# ChromBPNet: bias factorized, base-resolution deep learning models of chromatin accessibility reveal cis-regulatory sequence syntax, transcription factor footprints and regulatory variants

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## ABSTRACT

Despite extensive mapping of cis-regulatory elements (cREs) across cellular contexts with chromatin accessibility assays, the sequence syntax and genetic variants that regulate transcription factor (TF) binding and chromatin accessibility at context-specific cREs remain elusive. We introduce ChromBPNet, a deep learning DNA sequence model of base-resolution accessibility profiles that detects, learns and deconvolves assay-specific enzyme biases from regulatory sequence determinants of accessibility, enabling robust discovery of compact TF motif lexicons, cooperative motif syntax and precision footprints across assays and sequencing depths. Extensive benchmarks show that ChromBPNet, despite its lightweight design, is competitive with much larger contemporary models at predicting variant effects on chromatin accessibility, pioneer TF binding and reporter activity across assays, cell contexts and ancestry, while providing interpretation of disrupted regulatory syntax. ChromBPNet also helps prioritize and interpret regulatory variants that influence complex traits and rare diseases, thereby providing a powerful lens to decode regulatory DNA and genetic variation.

## INTRODUCTION

Transcription factors (TFs) bind specific DNA sequence motifs encoded in cis-regulatory elements (cREs) to modulate transcription of genes. While these motifs are abundant in the genome, TFs selectively occupy only a small fraction of potential sites in a cell context-specific manner[1,2]. Selective TF occupancy is governed by factors beyond the intrinsic sequence specificity and concentration of TFs, including cooperative and competitive interactions between TFs and the nucleosomes that package DNA into chromatin[3–6]. These interactions are mediated by regulatory sequence syntax of cREs, consisting of flexible arrangements of TF motifs with variable composition, affinity, density, spacing, and orientation[7–21]. Disease-associated genetic variants frequently disrupt regulatory sequence syntax, altering TF occupancy, chromatin state and gene expression[22–24]. Hence, deciphering the context-specific sequence code of cREs is crucial for understanding gene regulation and the genetic basis of traits and diseases.

Technical limitations of assays that directly profile genome-wide TF binding profiles have restricted comprehensive binding maps of human TFs to a few cellular contexts[25–36]. Chromatin accessibility assays provide a scalable alternative to profile cREs bound by TFs that often exhibit a remodeled "open" chromatin state devoid of nucleosomes, rendering them more accessible to enzymatic cleavage or transposition[37–42]. DNase-seq and ATAC-seq assays use the DNase-I nuclease and Tn5 transposase respectively to preferentially enrich sequencing coverage within accessible regions, enabling genome-wide identification of putative cREs in a single experiment[43–50]. ATAC-seq has been further adapted to profile chromatin accessibility at single cell resolution[51–55]. These assays have been deployed across thousands of cellular contexts resulting in comprehensive maps of millions of putative cREs, including promoters, enhancers, and insulators, with diverse context-specific accessibility patterns reflecting dynamic TF-mediated regulation[29,30,49,56–63]. Further, thousands of genetic variants have been associated with variation of chromatin accessibility in molecular quantitative trait locus (QTL) studies and disease-associated genetic variants identified by genome-wide association studies (GWAS) are highly enriched in accessible cREs of disease-relevant cell types, highlighting the utility of chromatin accessibility in mapping regulatory genetic variants[23,24,64–71].

While accessible cREs encompass a large proportion of context-specific TF binding sites and are highly enriched for their cognate motifs, the mere presence of an enriched TF motif in an accessible region is insufficient evidence to infer whether or not it is occupied by a TF or its role in regulating chromatin accessibility[29,49,72–74]. TFs exhibit distinct abilities to engage with chromatin – "pioneer" factors can bind their target motifs within closed chromatin and initiate accessibility through nucleosome remodeling, while other "settler" TFs require pre-accessible regions for binding[5,75–77]. However, even this dichotomization of TFs into pioneers and settlers oversimplifies the regulation of chromatin accessibility by not accounting for sequence-mediated cooperation and competition between multiple TFs and nucleosomes, which depends on genomic context, TF concentration and cellular state. The hierarchical and combinatorial complexity of regulatory syntax also implies that naive overlap of non-coding genetic variants with accessible regions or TF motif instances is not sufficient to understand their pleiotropic, quantitative impact on chromatin accessibility and downstream phenotypes. Several computational approaches have been developed to address these challenges.

Computational footprinting methods attempt to identify occupied TF binding sites in accessible regions by exploiting the observation that some bound proteins protect the DNA from enzymatic cleavage[37–42]. These methods typically employ unsupervised statistical models to scan base-resolution chromatin accessibility profiles to identify characteristic "footprint" patterns of reduced enzymatic cleavage that align with TF motifs[47,77–90]. Some footprinting methods such as HINT-

ATAC, TOBIAS and PRINT explicitly correct for sequence-specific enzymatic biases that can significantly distort footprints in accessible regions by leveraging sequence models of enzyme bias trained on cleavage profiles from genomic background or naked DNA libraries[78,79,90,91]. While these methods have successfully revealed TF binding dynamics and helped prioritize regulatory variants[92,93], they face key limitations: they typically require high read depth, rely on pre-defined motifs thereby missing novel sequence motifs and cooperative syntax, struggle to detect TFs with low residence times with weak footprints or non-canonical effects on profile shape, and cannot directly infer quantitative effects of variants on chromatin accessibility.

An alternate approach to overcome some of these limitations, involves training and interpreting supervised machine learning models such as support vector machines (SVMs) and deep neural networks to predict chromatin accessibility as a function of local DNA sequence context[94–104]. Deep learning models of regulatory DNA learn de novo predictive sequence features and higher-order syntax, enabling novel insights via various model interpretation frameworks[104–115]. Model predictions can denoise sparse coverage profiles, making them applicable to datasets across a wide range of sequencing depths[105]. Unlike traditional footprinting methods, they can detect TF motifs that influence accessibility without relying on heuristic footprint definitions, potentially identifying TFs with weak or unconventional footprints[94,95,97,99,100,103]. Additionally, in silico mutagenesis experiments can predict the regulatory impact of genetic variants not observed in the training samples[94,95,97–102]. However, most current models train on either binarized peak level data or coarse-resolution profiles (32-100 bp)[94–104], thereby not leveraging fine-grained, base-resolution patterns that have been shown to enhance interpretability and predictive accuracy for other biochemical readouts[97]. Furthermore, current predictive models overlook enzyme sequence biases. Recently, large, multi-task, long-context models trained on diverse regulatory datasets have shown improved predictive performance but require substantial computational resources and cannot be easily trained on individual datasets[97,102]. Their complexity also limits robust and scalable interpretation of the cis-regulatory code.

To address these challenges, we introduce ChromBPNet, a deep learning model augmented with robust model interpretation methods to accurately predict base-resolution chromatin accessibility profiles from local DNA sequence. ChromBPNet features a novel end-to-end framework that automatically detects, learns and deconvolves assay-specific enzyme biases from regulatory sequence determinants of accessibility, thereby significantly improving concordance between DNase-seq and ATAC-seq experiments and enabling imputation of high-resolution, denoised TF footprints and predictive sequence syntax even from low coverage datasets. ChromBPNet models of accessibility across diverse cell-lines reveal relatively compact lexicons of shared and context-specific predictive TF motifs and cooperative composite elements that directly influence chromatin accessibility and reflect TF occupancy. We introduce new measures for predicting base-resolution effects of variants on chromatin accessibility and show through extensive benchmarks that ChromBPNet performs competitively or better than much larger, multi-task models at predicting and interpreting effects of genetic variants on chromatin accessibility, TF binding and reporter activity. Our models exhibit robust variant effect predictions across experimental assays, bulk and single cell datasets, ancestry groups, and cellular contexts. ChromBPNet enables prioritization and interpretation of fine mapped variants in GWAS loci associated with complex traits and putative causal variants in rare disease, with support from validation experiments. ChromBPNet thus offers a powerful but lightweight predictive model for dissecting context-specific sequence determinants of chromatin accessibility and prioritizing regulatory genetic variants.

## RESULTS

### Convolutional neural networks accurately predict base-resolution chromatin accessibility profiles from local DNA sequence context

We trained a convolutional neural network (CNN) to model unstranded, base-resolution ATAC-seq or DNase-seq cleavage profiles in 1 Kb genomic segments as a function of local (2114 bp) regulatory DNA sequence context **(Fig. 1a)**. We adapted the BPNet architecture, originally developed to predict base-resolution binding profiles of individual TFs, by increasing the number of pattern detectors (filters) in each convolutional layer from 64 to 512, to accommodate the more complex sequence lexicon and syntax required to predict genome-wide chromatin accessibility[105].

The model predicts the expected base-resolution coverage profile over each segment as two complementary outputs: the "count head" of the model predicts total coverage (total counts) over the segment, which captures the magnitude of accessibility, while the "profile head" predicts the profile shape in the form of a base-resolution multinomial probability distribution across the segment. Model parameters were optimized using the BPNet multiscale loss function composed of a linear combination of a mean-squared error (MSE) loss for the total coverage (in *log* scale) and a multinomial negative log-likelihood loss for profile shape[105]. Model training, tuning and performance evaluation were performed using reproducible peaks and G/C content-matched background regions from non-overlapping chromosome partitions in a 5-fold cross-validation set up.

We first trained separate models on ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles in the K562 cell line[30]. Visual inspection of measured and predicted profiles over representative peak regions in held-out chromosomes highlighted strong concordance at multiple resolutions (**Fig. 1b, Extended Fig. 1a)**. Systematic evaluation of prediction performance across the held-out peak regions in test chromosomes corroborated the strong correlation (Pearson correlation $r$ = 0.70+/-0.02 $p$ < 1e-10 for ATAC-seq and $r$ = 0.71+/-0.02, $p$ < 1e-10 for DNase-seq) between measured and predicted total counts **(Fig. 1c, Extended Fig. 2b).** Measured and predicted profile shapes were also highly concordant, as measured by Jensen-Shannon Distance (JSD), approaching the upper bound of pseudoreplicate concordance (**Fig. 1d, Extended Fig. 2c**). The models also accurately discriminate high-confidence, reproducible peaks from background regions across entire test chromosomes (area under the Receiver Operating Curve (auROC) = 0.98+/-0.001, average precision (AP) = 0.42+/-0.01 for ATAC-seq and auROC = 0.98+/-0.001, AP = 0.46+/-0.02 for DNase-seq).

### Model interpretation reveals the influence of Tn5/DNase-I sequence preferences on chromatin accessibility profiles

Next, we applied our well-established model interpretation framework to identify predictive sequence features[97,116]. First, we used DeepLIFT/DeepSHAP to estimate the contribution scores of individual bases in peaks to the model's predictions of total counts (count contribution) and profile shape (profile contribution) separately[117,9797,116,97]. Visual inspection of count contribution scores from the K562 ATAC-seq models at three representative ATAC-seq peaks in K562 clearly highlighted predictive motif instances of key TFs such as CTCF and SP1, supported by ChIP-seq peaks (**Fig. 1b**). In contrast, profile contribution scores at these loci were diminished for several TF motifs (e.g. SP1 motifs) that had high count contributions and highlighted several spurious bases that did not match known TF motifs.

To investigate the discrepancy between count and profile contribution scores more globally, we derived count and profile contribution scores within 30,000 randomly sampled ATAC-seq peak sequences in K562. We then used the TF-MODISCO motif discovery algorithm to align and cluster subsequences with high contribution scores from all the scored sequences into a consolidated, non-redundant repertoire of motifs in the form of Contribution Weight Matrices (CWMs) and Position Frequency matrices (PFMs)[107,97]. We derived TF-MODISCO motifs separately for count and profile contribution score profiles and assigned putative TF labels for each motif based on their similarity to previously annotated TF motifs and overlap enrichment with ENCODE TF ChIP-seq datasets in K562 (**Fig. 1e,f**). Motifs derived from count contribution scores mapped to well-known TF drivers of chromatin accessibility in K562 including GATA-TAL, NFYB, STAT5A, CTCF, SP1, NFIX, ATF2, and ELK1 (**Fig. 1e**). In contrast, several motifs derived from profile contribution scores did not match known TFs, while those that did match were less prevalent and distorted (**Fig. 1f,g**). A closer examination of the top-ranking spurious motifs suggested a strong resemblance to the intrinsic sequence preference of the Tn5 transposase used in ATAC-seq experiments (**Fig. 1f**)[79].

Analogous interpretation of DNase-seq models in K562 revealed greater similarity of profile and count contribution scores than observed for ATAC-seq models. Both types of contribution scores at representative DNase-seq peaks highlighted known TF motif instances and fewer spurious bases **(Extended Fig. 1a)**. TF-MODISCO motifs derived from count and profile contribution scores were also similar to each other and to motifs derived from count contribution scores of the ATAC-seq models **(Extended Fig. 1b,c)**. However, TF-MODISCO identified one motif matching the intrinsic sequence preference of the DNase-I enzyme from the DNase-seq profile contribution scores but not count contribution scores **(Extended Fig. 1c)**. Nevertheless, its prevalence and influence was less pronounced compared to Tn5's motif identified from ATAC-seq profile contribution scores **(Extended Fig. 1b-d)**.

Collectively, these results demonstrate that deep learning models trained naively on base-resolution chromatin accessibility profiles conflate the influence of TF motif syntax with the intrinsic sequence preferences of enzymes like Tn5 and DNase-I. While total counts (overall accessibility) in peaks are not affected by enzyme sequence preferences and exclusively determined by TF motif syntax, the base-resolution positional distribution of reads (profile shape) in peaks is impacted by enzyme sequence preferences, with Tn5 causing stronger distortions in ATAC-seq profiles than DNase-I in DNase-seq profiles. These insights led us to develop new model training strategies that explicitly decouple the influence of enzyme sequence preferences from the contribution of TF motif syntax on base-resolution chromatin accessibility profiles.

## CNNs learn Tn5/DNase-I sequence preferences from background cleavage profiles of chromatin accessibility experiments

To correct the impact of intrinsic enzymatic biases on base-resolution positional distribution of reads, we first developed new predictive sequence models of enzyme sequence preference. For ATAC-seq, unstranded Tn5 insertion profiles are typically obtained by aggregating appropriately offset 5' read starts from both strands. The canonical offsets used to correct for Tn5's dimeric binding and the insertion of two adaptors, spaced 9 bp apart, are +4 bp for reads mapping to the + strand and -5 bp for reads mapping on the - strand[118]. However, other offsets, such as +4/-4 bp shifts, have also been reported to improve models of Tn5 sequence preference[79,91]. To reconcile these reports, we systematically evaluated the different offset choices based on alignment of simple position weight matrix (PWM) motif models of Tn5 sequence preference derived from *k*-mers centered on shifted 5' read-starts in background regions from the + and - strand separately.

+4/-4 bp offsets were found to result in superior alignment of Tn5 PWMs derived from the two strands, justifying the use of this offset to derive unstranded coverage profiles of Tn5 insertions aggregated over both strands. (**Extended Fig. 3a-b**). Analogous analysis of strand-specific PWMs derived from DNase-I cleavage profiles, identified shifts of 0 bp for reads on the + strand and +1 bp for reads on the - strand for optimal alignment of DNase-I sequence preferences across strands[79,91].

Previous models of Tn5 and DNase-I sequence preference have used mononucleotide and dinucleotide weight matrix models, and enumerated or ensemble *k*-mer models[78,79,85,88,91,92,119–122]. Given the prior success of CNNs at modeling sequence specificity of TFs, we decided to test whether BPNet models trained only on ATAC-seq or DNase-seq profiles from non-accessible background genomic regions devoid of TF binding might learn accurate models of Tn5 and DNase-I sequence preferences. A modified BPNet "bias model" with 128 filters and an effective receptive field of 100 bp trained on sparse background ATAC-seq profiles in GM12878 was surprisingly effective at predicting total counts and profile shapes (Pearson correlation $r = 0.60$ ($p < 1e-10$), median JSD = 0.74) (**Extended Fig. 3c-d**), suggesting a strong influence of intrinsic Tn5 sequence preference in background regions. Since accidental training on weakly accessible regions occupied by sequence-specific TFs could result in contaminated bias models that learn TF motifs alongside enzymatic sequence preferences, we used our interpretation framework to systematically discover all sequence motifs learned by bias models trained on background regions passing different signal thresholds. We introduced a background signal coverage threshold as an adjustable hyperparameter with conservative defaults ensuring that bias models only learned motifs resembling Tn5 bias or other low complexity sequence patterns that did not resemble any known TF motifs.

We then used the bias model trained on background regions to predict Tn5 insertion bias profiles in peak regions. A representative peak locus in GM12878 revealed remarkable similarity between the predicted bias profile, the measured ATAC-seq profile and the predicted ATAC-seq profile from the expanded BPNet model. The exception was around the peak summit, where there was stronger protection against Tn5 insertion in measured and predicted ATAC-seq profiles compared to the predicted bias profile (**Fig. 2b)**. DeepLIFT profile contribution scores from the expanded BPNet model highlighted a CTCF binding site at the peak center, likely conferring this protection, as well as other spurious bases in the rest of the sequence. Profile contribution scores of the same sequence from the Tn5 bias model highlighted many of the same spurious bases suggesting that these likely reflect Tn5 sequence preference. However, the CTCF motif had no detectable contribution to the Tn5 bias profile confirming that the bias model had not accidentally learned the CTCF motif.

Systematic comparison of the predicted Tn5 bias profiles against measured ATAC-seq profiles across all peak regions in each of the cell-lines, revealed high concordance of profile shapes (median JSD=0.48) but poor prediction of total counts ($r = -0.16$) (**Extended Fig. 3e-h**), corroborating our previous results from the expanded BPNet ATAC-seq models that Tn5 bias strongly influences profile shape but not total counts in ATAC-seq peaks. TF-MODISCO further confirmed this conclusion by discovering pervasive Tn5 bias motifs in profile contribution scores but not in count contribution scores from the Tn5 bias model across ATAC-seq peak sequences (**Fig. 2c, Supp Figs. 3)**. Further, no known TF motifs were identified by TF-MODISCO in count and profile contribution scores from the Tn5 bias model across ATAC-seq peak sequences, affirming that the Tn5 bias model did not accidentally learn any known TF motifs.

Analogous results and conclusions were obtained for bias models trained on DNase-I cleavage profiles in background regions from DNase-seq experiments (**Extended Fig. 3g, 3h, 5a, 5b**).

Interestingly, TF-MODISCO applied to profile contribution scores of the DNase bias models in background regions revealed multiple subtle variations of the canonical DNase-I sequence preference motif, suggesting that even for DNase-I, a single PWM motif model is insufficient to fully represent its sequence preference (**Extended Fig. 5a**). TF-MODISCO did not discover any DNase-I bias motifs from count contribution scores of the DNase bias model, supporting our previous observation that DNase-I sequence preference also exclusively affects profile shape (**Supp Figs. 3**).

Finally, we explicitly quantified the sensitivity of ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles to the various variations of Tn5 and DNase-I bias motifs with a "marginal footprinting" approach (**Extended Fig. 3i-k, 5d)**[105,110,123]. We sampled the highest affinity *k*-mer from each bias motif, embedded it into a library of randomized background sequences, and averaged the normalized profile predictions from the bias models over the entire library to obtain marginal footprints. Each of the Tn5 and DNase-I bias motifs produced distinct marginal footprints, confirming the sensitivity of the bias model to these motifs. However, marginal Tn5 bias footprints were orders of magnitude stronger than the marginal DNase-I bias footprints, supporting our previous conclusions that Tn5 introduces stronger distortion of profile shapes than DNase-I.

## A bias-factorized neural network (ChromBPNet) deconvolves enzyme sequence preferences from regulatory sequence determinants of chromatin accessibility

Next, we developed a novel "bias-factorized" neural network architecture, named ChromBPNet, to deconvolve enzyme sequence preferences from TF motif syntax and other sequence features influencing base-resolution ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles in peak regions (**Fig. 2d**). ChromBPNet processes 2114 bp input sequences to produce a 1 Kb base-resolution profiles, decomposed into total counts and base-resolution positional probability distribution of reads through two parallel submodels. It combines a pre-trained BPNet enzyme bias model whose parameters are frozen with an expanded BPNet architecture which has learnable parameters. Training occurs in two stages. The first stage fits and scales the predicted enzyme bias profiles from the frozen bias submodel to the measured total counts and profile shapes across peaks and background regions in the training set. The second stage trains the expanded BPNet submodel on the residual variance in the total counts and profile shape not explained by the bias submodel from the first stage fit. The model predicts uncorrected accessibility coverage profiles by combining outputs from both submodels. To obtain a "bias-corrected" coverage profile, we disconnect the bias submodel and only use the residual submodel's predictions. Uncorrected or bias-corrected count and profile sequence contribution scores are derived by applying DeepLIFT/SHAP to the predictions from count and profile heads of the combined model or residual submodel, respectively.

We trained separate ChromBPNet models on ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles from 5 ENCODE Tier 1 cell-lines: K562, HepG2, GM12878, IMR90, and H1-hESC. In K562, the prediction performance of uncorrected predictions from the ChromBPNet models matched that of the expanded BPNet models without bias factorization (**Extended Fig. 2a**). ChromBPNet models from the other 4 cell-lines also achieved high predictive performance for total counts (median $r$ = 0.69) and profile shape (median JSD = 0.62) across held-out peaks, on par with the K562 models (**Extended Fig. 2b-c**).

To evaluate the efficacy of bias correction, we first examined the bias-corrected ATAC-seq profile predicted by the GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model at the exemplar ATAC-seq peak bound by CTCF (**Fig. 2b**). The bias-corrected predicted profile revealed a distinctive, latent

footprint tightly bookending the CTCF motif, obscured in the measured and uncorrected predicted profiles. Bias-corrected profile contribution scores exclusively highlighted the CTCF motif and two ZBTB7A motifs with weak repressive (negative contribution scores) effects that were not discernable in uncorrected profile contribution scores. Bias correction also suppressed spurious flanking bases representing Tn5 bias that were highlighted by uncorrected profile contribution scores. Examination of analogous tracks from the DNase-seq ChromBPNet models showed that DNase-I bias produced milder distortions of predicted profiles and contribution scores at this locus (**Extended Fig. 5b**).

Comparison of TF-MODISCO motifs derived from uncorrected and bias-corrected profile contribution scores across 30,000 randomly sampled GM12878 ATAC-seq peaks showed that bias correction completely eliminated Tn5 bias motifs that dominated uncorrected profile contribution scores and clearly revealed motifs of key LCL TFs, consistent with motifs derived from count contribution scores (**Fig. 2e**). DNase-seq models also showed complete elimination of the DNase-I bias motifs from profile contribution scores (**Extended Fig. 5c**).

Marginal footprinting showed that bias-corrected profiles were insensitive to Tn5 and DNase-I bias motifs, in contrast to uncorrected profiles (**Fig. 2f**, **Extended Fig. 5d**). Furthermore, bias-corrected marginal ATAC-seq footprints of predictive TF motifs lacked high-frequency distortions present in uncorrected footprints that strongly matched enzyme bias interference at these motifs, and revealed clear differences in footprint morphology (depth and shapes) between TF motifs (**Fig. 2g**). Marginal footprints from bias-corrected profiles were absent at GATA1 motifs, used as a negative control since GATA TFs lack expression in GM12878. In contrast, uncorrected profiles produced detectable GATA1 marginal footprints, identical to those derived from bias model profiles. Analogous analysis of TF footprints from DNase-seq ChromBPNet models revealed discernible but subtle effects of bias correction (**Extended Fig. 5e**).

