

RevGadgets: an R Package for visualizing Bayesian phylogenetic analyses from RevBayes

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Abstract

1. Statistical phylogenetic methods are the foundation for a wide range of evolutionary and epidemiological studies. However, as these methods grow increasingly complex, users often encounter significant challenges with summarizing, visualizing, and communicating their key results.
2. We present *RevGadgets*, an R package for creating publication-quality figures from the results of a large variety of phylogenetic analyses performed in *RevBayes* (and other phylogenetic software packages).
3. We demonstrate how to use *RevGadgets* through a set of vignettes that cover the most common use cases that researchers will encounter.
4. *RevGadgets* is an open-source, extensible package that will continue to evolve in parallel with *RevBayes*, helping researchers to make sense of and communicate the results of a diverse array of analyses.

[Bayesian phylogenetics, data visualization, R, RevBayes]

1 Introduction

Beyond being a graphical representation of the Tree of Life, phylogenetic trees provide a rigorous basis for a wide range of evolutionary and epidemiological inferences. Phylogenetic methods allow researchers to understand how molecular and morphological traits evolve (Nei, 1987; Yang, 2014; Felsenstein, 1985; Harvey and Pagel, 1991), how lineages disperse over geographic space (Ronquist and Sanmartín, 2011), and how lineages diversify over time (Morlon, 2014), among other evolutionary phenomena. Additionally, phylogenetic methods can be used to inform conservation decisions (Faith,

1992) and are powerful epidemiological tools (Volz et al., 2013; Baele et al., 2017).

Phylogenetic methods are increasingly based on explicit probabilistic models with parameters that describe underlying evolutionary processes. As datasets grow and evolutionary hypotheses become more nuanced, these models necessarily become more complex. *RevBayes* (Höhna et al., 2016) is a Bayesian phylogenetic inference program that was developed to accommodate this increasing complexity and allows users to explore a vast space of phylogenetic models. Models in *RevBayes* are specified as probabilistic graphical models (Höhna et al., 2014), which are graphical representations of the

26 underlying dependencies among parameters (and their
27 corresponding prior distributions), similar to individual
28 Legos being used to build a complex city. Using this
29 graphical modeling framework, users can design cus-
30 tomized models and tailor analyses to their particular
31 datasets and research questions. However, this flexibil-
32 ity comes at a cost: because of the nearly infinite vari-
33 ety of possible models (and model combinations) that
34 users can explore in RevBayes, the results of these anal-
35 yses are often challenging to summarize and visualize
36 using standard software. This is a significant limitation
37 for RevBayes users because, in addition to being the pri-
38 mary method for reporting results of phylogenetic anal-
39 yses, graphical summaries are a valuable tool for mak-
40 ing sense of scientific results (Tufte, 2001), and for diag-
41 nosing modeling and analytical problems (Kerman et al.,
42 2008).

43 Historically, RevBayes users have had to process and
44 plot their results using *ad hoc* scripts written for each
45 analysis, which imposed a significant barrier to entry for
46 users not familiar with the structure of RevBayes out-
47 put or comfortable with developing their own graphical
48 summaries. To address these challenges, we developed
49 RevGadgets. RevGadgets is an R package (R Core Team,
50 2020) that adds to the diverse ecosystem of phyloge-
51 netic visualization tools—*e.g.*, ape (Paradis and Schliep,
52 2019), Tracer (Rambaut et al., 2018), phytools (Rev-
53 ell, 2012), ggtree (Yu et al., 2017), FigTree (Rambaut,
54 2014), IcyTree (Vaughan, 2017), among many others—
55 but is specialized for output produced by RevBayes.
56 RevGadgets serves as a bridge between RevBayes anal-
57 yses and existing tools for phylogenetic data processing
58 and plotting in R, especially the ggtree package suite,
59 which includes the ggtree, tidytree, and treeio pack-
60 ages (Wang et al., 2020; Yu et al., 2017). RevGadgets pro-
61 vides tools for plotting summary trees (including sum-
62 maries of parameters for each branch), ancestral-state
63 estimates, and posterior distributions of parameters for
64 a variety of models. Using the general framework of
65 ggplot2, the tidyverse, and associated packages (Wick-
66 ham, 2011; Wickham et al., 2019), plotting functions re-
67 turn plot objects with default, but customizable, aesthet-
68 ics. Here, we present five vignettes demonstrating how
69 to use RevGadgets to summarize results for a variety of
70 phylogenetic analyses.

71 Phylogenies

72 Phylogenies are central to all analyses in RevBayes, so
73 accurate and information-rich visualizations of evolu-
74 tionary trees are critical. In this case study, we demon-
75 strate the tree-plotting functionality of RevGadgets, with
76 methods to visualize phylogenies and their associated
77 posterior probabilities, divergence-time estimates, and

