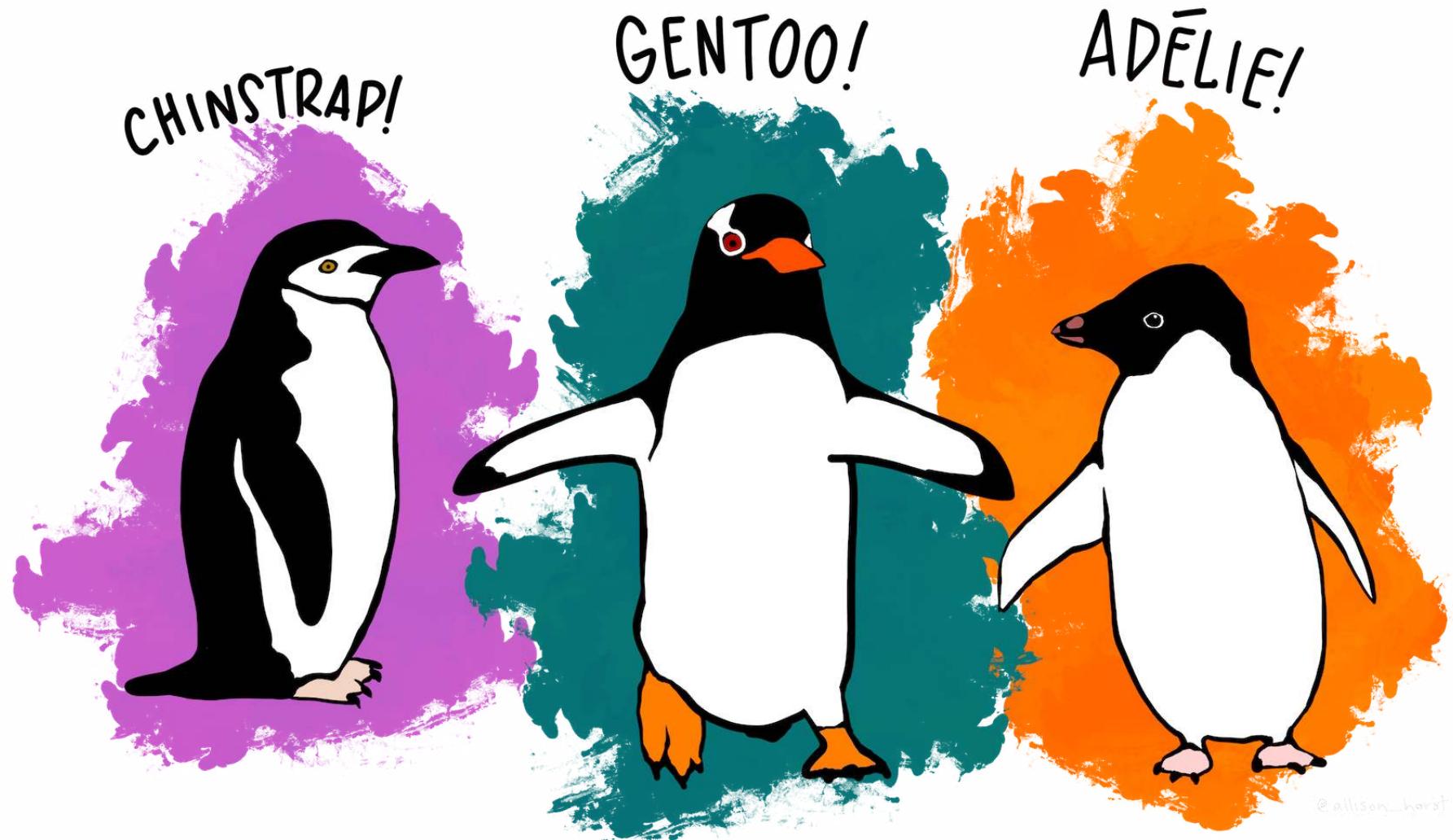
ggplot2:

Build a data
MASTERPIECE



HORST '18

Our data set: Palmer Penguins!

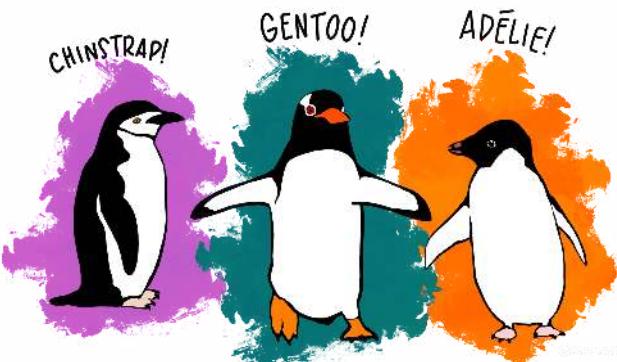


Our data set: Palmer Penguins!



```
1 library(palmerpenguins)
2 penguins

# A tibble: 344 × 8
  species island bill_length_mm bill_depth_mm flipper_length_mm body_mass_g
  <fct>   <fct>      <dbl>        <dbl>          <int>        <int>
1 Adelie  Torgersen     39.1         18.7           181        3750
2 Adelie  Torgersen     39.5         17.4           186        3800
3 Adelie  Torgersen     40.3         18             195        3250
4 Adelie  Torgersen     NA            NA             NA          NA
5 Adelie  Torgersen     36.7         19.3           193        3450
6 Adelie  Torgersen     39.3         20.6           190        3650
7 Adelie  Torgersen     38.9         17.8           181        3625
8 Adelie  Torgersen     39.2         19.6           195        4675
9 Adelie  Torgersen     34.1         18.1           193        3475
10 Adelie Torgersen      42            20.2           190        4250
# i 334 more rows
# i 2 more variables: sex <fct>, year <int>
```



Your turn!

Run this code and look at the output in the console

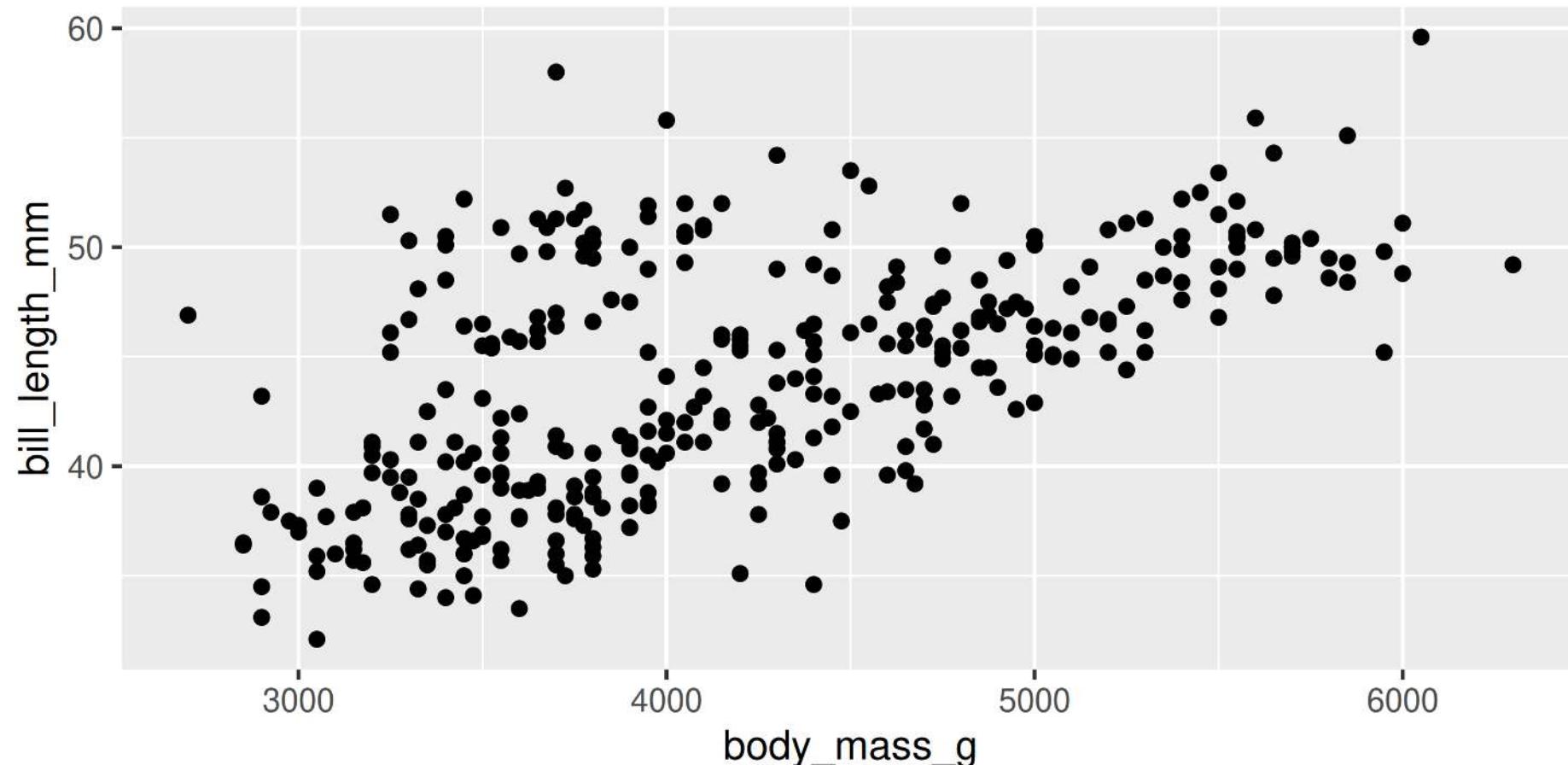
Side Note

Where did the `penguins` data set come from?

- Sometimes R packages contain data
- If you load a package (i.e. `library(palmerpenguins)`) you can use the data
- **Note** that here the data object is called `penguins` (not `palmerpenguins`)
- **Note** this is NOT how you'll load your own data

A basic plot

```
1 library(palmerpenguins)
2 library(tidyverse)
3
4 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +
5   geom_point()
```

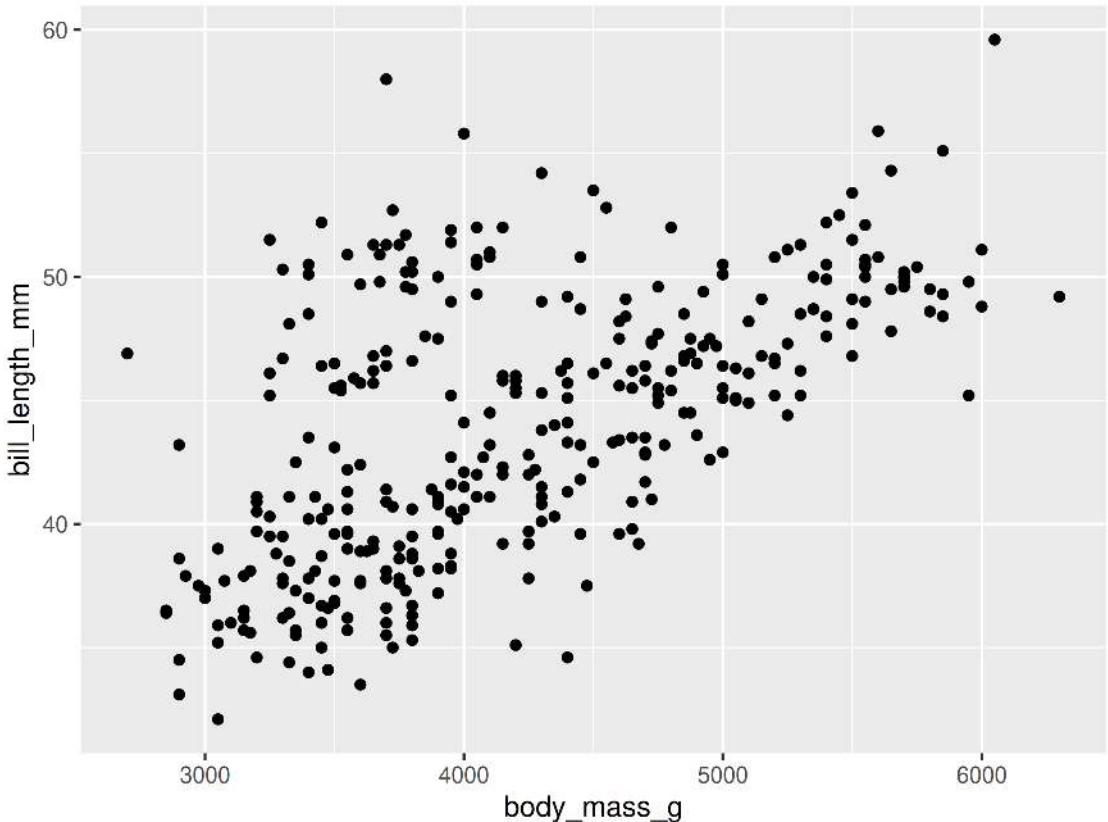


Break it down

```
1 library(palmerpenguins)
2 library(tidyverse)
3
4 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +
5   geom_point()
```

library()

- Load the `palmerpenguins` package
- Now we have access to `penguins` data

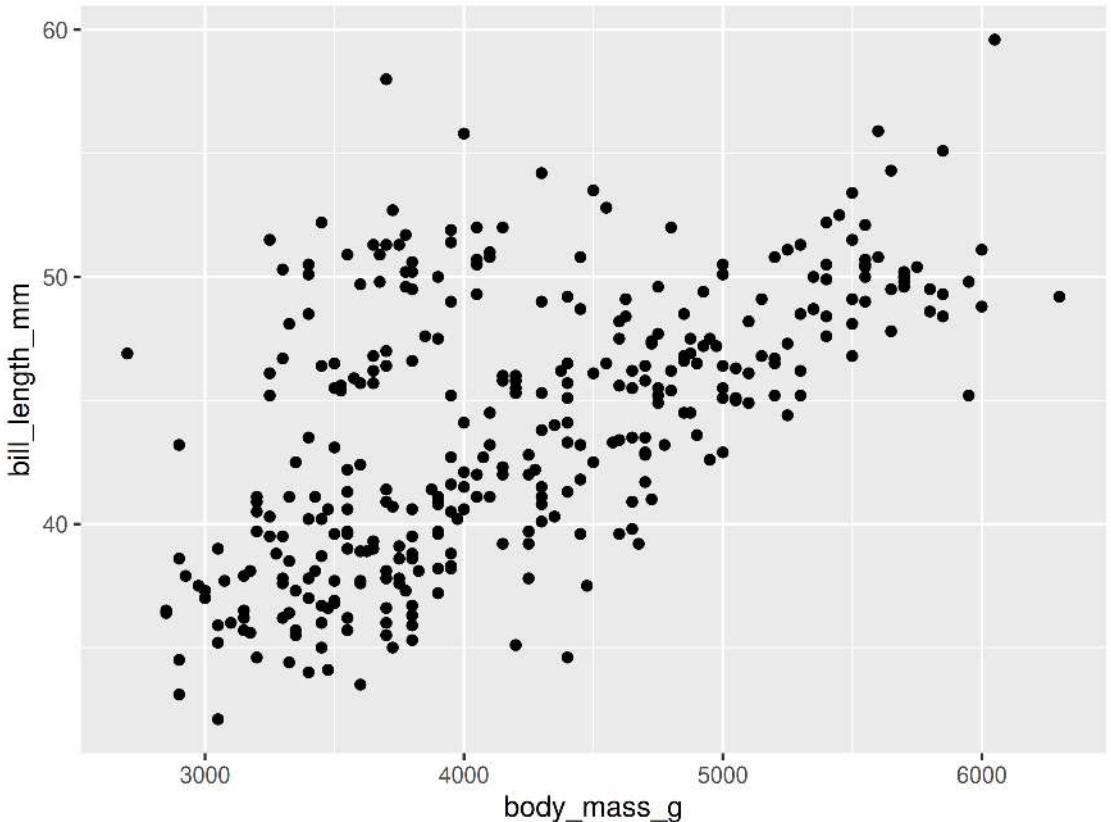


Break it down

```
1 library(palmerpenguins)
2 library(tidyverse)
3
4 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +
5   geom_point()
```

library()

- Load the `tidyverse` packages (includes `ggplot2`)
- Now we have access to the `ggplot()` function (and `aes()` and `geom_point()` etc.)

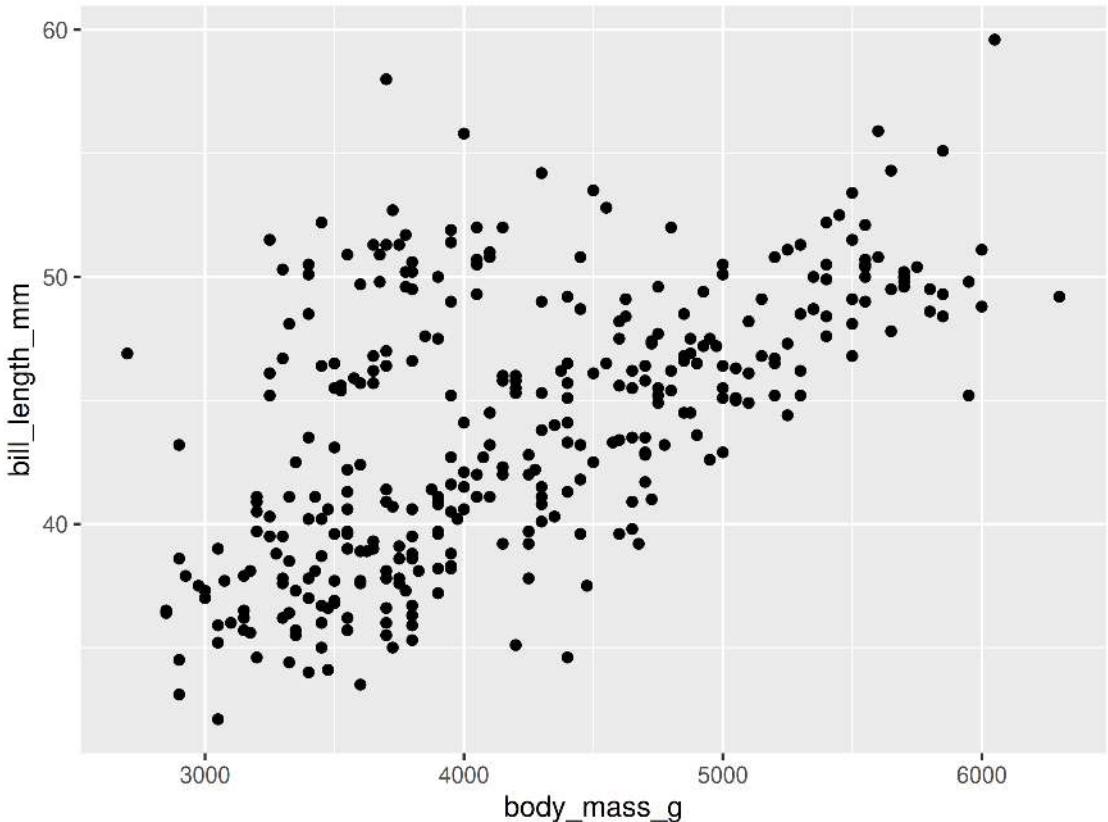


Break it down

```
1 library(palmerpenguins)
2 library(tidyverse)
3
4 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +
5   geom_point()
```

ggplot()

- Set the attributes of your plot
- **data** = Dataset
- **aes** = Aesthetics (how the data are used)
- Think of this as your plot defaults



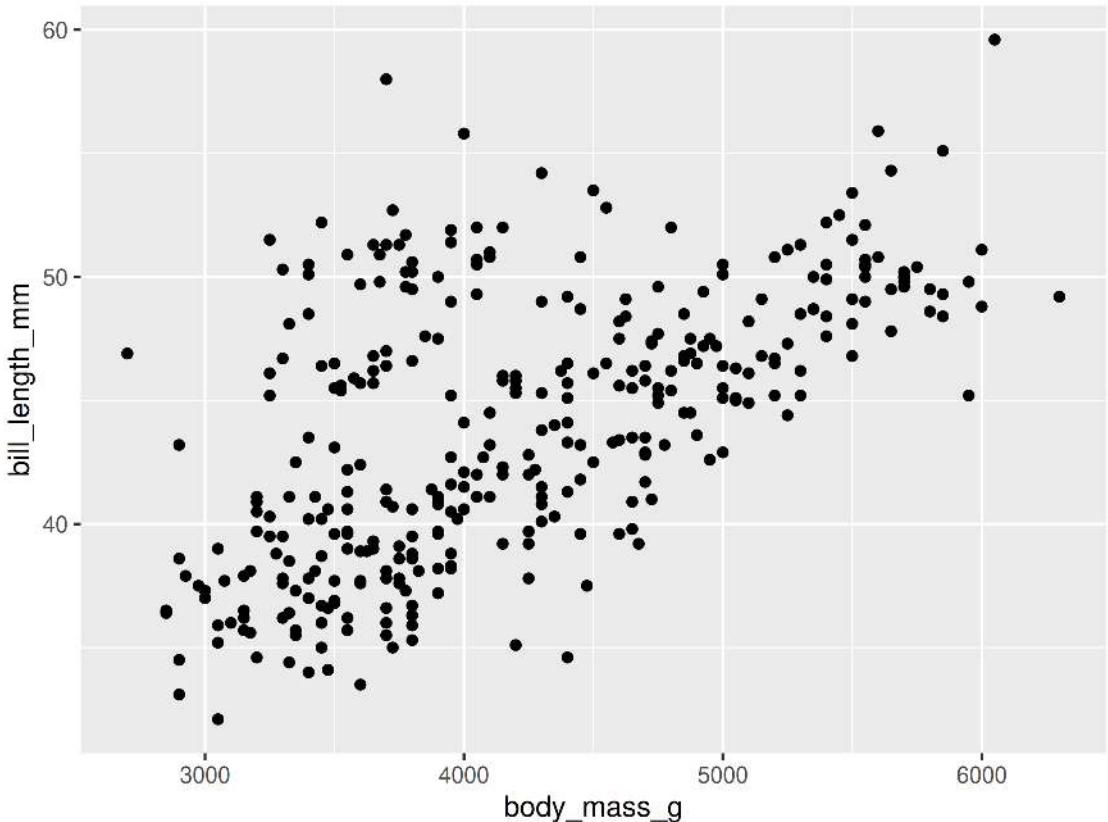
Break it down

```
1 library(palmerpenguins)
2 library(tidyverse)
3
4 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +
5   geom_point()
```

geom_point()

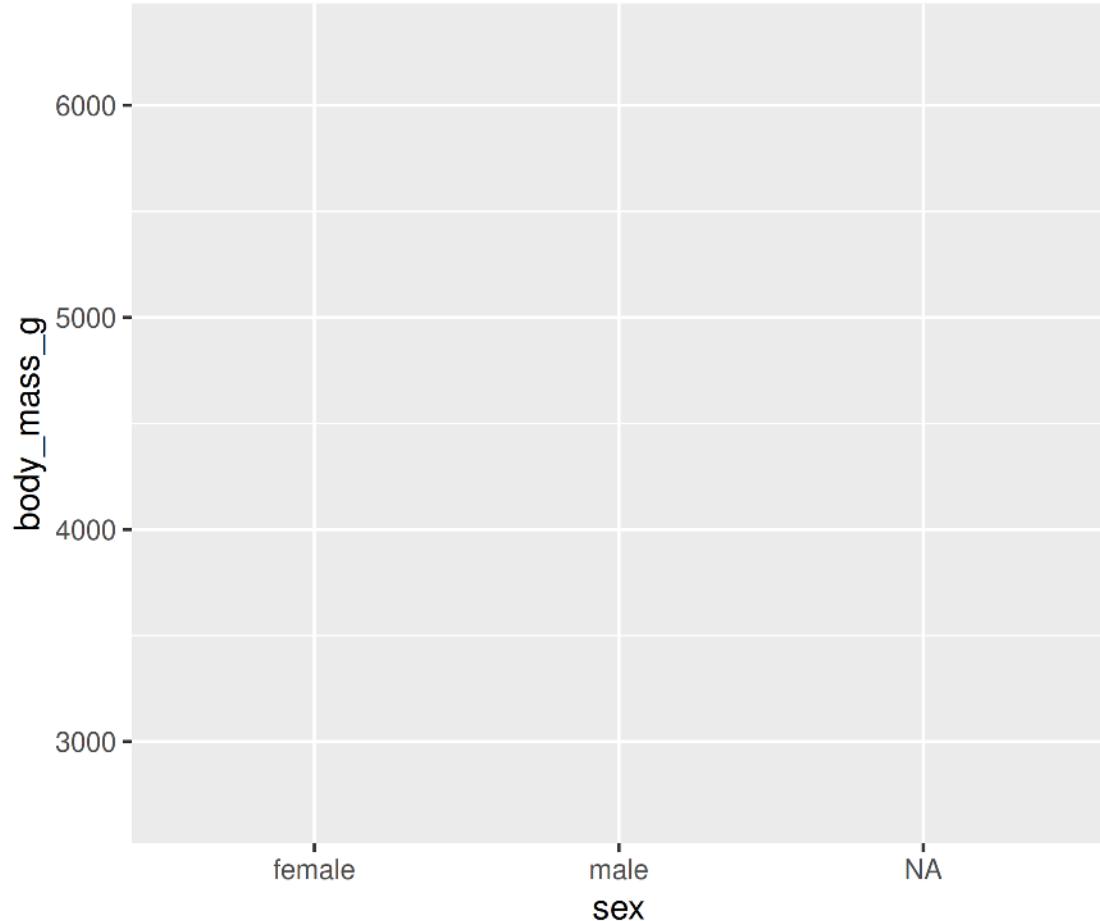
- Choose a `geom` function to display the data
- Always *added* to a `ggplot()` call with `+`

