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Journal of Fish Biology

Understanding and managing fish populations: keeping the toolbox fit for purpose --Manuscript Draft--

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Abstract:	Wild fish populations are currently experiencing unprecedented pressures, which are projected to intensify in the coming decades. Developing a thorough understanding of the influences of both biotic and abiotic factors on fish populations is a salient issue in contemporary fish conservation and management. During the 50th Anniversary of the Fisheries Society of the British Isles, University of Exeter, 2017, scientists from diverse research backgrounds gathered to discuss key topics under the broad umbrella of 'Understanding Fish Populations'. Below, the output of one such discussion group is detailed, focusing on tools used to investigate natural fish populations. Five main groups of approaches were identified: (i) Tagging and telemetry; (ii) Molecular tools; (iii) Survey tools; (iv) Statistical and modelling tools; and (v) Tissue analyses. The appraisal covered current challenges and potential solutions for each of these topics. In addition, three key themes were identified as applicable across all tool-based applications. These included data management, public engagement, and fisheries policy and governance. The continued innovation of tools and capacity to integrate interdisciplinary approaches into the future assessment and management of fish populations is highlighted as an important focus for the next 50 years of fisheries research.

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Corresponding author's name: Dr Jamie Stevens

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Question 2: If you have undertaken experimental work, has the care and use of experimental animals complied with local and or national animal welfare laws, guidelines and policies? NO

If 'Yes', state these and provide suitable evidence (e.g. for the U.K. a Home Office PPL number is sufficient), both here and in the manuscript, that protocols have undergone an ethical review process by an institutional animal care and use (or similar) committee, a local ethics committee, or by appropriately qualified scientific and lay colleagues.

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If 'No', because these laws do not exist in your country, please state this. Alternatively, if you carried out purely observational work so ethical permission was not considered necessary please state this both here and in the manuscript.

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Question 3: Were fishes killed during or at the end of your experiment (e.g. for tissue sampling)? NO

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[Type text] [Type text] 14/07/15

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1 **Title:** Understanding and managing fish populations: keeping the toolbox fit for
2 purpose

3 **Running title:** Tools for understanding fish populations

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36

37 **Abstract**

38 Wild fish populations are currently experiencing unprecedented pressures, which are
39 projected to intensify in the coming decades. Developing a thorough understanding
40 of the influences of both biotic and abiotic factors on fish populations is a salient
41 issue in contemporary fish conservation and management. During the 50th
42 Anniversary of the Fisheries Society of the British Isles, University of Exeter, 2017,
43 scientists from diverse research backgrounds gathered to discuss key topics under
44 the broad umbrella of 'Understanding Fish Populations'. Below, the output of one
45 such discussion group is detailed, focusing on tools used to investigate natural fish
46 populations. Five main groups of approaches were identified: (i) Tagging and
47 telemetry; (ii) Molecular tools; (iii) Survey tools; (iv) Statistical and modelling tools;
48 and (v) Tissue analyses. The appraisal covered current challenges and potential
49 solutions for each of these topics. In addition, three key themes were identified as
50 applicable across all tool-based applications. These included data management,
51 public engagement, and fisheries policy and governance. The continued innovation
52 of tools and capacity to integrate interdisciplinary approaches into the future
53 assessment and management of fish populations is highlighted as an important
54 focus for the next 50 years of fisheries research.

55 Key words: archaeology, genetics, modelling, surveys, stable isotopes, telemetry

56

57 **Introduction**

58 Approximately 30% of fish species have been overexploited (FAO, 2014),
59 representing significant losses to biodiversity, ecosystem services and
60 socioeconomic contributions (Worm et al., 2009). In light of the increasing challenges
61 presented by climate change and other natural and anthropogenic stressors (Gordon
62 et al., 2018), an improved understanding of fish populations is critical to facilitate
63 effective management and conservation initiatives. During the summer of 2017, the
64 Fisheries Society of the British Isles (FSBI) held its 50th Anniversary Symposium
65 under the broad umbrella of 'Understanding Fish Populations'. To highlight key
66 knowledge gaps and opportunities, we detail the outcome of a working group
67 convened at the symposium, which was tasked with considering the theme of 'Tools
68 for understanding fish populations'. The scope of the discussion spanned diverse
69 areas including spatial ecology and migration patterns, genetics and evolutionary
70 biology, physiology, trophic ecology, and developmental and population biology. In
71 this article, we consider major advances in the use of tools across broad areas of
72 fish biology, and identify knowledge gaps and potential solutions in each area in
73 order to guide and inform future research, and to better understand and protect wild
74 fish populations.

75

76 **Tagging and telemetry**

77 A significant problem hampering the study of fish, marine benthic species in
78 particular, is that of determining their geographical locations at fine scales, over long
79 durations. Tagging and telemetry involves the application of external and or internal

80 tags or devices to manually or passively track fish movement (Cooke et al., 2013).
81 Both forms can be particularly challenging in the marine environment, though manual
82 tracking can work well at feeding grounds and at spawning aggregations (e.g.
83 Murchie et al., 2015), while passive tracking has valuable applications along known
84 migration routes (Dahlgren et al., 2016), for example, as anadromous/catadromous
85 species migrate in and out of river estuaries (Lauridsen et al., 2017). Suites of tools
86 exist for such tasks (e.g. acoustic transmitters, PIT and Floy™ tags, radio, archival,
87 etc.) and have been routinely used to understand the spatial ecology of a range of
88 fish taxa (Bograd et al., 2010). With technological improvements in tags and tracking
89 equipment, the field has grown vastly in recent decades (see reviews by Pine et al.,
90 2003; Jepsen et al., 2015). We briefly highlight some of the tags and telemetry
91 options commonly used by researchers along with a discussion of some of the
92 limitations and challenges associated with these tools.