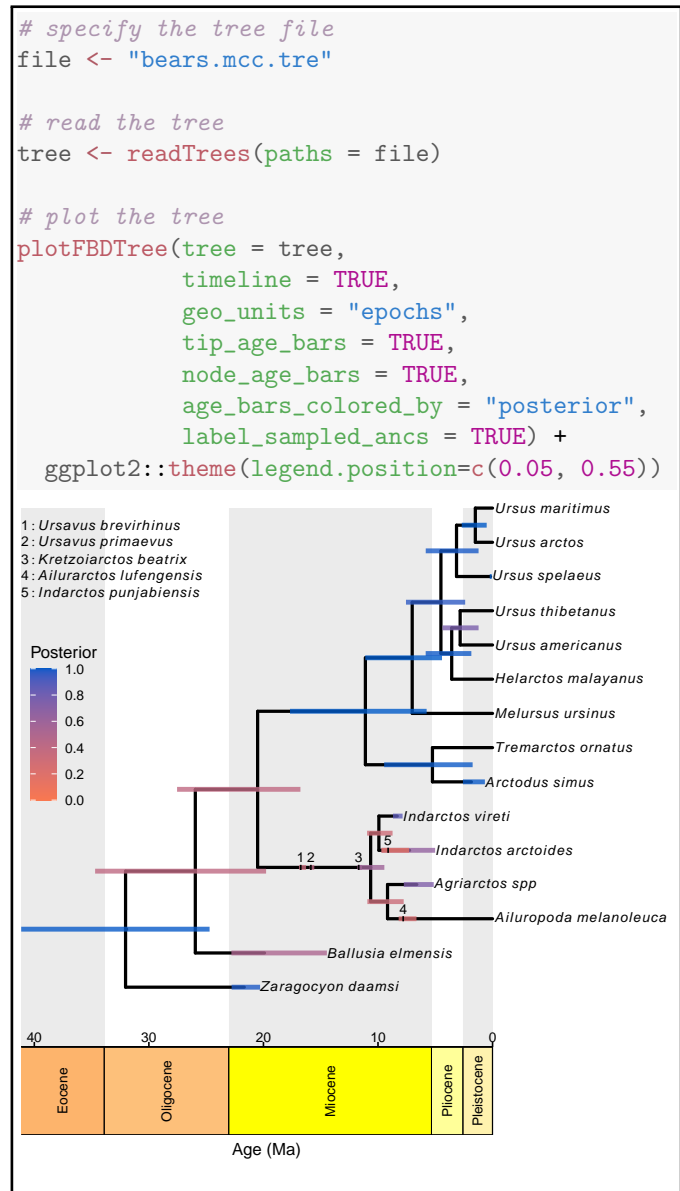


Figure 1: Plotting a time-calibrated phylogeny of extinct and extant taxa. Top) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting a time-calibrated phylogeny of extant and extinct bears. We use the `theme` function from `ggplot2` to add the posterior-probability legend. Bottom) The maximum sampled-ancestor clade-credibility (MSACC) tree for the bears. Sampled ancestors are indicated by numbers along the branches (legend, top left). Bars represent the 95% credible interval of the age of the node, tip or sampled ancestor in millions of years (geological timescale, x-axis); the color of the bar corresponds to the posterior probability (legend, middle left) of that a clade exists, the posterior probability that a fossil is a sampled ancestor, or the posterior probability that a tip is not a sampled ancestor. (Data from Abella et al., 2012; Heath et al., 2014.)

branch-specific parameter estimates.

RevGadgets provides paired functions for (1) reading in and processing data, and (2) summarizing and visualizing results. For phylogenies, the function `readTrees()`

loads trees (either individual trees, or sets of trees) in either Newick or NEXUS (Maddison et al., 1997) formats, then processes associated branch or node annotations, and finally stores the tree(s) as treedata object(s) (as defined by treeio; Wang et al., 2020). Users can then visualize the treedata object using either plotTree() or plotFBDTree(), as we demonstrate below. Alternatively, users may choose to write custom plotting code using existing ggtree functions.

RevGadgets can plot both unrooted and rooted trees, and creates plots that are compatible with plotting options from ggtree. Additionally, RevGadgets provides extensive functionality for plotting trees with non-contemporaneous tips, such as those produced by total-evidence analyses under the fossilized birth-death [FBD] process (Heath et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2016). The fossilized birth-death process (and the related serially-sampled birth-death process; Stadler, 2010) produces sampled ancestors (samples that are directly ancestral to another sampled taxon and thus are not represented as tips in the tree), and the ages of the samples are often subject to uncertainty (e.g., because of imperfect knowledge about the age of the strata from which the samples were collected). As a consequence, conventional tree plotting tools are unsuitable for plotting FBD trees. We demonstrate how to use RevGadgets to plot the results of an FBD analyses of living and extinct bears (Figure 1; data from Abella et al., 2012 and Heath et al., 2014). We include age bars colored by the posterior probability of the corresponding node, a geological time scale and labeled epochs from the package deptime (Gearty, 2021), and fossils estimated to be direct ancestors of other samples (i.e., sampled ancestors).

In addition to visualizing trees themselves, RevGadgets allows researchers to visualize branch-specific parameters, for example rates of evolution or diversification for each branch in the phylogeny. In Figure 2, we demonstrate how to use plotTree() to visualize the estimated optimal body size as it varies across the cetacean phylogeny under a relaxed Ornstein-Uhlenbeck process (Butler and King, 2004; Uyeda and Harmon, 2014; data from Steeman et al., 2009; Slater et al., 2010). Under this model, a quantitative character evolves towards an adaptive optimum that changes along the branches of the tree, and thus the optimum associated with each branch is a focal inference.