ggplots are essentially layered objects, starting with a call to `ggplot()`

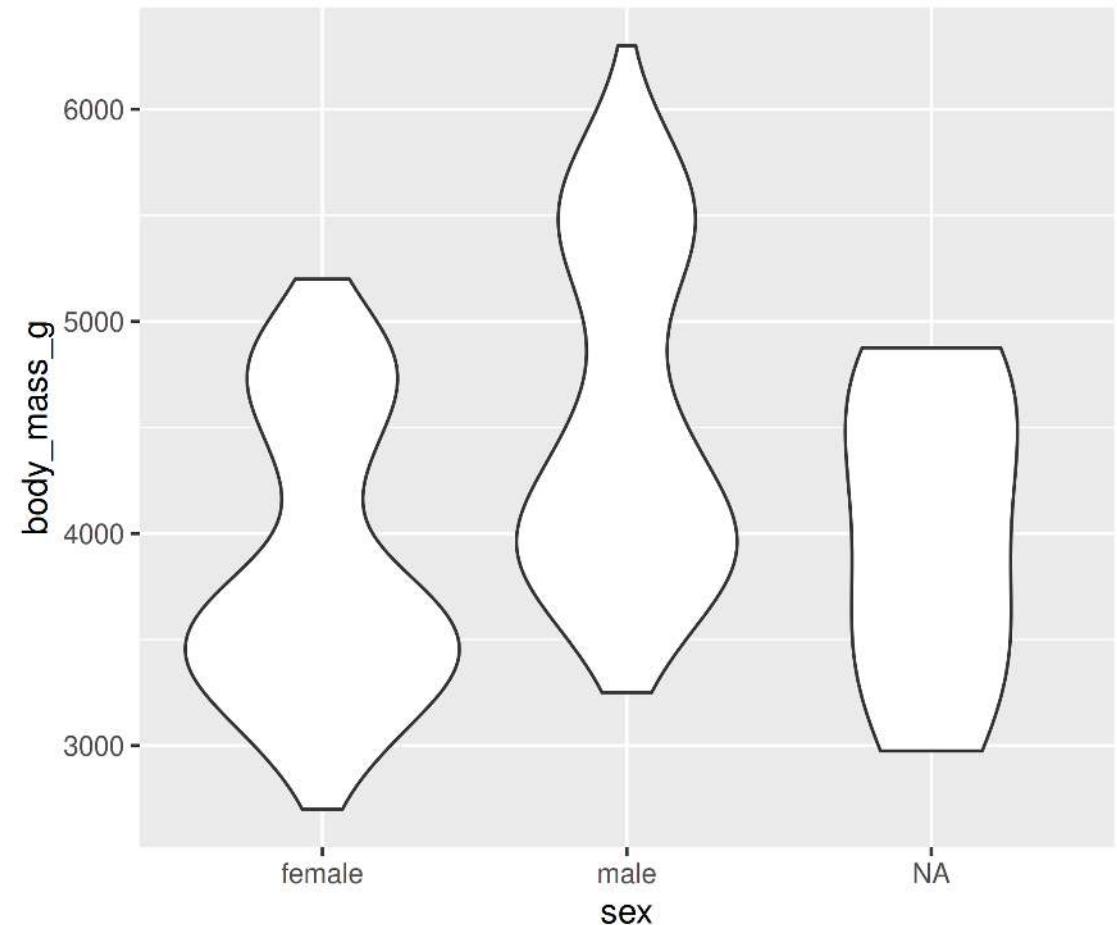


Plots are layered

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g))
```



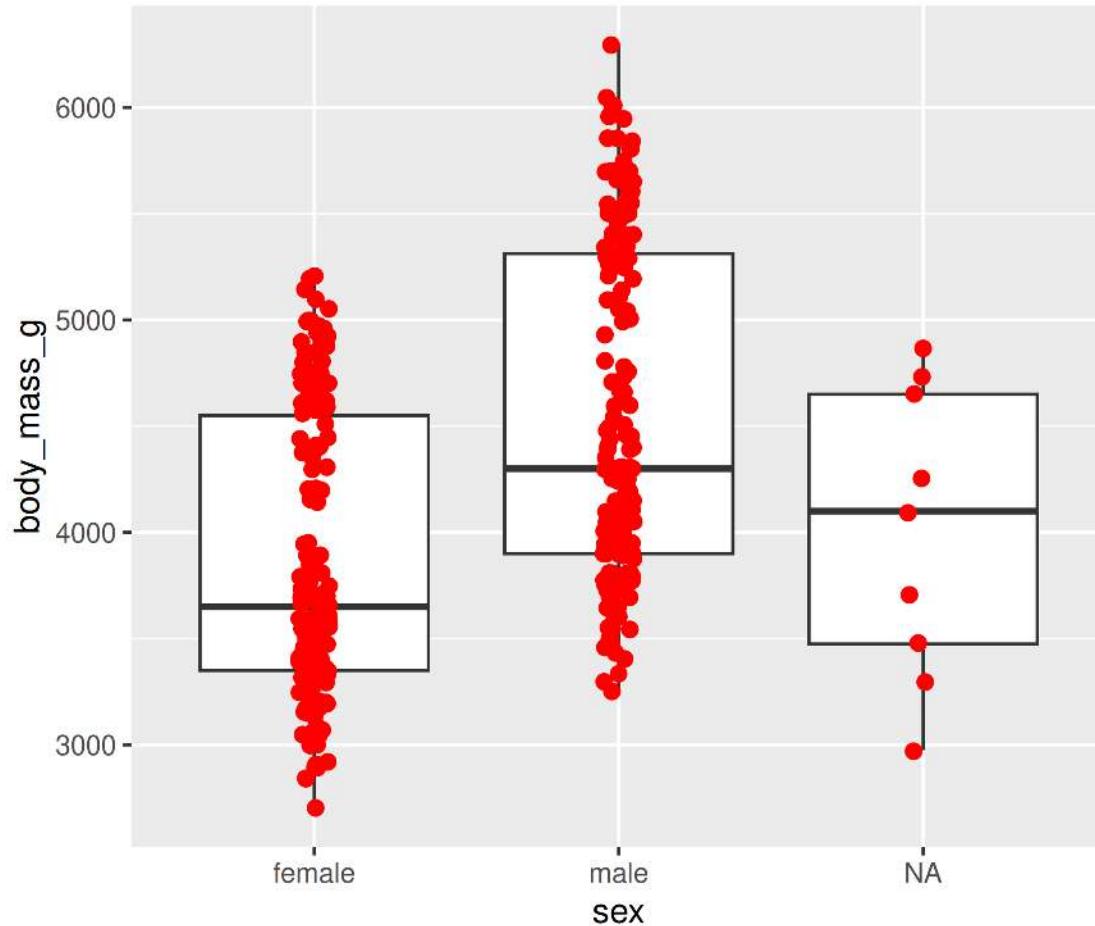
```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g)) +  
2   geom_violin()
```



Plots are layered

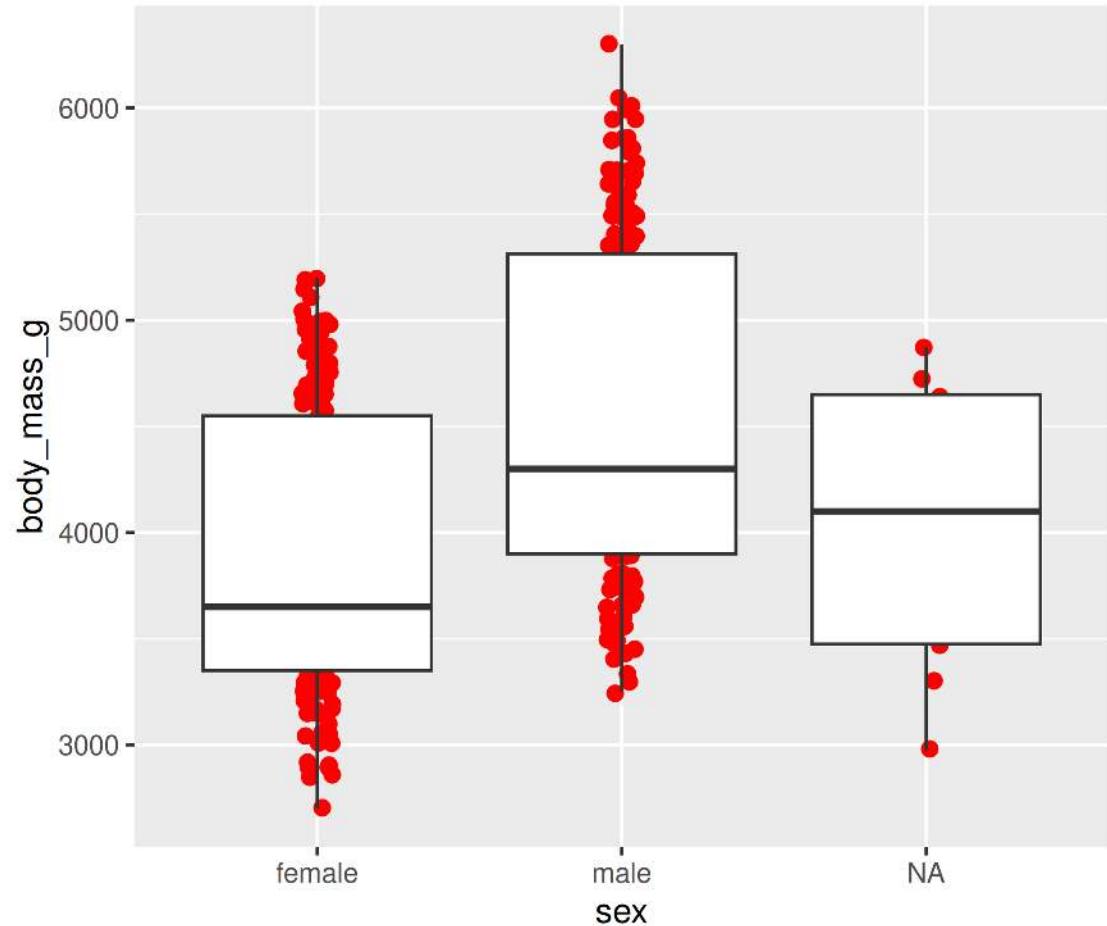
You can add multiple layers

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g)) +  
2   geom_boxplot() +  
3   geom_point(size = 2, colour = "red",  
4               position = position_jitter(width = 0.05))
```



Order matters

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g)) +  
2   geom_point(size = 2, colour = "red",  
3               position = position_jitter(width = 0.05)) +  
4   geom_boxplot()
```

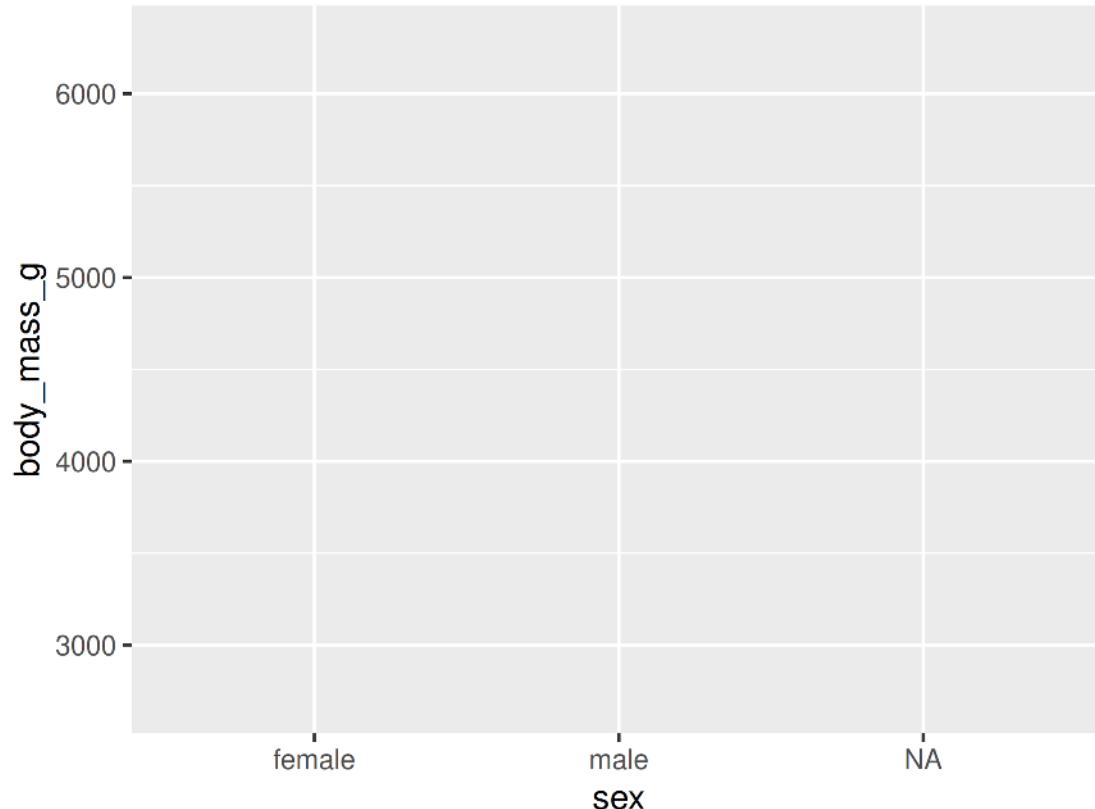


Plots are objects

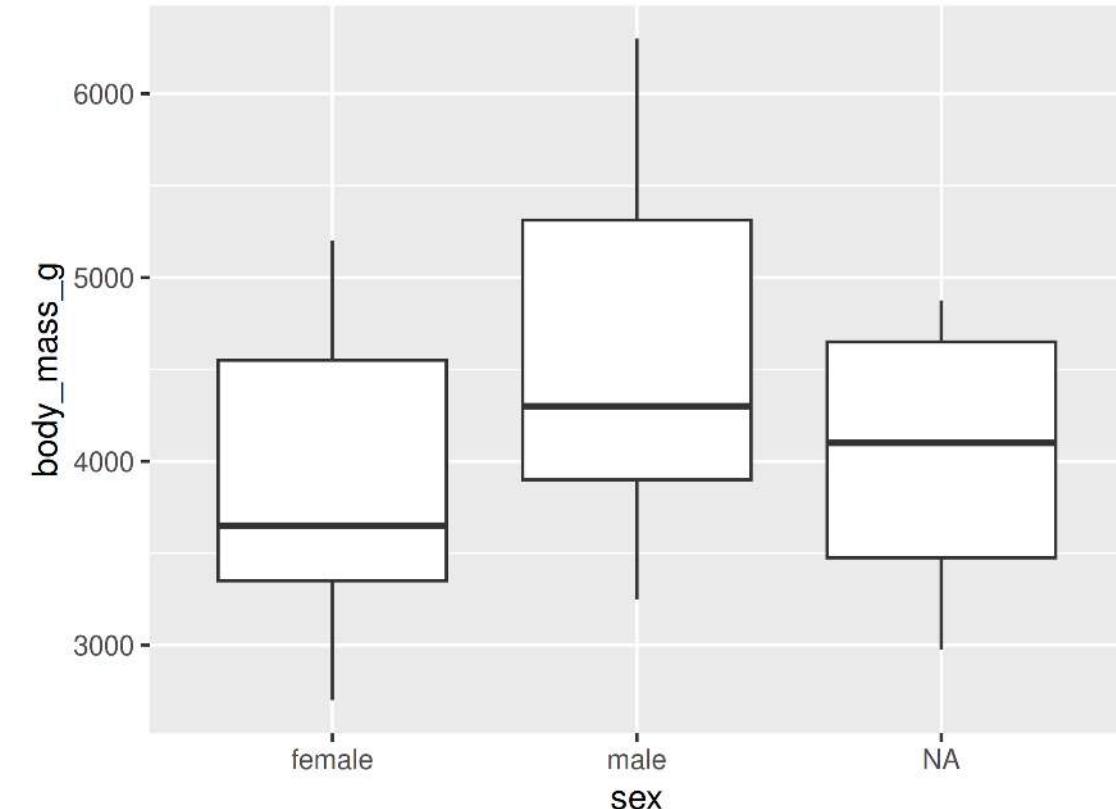
Any ggplot can be saved as an object

```
1 g <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g))
```

```
1 g
```



```
1 g + geom_boxplot()
```

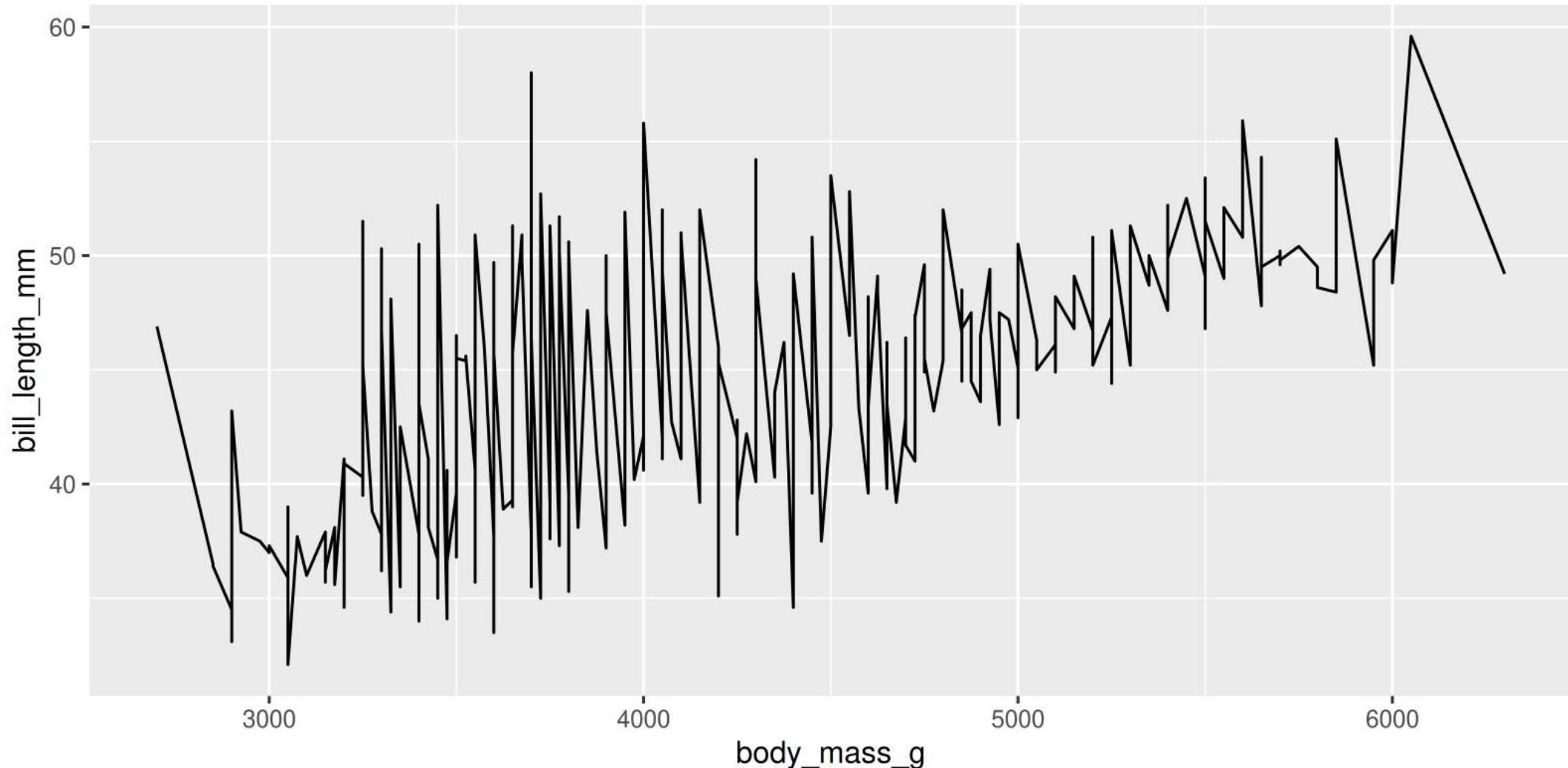


More Geoms

(Plot types)

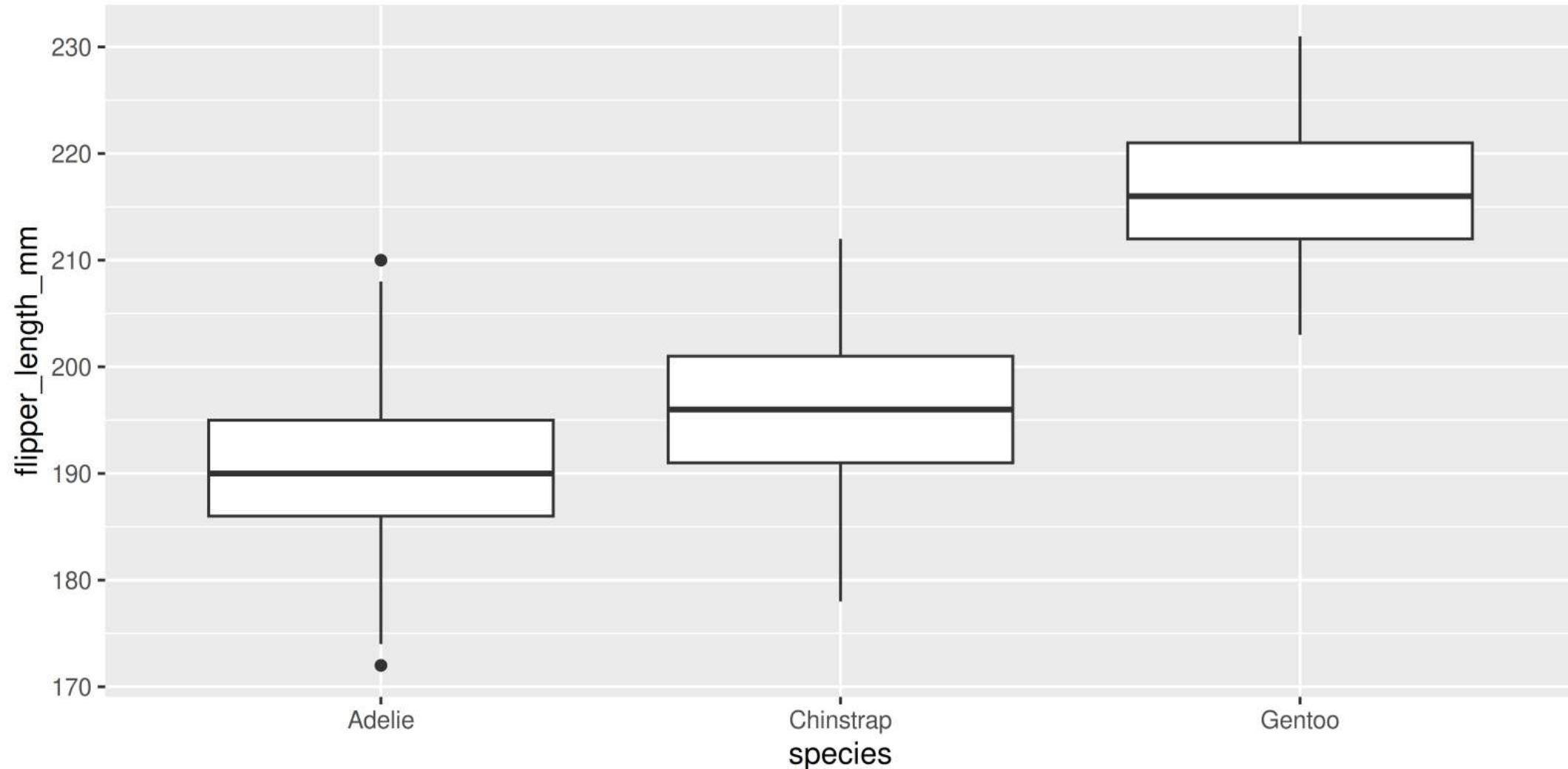
Geoms: Lines

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_line()
```



Geoms: Boxplots

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = species, y = flipper_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_boxplot()
```

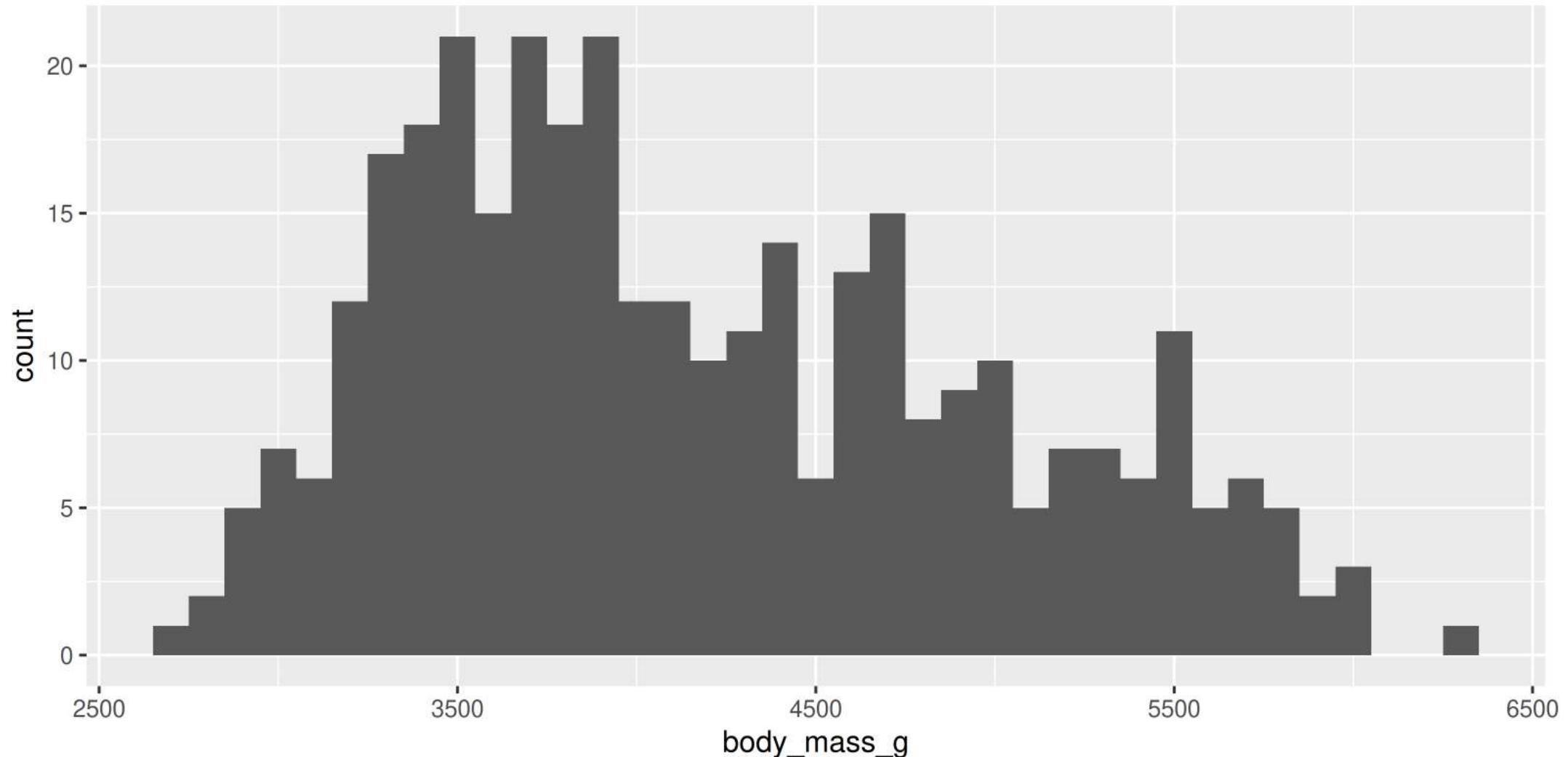


Geoms: Histogram

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g)) +  
2   geom_histogram(binwidth = 100)
```

Note:

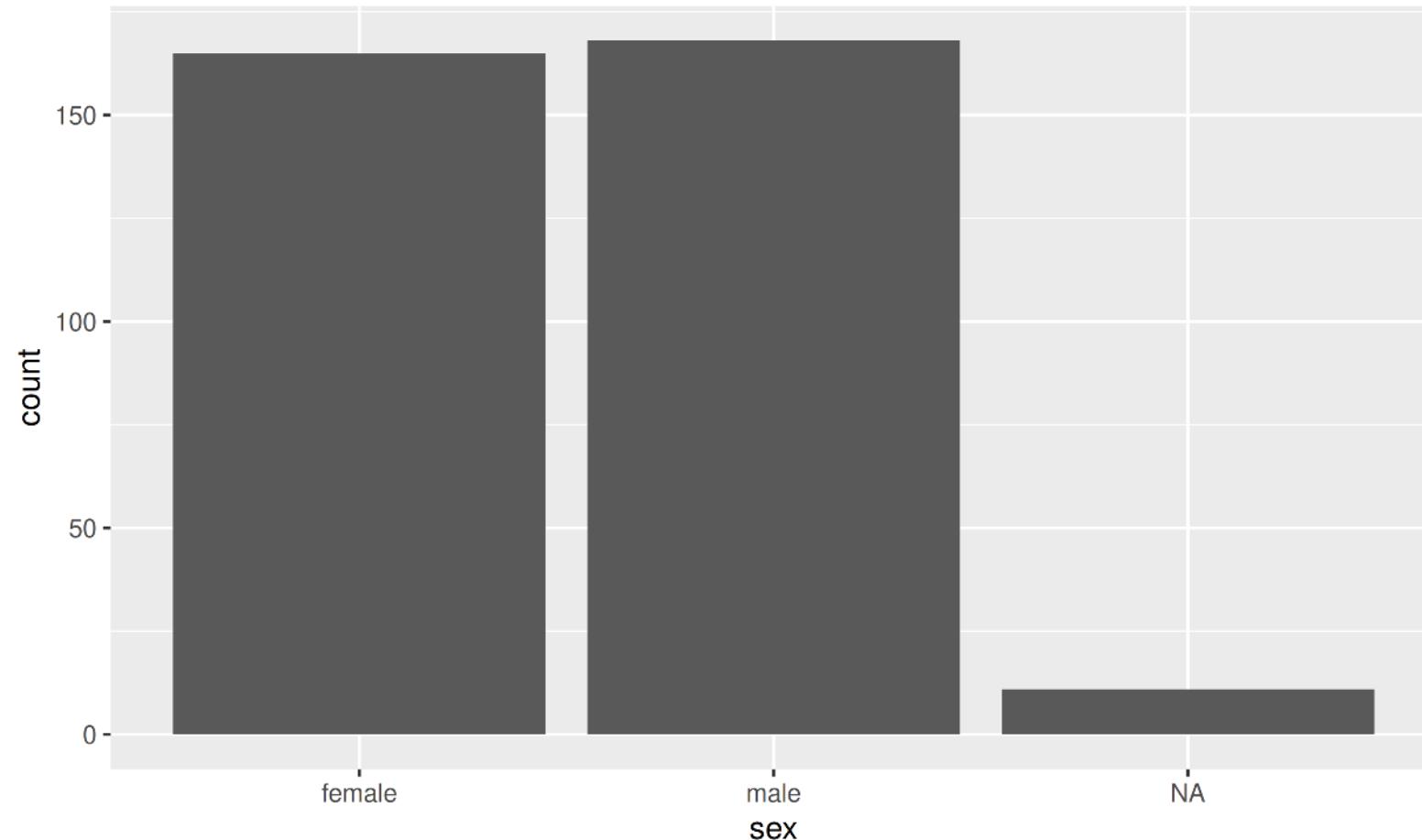
We only need 1 aesthetic here



Geoms: Barplots

Let `ggplot` count your data

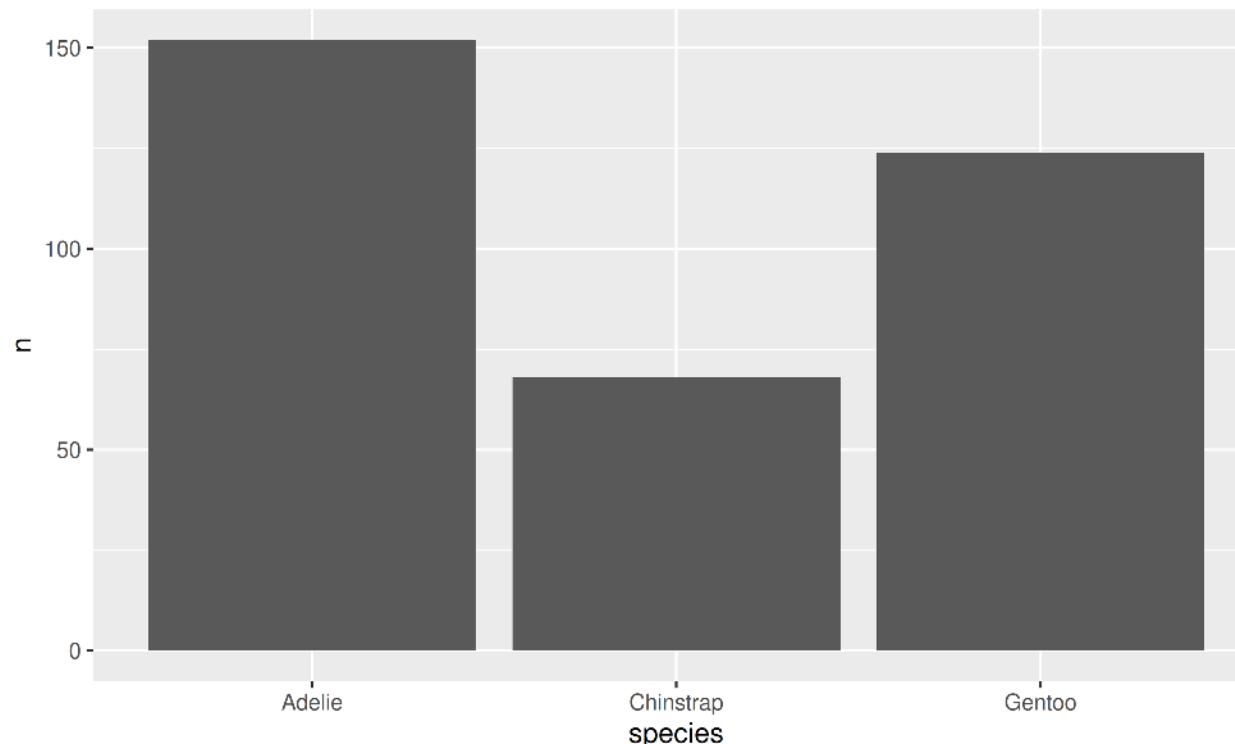
```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex)) +  
2   geom_bar()
```