These results demonstrate ChromBPNet's effectiveness at deconvolving and eliminating enzyme sequence preferences, revealing high fidelity, bias-corrected chromatin accessibility profiles, TF footprints and the underlying sequence drivers at base-resolution.

## ChromBPNet outperforms alternative approaches for enzyme bias correction

Next, we leveraged ChromBPNet's modular design for bias correction to systematically evaluate alternative approaches for measuring and correcting enzyme bias.

First, we compared Tn5 bias models trained on cleavage profiles from naked genomic DNA versus chromatinized background regions from ATAC-seq experiments[79,90]. TF-MODISCO motifs from the naked DNA bias model's profile contribution scores showed stronger A/T content at specific positions compared to those derived from chromatinized background despite being trained on compositionally matched regions, indicating differences in learned enzyme sequence preferences (**Extended Fig. 4a**). In contrast, chromatin background models from different cell-lines (HepG2 and GM12878) did not show any discernible motif differences (**Extended Fig. 4a**). Further, ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 ATAC-seq data augmented with the naked DNA bias model produced TF-MODISCO motifs from bias-corrected profile contribution scores contaminated with strong G/C bias (**Extended Fig. 4b**). In contrast, training the GM12878 model with a HepG2 chromatin-background bias model avoided this contamination. Marginal footprinting at Tn5 bias motifs and TF motifs showed that naked DNA bias-corrected profiles performed incomplete bias correction compared to chromatin-background bias-corrected profiles (**Extended Fig. 4c,d**).

These results support previous findings that naked DNA enzyme cleavage profiles do not fully capture the enzyme sequence preferences in chromatin, and that chromatin-background bias models enable superior bias correction[79]. While our results suggest transferability of chromatin-background bias models across cell-lines, we advise performing careful verification of bias correction via model interpretation, as presented above, since unknown differences in experimental protocols and other dataset-specific artifacts could impact the efficacy of bias correction.

Next, we used ChromBPNet's bias-correction verification framework to evaluate established bias correction methods, TOBIAS[78] and HINT-ATAC[79]. Expanded BPNet models (i.e. ChromBPNet without the bias-correction module) trained directly on GM12878 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles pre-corrected by these methods showed only partial bias correction in profile predictions and contribution scores at exemplar loci, TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores, and marginal footprints (**Fig. 2b,2e-g** for ATAC-seq, **Extended Fig. 5b-e** for DNase-seq, **Supp Figs. 2**). ChromBPNet models augmented with TOBIAS's bias model also failed to fully eliminate enzyme bias, underperforming even simple baseline CNN bias models trained on chromatin background (**Fig. 2b,2e-g** for ATAC-seq**, Extended Fig. 5b-e** for DNase-seq, **Supp Figs. 2**).

In summary, our results suggest that BPNet models trained on chromatin background models provide superior bias correction compared to alternative approaches.

## ChromBPNet substantially improves concordance between ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles & predictive sequence features

While DNase-seq and ATAC-seq experiments identify largely overlapping peak regions in matched biosamples, their base-resolution cleavage profiles often differ substantially (**Fig. 3a**). We hypothesized that these differences stem from profile sparsity and enzyme-specific biases distorting profile shapes. Given that ChromBPNet predicts denoised, bias-corrected profiles at base resolution, we expected higher concordance between predicted profiles from independently trained ATAC-seq and DNase-seq models compared to measured profiles.

To test this hypothesis, we compared predictions from K562 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq models across 30K randomly sampled overlapping peaks. Uncorrected predicted profiles, which alleviate coverage sparsity but retain enzyme biases, showed improved similarity (JSD = 0.58 ± 0.03, lower is better) compared to measured profiles (JSD = 0.81 ± 0.08) (**Fig. 3b**). Bias-corrected predicted profiles demonstrated substantially higher concordance (JSD = 0.26 ± 0.08).

The improved concordance of bias-corrected predicted profiles extended to the corresponding predictive sequence features highlighted by sequence contribution scores derived from the ATAC-seq and DNase-seq models. Profile contribution scores from bias-corrected models showed much higher similarity (JSD = 0.1 ± 0.03) than those from uncorrected profiles (JSD = 0.15 ± 0.03) (**Fig. 3c**). Count contribution scores remained unaffected by bias correction, supporting our finding that enzyme bias primarily impacts profile shape prediction and associated contribution scores. The improved concordance was not only evident at individual loci (**Fig. 3a**) but also resulted in strong similarity of predictive TF-MODISCO motifs and the proportion of predictive motif instances identified from profile contribution scores of both models (**Fig. 3d**).

Despite improved concordance of bias-corrected profiles and contribution scores, subtle differences persisted between bias-corrected ATAC-seq and DNase-seq footprints at predictive

motif instances (**Fig. 3a**). Systematic comparison of marginal bias-corrected footprints at key TF-MODISCO motifs revealed that DNase-seq footprints were consistently narrower (25-35 bp vs. 35-40 bp) and deeper (0-0.0325 vs 0-0.01 probability of cleavage) than ATAC-seq footprints, often showing more refined structure (**Fig. 3e-h**). These differences are consistent with DNase-I's smaller size (~31 kDa), direct DNA cleavage mechanism, and higher sensitivity to local chromatin structure, compared to the larger Tn5 transposase (53.3 kDa) used in ATAC-seq[124,125].

Nevertheless, we observed high correlation of bias-corrected marginal footprint depths between assays across predictive TF motifs (Pearson $r$ = 0.98, **Fig. 3h**). This demonstrates that ChromBPNet's bias-corrected footprints from both ATAC-seq and DNase-seq consistently reveal differences in TF residence times and occupancy, ranging from deep (CTCF, NRF1, BACH) to moderate (GATA, ELK, SP1) and shallow (NFYB, STA5) footprints[126,127].

Thus, ChromBPNet eliminates sequence-specific enzyme preferences while preserving intrinsic structural differences between Tn5 and DNase-I, revealing highly concordant predictive motif syntax and co-localized footprints from both assays.

## ChromBPNet can impute base-resolution profiles, footprints and predictive sequence motifs from low coverage ATAC-seq and DNase-seq datasets

Sequencing coverage in ATAC-seq/DNase-seq experiments significantly impacts the sensitivity and specificity of typical analysis workflows. For example, traditional footprinting methods often require >100M reads for sensitive and high-fidelity footprint identification at individual loci [73,74]. While the ChromBPNet models analyzed above were trained on such deeply sequenced bulk datasets, deep sequencing is frequently constrained by cost or library complexity. For instance, rare cell populations identified from single-cell or single-nucleus ATAC-seq experiments may yield shallow pseudobulk samples with only 5-10M reads from as few as 100 nuclei. We sought to investigate whether ChromBPNet models could be successfully trained on such shallow datasets and how read depth affects model performance and interpretation.

To investigate ChromBPNet's performance as a function of read depth, we created subsampled datasets (250M, 100M, 50M, 25M, and 5M reads) from our deepest ATAC-seq dataset (572M reads, GM12878). As expected, base-resolution profiles deteriorated with decreasing read depth (JSDs ranging from 0.1-1.0, median JSD increasing from 0.3 (250M), 0.5 (100M), 0.6 (50M), 0.7 (25M), 0.9 (5M)) (**Fig. 4a,b**). At 5M reads, profiles were often too sparse to visually identify peaks or footprints (**Fig. 4a**).

In contrast, ChromBPNet models trained independently on each subsampled dataset imputed uncorrected and bias-corrected base-resolution profiles with remarkably high fidelity (JSDs ranging from 0.1-0.6, median JSD ranging from 0.147 (250M), 0.145 (100M), 0.153 (50M), 0.156 (25M), 0.190 (5M)) relative to the reference high-depth model, showing visible degradation only at 5M reads (**Fig. 4b**). Count and profile contribution scores also remained highly concordant across read depths, with some degradation at 5M reads. Accurate footprint and sequence syntax imputation was evident at individual loci across all read depths (**Fig. 4a**).

To estimate genome-wide recovery of predictive sequence motifs as a function of read depth, we compared predictive instances of TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores from the reference high-depth model to those from models trained on subsampled datasets. As expected, recall rates were higher for top-ranked, more frequent motifs (e.g., IRF, SPI, RUNX) compared to less frequent ones (e.g., PAX, COE, HNF1) (**Fig. 4c**). Recall rates remained stable across subsampled models down to 25M reads, below which we observed substantial loss for the

least frequent motifs. Recovery of bias-corrected marginal footprints showed similar trends (**Fig. 4d**).

Hence, ChromBPNet accurately imputes base-resolution profiles, predictive sequence motifs, and their marginal footprints from moderate coverage (25M reads) chromatin accessibility profiles, comparable to much deeper samples. Even at very low coverage (5M reads), despite some expected information loss, ChromBPNet's predicted profiles and sequence annotations offer substantial benefits over directly using measured profiles. These results indicate that ChromBPNet can be effectively applied to typical bulk ATAC-seq and DNase-seq datasets, as well as cell-type resolved, pseudo-bulk scATAC-seq profiles, to decipher TF motif lexicons and footprints.

## ChromBPNet reveals compact TF motif lexicons, cooperative composite elements and predictive motif instances that influence chromatin accessibility and TF occupancy

Next, we used ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq and DNase-seq data from the 5 ENCODE Tier-1 cell-lines to decipher TF motif lexicons that regulate chromatin accessibility in each cellular context. TF-MODISCO identified 50-65 predictive, non-redundant motifs from count and profile contributions scores across all peak regions in each cell line, supporting previous findings of a limited repertoire of TFs influencing chromatin accessibility[128] (**Supp Figs 5**). These included motifs of ubiquitous TFs (e.g. CTCF, SP1 and AP1) and well-known cell-type specific TFs (e.g. IRF, SPI1, RUNX, and NFκB in GM12878; GATA-TAL in K562; FOXA and HNF4 in HepG2; OCT-SOX, SOX, ZIC3, and TEAD in H1-hESC; and FOX, TEAD, and POU1F1 in IMR90) (**Fig. 5a; Extended Fig. 6a and 7a-b**).

Bias-corrected marginal footprints of motifs verified their cell-type specific or ubiquitous effects on chromatin accessibility. For example, the HNF4, NFκB, GATA, OCT-SOX, and FOXL motifs were identified only in HepG2, GM12878, K562, H1-hESC, and IMR90 models, respectively, and displayed corresponding cell-type-specific marginal footprints, matching their expression patterns (**Fig. 5b; Extended Fig. 7c**). In contrast, the ubiquitous CTCF and SP1 motifs exhibited consistent and reproducible marginal footprints across models from all five cell lines. Notably, the shape of uncorrected marginal ATAC-seq footprints lacked cell-type specificity, underscoring the importance of bias correction for accurately inferring TF footprints (**Fig. 5b**).

TF-MODISCO also identified several composite elements—homotypic or heterotypic combinations of TF motifs—exhibiting strict syntax constraints, including spacing, order, and orientation. Examples included the FOS-TEAD composite in IMR90[129] and IRF1-SPI1 and IRF1-AP1 composites in GM12878[130] (**Extended Fig. 6b**). These composite elements typically mediate cooperative effects of multiple TFs through precise binding configurations. Using ChromBPNet, we tested whether the models learned these syntax-dependent cooperative effects. For instance, we used the IMR90 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq models to predict and compare bias-corrected marginal footprints of the FOS-TEAD composite element against those of the individual TEAD and FOS motifs. The composite footprint was substantially stronger than the footprints of either motifs as well as their sum, suggesting a super-additive cooperative effect (**Fig. 5c; Extended Fig. 7d**). Furthermore, altering the spacing or orientation of TEAD and FOS motifs abolished the cooperative effect, confirming strict syntax requirements (**Fig. 5c; Extended Fig. 7d**). This behavior was corroborated using BPNet models trained on FOS ChIP-seq data from IMR90 (**Extended Fig. 6c**).

We next used the extensive compendium of TF ChIP-seq datasets in these cell-lines to benchmark the predictive motif instances of TF-MODISCO motifs identified by ChromBPNet against occupancy of putative TFs that might bind the motif. However, directly comparing ChromBPNet derived motif instances to TF ChIP-seq peaks presents several challenges: ChIP-seq peaks (~200 bp) are wider than individual motifs (4–25 bp), often lack the direct binding motif of the target TF and may contain motifs of multiple TFs that contribute to binding of the target TF. Additionally, ChIP-seq coverage does not provide reliable estimates of each motif's contribution to TF occupancy. To overcome these limitations, we instead used contribution scores derived from BPNet models trained on the TF ChIP-seq datasets as a high-resolution estimate of their contribution to occupancy of the target TF.

In exploratory analyses of specific enhancer and promoter regions, we found strong agreement between ChromBPNet and BPNet-predicted motif instances. For example, the HepG2 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models identified CEBP, FOXA, and AP1 motifs within an accessible enhancer 35 Kb downstream of the LDLR gene, aligning with motif instances highlighted by BPNet models trained on CEBPB, FOXA2, and FOSL2 ChIP-seq data (**Fig. 5d; Extended Fig. 7e**). Similarly, the K562 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq models identified GATA-TAL heterodimer motif in the PKLR promoter, matching GATA-TAL heterodimer motifs from GATA1 and TAL1 ChIP-seq BPNet models (**Extended Fig. 6d, 7f**).

We then systematically benchmarked all TF-MODISCO motifs derived from ChromBPNet against reference BPNet models of ChIP-seq datasets of putative TFs that could bind these motifs. For each TF-MODISCO motif assigned to putative target TFs for which TF ChIP-seq data was available, we identified motif instances based on sequence similarity to the TF-MODISCO PWMs ($p \leq 0.05$, MOODS PWM scanner) in all ATAC-seq/DNase-seq peaks overlapping ChIP-seq peaks of the target TF[131]. For each motif instance, we estimated the (1) total count contribution score from ChromBPNet, (2) measured accessibility (total coverage) of the overlapping ATAC-seq/DNase-seq peak, and (3) footprint scores from the TOBIAS footprinting method[78]. We assessed how well these metrics correlated with the reference count contribution scores from BPNet models of the target TF ChIP-seq data.

Using the CTCF motif as a case study, we observed a strong correlation (Pearson $r > 0.89$) between ChromBPNet contribution scores and BPNet-derived scores from CTCF ChIP-seq models in HepG2 (**Fig. 5e**). In contrast, total accessibility scores ($r = -0.1$) and TOBIAS footprinting scores ($r = 0.2$) exhibited poor correlation (**Fig. 5f**). This pattern was consistent across a broader set of motifs and TF ChIP-seq datasets (**Fig. 5g**). These results indicate that ChromBPNet's contribution scores accurately capture the quantitative effect sizes of motif instances on TF occupancy, outperforming alternative footprinting approaches.

## ChromBPNet predicts effects of genetic variants on chromatin accessibility across assays, ancestry groups, cell-lines and primary cells

Predictive models of regulatory DNA could potentially enable in silico prioritization and interpretation of non-coding genetic variants that influence regulatory activity. Hence, we evaluated the ability of ChromBPNet models trained using the reference genome to predict the counterfactual effects of genetic variants on chromatin accessibility. Using cell context-specific DNase-seq or ATAC-seq models, we predicted 1 Kb bias-corrected, base-resolution coverage profiles for reference and alternate alleles of any query variant, centered within its 2,114 bp genomic sequence context. From the pair of predicted profiles, we computed several complementary measures of variant effects.

(1) **Log fold-change (logFC)** of total predicted coverage between the reference and alternate alleles, providing a canonical effect size of the variant on local accessibility.
(2) **Active Allele Quantile (AAQ)** is the percentile of the predicted total coverage of the stronger allele relative to the distribution of predicted total coverage across all ATAC-seq/DNase-seq peaks.
(3) **Jensen-Shannon distance (JSD)** between the bias-corrected base-resolution probability profiles of the two alleles, which captures effects on profile shape, such as changes in TF footprints.
(4) **Integrative Effect Size (IES)** is the product of logFC and JSD, capturing both total coverage change and profile shape differences.
(5) **Integrative Prioritization Score (IPS)** is the product of logFC, JSD, and AAQ, integrating all aspects of variant impact to prioritize biologically relevant variants.

We first benchmarked variant effect prediction performance against DNase-seq quantitative trait loci (dsQTLs) identified in 70 lymphoblastoid cell-lines (LCLs) of Yoruban African ancestry[65], using a curated dataset[132] of ~500 statistically significant dsQTLs and a 50x larger negative set of matched control variants. Both sets are restricted to variants that overlap DNase-seq peaks from the LCL cohort, to ensure that the positive set is enriched for likely causal, local cis-dsQTLs while minimizing the inclusion of spurious variants in linkage disequilibrium.

We computed the five types of variant effect scores from ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq and DNase-seq data from a single reference LCL (GM12878) of European ancestry. We first tested these scores in terms of their classification performance relative to the positive and negative sets (**Extended Fig. 8a**). Among individual scores, JSD generally performed on par with or better than logFC, suggesting that changes in profile shape alone were as discriminative as changes in total coverage. Combining JSD and logFC through the Integrative Effect Size (IES) further improved performance. However, the Integrative Prioritization Score (IPS), which incorporates the Active Allele Quantile (AAQ) along with logFC and JSD, yielded the best results, with an average precision (AP) of 0.54 for ATAC-seq and 0.43 for DNase-seq (**Fig. 6a**).

We suspected this performance gap between the ATAC-seq and DNase-seq could be simply due to the substantial difference in read depth of the ATAC-seq (572M reads) and DNase-seq (68M reads) datasets used to train the models. To investigate further, we rescored the variants with ChromBPNet models trained on subsampled ATAC-seq datasets (250M, 100M, 50M, 25M and 5M). AP remained above 0.5 for the 100M reads model and dropped to 0.46 at 50M reads, which is comparable to that of the 68M DNase-seq model (AP = 0.43) (**Fig. 6a, Extended Fig. 8b**). Below 50M reads, AP declined more sharply, reaching 0.29 at 5M reads (**Extended Fig. 8b**). The ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models substantially outperformed the gkm-SVM model (AP = 0.19) trained on the same 68M DNase-seq dataset. Surprisingly, both ChromBPNet models also substantially outperformed published variant effect scores on GM12878 DNase-seq from the Enformer model (AP = 0.33), which is a state-of-the-art, long-context (200 Kb), multi-task transformer model trained on chromatin accessibility, TF binding and gene expression tracks from diverse cell types in human and mouse, including the 68M GM12878 DNase-seq dataset (**Fig. 6a**, **Extended Fig. 8b**).

Next, we evaluated the correlation between predicted logFC effect sizes from ChromBPNet models and the observed effect sizes of the significant dsQTLs in the positive set. The ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq ($r$ = 0.76 at 572M, $r$ = 0.73 at 50M) and DNase-seq ($r$ = 0.73 and at 68M) outperformed the gkm-SVM model ($r$ = 0.73 at 68M DNase-seq) (**Fig. 6b, Extended Fig. 8c**). All ChromBPNet models also substantially outperformed Enformer ($r$ = 0.56 at 68M DNase-seq reads) (**Extended Fig. 8c**). Remarkably, subsampled ATAC-seq models

maintained high correlations even at very low read depths ($r$ = 0.67 at 5M reads). Similar trends were observed when comparing unsigned predicted and measured effect sizes.

We suspected that Enformer's poor performance relative to ChromBPNet may be due to potential flaws in their published variant scores. Upon investigation, we realized that Enformer's reported variant scores were computed by comparing the total coverage of predicted profiles spanning ~100 Kb around each variant for both alleles, which can greatly diminish the local effect of variants. To address this issue, we recomputed Enformer variant effect scores as the allelic log fold change of coverage over local 2 Kb profiles around each variant. These revised local variant effect scores showed substantial improvements in variant prioritization (AP = 0.53 at 68M DNase-seq), outperforming matched ChromBPNet models (AP = 0.43 at 68M DNase-seq, AP = 0.46 at 50M ATAC-seq). dsQTL effect size prediction also improved substantially ($r$ = 0.73, $|r|$ = 0.20 at 68M DNase-seq), but slightly underperformed matched ChromBPNet models ($r$ = 0.73, $|r|$ = 0.25). However, ChromBPNet trained on the higher coverage (572M) ATAC-seq data (AP = 0.54, $r$ = 0.76, $|r|$ = 0.29) outperformed Enformer, highlighting the importance of high quality, deeply sequenced training data.

Beyond predicting effects of variants on accessibility, ChromBPNet can also provide insights into the disrupted regulatory syntax, via contrasts of contribution scores of reference and alternate allele sequences. For example, for dsQTL rs11242436, both ChromBPNet and Enformer predicted strong effects on accessibility. Comparing the contribution scores of the reference and alternative sequences derived from the DNase-seq and ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models showed that the "A" allele not only directly disrupts a predictive AP1 motif instance but also reduces the contribution of a neighboring AP1 motif, suggesting disruption of cooperative syntax (**Fig. 6c**). Additionally, ChromBPNet's base-resolution predictions reveal a loss of footprints, providing a more detailed characterization of the variant's impact compared to Enformer's binned predictions.

To verify the robustness of our benchmarks, we performed additional comparative evaluations using two other independent, well powered chromatin accessibility QTL (caQTL) studies based on ATAC-seq profiling in ~100 LCLs of European ancestry[66] and ~100 LCLs of diverse African ancestry[67]. The overall conclusions from both benchmarks were consistent with those of the dsQTL benchmark and remained robust across different significance thresholds for defining significant caQTLs (**Fig. 6d-g, Extended Fig. 9a-d**).

The African caQTL study also identified 5,897 heterozygous variants across all individuals with significant intra-individual allelic imbalance of accessibility. Variant effect scores (logFC) from the GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model showed strong directional correlation ($r$ = 0.68) with the reported allelic imbalance effect sizes (consensus average over all individuals) on par with the cross-individual QTL effect sizes from the same study ($r$ = 0.69) (**Fig. 6g,h, Extended Fig. 9f**).

The African caQTL dataset, spanning six ancestry subgroups (Esan, Maasai, Mende, Gambian, Luhya, and Yoruba), enabled assessment of variant effect score robustness across models trained on different reference datasets. We observed very high correlations ($r$ = 0.96-0.97) in variant effect scores (logFC and JSD) between all pairs of African subgroup models (**Fig. 6i, Extended Fig. 9e**). Models trained on European LCL reference datasets showed slightly lower but still high correlation ($r$ = 0.93-0.95) with all African ancestry subgroup models, suggesting strong cross-ancestry generalization of variant effect predictions.

Finally, we evaluated ChromBPNet models trained on pseudobulk scATAC-seq profiles from two disease-relevant primary cell types, human microglia and coronary smooth muscle cells, against cell-context matched caQTL datasets[69,70]. Using reference ChromBPNet models trained on an

independent scATAC-seq pseudobulk dataset of microglia[133] and models trained on pooled smooth muscle cell (SMC) profiles[70], we observed strong directional correlations between predicted and reported effect sizes for significant caQTLs ($r$ = 0.6 for microglia, $r$ = 0.7 for SMCs) (**Figure 6j,k, Extended Fig. 9g,h**).

These comprehensive analyses demonstrate that ChromBPNet models, despite being trained on single-reference ATAC-seq/DNase-seq profiles using only the reference genome and its short local context, can robustly prioritize causal variants and predict variant effects on chromatin accessibility, performing on par with much larger state-of-the-art, multi-task deep learning models. ChromBPNet exhibits strong generalization across assays (DNase-seq and ATAC-seq), QTLs identified across diverse ancestry groups, and cellular contexts, maintaining robust performance in both cell lines and primary cells.