93 Archival data storage tags (DSTs), which collect data on both the internal and/or
94 external environments of fish are the only method available to assess internal states
95 (e.g. bioenergetics, Cooke et al., 2016). However, DSTs currently only provide
96 information on the environment experienced by the tagged fish if the tag is
97 recovered, meaning these data are lost if recapture rates are low, often the case in
98 fish tagging surveys. Communication History Acoustic Tags (so called 'CHATs'),
99 which transmit data to nearby transponder receivers are a promising alternative.
100 Since there have been relatively few uses of this tag type (Voegeli et al., 2001; Hight
101 & Lowe, 2007), there is potential for development in this area. Pop-off DSTs are also
102 becoming available and will no doubt prove very useful once problems associated
103 with size and recoverability are resolved.

Commented [JP1]: DSTs are perhaps the only tool to look at internal states, and recovery is possible for territorial species or those that converge in one place. A good reference here would be Cooke, S. J., Brownscombe, J. W., Raby, G. D., Broell, F., Hinch, S. G., Clark, T. D., & Semmens, J. M. (2016). Remote bioenergetics measurements in wild fish: opportunities and challenges. *Comparative Biochemistry and Physiology Part A: Molecular & Integrative Physiology*, 202, 23-37.

104 Pop-up satellite archival tags (PSATs), which detach from the tagged fish after some
105 time at sea and transmit telemetry data to overpassing satellites, are currently limited
106 in terms of hardware, software and satellite reception. PSATs are large, so are
107 limited in use for larger, often highly migratory individuals, and may also affect fish
108 behaviour (Methling et al., 2011). Additionally, battery failure, antenna damage, or
109 mechanical failure may limit registration or transmission of data (Hays et al., 2007;
110 Musyl et al., 2011). PSAT technology is relatively new, so future reductions in size
111 and weight and also improvement in reliability can be expected. In terms of software,
112 PSATs currently only transmit limited amounts of data due to transmission costs and
113 the short time that the receiving satellite is above the horizon. Future software
114 development is required to reduce transmission costs, optimise data transmission
115 and provide more flexibility for users to tailor controls, in order to provide higher
116 resolution data at the desired temporal scale. An increase in the number of satellite
117 platforms that can receive PSAT data would help to improve reception issues.
118 Interference on frequencies selected for tags at certain geographical locations (see
119 Musyl et al., 2011) also requires consideration.

120 Acoustic telemetry offers autonomous, continuous monitoring (Heupel et al., 2006)
121 and has the potential to significantly enhance our understanding of marine predator
122 habitat use, activity patterns and resource partitioning (Hussey et al., 2015). Acoustic
123 arrays have been used in many studies in elucidating fish movements (e.g.
124 Papastamatiou et al., 2013; Lea et al., 2016), and transmitters have been used more
125 innovatively to measure trophic interactions (Halfyard et al., 2017). Issues remain
126 however, for example, in the significant cost and effort involved in deploying and
127 maintaining acoustic arrays.

Commented [JP2]:

also the potential to measure trophic interactions eg
Halfyard, E. A., Webber, D., Del Papa, J., Leadley, T.,
Kessel, S. T., Colborne, S. F. and Fisk, A. T. (2017),
Evaluation of an acoustic telemetry transmitter
designed to identify predation events. *Methods Ecol*
Evol. doi:10.1111/2041-210X.12726

128 Organisations such as the Ocean Tracking Network (Whoriskey et al., 2015), (OTN;
129 oceantrackingnetwork.org) and the Australian Animal Tracking Network both maintain
130 acoustic infra-structure in the form of deployed receivers (arrays or curtains) in key
131 ecological areas into which researchers are free to release tagged animals. These
132 initiatives substantially reduce the cost and risk associated with acoustic tracking
133 projects and similar approaches can be applied globally (for example, a European
134 tracking network is currently being developed). Furthermore, integration of
135 standardised data repositories along with a comprehensive set of analytical tools to
136 ensure rapid and sophisticated analysis of acoustic array data (Lea et al., 2016)
137 would lead to new insights into the spatial ecology of fish. Further technological
138 developments such as the use of AUVs to perform routine data download
139 operations, or even complement fixed acoustic receivers (Davis et al., 2016), will
140 make acoustic telemetry increasingly affordable and accessible to more researchers.
141 Continued collaborations with established regional and international tracking
142 networks, together with the ever-increasing sophistication, miniaturisation, durability
143 and cost reduction of tags promises an increasingly important role for acoustic
144 telemetry in our understanding of fish ecology.

145

146 **Molecular tools**

147 *Population genetics and genomics*

148 Using genetic tools to understand fish genetic diversity and population structure has
149 wide-ranging applications for evolutionary biology, and the conservation and

150 management of fish stocks. Until recently, molecular techniques such as
151 mitochondrial sequencing and the analysis of microsatellite loci have been used
152 most commonly to explore intra-specific variation in fish and many other organisms
153 (e.g. Ferguson & Danzmann, 1998; Chistiakov et al., 2006). More recently, however,
154 the increased availability and cost efficiency of high-throughput sequencing, which is
155 capable of producing millions of sequencing reads (e.g. RADseq, RNAseq), has
156 revolutionised the fields of population and conservation genetics (Allendorf et al.,
157 2010). It is however important to understand what extra information high-throughput
158 sequencing data can provide, the biases involved in study design and data
159 generation, and also how its usage might be optimised. Here, we seek to identify
160 knowledge gaps in the field of fish population genetics, and contemplate how this
161 area of research may evolve in the future.

162 Attaining high quality, clean DNA for large numbers of individuals is paramount for
163 downstream sequencing processes, but in some cases can be challenging.
164 Biological samples can often be compromised during sampling or transport,
165 potentially rendering field efforts futile. Population genetic studies on fish frequently
166 require sampling from river transects or remote locations at sea, and so portable
167 laboratories for sampling, storing and extracting DNA would be welcomed. At the
168 same time, emerging technologies, e.g. the MinION USB sequencer
169 (nanoporetech.com/products/minion), have the potential to revolutionise when and where
170 genetic data can be generated. Most new technologies are currently restricted to
171 sequencing small genomes, such as those of bacteria, but with on-going
172 improvements, these technologies open up the possibility of being able to sequence
173 DNA in real-time in the field (Hayden, 2015). Recently, the MinION technology has
174 started to be used in hybrid assemblies with Illumina short reads (Austin et al., 2017)

175 and *de novo* eukaryotic genomes (including fish) are in progress (Jansen et al.,
176 2017).