Geoms: Barplots

You can also provide the counts

```
1 # Create our own data frame
2 species_counts <- data.frame(species = c("Adelie", "Chinstrap", "Gentoo"),
3                                n = c(152, 68, 124))
4
5 ggplot(data = species_counts, aes(x = species, y = n)) +
6   geom_bar(stat = "identity")
```



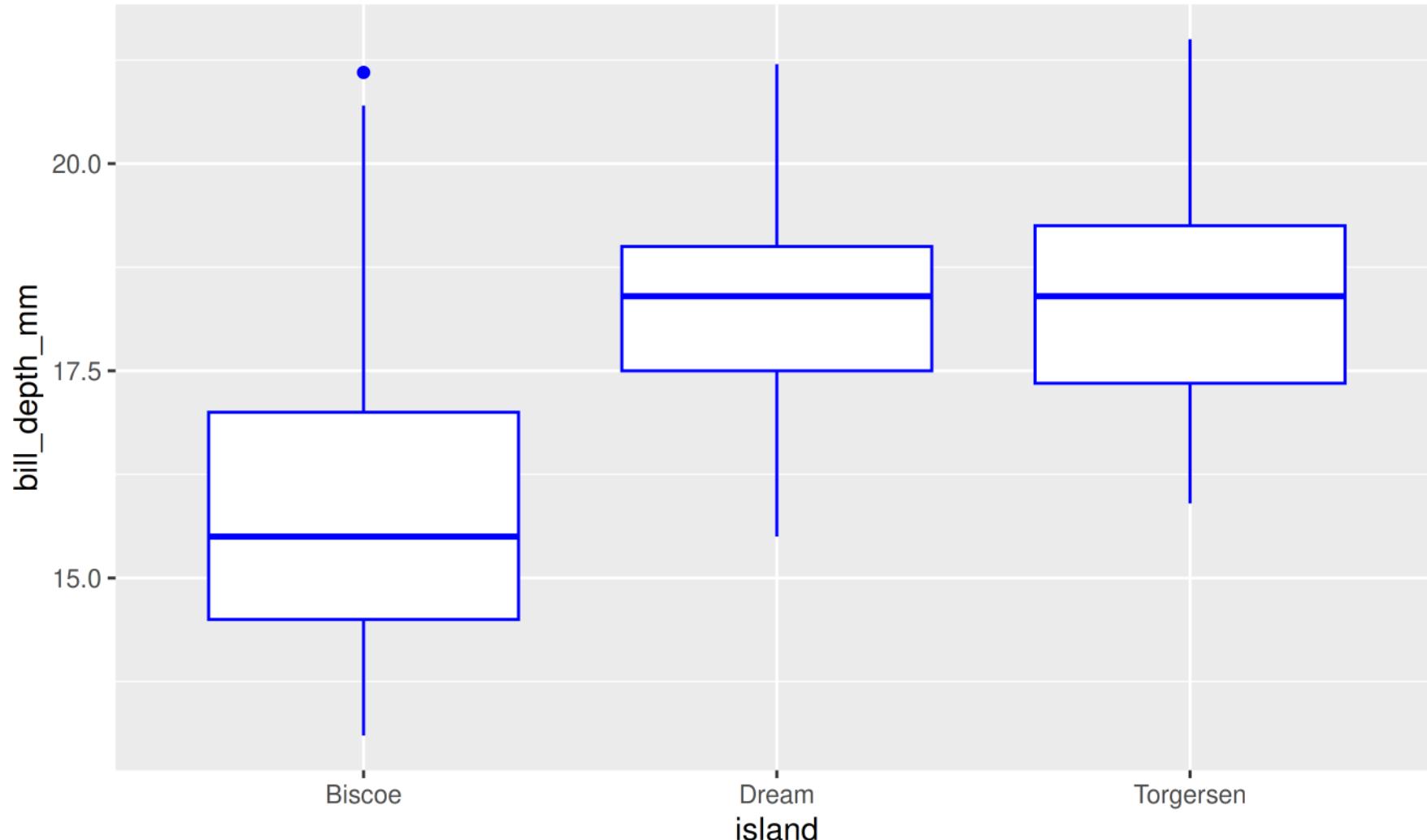
Your Turn: Create this plot

```
1 ggplot(data = ___, aes(x = ___, y = ___)) +  
2   geom___(____)
```

Too Easy?

Plot points on top

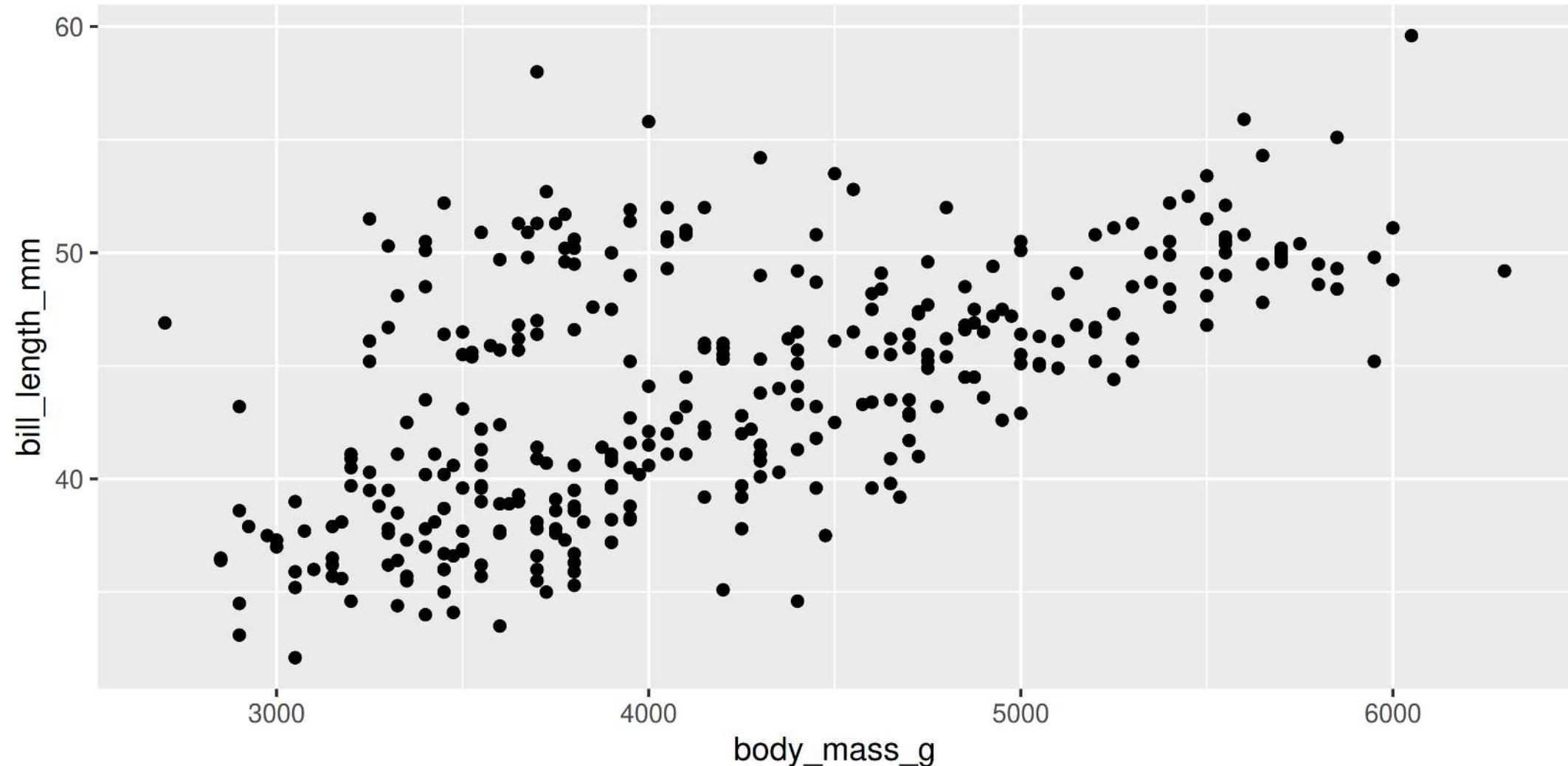
Why not consider jittering them?



Showing** data by group**

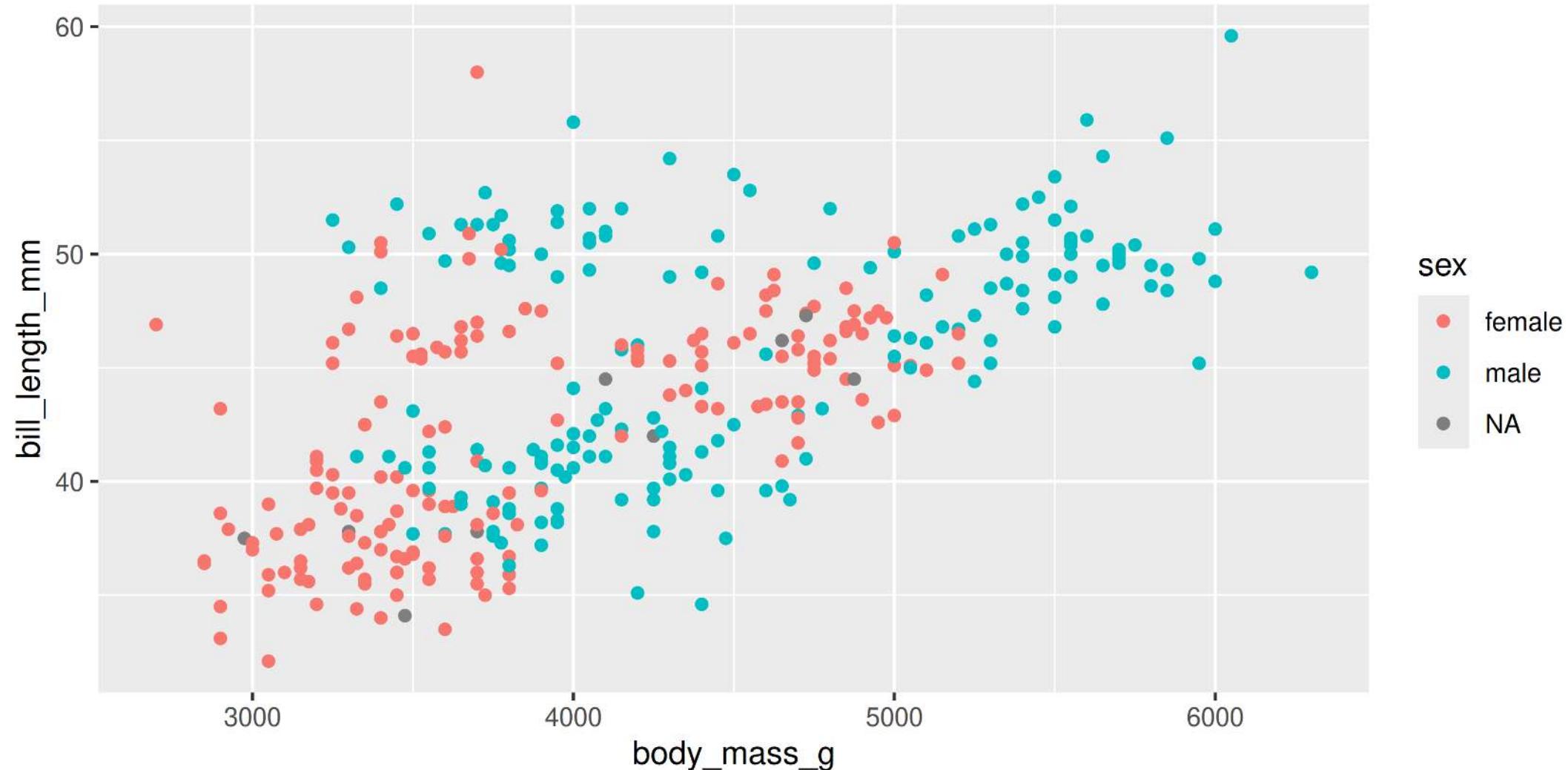
Mapping aesthetics

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_point()
```



Mapping aesthetics

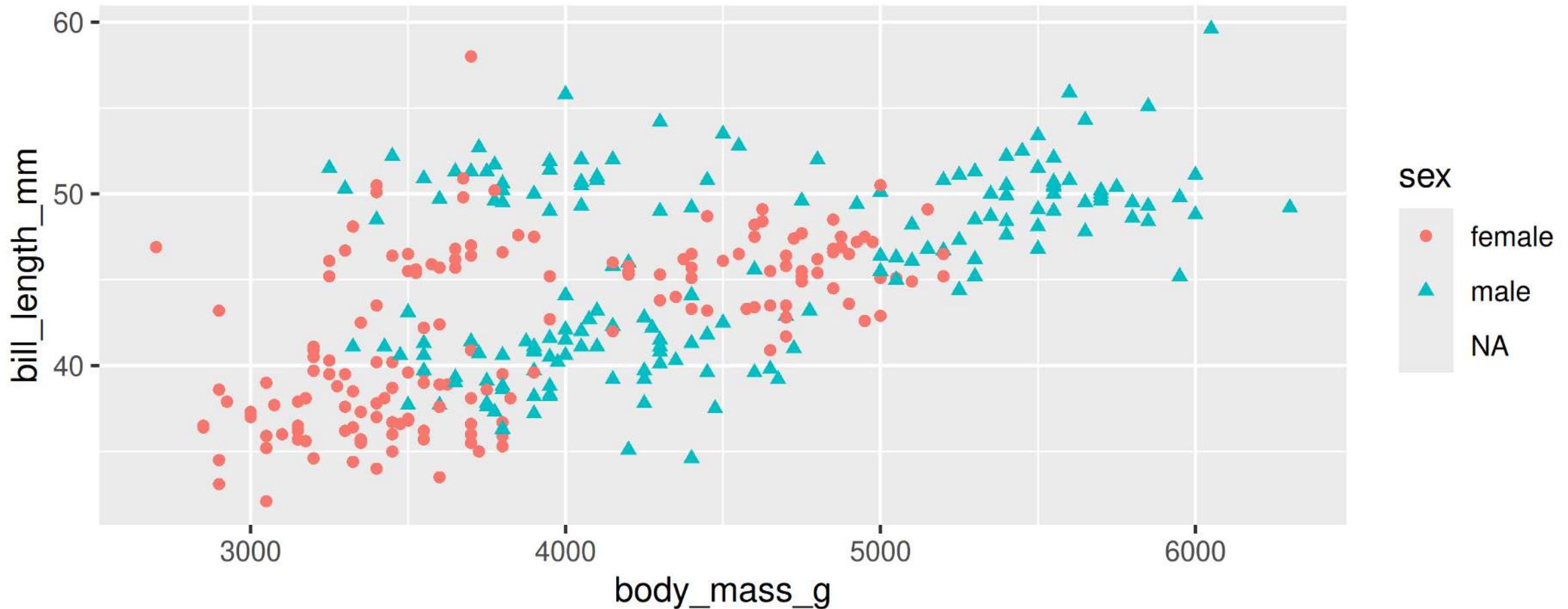
```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = sex)) +  
2   geom_point()
```



Mapping aesthetics

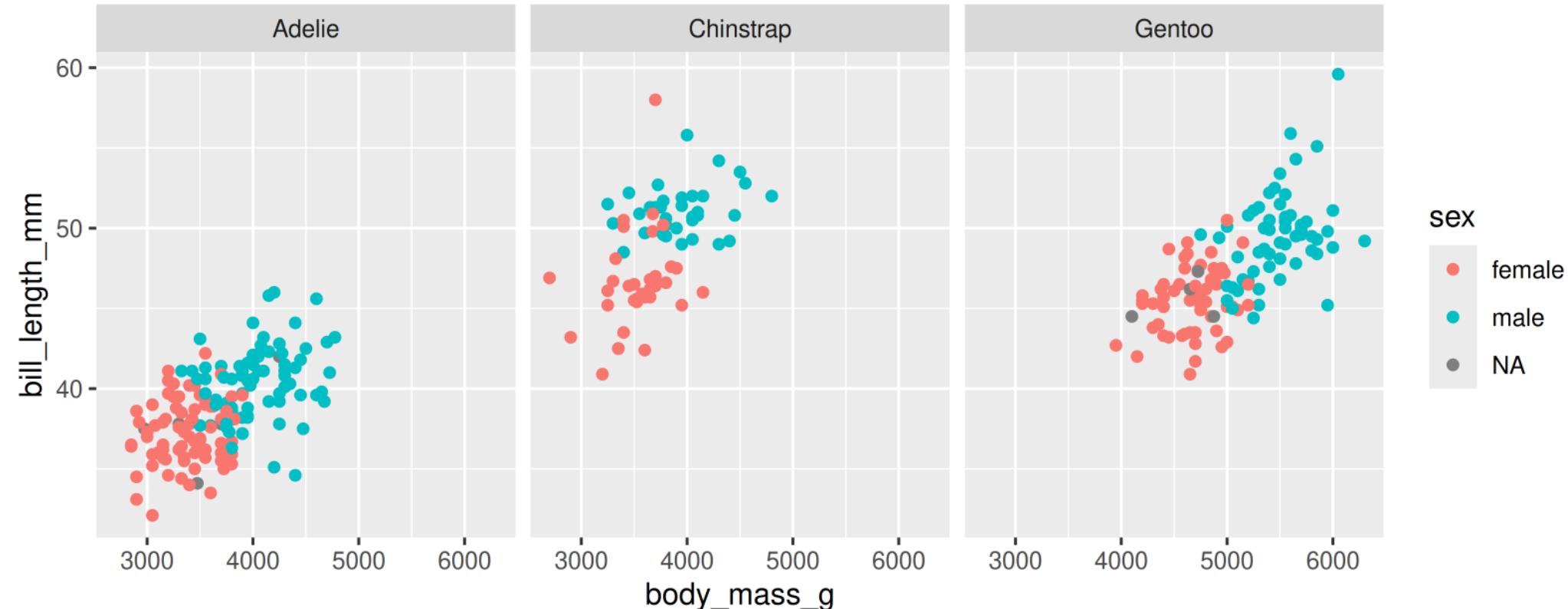
ggplot automatically populates the legends (combining where it can)

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = sex, shape = sex)) +  
2   geom_point()
```



Faceting: facet_wrap()

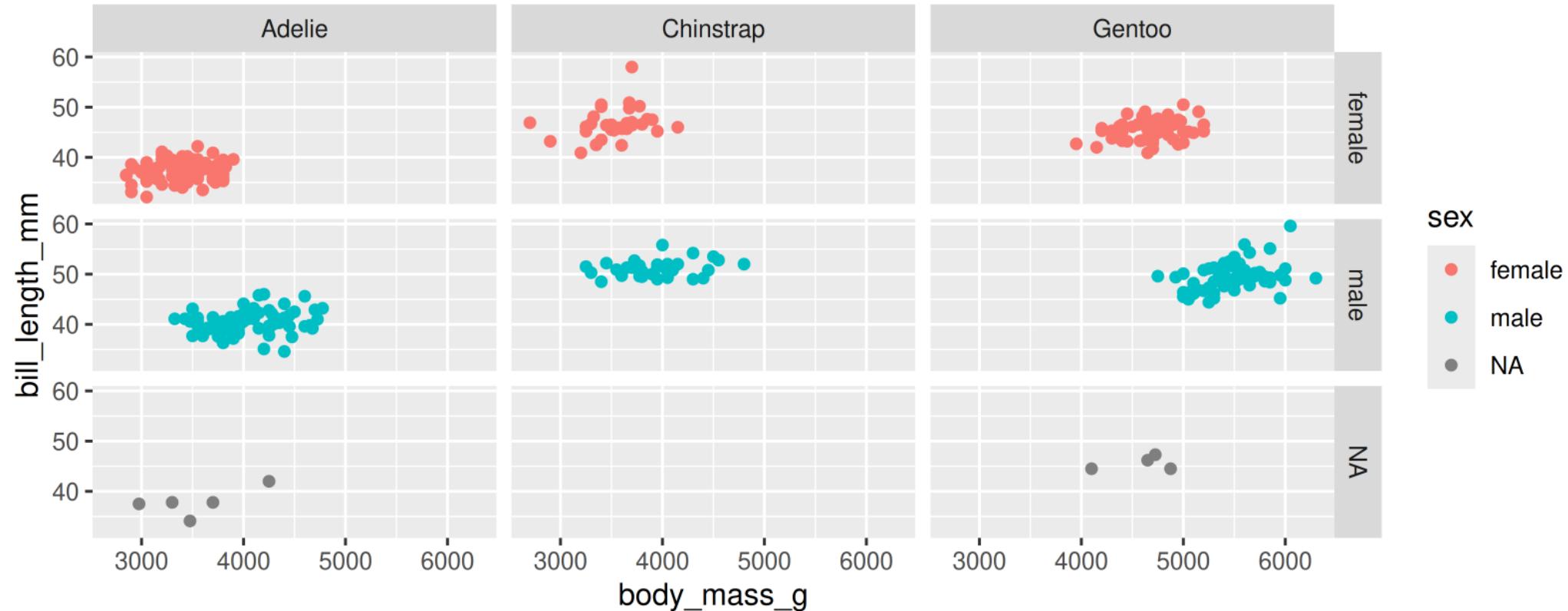
```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = sex)) +  
2   geom_point() +  
3   facet_wrap(~ species)
```



Split plots by **one** grouping variable

Faceting: facet_grid()

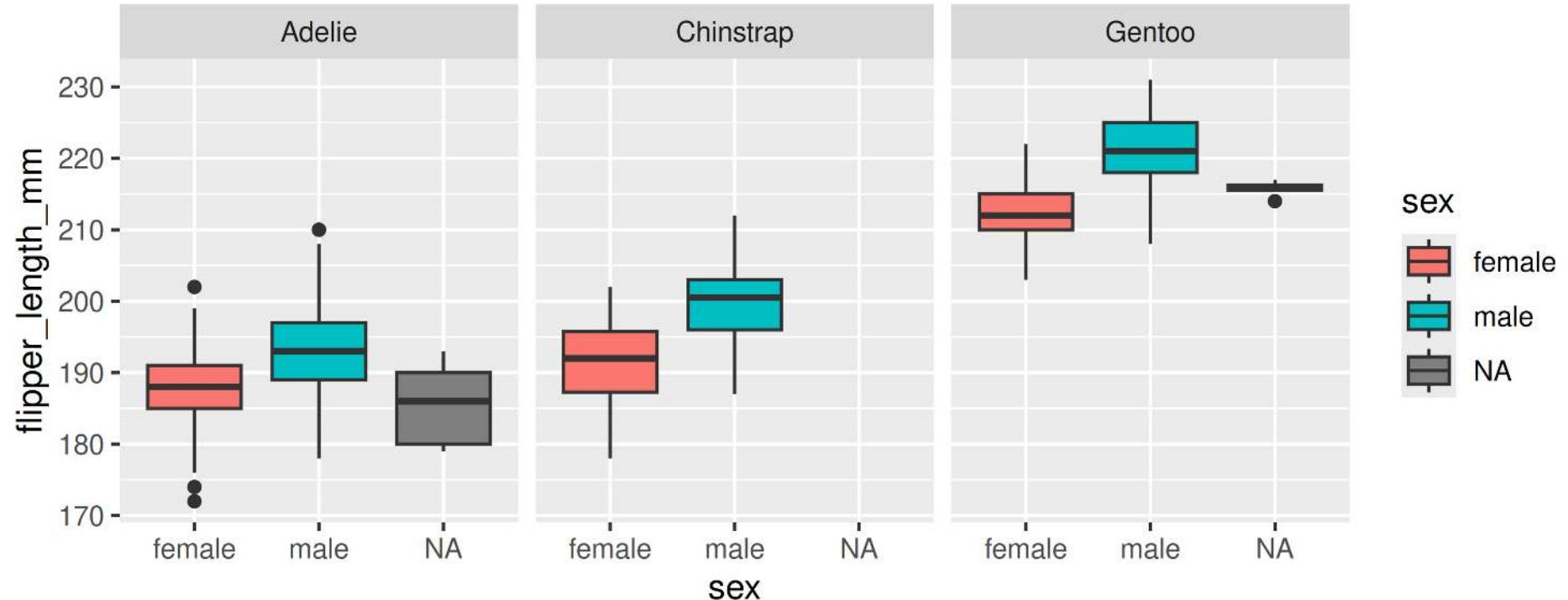
```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = sex)) +  
2   geom_point() +  
3   facet_grid(species ~ sex)
```



Split plots by **two** grouping variables

Your Turn: Create this plot

```
1 ggplot(data = _____, aes(____)) +  
2 _____ +  
3 _____
```



Hint: `colour` is for outlining with a colour, `fill` is for ‘filling’ with a colour

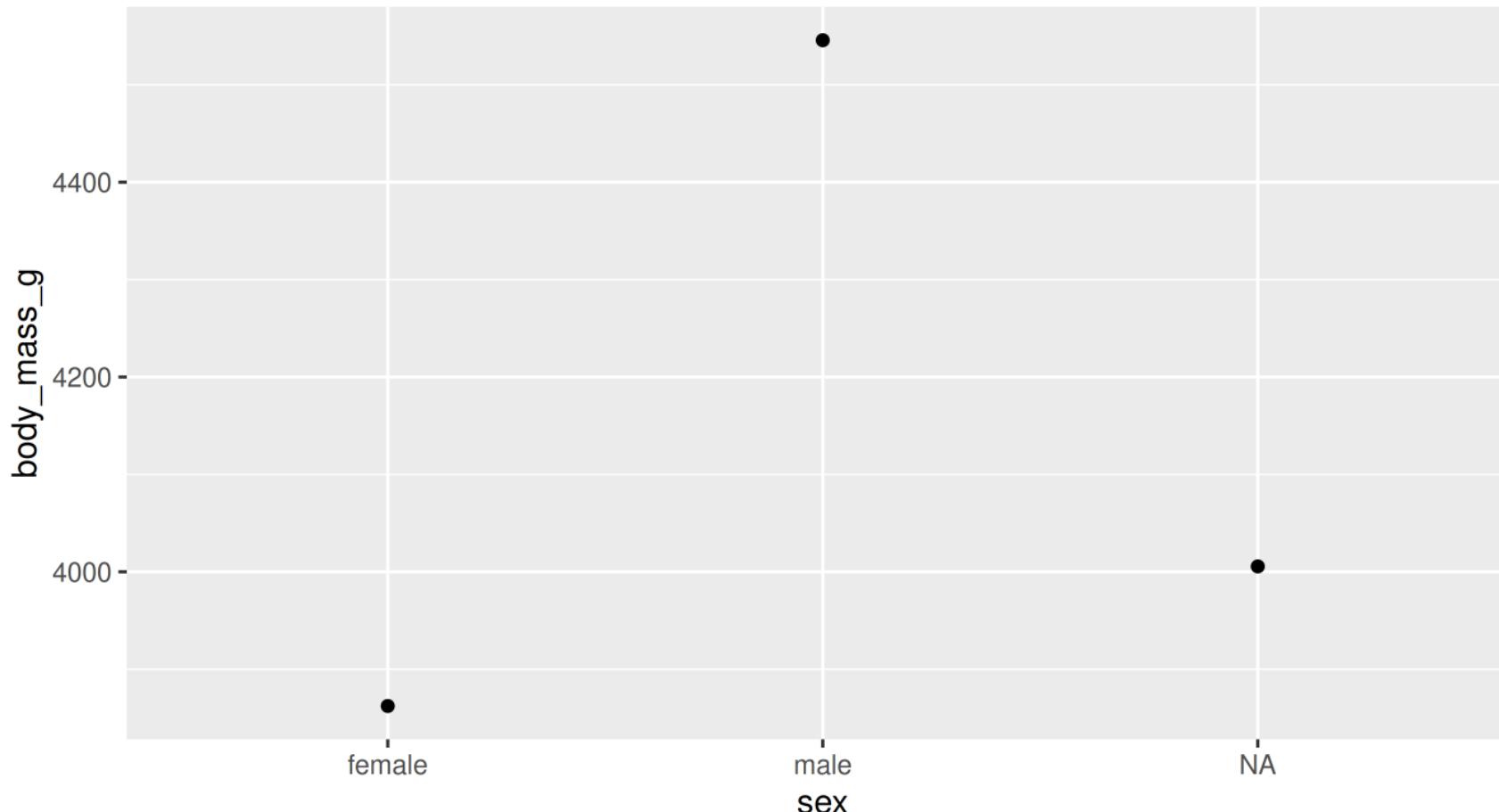
Too Easy? Split boxplots by sex **and** island