## ChromBPNet predicts effects of sequence variation influencing pioneer TF occupancy, massively parallel reporter activity, complex traits and rare disease

Having established that ChromBPNet can predict variant effects on chromatin accessibility and that motif contribution scores reflect their influence on TF occupancy, we hypothesized that ChromBPNet's variant effect predictions should correlate with their upstream effects on TF occupancy, particularly for lineage-specific pioneer factors. We tested this hypothesis using a comprehensive binding QTL (bQTL) study that assessed effects of over 1 million variants on genome-wide SPI1 pioneer TF occupancy via a pooled ChIP-seq experiment across 60 Yoruban LCLs[134]. Using GM12878 ChromBPNet models to predict variant effects on DNase-seq and ATAC-seq profiles, we observed that bins of bQTLs with higher statistical significance showed stronger predicted effect sizes on chromatin accessibility, concordant with observed bQTL effect size distributions (**Extended Fig. 10a**).

Using the rs5764238 (C>G) SPI1 bQTL as a representative example, we visualized and compared the allele-specific predicted profiles and contribution scores from both ChromBPNet models to those derived from BPNet models trained on SPI1 ChIP-seq profiles from GM12878 **(Fig. 7a)**. The BPNet model predicted low TF occupancy for the C allele, regulated by a weak flanking SPI1 motif. The G allele significantly increased predicted occupancy by amplifying an overlapping SP1 motif's contribution score. DNase-seq and ATAC-seq ChromBPNet predictions corroborated these findings, matching the measured bQTL allelic effect direction.

We evaluated discriminative performance using 447 high-confidence bQTLs against a negative set (125x larger) of control variants from the African caQTL benchmark. This negative set was carefully chosen to exclude variants that were not SPI1 bQTLs but could still act as significant chromatin QTLs, ensuring a fair comparison. The DNase-seq (68M reads) ChromBPNet model (AP = 0.33) substantially outperformed Enformer's published scores (AP = 0.14) but slightly underperformed revised local effect scores from Enformer (AP = 0.34) (**Fig. 7b**). ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models surpassed Enformer's revised scores (AP = 0.37) even at matched read depths (**Fig. 7b**). All ChromBPNet models outperformed Enformer in predicting signed and unsigned bQTL effect sizes ($r$ = 0.59 for 572M ATAC-seq reads, $r$ = 0.58 for 50M ATAC-seq & r = 0.59 for 68M DNase-seq, versus $r$ = 0.53 for Enformer revised scores) (**Fig. 7c, Extended Fig. 10c**). These findings remained robust across different bQTL significance thresholds (**Extended Fig. 10b,c**).

We further investigated whether ChromBPNet's predicted effects of sequence variation on chromatin accessibility related to experimentally measured effects on downstream regulatory

activity as measured by massively parallel reporter assays (MPRAs). We used a benchmark dataset from the CAGI5 competition that used MPRAs to profile the effects of over 30,000 single nucleotide substitutions and deletions in 20 disease-associated regulatory elements including nine promoters (e.g., IRF4, IRF6, MYC, SORT1) and five enhancer elements (e.g., TERT, LDLR, F9, HBGI) in relevant cell-lines[135,136]. Using ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq/DNase-seq data in matched cell-lines, we compared ChromBPNet's predicted effect sizes for each of the variants with measured MPRA scores and benchmarked against Enformer's predictions. ChromBPNet matched Enformer's performance within a margin of +/- 0.05 (Pearson correlation) for 9 loci and exceeded it substantially for 5 out of 14 loci (**Fig. 7d, Extended Fig. 10d**).

Next, we tested whether ChromBPNet's variant effect scores could be used to prioritize potentially causal variants within GWAS loci associated with complex traits and diseases. We focused on a collection of GWAS studies of 9 red blood cell traits for which reliable statistical fine mapping was available[137]. Among these traits, we identified three - Mean corpuscular volume (MCV), Mean corpuscular hemoglobin (MCH) and Mean corpuscular hemoglobin concentration (MCHC) - for which over 50% of heritability was explained by chromatin accessible regions in K562. Using K562 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models, we predicted variant effects for 11,916,124 variants including 12,951 variants in loci associated with these three traits. We then estimated the enrichment of overlap of high scoring variants from ChromBPNet (across a range of score thresholds) with fine mapped variants passing various posterior probability (PIP) thresholds (**Fig. 7e, Extended Fig. 10e**). We observed a strong increase in enrichment with higher PIP thresholds across all ChromBPNet score thresholds. Notably, the enrichment became more pronounced at more stringent ChromBPNet score thresholds, reaching up to 70-fold enrichment (at a PIP threshold of 0.4).

ChromBPNet can also provide insights into the regulatory syntax disrupted by fine mapped variants predicted to have strong effects on accessibility. For example, rs11553699 is a fine mapped SNV (PIP = 1) strongly associated with mean corpuscular volume (MCV). Contribution scores of reference and alternate allele sequences from ChromBPNet revealed that the A to G transition disrupts a GATA-TAL composite element, representing binding sites of GATA1 and TAL1 which are critical regulators of erythroid development (**Fig. 7f**). These results suggest that ChromBPNet's variant effect scores can help prioritize and interpret potentially causal variants in GWAS loci.

ChromBPNet's sequence-based predictions of variant effects are independent of population allele frequencies, enabling evaluation of both common and rare non-coding variants. We previously demonstrated this capability using BPNet models trained on cell-type resolved scATAC-seq pseudobulk data from fetal heart and brain cell types to prioritize de novo variants in patients with congenital heart disease and neurodevelopmental disorders[94,95]. Here, we showcase the utility of ChromBPNet models trained on scATAC-seq pseudobulk profiles from human fetal brain glutamatergic neurons to analyze a *de novo* variant (chr6:14501369 A>G) from a patient in the Deciphering Developmental Disorders (DDD) cohort with severe, undiagnosed neurodevelopmental disorder[138,139]. The variant lies within a strong scATAC-seq peak in the reference glutamatergic neuron sample. ChromBPNet predicts the risk allele (G) to decrease chromatin accessibility by 40% (**Fig. 7g**). Further, contribution scores of reference and alternate sequences reveals that this reduction stems from the risk allele creating a binding site for the NR2F1 repressor with strong negative contribution scores, which is known to suppress alternative cell fates during neuronal specification and glutamatergic neuron development[140,141]. The variant lies between the CD83 (384 Kb) and JARID2 (748 Kb) genes, with JARID2 being the likely target given its expression in glutamatergic neurons, critical role in neural development through PRC2

and previous associations with autism and intellectual disability[142–145]. These lines of evidence suggest that JARID2 might be the target gene of this variant.

To validate these predictions, we tested both alleles in transgenic mouse reporter assays at embryonic day E11.5. The risk allele abolished enhancer activity in the forebrain, hindbrain and eyes, while reducing activity in the midbrain (**Fig. 7h**). As a control, we tested another nearby DDD de novo variant (chr6:14501675 G>T) that ChromBPNet predicted would not affect accessibility (**Extended Fig. 10f)**. This control variant showed no effect on enhancer activity, supporting ChromBPNet's ability to distinguish functional from neutral variants (**Fig. 7g**).

Overall, our analyses suggest that despite training ChromBPNet models only on chromatin accessibility profiles, their variant effect scores generalize to regulatory layers including TF occupancy and regulatory activity and for prioritization of fine mapped variants in GWAS loci and *de novo* variants in rare disease.

## DISCUSSION

ChromBPNet combines the predictive power of deep learning, the precision of footprinting methods, and systematic bias correction to enhance inference of regulatory sequence syntax and genetic variation.

### ChromBPNet introduces several technical innovations that enhance predictive models of chromatin accessibility

ChromBPNet directly models raw base-resolution coverage profiles without requiring ad-hoc pre-processing or normalization. Its bias-factorized architecture and loss functions, combined with stage-wise residual training, implicitly account for profile sparsity while disentangling enzyme preferences from regulatory syntax. This model design was guided by systematic model interpretation, revealing insights that performance metrics alone would miss. By separately modeling total coverage and profile shape, we discovered through DeepLIFT, TF-MODISCO, and marginal footprinting analyses that initial models learned confounding enzyme biases that affected profile shape but not total coverage.

ChromBPNet's modular design also facilitates systematic evaluation of different bias models and external bias correction strategies within a predictive framework. Rigorous benchmarks using our integrated interpretation framework demonstrate that BPNet-like CNNs trained on background chromatin accessibility profiles consistently outperform established methods like HINT-ATAC and TOBIAS, as well as CNN models trained on naked DNA[90,79]. While chromatin-background bias models can usually transfer between experiments using identical protocols, experiment-specific bias models guarantee automatic adaptation to different assays, protocol variations and experiment-specific artifacts without requiring any additional data collection[90]. To ensure robust use across diverse experimental settings, the ChromBPNet package not only provides carefully validated pretrained reference bias models but also includes checkpoints with diagnostic reports for vetting bias correction.

Comparative analysis of ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models support the robustness and generalizability of our bias correction approach. Despite the distinct enzymatic biases of these assays, after bias-correction, the models predict highly consistent predicted profiles, contribution scores and motifs. Bias-corrected marginal footprints preserve the structural differences between assays while showing strong correlation in footprint depth across TF motifs.

**ChromBPNet improves interpretation of sequence determinants of chromatin accessibility**

ChromBPNet provides insights into a fundamental question about which motifs mediate the influence of TFs on chromatin accessibility across cellular contexts. Models from multiple cell-lines consistently reveal that a relatively compact lexicon of both cell-type specific and ubiquitous motifs, including composite elements, is sufficient to accurately predict both overall accessibility and base-resolution profiles, supporting earlier findings that a limited set of TFs directly regulate chromatin accessibility[128]. While some motifs map to established pioneer factors like FOXA2 in HepG2, GATA1 in K562, and OCT4-SOX2 in H1-ESCs, others may prove to be novel pioneers or influence accessibility through alternative mechanisms. For example, in our recent study of Drosophila embryogenesis, ChromBPNet models applied to dynamic chromatin accessibility profiles reveal distinct roles and hierarchical relationships between pioneer factors like Zelda and context-dependent activators, each governed by specific cis-regulatory rules[113].

ChromBPNet also enables systematic in silico analysis of how regulatory syntax influences accessibility through precise perturbation of motif combinations, affinity, spacing, and orientation. Our analysis of the FOS-TEAD composite element demonstrates how specific spacing and orientation constraints between motifs produce super-additive effects on accessibility[129]. ChromBPNet can also reveal insights into how TF motif affinity and concentration jointly regulate accessibility. In Drosophila embryogenesis, ChromBPNet revealed that Zelda pioneers accessibility proportional to its motif affinity[113]. In our recent fibroblast reprogramming study, ChromBPNet revealed how supraphysiological concentrations of reprogramming factors engage cryptic low-affinity sites flanked by AP1 motifs, redirecting AP1 away from somatic regulatory elements[146]. Similarly, in cranial neural crest cells, ChromBPNet uncovered how low-affinity TWIST1 motifs drive dosage-sensitive responses through TF-nucleosome competition, while SOX9 dosage sensitivity is mediated through AP-1 motifs[147].

Further, ChromBPNet not only enables precision identification of predictive motif instances in accessible cREs but also helps quantify their effects on accessibility. We demonstrate that contribution scores of predictive motif instances strongly reflect their direct effects on TF occupancy, substantially outperforming traditional footprinting approaches. ChromBPNet's predicted motif instances and effect sizes are also strongly corroborated by systematic motif mutagenesis experiments via CRISPR VariantFlowFISH experiments in human cell lines and large-scale in vivo reporter experiments in transgenic mouse models[148,149].

**Our study advances both the methodology and benchmarking standards for predicting and interpreting regulatory genetic variation.**

We introduce novel measures of variant effects that complement traditional measures of allelic imbalance of total accessibility (log-fold changes), including the Jensen-Shannon Distance (JSD) for changes in base-resolution profile shape and the Active Allele Quantile (AAQ) that calibrates variant effects against genome-wide accessibility. While profile shape changes alone are surprisingly predictive, combining these measures into an integrative score further improves variant prioritization.

To enable rigorous evaluation of variant effect prediction, we contribute carefully curated benchmarking datasets spanning chromatin QTLs from diverse ancestry groups[67,66], pioneer TF binding QTLs[134], reporter assays[135,136], and fine-mapped GWAS variants for red blood cell traits[150]. These benchmarks systematically assess prediction accuracy across multiple regulatory layers, ancestry groups, and experimental assays. Our evaluation framework examines both

variant classification and effect size prediction across significance thresholds. To ensure fair comparisons with existing methods like deltaSVM and Enformer we incorporate benchmarks reported in their respective publications. We also identified and corrected flaws in Enformer's published variant effect scores, significantly improving its performance.

ChromBPNet accurately predicts directional effects of chromatin QTLs robustly across assays and cell types. These results stand in stark contrast to recent reports showing that long-context expression models, including Enformer, struggle to achieve directionally concordant predictions of expression QTL effects[151,152]. Notably, we find that Enformer's DNase-seq predictions, like ChromBPNet's, accurately capture directional effects of chromatin QTLs. This suggests both models can effectively predict causal effects of sequence variation on local chromatin accessibility despite training only on reference genome sequences. The challenge in expression QTL prediction likely stems from the difficulty of modeling distal regulatory interactions with current long-context gene expression models[148,153,154]. Further, the high concordance between predictions from ChromBPNet models trained on data from diverse ancestry groups suggests that the model learns causal regulatory mechanisms independent of the confounding effects of population-specific linkage disequilibrium.

However, despite substantial differences in architecture (6M vs 250M parameters), sequence context (2Kb vs >100Kb), and training data (single task vs massively multi-task), ChromBPNet is highly competitive with Enformer across multiple benchmarks. ChromBPNet generally outperforms Enformer in predicting quantitative effect sizes for chromatin QTLs, binding QTLs, and reporter assays but underperforms at variant classification. However, even this advantage largely disappears when ChromBPNet is trained on higher-depth data, suggesting that Enformer's edge at variant classification stems less from its longer context window and more from indirect access to reinforcing regulatory signals from TF and histone modification datasets via multi-task training, especially in LCLs. Models trained on deeper datasets are more sensitive to rarer motifs and are likely more effective at learning cooperative effects of motif epistasis within local sequence contexts, thereby improving sensitivity and specificity of variant prioritization (**Fig. 4c-d)**. Further, ChromBPNet also significantly outperforms much larger annotation-agnostic DNA language models (DNALMs) in zero-shot, probed and fine-tuned settings at predicting accessibility QTLs[155]

Our evaluations across multiple, independent chromatin QTL benchmark datasets also reveals important considerations for benchmarking variant effect prediction models. While absolute performance varies across datasets and significance thresholds, particularly for variant classification, the relative performance between methods is quite consistent, and quantitative effect size predictions are more comparable across datasets. These variations likely stem from differences in data quality, sequencing depth, peak-calling and QTL analysis approaches. Importantly, we find that restricting chromatin QTLs to variants within peaks is quite critical to enrich for likely causal variants. Without this filtering, performance decreases due to apparent false negatives – variants with strong observed but no predicted effects that likely tag the true causal variants[67].

Finally, ChromBPNet provides interpretable predictions for disease-relevant variants across the allele frequency spectrum. Predicted variant effects on chromatin accessibility in disease-relevant cell types enrich for fine-mapped common GWAS variants and also help prioritize de novo variants in rare diseases for downstream validation experiments [95,94]. Further, ChromBPNet delivers stable and robust interpretation of the context-specific regulatory syntax disrupted by prioritized non-coding variants, which not only provides mechanistic insights but can also help weed out potential false positives that may disrupt spurious sequence features.

**Limitations, Caveats and future opportunities**

ChromBPNet's predictions of total accessibility still lag behind pseudo-replicate concordance, suggesting that while local sequence context can accurately predict profile shape distal context is likely critical for modeling total accessibility. However, current long-context models that simply increase model capacity and receptive fields struggle to learn distal regulation[148,153,154]. Future improvements may come from stage-wise training approaches that progressively build long-context models from pre-trained local models like ChromBPNet, and training objectives that leverage multiple axes of regulatory variation across the genome and across cell states[156].

ChromBPNet demonstrates the versatility of BPNet's architectural backbone and loss functions - minimal modifications enable robust modeling of chromatin accessibility profiles. While we have not extensively explored alternative architectures, recent benchmarks show that CNNs are extremely competitive with alternative architectures[157]. Replacing ChromBPNet's dilated residual layers with biLSTMs yield marginal performance gains, suggesting that further architecture optimizations are unlikely to deliver major improvements[157]. The key contribution of ChromBPNet lies in the bias-factorized model architecture and bias correction approach. The modular design of the model allows for seamlessly testing alternative backbone architectures. Future work could also explore complementary signal representations beyond count and profile decomposition, such as multi-scale footprints or fragment length-aware V-plots, to enhance TF footprint and nucleosome positioning signal [90,158,159].

Our systematic evaluations show that read-depth and data quality can impact several model applications. ChromBPNet effectively imputes profiles from sparse datasets (≥5M reads), enabling analysis of rare cell populations from single-cell data. However, sensitivity to rare motifs and variant classification performance decrease notably below 25M reads, though effect size predictions remain robust. While multi-tasking across auxiliary datasets could boost performance, as seen with Enformer, careful consideration is needed as we have observed that multi-task models trained across diverse contexts learn causally inconsistent features affecting counterfactual predictions and sequence design applications.

ChromBPNet models cis-regulatory sequence determinants of chromatin accessibility in bulk or pseudobulk profiles, requiring separate models for distinct cell states and biosamples. Future extensions could integrate sequence with regulator expression to jointly model cis and trans effects at single base and single cell resolution[160,161]. Such an approach could enable interpretable sequence-anchored "foundation" models trained on large-scale multi-omic single cell atlases.

ChromBPNet is useful to decipher TF motif lexicons, syntax and genetic variants that specifically influence chromatin accessibility. However, it cannot reveal sequence determinants of many other "setter" TFs that bind open chromatin but do not influence accessibility. Models trained on TF ChIP-seq data that integrate sequence with measured accessibility profiles or bias-corrected predicted profiles from ChromBPNet could potentially recover binding sites of settler TFs. Further, in this study, we explicitly focus our analysis on retrieving predictive TF motifs that influence accessibility. ATAC-seq assays also capture nucleosome footprints proximal to accessible sites that fall within ChromBPNet's receptive field[90,159]. Hence, ChromBPNet could also be used to study the impact of TF motifs and other sequence features on nucleosome occupancy and positioning. More broadly, regulatory DNA sequences encode multiple, intertwined, pleiotropic cis-regulatory codes that have affected different biochemical readouts of regulatory interactions and activity[162]. This means that to comprehensively decipher all layers of the cis-regulatory code

and types of regulatory variants, it will be critical to train and interpret predictive models of diverse regulatory and transcriptional readouts within and across diverse cellular contexts.

Comparative analysis of ChromBPNet models of different cell types and states can provide intricate insights into the context-specificity of global and local sequence determinants of chromatin accessibility[146]. However, explicitly fine tuning these models on differential accessibility would enable more sensitive detection of subtle differential effects especially across closely related cellular contexts[156].
Further, while ChromBPNet is quite effective at predicting directionally concordant effects of regulatory variants on chromatin accessibility, its performance could be further boosted by explicitly exposing the model to genetic variation and matched accessibility profiles across multiple individuals[163]. The extensive variant prediction benchmarks we provide in this study also have several limitations. For the chromatin accessibility QTL classification benchmarks, we conservatively restrict control variants to peak regions to match the context of significant QTLs. Future evaluations should examine other types of control variants, such as those that may create or destroy isolated motif instances in background chromatin that could yield spurious predictions. Our current benchmarks are restricted to local QTLs and do not evaluate the ability to predict distal chromatin QTLs and eQTLs. Future evaluations will also need to test prediction of other classes of variants beyond SNVs, such as indels and STRs[164,165].

Finally, while ChromBPNet can prioritize trait and disease-relevant non-coding variants that affect chromatin accessibility, these predictions will need to be integrated with measured and predicted effects of variants on diverse molecular and cellular phenotypes in disease-relevant cellular contexts to improve precision and sensitivity of mapping causal variants and understanding their mechanism of action[164,166].

In conclusion, ChromBPNet provides a lightweight, versatile tool for enhancing the utility of chromatin accessibility data to decipher regulatory syntax and genetic variation at unprecedented resolution. The principled framework we introduce for bias correction and interpretation provides a generalizable template for disentangling technical and biological effects from sequencing-based molecular profiling assays. Early release of a stable, well-documented package implementing ChromBPNet has already enabled broad adoption by the community [113,146–149,155,162,166–173]. We remain committed to maintaining and extending ChromBPNet to address the challenges outlined above.

## DATA AND CODE AVAILABILITY

Code to train chrombpnet models: https://github.com/kundajelab/chrombpnet
Code to reproduce figures in the paper: https://github.com/kundajelab/chrombpnet-figures
Zenodo: https://zenodo.org/records/10396047
Variant effect scores and other models not uploaded to ENCODE - https://www.synapse.org/chrombpnet (syn59449898)

## AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

A.K., A.P., and A.S. conceived the project. A.P. developed ChromBPNet including the bias models and bias correction approaches, trained all models, developed benchmarks and performed all analyses with guidance from A.K. A.S. and S.N. provided conceptual advice during ChromBPNet's architecture development. A.S. developed preliminary versions of the expanded BPNet and ChromBPNet models and trained preliminary models. A.P. performed all data

preprocessing with help from A.S. S.K trained ChromBPNet models in smooth muscle cells and microglia. A.S.K., V.R., and W.J.G. generated the H1ESC ATAC-seq experimental data. E.K., M.K., and L.A.P. performed transgenic mouse reporter experiments. K.K. and K.A. reprocessed and called caQTLs for the European LCL caQTL dataset and provided peak calls for the African LCL caQTL dataset. A.P. drafted the manuscript and figures with guidance from A.K. A.K. contributed to writing and revisions. All authors read and provided feedback on the manuscript.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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## ETHICS DECLARATION

**Competing interests:** A.S. was a consultant for MyoKardia. W.J.G. is a consultant and equity holder for 10x Genomics, Nvidia, Guardant Health, Quantapore, and Ultima Genomics, and cofounder of Protillion Biosciences, and is named on patents describing ATAC-seq.. A.S is an employee of Insitro. S.N is an employee of Genentech. A.S.K is an employee of Ultima Genomics. V.R is an employee of Rockefeller University. A.K. is on the scientific advisory board of SerImmune, TensorBio, AINovo, is a consultant with Arcardia Science, Inari, Precede Biosciences, was a consultant with Illumina and PatchBio and has a financial stake in DeepGenomics, Immunai and Freenome.