177 Alongside population genetic studies, research based on whole genome data is
178 emerging, and the genomes of several commercially important species have now
179 been published (e.g. Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*), Star et al., 2011; Atlantic salmon
180 (*Salmo salar*), Lien et al., 2016). However, while the ever-reducing cost of whole
181 genome sequencing provides opportunities to sequence and publish more fish
182 genomes, in our view, the key priority is not simply publishing genomes, but also
183 high-quality genome annotation. Gene annotation and accurate knowledge of the
184 function of different identified regions is of extreme importance if genomic tools are
185 to be used reliably in conservation and management (Ekblom & Wolf, 2014).
186 Therefore, projects such as the 'Functional Annotation of All Salmonid Genomes'
187 (Macqueen et al., 2017) should be encouraged and developed. It is also important
188 not to underestimate or neglect the computing power and bioinformatics expertise
189 required to produce high quality genome scaffolds and annotations, and also to
190 recognise and account for biases in next generation sequencing data (see Benestan
191 et al., 2017).

192 Furthermore, population genetic approaches are usually focused on a single
193 species. Consequently, there is a mismatch between studies of a single species
194 genotyped at high resolution, but generally at small spatial scales (e.g. population
195 genetics, often using hundreds to thousands of markers through GBS or GWAS) and
196 studies of multiple species at larger spatial scales but using lower resolution markers
197 (e.g. phylogeography or biodiversity assessments using metabarcoding or mtDNA
198 sequencing). Nonetheless, the widespread application of molecular resources has

199 led to the accumulation of rich datasets across a broad range of species,
200 geographical regions and time periods (Blanchet et al., 2017). Accordingly, we
201 anticipate that this aggregation of data may allow the underlying processes that drive
202 genetic variability across these regions and times to be revealed, enabling a broader
203 testing of theories in population genetics and evolution (Ellegren & Galtier, 2016;
204 Pauls et al., 2014).

205 Such studies will require the combination of high genetic resolution markers across
206 large spatial scales, which is a non-trivial task, especially when dealing with non-
207 model species. Three challenges arise in such cases: firstly, the financial investment
208 required to obtain reliable datasets for several species remains significant. Despite
209 reductions in sequencing costs, it may be financially sensible to rely on more
210 classical markers such as microsatellites or small subsets of single nucleotide
211 polymorphisms (SNPs). Secondly, there is a need for a standardised framework in
212 order to make datasets comparable across different species and regions. This
213 standardisation must occur when collecting samples, characterising markers (e.g.
214 Ellis et al., 2011; Helyar et al., 2011) and during the subsequent data analysis to
215 streamline user choices (Paris et al., 2017), which may bias the biological
216 interpretation of data, see Rodríguez-Ezpeleta et al. (2016). It is therefore important
217 that researchers use common methods to isolate and characterise markers for entire
218 sets of focal species, and/or provide full access to detailed analyses when datasets
219 are generated.

220 Finally, as multi-species approaches remain scarce, there is a need to define
221 hypotheses at the beginning of such investigations. In this respect, simulation tools
222 (e.g. Laval & Excoffier, 2004; Peng & Kimmal, 2005; Neuenschwander, 2006) are

223 particularly useful for testing complex hypotheses and also for predictive purposes.
224 Moreover, the integration of mathematical and statistical models with fish population
225 genetics would be useful for revealing genotype-phenotype interactions (Ritchie et
226 al., 2015), evolutionary signatures (Stark et al., 2007), functional DNA elements
227 (Schridder & Kern, 2014), spatial dynamics (Guillot et al., 2009) and species-genetic
228 diversity correlations (SGDC; Vellend 2003; Vellend et al., 2014).

229

230 *Environmental DNA*

231 The use of environmental DNA (eDNA) to identify the presence and understand the
232 distribution of fish has expanded rapidly in the last decade. eDNA is a polydisperse
233 mixture (Turner et al., 2014; Wilcox et al., 2015) of various biological material
234 ranging from entire cellular fragments to extracellular DNA, which is isolated from
235 environmental samples such as water or sediment. Such techniques are used for
236 species identification and food security purposes. Universal primers that target
237 mitochondrial DNA can be applied for identifying species presence (Yamamoto et al.,
238 2016) or to gain information about species natural history (e.g. food web
239 construction, Sousa et al. (2016)).

240 An important component of this work is validating the results from eDNA surveys
241 with traditional fish survey methods. In both freshwater and marine environments,
242 eDNA has compared favourably to traditional fish survey methods (Thomsen et al.,
243 2012; Hänfling et al., 2016). However, eDNA was found to be less effective
244 compared to experienced snorkel surveys (Ulibarri et al., 2017). This underpins the
245 importance of validation with traditional techniques, especially in spatially
246 heterogeneous and complex aquatic environments (Shogren et al., 2017).

247 The development of effective PCR primers is central to the successful application of
248 eDNA (e.g. Freeland, 2016; MacDonald & Sarre, 2017). As a result, a vast range of
249 primer sets are available for fishes (e.g. Doi et al., 2015; Clusa et al., 2017).
250 Metabarcoding primers, that simultaneously amplify eDNA from many fish species,
251 have also been developed for monitoring entire fish communities (Miya et al., 2015;
252 Valentini et al., 2016).