The plotTree() function can also visualize unrooted or circular phylogenies, and users may add text annotations to denote posterior probabilities or other quantities. Users can apply ggtree functions to modify the RevGadgets plot, e.g., to highlight certain clades with geom_highlight() or to add phylopic (http://phylopic.org/) using geom_phylopic(). Together, these functions provide user-friendly and customizable tree-plotting

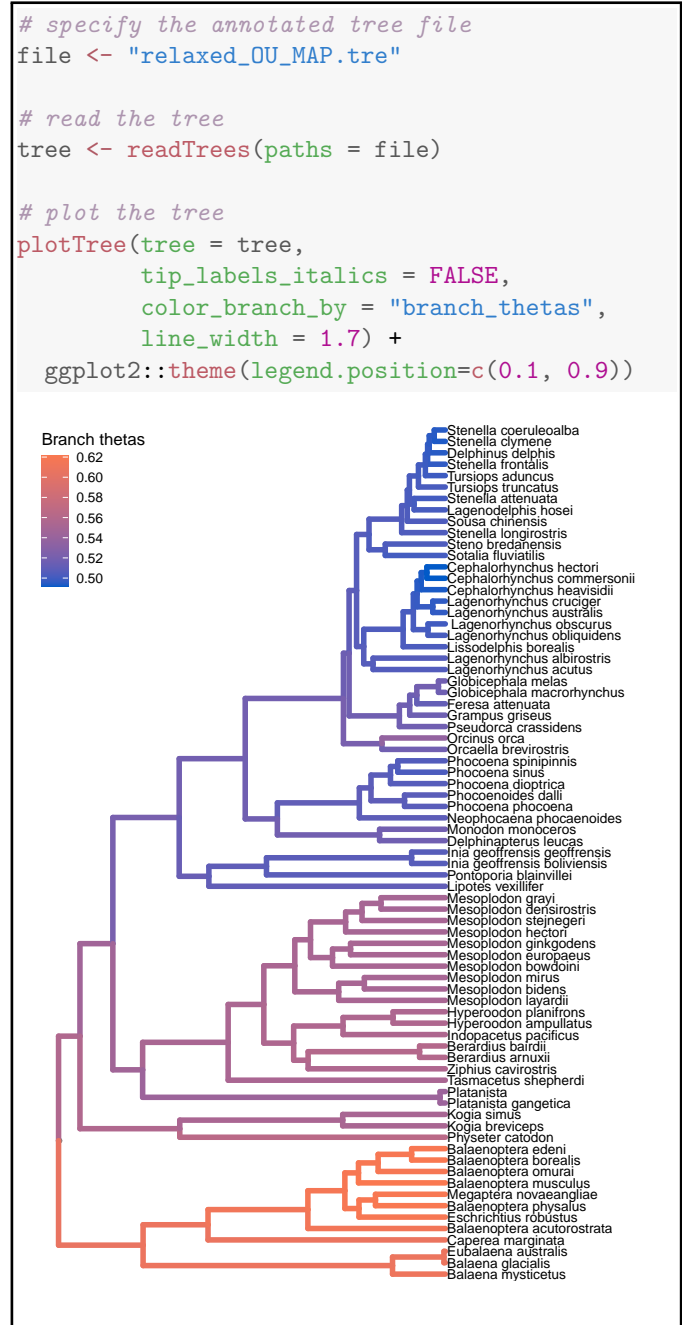


Figure 2: Plotting branch-specific parameter values across a phylogeny. Top) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting the cetacean phylogeny that has been annotated with branch-specific adaptive optima (θ) inferred under a relaxed Ornstein-Uhlenbeck model. Bottom) The cetacean phylogeny with branches colored according to the posterior-mean estimate of the inferred branch-specific optimum body size, θ (legend, tip left). (Phylogeny from Steeman et al., 2009; body size data in units of natural log-transformed meters from Slater et al., 2010.)

functionality for a variety of core research questions in evolutionary biology.

Posterior Estimates of Numerical Parameters

RevGadgets provides several tools to visualize posterior distributions of numerical parameters. The output produced by most RevBayes analyses is a (typically tab-delimited) text file where rows correspond to samples from sequential iterations of an MCMC analysis, and columns correspond to parameters in the model. Most information of interest to researchers—e.g., most probable parameter values (maximum *a posteriori*, or MAP, estimates), 95% credible intervals (CIs), or full posterior distributions—requires processing this raw MCMC output. Here, we demonstrate methods for processing and visualizing MCMC output for both quantitative and qualitative parameters.

We illustrate the core functions for reading, summarizing and visualizing posterior distributions of specific parameters with an example analysis of chromosome number evolution (Figure 3; data from Freyman and Höhna, 2018). We use `readTrace()` to read in parameters sampled during one or more MCMC analyses. We then use `summarizeTrace()` to calculate the posterior mean and 95% credible interval for the focal parameters. Finally, we plot the marginal posterior distributions of the focal parameters using `plotTrace()`.

Plots of the posterior distributions of parameter values are key to a thorough understanding of the results of any Bayesian analysis. These tools encourage users to explore their results thoroughly rather than relying on single summary statistics. These summaries and plots may also be useful as tools for science communication and education on statistical phylogenetics, as they can easily be used to demonstrate differences in parameter estimates that result from changes to basic phylogenetic models. Additionally, the output of `readTrace()` may be passed to R packages specializing in MCMC diagnosis, e.g., `convenience` (Fabreti and Höhna, 2021) or `coda` (Plummer et al., 2006). These functions are compatible with any delimited text file of MCMC samples, and can be used with the output of most Bayesian phylogenetic programs.