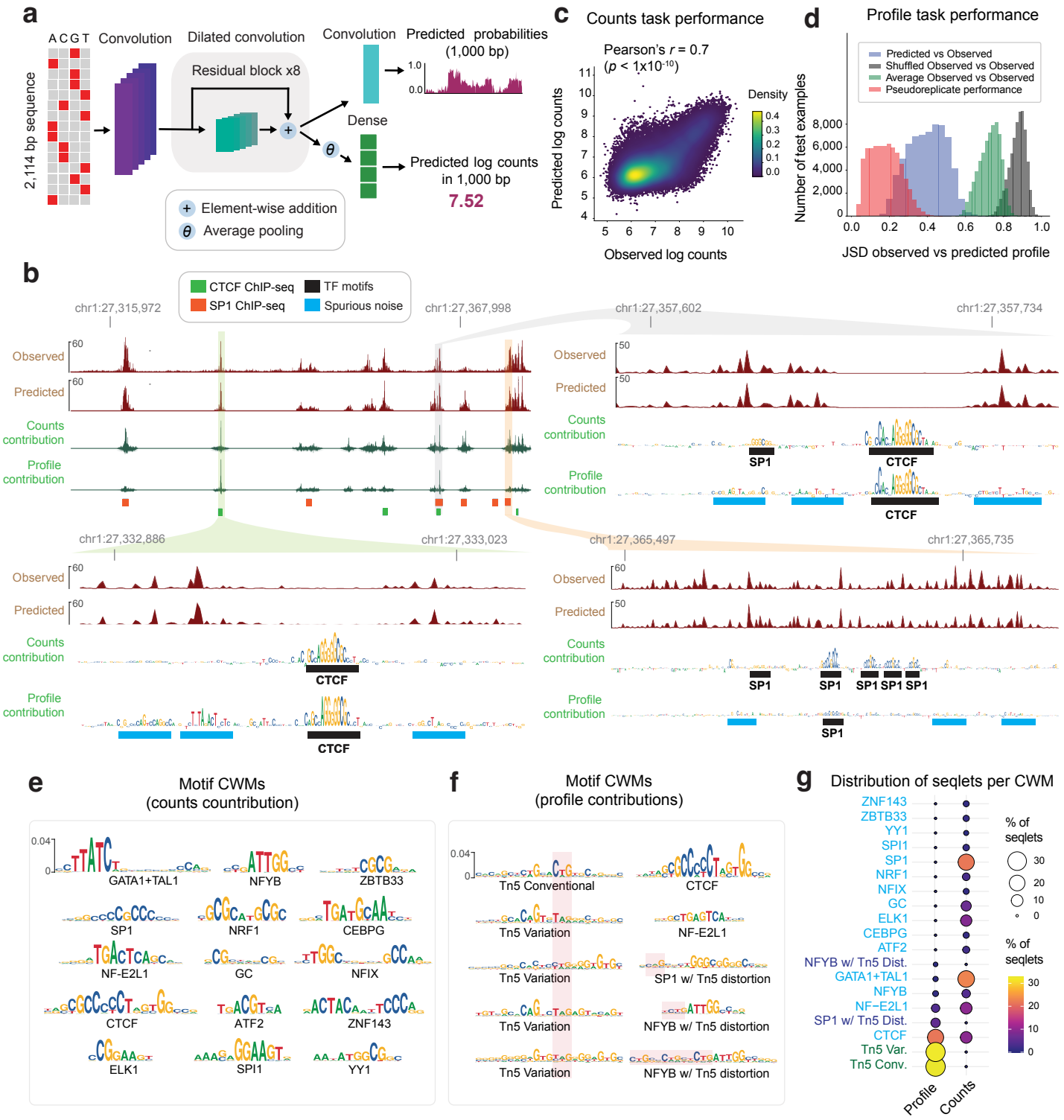

a
A C G T
Convolution
Dilated convolution
Residual block x8
Convolution
Predicted probabilities (1,000 bp)
2,114 bp sequence
Dense
Predicted log counts in 1,000 bp
7.52
Element-wise addition
Average pooling
b
CTCF ChIP-seq
SP1 ChIP-seq
TF motifs
Spurious noise
chr1:27,315,972
chr1:27,367,998
chr1:27,357,602
chr1:27,357,734
chr1:27,332,886
chr1:27,333,023
chr1:27,365,497
chr1:27,365,735
Observed
Predicted
Counts contribution
Profile contribution
SP1
CTCF
c
Counts task performance
Pearson's r = 0.7
(p < 1x10-10)
Density
Predicted log counts
Observed log counts
d
Profile task performance
Predicted vs Observed
Shuffled Observed vs Observed
Average Observed vs Observed
Pseudoreplicate performance
Number of test examples
JSD observed vs predicted profile
e
Motif CWMs (counts countribution)
GATA1+TAL1
NFYB
ZBTB33
SP1
NRF1
CEBPG
NF-E2L1
GC
NFIX
CTCF
ATF2
ZNF143
ELK1
SPI1
YY1
f
Motif CWMs (profile contributions)
Tn5 Conventional
CTCF
Tn5 Variation
NF-E2L1
SP1 w/ Tn5 distortion
NFYB w/ Tn5 distortion
g
Distribution of seqlets per CWM
ZNF143
ZBTB33
YY1
SPI1
SP1
NRF1
NFIX
GC
ELK1
CEBPG
ATF2
NFYB w/ Tn5 Dist.
GATA1+TAL1
NFYB
NF-E2L1
SP1 w/ Tn5 Dist.
CTCF
Tn5 Var.
Tn5 Conv.
% of seqlets
Profile
Counts

**Figure 1: Convolutional neural networks accurately predict base-resolution ATAC-seq profiles from local DNA sequence context but are confounded by Tn5 sequence bias. (a)** Schematic of the expanded BPNet architecture that maps 2114 bp of input sequence to 1 Kb base-resolution DNase-seq or ATAC-seq cleave profiles as two complementary outputs - a count head capturing the total coverage (log scale) and a profile head that captures the base-resolution multinomial probability distribution of reads **(b)** Exemplar locus on chr11 (held-out test chromosome) showing observed (Obs) ATAC-seq profiles, BPNet predicted (Pred) profiles at multiple resolutions and DeepLIFT sequence contribution scores to count and profile shape predictions. High count contribution scores highlight TF motif instances, whereas high profile contributions also capture spurious features that resemble Tn5 sequence preference. **(c)** Measured and predicted log(total counts) from K562 ATAC-seq peaks in held-out chromosomes exhibit high and statistically significant correlation. **(d)** Distribution of Jensen-Shannon Distance (JSD) between measured and predicted base-resolution K562 ATAC-seq profiles from peak regions in held-out chromosomes (blue) partially overlaps with distribution of concordance of pseudo-replicate profiles (red) which acts an upper bound, and is substantially better that baseline concordance between observed profiles and the average profile over all peaks (green) and between observed profiled and scrambled versions of the observed profiles (grey). **(e)** Top 15 TF-MODISCO contribution weight matrix (CMW) motifs derived from count contribution scores of the K562 ATAC-seq BPNet model map to well known TF motifs. **(f)** TF-MODISCO CWM motifs derived from profile contribution scores map to Tn5 bias motifs and distorted TF motifs. **(g)** Comparison of the frequency of high-confidence predictive instances (seqlets) of each TF-MODISCO motif identified from the count and profile heads show that Tn5 bias motifs dominate the profile contribution scores over TF motifs.

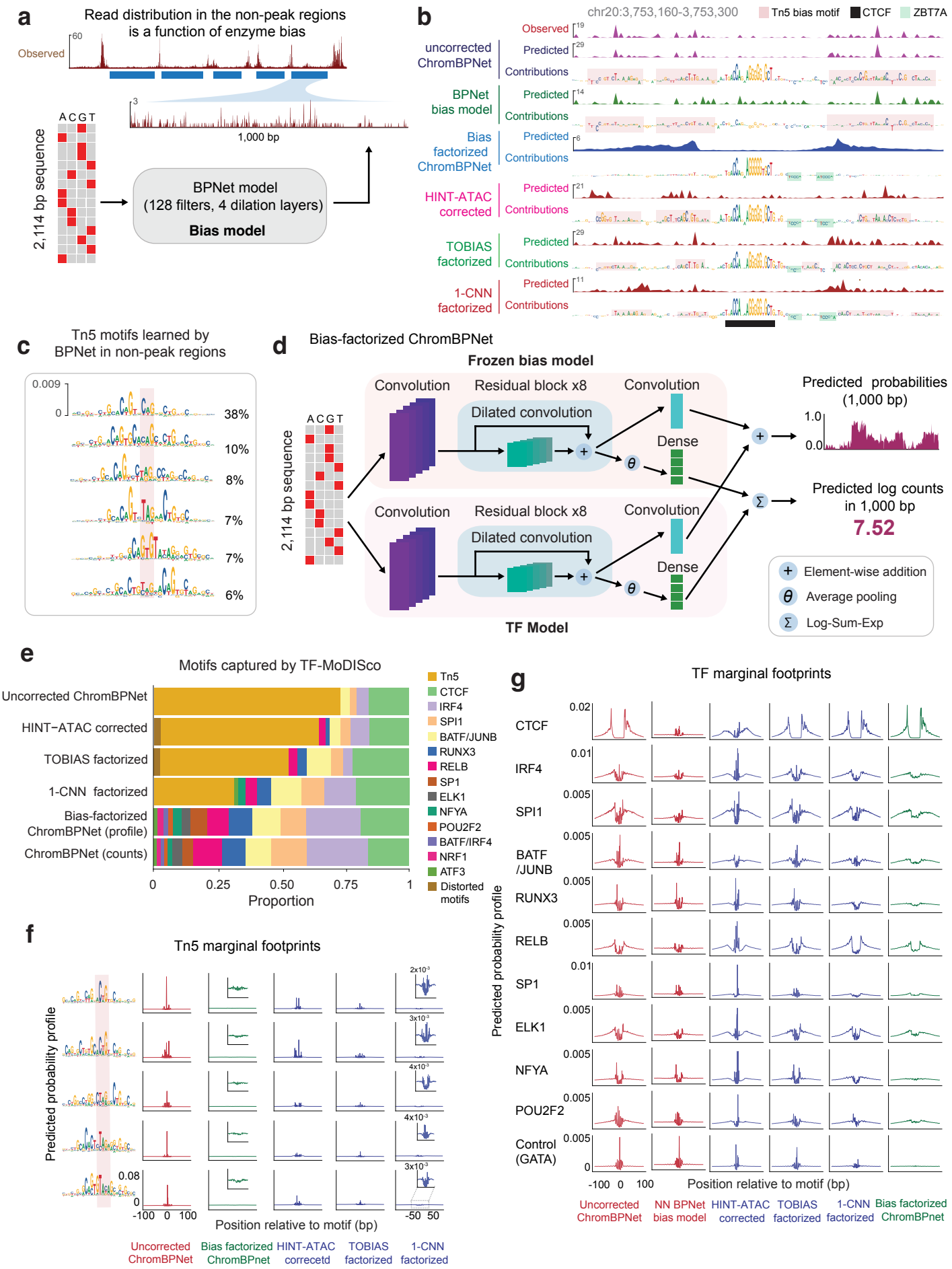

a
Read distribution in the non-peak regions is a function of enzyme bias
Observed
60
3
1,000 bp
A C G T
2,114 bp sequence
BPNet model
(128 filters, 4 dilation layers)
Bias model
b
chr20:3,753,160-3,753,300
Tn5 bias motif
CTCF
ZBT7A
Observed
uncorrected ChromBPNet
Predicted
Contributions
BPNet bias model
Bias factorized ChromBPNet
HINT-ATAC corrected
TOBIAS factorized
1-CNN factorized
c
Tn5 motifs learned by BPNet in non-peak regions
0.009
0
38%
10%
8%
7%
7%
6%
d
Bias-factorized ChromBPNet
Frozen bias model
Convolution
Residual block x8
Dilated convolution
Dense
TF Model
Predicted probabilities (1,000 bp)
1.0
0.0
Predicted log counts in 1,000 bp
7.52
Element-wise addition
Average pooling
Log-Sum-Exp
e
Motifs captured by TF-MoDISco
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
HINT−ATAC corrected
TOBIAS factorized
1-CNN factorized
Bias-factorized ChromBPNet (profile)
ChromBPNet (counts)
0
0.25
0.50
0.75
1
Proportion
Tn5
CTCF
IRF4
SPI1
BATF/JUNB
RUNX3
RELB
SP1
ELK1
NFYA
POU2F2
BATF/IRF4
NRF1
ATF3
Distorted motifs
f
Tn5 marginal footprints
Predicted probability profile
0.08
0
-100 0 100
Position relative to motif (bp)
2x10-3
3x10-3
4x10-3
-50 50
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
Bias factorized ChromBPnet
HINT-ATAC correcetd
TOBIAS factorized
1-CNN factorized
g
TF marginal footprints
CTCF
IRF4
SPI1
BATF /JUNB
RUNX3
RELB
SP1
ELK1
NFYA
POU2F2
Control (GATA)
0.02
0.01
0.005
0
-100 0 100
Position relative to motif (bp)
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
NN BPNet bias model
HINT-ATAC corrected
TOBIAS factorized
1-CNN factorized
Bias factorized ChromBPnet

**Figure 2: Bias-factorized ChromBPNet models of ATAC-seq profiles coupled to neural network models of Tn5 bias deconvolve Tn5 bias from regulatory TF motif syntax. (a)** Schematic of BPNet models used to learn Tn5 bias from ATAC-seq profiles from background chromatin that excludes ATAC-seq peaks. **(b)** Exemplar locus at chr20:3,753,160-3,753,300 showing several tracks from top to bottom: observed GM12878 ATAC-seq profile; uncorrected predicted profile from ChromBPNet; uncorrected profile contribution scores from ChromBPNet shows spurious Tn5 bias; predicted Tn5 bias profiles from BPNet bias model shows strong resemblance to observed and uncorrected profiles; profile contribution scores from bias model match spurious Tn5 bias features; bias-corrected predicted profile from ChromBPNet shows a strong, denoised latent footprint; bias-corrected profile contribution scores from ChromBPNet are devoid of spurious Tn5 bias highlighting CTCF and ZBTB7A motifs; predicted profiles from ChromBPNet model using HINT-ATAC's bias correction method; profile contribution scores from HINT-ATAC ChromBPNet model show spurious Tn5 bias; predicted profiles from ChromBPNet model using TOBIAS's bias correction method; profile contribution scores from TOBIAS ChromBPNet model shows spurious Tn5 bias; predicted profiles from ChromBPNet model that uses a simplified 1-filter CNN bias model; profile contribution scores from ChromBPNet model with 1-filter CNN bias model shows spurious Tn5 bias. **(c)** TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores of the BPNet bias model trained on chromatin background capture different variations of the canonical Tn5 sequence preference motif. **(d)** Schematic of the bias-factorized architecture of ChromBPNet consisting of a pre-trained bias model and residual TF sub-model with trainable parameters. **(e)** Relative frequency of high-confidence predictive instances (seqlets) of TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores of various ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 ATAC-seq data using different bias models (no bias model, TOBIAS bias model, 1-filter CNN bias model and BPNet bias model) or pre-corrected profiles (HINT-ATAC) shows that Tn5 bias motifs dominate all but the ChromBPNet model coupled with the BPNet bias model. **(f)** Marginal footprints of various TF-MODISCO Tn5 bias motifs (rows) using predicted profiles from GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models using different bias models or pre-corrected profiles (cols) show that only the BPNet bias model enables near optimal correction of Tn5 bias. **(g)** Marginal footprints of various predictive TF motifs (rows) using predicted profiles from GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models that use different bias models or pre-corrected profiles (cols) show that only the BPNet bias model removes confounding Tn5 bias.

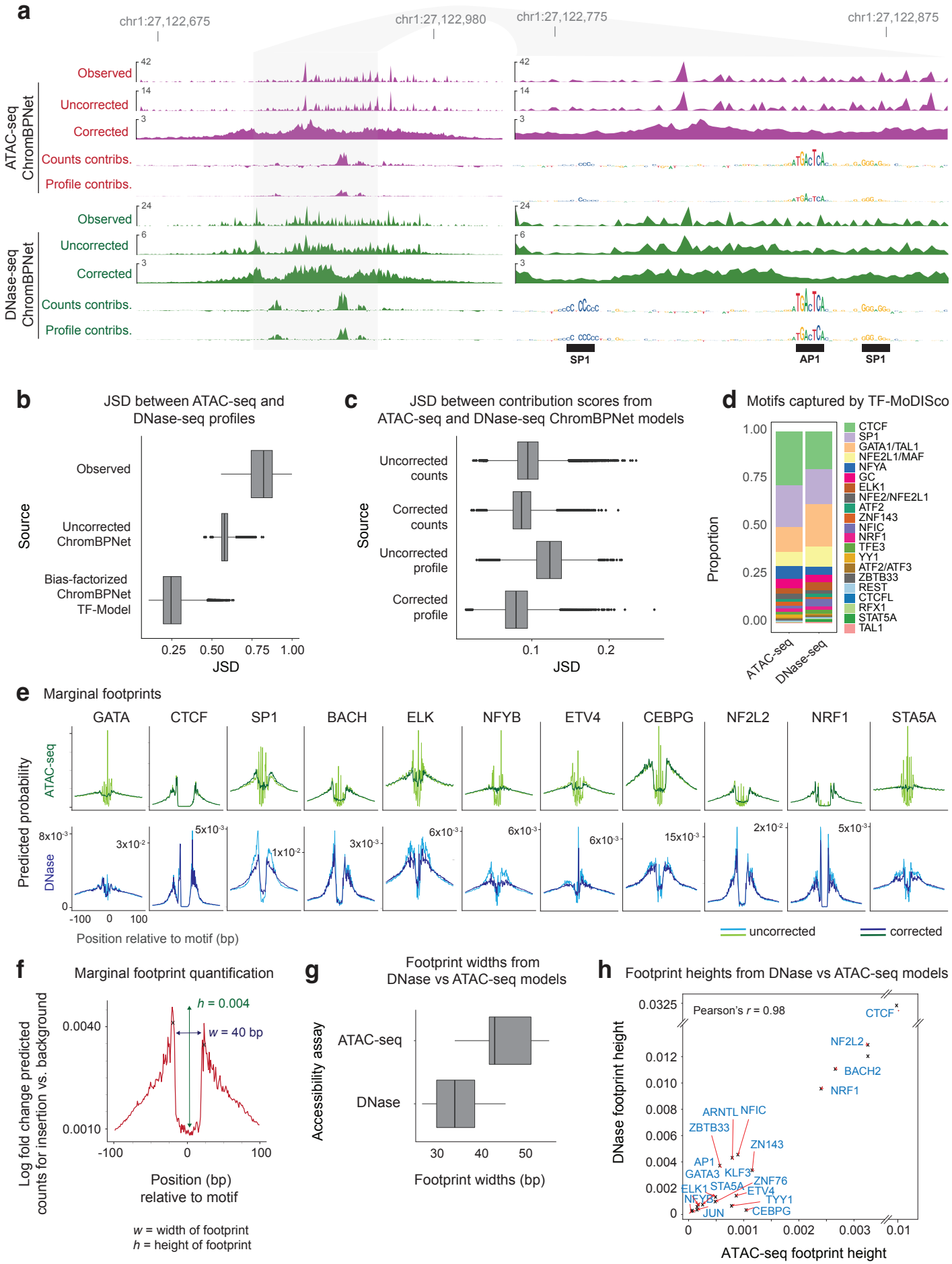

a
chr1:27,122,675
chr1:27,122,980
chr1:27,122,775
chr1:27,122,875
ATAC-seq ChromBPNet
Observed
Uncorrected
Corrected
Counts contribs.
Profile contribs.
DNase-seq ChromBPNet
Observed
Uncorrected
Corrected
Counts contribs.
Profile contribs.
SP1
AP1
SP1
b
JSD between ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles
Source
Observed
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
Bias-factorized ChromBPNet TF-Model
JSD
c
JSD between contribution scores from ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models
Source
Uncorrected counts
Corrected counts
Uncorrected profile
Corrected profile
JSD
d
Motifs captured by TF-MoDISco
Proportion
ATAC-seq
DNase-seq
CTCF
SP1
GATA1/TAL1
NFE2L1/MAF
NFYA
GC
ELK1
NFE2/NFE2L1
ATF2
ZNF143
NFIC
NRF1
TFE3
YY1
ATF2/ATF3
ZBTB33
REST
CTCFL
RFX1
STAT5A
TAL1
e
Marginal footprints
GATA
CTCF
SP1
BACH
ELK
NFYB
ETV4
CEBPG
NF2L2
NRF1
STA5A
Predicted probability
ATAC-seq
DNase
Position relative to motif (bp)
uncorrected
corrected
f
Marginal footprint quantification
Log fold change predicted counts for insertion vs. background
h = 0.004
w = 40 bp
Position (bp) relative to motif
w = width of footprint
h = height of footprint
g
Footprint widths from DNase vs ATAC-seq models
Accessibility assay
ATAC-seq
DNase
Footprint widths (bp)
h
Footprint heights from DNase vs ATAC-seq models
Pearson's r = 0.98
DNase footprint height
ATAC-seq footprint height
CTCF
NF2L2
BACH2
NRF1
ARNTL
NFIC
ZBTB33
ZN143
AP1
GATA3
KLF3
ZNF76
ELK1
STA5A
ETV4
NFYB
TYY1
JUN
CEBPG

**Figure 3: ChromBPNet's bias correction improves concordance between ATAC-seq and DNase-seq experiments. (a)** Exemplar locus at chr1:27,122,675-27,122,980 showing several tracks from top to bottom: observed K562 ATAC-seq profile; uncorrected predicted ATAC-seq profile from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet; bias-corrected predicted ATAC-seq profile; bias-corrected count and profile contribution scores from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet highlighting AP1 and SP1 motifs (on right zoomed in panel); observed K562 DNase-seq profile shows poor similarity to observed ATAC-seq profile; uncorrected predicted DNase-seq profile from DNase-seq ChromBPNet; bias-corrected predicted DNase-seq profile from DNase-seq ChromBPNet is more similar to bias-corrected ATAC-seq profile but shows narrower footprints; bias-corrected count and profile contribution scores from DNase-seq ChromBPNet highlighting AP1 and SP1 motifs that are highly concordant with contribution scores derived from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet; **(b)** Distribution of discordance (measured using JSD) between pairs of observed K562 DNase-seq and ATAC-seq profiles over peak regions, and predicted (uncorrected and bias-corrected) ATAC-seq and DNase-seq profiles. **(c)** Distribution of discordance (JSD) between pairs of different types of contribution score profiles from ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models over peak regions. From top to bottom: count contribution scores from uncorrected ChromBPNet; count contribution scores from bias-corrected ChromBPNet; profile contribution scores from uncorrected ChromBPNet; profile contribution scores from bias-corrected ChromBPNet. Bias-correction significantly improves concordance of corrected profile contribution scores. **(d)** Relative frequency of high-confidence predictive motif instances (seqlets) of TF-MODISCO motifs derived from bias-corrected profile contribution scores derived from K562 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models show high similarity. **(e)** Comparison of marginal footprints at TF-MODISCO motifs derived from uncorrected and bias-corrected normalized probability profiles from K562 ATAC-seq (top) and DNase-seq (bottom) ChromBPNet models (y-axis scales are the same for top and bottom panels of each column). **(f)** Schematic showing definition of height and width of marginal footprints. **(g)** Distribution of widths of bias-corrected marginal footprints at TF-MODISCO motifs from ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models shows that DNase-seq produces narrower footprints. **(h)** In contrast, the heights of the bias-corrected marginal footprints from DNase-seq and ATAC-seq models are highly correlated across TF motifs.