Adding Statistics to Plots

Summarizing data

Add data means as points

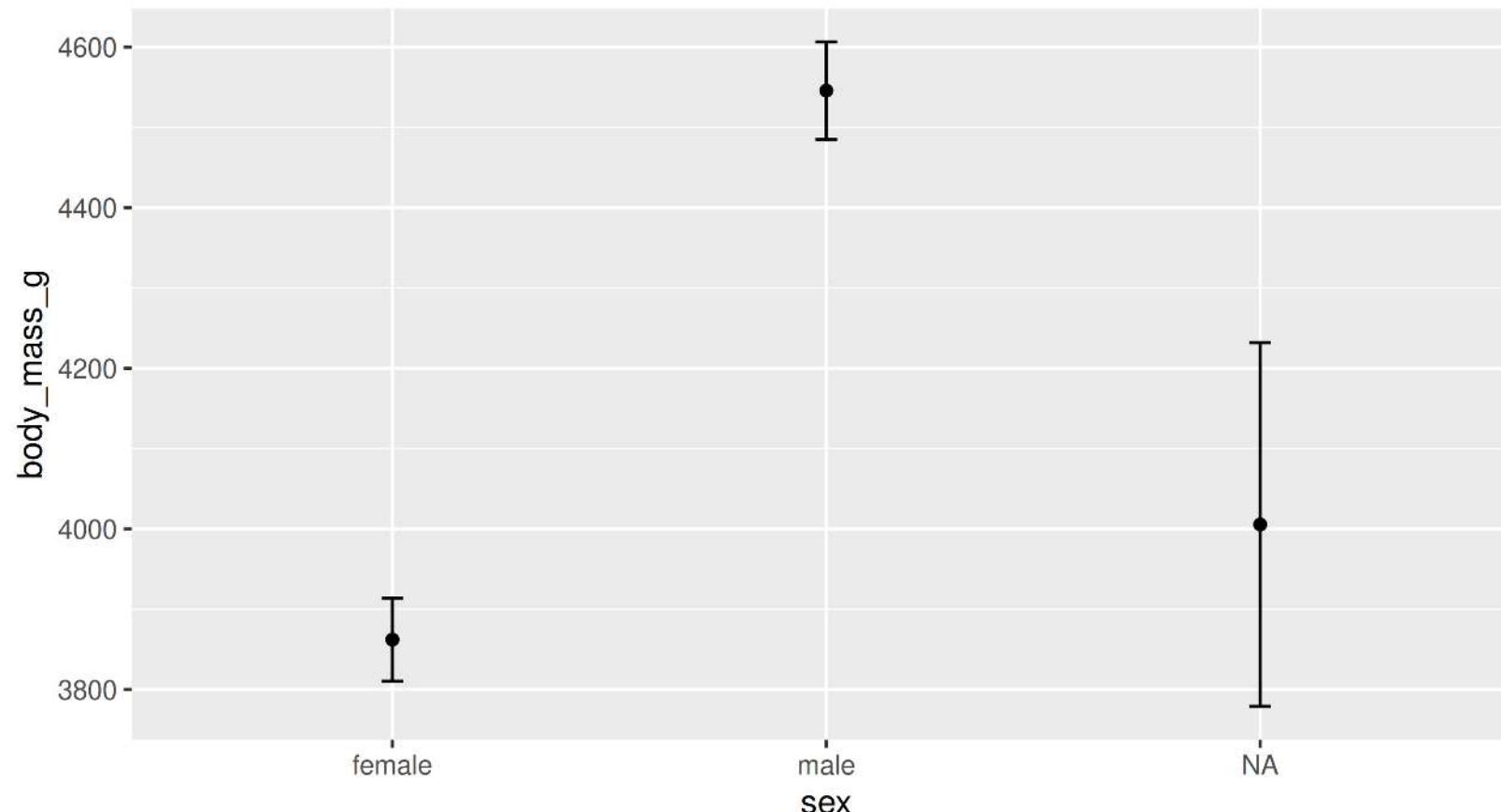
```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g)) +  
2   stat_summary(geom = "point", fun = mean)
```



Summarizing data

Add error bars, calculated from the data

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g)) +  
2   stat_summary(geom = "point", fun = mean) +  
3   stat_summary(geom = "errorbar", width = 0.05, fun.data = mean_se)
```

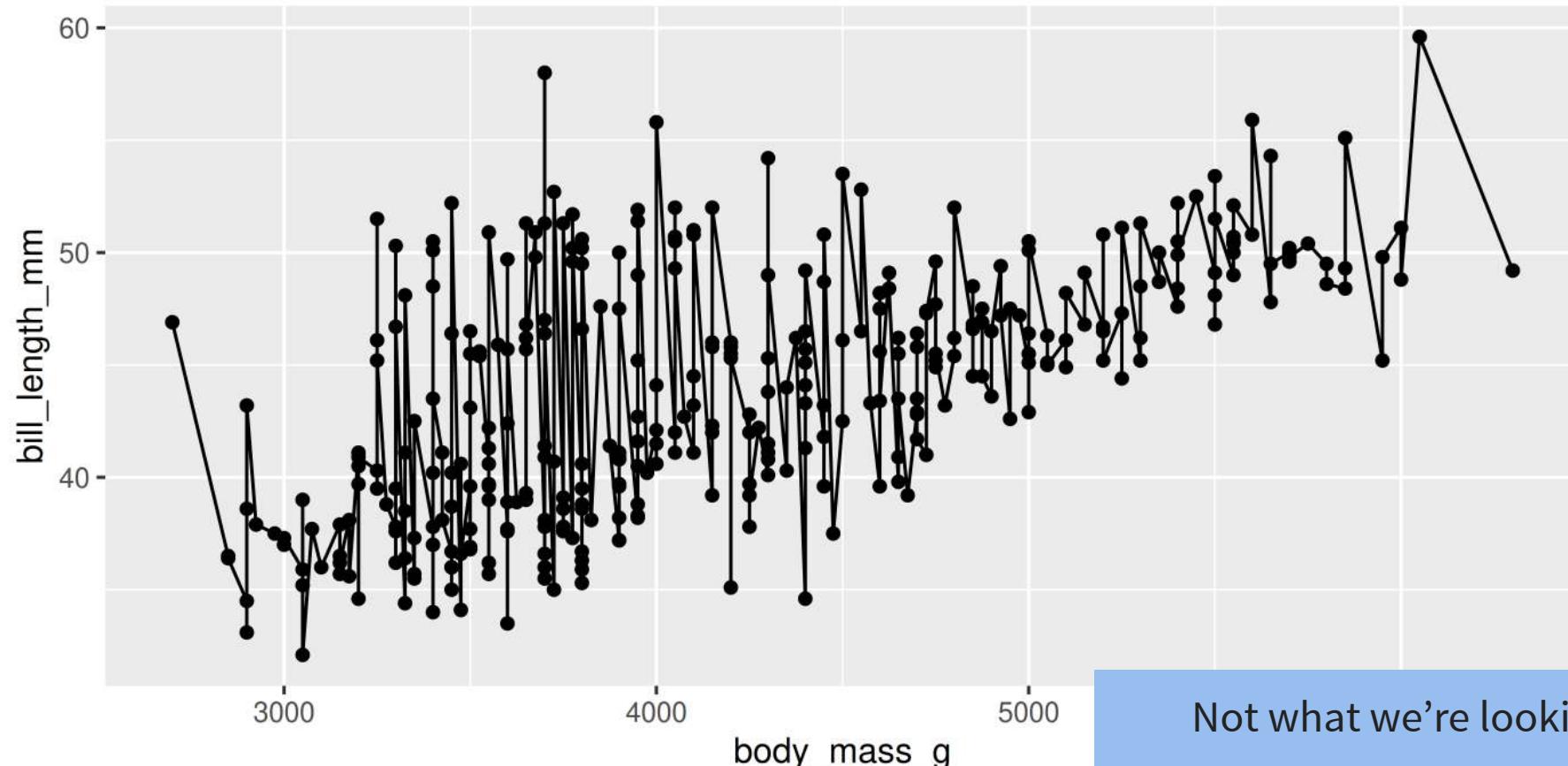


Trendlines / Regression Lines

Trendlines / Regression lines

`geom_line()` is connect-the-dots, not a trend or linear model

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_point() +  
3   geom_line()
```

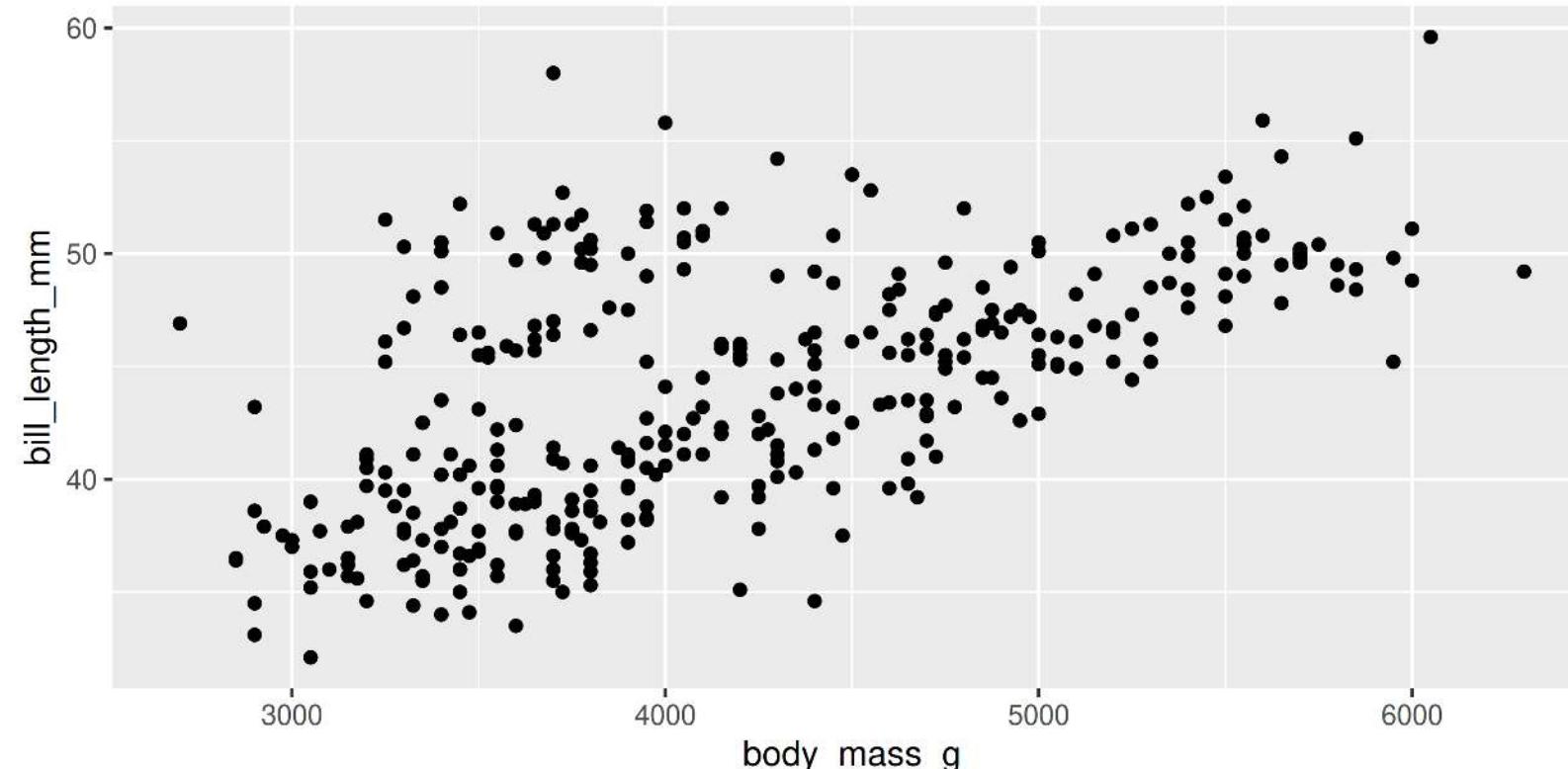


Trendlines / Regression lines

Let's add a trend line properly

Start with basic plot:

```
1 g <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_point()  
3 g
```

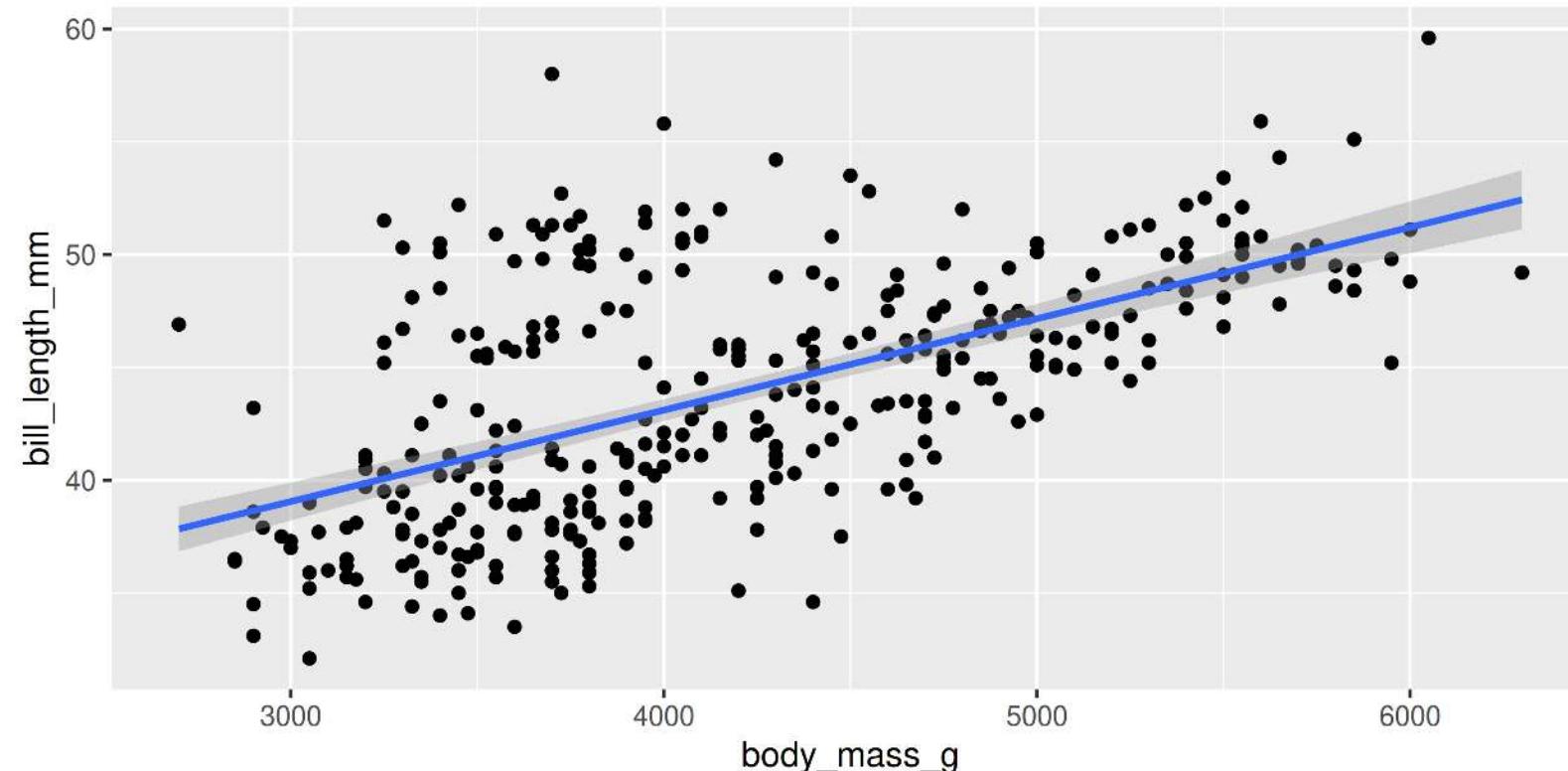


Trendlines / Regression lines

Add the `stat_smooth()`

- `lm` is for “linear model” (i.e. trendline)
- grey ribbon = standard error

```
1 g + stat_smooth(method = "lm")
```

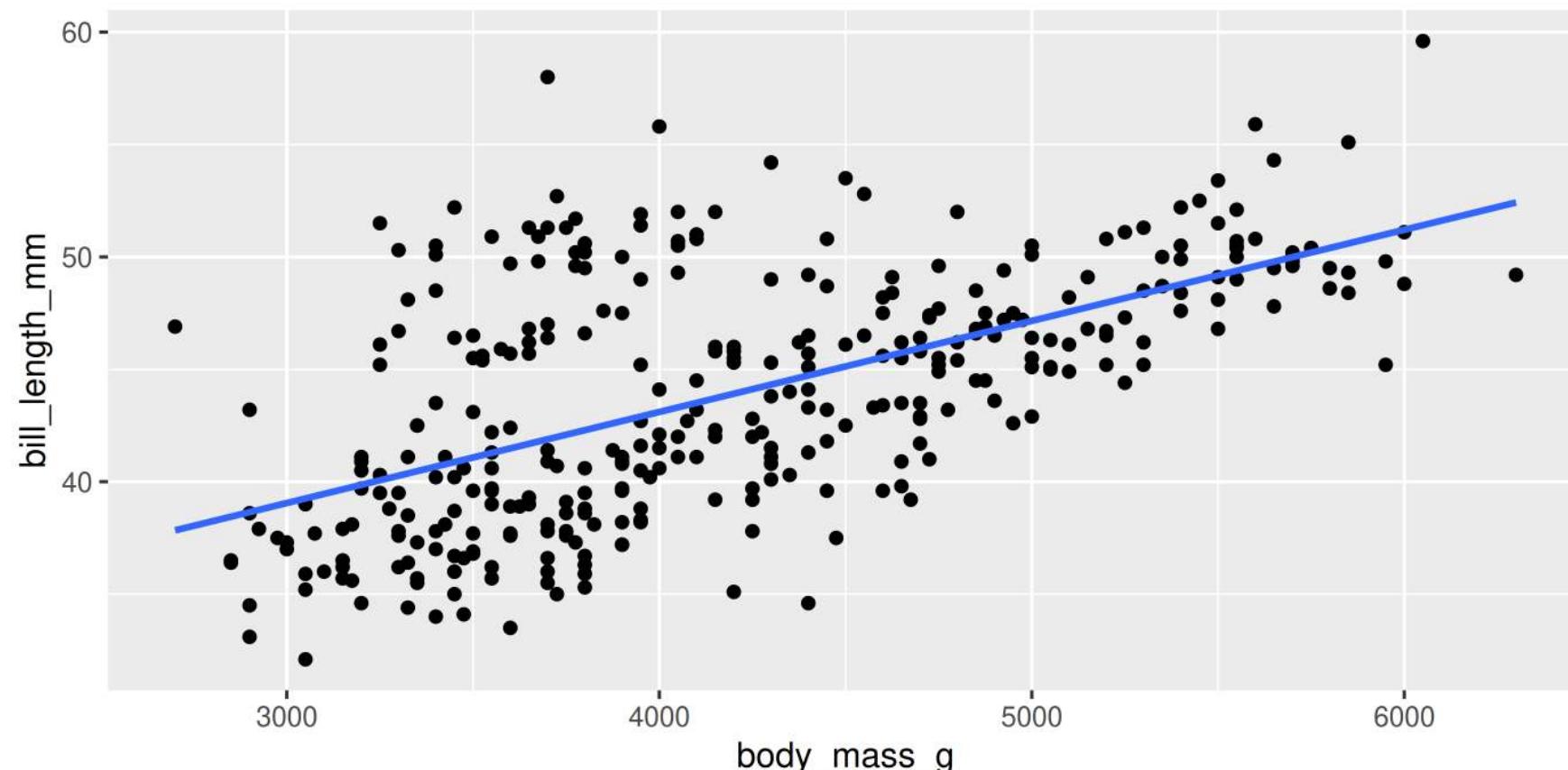


Trendlines / Regression lines

Add the `stat_smooth()`

- remove the grey ribbon `se = FALSE`

```
1 g + stat_smooth(method = "lm", se = FALSE)
```

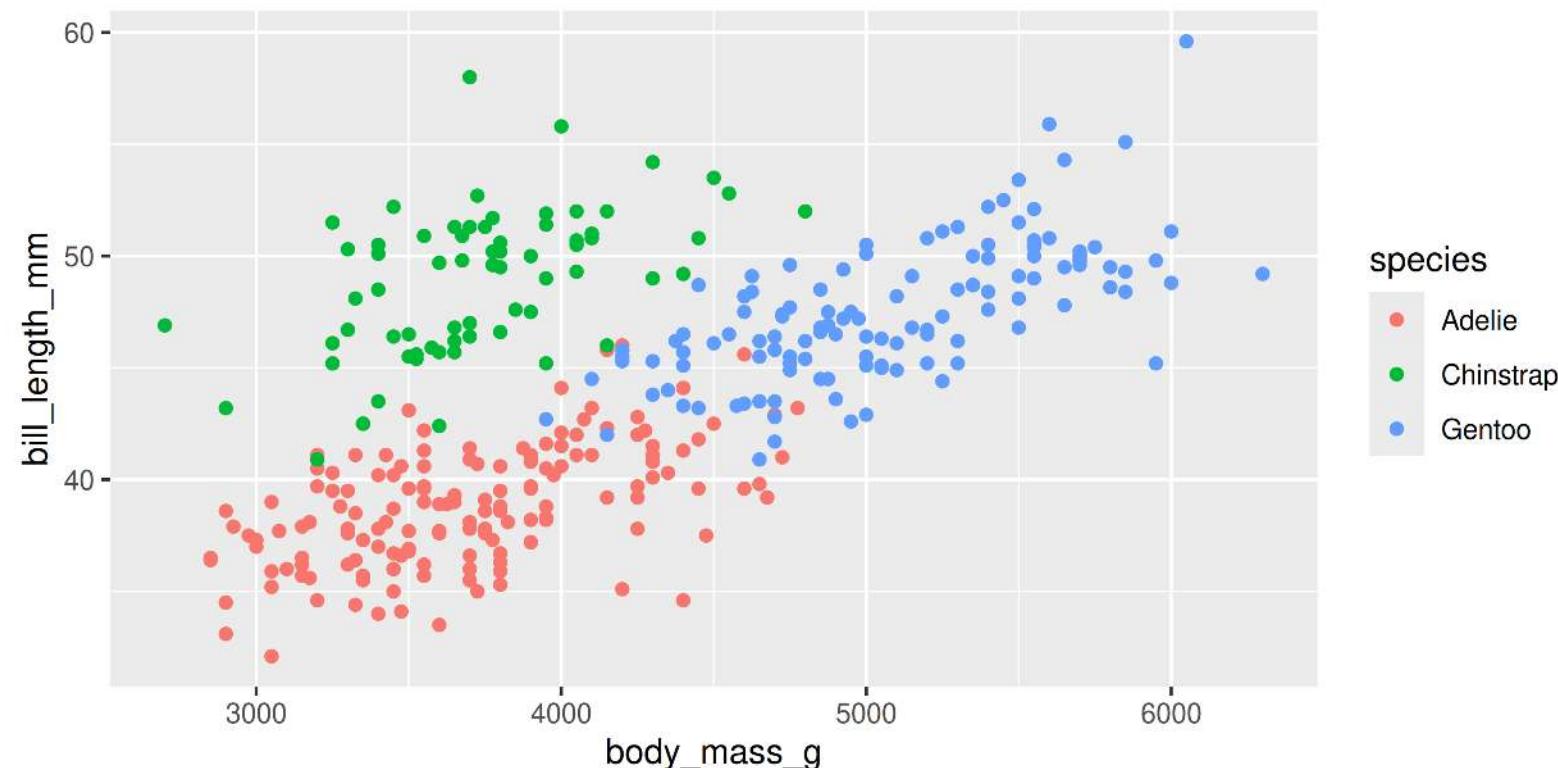


Trendlines / Regression lines

A line for each group

- Specify group (here we use colour to specify species)

```
1 g <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = species)) +  
2   geom_point()  
3 g
```

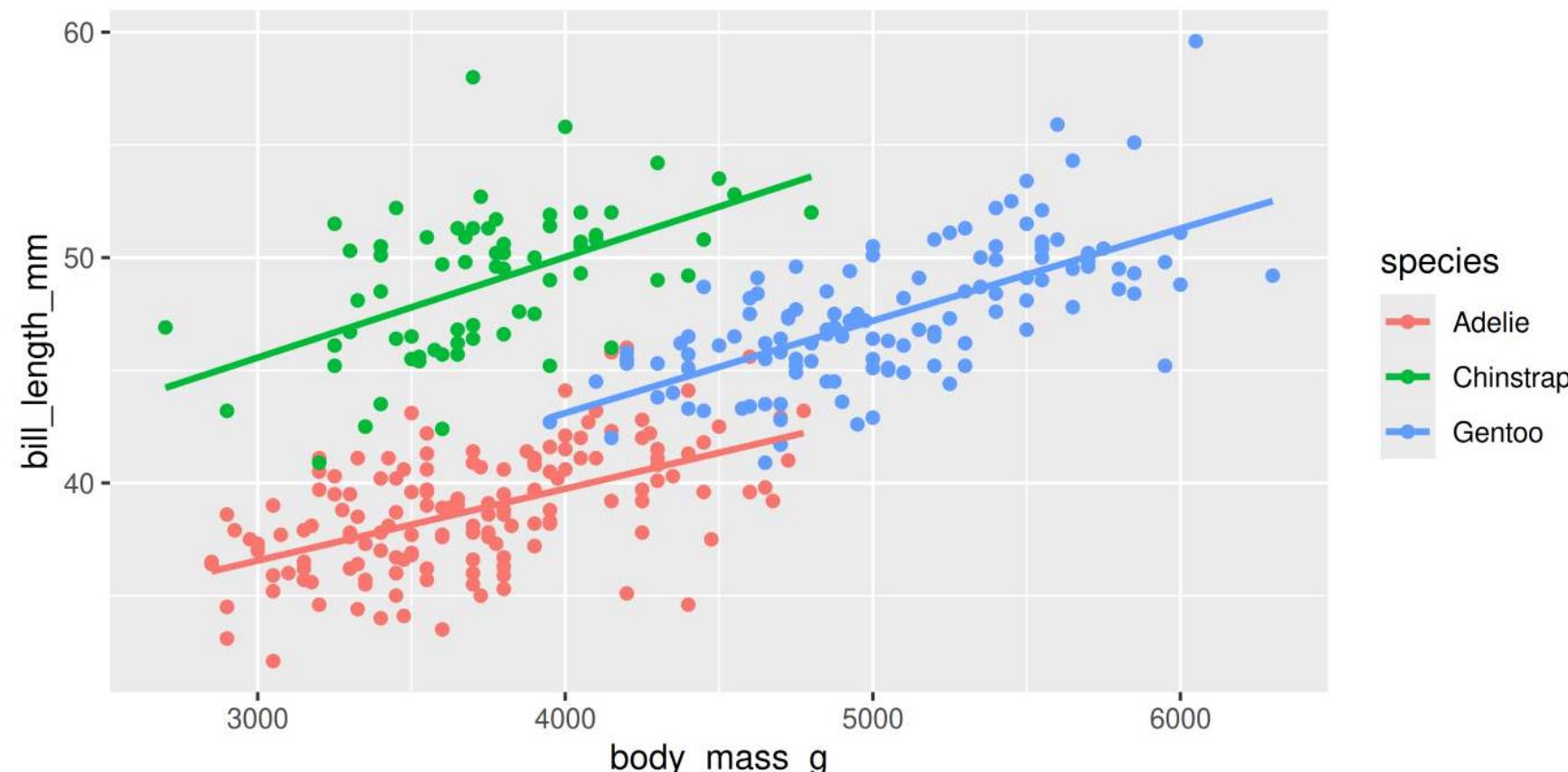


Trendlines / Regression lines

A line for each group

- `stat_smooth()` automatically uses the same grouping

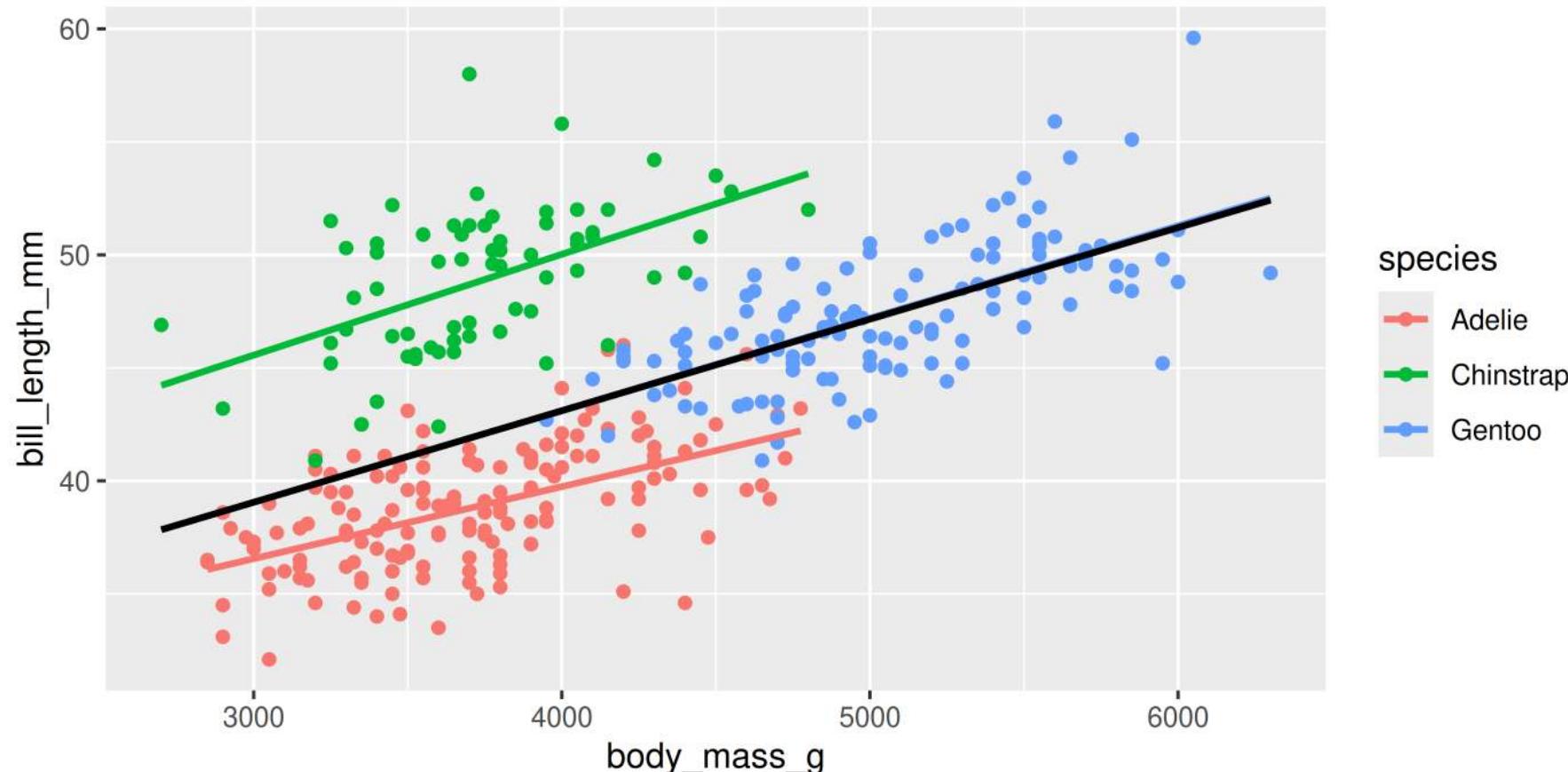
```
1 g + stat_smooth(method = "lm", se = FALSE)
```



Trendlines / Regression lines

A line for each group AND overall

```
1 g +
2 stat_smooth(method = "lm", se = FALSE) +
3 stat_smooth(method = "lm", se = FALSE, colour = "black")
```



Your Turn: Create this plot

- A scatter plot: Flipper Length by Body Mass grouped by Species
- With *a single regression line for the overall trend*

Too Easy? Add regression lines for each species as well

Can you make the species lines larger?