Ancestral-State Estimates

In addition to making inferences about the underlying process of evolution, researchers may be interested in studying how particular characters evolved across the branches of the phylogeny. Ancestral-state estimation is a method for inferring that history.

RevGadgets offers two different types of summaries for ancestral-state estimates: 1) maximum *a posteriori* (MAP) estimates, i.e., the states with the highest poste-

```
# specify the log files with rates of
# chromosome evolution
files <- c("chromevol_simple.log")

# read the trace
trace <- readTrace(path = files)

## Reading in log file 1

# summarize the traces of the parameters
# gamma: chromosome gain rate
# delta: chromosome loss rate
summary <- summarizeTrace(
  trace = trace,
  vars = c("gamma", "delta"))

# report the summary for the gain rate
summary[["gamma"]]

## $trace_1
##      mean      median      MAP
## 0.28853914 0.23994560 0.13586156
## quantile_2.5 quantile_97.5
## 0.03347161 0.80123940

# plot the posteriors of each parameter
plotTrace(trace = trace,
  vars = c("gamma", "delta"))[[1]]
```

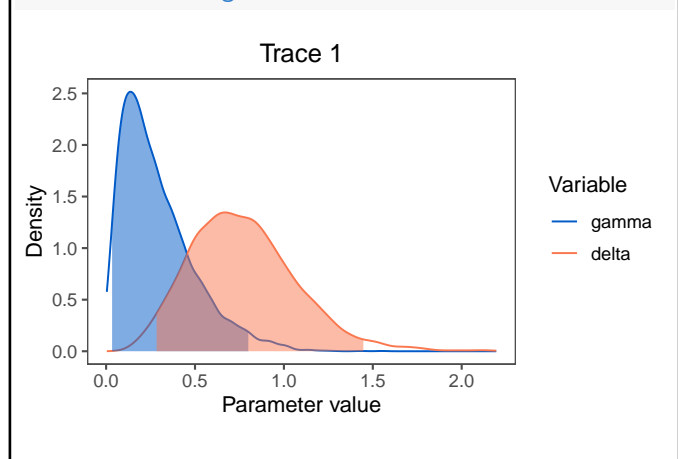


Figure 3: Plotting posterior distributions of numerical parameter values. Top) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting the posterior distributions of rates of chromosome evolution in *Aristolochia*. Bottom) Marginal posterior distributions of the two rate parameters. Shaded regions represent the 95% credible interval of each posterior distribution. (Data from Freyman and Höhna, 2018.)

rior probability at each node, and; 2) pie charts that represent each state in proportion to its probability at each node. Ancestral-state estimates may be represented as text annotations rather than colored symbols. Additionally, RevGadgets can summarize and visualize ancestral-state estimates at internal nodes and at the “shoulders”,