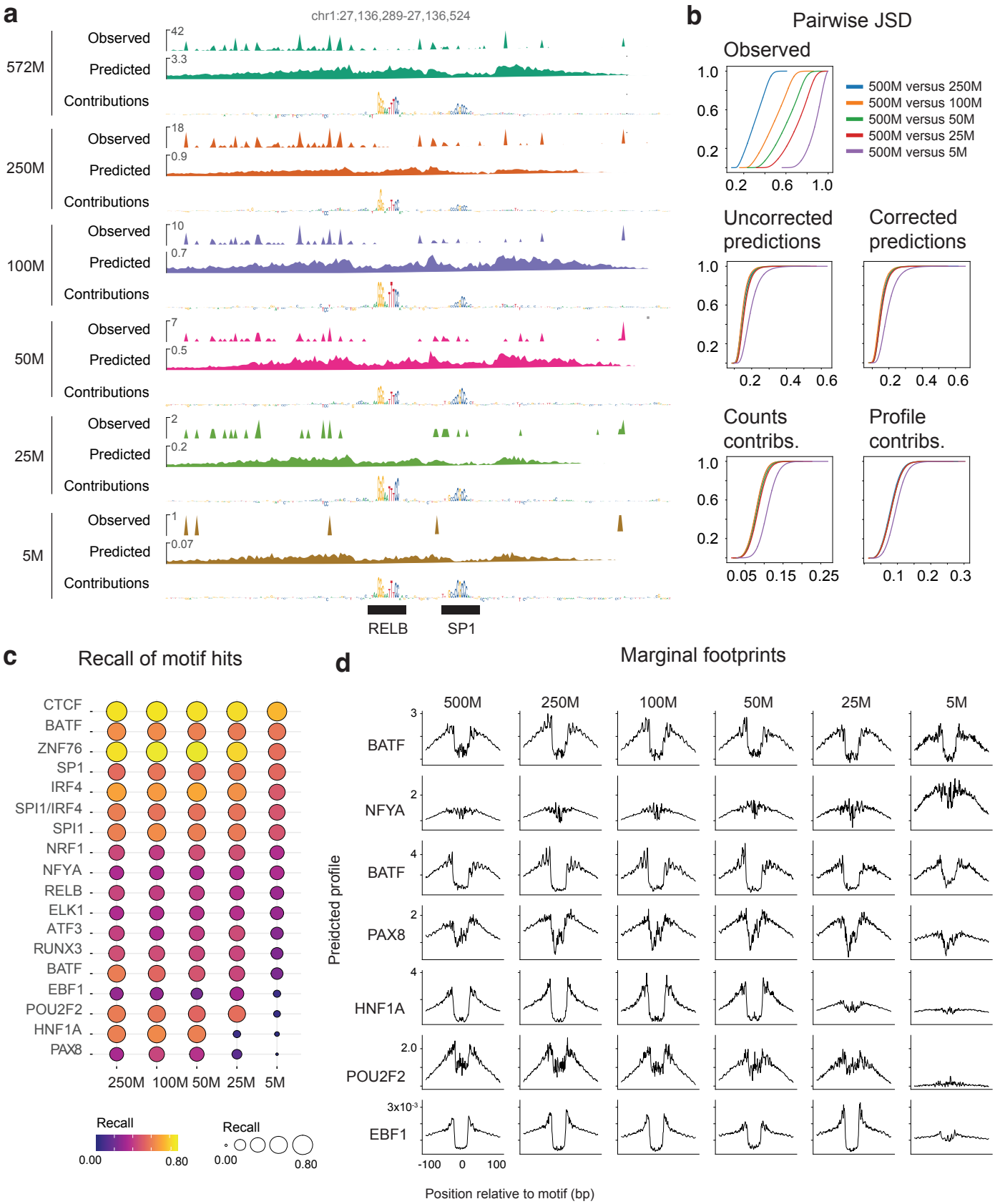

a
chr1:27,136,289-27,136,524
572M
250M
100M
50M
25M
5M
Observed
Predicted
Contributions
42
3.3
18
0.9
10
0.7
7
0.5
2
0.2
1
0.07
RELB
SP1
b
Pairwise JSD
Observed
500M versus 250M
500M versus 100M
500M versus 50M
500M versus 25M
500M versus 5M
Uncorrected predictions
Corrected predictions
Counts contribs.
Profile contribs.
c
Recall of motif hits
CTCF
BATF
ZNF76
SP1
IRF4
SPI1/IRF4
SPI1
NRF1
NFYA
RELB
ELK1
ATF3
RUNX3
BATF
EBF1
POU2F2
HNF1A
PAX8
250M 100M 50M 25M 5M
Recall
0.00
0.80
d
Marginal footprints
500M 250M 100M 50M 25M 5M
BATF
NFYA
BATF
PAX8
HNF1A
POU2F2
EBF1
Preidcted profile
Position relative to motif (bp)

**Figure 4: ChromBPNet can impute base-resolution profiles, TF footprints and predictive sequence motifs from low coverage ATAC-seq and DNase-seq datasets. (a)** Exemplar locus on chr1 (held-out test chromosome) showing observed (Obs) GM12878 ATAC-seq profiles deteriorating with progressively subsampled datasets (250M, 100M, 50M, 25M, and 5M total reads). However, bias-corrected predicted profiles and contribution scores from GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models trained on datasets of all read depths are highly concordant. **(b)** Distribution of discordance (JSD) between pairs (maximal read depth vs. progressively subsampled data) of various types of profiles over peak regions. Observed ATAC-seq profiles (which exhibit increasing discordance with reducing read depth). In contrast, uncorrected and bias-corrected predicted profiles, bias-corrected count and profile contribution scores exhibit very similar distributions as low as 25M. Some deterioration is only visible at 5M reads. **(c)** Comparison of recall of predictive instances of top ranking TF-MODISCO motifs in profile contribution scores from the GM12878 ChromBPNet models trained on various subsampled datasets, using the instances identified at 572M reads (full read-depth) as ground truth. Motif recall is high and consistent across most read depths. Rare motifs are lost at low read depths (5M reads). **(d)** Comparison of marginal footprints at representative TF-MODISCO motifs from ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 ATAC-seq data at different subsampled read-depths.

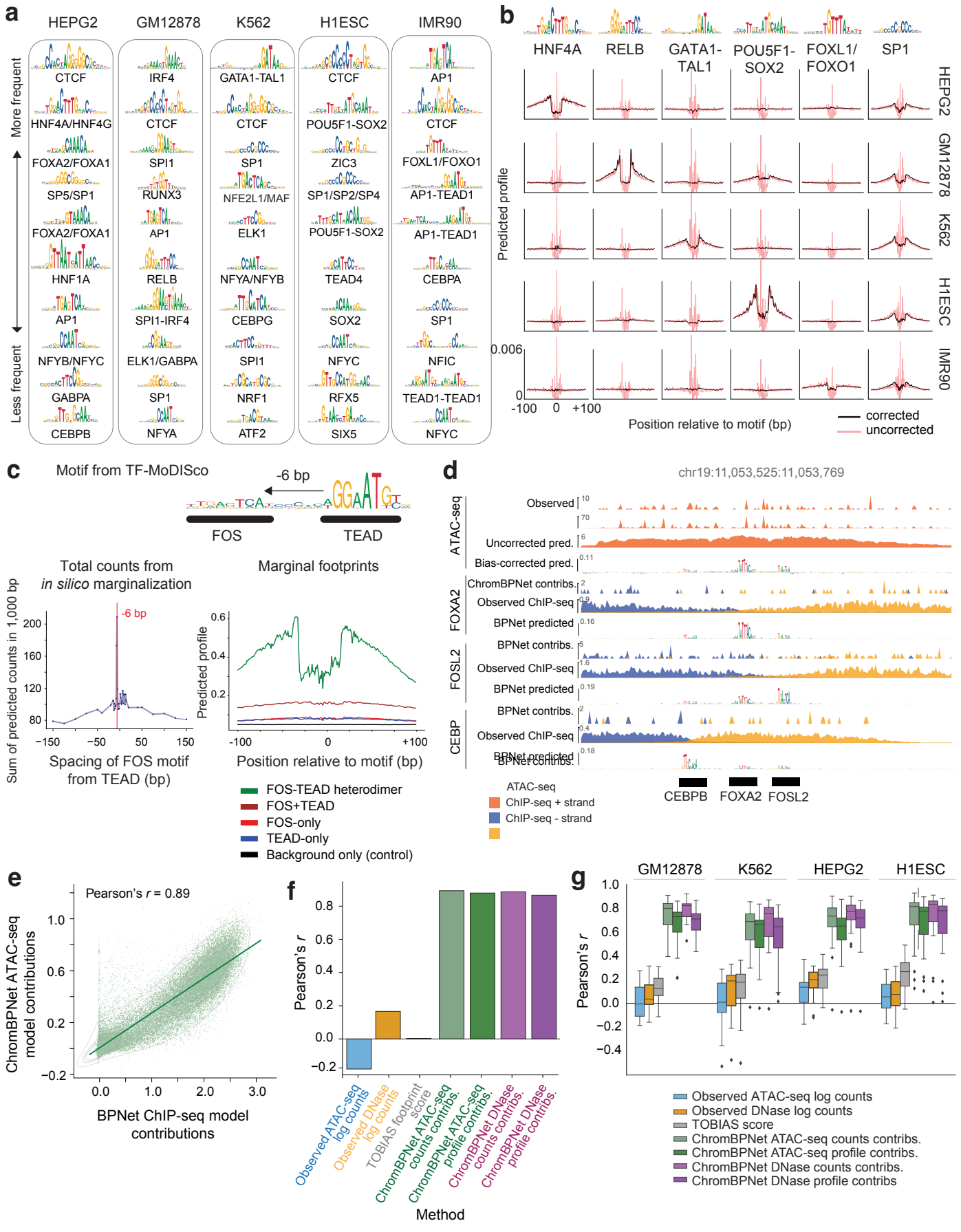

a
HEPG2
GM12878
K562
H1ESC
IMR90
More frequent
Less frequent
CTCF
HNF4A/HNF4G
FOXA2/FOXA1
SP5/SP1
FOXA2/FOXA1
HNF1A
AP1
NFYB/NFYC
GABPA
CEBPB
IRF4
CTCF
SPI1
RUNX3
AP1
RELB
SPI1-IRF4
ELK1/GABPA
SP1
NFYA
GATA1-TAL1
CTCF
SP1
NFE2L1/MAF
ELK1
NFYA/NFYB
CEBPG
SPI1
NRF1
ATF2
CTCF
POU5F1-SOX2
ZIC3
SP1/SP2/SP4
POU5F1-SOX2
TEAD4
SOX2
NFYC
RFX5
SIX5
AP1
CTCF
FOXL1/FOXO1
AP1-TEAD1
AP1-TEAD1
CEBPA
SP1
NFIC
TEAD1-TEAD1
NFYC
b
HNF4A
RELB
GATA1-TAL1
POU5F1-SOX2
FOXL1/FOXO1
SP1
HEPG2
GM12878
K562
H1ESC
IMR90
Predicted profile
0.006
0
-100
0
+100
Position relative to motif (bp)
corrected
uncorrected
c
Motif from TF-MoDISco
-6 bp
FOS
TEAD
Total counts from
in silico marginalization
Sum of predicted counts in 1,000 bp
-6 bp
200
160
120
80
−150
−50
50
150
Spacing of FOS motif
from TEAD (bp)
Marginal footprints
Predicted profile
0.6
0.4
0.2
-100
0
+100
Position relative to motif (bp)
FOS-TEAD heterodimer
FOS+TEAD
FOS-only
TEAD-only
Background only (control)
d
chr19:11,053,525:11,053,769
ATAC-seq
Observed
Uncorrected pred.
Bias-corrected pred.
FOXA2
ChromBPNet contribs.
Observed ChIP-seq
BPNet predicted
FOSL2
BPNet contribs.
Observed ChIP-seq
BPNet predicted
CEBP
BPNet contribs.
Observed ChIP-seq
BPNet predicted
ATAC-seq
ChIP-seq + strand
ChIP-seq - strand
CEBPB
FOXA2
FOSL2
e
Pearson's r = 0.89
ChromBPNet ATAC-seq
model contributions
1.0
0.6
0.2
−0.2
0.0
1.0
2.0
3.0
BPNet ChIP-seq model
contributions
f
Pearson's r
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
−0.2
Observed ATAC-seq log counts
Observed DNase log counts
TOBIAS footprint score
ChromBPNet ATAC-seq counts contribs.
ChromBPNet ATAC-seq profile contribs.
ChromBPNet DNase counts contribs.
ChromBPNet DNase profile contribs.
Method
g
GM12878
K562
HEPG2
H1ESC
Pearson's r
1.0
0.8
0.6
0.4
0.2
0.0
−0.2
−0.4
Observed ATAC-seq log counts
Observed DNase log counts
TOBIAS score
ChromBPNet ATAC-seq counts contribs.
ChromBPNet ATAC-seq profile contribs.
ChromBPNet DNase counts contribs.
ChromBPNet DNase profile contribs

**Figure 5: ChromBPNet models of ATAC-seq data reveals compact TF motif lexicons, cooperative composite elements and predictive motif instances that influence chromatin accessibility and TF occupancy. (a)** Top 10 TF-MODISCO motifs (ranked by number of predictive motif instances) derived from count contribution scores from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models of diverse cell-lines. **(b)** Marginal footprints of TF-MODISCO motifs using normalized uncorrected (red) and bias-corrected profile predictions (black) from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models of diverse cell-lines. Bias-correction reveals cell-type specificity of footprints. (**c)** TF-MODISCO applied to the IMR90 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model reveals a FOS-TEAD composite heterodimer motif (top). Strength (maximum) of marginal footprints of paired FOS and TEAD motifs with variable spacing shows strong cooperative effects only at the fixed 6 bp spacing (bottom-left). Marginal footprints of the FOS motif, TEAD motif, FOS-TEAD composite motif and the sum of FOS and TEAD marginal footprints demonstrates the super-additive cooperative effect of the FOS-TEAD composite (bottom-right). **(d)** Exemplar accessible region in chr19 near the LDLR gene in HEPG2 displaying the observed profile from ATAC-seq and FOXA2, FOSL2 and CEPBP ChIP-seq data, alongside uncorrected and bias corrected predicted profiles, and count contribution scores from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model and TF ChIP-seq BPNet models. Predictive motif instances from ChromBPNet and BPNet models are in strong agreement. **(e)** Count contribution scores derived from HepG2 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model and CTCF TF ChIP-seq BPNet model are highly correlated at CTCF motif matches in CTCF peaks overlapping ATAC-seq peaks in HepG2. **(f)** Comparison of correlation of CTCF ChIP-seq BPNet model count contribution scores at CTCF motif matches with various types of motif activity scores derived from ATAC-seq data in HEPG2. Count and profile contribution scores from ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models substantially outperform observed peak-level ATAC-seq and DNase-seq counts and TOBIAS footprint scores. **(g)** Similar comparisons as in (f) over motif instances of various TF-MODISCO motifs derived from ChromBPNet models of different cell-lines show that motif contribution scores from ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet models show much stronger correlations with motif contribution scores from matched TF ChIP-seq BPNet models compared to the alternative measures (observed peak-level ATAC-seq and DNase-seq counts and TOBIAS footprint scores) of motif activity.

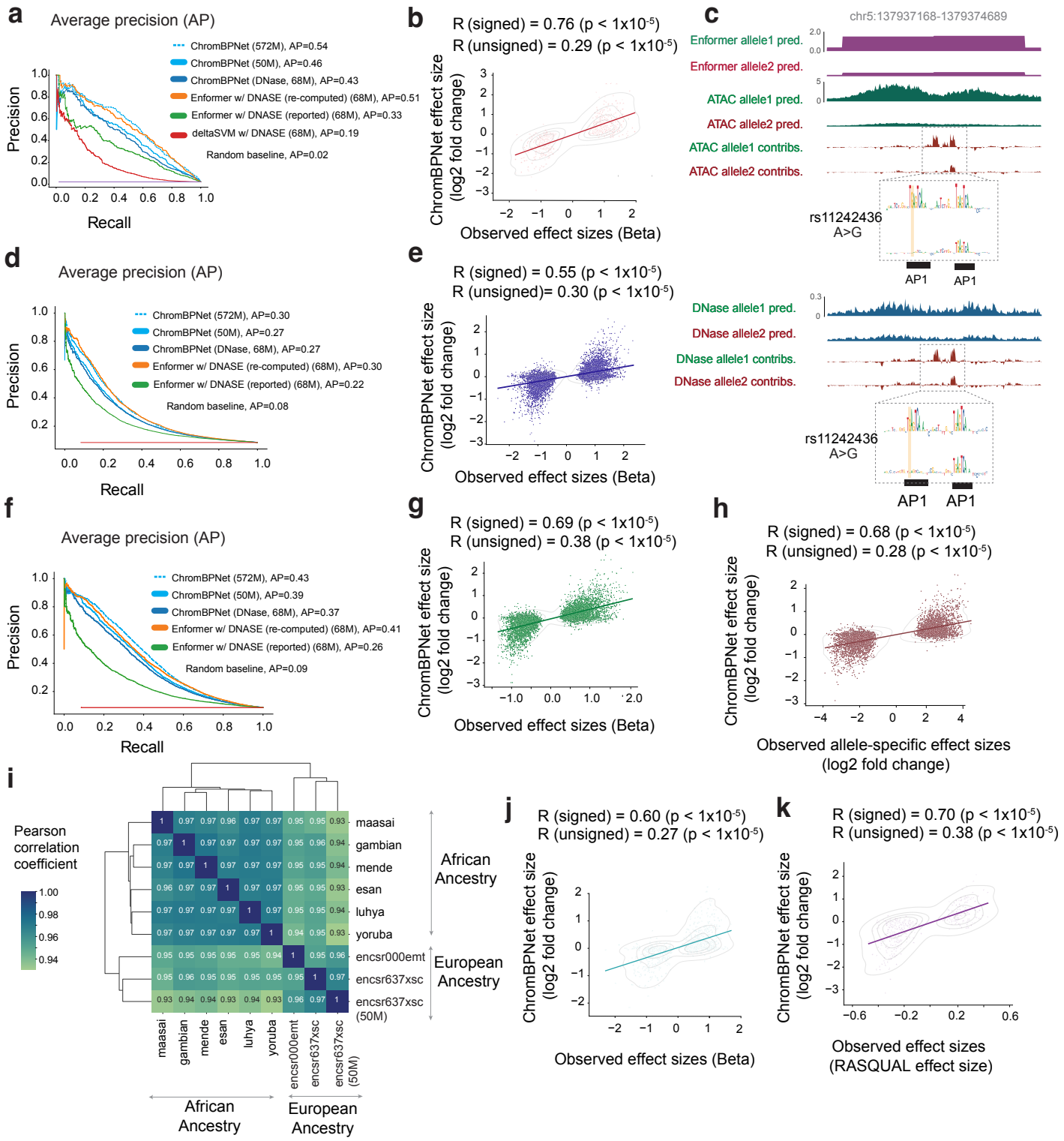

a
Average precision (AP)
ChromBPNet (572M), AP=0.54
ChromBPNet (50M), AP=0.46
ChromBPNet (DNase, 68M), AP=0.43
Enformer w/ DNASE (re-computed) (68M), AP=0.51
Enformer w/ DNASE (reported) (68M), AP=0.33
deltaSVM w/ DNASE (68M), AP=0.19
Random baseline, AP=0.02
Precision
Recall
b
R (signed) = 0.76 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned) = 0.29 (p < 1x10-5)
ChromBPNet effect size (log2 fold change)
Observed effect sizes (Beta)
c
chr5:137937168-1379374689
Enformer allele1 pred.
Enformer allele2 pred.
ATAC allele1 pred.
ATAC allele2 pred.
ATAC allele1 contribs.
ATAC allele2 contribs.
rs11242436
A>G
AP1
AP1
DNase allele1 pred.
DNase allele2 pred.
DNase allele1 contribs.
DNase allele2 contribs.
rs11242436
A>G
AP1
AP1
d
Average precision (AP)
ChromBPNet (572M), AP=0.30
ChromBPNet (50M), AP=0.27
ChromBPNet (DNase, 68M), AP=0.27
Enformer w/ DNASE (re-computed) (68M), AP=0.30
Enformer w/ DNASE (reported) (68M), AP=0.22
Random baseline, AP=0.08
Precision
Recall
e
R (signed) = 0.55 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned)= 0.30 (p < 1x10-5)
ChromBPNet effect size (log2 fold change)
Observed effect sizes (Beta)
f
Average precision (AP)
ChromBPNet (572M), AP=0.43
ChromBPNet (50M), AP=0.39
ChromBPNet (DNase, 68M), AP=0.37
Enformer w/ DNASE (re-computed) (68M), AP=0.41
Enformer w/ DNASE (reported) (68M), AP=0.26
Random baseline, AP=0.09
Precision
Recall
g
R (signed) = 0.69 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned) = 0.38 (p < 1x10-5)
ChromBPNet effect size (log2 fold change)
Observed effect sizes (Beta)
h
R (signed) = 0.68 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned) = 0.28 (p < 1x10-5)
ChromBPNet effect size (log2 fold change)
Observed allele-specific effect sizes (log2 fold change)
i
Pearson correlation coefficient
1.00
0.98
0.96
0.94
maasai
gambian
mende
esan
luhya
yoruba
encsr000emt
encsr637xsc
encsr637xsc (50M)
African Ancestry
European Ancestry
African Ancestry
European Ancestry
j
R (signed) = 0.60 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned) = 0.27 (p < 1x10-5)
ChromBPNet effect size (log2 fold change)
Observed effect sizes (Beta)
k
R (signed) = 0.70 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned) = 0.38 (p < 1x10-5)
ChromBPNet effect size (log2 fold change)
Observed effect sizes (RASQUAL effect size)

**Figure 6: ChromBPNet predicts effects of genetic variants on chromatin accessibility across assays, ancestry groups, cell-lines and primary cells. (a)** Comparison of variant classification performance (Precision-recall curves and average precision (AP)) of different models (gkmSVM, ChromBPNet and Enformer) trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq at discriminating significant DNase-seq QTLs (dsQTLs) in Yoruban lymphoblastoid cell-lines (LCLs) from controls variants. ChromBPNet is highly competitive with Enformer and substantially outperforms gkmSVM. **(b)** The observed effect sizes (x-axis, regression betas) of significant dsQTLs are significantly correlated with GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet's predicted effect sizes (y-axis, log fold changes). **(c)** Example locus around dsQTL SNP rs11242436. Tracks displayed include bias-corrected predicted profiles from ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq data and predicted profiles from Enformer's GM12878 DNase-seq head for both alleles. Also shown are ChromBPNet's contribution scores for both alleles illustrating the disruption of an AP1 motif by the variant and a cooperative effect on another adjacent AP1 motif. **(d)** Comparison of variant classification performance of ChromBPNet and Enformer trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data at discriminating significant ATAC-seq QTLs (caQTLs) in European LCLs from control variants. **(e)** The observed effect sizes (x-axis, regression betas) of significant European LCL caQTLs are significantly correlated with GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet's predicted effect sizes (y-axis, log fold changes). **(f)** Comparison of variant classification performance of ChromBPNet and Enformer trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data at discriminating significant ATAC-seq QTLs (caQTLs) in African LCLs from control variants. **(g)** The observed effect sizes (x-axis, regression betas) of significant African LCL caQTLs are significantly correlated with GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet's predicted effect sizes (y-axis, log fold changes). **(h)** The observed allelic imbalance of ATAC-seq coverage (x-axis, log fold changes) at heteroyzgous variants in the African caQTL LCL cohort is significantly correlated with GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet's predicted effect sizes (y-axis, log fold changes). **(i)** Predicted effect sizes (log fold changes) for the significant African LCL caQTLs from ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq data from reference LCLs from different ancestry groups/subgroups (each row/column in the matrix) are highly correlated. **(j)** The observed effect sizes (x-axis, regression betas) of significant caQTLs in microglia are significantly correlated with predicted effect sizes from a ChromBPNet model trained on a reference microglia scATAC-seq pseudobulk dataset (y-axis, log fold changes). **(k)** The observed effect sizes (x-axis, effect sizes from the RASQUAL method) of significant caQTLs in coronary artery smooth muscle cell-lines are significantly correlated with predicted effect sizes from a ChromBPNet model trained on a reference caSMC scATAC-seq pseudobulk dataset (y-axis, log fold changes).