253 Beyond inferring if a fish species is present in the sampled location, researchers
254 have begun to investigate if eDNA can provide further information regarding fish
255 populations. The use of eDNA to infer population level variation has been
256 demonstrated (Uchii et al., 2015; Sigsgaard et al., 2016), but is still in its infancy.
257 Similarly, although attempts to link eDNA concentration and fish biomass have
258 shown promising results (Lacoursière-Rousse et al., 2016; Yamamoto et al., 2016),
259 further development is required to improve the accuracy of these measurements.

260 However, for techniques utilising eDNA to be optimised, preexisting molecular
261 information needs to be accessible. A number of publicly available databases (e.g.
262 NCBI Genbank and BOLD - boldsystems.org) hold a vast array of molecular data but
263 there is still a need for further mitochondrial genome sequencing to allow optimal
264 usage of molecular identification techniques.

265

266 *Microbiomes*

267 Analysis of a microbiome can provide novel insights into the health and biology of
268 fish populations. Traditional culture-dependent tools used to map the commensal

269 microbiota community in teleost fish are often time-consuming, expensive and
270 subjected to bias as only 0.1-10% of bacteria can be cultured *in vitro* (Amann et al.,
271 1995; Austin, 2006). More recently, rapid culture-independent tools such as 16S
272 rRNA targeted sequencing have been utilised to provide detailed profiles of the
273 structure and diversity of the microbiota residing on the mucosal surface of fish
274 (Ghanbari et al., 2015).

275 The gut microbiome composition has also become an important biomarker for
276 understanding the influence of stress in fish (Llewellyn et al., 2014), as numerous
277 stressful stimuli have been shown to alter the microbiome composition (Xia et al.,
278 2014; Gaulke et al., 2016). The gut microbiome composition can provide insights into
279 the ecology and physiology of fish in a range of areas such as ecological speciation
280 (Sevellec et al., 2014), the biology of migratory fish (Llewellyn et al., 2016), trophic
281 interactions within ecosystems (Ingerslev et al., 2014) and adaptation to extreme
282 environments (Song et al., 2016).

283 There are a number of challenges currently facing fish microbiome research. At
284 present, the majority of data regarding the microbiome composition in wild teleost
285 fish originates from laboratory models (Tarnecki et al., 2017). More studies are
286 required to see if captive-reared animals provide a reliable analogue for wild
287 populations. Standardised protocols for collecting and generating microbiome data
288 are also lacking, which could restrict progress as several processes have the
289 potential to introduce differential bias in microbiota profiles (e.g. Salipante et al.,
290 2014; Hart et al., 2015). Adopting a framework of robust, quality-controlled protocols
291 (e.g. similar to human microbiome research Methé et al., (2012)) would be of great
292 benefit. In addition, there is currently a lack of non-invasive protocols for conducting

293 longitudinal or repeated sampling of the gut microbial community in individual fish
294 over time. The application of rectal swabs (Budding et al., 2014) for sampling the
295 vent of fish could provide a non-invasive strategy for collecting microbiome data from
296 individuals over time. Finally, time-series data could also enhance our knowledge in
297 terms of the functional aspects of host lifecycles and the stability and resilience of
298 microbiota (Goodrich et al., 2014).

299

300 **Survey Tools**

301 *Field-based surveys*

302 Fish population assessments are conducted using a wide range of techniques; the
303 advantages, limitations, personnel requirements and health and safety
304 considerations of each are presented in **Table 1**. It is encouraging to note that even
305 well-established methods such as hydro-acoustics are continually being improved,
306 while emerging tools such as eDNA (see above) are beginning to be included in
307 routine monitoring. We suggest that integrating methods and data series are key
308 priorities for future research in this field.

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309 In large and complex habitats it is often the case that a suite of survey
310 methodologies has to be employed to sample different times, habitats and species
311 effectively. Indeed, an advantage of field-based surveys is the ability to generate
312 information from both fishery-independent (Nash et al., 2016) and fishery-dependent
313 (Shin et al., 2010) data. However, the availability of a diversity of methodologies, can
314 make the task of assessment in these habitats even more costly; issues also remain

315 over how to use often disparate data types to develop a sound understanding of a
316 fishery. Integrating methods represents a key means of improving data resolution
317 from such field surveys. For instance, methods such as eDNA and hydro-acoustic
318 sampling provide comparatively fast and non-invasive estimates of fish community
319 structure and biomass. However, to obtain a thorough understanding of fish
320 populations, this information must be combined with fish age, size and health data
321 obtained via destructive sampling (e.g. gill netting). As yet, there are no structured,
322 universally agreed guidelines on which methods should be integrated to obtain a
323 thorough assessment of population dynamics from a specific habitat type.

324 Fish survey methodologies are typically determined at a national level, making
325 international comparisons of data extremely challenging. In recent years,
326 standardised protocols initiated through the EU Water Framework Directive have
327 facilitated Europe-wide assessments of fish community structure. Such international
328 standardisation is essential when assessing the impact of anthropogenic effects on
329 fish (see Gordon et al., 2018), and we recommend that efforts are made to make
330 national datasets available using standardised metadata and biodiversity
331 information, ideally via open sharing platforms (e.g. freshwaterplatform.eu).

332

333 *Historical records*

334 Historical records (e.g. catch records) can also be useful in helping to extrapolate
335 population data back into the recent past. Libraries and historical societies often hold
336 picture archives and these images can in some instances be used as a form of

337 historical survey data to provide information on past community composition and size
338 distributions (McClenachan, 2009). Historical records of catch data are typically held
339 by government agencies or can be found in local archives (e.g. angling club logs)
340 and corporate records. Such data have been used successfully to reconstruct fish
341 populations back to the late 1800s (Thurstan & Roberts, 2010; Thurstan et al., 2010).
342 Catch reconstruction approaches can also provide useful insights into fishery trends
343 that may not be apparent from Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) reported
344 data alone (Smith & Zeller, 2015; Zeller et al., 2015). Although limited to the
345 information that is still available and subject to the often-unidentifiable biases of the
346 individuals who originally recorded the data, such data can provide a unique way to
347 extrapolate population data back in time.