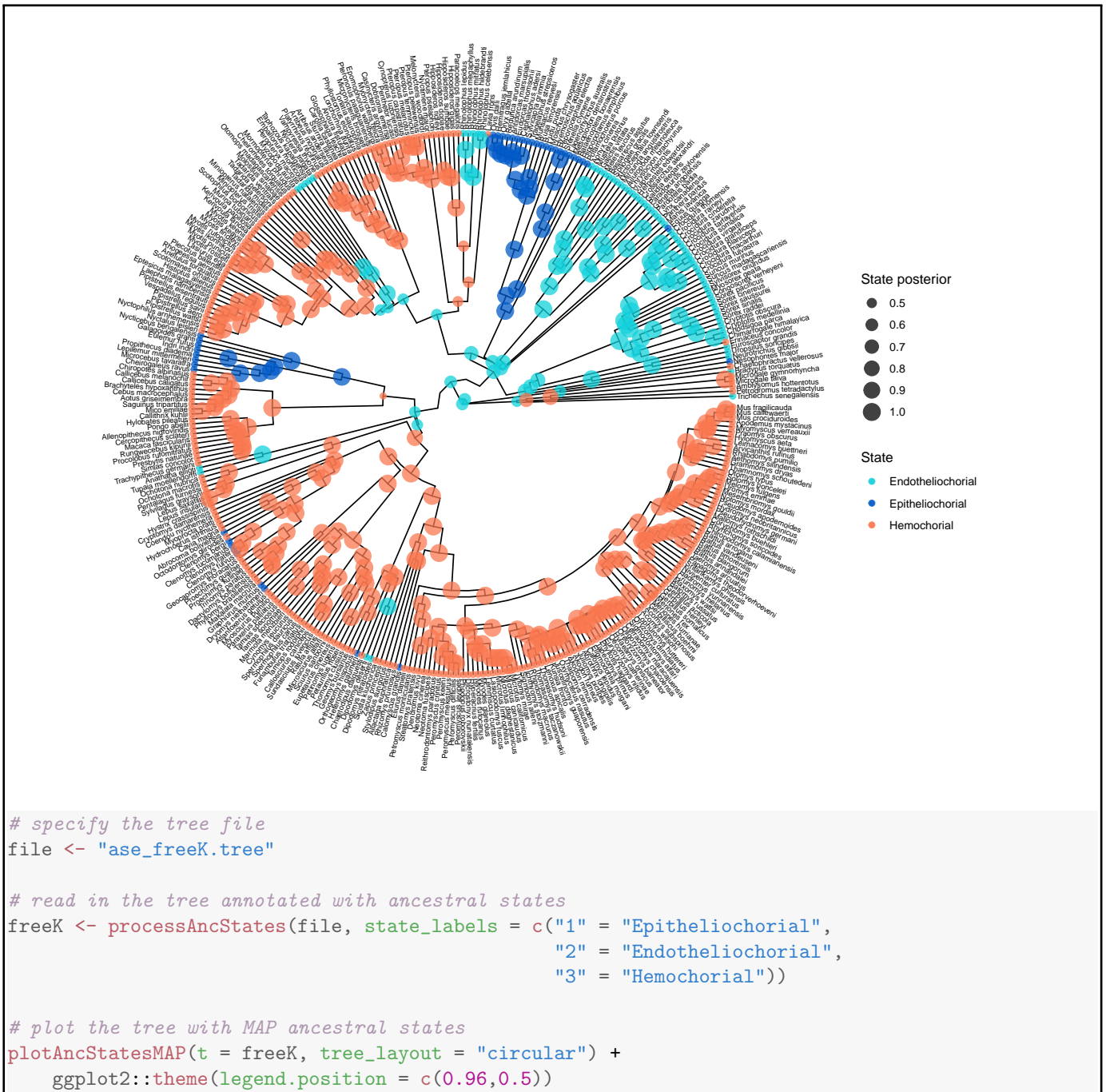


Figure 4: Plotting maximum a posteriori (MAP) estimates of ancestral states on a circular phylogeny. Top) MAP estimates of ancestral placental states across the phylogeny of mammals. Each node is colored by the MAP state (legend, bottom right); the size of each symbol is proportional to the posterior probability of the map state (legend, top right). Bottom) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting the MAP estimates for ancestral placental states across the mammals phylogeny. (Data from Elliot and Crespi, 2006.)

194 *i.e.*, at the beginning of each branch. Plotting the states at
 195 internal nodes is appropriate for standard evolutionary
 196 models of anagenetic (within-lineage) change. However,
 197 models of evolution that include a cladogenetic component
 198 (*e.g.*, models of biogeographic or chromosome-number
 199 evolution; Ree and Smith, 2008; Goldberg and

Igić, 2012; Freyman and Höhna, 2018) also allow states
 to change at speciation events. In this case, researchers
 may also want to plot the shoulder states, which represent
 the ancestral-state estimates for each daughter lineage
 immediately following the speciation event.