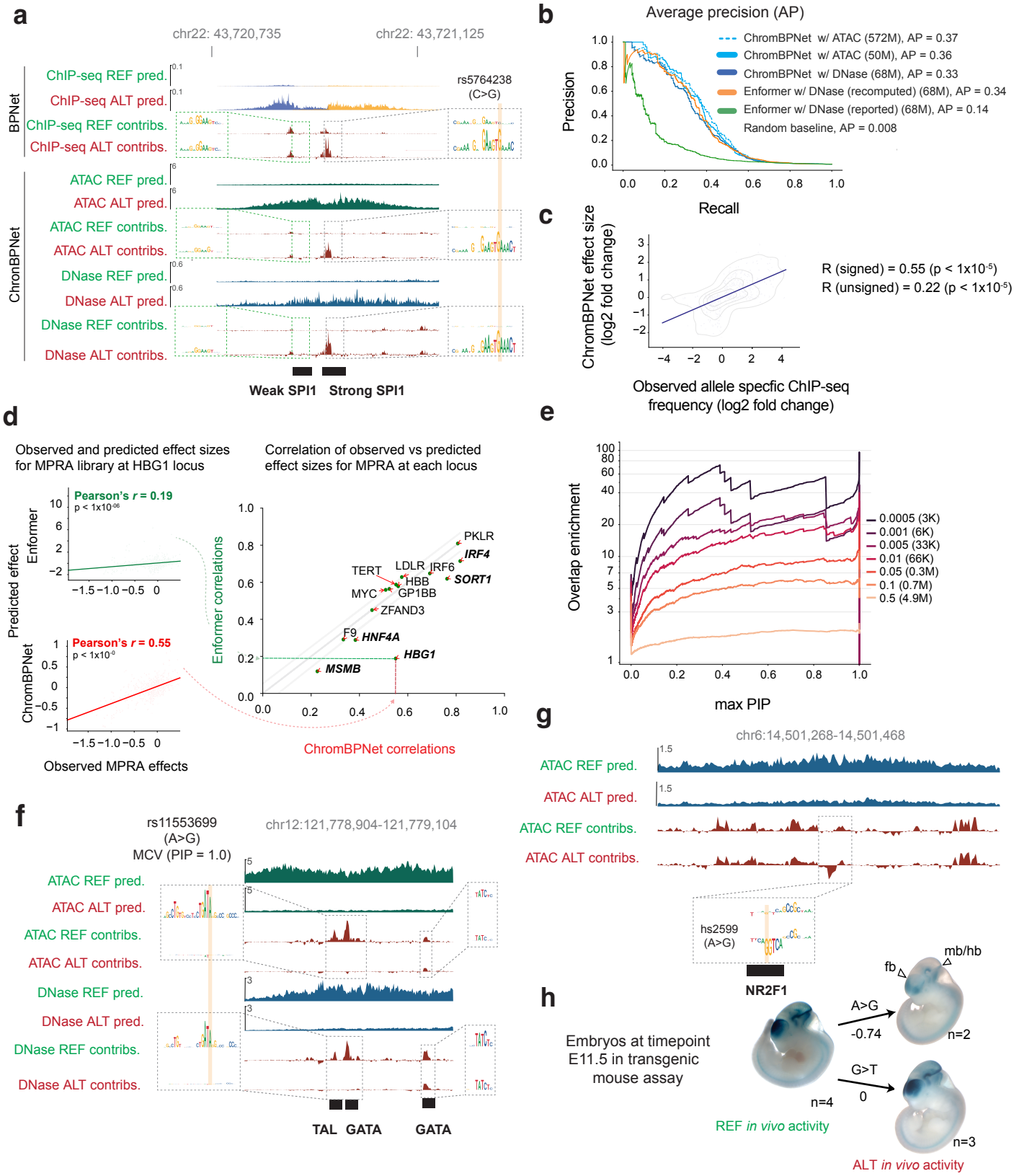
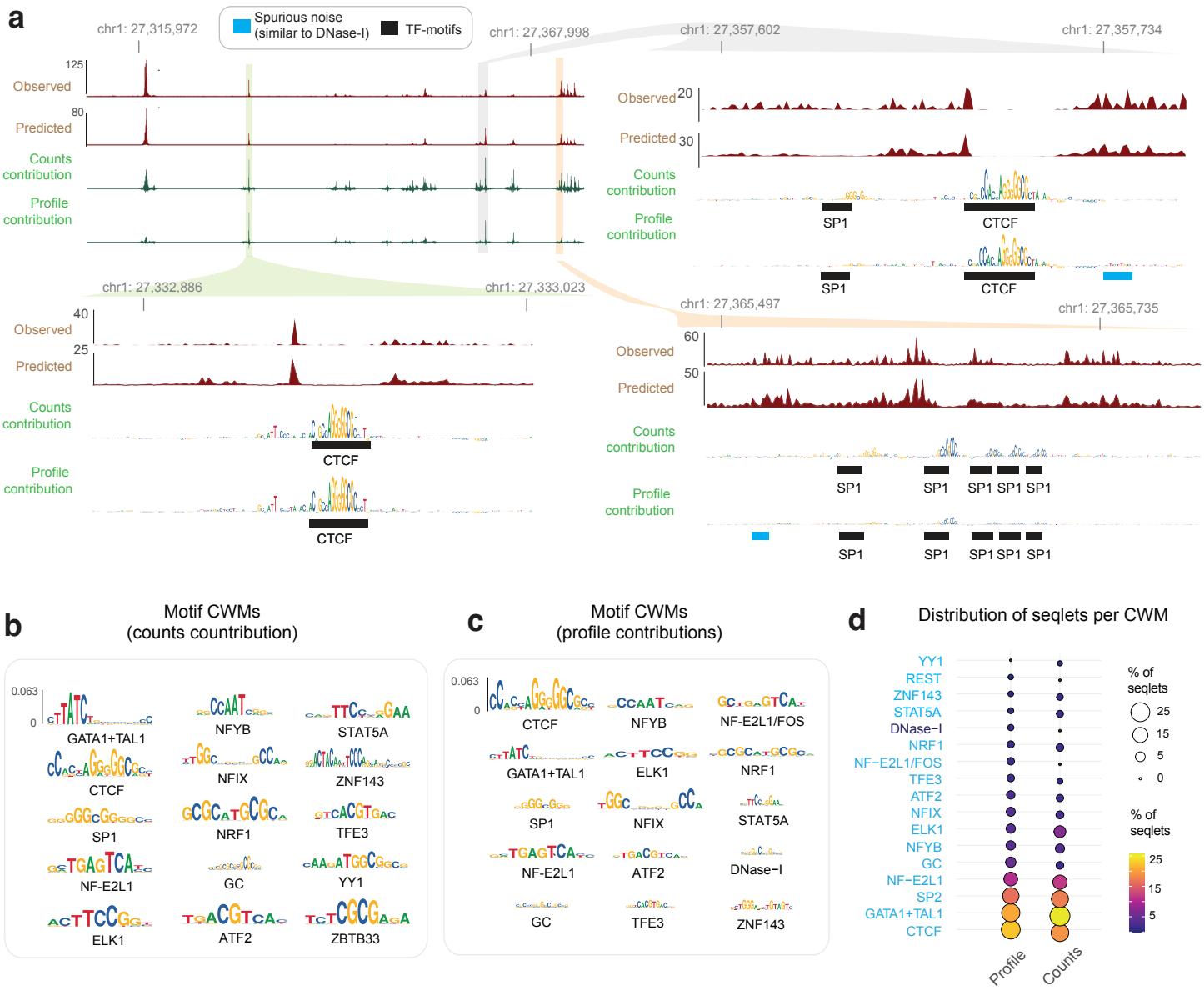
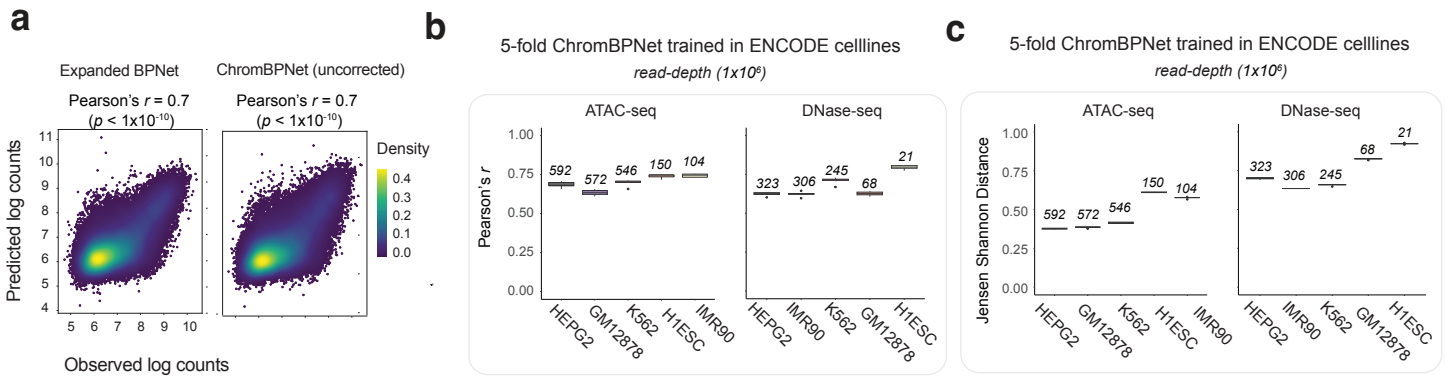

a
chr22: 43,720,735
chr22: 43,721,125
rs5764238
(C>G)
BPNet
ChIP-seq REF pred.
ChIP-seq ALT pred.
ChIP-seq REF contribs.
ChIP-seq ALT contribs.
ChronBPNet
ATAC REF pred.
ATAC ALT pred.
ATAC REF contribs.
ATAC ALT contribs.
DNase REF pred.
DNase ALT pred.
DNase REF contribs.
DNase ALT contribs.
Weak SPI1
Strong SPI1
b
Average precision (AP)
ChromBPNet w/ ATAC (572M), AP = 0.37
ChromBPNet w/ ATAC (50M), AP = 0.36
ChromBPNet w/ DNase (68M), AP = 0.33
Enformer w/ DNase (recomputed) (68M), AP = 0.34
Enformer w/ DNase (reported) (68M), AP = 0.14
Random baseline, AP = 0.008
Precision
Recall
c
ChromBPNet effect size
(log2 fold change)
R (signed) = 0.55 (p < 1x10-5)
R (unsigned) = 0.22 (p < 1x10-5)
Observed allele specfic ChIP-seq
frequency (log2 fold change)
d
Observed and predicted effect sizes
for MPRA library at HBG1 locus
Correlation of observed vs predicted
effect sizes for MPRA at each locus
Pearson's r = 0.19
p < 1x10-06
Pearson's r = 0.55
p < 1x10-0
Predicted effect
Enformer
ChromBPNet
Observed MPRA effects
Enformer correlations
ChromBPNet correlations
PKLR
IRF4
TERT
LDLR
JRF6
HBB
SORT1
MYC
GP1BB
ZFAND3
F9
HNF4A
HBG1
MSMB
e
Overlap enrichment
max PIP
0.0005 (3K)
0.001 (6K)
0.005 (33K)
0.01 (66K)
0.05 (0.3M)
0.1 (0.7M)
0.5 (4.9M)
f
rs11553699
(A>G)
MCV (PIP = 1.0)
chr12:121,778,904-121,779,104
ATAC REF pred.
ATAC ALT pred.
ATAC REF contribs.
ATAC ALT contribs.
DNase REF pred.
DNase ALT pred.
DNase REF contribs.
DNase ALT contribs.
TAL
GATA
GATA
g
chr6:14,501,268-14,501,468
ATAC REF pred.
ATAC ALT pred.
ATAC REF contribs.
ATAC ALT contribs.
hs2599
(A>G)
NR2F1
h
Embryos at timepoint
E11.5 in transgenic
mouse assay
A>G
-0.74
n=2
G>T
0
n=4
n=3
fb
mb/hb
REF in vivo activity
ALT in vivo activity

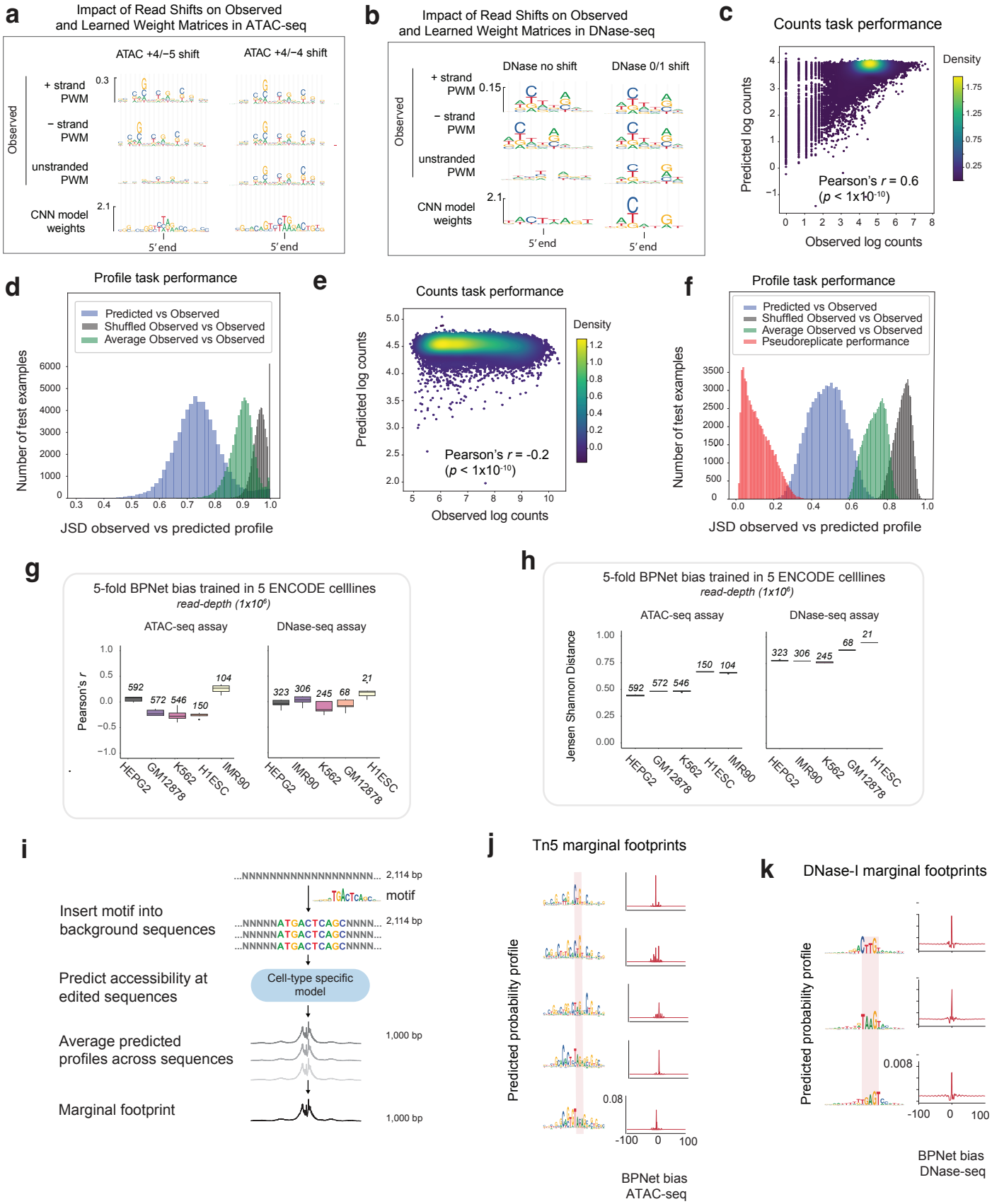
**Figure 7: ChromBPNet predicts effects of genetic variants influencing pioneer TF occupancy, massively parallel reporter activity of cRE mutagenesis, complex traits and rare disease. (a)** Example locus around SNP rs5764238, which is a significant SPI1 binding QTL (bQTL) in LCLs. Predicted profiles and contribution scores from various models are shown. From top to bottom: SPI1 BPNet ChIP-seq model in GM12878, GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet and GM12878 DNase-seq ChromBPNet. Contributions consistently illustrate the creation of a strong SPI1 motif by the G allele, with a neighboring weak SPI1 motif driving weak accessibility for the C allele. **(b)** Comparison of variant classification performance (Precision-recall curves and average precision (AP)) of different models (ChromBPNet and Enformer) trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq at discriminating SPI1 bQTLs in LCLs from controls variants shows that ChromBPNet is competitive with Enformer. **(c)** The observed effect sizes (x-axis, allele specific ChIP frequencies) of significant SPI1 bQTLs are significantly correlated with GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet's predicted effect sizes (y-axis, log fold changes). **(d)** Benchmark against massively parallel reporter assays (MPRAs) that measure effects of saturated mutagenesis of various cREs (enhancers and promoters) in various cell-lines. The cREs are named based on the nearest gene locus. For each cRE mutagenesis experiment, Pearson correlation is computed between the measured MPRA effect and the predicted effect from DNase-seq ChromBPNet models trained in the closest matched cell-line, over all mutants. Pearson correlation was also estimated using predicted effects from Enformer DNase-seq heads in the closest matched cell-lines. The scatter plot on the right compares the Pearson correlations of ChromBPNet (x-axis) to the Pearson correlations of Enformer (y-axis) for all cREs. Grey lines flanking the diagonal represent +/- 0.5 from the diagonal. ChromBPNet outperforms Enformer at several cREs (marked in bold, *IRF4, SORT1, HNF4A, MSMB, HBG1*). The scatter plots on the left compare the observed MPRA effects (x-axis) against the predicted effects from Enformer (top plot) or ChromBPNet (bottom plot) for all mutants of the HBG1 cRE. **(e)** Benchmark testing overlap enrichment (y-axis) of fine mapped variants from GWAS loci associated with red blood cell traits that pass various posterior probability (PIP) thresholds (x-axis) with variants predicted to have strong effects (at various thresholds) by ChromBPNet model trained on K562 ATAC-seq data. Each curve corresponds to a different ChromBPNet effect size threshold (the right panel shows the threshold scores and the number of variants that pass each threshold). Enrichments increase with increasing PIP and more stringent ChromBPNet thresholds. **(f)** Example locus around SNP rs11553699, which is a high-PIP fine mapped variant in a GWAS locus associated with the Mean Corpuscular Volume (MCV) read blood cell trait. Bias-corrected predicted profiles and contribution scores for each allele from GM12878 ATAC-seq and DNase-seq ChromBPNet model show that the G allele disrupts a GATA motif. **(g)** Example locus around variant hs2599, which is a *de novo* variant from a patient with severe, undiagnosed neurodevelopmental disorder (NDD). Bias-corrected predicted profiles and contribution scores are shown for both alleles from a ChromBPNet model trained on scATAC-seq pseudobulk data from glutamatergic neuron cell-type from human fetal brain tissue. The G allele is predicted to reduce accessibility due to the creation of a repressive NR2F1 motif with strong negative contribution scores. **(h)** Transgenic mouse reporter assay at the E11.5 developmental stage testing two de novo DDD variants. Mice with the reference A allele exhibited strong enhancer activity in various brain regions compared to mice with the alternate G allele, which showed significantly reduced enhancer activity in the forebrain (fb), hindbrain (hb), eyes, and midbrain (mb). These results are consistent with our model's predictions in (g). In contrast, mice with the DDD de novo variant with reference allele G and alternate allele T showed no effect on enhancer activity, aligning with our model's predictions shown in Extended Figure 10f.



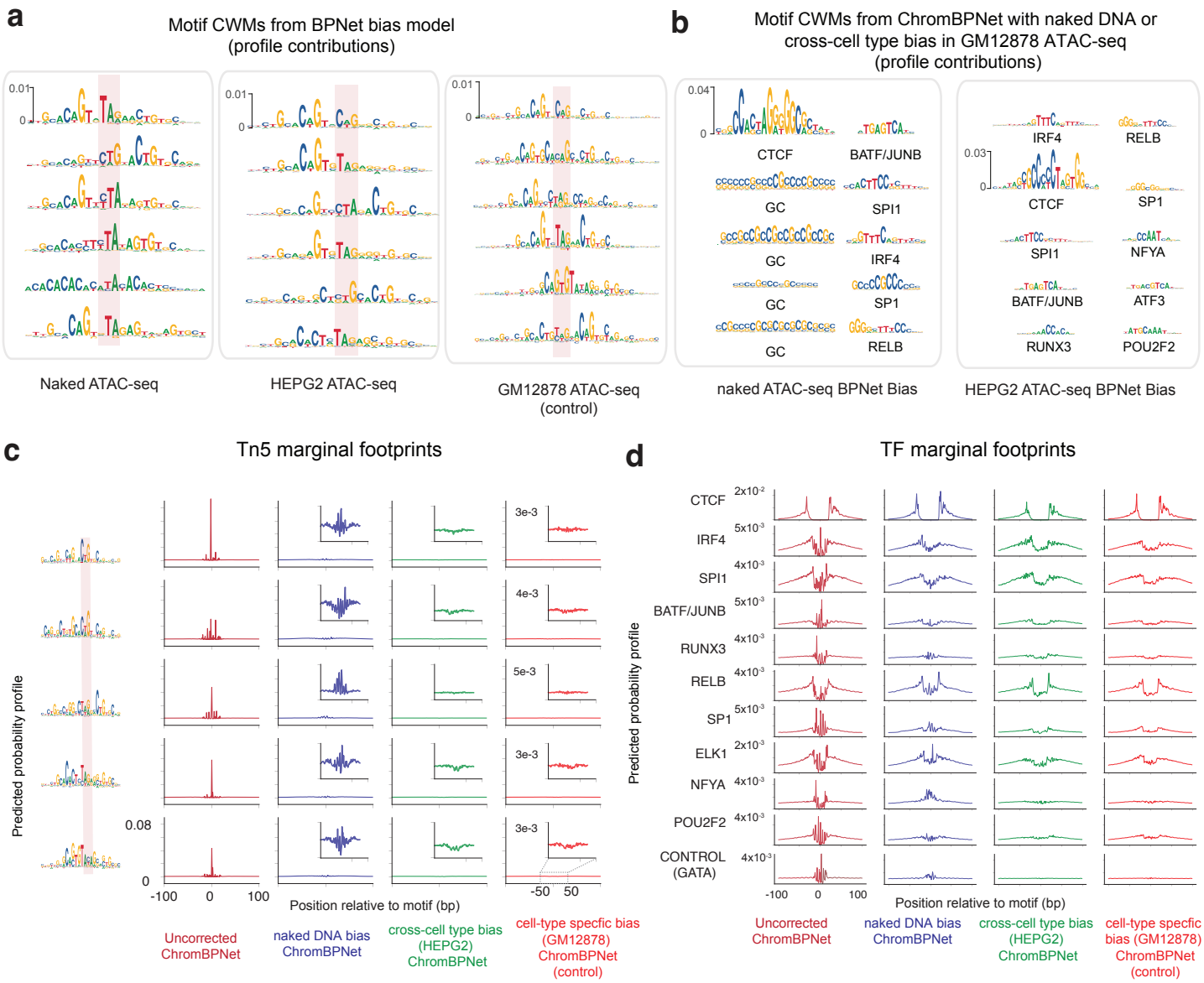

**Extended Figure 1: Convolutional neural networks accurately predict base-resolution DNase-seq profiles from local DNA sequence context but are confounded by DNase-I sequence bias. (a)** Exemplar locus on chr11 (held-out test chromosome) showing observed (Obs) DNase-seq profiles, BPNet predicted (Pred) profiles at multiple resolutions and DeepLIFT sequence contribution scores to count and profile shape predictions. High count contribution scores highlight TF motif instances, whereas high profile contributions also capture spurious features that resemble DNase-I sequence preference. **(b)** Top 15 TF-MODISCO contribution weight matrix (CMW) motifs derived from count contribution scores of the K562 DNase-seq BPNet model map to well known TF motifs. **(c)** Top 15 TF-MODISCO contribution weight matrix (CMW) motifs derived from profile contribution scores of the K562 DNase-seq BPNet model map to well known TF motifs. **(d)** Comparison of the frequency of high-confidence predictive instances (seqlets) of each TF-MODISCO motif identified from the count and profile heads show that Dnase-I bias motifs moderately dominate the profile contribution scores over TF motifs.



