Dynamic habitat suitability modeling reveals rapid poleward distribution shift in a mobile apex predator

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NICHOLAS J. HILL1, ANDREW J. TOBIN1, APRIL E. RESIDE2, JULIAN G. PEPPERELL3 and TOM C. L. BRIDGE4,5

1Centre for Sustainable Tropical Fisheries and Aquaculture, College of Marine and Environmental Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville, Qld 4811, Australia, 2Centre for Tropical Environmental and Sustainability Sciences, College of Marine and Environmental Sciences, James Cook University, Townsville, Qld 4811, Australia, 3Pepperell Research and Consulting Pty Ltd., P.O. Box 1475, Noosaville DC, Qld 4566, Australia, 4ARC Centre of Excellence for Coral Reef Studies, James Cook University, Townsville, Qld 4811, Australia, 5Australian Institute of Marine Science, PMB #3, Townsville MC, Qld 4810, Australia

Abstract

Many taxa are undergoing distribution shifts in response to anthropogenic climate change. However, detecting a climate signal in mobile species is particularly due to their wide-ranging, patchy distributions, often driven by natural climate variability. For example, difficulties associated with assessing pelagic fish distributions have rendered fisheries management ill-equipped to adapt to the challenges posed by climate change, leaving pelagic species and ecosystems vulnerable. Here, we demonstrate the value of citizen science data for modelling the dynamic habitat suitability of a mobile pelagic predator (black marlin, *Istiompax indica*) within the south-west Pacific Ocean. The extensive spatial and temporal coverage of our occurrence data set (*n* = 18 717), collected at high resolution (~1.85 km²), enabled identification of suitable habitat at monthly time steps over a 16-year period (1998–2013). We identified considerable monthly, seasonal and interannual variability in the extent and distribution of suitable habitat, predominantly driven by chlorophyll a and sea surface height. Interannual variability correlated with El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) events, with suitable habitat extending up to ~300 km further south during La Nina events. Despite the strong influence of ENSO, our model revealed a rapid poleward shift in the geometric mean of black marlin habitat, occurring at 88.2 km decade⁻¹. By incorporating multiple environmental factors at monthly time steps, we were able to demonstrate a rapid distribution shift in a mobile pelagic species. Our findings suggest that the rapid velocity of climate change in the south-west Pacific Ocean is likely affecting mobile pelagic species, indicating that they may be more vulnerable to climate change than previously thought.

Keywords: apex predator, black marlin (*Istiompax indica*), boundary current, climate change, distribution shift, habitat suitability, MaxEnt, species distribution modelling, tunas and billfishes

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Introduction

Rapid and extensive distribution shifts in response to global climate change have been detected in numerous marine and terrestrial taxa (Parmesan & Yohe, 2003; Chen et al., 2011; Pinsky et al., 2013). These shifts are predicted to continue in coming decades, resulting in a reassembly of current ecological communities (Loarie et al., 2009; Hazen et al., 2012; Burrows et al., 2014). Although numerous shifts have been predicted, empirical evidence via retrospective detection has proven elusive for the majority of species due to inadequate spatial and/or temporal coverage of baseline occurrence data (Booth et al., 2011; Hobday & Evans, 2013). This has inhibited the development and implementation of appropriate management strategies to assess species vulnerability to climate change (Conroy et al., 2011).

Where species occurrence data are patchy, modelling changes in habitat suitability has proven useful for identifying distribution shifts (Elith et al., 2006, 2010). However, habitat suitability metrics are often focused on temperature (Loarie et al., 2009; Burrows et al., 2014) which can result in underestimation of the rate and magnitude of distribution shifts expected to occur (VanDerWal et al., 2012). Species distributions are driven by multiple, interacting factors, and therefore, their response to climate change is likely to be more complex and region specific than simple models based solely on temperature suggest (Ackerly et al., 2010; Bell et al., 2013a). Data paucity is particularly prevalent in pelagic ecosystems, which are difficult to survey at fine spatial and temporal scales (Hobday & Evans, 2013). Increasing atmospheric CO₂ concentrations have caused fundamental changes to the world’s oceans, including increased sea surface temperatures and shifts in oceanic circulation and primary productivity patterns (Boyce...
et al., 2010; Pachauri et al., 2014). However, our understanding of the impacts these physical changes will have on pelagic species, and the resulting consequences, is poorly understood.