We demonstrate how to plot ancestral-state estimates

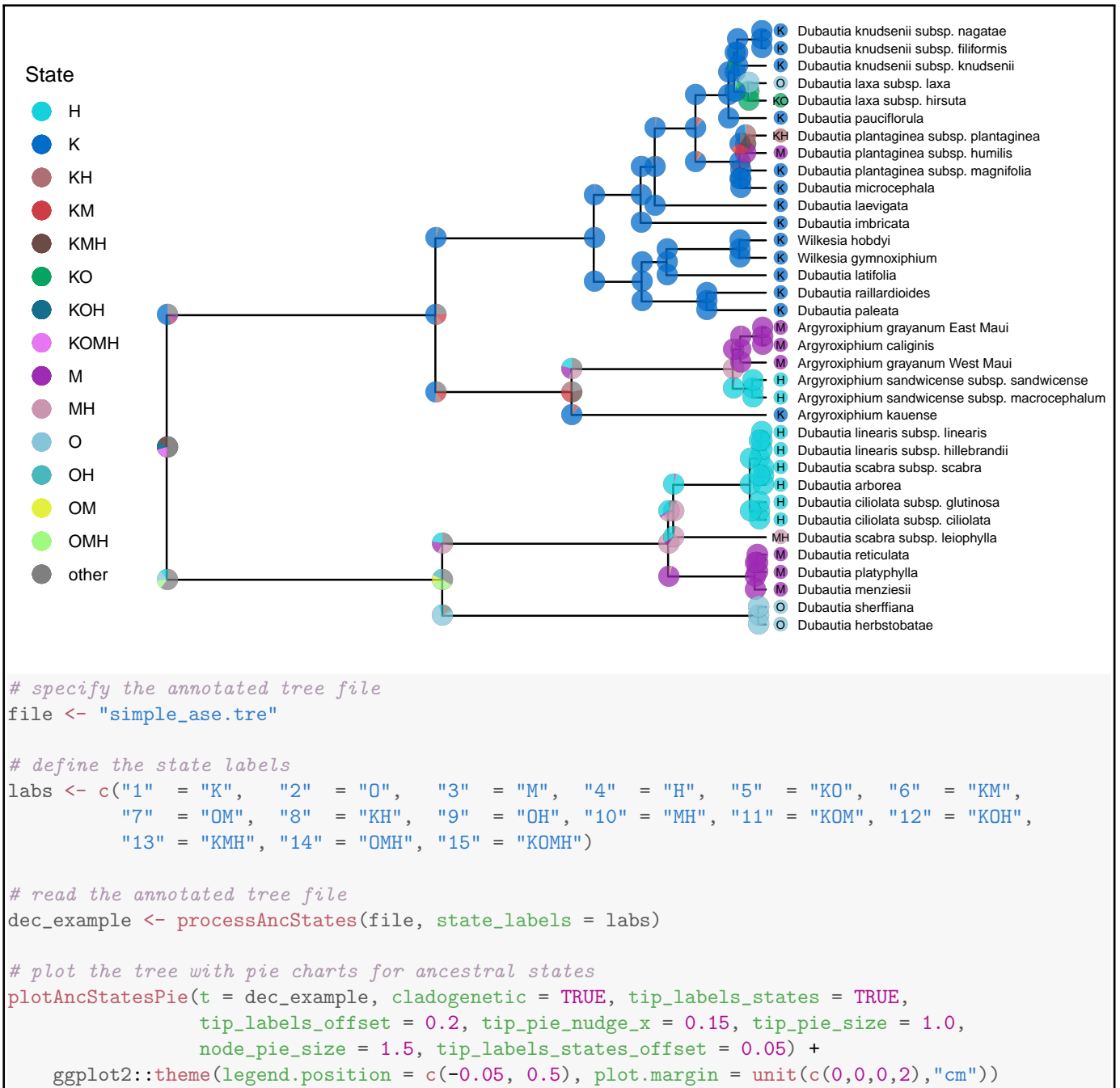


Figure 5: Plotting posterior distributions of ancestral states under a cladogenetic model. Top) The posterior estimates ancestral biogeographic states of the Hawaiian silverswords estimated under a DEC model. The size of each pie slice is proportional to the posterior probability of a given state (legend, top left) for a particular lineage. Pies at nodes represent the state of the ancestral lineage immediately before speciation; pies at “shoulders” represent the states of each daughter lineage immediately following the speciation event. Bottom) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting the posterior estimates for ancestral geographic range across the phylogeny of Hawaiian silverswords. (Data from Landis et al., 2018.)

206 of placenta type across the mammal phylogeny un- 212
 207 der an asymmetric model of character evolution (Fig- 213
 208 ure 4; data from Elliot and Crespi, 2006). First, we use 214
 209 processAncStates() to read in and parse the phylogeny 215
 210 and ancestral-state estimates inferred using RevBayes. 216
 211 Second, we use plotAncStatesMAP() to color each node

symbol according to the state with the highest posterior 212
 probability, and make the area of the symbol propor- 213
 tional to that state’s posterior probability. Because of the 214
 size of the phylogeny, we choose to plot the estimates on 215
 a circular tree by changing the tree layout parameter. 216

Next, we demonstrate plotting estimates of ancestral 217

218 ranges of the Hawaiian silversword alliance that were
219 generated by a Dispersal-Extinction-Cladogenesis (DEC)
220 model (Figure 5; data from Landis et al., 2018). Since
221 the DEC model features a cladogenetic component, we
222 include shoulder-state estimates. Because of the large
223 number of states in this analysis (15 possible ranges
224 and one “other” category), more pre-processing is nec-
225 essary. As before, we pass the appropriate state names
226 to `processAncStates()`; however, in this case we plot
227 pie charts representing the probability of each state using
228 `plotAncStatesPie()`, and plot states at shoulders using
229 `cladogenetic = TRUE`.

230 Beyond the above examples, these versatile plotting
231 tools can visualize any discrete ancestral-state estimates
232 reconstructed by RevBayes, including the results of
233 chromosome count estimations (Freyman and Höhna,
234 2018) and discrete state-dependent speciation and ex-
235 tinction (SSE) models (Freyman and Höhna, 2019; Zenil-
236 Ferguson et al., 2019).

237 Diversification Rates

238 The processes of speciation and extinction (*i.e.*, lineage
239 diversification) is of great interest to evolutionary bi-
240 ologists (Morlon, 2014). Rates of speciation and ex-
241 tinction may be modeled as constant over time and
242 among branches (as in a constant-rate birth-death pro-
243 cess; Kendall et al., 1948; Nee et al., 1994), or allowed
244 to vary over time (Stadler, 2011; May et al., 2016), across
245 branches of a phylogeny (Rabosky, 2014; Höhna et al.,
246 2019), or based on the character states of the evolving
247 lineages (Maddison et al., 2007; Freyman and Höhna,
248 2019). For example, rates that vary across branches of the
249 phylogeny can be visualized using `plotTree()` to color
250 the branches by their inferred rate. State-dependent
251 diversification models provide estimates of the specia-
252 tion and extinction rates associated with each charac-
253 ter state, and may also be used to estimate ancestral
254 states. `plotTrace()` or specific processing and plot-
255 ting functions for diversification rates—`processSSE()`,
256 `plotMuSSE`, and `plotHiSSE`—may be used to visu-
257 alize the estimated rates. `plotAncStatesMAP()` or
258 `plotAncStatesPie()` may be used to visualize the
259 ancestral-state estimates.

260 We demonstrate how to plot the results of a
261 time-varying model—the episodic birth-death process
262 (Stadler, 2011; Höhna, 2015)—applied to primate phy-
263 logeny (Figure 6; Springer et al., 2012). The episodic
264 birth-death analysis in RevBayes produces separate trace
265 files each type of rate. We read these output files using
266 `processDivRates()` and plot the resulting parameter es-
267 timates over time using `plotDivRates()`.