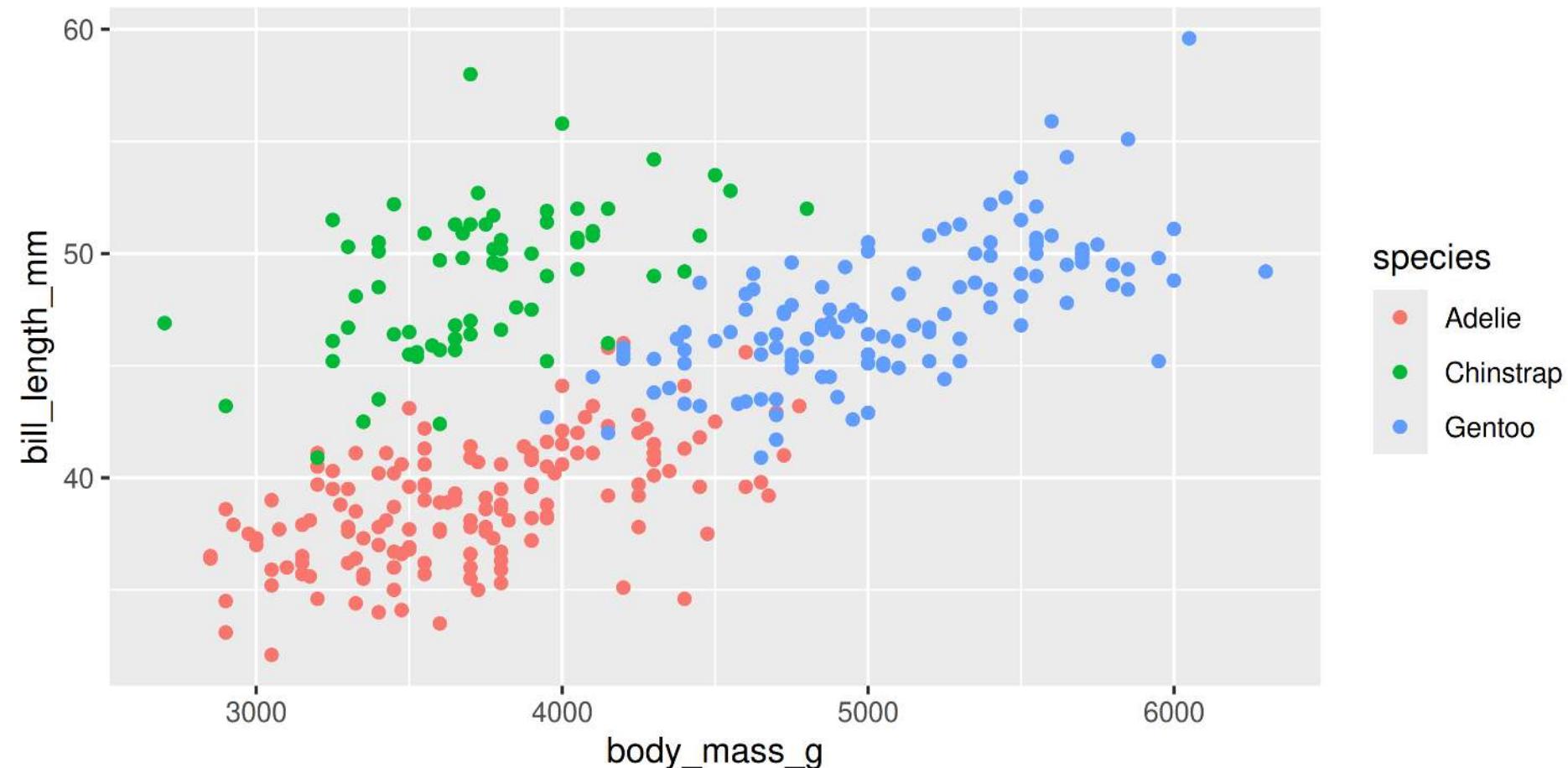
Can you indicate which points are female and which are male?

Customizing plots

Customizing: Starting plot

Let's work with this plot

```
1 g <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = species)) +  
2   geom_point()
```

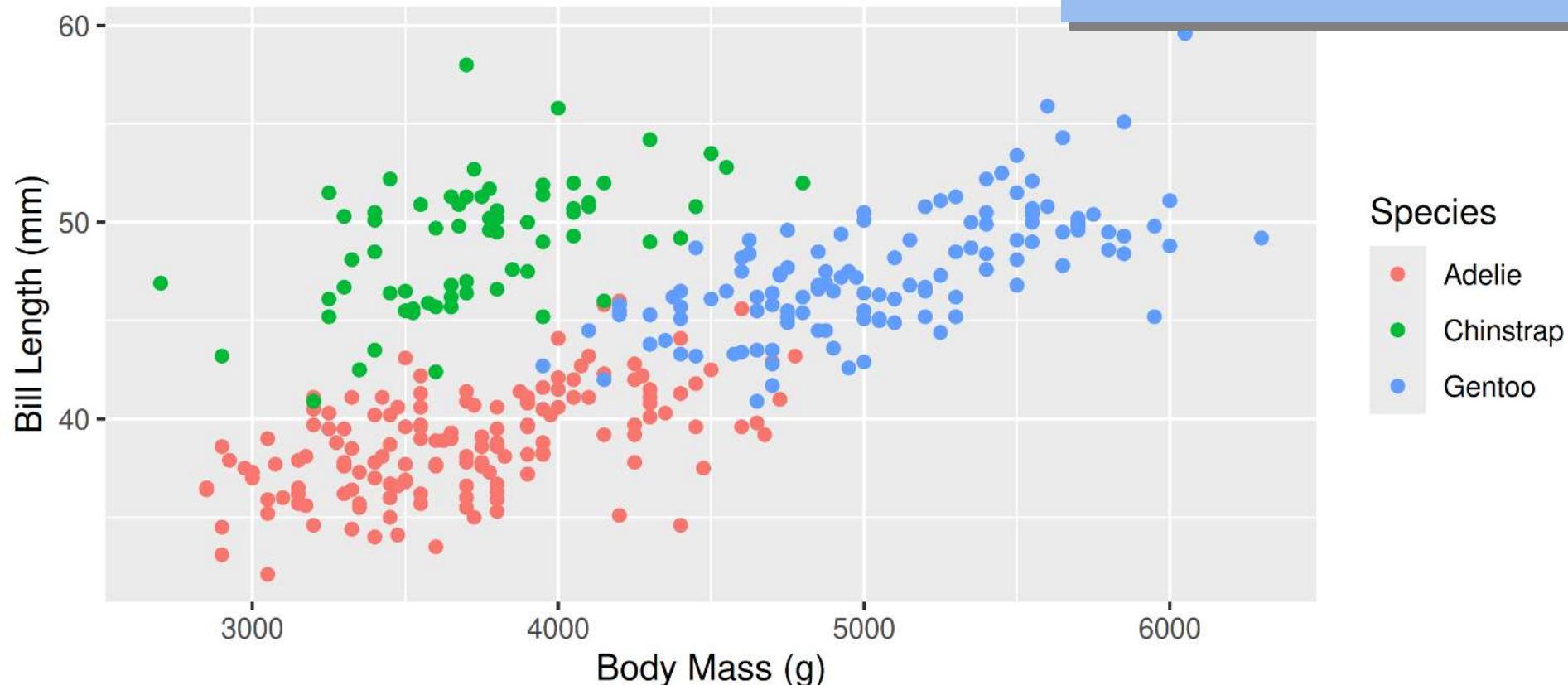


Customizing: Labels

```
1 g + labs(title = "Bill Length vs. Body Mass",
2           x = "Body Mass (g)",
3           y = "Bill Length (mm)",
4           colour = "Species", tag = "A")
```

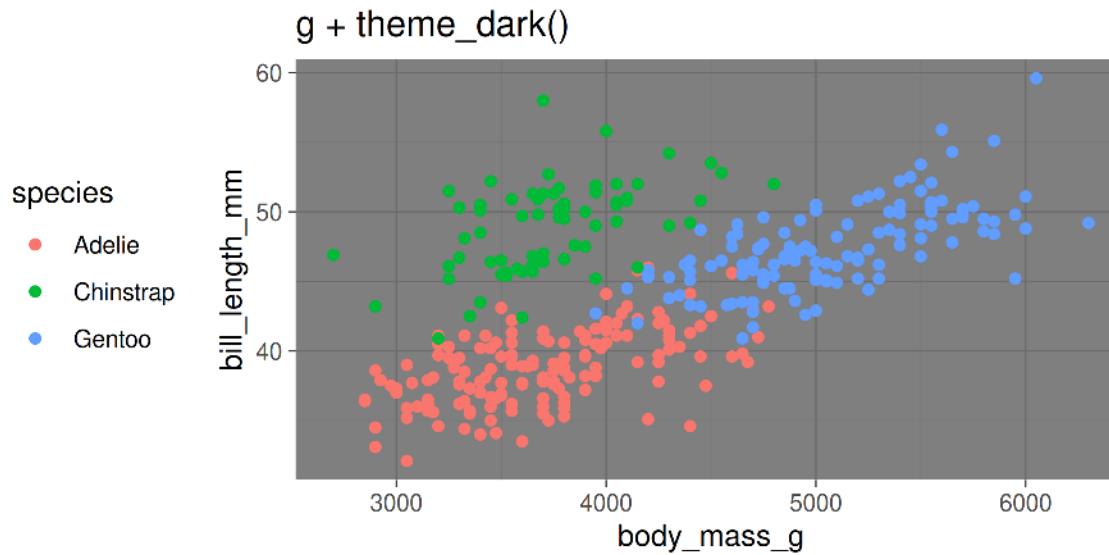
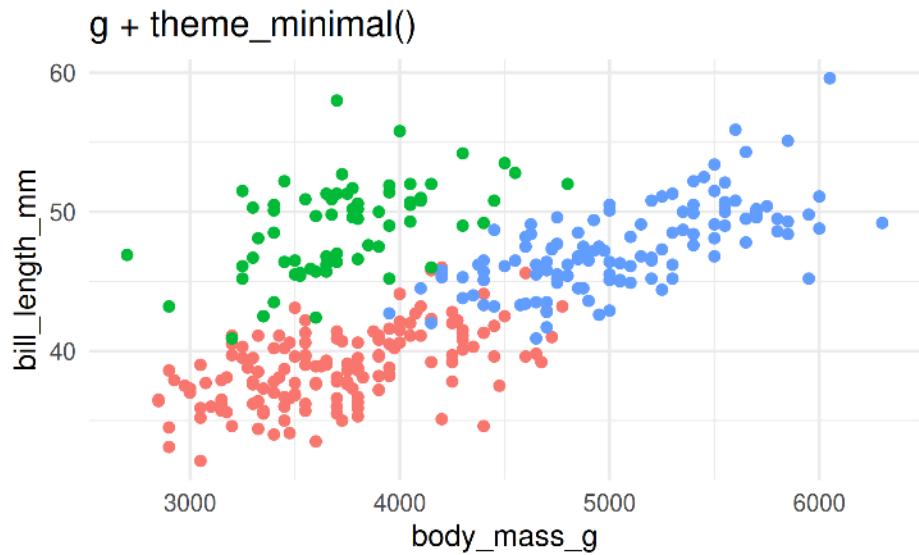
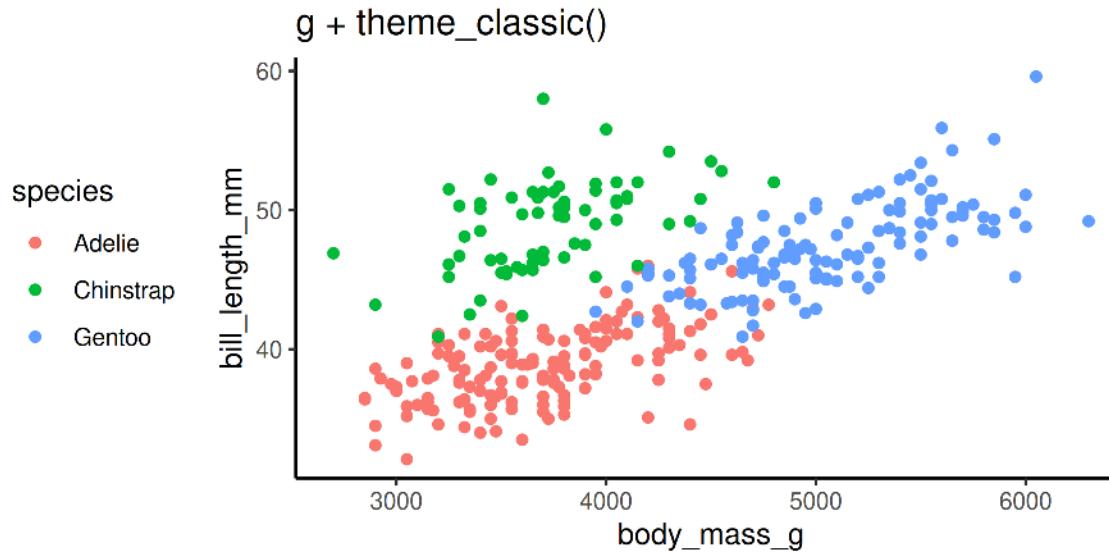
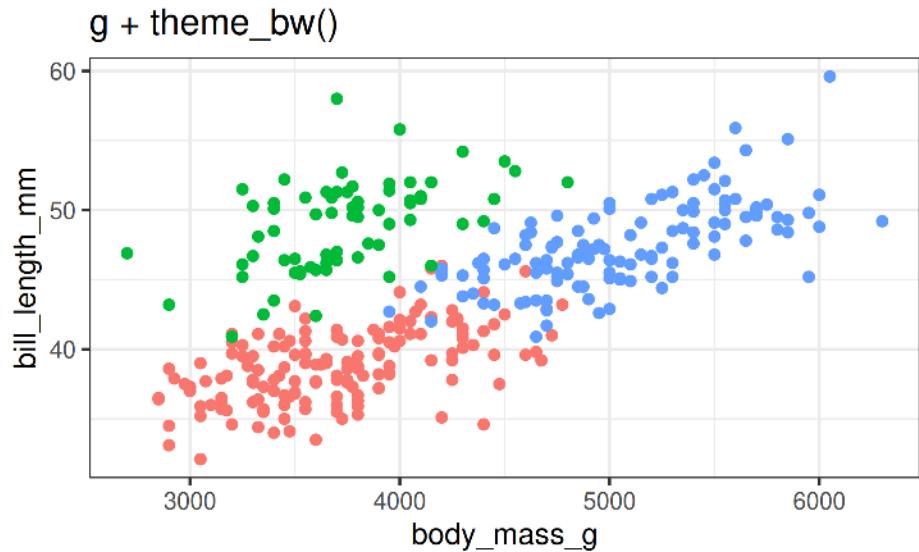
A

Bill Length vs. Body Mass



Your Turn: Add proper labels to some of your previous plots

Customizing: Built-in themes



Customizing: Axes

scale_ + (x or y) + type (continuous, discrete, date, datetime)

- scale_x_continuous()
- scale_y_discrete()
- etc.

Common arguments

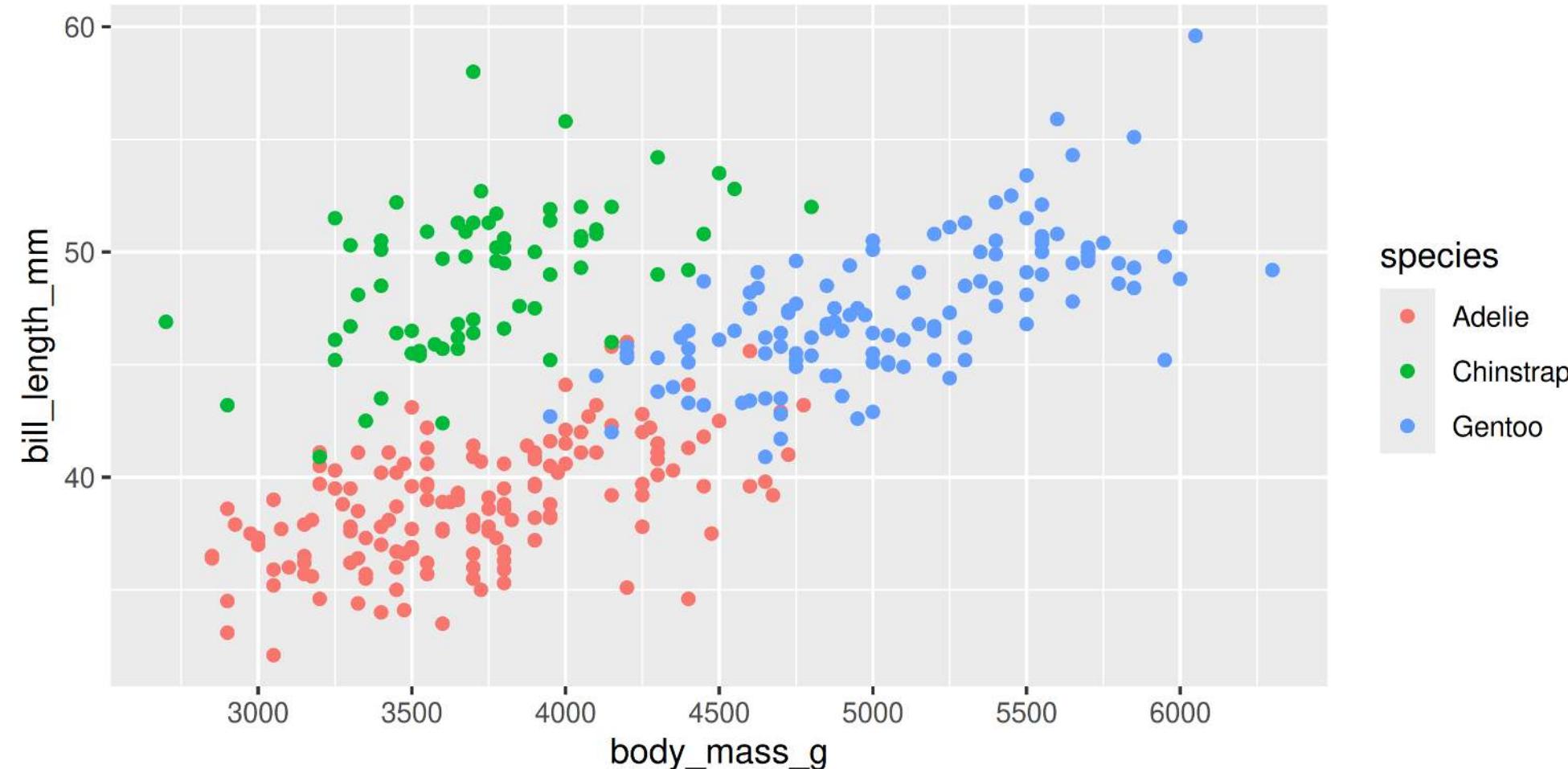
```
1 g + scale_x_continuous(breaks = seq(0, 20, 10)) # Tick breaks
2 g + scale_x_continuous(limits = c(0, 15))        # xlim() is a shortcut for this
3 g + scale_x_continuous(expand = c(0, 0))         # Space between axis and data
```

Let's take a look...

Customizing: Axes

Breaks

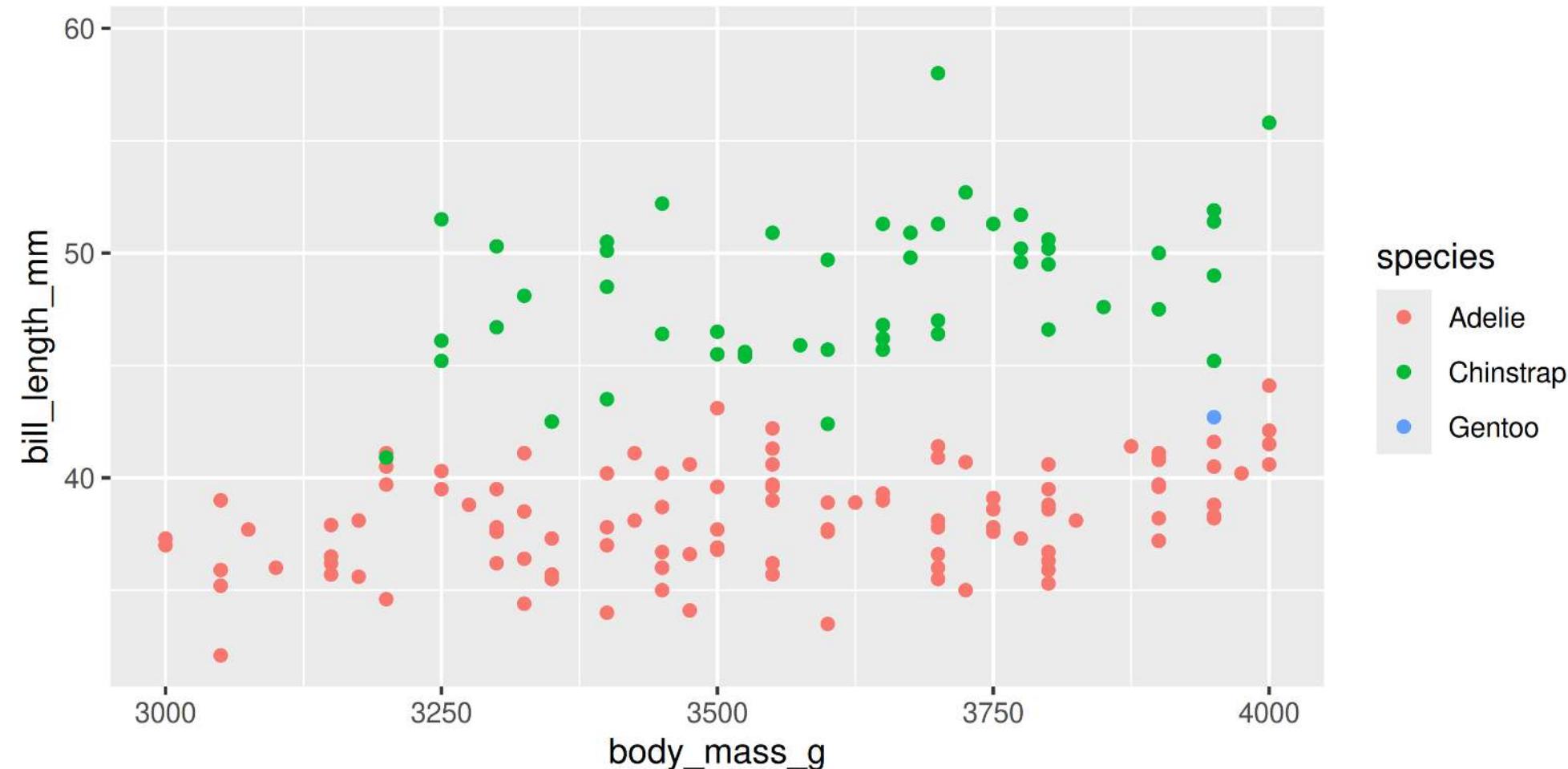
```
1 g + scale_x_continuous(breaks = seq(2500, 6500, 500))
```



Customizing: Axes

Limits

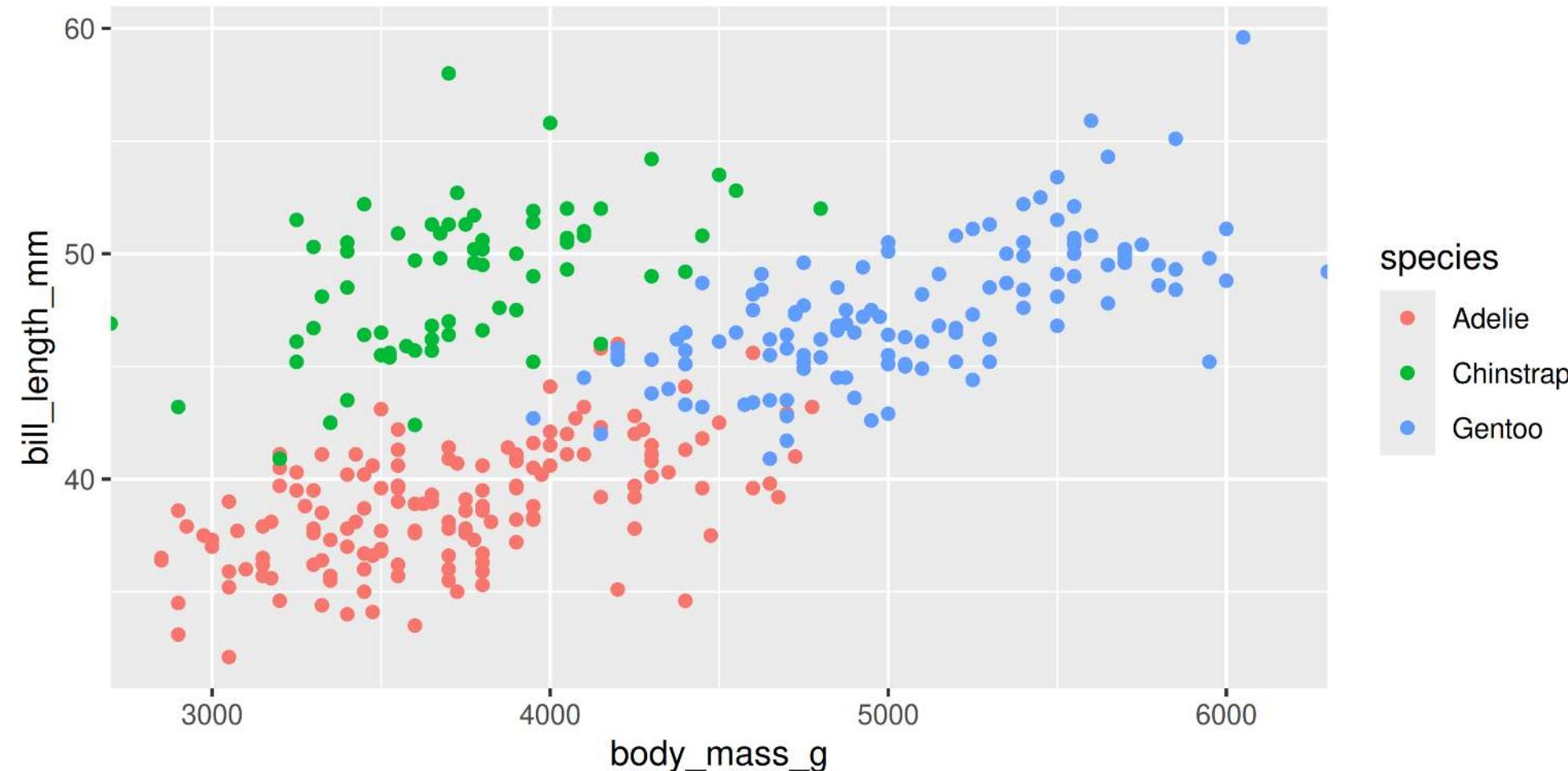
```
1 g + scale_x_continuous(limits = c(3000, 4000))
```