Apex predators exert important top-down control of food webs and are critical for maintaining ecosystem function (Myers et al., 2007; Estes et al., 2011). Many large-bodied pelagic predators are highly mobile and regularly undertake migrations of hundreds to thousands of kilometres at annual and interannual timescales (Block et al., 2011). Despite their widespread distributions, mobile pelagic predators have declined in abundance due to overfishing (Baum & Worm, 2009), causing changes to open ocean food webs (Myers et al., 2007; Worm & Tittensor, 2011). Climate-induced distribution shifts are likely to alter the functioning of pelagic ecosystems already under pressure from anthropogenic stressors (Hsiieh et al., 2006; Beaugrand et al., 2008; Hazen et al., 2012; Robinson et al., 2014).

Furthermore, mobile pelagic predators represent 20% of total economic value in global marine capture fisheries (FAO, 2012). Distribution shifts in commercially important species will have serious implications for food security and human welfare globally (Brander, 2010; Cheung et al., 2010; Madin et al., 2012). Early detection and characterization of species responses to climate change is therefore vital for bolstering the resilience and adaptive capacity of fisheries, allowing appropriate management contingencies to be implemented (Hobday & Evans, 2013; Holbrook & Johnson, 2014; Maxwell et al., 2015).

Detecting distribution shifts in mobile marine species has proven difficult due to naturally low densities, high mobility and the remoteness of preferred habitats. Acoustic and archival tagging technologies have improved understanding of species movements across space and time (Schaefer et al., 2014; Maxwell et al., 2015), but are costly and can be logistically difficult to undertake. In the absence of sophisticated tagging data, species distribution modelling (SDM) has proven useful for illustrating the dynamic habitat suitability of mobile species and presents itself as a potential tool for dynamic ocean management (Elith et al., 2006; Lehodey et al., 2006; Maxwell et al., 2015). Habitat suitability of mobile species is determined by a range of environmental (e.g. temperature; Boyce et al., 2008) and ecological parameters (e.g. prey abundance; Griffiths et al., 2010) which vary across both space (metres – 1000’s km) and time (minutes – multidecadal). Therefore, modelling distribution shifts using environmental data averaged over broad climatic scales (e.g. Perry et al., 2005; Montero-Serra et al., 2015) may inaccurately represent habitat suitability for mobile species (Reside et al., 2010). Low spatial resolution data and use of inappropriate modelling techniques have hindered the detection of underlying long-term shifts in some mobile species (Hobday & Evans, 2013).

Utilizing citizen science to assist with the spatial and temporal coverage of data sampling can help overcome problems associated with data paucity. For example, citizen science has proven critical in establishing the projected impacts of climate change on the distribution and volume of remaining viable habitat for mobile bird species (VanDerWal et al., 2012; Abolafya et al., 2013). In Australia, a large-scale tagging program utilizing recreational fishermen to collect data on targeted pelagic species has been operating since 1974 in collaboration with fisheries management (NSW DPI, 2014). Participants apply a conventional streamer tag to captured fish before release and record the capture date, release location and approximate length and weight of each fish. Under the program, recreational anglers have tagged over 419 000 individual fish across 25 different species, providing a spatially and temporally extensive data set of the distribution of pelagic fishes (NSW DPI, 2014).

Black marlin (Istiophorus indica) are a common target of recreational anglers in many locations throughout the south-west Pacific Ocean and are regularly recorded in the NSW DPI Game Fish Tagging Program (NSW DPI, 2014). The distribution of black marlin extends throughout tropical and subtropical regions of the Pacific and Indian Oceans predominately found in epipelagic waters (Pepperell, 1990; Domeier & Speare, 2012). Although geographically widespread and capable of crossing ocean basins (Pepperell, 1990), black marlin show a seasonal affinity for continental margins and seamounts (Campbell et al., 2003; Gunn et al., 2003), increasing their accessibility to recreational anglers. Recently, Williams et al. (2015) identified three distinct genetic populations in the south-west Pacific, eastern Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. In the south-west Pacific population examined in this study, spawning occurs from September to November adjacent to the continental shelf of north-east Australia (Leis et al., 1987; Domeier & Speare, 2012). From September to April, juveniles 1–4 years old undertake a southerly migration along Australia’s eastern continental margin (17–34°S) (Pepperell, 1990). Although the south-west Pacific population is targeted by a substantial recreational fishery, little is known about population status (Collette et al., 2011) or where else the species might occur.