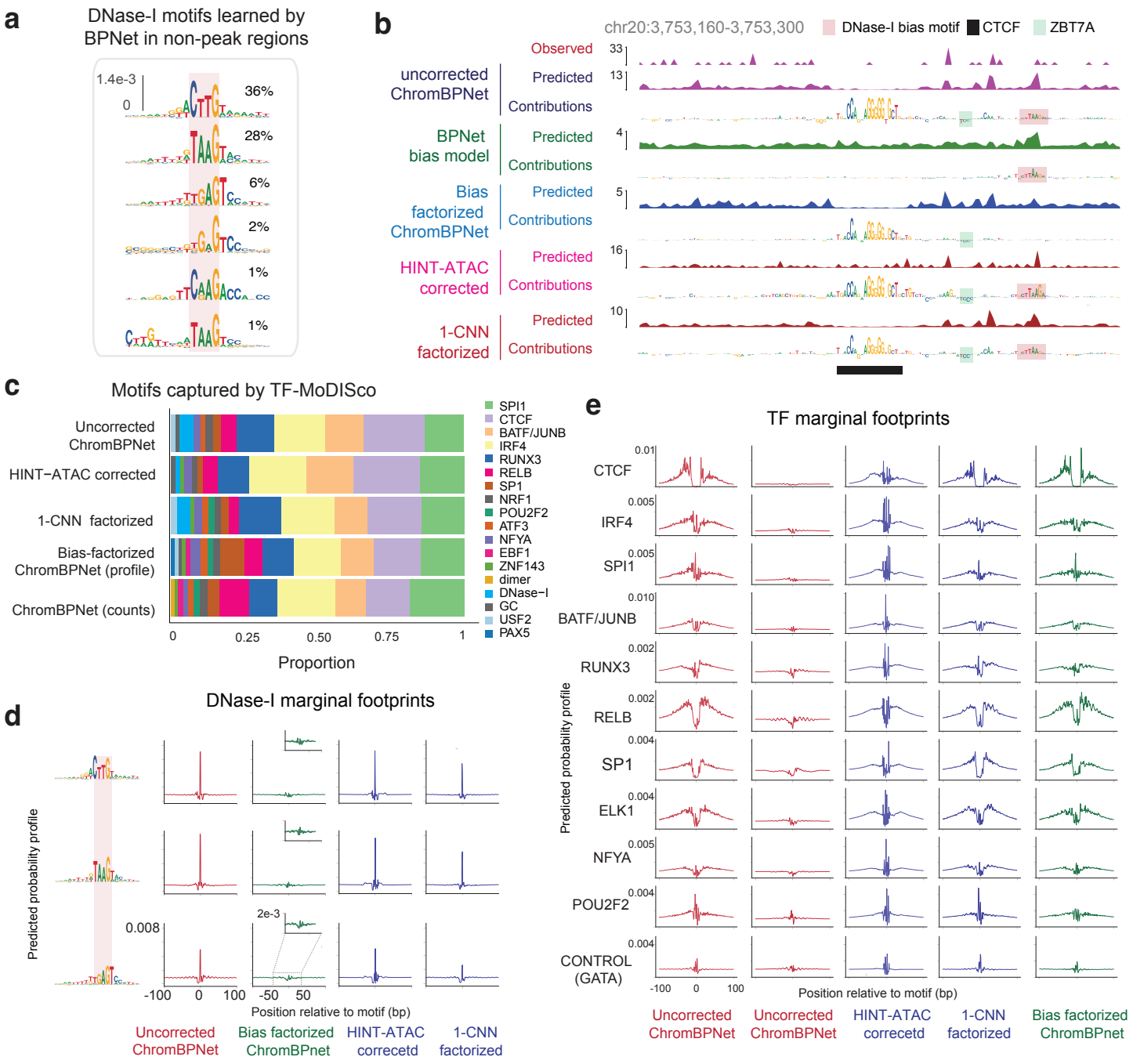

**Extended Figure 2: Comparison of count and profile head performance across different models, assays and cell-lines. (a)** Uncorrected total count predictions from expanded BPNet models and bias-factorized ChromBPNet models of K562 ATAC-seq data show identical similarity to the measured total counts. **(b,c)** ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq and DNase-seq data from diverse cell-lines show comparable and stable total count prediction performance (b) and profile prediction performance (c) across folds (box-plots), assays and cell-lines despite differences in read depth.


a
Impact of Read Shifts on Observed and Learned Weight Matrices in ATAC-seq
ATAC +4/−5 shift
ATAC +4/−4 shift
Observed
+ strand PWM
− strand PWM
unstranded PWM
CNN model weights
5′end
b
Impact of Read Shifts on Observed and Learned Weight Matrices in DNase-seq
DNase no shift
DNase 0/1 shift
c
Counts task performance
Predicted log counts
Observed log counts
Density
Pearson's r = 0.6
(p < 1x10-10)
d
Profile task performance
Predicted vs Observed
Shuffled Observed vs Observed
Average Observed vs Observed
Number of test examples
JSD observed vs predicted profile
e
Counts task performance
Pearson's r = -0.2
(p < 1x10-10)
f
Profile task performance
Predicted vs Observed
Shuffled Observed vs Observed
Average Observed vs Observed
Pseudoreplicate performance
g
5-fold BPNet bias trained in 5 ENCODE celllines
read-depth (1x10^6)
ATAC-seq assay
DNase-seq assay
Pearson's r
HEPG2
GM12878
K562
H1ESC
IMR90
h
5-fold BPNet bias trained in 5 ENCODE celllines
read-depth (1x10^6)
Jensen Shannon Distance
i
Insert motif into background sequences
Predict accessibility at edited sequences
Cell-type specific model
Average predicted profiles across sequences
Marginal footprint
2,114 bp
motif
1,000 bp
j
Tn5 marginal footprints
Predicted probability profile
BPNet bias ATAC-seq
k
DNase-I marginal footprints
Predicted probability profile
BPNet bias DNase-seq

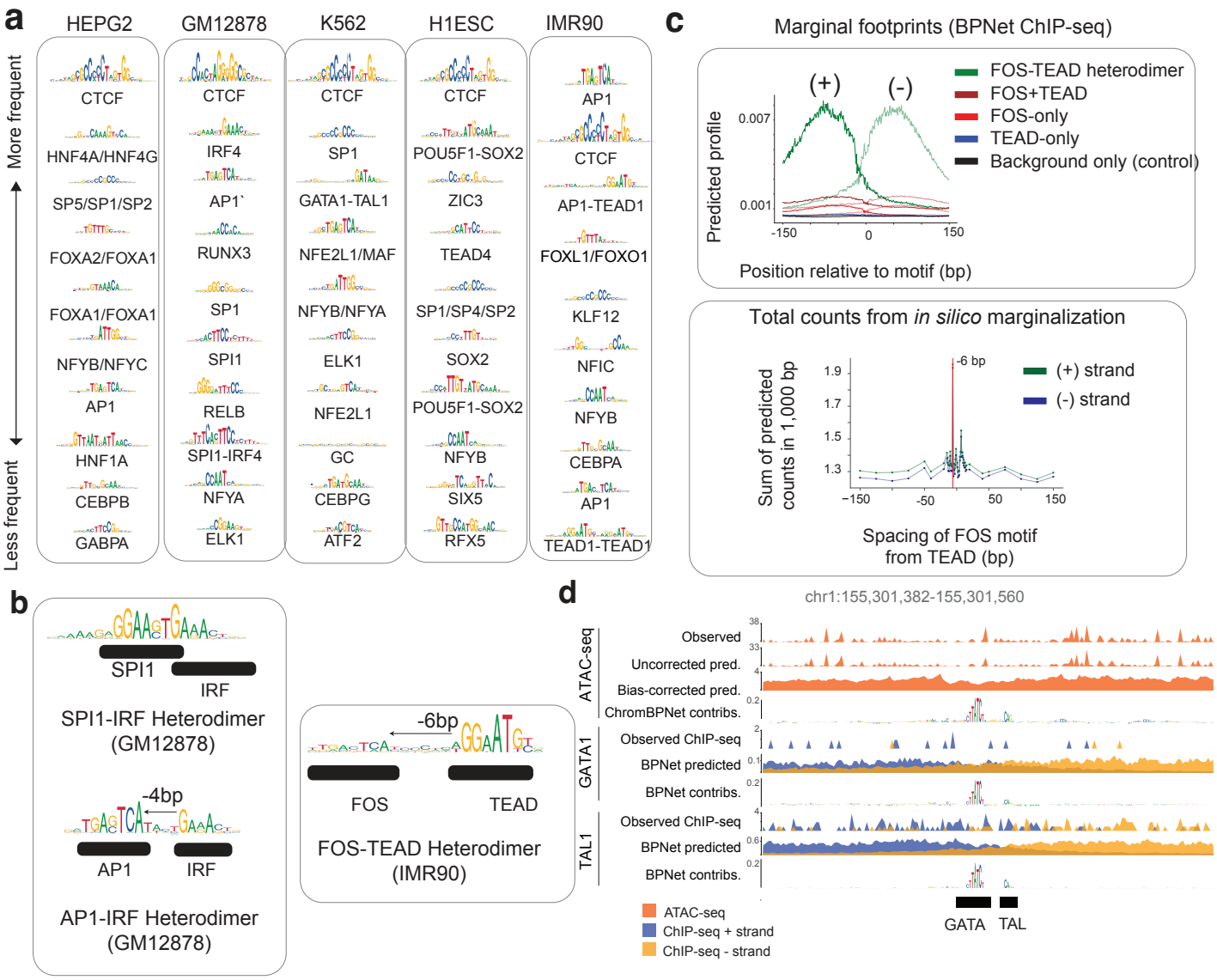
**Extended Figure 3: Performance evaluation of BPNet bias models: (a,b)** Comparison of position frequency matrices derived from *k*-mers centered on 5' ends of GM12878 ATAC-seq reads (a) and DNase-seq reads (b) (from chr20) mapping to the + strand only, - strand only, or both strands with different strand-specific shifts (+4/-5 or +4/-4 for ATAC-seq and 0/0 or 0/+1 for DNase-seq). The +4/-4 shift and the 0/+1 shifts correct the misalignment of strand-specific Tn5 and DNase-I PWMs respectively. Filter weights from the 1-filter CNN chromatin background bias model shows correct Tn5 and DNase-I bias motifs when trained on ATAC-seq reads with +4/-4 shift and DNase-seq reads with 0/+1 shifts respectively. **(c,d)** GM12878 ATAC-seq chromatin background BPNet bias model shows strong prediction of total counts in background regions of held-out test chromosomes (c) and strong prediction of profile shape (d) (blue distribution) relative to shuffled observed profiles (grey distribution) and average observed profiles (green distribution) in background regions of held-out test chromosomes. **(e)** GM12878 ATAC-seq chromatin background BPNet bias model shows poor prediction of total counts in ATAC-seq peak regions in held-out test chromosomes, indicating that bias does not affect total counts in peaks. **(f)** GM12878 ATAC-seq chromatin background BPNet bias model achieves high performance (blue distribution) at predicting profile shapes in peak regions in held-out test chromosomes compared to pseudoreplicate concordance (red), outperforming average observed profiles (green) and shuffled observed profiles (grey) baselines, suggesting Tn5 bias strongly influences profile shapes in peaks. **(g,h)** Performance of chromatin background BPNet bias models at predicting total counts (g) and profile shapes (h) in peak regions in held-out test chromosomes for ATAC-seq and DNase-seq data from diverse cell-lines. **(i)** Schematic of the marginal footprinting approach that averages model predictions over a library of background sequences containing a centrally embedded query motif. **(j,k)** Marginal footprints of various Tn5 (j) and DNase-I (k) TF-MODISCO bias motifs (rows) from predicted profiles of GM12878 ATAC-seq (j) and DNase-seq (k) chromatin background BPNet bias models.



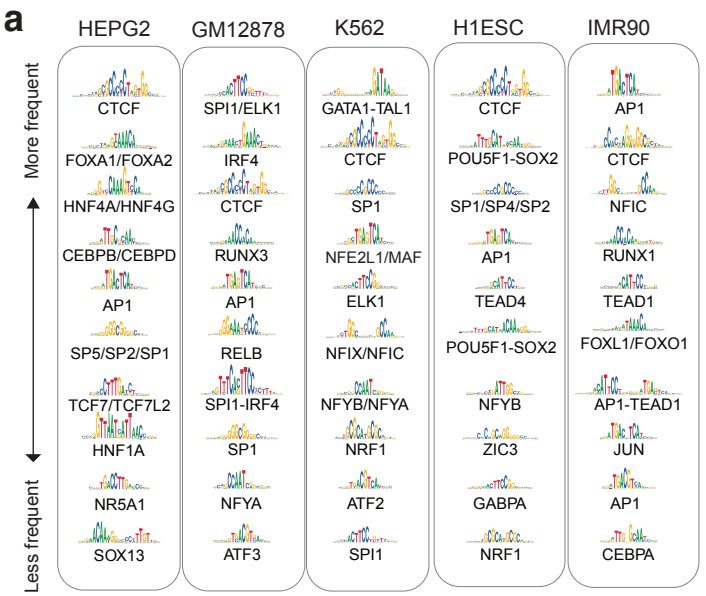

**Extended Figure 4: Tn5 bias models derived from naked DNA transposition libraries differ from those derived from chromatin background resulting in incomplete bias correction. (a)** TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores of BPNet bias models trained on naked DNA transposition library (column 1) show stronger A/T content compared to those derived from bias models trained on HepG2 (col2) and GM12878 (col3) ATAC-seq background chromatin profiles. **(b)** Top ranked TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores of peak regions from GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models coupled to BPNet bias model trained on naked DNA library (col1) or chromatin background from HepG2 ATAC-seq experiment (col2). The former show strong G/C contamination of learned TF motifs showing incomplete bias correction. **(c)** Marginal footprints of various TF-MODISCO Tn5 bias motifs (rows) using predicted profiles from GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models using different bias models (no bias model, naked DNA bias model, HepG2 chromatin background bias model, GM12878 chromatin background bias model) show that the naked DNA BPNet bias model does not completely eliminate Tn5 bias and that chromatin bias models can provide very effective bias correction even across cell-lines. **(d)** Marginal footprints of various predictive TF motifs (rows) using predicted profiles from GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models that use different bias models show that naked DNA BPNet bias model does not completely eliminate Tn5 bias (especially visible for NFYA, POU2F2 and the control motif of GATA1 that is not expressed in GM12878).

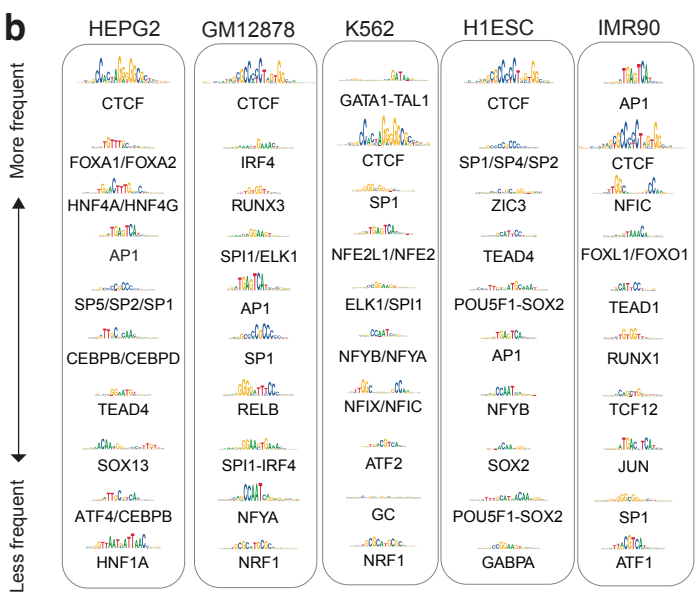

a
DNase-I motifs learned by BPNet in non-peak regions
1.4e-3
0
36%
28%
6%
2%
1%
1%
b
chr20:3,753,160-3,753,300
DNase-I bias motif
CTCF
ZBT7A
uncorrected ChromBPNet
Observed
Predicted
Contributions
BPNet bias model
Predicted
Contributions
Bias factorized ChromBPNet
Predicted
Contributions
HINT-ATAC corrected
Predicted
Contributions
1-CNN factorized
Predicted
Contributions
33
13
4
5
16
10
c
Motifs captured by TF-MoDISco
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
HINT−ATAC corrected
1-CNN factorized
Bias-factorized ChromBPNet (profile)
ChromBPNet (counts)
0
0.25
0.50
0.75
1
Proportion
SPI1
CTCF
BATF/JUNB
IRF4
RUNX3
RELB
SP1
NRF1
POU2F2
ATF3
NFYA
EBF1
ZNF143
dimer
DNase−I
GC
USF2
PAX5
d
DNase-I marginal footprints
Predicted probability profile
0.008
2e-3
-100
0
100
-50
50
Position relative to motif (bp)
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
Bias factorized ChromBPNet
HINT-ATAC correcetd
1-CNN factorized
e
TF marginal footprints
CTCF
IRF4
SPI1
BATF/JUNB
RUNX3
RELB
SP1
ELK1
NFYA
POU2F2
CONTROL (GATA)
0.01
0.005
0.005
0.010
0.002
0.002
0.004
0.004
0.005
0.004
0.004
Predicted probability profile
-100
0
100
Position relative to motif (bp)
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
Uncorrected ChromBPNet
HINT-ATAC correcetd
1-CNN factorized
Bias factorized ChromBPnet

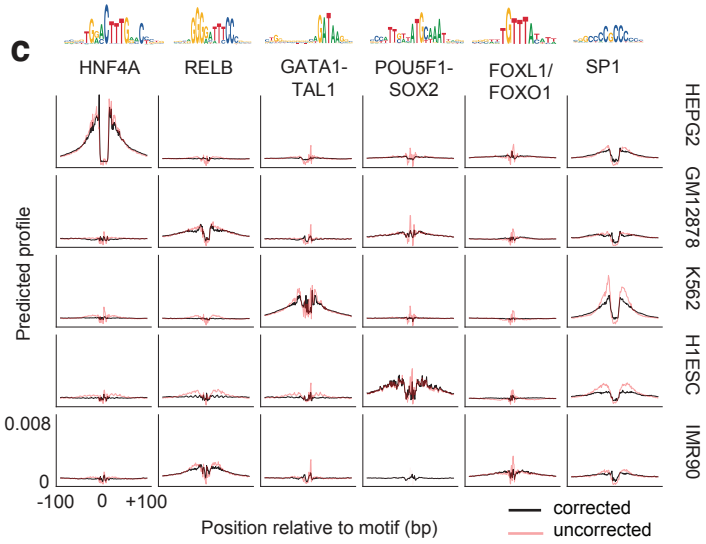
**Extended Figure 5: Bias-factorized ChromBPNet models of DNase-seq profiles coupled to neural network models of DNase-I bias deconvolve DNase-I bias from regulatory TF motif syntax. (a)** TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores of HEPG2 BPNet bias model trained on chromatin background capture different variations of the canonical DNase-I sequence preference motif **(b)** Exemplar locus at chr20:3,753,160-3,753,300 showing several tracks from top to bottom: observed GM12878 DNase-seq profile; uncorrected predicted profile from ChromBPNet; uncorrected profile contribution scores from ChromBPNet shows spurious DNase-I bias; predicted DNase-I bias profiles from BPNet bias model shows moderate resemblance to observed and uncorrected profiles; profile contribution scores from bias model match spurious DNase-I bias features; bias-corrected predicted profile from ChromBPNet shows a strong, denoised latent footprint; bias-corrected profile contribution scores from ChromBPNet are devoid of spurious DNase-I bias highlighting CTCF and ZBTB7A motifs; predicted profiles from ChromBPNet model using HINT-ATAC's bias correction method; profile contribution scores from HINT-ATAC ChromBPNet model show spurious DNase-I bias; predicted profiles from ChromBPNet model that uses a simplified 1-filter CNN bias model; profile contribution scores from ChromBPNet model with 1-filter CNN bias model shows spurious DNase-I bias **(c)** Relative frequency of high-confidence predictive instances (seqlets) of TF-MODISCO motifs derived from profile contribution scores of various ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 DNase-seq data using different bias models (no bias model, 1-filter CNN bias model and BPNet bias model) or pre-corrected profiles (HINT-ATAC) shows that DNase-I bias motifs dominate all but the ChromBPNet model coupled with the BPNet bias model. **(d)** Marginal footprints of various TF-MODISCO DNase-I bias motifs (rows) using predicted profiles from GM12878 DNase-seq ChromBPNet models that use different bias models or pre-corrected profiles (cols) show that only the BPNet bias model enables near optimal correction of DNase-I bias. **(e)** Marginal footprints of various predictive TF motifs (rows) using predicted profiles from GM12878 DNase-seq ChromBPNet models that us different bias models or pre-corrected profiles (cols) show that only the BPNet bias model removes confounding DNase-I bias.

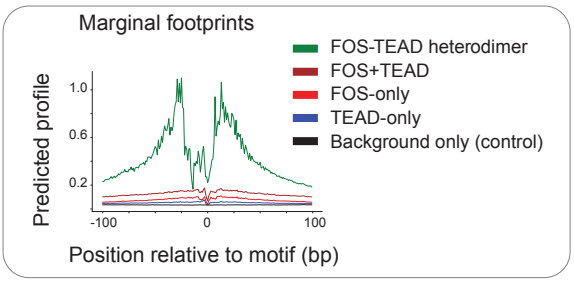


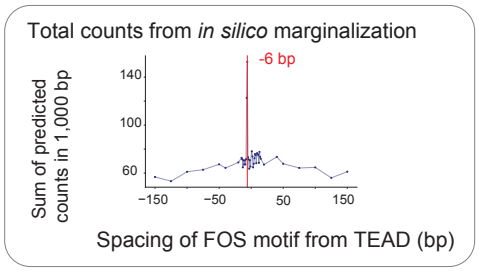

**Extended Figure 6: Additional evidence for ChromBPNet derived TF motif lexicons, cooperative composite elements and predictive motif instances with support from TF ChIP-seq. (a)** Top 10 TF-MODISCO motifs (ranked by number of predictive motif instances) derived from profile contribution scores from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet models of diverse cell-lines. Motifs names containing / refer to multiple TFs of the same family that match the motif. Motif names containing - refer to composite elements. **(b)** Exemplar composite motifs identified by TF-MODISCO from contribution scores derived from ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq and DNase-seq data from IMR90 (FOS-TEAD composite) and GM12878 (SPI1-IRF and AP1-IRF composites). **(c)** Marginal profiles at FOS motif, TEAD motif, FOS-TEAD composite motif and the sum of FOS and TEAD marginal profiles from BPNet model of FOS TF ChIP-seq data from IMR90 demonstrates the super-additive cooperative effect of the FOS-TEAD composite on FOS binding (top). Variation of the strength (maximum) of predicted marginal FOS ChIP-seq profiles anchored at FOS and TEAD motifs with variable spacing inserted in background sequences shows strong cooperative effects on FOS binding only at the fixed 6 bp spacing (bottom). **(d)** Exemplar accessible region in chr1 near the PKLR gene in K562 displaying the observed profile from ATAC-seq and GATA1, TAL1 ChIP-seq data, alongside uncorrected and bias corrected predicted profiles, and count contribution scores from ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model and TF ChIP-seq BPNet models. Predictive motif instances from ChromBPNet and BPNet models are in strong agreement.