Customizing: Axes

Space between origin and axis start

```
1 g + scale_x_continuous(expand = c(0, 0))
```

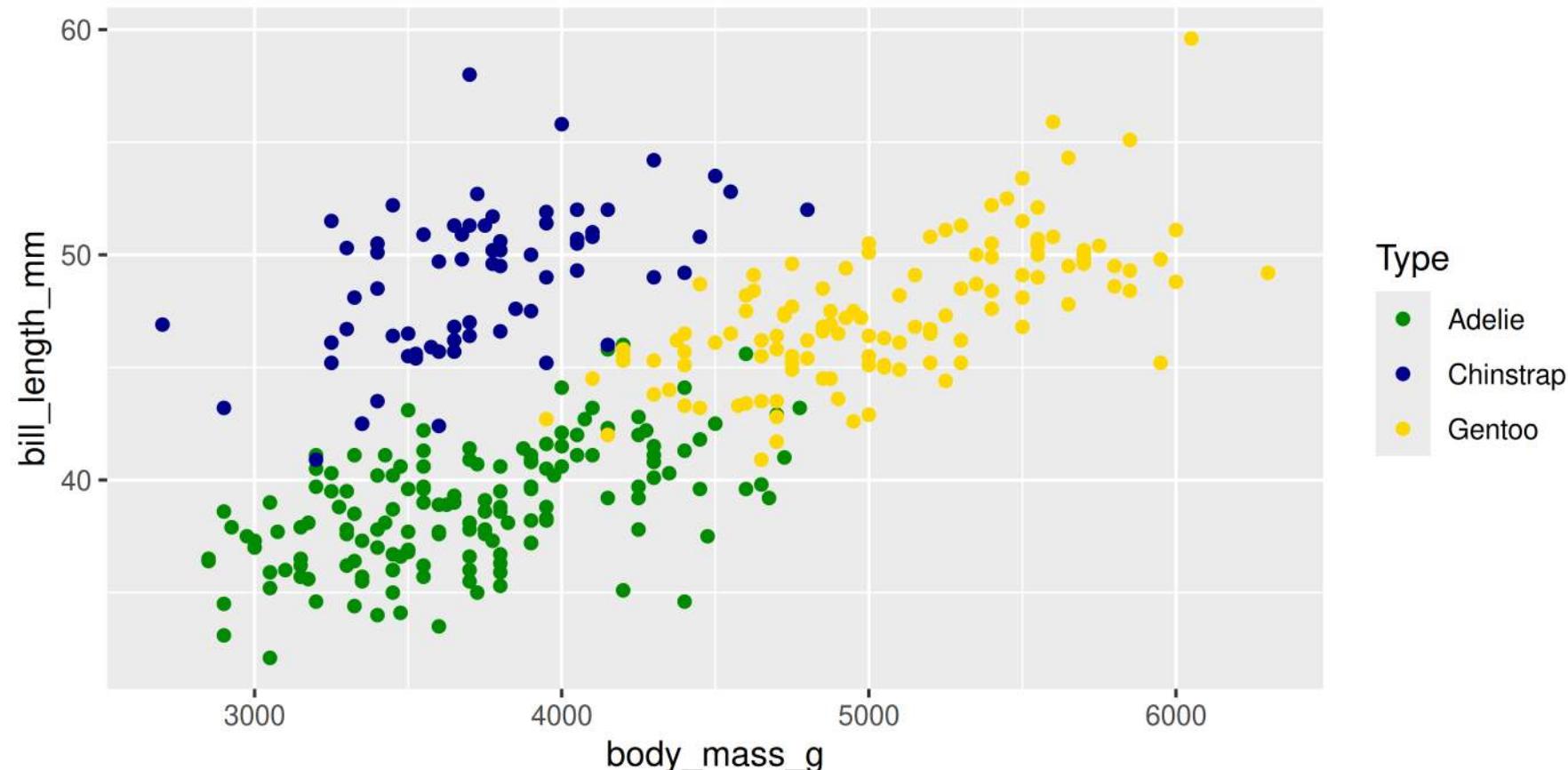


Customizing: Aesthetics

Using scales

`scale_ + aesthetic (colour, fill, size, etc.) + type (manual, continuous, datetime, etc.)`

```
1 g + scale_colour_manual(name = "Type", values = c("green4", "blue4", "gold"))
```

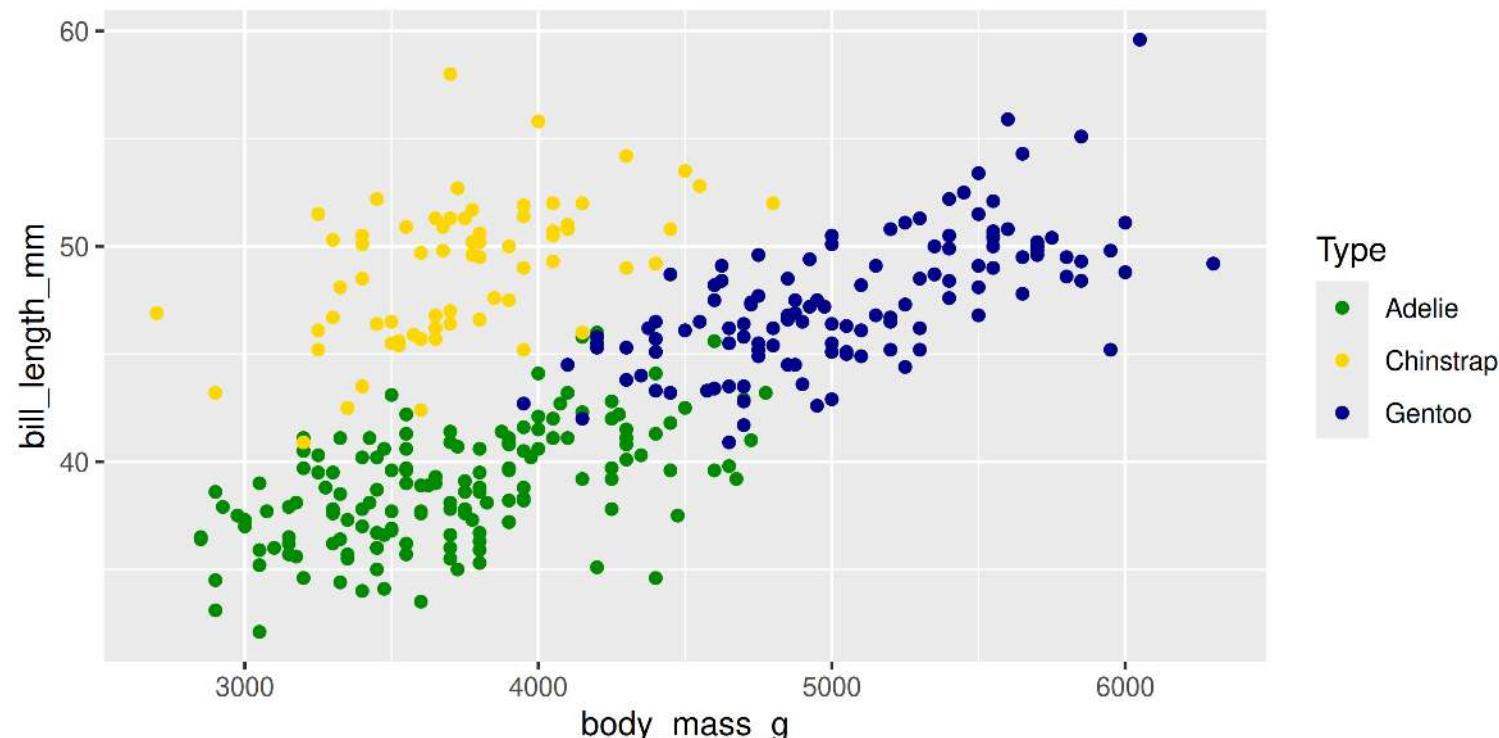


Customizing: Aesthetics

Using scales

Or be very explicit:

```
1 g + scale_colour_manual(  
2   name = "Type",  
3   values = c("Adelie" = "green4", "Gentoo" = "blue4", "Chinstrap" = "gold"),  
4   na.value = "black")
```

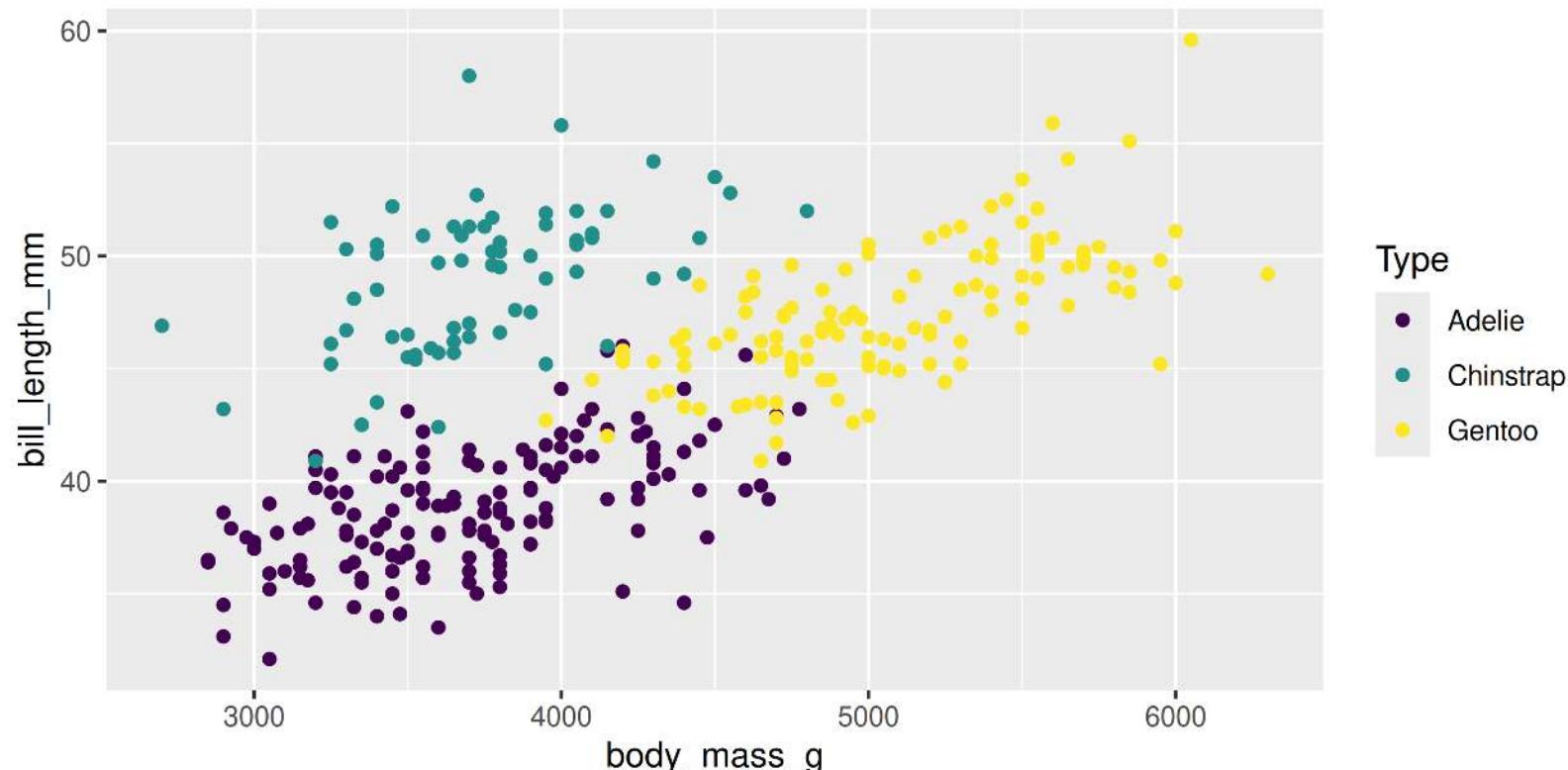


Customizing: Aesthetics

For colours, consider colour-blind-friendly scale

`viridis_d` for “discrete” data

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = species)) +  
2   geom_point() +  
3   scale_colour_viridis_d(name = "Type")
```

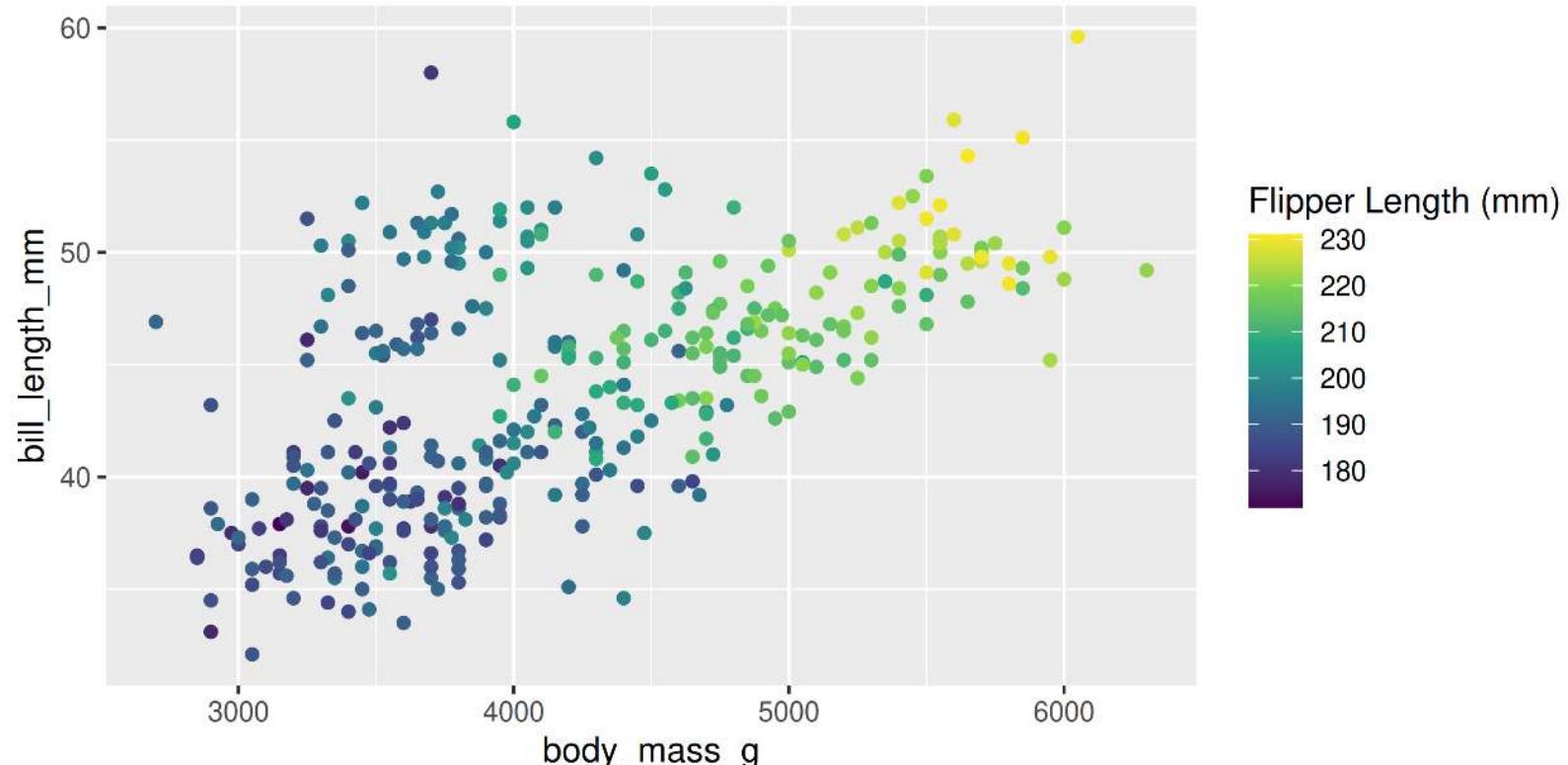


Customizing: Aesthetics

For colours, consider colour-blind-friendly scale

`viridis_c` for “continuous” data

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = flipper_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_point() +  
3   scale_colour_viridis_c(name = "Flipper Length (mm)")
```



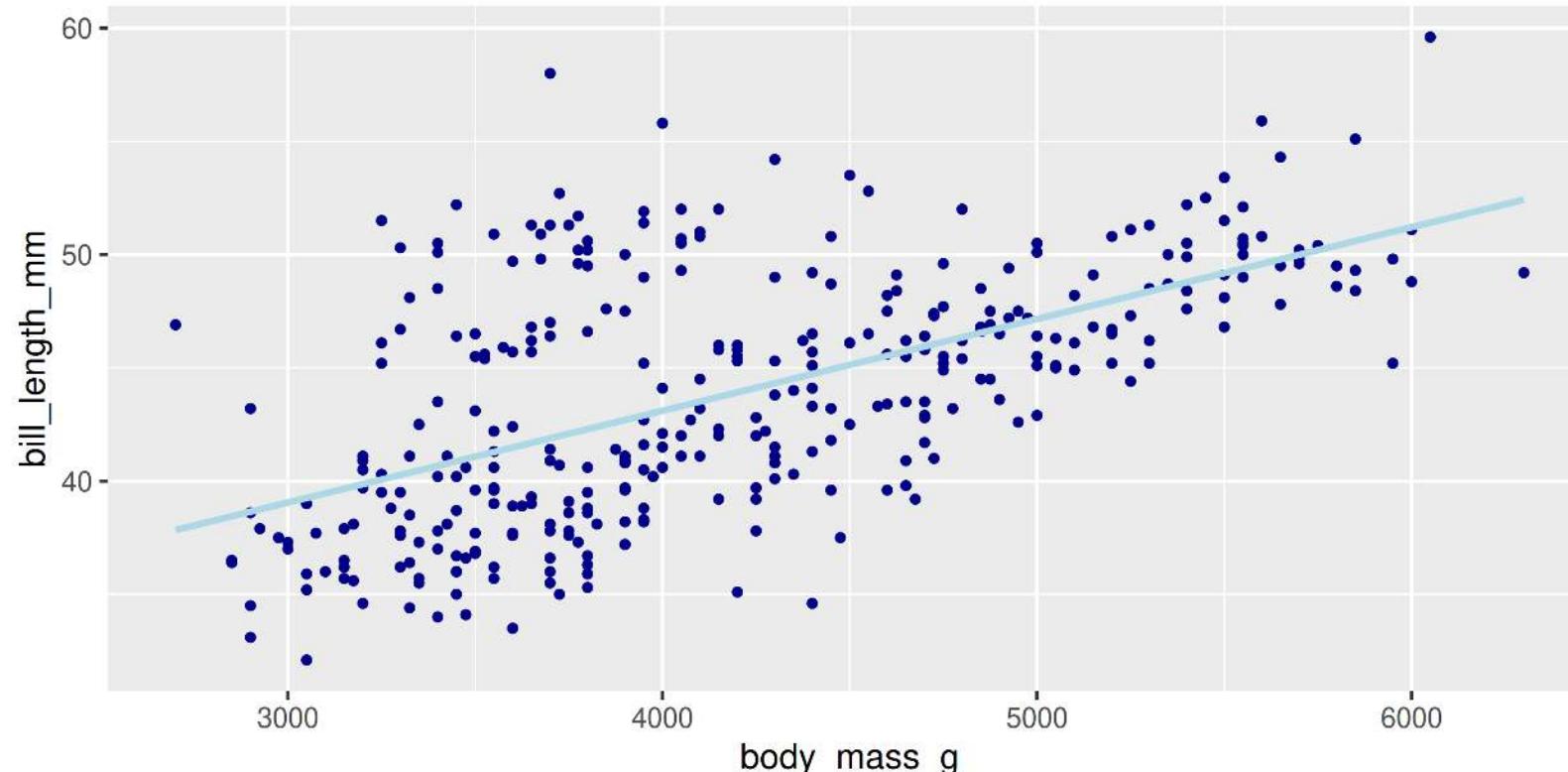
Customizing: Aesthetics

Forcing

Remove the association between a variable and an aesthetic

```
1 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g, y = bill_length_mm, colour = "darkblue")) +  
2   geom_point(size = 1) +  
3   stat_smooth(method = "lm", se = FALSE, colour = "lightblue")
```

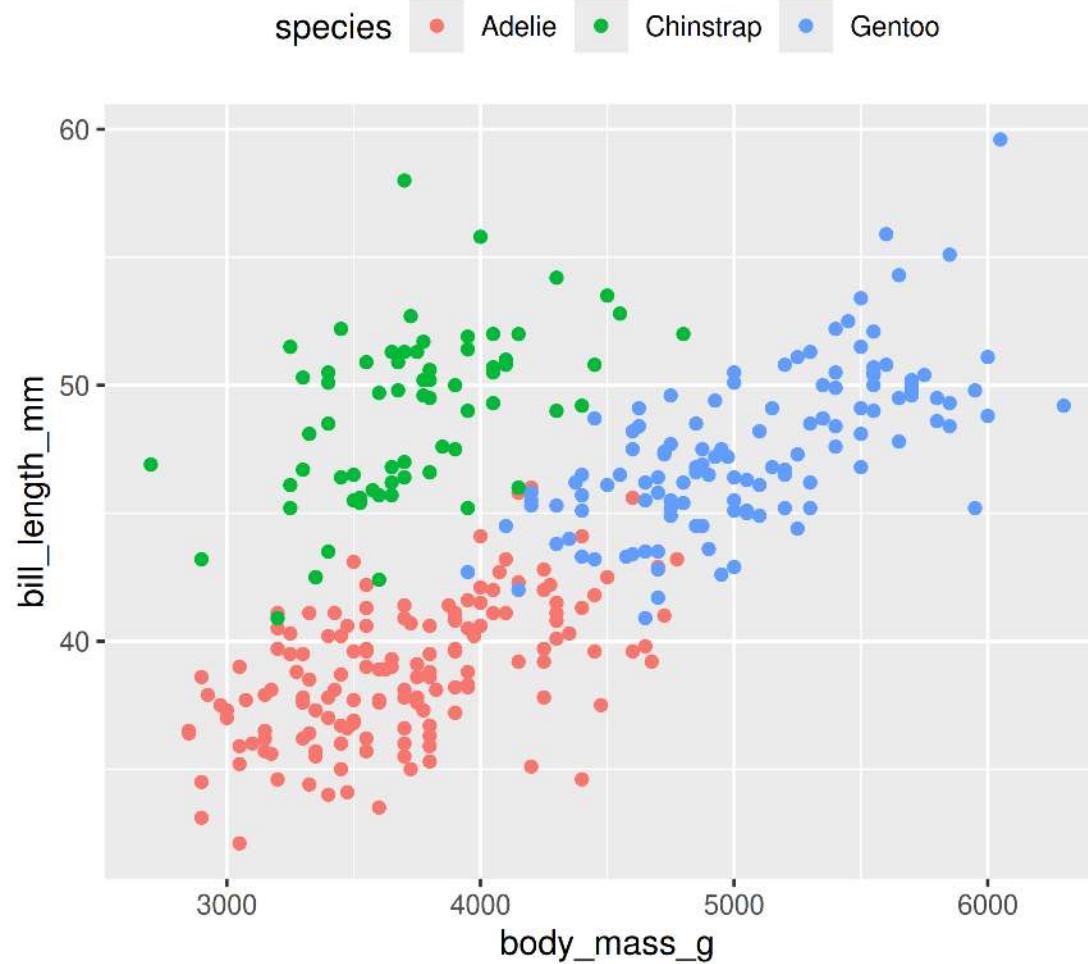
Note: When forcing,
aesthetic is not inside
`aes()`



Customizing: Legends placement

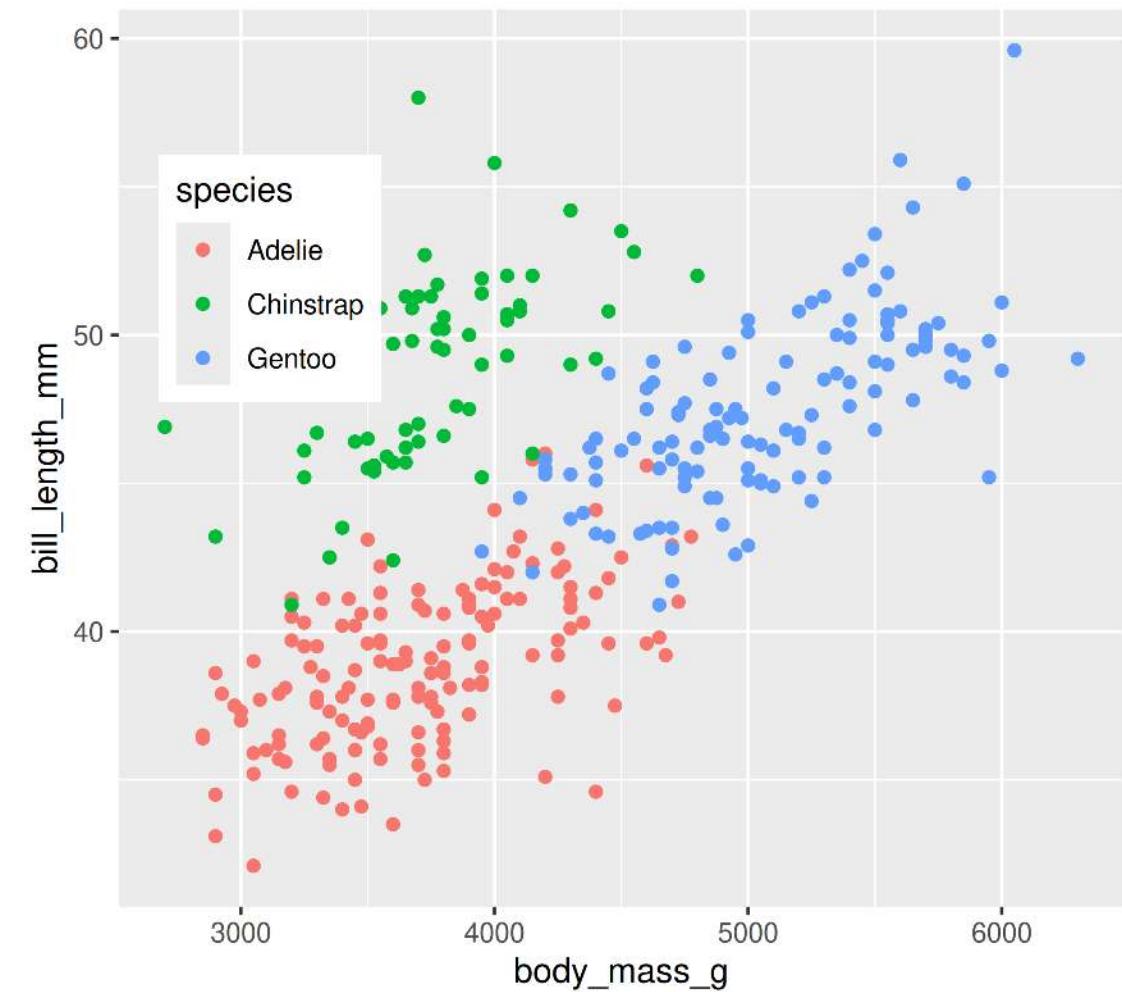
At the: top, bottom, left, right

```
1 g + theme(legend.position = "top")
```

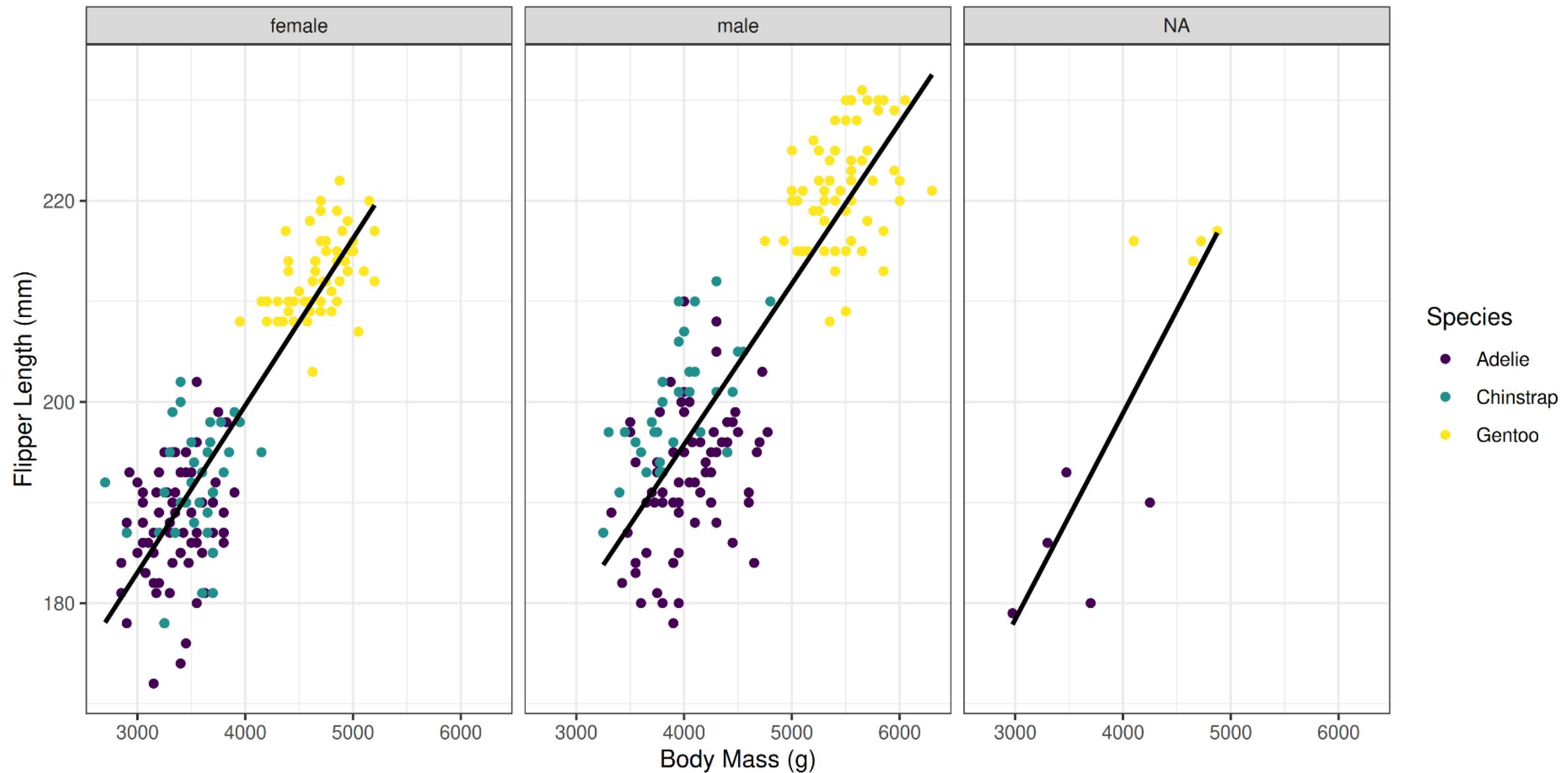


Exactly here

```
1 g + theme(legend.position = c(0.15, 0.7))
```



Your Turn: Create this plot



Too Easy?