348

349 **Statistical and modelling tools**

350 *Bayesian methods* - Reliable estimates of demographic parameters (e.g. abundance,
351 survival, growth rates and fecundity) and an understanding of the processes that
352 regulate these parameters are fundamental for sustainable management of fish
353 populations. However, to understand the ecological processes and to truly inform
354 policy, researchers must use multiple data sources, provide links between
355 management actions and population responses and also estimate uncertainty as a
356 prerequisite to making forecasts that provide useful information. Bayesian methods
357 in ecology and conservation biology are now increasingly being used to explore
358 these links, for example, in stable isotope analyses (see below). Indeed, the
359 Bayesian framework provides an intuitive method for estimating parameters,

Commented [JP4]: Bayesian techniques are also being used for SIA analyses, and this would provide a link into the next section.

360 expressing uncertainty in these estimates and allows for the incorporation of as
361 much or as little existing data or prior knowledge that is available (Ellison, 2004).
362 However, to develop the use of this specific framework in fish ecology and
363 management, there is a need to educate and train fish biologists in the use of
364 Bayesian principles and methods.

365 *Individual-based models (IBMs)* are process-based mechanistic computer models
366 that simulate emergent properties of fish biology, behaviour, traits or group
367 characteristics, based on simple heuristic functions, and their use has grown
368 exponentially (e.g. DeAngelis & Mooij, 2005) as computational power has increased
369 (DeAngelis & Grimm, 2014). Several separate individual-based models were
370 presented at the 50th Symposium of the FSBI, and, with continued increases in
371 computational power, IBMs look set to offer powerful new avenues for population
372 research (DeAngelis & Grimm, 2014) in computationally challenging multifactor
373 systems such as fish ecotoxicology (e.g. Mintram et al., 2017). Additionally, a variety
374 of tools now exist which provide for the easier creation of new models, such as
375 various R packages (see: derekogle.com/fishR/packages) and programmable
376 environments (e.g. NetLogo; ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/). However, programs such
377 as R are sometimes not intuitive to new users, and so additional training for fisheries
378 scientists and collaborations between scientists from different computational and
379 statistical backgrounds would be advantageous. For more robust future application
380 of IBMs within fisheries science, there is a need for more assessment of the relative
381 strengths and weaknesses (and potential availability and future development) of the
382 different models.

Commented [JP5]: be good to also highlight
NetLogo <https://ccl.northwestern.edu/netlogo/>

Commented [JP6]: I think this section could include
a short paragraph on the availability of cutting-edge
frequentist statistical tools within freeware such as R.
Example citation could be
Bolker, B.M., Brooks, M.E., Clark, C.J., Geange, S.W.,
Poulsen, J.R., Stevens, M.H.H. & White, J.S.S. (2009)
Generalized linear mixed models: a practical guide
for ecology and evolution. *Trends in Ecology &
Evolution*, 24, 127-135.

Integration with environmental data is a pertinent issue when modelling and is becoming easier through developments in geographic information systems (GIS) and other programming environments (such as R), which now include procedures and libraries for use in ecological work. One example is the use of food web models that integrate environmental data (e.g. Christensen & Walters, 2004) and coral reef ecosystem modelling methods (e.g. Rogers et al., 2014; Weijerman et al., 2015). A hindrance to the integration of environmental data into fisheries science is that it can be difficult to find and access data sources, although availability and accessibility of such data is improving (e.g. worldclim.org). The existence of a central node or hub with paths to these data sources would be useful.

393

394 Tissue analysis

395 *Stable isotope ecology*

Stable isotopes are now routinely used to quantify the trophic ecology (Boecklen et al., 2011) and migration history (Trueman et al., 2012) of fishes, or to identify community level patterns in food web structure and resource use (Layman et al., 2012). Although the technique is still in its relative infancy, stable isotope ecology has advanced much in recent decades. Below we outline four areas of rapid development with potential to enhance the applicability of this tool to studies of fish biology.

Biochemical mechanism: The relationship between the isotopic composition of a consumer's tissues and that of its prey is fundamental to all applications of stable

Commented [JP7]: Also you could highlight the use of food web models to integrate data eg Christensen, V. & Walters, C.J. (2004) Ecosim with Ecosim: methods, capabilities and limitations. Ecological Modelling, 172, 109-139. Weijerman, M., Fulton, E.A., Kaplan, I.C., Gorton, R., Leemans, R., Mooij, W.M. & Brainard, R.E. (2015) An integrated coral reef ecosystem model to support resource management under a changing climate. PLoS ONE, 10, e0144165. Rogers, A., Blanchard, J.L. & Mumby, P.J. (2014) Vulnerability of coral reef fisheries to a loss of structural complexity. Current Biology, 24, 1000-1005.

405 isotopes in ecology. However, while general principles are clear (i.e. faster reaction
406 rates and preferential incorporation of light isotopes into excretory metabolites a
407 process termed trophic fractionation (DeNiro & Epstein, 1977)), the precise
408 mechanisms leading to fractionation and, particularly, the extent of isotopic
409 fractionation expected under differing physiological conditions cannot currently be
410 predicted, primarily due to the complexity of amino acid biochemistry. Uncertainties
411 associated with the isotopic expression of tissue composition, and relative rates of
412 tissue growth and regeneration further complicate the interpretation of stable isotope
413 values in ecology. However, recent information gained from compound-specific
414 isotope analysis (i.e. assessing isotopic compositions of single amino acids) is
415 beginning to shed light on the fractionation process (McMahon & McCarthy, 2016).

416 *Population-level data:* The distribution of isotopic compositions of individuals within a
417 population (often termed the 'isotopic niche', Newsome et al., 2007) has been
418 proposed as a powerful comparative measure of population-level ecological
419 characters. However, in addition to individual variability in consumers, the distribution
420 of isotopic compositions in a population is influenced by spatial and temporal
421 variations in the isotopic composition of primary production, temporal variability
422 within trophic linkages and differential rates of growth and isotopic assimilation
423 (Gorokhova, 2017). Very few studies have attempted to combine ecological and food
424 web theory with isotope systematics to explore the sensitivity of community isotopic
425 metrics to changes in food web structure and function.