268 Together with the aforementioned functions
269 for plotting diversification parameter estimates,

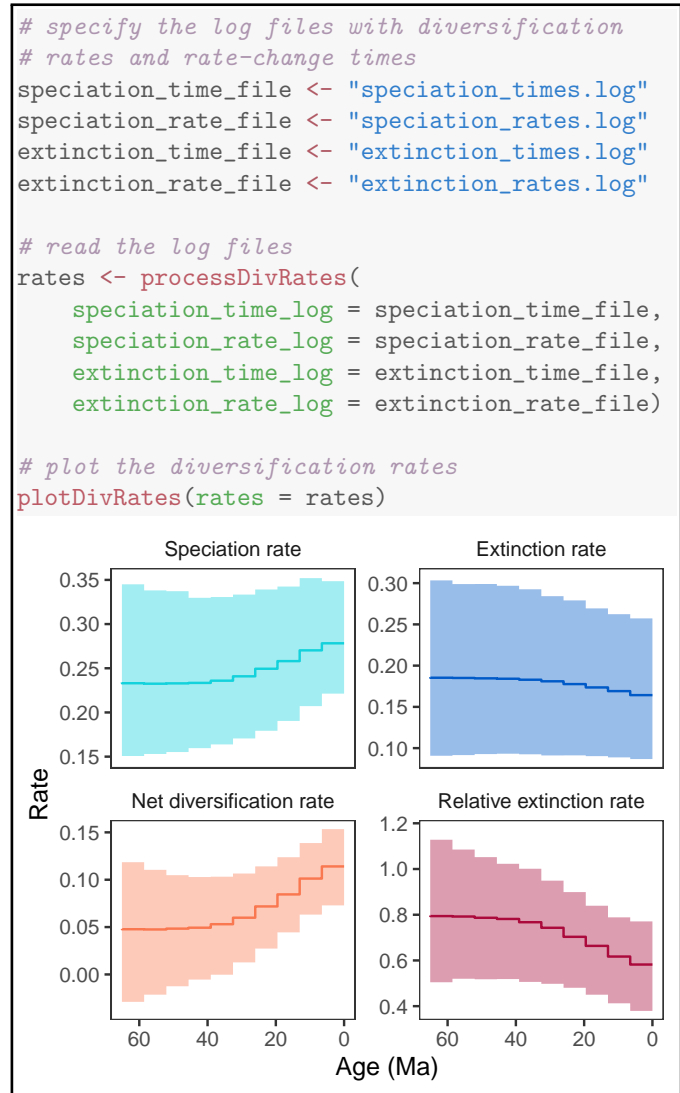


Figure 6: Plotting posterior distributions of diversification rates over time. Top) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting the posterior estimates of diversification rates over time inferred from the primate phylogeny. Bottom) Posterior distributions of speciation and extinction rates over time, as well as the net diversification rate (speciation minus extinction) and the relative extinction rate (extinction divided by speciation). Dark lines correspond to the posterior-mean estimate of each parameter for each time interval, and shaded regions correspond to the 95% credible interval. (Data from Springer et al., 2012.)

270 `plotDivRates()` allows users to visualize the out-
271 puts of nearly all diversification analyses available in
272 RevBayes. Stochastic character mapping of diversifi-
273 cation estimates, in which the timing and location of
274 diversification rate shifts are painted along the branches
275 of the tree, will be added in the future (Freyman and
276 Höhna, 2019; Höhna et al., 2019).

277 Model Adequacy

278 In addition to visualizing the results of phylogenetic
279 inferences with a specific model, RevGadgets provides
280 tools for exploring the adequacy of the model (*i.e.*,
281 whether the model provides an adequate description
282 of the data-generating process; Bollback, 2002; Gelman
283 et al., 2013; Brown, 2014; Höhna et al., 2018). Posterior-
284 predictive analysis tests whether a fitted model simu-
285 lates (predicts) data that are similar to the observed data.
286 This process is distinct from model testing, in which one
287 model is chosen from a set of possible models, as the best
288 model of the set may still provide an inadequate descrip-
289 tion of the underlying process.

290 First, users analyze their data with the model of inter-
291 est and then use the inferred posterior distribution to
292 simulate a number of new data sets. The user then se-
293 lects test statistics that describe important features of the
294 data (*e.g.*, the number of invariant sites in a nucleotide
295 alignment) and calculates these statistics for both the ob-
296 served data and the simulated data. If the statistic from
297 the empirical data is reasonably included within the dis-
298 tribution of statistics from simulated datasets (posterior-
299 predictive p -value > 0.05), the model is considered an
300 adequate description of the process that produced the
301 tested data feature.

302 Here, we demonstrate the workflow for a posterior-
303 predictive analysis to test model adequacy of the Jukes-
304 Cantor model for nucleotide sequence evolution (Jukes
305 et al., 1969) in a single gene across a sample of 23 pri-
306 mates (Figure 7; data from Springer et al., 2012). First,
307 we perform an analysis in RevBayes under a Jukes-
308 Cantor model of nucleotide sequence data. Second,
309 we use RevBayes to simulate datasets under the pos-
310 terior distributions estimated in the first step. Third,
311 we use RevBayes to calculate statistics from the simu-
312 lated and empirical datasets. These statistics should
313 describe aspects of the data that we hope capture a
314 meaningful component of model performance. Finally,
315 we use RevGadgets to plot those statistics and compute
316 posterior-predictive p -values.