Play with shape values >20 and fill and colour

Side note: Order of operations

Order of operations

Remember...

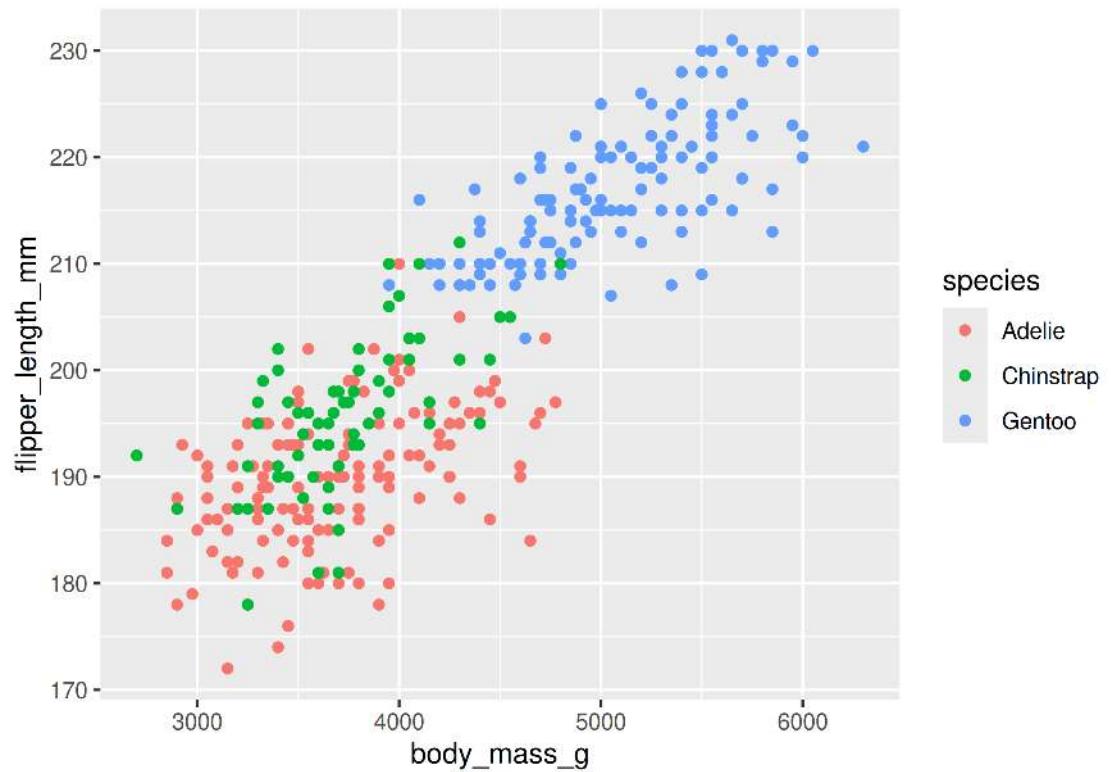
- `ggplot()` is the default line (all options passed down)
- The other lines are *added* with the `+` (options only apply to this line)

Order of operations

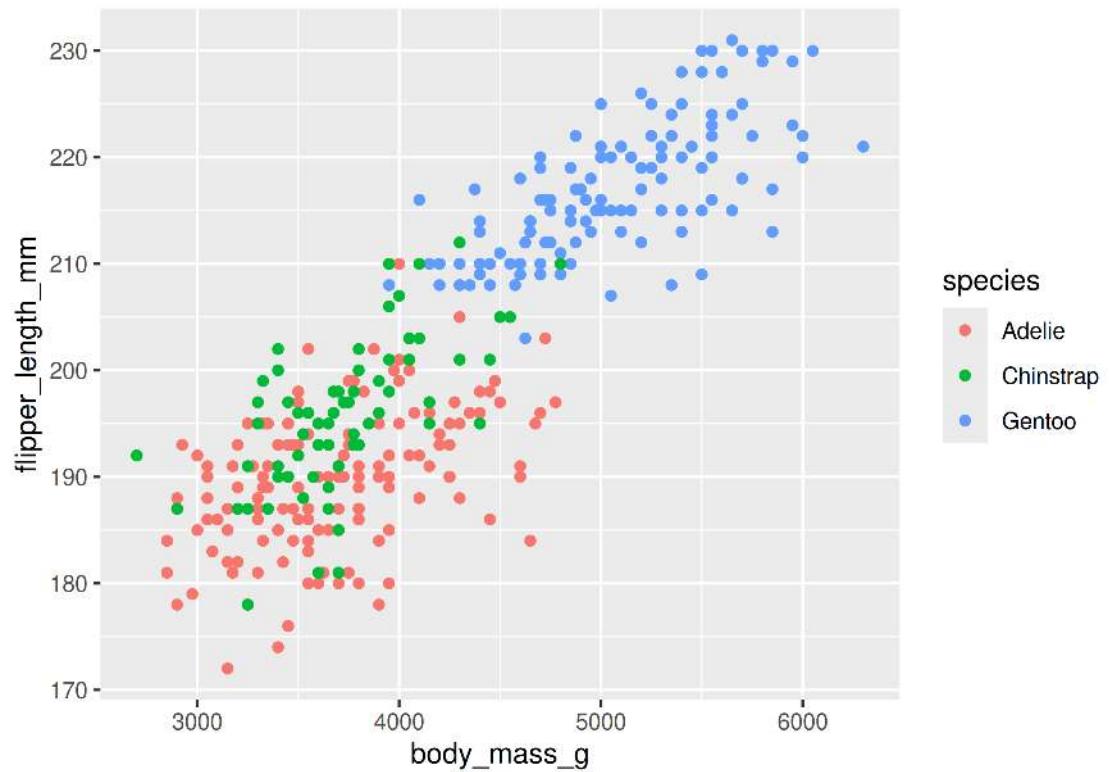
Where to put the `aes()`?

Sometimes it doesn't matter...

```
1 ggplot(penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g,  
2                      y = flipper_length_mm,  
3                      colour = species)) +  
4   geom_point()
```



```
1 ggplot(penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g,  
2                      y = flipper_length_mm)) +  
3   geom_point(aes(colour = species))
```

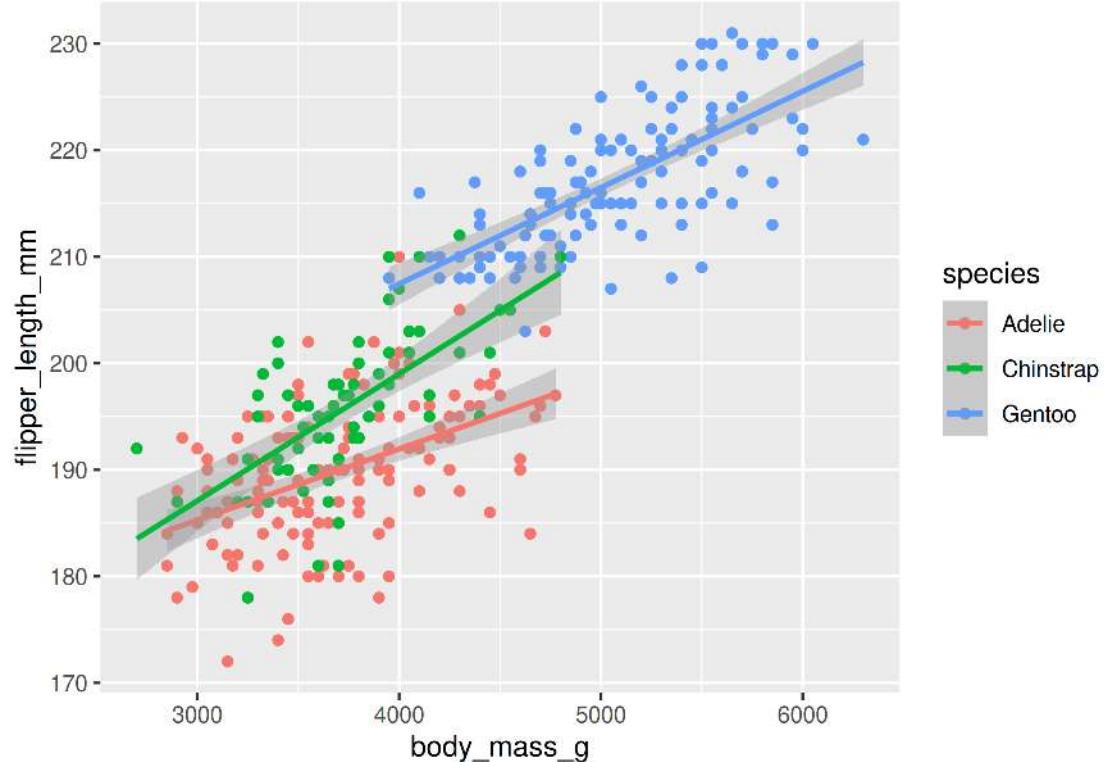


Order of operations

Where to put the `aes()`?

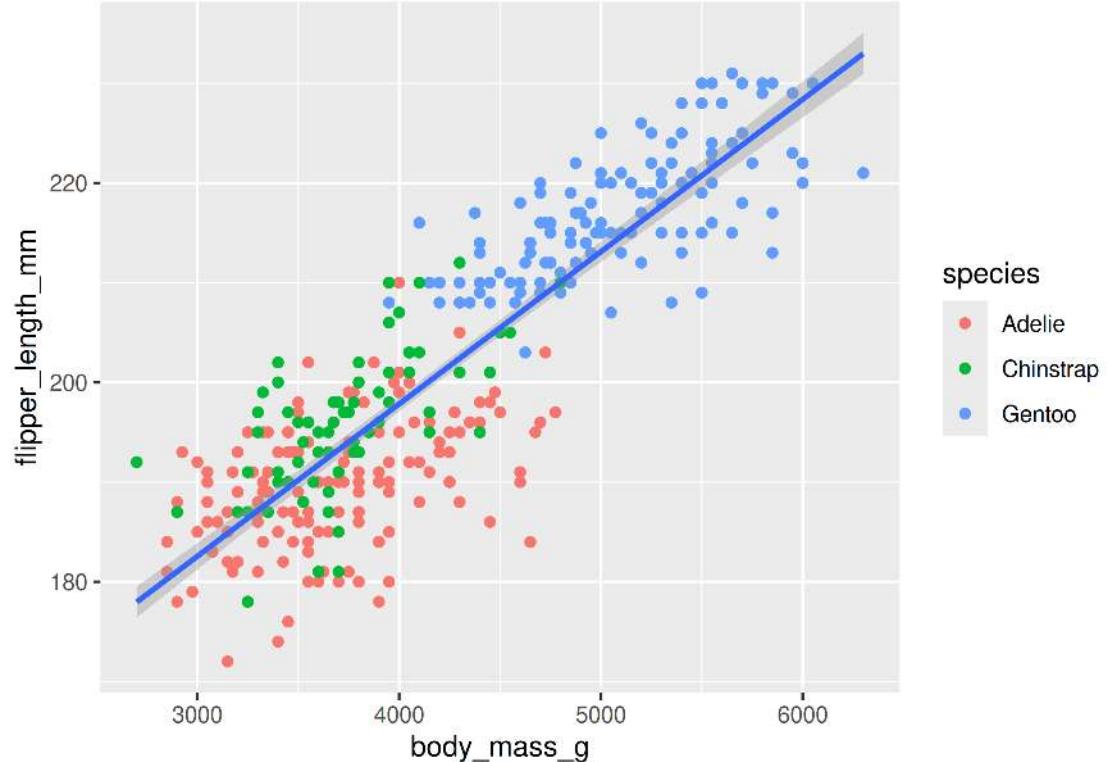
Sometimes it DOES matter...

```
1 ggplot(penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g,  
2                      y = flipper_length_mm,  
3                      colour = species)) +  
4   geom_point() +  
5   stat_smooth(method = "lm")
```



Applies to ALL lines in the ggplot
including `stat_smooth()`

```
1 ggplot(penguins, aes(x = body_mass_g,  
2                      y = flipper_length_mm)) +  
3   geom_point(aes(colour = species)) +  
4   stat_smooth(method = "lm")
```



Applies to only the `geom_point()`
in the ggplot

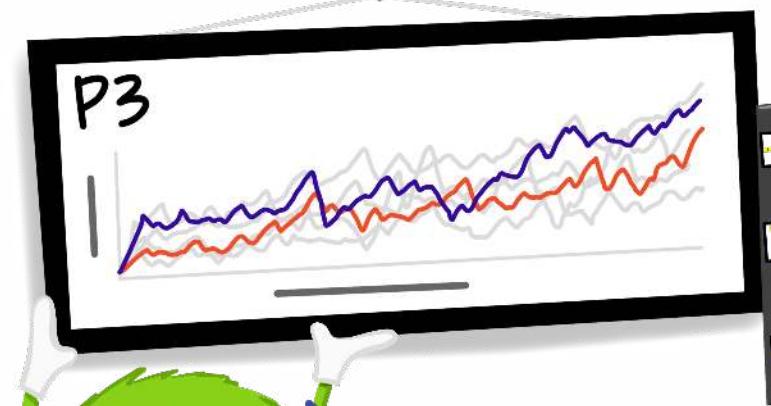
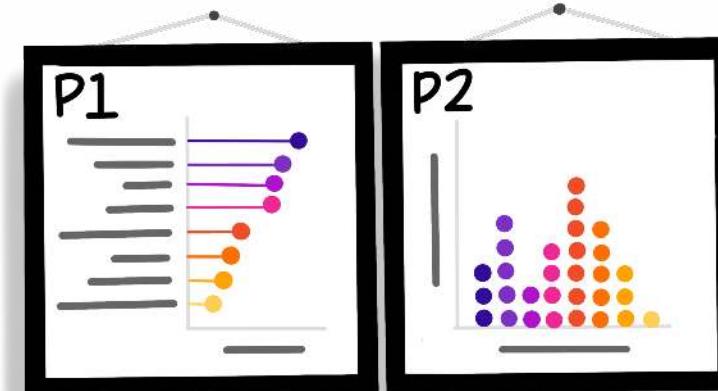
not `stat_smooth()`

Combining plots with patchwork



patchwork

Combine + arrange
your ggplots!



PLAN:
 $(P1+P2)/P3$



Honest Zao

Combining plots

Setup

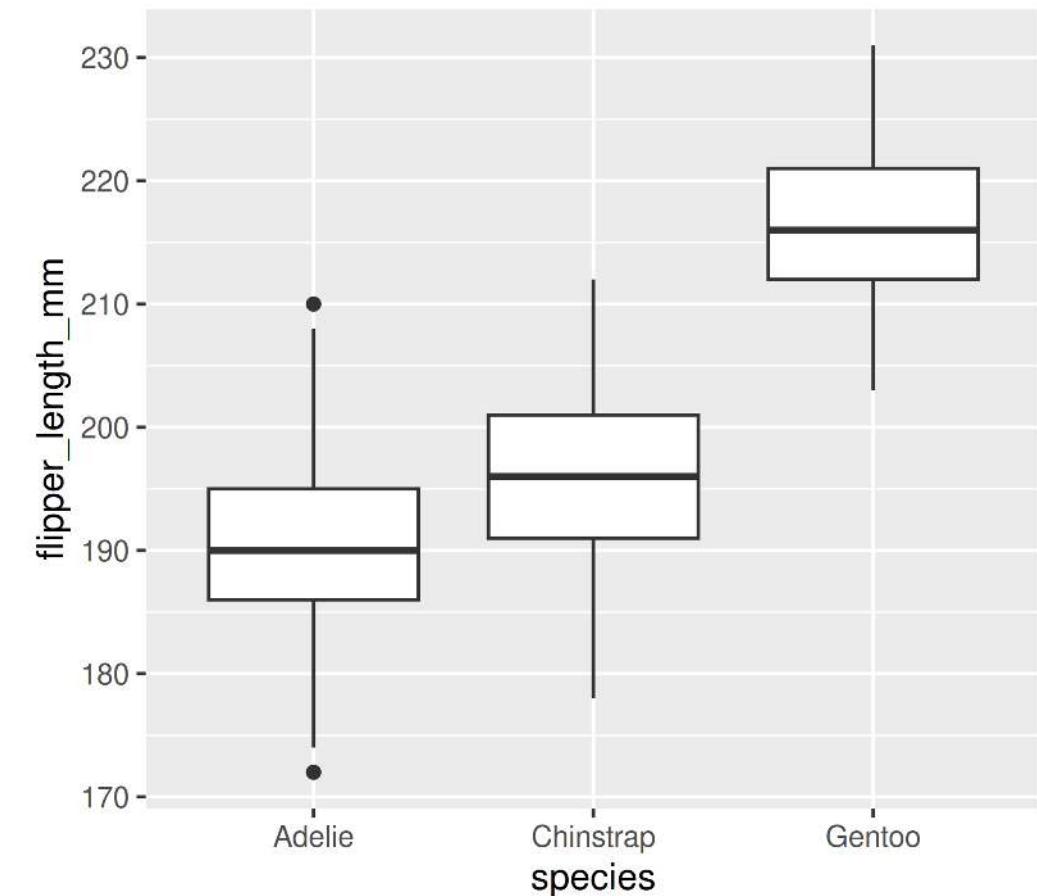
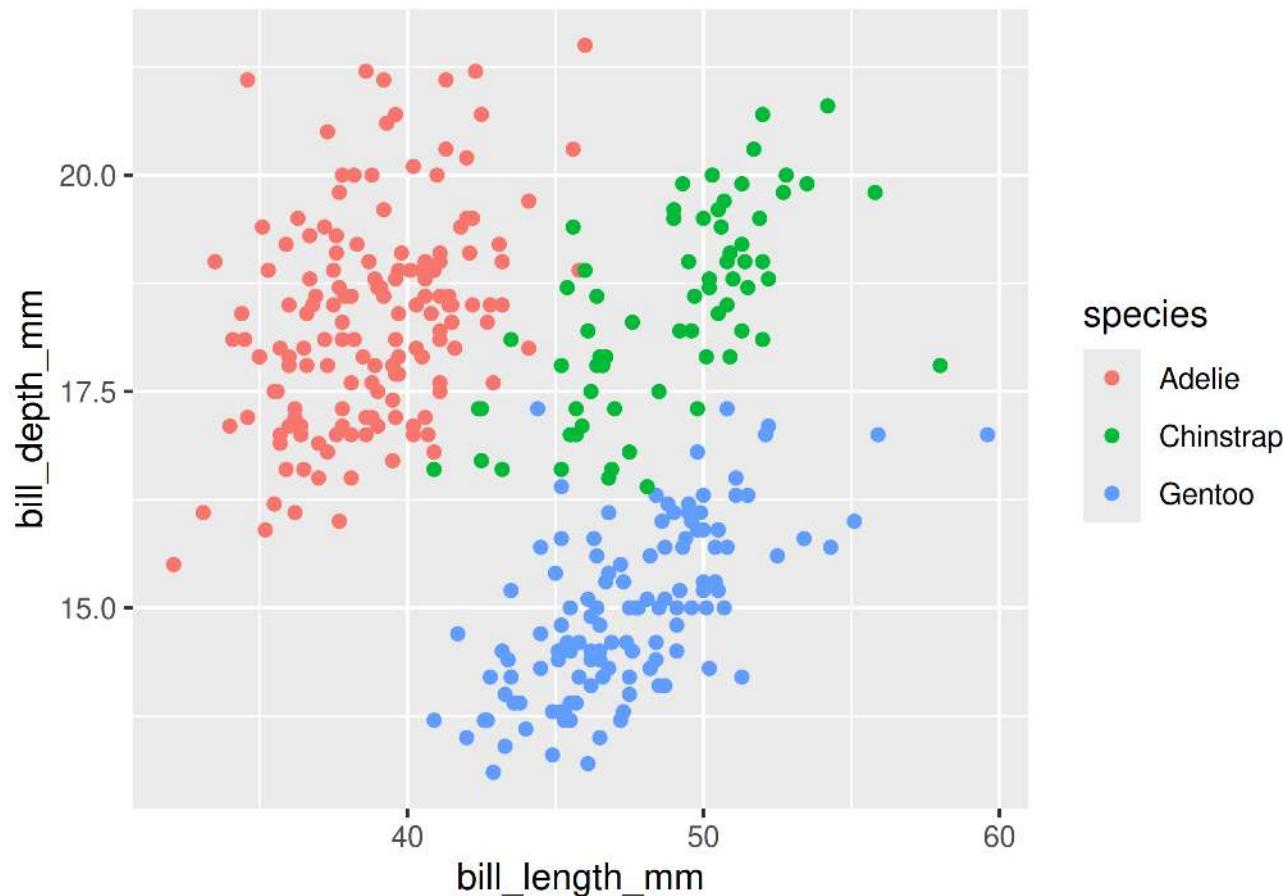
- Load [patchwork](#)
- Create a couple of different plots

```
1 library(patchwork)
2
3 g1 <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = bill_length_mm, y = bill_depth_mm, colour = species)) +
4   geom_point()
5
6 g2 <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = species, y = flipper_length_mm)) +
7   geom_boxplot()
8
9 g3 <- ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = flipper_length_mm, y = body_mass_g, colour = species)) +
10  geom_point()
```