426 *IsoBank:* To date, applications of stable isotopes to fish biology have predominantly
427 focussed on analyses of specific populations or communities. The absence of a
428 centralised, open-access repository for stable isotope data restricts the opportunity

429 for syntheses or meta-analyses of stable isotope data (Pauli et al., 2017). Recent
430 efforts to address this have found broad support from the stable isotope research
431 community (Pauli et al., 2017) and would be especially beneficial to fish biologists
432 due to the large amount of fish isotope data currently available. Defining an ontology
433 of stable isotope metadata, information required to describe and interpret isotope
434 data, for fish biologists is an immediate requirement in this regard.

435 *Marine isoscapes:* The stable isotope ratios of a consumer's tissue encode the
436 resources (water, air, prey etc.) it was using when that tissue was formed. As such,
437 provided one has access to a suite of isotopic baseline measurements (e.g. water,
438 plants and primary consumers), it is possible to trace an organisms route through
439 space and time up to the point of capture (Trueman et al., 2012). Creation of a
440 practically useful isoscape requires relatively dense sampling of a reference
441 organism across space (and potentially time). Bulk stable isotope analyses are now
442 routine, commonly available globally, and relatively cheap, and regional marine
443 isoscape models are being developed at a rapid rate (MacKenzie et al., 2014; Kurle
444 & McWhorter, 2017). In the open ocean, sample-based isoscapes are difficult to
445 develop, but progress is being made in isotope-enabled global biogeochemical
446 models (Magozzi et al., 2017), offering temporal and spatial models of expected
447 isotopic variability at global scales. Improving the precision, accuracy and availability
448 of these baseline measurements will increase the robustness and precision of
449 isotope based estimates animal position.

450

451 *Archaeological material*

452 Archaeological material can allow an otherwise impossible snapshot into past
453 populations. Traditional morphological approaches can provide age distributions and
454 species ranges, and, with the rapid development of biomolecular archaeology in the
455 past 20 years, many of the techniques used to explore modern fish populations can
456 now be used to look into the past. From ancient DNA to proteomics, and isotopes to
457 lipids, a wide range of biomolecules have been recovered and explored from
458 archaeological material (Orton, 2016). For example, compound-specific isotope
459 analysis has the potential to track trophic level changes through time (McClelland &
460 Montoya, 2002; Naito et al., 2016). Population genetics of extinct populations have
461 been successfully explored in terrestrial animals (Chang & Shapiro, 2016; Murray et
462 al., 2017) and these same techniques can be used on fish bones to reconstruct past
463 genetics (Iwamoto et al., 2012; Ólafsdóttir et al., 2014). Ideally these data will be
464 used to understand environmental and anthropogenic effects on fish populations and
465 how modern fish populations might respond to climate change and fishing pressures.

466 A major barrier to the use of archaeological fish material is the fact that less than
467 10% of fish bones are identified to species (Wheeler & Jones, 1989; Gobalet, 2001)
468 and much of what is identified is buried in the 'grey literature' of archaeological
469 reports that are often not digitised and printed in small quantities (Linden & Webley,
470 2012). This makes the material relevant to an ecological question very difficult to
471 find. Archaeologists are working towards ways to improve the amount of bones
472 identified by better reference collections and education on fish bones (National
473 Zooarchaeological Reference Resource, Nottingham's Archaeological Fish
474 Resource, Vertebra@UWF) and on creating searchable databases of archaeological
475 material (Callou, 2009; Kansa, 2010). In addition, new ZooMS (Zooarchaeology by
476 Mass Spectrometry) techniques are being explored to quickly identify even small

477 bones and scales to species using peptide mass fingerprinting (Richter et al., 2011)
478 which will allow even more material to be identified in a useful way for those working
479 on understanding fish populations. In the near future, it should be possible for
480 modern fish biologists, in conjunction with archaeologists, to ask direct questions of
481 past populations (Van Neer & Ervynck, 2010).

482

483 **General topics identified as applicable across all themes**

484 *Management of data: integration, calibration and standardisation*

485 Progression of an integrated management framework for data classification,
486 characterisation, storage and accessibility would be a valuable resource for fish and
487 fisheries biologists. FishBase, which at the time of writing contains information
488 regarding 33,600 fishes, involving 2290 collaborators, and receives over 600,000
489 visits per month, is an example of the potential for such a resource (see: fishbase.org;
490 Froese & Pauly, 2017). A single database for all types of fish data (for example,
491 DNA, tagging, isotopes, diet) is probably unworkable, but the advent of application
492 programming interfaces (API) and analytical software which allows automated
493 querying across multiple databases represents an unprecedented opportunity to
494 access a wealth of global data. Indeed, we suggest that more data (such as those
495 discussed here) could be integrated into FishBase. However, such resources require
496 significant funding and long-term commitment from governments and trans-national
497 organisations, e.g. NASCO.

498

Commented [JRS8]: why not suggest the integration of these data into Fishbase?

500 Scientific engagement with the public is essential to effect meaningful societal
501 change or to ensure a wider consensus is made around new discoveries or ethical
502 considerations. Additionally, however, the power of the public as a “tool” in science is
503 also being increasingly recognised. ‘Crowdfunding’, whereby a scientist requests
504 small amounts of money from a large number of interested individuals to
505 successfully launch a project, potentially provides a powerful new way to raise funds,
506 overcoming some of the difficulties of raising money from traditional grant bodies,
507 especially for early career researchers or those in developing countries (Wheat et al.,
508 2013).