Here, we demonstrate the value of citizen science collected data for investigating distribution shifts in the south-west Pacific population of black marlin. We model the dynamic habitat suitability of black marlin using high-resolution spatial and temporal data to investigate (i) environmental factors that characterize...
suitable habitat of black marlin; (ii) the variation in location of suitable habitat across seasonal and interannual timescales in relation to natural climate oscillations; and (iii) whether a long-term distribution shift has occurred and is consistent with the effects of climate change observed in the south-west Pacific Ocean.

Materials and methods

Study region

The study was conducted in the south-west Pacific Ocean (3°–39°S/142°–180°E; Fig. 1a). The study area encompasses the ‘core’ range of the south-west Pacific black marlin population identified using genetic analysis, archival tagging and historical commercial catch data (Williams et al., 1994; Domeier & Speare, 2012; Williams et al., 2015). The dominant oceanographic feature of this region is the East Australian Current (EAC), a poleward-flowing western boundary current that transports warm, oligotrophic waters along Australia’s east coast (Ridgway, 2007). The EAC originates from the westward-flowing South Equatorial Current, which bifurcates at the Australian continental margin at 17°–19°S (Brinkman et al., 2001). A seasonal strengthening in the EAC occurs from September to April (Luick et al., 2007). The EAC departs from the east coast at 32°–34°S, flowing east towards New Caledonia and New Zealand, forming the Tasman Front (Baird et al., 2008; Suthers et al., 2011). The Tasman Front is a transition zone, representing the collision of cold (Tasman Sea) and warm water (Coral Sea) bodies, often exhibiting strong thermal gradients of >2 °C (Baird et al., 2008). Over winter (April–August), subantarctic cold waters push north, forcing the EAC and Tasman Front to retreat towards the equator.

These major oceanographic features vary across numerous temporal scales, attributed to the influence of climate oscillations. El Nino Southern Oscillation (ENSO) is the dominant force, which drives strong interannual variability in the oceanography of the south-west Pacific Ocean (Holbrook et al., 2009). El Nino events are characterized by anomalously high sea surface temperatures adjacent to Australia’s south-east coast and anomalously cool temperatures in the north as the West Pacific Warm Pool disperses east. In contrast, during La Nina events, trade winds strengthen, forcing West Pacific Warm Pool water to remain in the south-west Pacific (Holbrook & Bindoff, 1997; Holbrook et al., 2009). Decadal variability is also present, characterized by extended warm, El Nino-like conditions, or conversely cold, La Nina-like conditions. Combination of these various climatic influences creates highly variable oceanographic conditions within the south-west Pacific Ocean. Globally, western boundary currents such as the EAC are warming 2–3 times faster than the global mean (Wu et al., 2012; Hobday & Pecl, 2013; Hu et al., 2015). Despite this substantial natural variability in oceanographic features, a long-term incessant poleward shift in these features has been recorded (Cai, 2006; Ridgway, 2007) and is predicted to continue (Cai et al., 2005; Ridgway & Hill, 2012), with subsequent shifts in numerous marine taxa documented (Frusher et al., 2014; Verges et al., 2014).

Occurrence data

Occurrence records were obtained from black marlin tagged by recreational anglers in the New South Wales Department
of Primary Industries Tagging Program (NSW DPI, 2014). The database covers the period from 1974 to present. However, in this study, we only used a subset from the period 1998–2013. This period was chosen due to the availability of high-resolution environmental data and also to account for the increased fishing effort present in the database in the 1970s and 1980s. Occurrence data were binned into monthly time steps, leaving a total of 24,344 occurrence records available at a spatial resolution of 1 min of latitude/longitude (~0.185 km²) (Fig. 1b). Although the distribution of tag records is predominately restricted to within close proximity of coastlines, the use of this data enabled analysis at a much finer spatial scale than would be possible using commercial catch per unit effort data, which is often collected at a resolution of 5 × 5° (~556.63 km²) (e.g. Su et al., 2011).

Environmental data

Environmental factors (Table S1) were chosen as potential explanatory variables based on their availability and demonstrated influence on pelagic species distributions (Su et al., 2011). Spatial layers for environmental factors were acquired using the Marine Geospatial Ecology Tool (MGET) (Roberts et al., 2010) in ArcGIS. Daily measurements for each factor were averaged at monthly time steps (n = 192) from 1998 to 2013 to reduce the influence of local minima/maxima and no-data cells (e.g., due to cloud cover) on environmental spatial layers. No-data cells were interpolated using the del2a method within MGET which uses Laplacian interpolation (D’errico, 2005). All environmental layers were resampled to a common spatial resolution (4 km²) to satisfy requirements of MAXENT. Mixed layer depth and bathymetry were also investigated, but were not included in the final model as they led to overfitting of the data.