Combining plots with patchwork

Side-by-Side 2 plots

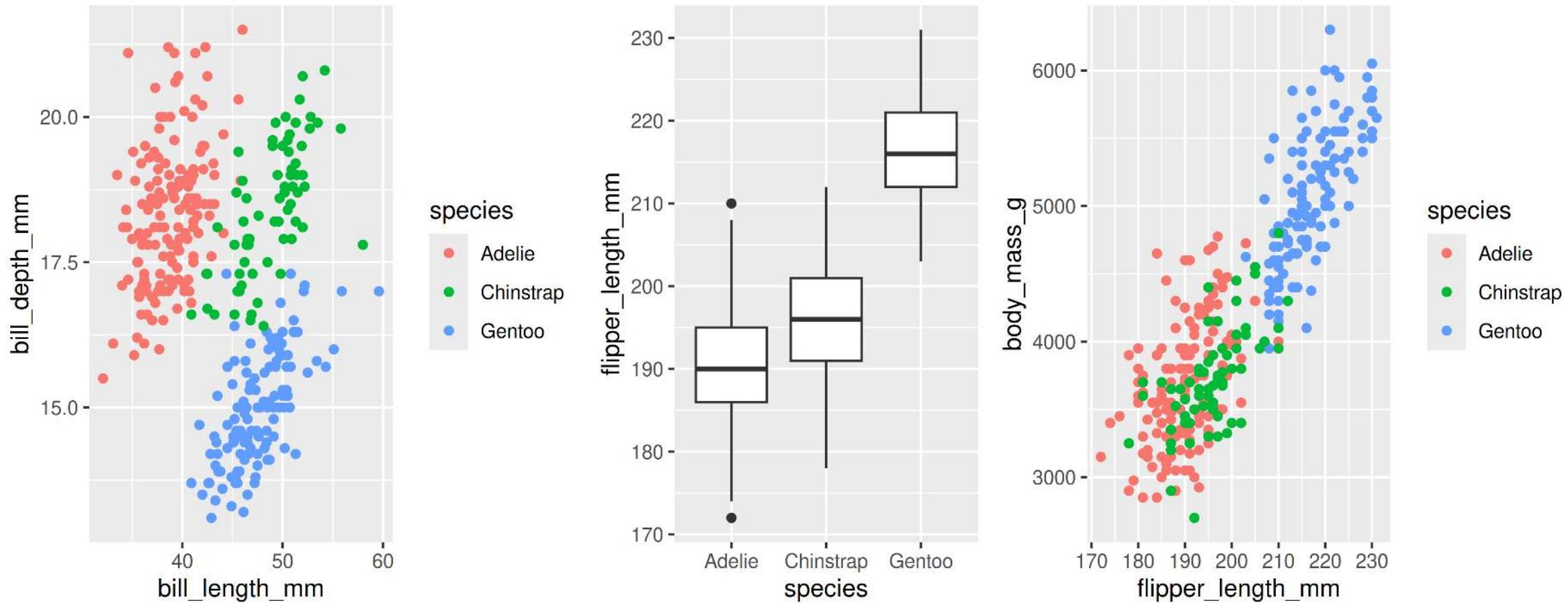
```
1 g1 + g2
```



Combining plots with patchwork

Side-by-Side 3 plots

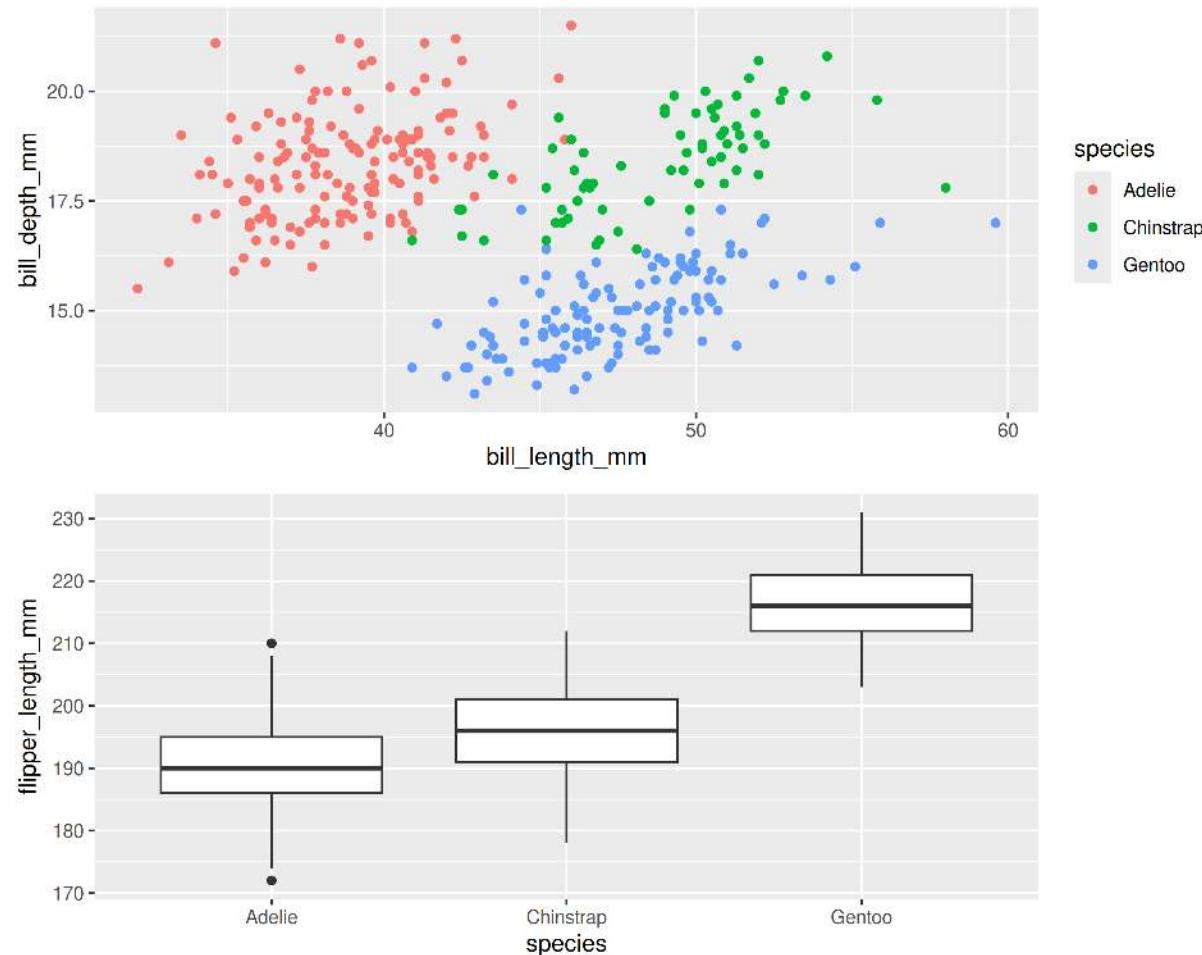
```
1 g1 + g2 + g3
```



Combining plots with patchwork

Stacked 2 plots

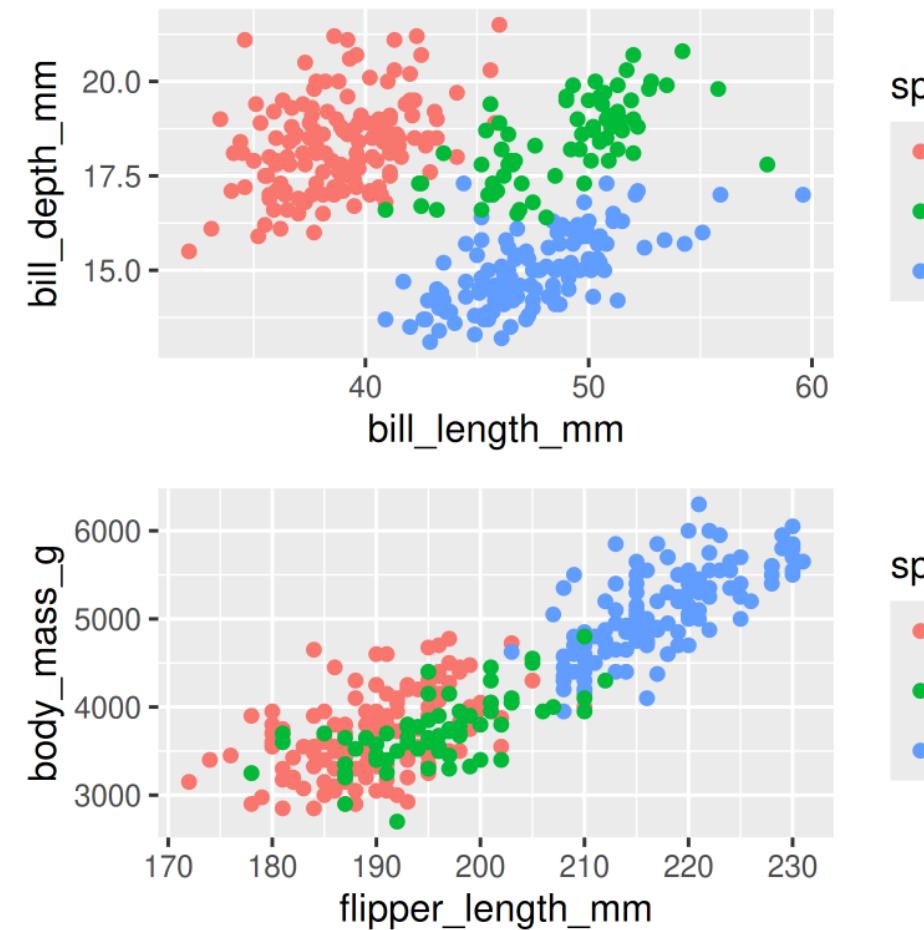
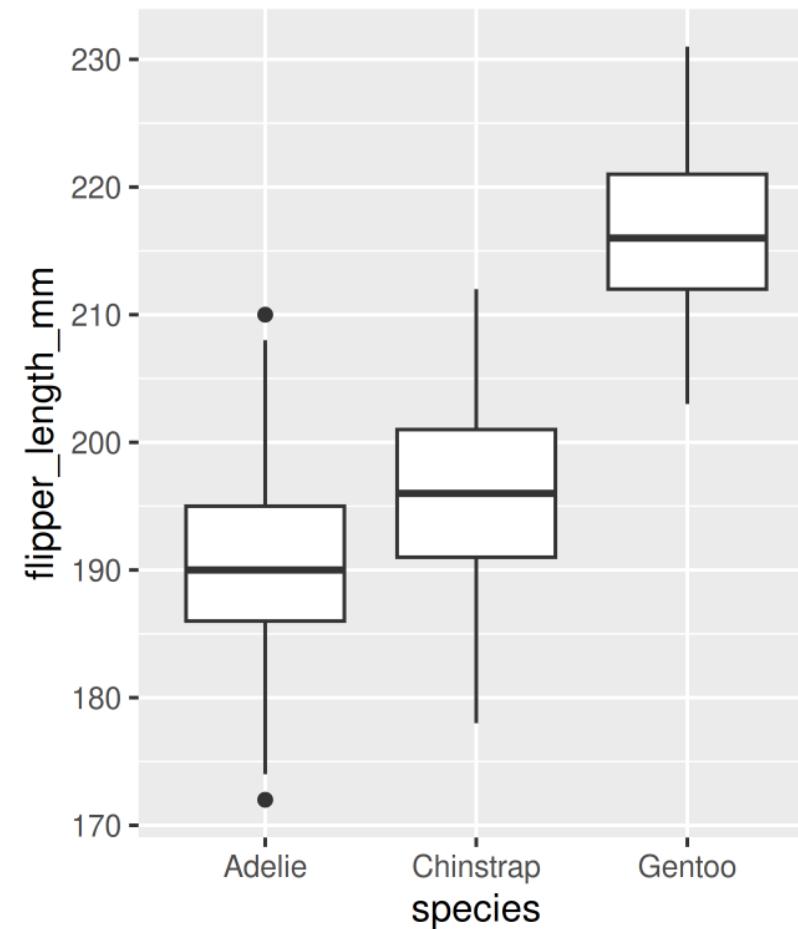
```
1 g1 / g2
```



Combining plots with patchwork

More complex arrangements

```
1 g2 + (g1 / g3)
```



species

- Adelie
- Chinstrap
- Gentoo

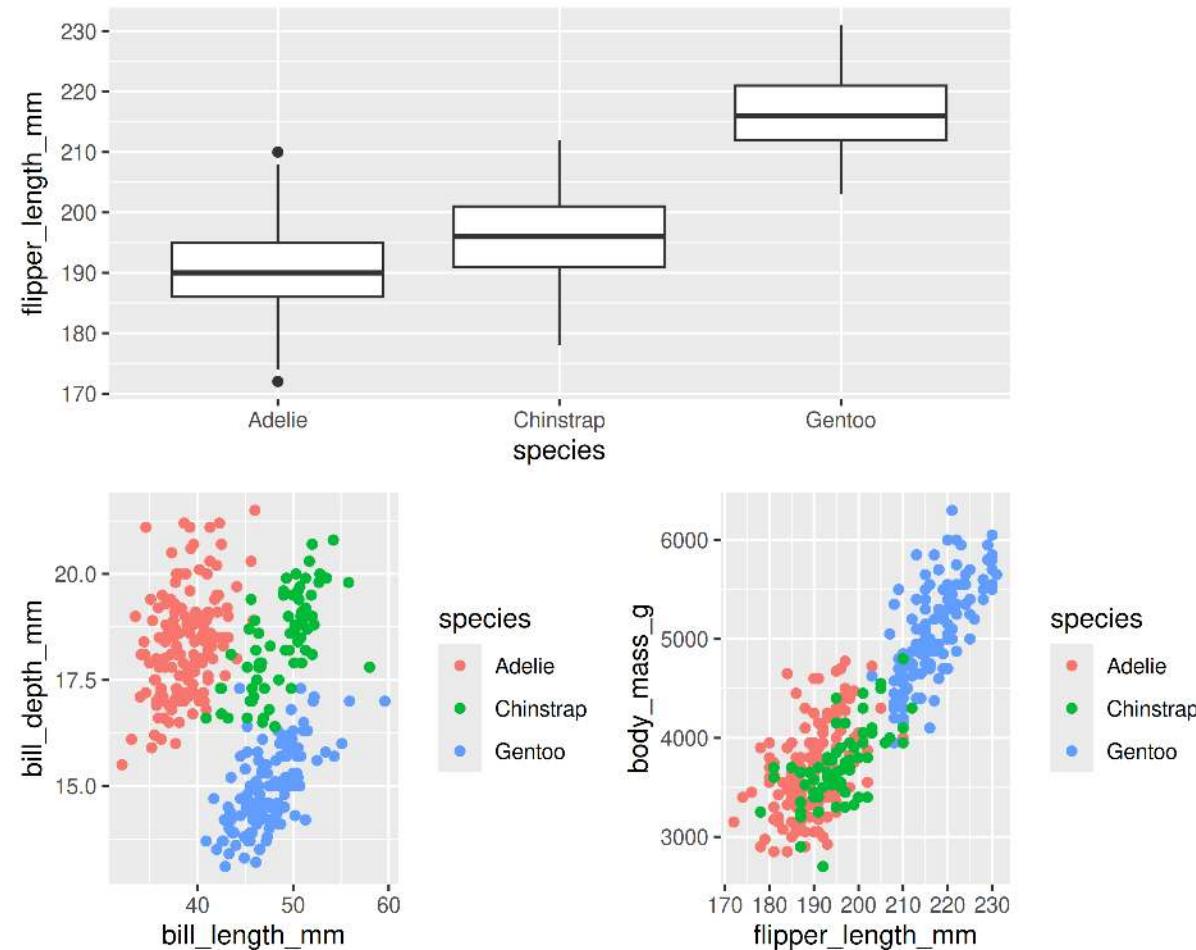
species

- Adelie
- Chinstrap
- Gentoo

Combining plots with patchwork

More complex arrangements

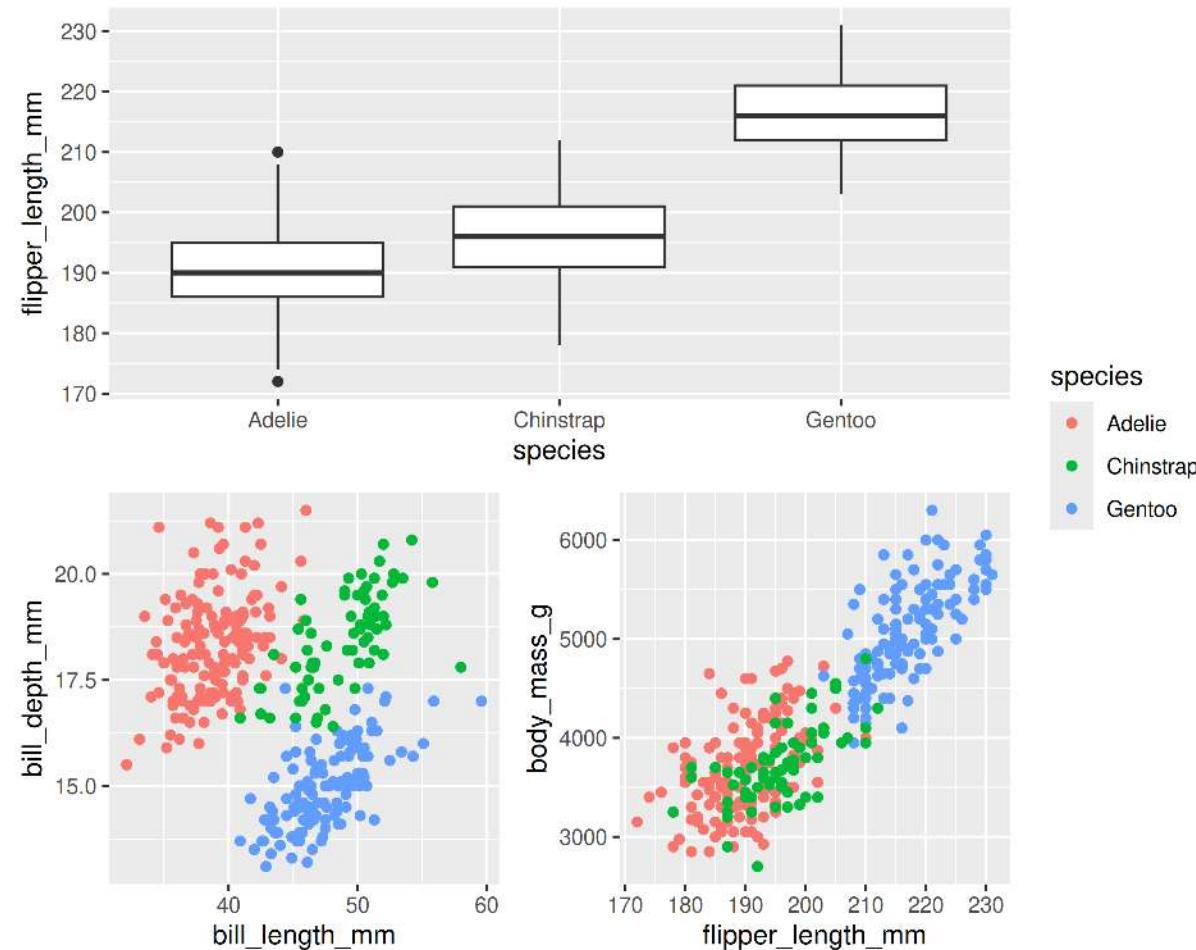
```
1 g2 / (g1 + g3)
```



Combining plots with patchwork

“collect” common legends

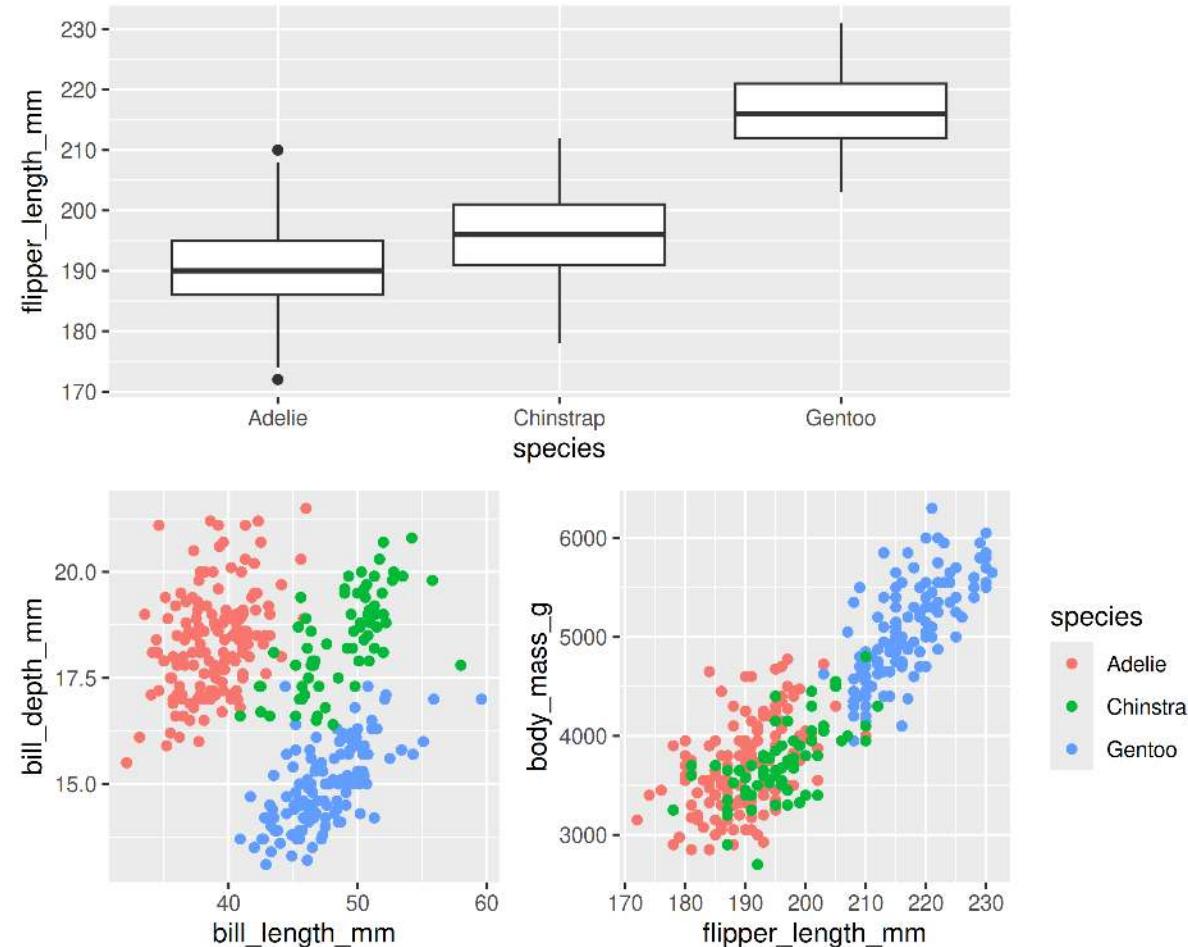
```
1 g2 / (g1 + g3) + plot_layout(guides = "collect")
```



Combining plots with patchwork

“collect” common legends

```
1 g2 / (g1 + g3 + plot_layout(guides = "collect"))
```



Combining plots with patchwork

Annotate

```
1 g2 / (g1 + g3) +
2 plot_layout(guides = "collect") +
3 plot_annotation(title = "Penguins Data Summary",
4                   caption = "Fig 1. Penguins Data Summary",
5                   tag_levels = "A",
6                   tag_suffix = ")")
```

Too Easy?

Can you figure out how to collect common axes as well?

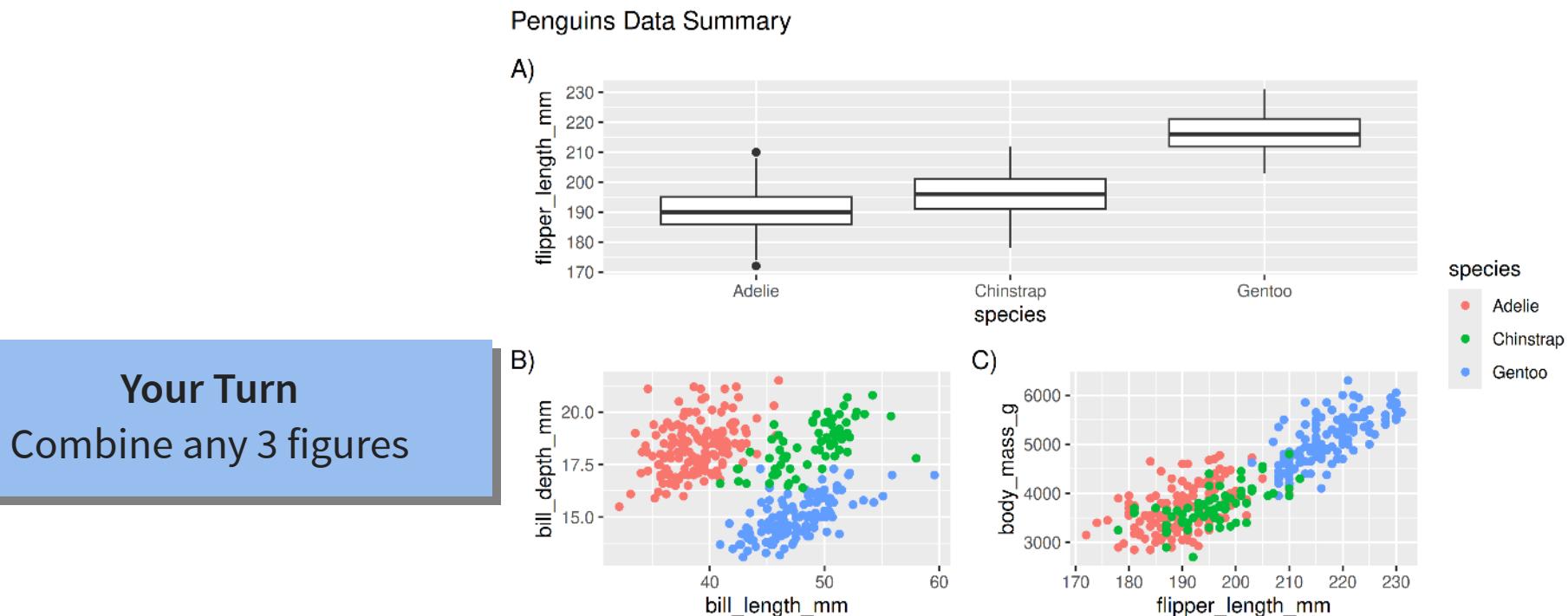


Fig 1. Penguins Data Summary

Saving plots

Saving plots

RStudio Export

Demo

ggsave()

```
1 g <- ggplot(penguins, aes(x = sex, y = bill_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_boxplot()  
3  
4 ggsave(filename = "penguins_mass.png", plot = g)
```

Saving plots

Publication quality plots

- Many publications require ‘lossless’ (pdf, svg, eps, ps) or high quality formats (tiff, png)
- Specific sizes corresponding to columns widths
- Minimum resolutions

```
1 g <- ggplot(penguins, aes(x = sex, y = body_mass_g)) +  
2   geom_boxplot() +  
3   labs(x = "Sex", y = "Body Mass (g)") +  
4   theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))  
5  
6 ggsave(filename = "penguins_mass.pdf", plot = g, dpi = 300,  
7         height = 80, width = 129, units = "mm")
```

Wrapping up: Common mistakes

- The package is `ggplot2`, the function is just `ggplot()`
- Did you remember to put the `+` at the `end` of the line?
- Order matters!
 - If you're using custom `theme()`'s, make sure you put these lines `after` bundled themes like `theme_bw()`, or they will be overwritten
- Variables like 'year' are treated as continuous, but are really categories
 - Wrap them in `factor()`
 - e.g. `ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = factor(year), y = body_mass_g))`

Wrapping up: Common mistakes

I get an error regarding an object that can't be found or aesthetic length?

You are probably trying to plot two different datasets, and you make references to variables in the `ggplot()` call that don't exist in one of the datasets:

```
1 n <- count(penguins, island)
2
3 ggplot(data = penguins, aes(x = flipper_length_mm, y = bill_length_mm, colour = species)) +
4   geom_point() +
5   facet_wrap(~ island) +
6   geom_text(data = n, aes(label = n),
7             x = -Inf, y = +Inf, hjust = 0, vjust = 1)
```

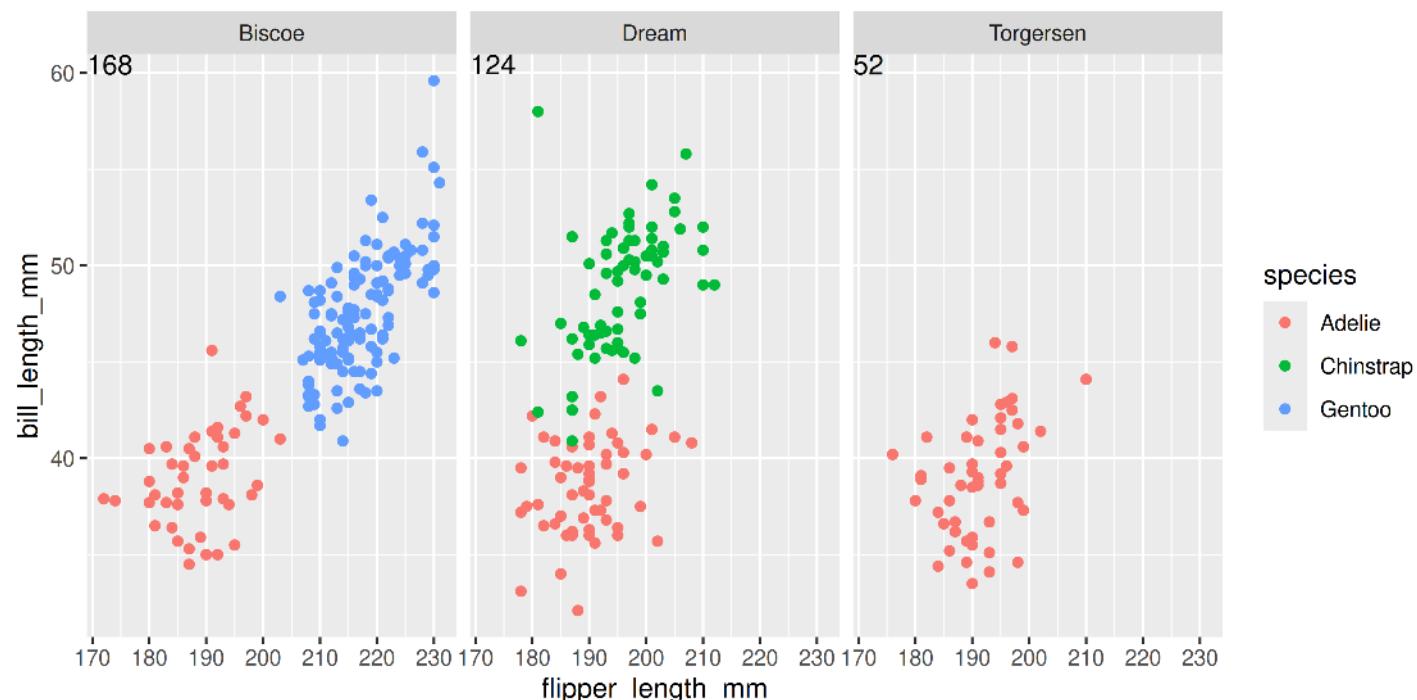
```
Error in `geom_text()`:
! Problem while computing aesthetics.
i Error occurred in the 2nd layer.
Caused by error:
! object 'species' not found
```

Wrapping up: Common mistakes

I get an error regarding an object that can't be found or aesthetic length?

Either move the aesthetic...

```
1 ggplot(penguins, aes(x = flipper_length_mm, y = bill_length_mm)) +  
2   geom_point(aes(colour = species)) +  
3   facet_wrap(~ island) +  
4   geom_text(data = n, aes(label = n),  
5             x = -Inf, y = +Inf, hjust = 0, vjust = 1)
```



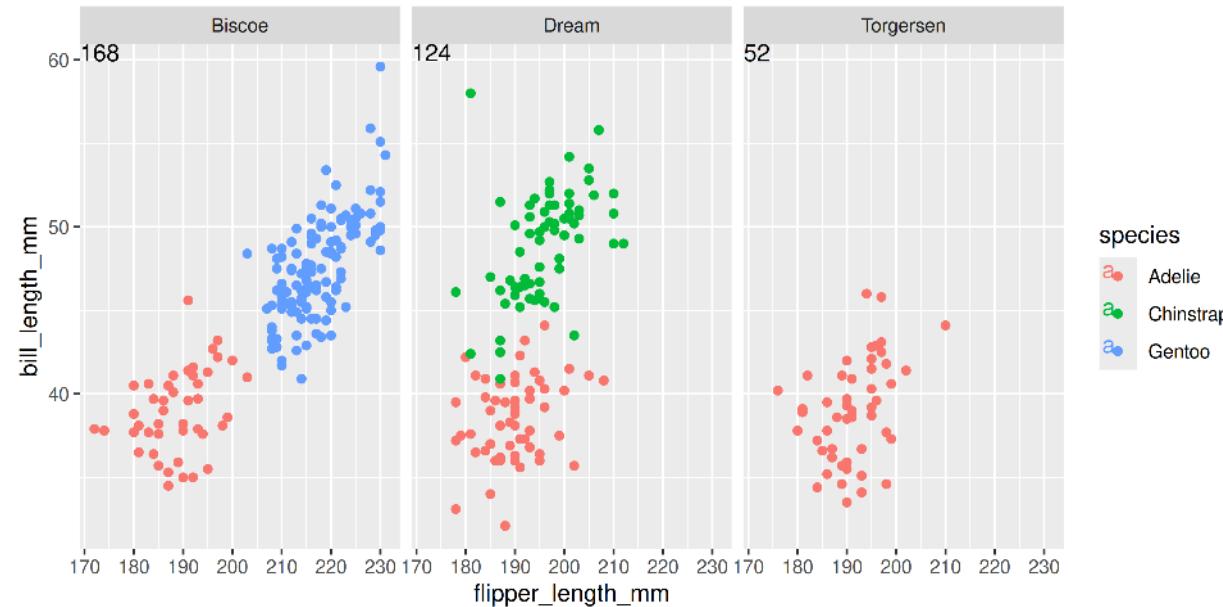
Wrapping up: Common mistakes

I get an error regarding an object that can't be found or aesthetic length?

Either move the aesthetic...

Or assign it to `NULL` where it is missing...

```
1 ggplot(penguins, aes(x = flipper_length_mm, y = bill_length_mm, colour = species)) +  
2   geom_point() +  
3   facet_wrap(~ island) +  
4   geom_text(data = n, aes(label = n, colour = NULL),  
5             x = -Inf, y = +Inf, hjust = 0, vjust = 1)
```



Wrapping up: Further reading (all Free!)

- RStudio > Help > Cheatsheets > Data Visualization with ggplot2
- [ggplot2 book v3](#) by Hadley Wickham, Danielle Navarro, and Thomas Lin Pedersen
- [patchwork website](#)
- [Cookbook for R](#) by Winston Chang
- [R for Data Science](#) by Hadley Wickham and Garret Grolemund
 - [Chapter on Data Visualization](#)
- [Data Visualization: A practical introduction](#) by Kieran Healy