509 In addition to funding science, the public can also actively engage in the process of
510 research directly through citizen science projects. Whilst research conducted by non-
511 professionals is certainly not a new concept, the numbers of projects involving citizen
512 scientists are growing, especially in the fields of environmental science and ecology
513 (Silverton, 2009). Through catch records of amateur anglers and commercial net
514 fishery data extending back many years, research into fish and fisheries is uniquely
515 placed to benefit from citizen science projects (Stuart-Smith et al., 2013), which have
516 effectively spanned generations of contributors. Similarly, REEF (reef.org) has been
517 collecting reef fish diversity and abundance data from trained volunteer divers for 27
518 years, and the data have been successfully leveraged in hundreds of publications
519 (e.g. Stallings, 2009; Serafy et al., 2015). Citizen science can also help achieve
520 important social outcomes, e.g. in establishing sustainable fisheries and marine
521 protected areas, MPAs (Bonney et al., 2014). And, as with crowdfunding, the best

522 examples of citizen science typically encourage deeper engagement with the public,
523 and offer a pathway to the democratisation of science.

524

525 *Fisheries policy and governance*

526 Conserving critical habitats is central to the sustainable management of fish species
527 and populations. Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), networks of MPAs and Marine
528 Conservation Zones (MCZs) are widely accepted management tools for fish and
529 other marine organisms that have been established in many countries (Harborne et
530 al., 2008; OSPAR, 2013). However, the design of MPA networks could benefit
531 greatly from the integration of traditional survey data, along with modelling and
532 connectivity data (Botsford et al., 2009; Grüss et al., 2014). From a social science
533 perspective, there is a need to better understand public perceptions of marine-
534 related conservation issues, e.g. fishery regulations, MPAs and MCZs, and to
535 incorporate these data into fisheries policy and governance frameworks. For
536 example, there is high public support for MPAs, with surveys showing that people
537 desire around 40% of the UK's marine waters to be protected (Hawkins et al., 2016).
538 But, while the public appears to realise that in reality levels of coverage are well
539 below 40%, there is still a substantial disconnect between perceived coverage of
540 highly protected UK MPAs (11%) and actual MPA coverage (<0.1%); ultimately, this
541 means that people believe the UK oceans receive a higher level of conservation than
542 in reality they do (Hawkins et al., 2016). Developing and implementing effective
543 policies for fisheries management remains challenging because of the complexities
544 of fisheries and the socio-political landscape under which they typically operate

Commented [JP9]: I felt this section and the next (Aquaculture) felt out of place for the scope of the paper, and could be cut. The paper has a nice focus on tools for studying fish and fisheries, and these sections move towards conservation science. Each is a huge topic that can only be covered very briefly, and the reader is left wondering why the authors don't address quotas, gear restrictions, management of migrating species and so on.

Commented [JS10]: I know what Ref 2 means, but I'd like to keep it in. Certainly, from one view point, MPAs do constitute an important tool in fisheries conservation and management.

545 (Jentoft & Chuenpagdee, 2009). However, the establishment of guidelines or
546 frameworks for fisheries policy and governance (e.g. FAO Voluntary Guidelines for
547 Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries) have the potential to better address
548 these challenges and provide appropriate implementable solutions.

549

Commented [JRS11]: Entire Aquaculture section deleted.

550 **Conclusions**

551 Across all five of the research themes identified here, it is clear that innovative and
552 novel tools are being employed to understand all aspects of the biology of fish
553 populations. Notwithstanding, the authors call for the continued development of
554 these new and emerging techniques. In particular, there is a need for better
555 integration of these methods and resulting data, to inform scientifically sound
556 management and conservation of fish populations.

557 However, it should be noted that, not infrequently, revolutionary methods have been
558 pedestalled as providing the ability to offer unprecedented novel answers to long-
559 standing practical problems. Unfortunately, the danger is that such methods can (by
560 their novelty and the excitement surrounding them), blinker scientists into posing
561 questions that showcase the methodology, rather than the biology (for example, the
562 plethora of papers that emerged in the early 1990s extolling the virtues of the
563 random amplified polymorphic DNA (RAPD) technique). The potentially reduced
564 power of using any technique on its own (new or otherwise), in isolation of other
565 apparently ‘antiquated’ methods can turn out to be unnecessarily restrictive. Every
566 technique has its limitations, but often the restrictions of one tool can be substantially
567 alleviated by the inclusion of another approach (e.g. Goodwin et al., 2016; Nielson et
568 al., 2017), the marriage of which can provide a new angle for researching

Commented [JP12]: the conclusions make some interesting points about combining techniques, but I think it also needs to call for the continued development of new and emerging techniques, since this is a focus of the paper.

569 challenging biological problems. It is important that both traditional and emerging
570 tools remain in the toolbox of fish biology research.

571 Likewise, when genetic-based assignment became popular, many researchers
572 naively believed the days of tagging fish were over. It is now realised that due to the
573 many stochastic drivers of population structure, genetic stock identification-based
574 methodologies such as genetic assignment, do not always succeed. In such cases,
575 there remains a significant role for tagging in fisheries research. As tag sizes
576 decrease, and the deleterious effects of tag insertions on fish also decrease, we can
577 anticipate that genetics and tagging will both continue to have a role to play. The
578 importance of the relative roles of each technique will depend on the questions being
579 addressed, the population structure of the study species, and the scale of the
580 questions being assessed.

581 A final example, which highlights the importance of applying inter-disciplinary and
582 complimentary tools for understanding fish populations, was a five-year, multi-
583 agency, EU-funded project investigating the migration and distribution of Atlantic
584 salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) in the north-east Atlantic (the SALSEA project; NASCO
585 2008). The purpose was to understand not just where salmon go, but what they eat,
586 migration routes to feeding grounds, and which waters and regions they pass
587 through. The SALSEA project used a combination of genetics (microsatellites),
588 stable isotope analysis, at-sea trawls, tagging and gut contents analysis to assess
589 the movements and diet of Atlantic salmon across the north-east Atlantic Ocean. As
590 a result of applying these combined approaches, salmon post-smolt movements
591 have been confidently ascertained (Gilbey et al., 2017). Nonetheless, even while this
592 comprehensive study was being finalised, a similarly broad-ranging study was also
593 being undertaken using SNPs (Bourret et al., 2013). Arguably, this method offers

594 both the potential for finer levels of stock discrimination and the ability to better
595 explore patterns among functional loci, which may make microsatellite-based
596 analysis redundant within a short period of time (though see Narum et al., 2008).