317 Despite being computationally inexpensive compared
318 to Bayesian model comparison methods (*i.e.*, Bayes fac-
319 tor calculation), posterior-predictive approaches remain
320 relatively uncommon in empirical phylogenetic studies.
321 As genome-scale datasets and increasingly complex sta-
322 tistical methods become more accessible to researchers,
323 posterior-predictive simulation will be critical to testing
324 how well our models describe the underlying generative
325 processes. This component of RevGadgets functionality
326 and the associated clear workflows for performing and
327 interpreting posterior-predictive tests will hopefully in-
328 crease the adoption of this important tool.

```
# specify the simulated statistics file  
sim <- "simulated_data_pps.csv"  
  
# specify the empirical statistics file  
emp <- "empirical_data_pps.csv"  
  
# read the statistics files  
stats <- processPostPredStats(path_sim = sim,  
                             path_emp = emp)  
  
# create the posterior-predictive plots  
plots <- plotPostPredStats(data = stats)  
  
# plot some of the statistics  
plots[c(1,3,5,7)]
```

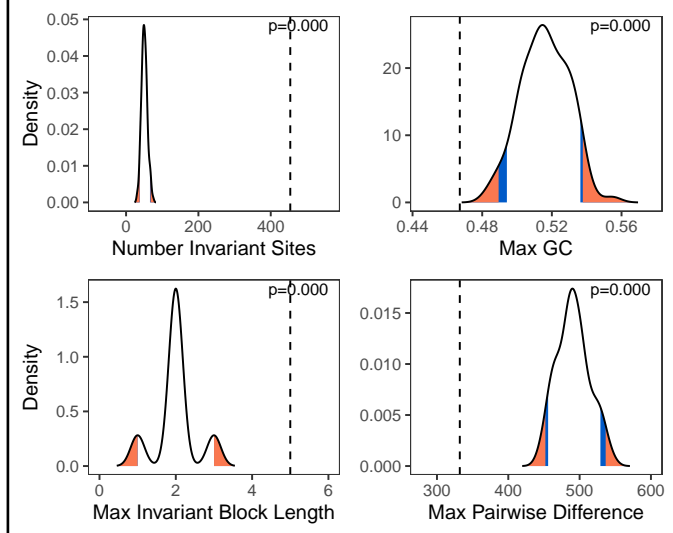


Figure 7: Plotting simulated posterior-predictive distributions to assess model adequacy. Top) RevGadgets code for reading in and plotting the distributions of summary statistics generated using posterior-predictive simulation posterior. Bottom) Posterior-predictive distributions (black curves) of four statistics simulated under the Jukes-Cantor model fit to primate *cytb*, compared to the same statistics computed on the observed data (dashed vertical lines). The posterior-predictive p -value (upper right of each panel) is the fraction of simulated statistics that are as or more extreme than the observed statistic. If the observed statistic falls in or beyond the orange region, we deem the model as inadequate at the 5% significance level; if the observed statistic falls in the blue region, the model is marginally adequate at the 10% significance level. In this case, the Jukes-Cantor model provides an inadequate description of the true generating process according to every summary statistic. (Data from Springer et al., 2012.)

329 Conclusions

330 RevBayes is a flexible platform for performing Bayesian
331 phylogenetic evolutionary inferences. Because of the
332 almost endless possibilities for building unique combi-
333 nations of models in RevBayes, these analyses are of-
334 ten challenging to visualize using standard plotting soft-

335 ware. We have developed an R package, RevGadgets,
336 to produce publication-quality visualizations of phy-
337 logenetic analyses performed in RevBayes. The case
338 studies described above illustrate some of the core
339 functionality available in RevGadgets and demonstrate
340 how to produce plots of the most commonly-performed
341 RevBayes analyses. RevBayes is open source software
342 that is actively maintained and developed. Likewise,
343 RevGadgets is also open source and will continue to pro-
344 vide new plotting tools to meet new visualization chal-
345 lenges as they arise. RevGadgets and any future updates
346 will be available on CRAN (<https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/RevGadgets/index.html>) and on
347 GitHub at <https://github.com/cmt2/RevGadgets>. Ad-
348 ditionally, we provide thorough documentation for all
349 functionality in the package and maintain numerous
350 tutorials demonstrating how to use RevGadgets on
351 the RevBayes website at <https://revbayes.github.io/tutorials/>. Together, the modular modeling tools from
352 RevBayes and the visualization gadgets in RevGadgets
353 will help researchers make sense of and communicate
354 the results of a diverse array of sophisticated phyloge-
355 netic analyses.
356
357

358 Authors Contributions

359 CMT and MRM designed the R package. All authors
360 contributed code and examples. CMT and MRM drafted
361 the manuscript. All authors revised and approved the
362 final version of the manuscript.

363 Dependencies

364 RevGadgets depends on many R packages, in particu-
365 lar: ape (Paradis and Schliep, 2019); phangorn (Schliep,
366 2011); phytools (Revell, 2012); ggplot2 (Wickham,
367 2011); ggtree (Yu et al., 2017); treeio (Wang et al., 2020);
368 deeptime (Gearty, 2021); dplyr (Wickham et al., 2021);
369 treeplyr (Uyeda and Harmon, 2020); tidytree (Yu,
370 2021b); reshape (Wickham, 2007); ggthemes (Arnold,
371 2021); tidyr (Wickham, 2021); tibble (Müller and Wick-
372 ham, 2021); gginnards (Aphalo, 2021a); ggimage (Yu,
373 2020); ggplotify (Yu, 2021a); png (Urbanek, 2013); and
374 ggpp (Aphalo, 2021b).

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Data Availability

RevGadgets is hosted on CRAN (<https://cran.r-project.org/web/packages/RevGadgets/index.html>) and all example datasets are freely available on
the RevBayes website (<https://revbayes.github.io/tutorials/intro/revgadgets>).

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