Species distribution model

We used the SDM algorithm MAXENT, which estimates the probability distribution of a species occurrence based on constraints from biologically relevant environmental factors (Phillips et al., 2006). MAXENT is a robust technique that performs well against similar methods when modelling nonsystematically collected occurrence data even if sample sizes are small (Elith et al., 2006). This technique accurately models species distributions, despite data limitations and biases (Elith et al., 2006; Pearson et al., 2007). MAXENT generates a continuous layer of habitat suitability (ranging from 0 to 1) across a specified domain by distinguishing the distribution of a species occurrence from the available surrounding environment (Phillips et al., 2006; Elith et al., 2011).

We generated a background data set to representatively sample the environment surrounding each occurrence record. MAXENT assumes the occurrence data were randomly sampled, with all locations within the study area equally likely to be sampled. To account for our occurrence data being biased towards areas more accessible to recreational anglers, we selected background data with equivalent spatial and temporal bias to ensure the model reflected the distribution of black marlin rather than sampling effort (Phillips et al., 2009). Background points were randomly placed within a specified buffer distance surrounding each occurrence record and assigned to the same monthly time step. Four different buffer sizes were investigated [50, 100, 200, 300 nautical miles (n. mi.)] to assess model performance (VanDerWal et al., 2009). The final models used the 200n. mi. buffer, which most effectively balanced habitat sensitivity and specificity, offering the most biologically informative and logical results (VanDerWal et al., 2009).

Occurrence and background points within close proximity to the coastline that did not contain data coverage from all environmental factors were omitted. A total of 18,717 occurrences and 23,242 background points were used in the final models. The value for each environmental factor was recorded at each point and derived from the relevant monthly time step. For the final model, environmental factors investigated included sea surface temperature, chlorophyll a (chl-a) concentration, sea surface height anomaly (ssha), current direction and current magnitude. All models were run using MAXENT in R 3.0.2 (Phillips et al., 2006). Model performance was evaluated with a tenfold cross-validation (500 iterations each) using SDM Tools (VanDerWal et al., 2015). To test model performance, occurrence data were randomly partitioned into subsets, with 70% of occurrence records used to train the model and the remaining 30% for testing. Each ‘fold’ of cross-validation was compared using area under the receiver operating characteristic curve (AUC) to provide estimates of model performance. Values approaching 1 suggest the model accurately predicts species occurrence, whereas a value of 0.5 suggests the model is no better than a random selection. The importance of each environmental factor in the training model was determined using a jackknife test. The final model was run using all occurrence data and projected onto a series of monthly spatial surfaces from 1998 to 2013 to hindcast the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat within the study area (Reside et al., 2010).

MAXENT provides a series of threshold values which can be used to generate discrete binomial suitable/non suitable outputs. These threshold values represent natural breaks in the scale of habitat suitability (0–1) defined by MAXENT. After visual inspection of binomial outputs produced using all thresholds, the MAXENT-derived ‘equate entropy of thresholded and original distributions logistic threshold’ value of 0.282 was used to define nonsuitable habitat from suitable habitat. This value was chosen as alternative thresholds provided by MAXENT were considered too high and therefore too restrictive for a highly mobile generalist species, omitting suitable habitat (Anderson et al., 2012).

The geometric mean of suitable habitat was calculated for each month (n = 192) by taking the average of all cells within the study area based on their suitability value and location (latitude/longitude). This provided a single point that estimated the core or centre of suitable habitat for each time step. Comparison of the latitudinal/longitudinal location of geometric means was used to investigate annual and interannual variability in the geographic location of suitable habitat. Points were assigned to three different ENSO states (El Nino, La
Nina and Neutral) and compared using boxplots. To investigate long-term trends in the geometric mean of suitable habitat from 1998 to 2013, we used a linear model that included season (January–April, May–August and September–December) and ENSO state (El Nino, La Nina and Neutral) as fixed effects to remove variability they impart on the observed latitudinal trend throughout the study period. Residual plots were used to confirm that the model satisfied assumptions of normality and heterogeneity of variance.