597 Thus, the authors consider the continued development of emerging tools, together
598 with the use of multiple methodologies and inter-disciplinary approaches, to
599 represent the best avenues for further improving our understanding of fish
600 populations. We implore scientists from unrelated fields to collaborate on such
601 projects. The FSBI 50th Anniversary Symposium represented one such event, where
602 fish-focused researchers across diverse fields, came together to advance the state
603 of fish biology.

604 **Acknowledgements**

605 We thank the organising committee of the 50th Anniversary Fisheries Society of the
606 British Isles Symposium, for enabling the working group discussion that led to the
607 development of this review. Thank you also to the University of Exeter for hosting the
608 50th Anniversary Symposium and to the numerous sponsors for funding its success.

609

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Table 1. Summary of popular current and emerging methods used for fish surveys along with the associated advantages and limitations of each method.

Method	Advantages	Limitations	Manpower requirement	Health & Safety consideration
Electric fishing	<div>1. Can be used in flowing and still water, amongst macrophytes and obstructions</div> <div>2. Relatively unselective</div> <div>3. Can be used quantitatively</div>	<div>1. Inefficient in water > 1 – 1.5m or in wide reaches</div> <div>2. Limited by water and bed conductivity</div> <div>3. Can be harmful to sensitive fish species and life stages</div> <div>4. Invasive</div>	Significant to high	High
Seine netting	<div>1. Can be used quantitatively</div> <div>2. Efficiency well-understood</div> <div>3. Relatively unselective</div>	<div>1. Limited effectiveness in very deep or very shallow water</div> <div>2. Limited effectiveness where there are macrophytes, obstructions, or soft sediment</div> <div>3. Restricted to use in low velocity water bodies.</div> <div>4. Invasive.</div>	High	Significant
Trawling	<div>1. Large areas of deep water can be surveyed efficiently</div>	<div>1. Restricted to use in relatively open continuous stretches of water of > 2m in depth.</div> <div>2. Cannot be used where there are dense macrophytes, very variable bed profiles or large</div>	High	High

		debris. 3. Requires sizeable boats and launching facilities. 4. Invasive.		
Gill-netting	1. Can be used in a wide variety of environments amongst debris and macrophytes, in almost any depth	1. Invasive / destructive 2. Limited ability to assess absolute fish abundance	Significant	Significant
Hydro-acoustics	1. Huge expanses of water can be surveyed efficiently 2. Non-invasive 3. Quantitative abundance estimates possible	1. Limited effectiveness in turbulent environments 2. Can only sample relatively open water so unsuitable to use for sampling in marginal habitats 3. Lacks capacity to differentiate between species 4. Cannot assess age, condition and health of fish	Significant	Significant
Fyke netting and trapping	1. Can be deployed in a variety of environments, 2. Can be effective for some species difficult to sample by other methods	1. Very species and size-selective 2. Limited ability to assess absolute fish abundance	Significant	Significant
Fry surveys – micromesh seine/handnet/traps	1. Focuses on margins of rivers and lakes, therefore less resource intensive, simple equipment only 2. Assesses a key life stage 3. Relatively unselective	1. Only assesses juvenile populations 2. Invasive – very young fish unlikely to survive capture	Significant	Significant
Fish counters /fixed traps	1. Good for assessing highly mobile fish with relatively	1. Resource intensive – high capital costs, maintenance 2. Quantitative assessment for	High	Significant

(sometimes accompanied by camera/video recorder)	predictable migration patterns	migratory species only 3. Often only operational under certain environmental conditions		
Rod-and-line	1. Adaptable, can be deployed almost anywhere 2. Amenable to volunteer/citizen science participation	1. Very effort-dependent (quantity and quality) 2. Strongly influenced by conditions 3. Very selective for species and size of fish 4. Limited capability to assess absolute fish abundance 5. Very noisy data	High	Low
Commercial fish catch monitoring	1. Enables large volumes of data collected over large spatial and temporal scales. 2. Relatively cheap – fish are being caught anyway	1. Can only happen where commercial fisheries exist. 2. Little control over changes in effort and methodology – driven by market forces 3. Strongly influenced by conditions	Low	Low
Visual surveys (snorkelling, counting from the bank)	1. Relatively non-invasive 2. Enables observation of fish in their surroundings	1. Only applicable in high water clarity and over short ranges 2. Mostly applicable to species with distinct individual home range, typically associated with physical habitat features.	Moderate	Significant to High
<i>Methods under development</i>				
eDNA (single-	1. Very adaptable, deployable	1. Currently can only establish fish presence and abundance of	Significant	Significant

target and meta barcoding)	<p>anywhere</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Non-invasive 3. Non-selective 4. Low field manpower requirement 	<p>species relative to each other – absolute abundance remains a challenge</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Cannot assess age, size, condition or health 3. Uncertainty around the source of eDNA in lotic environments 4. High laboratory time requirement 		
DIDSON /ARIS – high resolution sonar	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Can be used in turbid water, amongst obstructions 2. Can be used in a variety of depths and flows except very turbulent water Enables visualisation of target fish, species identification 3. Quantitative estimates possible Species (some) and size of fish can be identified 4. Observations of fish behaviour permissible 5. Non-invasive 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mobile deployment currently challenging 2. Limited ability to assess whole water body abundance 3. Limited species identification ability 4. High data-processing requirement 5. Cannot assess age, condition and health of fish 	Significant	Significant