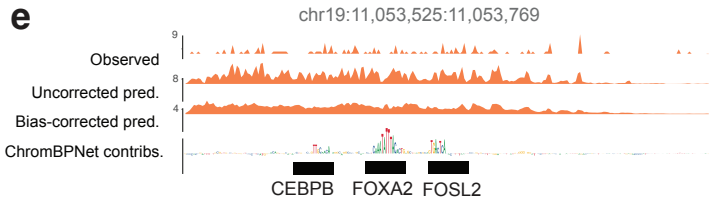

a
HEPG2
GM12878
K562
H1ESC
IMR90
More frequent
Less frequent
CTCF
FOXA1/FOXA2
HNF4A/HNF4G
CEBPB/CEBPD
AP1
SP5/SP2/SP1
TCF7/TCF7L2
HNF1A
NR5A1
SOX13
SPI1/ELK1
IRF4
CTCF
RUNX3
AP1
RELB
SPI1-IRF4
SP1
NFYA
ATF3
GATA1-TAL1
CTCF
SP1
NFE2L1/MAF
ELK1
NFIX/NFIC
NFYB/NFYA
NRF1
ATF2
SPI1
CTCF
POU5F1-SOX2
SP1/SP4/SP2
AP1
TEAD4
POU5F1-SOX2
NFYB
ZIC3
GABPA
NRF1
AP1
CTCF
NFIC
RUNX1
TEAD1
FOXL1/FOXO1
AP1-TEAD1
JUN
AP1
CEBPA

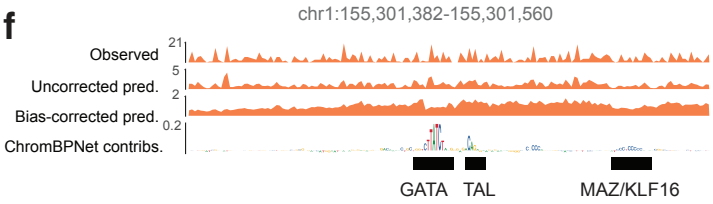

b
HEPG2
GM12878
K562
H1ESC
IMR90
More frequent
Less frequent
CTCF
FOXA1/FOXA2
HNF4A/HNF4G
AP1
SP5/SP2/SP1
CEBPB/CEBPD
TEAD4
SOX13
ATF4/CEBPB
HNF1A
CTCF
IRF4
RUNX3
SPI1/ELK1
AP1
SP1
RELB
SPI1-IRF4
NFYA
NRF1
GATA1-TAL1
CTCF
SP1
NFE2L1/NFE2
ELK1/SPI1
NFYB/NFYA
NFIX/NFIC
ATF2
GC
NRF1
CTCF
SP1/SP4/SP2
ZIC3
TEAD4
POU5F1-SOX2
AP1
NFYB
SOX2
POU5F1-SOX2
GABPA
AP1
CTCF
NFIC
FOXL1/FOXO1
TEAD1
RUNX1
TCF12
JUN
SP1
ATF1


c
HNF4A
RELB
GATA1-TAL1
POU5F1-SOX2
FOXL1/FOXO1
SP1
HEPG2
GM12878
K562
H1ESC
IMR90
Predicted profile
0.008
0
-100
0
+100
Position relative to motif (bp)
corrected
uncorrected

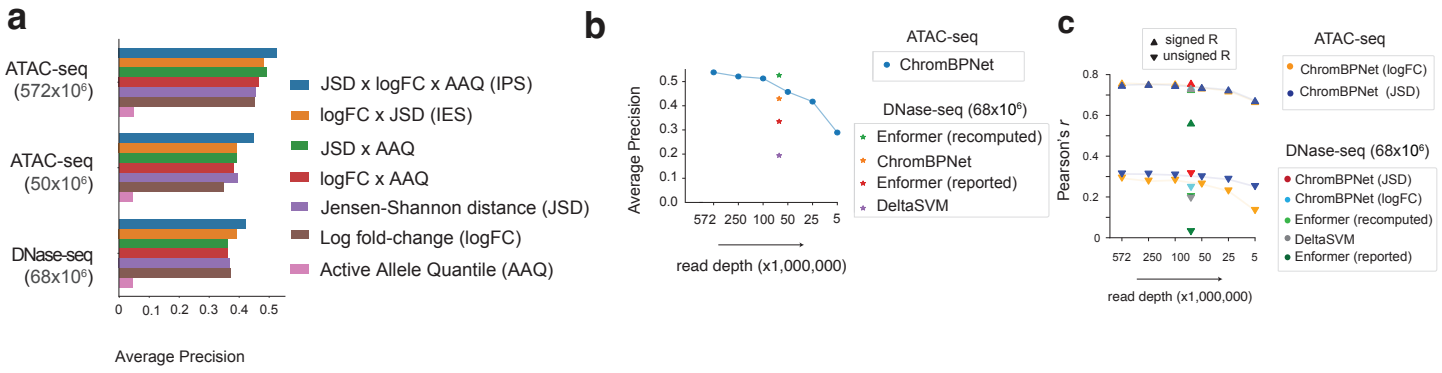

d
Marginal footprints
FOS-TEAD heterodimer
FOS+TEAD
FOS-only
TEAD-only
Background only (control)
Predicted profile
1.0
0.6
0.2
-100
0
100
Position relative to motif (bp)


Total counts from *in silico* marginalization
-6 bp
Sum of predicted counts in 1,000 bp
140
100
60
−150
−50
50
150
Spacing of FOS motif from TEAD (bp)

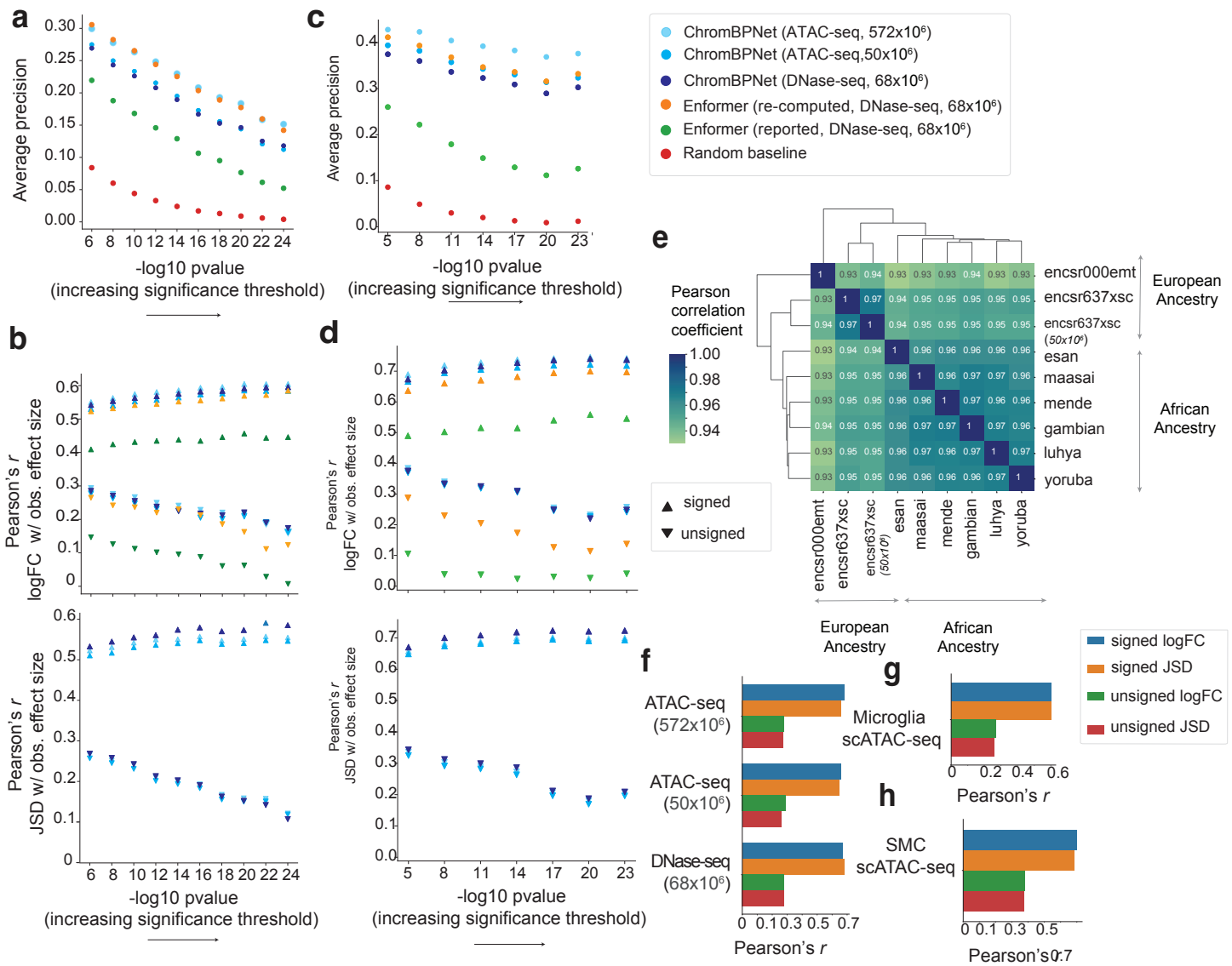

e
chr19:11,053,525:11,053,769
Observed
Uncorrected pred.
Bias-corrected pred.
ChromBPNet contribs.
9
8
4
CEBPB
FOXA2
FOSL2


f
chr1:155,301,382-155,301,560
Observed
Uncorrected pred.
Bias-corrected pred.
ChromBPNet contribs.
21
5
2
0.2
GATA
TAL
MAZ/KLF16

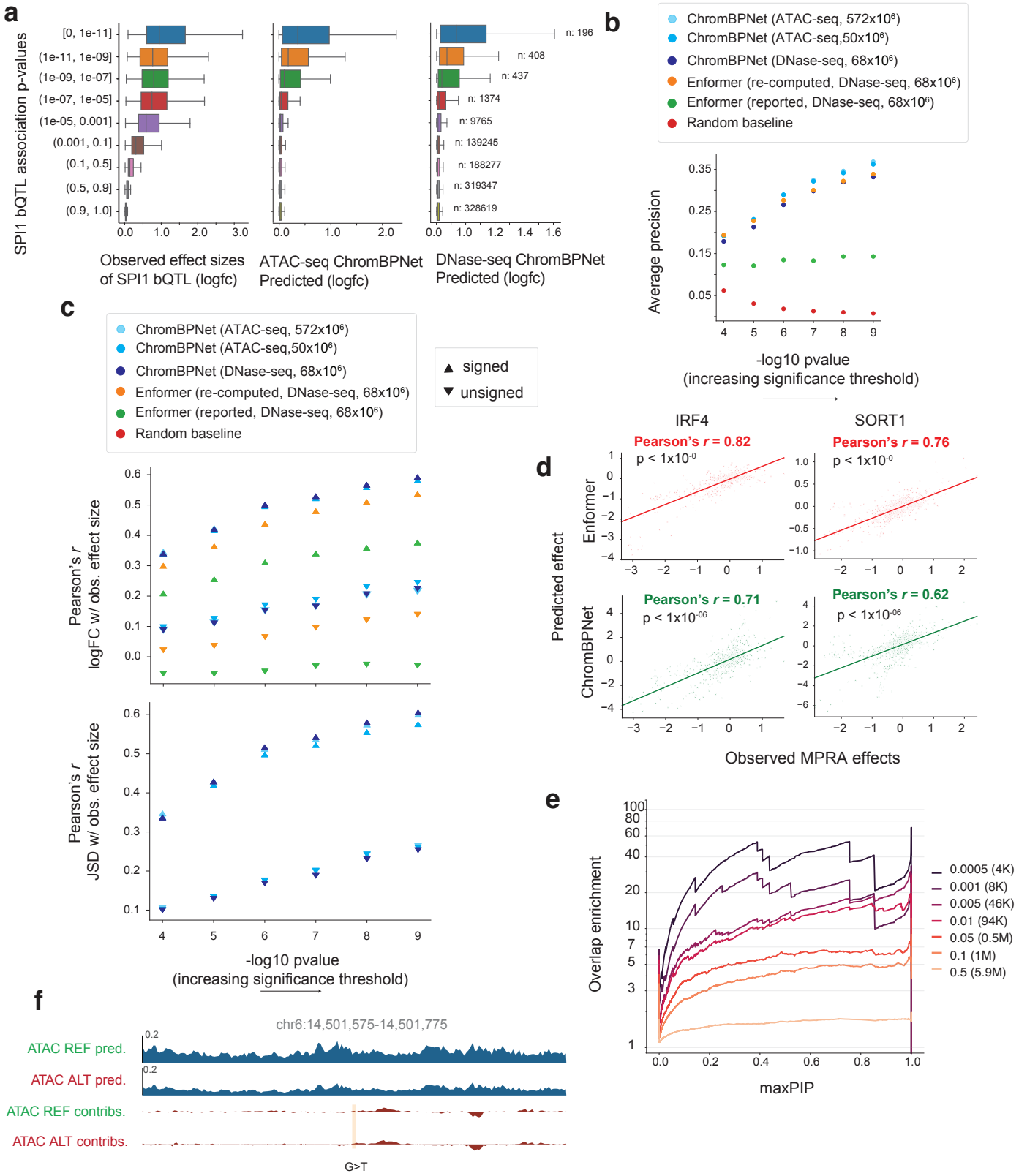
**Extended Figure 7: ChromBPNet models of DNase-seq data reveal compact TF motif lexicons, cooperative composite elements and predictive motif instances that influence chromatin accessibility and TF occupancy. (a,b)** Top 10 TF-MODISCO motifs (ranked by number of predictive motif instances) derived from count contribution scores (a) and profile contribution scores (b) from DNase-seq ChromBPNet models of diverse cell-lines. Motifs names containing / refer to multiple TFs of the same family that match the motif. Motif names containing - refer to composite elements. **(c)** Marginal footprints for TF-MODISCO motifs using normalized uncorrected (red) and bias-corrected profile predictions (black) from DNase-seq ChromBPNet models of diverse cell-lines. Bias-correction reveals cell-type specificity of footprints. **(d)** Marginal footprints for the FOS motif, TEAD motif, FOS-TEAD composite motif and the sum of FOS and TEAD marginal footprints demonstrates the super-additive cooperative effect of the FOS-TEAD composite (top). Variation of the strength (maximum) of marginal footprints anchored at FOS and TEAD TF motifs with variable spacing inserted in background sequences shows strong cooperative effects only at the fixed 6 bp spacing (bottom). **(e)** Exemplar accessible region in chr19 near the LDLR gene in HEPG2 displaying the observed profile from DNase-seq, alongside uncorrected and bias corrected predicted profiles, and count contribution scores from DNase-seq ChromBPNet model. **(f)** Exemplar accessible region in chr1 near the PKLR gene in K562 displaying the observed profile from DNase-seq, alongside uncorrected and bias corrected predicted profiles, and count contribution scores from DNase-seq ChromBPNet model.




**Extended Figure 8: Impact of training data read depth and variant scoring measures on ChromBPNet's variant classification and effect prediction performance for DNase-seq QTLs (dsQTLs) in Yoruban lymphoblastoid cell lines (LCLs) (a)** Comparison of variant classification performance (average precision (AP)) of ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 DNase-seq and ATAC-seq data (with two different read depths) at discriminating significant dsQTLs in Yoruban LCLs from control variants. Performance evaluated using different variant effect measures shows that the Integrative Prioritization Score (IPS) outperforms Active Allele Quantile (AAQ), log-fold change in predicted coverage (logFC), Jensen Shanon distance (JSD) of predicted allelic profiles, JSD x AAQ and logFC x AAQ. **(b)** LCL dsQTL variant classification performance (y-axis) of ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 ATAC-seq data decreases with read depth (572M, 250M, 100M, 50M, 25M, and 5M reads**)** of the training dataset (x-axis). Performance of GM12878 DNase-seq models (gkmSVM, ChromBPNet and Enformer) are also shown for comparison. **(c)** Correlation between LCL dsQTL observed effect sizes (signed and unsigned) and GM12878 ATAC-seq ChromBPNet model's predicted allelic log-fold changes of total counts or changes in profile shape (JSD) remain stable across most read depths (572M, 250M, 100M, 50M, 25M, and 5M reads) of the training set**.** Effect size prediction performance of various GM12878 DNase-seq models (gkmSVM, ChromBPNet and Enformer) are shown for comparison.


a
Average precision
-log10 pvalue
(increasing significance threshold)
b
Pearson's r
logFC w/ obs. effect size
JSD w/ obs. effect size
c
d
JSD w/ obs. effect size
ChromBPNet (ATAC-seq, 572x10⁶)
ChromBPNet (ATAC-seq,50x10⁶)
ChromBPNet (DNase-seq, 68x10⁶)
Enformer (re-computed, DNase-seq, 68x10⁶)
Enformer (reported, DNase-seq, 68x10⁶)
Random baseline
e
Pearson correlation coefficient
signed
unsigned
encsr000emt
encsr637xsc
encsr637xsc (50x10⁶)
esan
maasai
mende
gambian
luhya
yoruba
European Ancestry
African Ancestry
f
ATAC-seq (572x10⁶)
ATAC-seq (50x10⁶)
DNase-seq (68x10⁶)
Pearson's r
g
Microglia scATAC-seq
h
SMC scATAC-seq
signed logFC
signed JSD
unsigned logFC
unsigned JSD

**Extended Figure 9: Comparison of ChromBPNet and Enformer models for variant classification and effect size prediction caQTLs across various significance thresholds.** **(a)** Comparison of variant classification performance (average precision (AP)) of ChromBPNet and Enformer trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data at discriminating significant ATAC-seq QTLs (caQTLs) from European LCLs at varying caQTL significance thresholds (x-axis) versus control variants. **(b)** Comparison of correlation between observed effect sizes (signed and unsigned) of significant caQTLs from European LCLs selected at varying thresholds (x-axis) and predicted effect sizes (top: allelic log fold change of total counts, bottom: JSD between allelic profiles) of ChromBPNet and Enformer models trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data. **(c)** Comparison of variant classification performance of ChromBPNet and Enformer trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data at discriminating significant ATAC-seq QTLs (caQTLs) from African LCLs at varying caQTL significance thresholds (x-axis) versus control variants. **(d)** Comparison of correlation between observed effect sizes (signed and unsigned) of significant caQTLs from African LCLs selected at varying thresholds (x-axis) and predicted effect sizes (top: allelic log fold change of total counts, bottom: JSD between allelic profiles) of ChromBPNet and Enformer models trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data. **(e)** Predicted allelic effects on profile shape (Jensen Shannon Distance (JSD)) for the significant African LCL caQTLs from ChromBPNet models trained on ATAC-seq data from reference LCLs from different ancestry groups/subgroups (each row/column in the matrix) are highly correlated. **(f)** Correlation of observed allelic imbalance (signed and unsigned) of ATAC-seq coverage (log fold changes) at heteroyzgous variants in the African caQTL LCL cohort with predicted effect sizes (logFC and JSD) from ChromBPNet models trained on GM12878 ATAC-seq (at two read depths) or DNase-seq. **(g)** Correlation of observed effect sizes (regression betas) of significant caQTLs in microglia with various predicted effect sizes (logFC and JSD) from a ChromBPNet model trained on a reference microglia scATAC-seq pseudobulk dataset **(h)** Correlation of the observed effect sizes (effect sizes from the RASQUAL method) of significant caQTLs in coronary artery smooth muscle cell-lines with various predicted effect sizes (logFC and JSD) from a ChromBPNet model trained on a reference caSMC scATAC-seq pseudobulk dataset.


a
SPI1 bQTL association p-values
[0, 1e-11]
(1e-11, 1e-09]
(1e-09, 1e-07]
(1e-07, 1e-05]
(1e-05, 0.001]
(0.001, 0.1]
(0.1, 0.5]
(0.5, 0.9]
(0.9, 1.0]
n: 196
n: 408
n: 437
n: 1374
n: 9765
n: 139245
n: 188277
n: 319347
n: 328619
Observed effect sizes of SPI1 bQTL (logfc)
ATAC-seq ChromBPNet Predicted (logfc)
DNase-seq ChromBPNet Predicted (logfc)
b
ChromBPNet (ATAC-seq, 572x10⁶)
ChromBPNet (ATAC-seq,50x10⁶)
ChromBPNet (DNase-seq, 68x10⁶)
Enformer (re-computed, DNase-seq, 68x10⁶)
Enformer (reported, DNase-seq, 68x10⁶)
Random baseline
Average precision
-log10 pvalue
(increasing significance threshold)
c
signed
unsigned
Pearson's r logFC w/ obs. effect size
Pearson's r JSD w/ obs. effect size
-log10 pvalue
(increasing significance threshold)
d
IRF4
SORT1
Pearson's r = 0.82
p < 1x10-0
Pearson's r = 0.76
p < 1x10-0
Pearson's r = 0.71
p < 1x10-06
Pearson's r = 0.62
p < 1x10-06
Predicted effect
Enformer
ChromBPNet
Observed MPRA effects
e
Overlap enrichment
maxPIP
0.0005 (4K)
0.001 (8K)
0.005 (46K)
0.01 (94K)
0.05 (0.5M)
0.1 (1M)
0.5 (5.9M)
f
chr6:14,501,575-14,501,775
ATAC REF pred.
ATAC ALT pred.
ATAC REF contribs.
ATAC ALT contribs.
G>T

**Extended Figure 10: Additional evidence for benchmarks of ChromBPNet's variant effect prediction performance against SPI1 binding QTLs, massively parallel reporter activity of cRE mutagenesis and fine mapped GWAS variants. (a)** Comparison of distribution of observed SPI1 bQTL effect sizes (left), predicted effect sizes from ChromBPNet model of GM12878 ATAC-seq data (middle) and GM12878 DNase-seq data (right) stratified by p-value of the bQTL association significance (y-axis). More significant bQTL associations show stronger effect sizes. **(b)** Comparison of variant classification performance (average precision (AP)) of ChromBPNet and Enformer trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data at discriminating significant SPI1 bQTLs in LCLs at varying bQTL significance thresholds (x-axis) versus control variants. **(c)** Comparison of correlation between observed effect sizes (signed and unsigned) of significant bQTLs from LCLs selected at varying thresholds (x-axis) and predicted effect sizes (top: allelic log fold change of total counts, bottom: JSD between allelic profiles) of ChromBPNet and Enformer models trained on GM12878 DNase-seq or ATAC-seq data. **(d)** Comparison of the observed MPRA effects (x-axis) against the predicted effects from Enformer (top plot) or ChromBPNet (bottom plot) for all mutants of the IRF4 and SORT1 cREs. **(e)** Benchmark testing overlap enrichment (y-axis) of fine mapped variants from GWAS loci associated with red blood cell traits that pass various posterior probability (PIP) thresholds (x-axis) with variants predicted to have strong effects (at various thresholds) by ChromBPNet model trained on K562 DNase-seq data. Each curve corresponds to a different ChromBPNet effect size threshold (the right panel shows the threshold scores and the number of variants that pass each threshold). Enrichments increase with increasing PIP and more stringent ChromBPNet thresholds. **(f)** Example locus around a de novo variant nearby hs2599, from a patient with severe, undiagnosed neurodevelopmental disorder (NDD). Bias-corrected predicted profiles and contribution scores are shown for both alleles from a ChromBPNet model trained on scATAC-seq pseudobulk data from glutamatergic neuron cell-type from human fetal brain tissue. The allele is predicted to have no effect on accessibility.

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