Results

The distribution of modelled suitable habitat represented the spread of occurrence records well, giving confidence that this model is ecologically informative (Fig. S1). Cross-validated AUC value (0.634) indicated that the model was acceptable for a highly mobile generalist species with a broad environmental niche (Reside et al., 2011). Environmental factors that contributed most to the model were chl-a (47%) and ssha (30%), while current magnitude (14%), SST (4%) and current direction (5%) were less important (Fig. S2).

Seasonal variability

The model supported a seasonal latitudinal shift in the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat in the southwest Pacific Ocean (Fig. 2). In the late austral winter (August–September), suitable habitat occurs within a 10° latitudinal band extending across the south-west Pacific Ocean adjacent to north-east Australia centred on ~17°S (Fig. 2a). From September to April, suitable habitat shifts south and is more proximal to Australia’s east coast, in conjunction with the strengthening EAC (Fig. 2b). Suitable habitat extends to the central (~25°S) and south-east (~33°S) coast of Australia throughout the austral summer, reaching its most southern extent at the conclusion of summer (Fig. 2c). At its most southerly extent (~32–34°S), suitable habitat is bounded by unsuitable waters of the Tasman Front, forcing suitable habitat eastwards towards New Caledonia before shifting northwards again over the austral winter (June–August) (Fig. 2d). The distribution of geometric means within each year supported the occurrence of a seasonal latitudinal shift in the distribution of suitable habitat (Fig. S3).

Interannual variability

Considerable variability was observed in the latitudinal range of suitable habitat across the study area (142–180°E) among years (Fig. S4). Latitudinal variability in suitable habitat among years was lowest during May–August, when marlin occurred at lower latitudes. In contrast, the latitudinal position of suitable habitat was far more variable among years in January–April, when suitable habitat shifted to higher latitudes. Variability in the southerly extent of suitable habitat among years was correlated with ENSO, with suitable habitat extending up to 300 km further southwards during La Nina state in comparison with Neutral or El Nino state (Fig. 3).

Poleward shift in suitable habitat

Despite substantial variation in the latitudinal extent of suitable habitat due to natural climate oscillations, our model indicated an overall poleward shift in suitable habitat for all seasons over the period 1998–2013. After accounting for season and ENSO as factors, the model indicated that the geometric mean of suitable black marlin habitat has shifted poleward at a velocity of 88.2 km decade⁻¹ (Fig. 4). When each season was considered individually, significant trends were observed in both May–August ($R^2 = 0.59$, $P < 0.001$) and September–December ($R^2 = 0.52$, $P < 0.01$). In both seasons, the velocity of poleward distribution shifts was 77 km decade⁻¹. The velocity of poleward shifts was greater during January–April (111 km decade⁻¹). However, this trend was only marginally significant ($P = 0.06$) due to greater interannual variability during the summer months ($R^2 = 0.16$).

Discussion

Our model indicated a rapid poleward shift in the latitudinal distribution of suitable black marlin habitat. Suitable habitat is shifting south at a mean rate of 88.2 km decade⁻¹, independent of considerable variation observed due to season and ENSO. The velocity of the poleward distribution shift reported here for the period 1998–2013, based on empirical observations and multiple environmental factors, is considerably faster than predictions made for similar mobile pelagic predators using modelled climate scenarios ranging from 2030 to 2100 (Hobday, 2010; Robinson et al., 2014). Our results indicate that climate change may be rapidly changing the geographic location of suitable habitat for black marlin. Given that many mobile pelagic predators respond to a similar suite of environmental factors and oceanographic features, climate change may already be exerting a strong influence on pelagic ecosystems and fisheries (Pereira et al., 2010; Barnosky et al., 2012; Burrows et al., 2014).

Detecting distribution shifts on the decadal timescales for which data are commonly available has proven difficult for most mobile pelagic predators (Hobday & Evans, 2013). Furthermore, many predictions of distribution shifts consider too few
explanatory factors (e.g., temperature) (Hobday, 2010; Montero-Serra et al., 2015), despite evidence that species distributions are determined by numerous, interacting factors (Brill & Lutcavage, 2001; Ackerly et al., 2010; Grenouillet & Comte, 2014). Our results suggest that multiple factors interact to determine suitable habitat for black marlin, and support the hypothesis that models based on a single factor may underestimate the fingerprint of climate change (Vanderveal et al., 2012). Given that species distributions are likely influenced by multiple interacting factors (Ackerly et al., 2010; Grenouillet & Comte, 2014), fine-scale examination of species distributions is important in accurately assessing species vulnerability and likely responses to shifting habitat suitability driven by climate change.

Fig. 2 Seasonal variability in the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat within the south-west Pacific Ocean and its association with major oceanographic features. Unsuitable habitat <0.282. (a) August–October: a broad 10° latitudinal band of suitable habitat extends across the south-west Pacific Ocean adjacent to north-east Australia as the South Equatorial Current strengthens and collides with the continental shelf. (b) November–February: the East Australian Current extends south supplying suitable habitat to the mid and south-east coast of Australia. (c) March–April: suitable habitat has reached its most southern extent and is now extending east in conjunction with the Tasman Front. (d) May–July: cold water currents shift towards the equator, forcing suitable habitat north.
The velocity of poleward shift in suitable habitat reported here (88.2 km decade\(^{-1}\)) is rapid considering our study used geometric means. Studies of range expansion tend to focus on the margins of species distributions (Lenoir & Svenning, 2015), which are likely to be more dynamic than geometric means. Although rapid leading-edge range expansions have been reported for marine fishes (277 km decade\(^{-1}\)), shifts in the location of geometric means are generally slower (30 km decade\(^{-1}\)) (Poloczanska et al., 2013). Given the highly mobile nature of black marlin, geometric means compared among equivalent seasons provide greater insight into climate-induced distribution shifts than overall range-edge dynamics (Pinsky et al., 2013; Bates et al., 2015). After accounting for annual migration by considering seasons separately, our model indicates that the ‘leading edge’ (in this case, the geometric mean of suitable habitat during January–April, when black marlin occur at their more southerly limit) is shifting poleward at a faster rate (111 km decade\(^{-1}\)) than the ‘trailing edge’ (77 km decade\(^{-1}\)). The greater velocity of the leading edge for black marlin is likely driven by changes in the strength and southward penetration of the EAC (Ridgway, 2007; Ridgway & Hill, 2012) and provides further evidence of the influence of strengthening boundary currents on marine ecosystems (Wu et al., 2012; Hobday & Pecl, 2013). Higher latitudes are warming more rapidly overall than lower latitudes, although they also experience greater annual variability. Our findings of more rapid poleward extension at the leading edge support empirical observations that leading edges are shifting more rapidly than trailing edges (Poloczanska et al., 2013), despite theoretical evidence that leading and trailing edges are equally responsive to warming for marine ectotherms (Sunday et al., 2012).

Traditionally, mobile species such as black marlin have been considered less vulnerable to climate change due to their ability to track suitable habitat (Pearson & Dawson, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009). However, this hypothesis fails to consider that many mobile pelagic species are site attached to features for critical life history processes such as spawning (Block et al., 2011; Anderson et al., 2013). Climate change may render these key features less suitable (Hobday & Pecl, 2013), decreasing the resilience of some species (Robinson et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2013). For example, climate change will likely decrease the suitability of many spawning locations, driving declines in recruitment and overall abundance (Satoh, 2010; Bromhead et al., 2014). Tropicalization of temperate environments may progressively disconnect foraging and spawning grounds, increasing the distance required of species to travel (Robinson et al., 2009; Anderson et al., 2013). Furthermore, the distribution of productive upwelling zones is likely to shift, decreasing the abundance and availability of prey in some regions (Hazen et al., 2012; Boyce et al., 2014). Our results suggest that shifts in the
timing and suitability of key oceanographic features may limit the adaptability of mobile pelagic predators, making them more vulnerable to climate change than initially thought.

Our results indicate substantial seasonal and interannual variability in the distribution of suitable habitat. Seasonal shifts suggest that black marlin move in conjunction with a warm water pulse in the EAC from September to April. Our modelled results are concordant with tag recaptures of juvenile black marlin (Pepperell, 1990) and other similar species known to undertake seasonal migrations in association with western boundary currents, such as Atlantic bluefin tuna (Thunnus thynnus) within the Gulf Stream (Block et al., 2005) and striped marlin (Kajikia audax) within the Kuroshio Current (Lien et al., 2013). Our model also identified the Tasman Front as a region of suitable habitat which has not been previously reported for black marlin. Transition zones have been identified as important migratory corridors and foraging habitat for numerous mobile marine species (Polovina et al., 2001; Block et al., 2005, 2011), supporting model results regarding the potential importance of the Tasman Front. Our model also indicated interannual variability in the distribution of suitable habitat, at least partially driven by ENSO. Although the southward migration of juveniles has been inferred from tag recaptures (Pepperell, 1990), the effects of ENSO on the southerly penetration of black marlin were previously undocumented. There is not a strong ENSO signature in the behaviour of the EAC (Holbrook et al., 2009). Despite this, the southerly shift in distribution of suitable habitat during La Nina events is likely due to an overall increase in the presence of tropical mode water across the south-west Pacific Ocean.

Pacific Decadal Oscillation (PDO) influences environmental parameters throughout the south-west Pacific Ocean (Linsley et al., 2000; Ridgway, 2007) and is known to influence species distributions and abundance (Polovina, 1996; Lehodey et al., 2006). Recent shifts in regional climate indicators suggest that PDO has shifted to a cool, La Nina-like phase in recent years (Cai & Rensch, 2012). Due to the relatively short time period examined here (16 years), we cannot exclude the possibility that climatic factors operating on decadal scales (e.g. PDO) may help explain the poleward shifts observed here. However, long-term records show that poleward shifts are occurring in the climate (Cai, 2006) and oceanography (Ridgway, 2007) of the south-west Pacific irrespective of PDO phase (Ridgway & Hill, 2012; Hu et al., 2015) which is warming at 2–3 times the global average rate (Wu et al., 2012; Hobday & Pecl, 2013). Subsequently, poleward distribution shifts have been reported for numerous marine species (Poloczanska et al., 2013; Frusher et al., 2014). Furthermore, this poleward trend in climatic and oceanographic features is predicted to continue (Cai et al., 2005; Ridgway & Hill, 2012; Hu et al., 2015), suggesting the shift in suitable habitat reported here is likely to continue.

Mobile pelagic predators play a key functional role in pelagic ecosystems, and their decline has resulted in trophic cascades in some regions (Myers et al., 2007; Baum & Worm, 2009). Poleward distribution shifts in mobile pelagic predators could therefore have severe consequences for food webs in pelagic ecosystems, particularly in the tropics (Block et al., 2011; Bell et al., 2013a). Tropical nations are predicted to experience significant changes in fisheries production during the 21st century, with severe consequences for regional economic development and food security (Allison et al., 2009; Cheung et al., 2010; Bell et al., 2013b). Our results indicate that rapid changes are already occurring in pelagic ecosystems. With emphasis of management shifting to a dynamic framework (Lewison et al., 2015; Maxwell et al., 2015), application of this model in conjunction with more sophisticated tagging technology presents itself as a potential method to manage key, mobile pelagic resources in real-time as access to and quality of high-resolution remote sensing data improves.

Investigating the population status and distribution of mobile pelagic predators is difficult due to the remote nature of their habitat and naturally low population densities. These factors lead to a lack of data at suitable spatial or temporal resolution to identify trends in populations, inhibiting studies of distribution shifts or population trajectories (Hobday & Evans, 2013). While some tagging technologies (satellite archival and passive acoustic tagging) can yield valuable information for fisheries managers and climate modelling (Block et al., 2011; Hazen et al., 2012), they are prohibitively expensive for many applications. Here, we show that citizen science can provide a valuable and cost-effective method of obtaining long-term, spatially explicit occurrence records for a mobile pelagic predator (Booth et al., 2011). This model could be applied to facilitate broadscale implementation of a dynamic ocean management framework for a number of pelagic species where the use of more sophisticated tagging technology is not viable. Combining occurrence records with remotely sensed environmental data, we have shown a rapid, poleward shift in suitable habitat for black marlin. Given the success of our technique over such a short timescale (16 years), we advocate wider application of this method for studying mobile marine species. Increased utilization of such citizen science data may provide a valuable source of historical species
occurrence records across a wide range of marine and terrestrial taxa, facilitating improved understanding of the impacts climate change will have on species distributions.

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Supporting Information

Additional Supporting Information may be found in the online version of this article:

**Figure S1.** Animation of model outputs, showing the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat at monthly time steps \( (n = 192) \) from 1998 to 2013.

**Figure S2.** Variable contributions to final MaxEnt model output and model strength in the absence of each environmental factor determined using a jackknife test.

**Figure S3.** Distribution of geometric mean points from 1998 to 2013 grouped into months showing seasonal latitudinal variability in the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat.

**Figure S4.** Interannual variability in the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat within the south-west Pacific Ocean.

**Table S1.** Environmental factors investigated to model the distribution of suitable black marlin habitat in the south-west Pacific Ocean.