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Behavioural inference from signal processing using animal-borne  
multi-sensor loggers: a novel solution to extend the knowledge of sea  
turtle ecology

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25 camera, behavioural classification, marine ecology

26

27 **Abstract**

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The identification of sea turtle behaviours is a prerequisite to predicting the activities and time-budget of these animals in their natural habitat over long term. However, this is hampered by a lack of reliable methods that enable the detection and monitoring of certain key behaviours such as feeding. This study proposes a combined approach that automatically identifies the different behaviours of free-ranging sea turtles through the use of animal-borne multi-sensor recorders (accelerometer, gyroscope and time-depth recorder), validated by animal-borne video-recorder data. We show here that the combination of supervised learning algorithms and multi-signal analysis tools can provide accurate inferences of the behaviours expressed, including behaviours that are of crucial ecological interest for sea turtles, such as feeding and scratching. Our procedure uses multi-sensor miniaturized loggers that can be deployed on free-ranging animals with minimal disturbance. It provides an easily adaptable and replicable approach for the long-term automatic identification of the different activities and determination of time-budgets in sea turtles. This approach should also be applicable to a broad range of other species and could significantly contribute to the conservation of endangered species by providing detailed knowledge of key animal activities such as feeding, travelling and resting.

## 62 **1 Introduction**

63 It is essential to assess the feeding behaviours of free-ranging animals in order to estimate  
64 their time budgets, and thus understand how these animals maximise their fitness [1,2].  
65 However, investigating the foraging behaviour of sea turtles in their natural environment  
66 remains a significant challenge as it is impossible to obtain long-term behavioural data  
67 through visual observations alone. Although some studies have provided relevant information  
68 on sea turtle diet through post-mortem stomach content analysis or the deployment of animal-  
69 borne video-recorders [3–5], the proportion of time that sea turtles allocate to feeding  
70 activities on the long term remains unknown. Time-depth recorders (TDR) have been used to  
71 record the dive profiles and durations of free-ranging sea turtles and have provided insights  
72 into their underwater activities [6–8]. However, a number of authors have underlined the  
73 limits of focussing on dive profile, as foraging activity cannot be distinguished from transit or  
74 resting phases [9,10]. The joint use of TDR and video recorders revealed that the typical dive  
75 types described in [11,12] could not be associated with specific activities such as travelling,  
76 resting or foraging [13,14].

77 Devices combining miniaturised tri-axial accelerometers and TDR were described as a  
78 powerful tool to improve the identification of fine-scale behaviours in animals that cannot be  
79 easily monitored by visual observation [15–17]. Such devices have been deployed to study the  
80 behaviour and dive patterns of loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*, 18), green turtles (*Chelonia*  
81 *mydas*,19) and leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*, 20) during the inter-nesting period.  
82 However, the interpretation of the acceleration signals used in these studies to identify sea  
83 turtle behaviours in water was not validated by simultaneous visual observation, possibly  
84 resulting in misidentification and significant biases in the interpretation of the data.

85 A new approach was therefore necessary to reliably identify the underwater behaviours  
86 of free-ranging sea turtles without using direct visual observation (which is usually  
87 impossible) or video recordings, which are limited to short-term studies (a few hours) because  
88 of their high power consumption. Accelerometers permit the identification of feeding activity  
89 and time budget in marine animals such as seals and penguins by recording head movements  
90 that are likely to correspond to prey captures [21–23]. For the same purpose, accelerometers  
91 have been placed on the beak [24–27] or the top of the head [28] of sea turtles to record beak-  
92 openings and capture attempts. However, the position of the device was a significant  
93 disturbance for the individuals and could not be considered for long-term use (up to several

94 weeks). It was therefore crucial to develop a protocol for the long-term recording and  
95 identification of sea turtle feeding activities that minimizes disturbance to the animals whilst  
96 making optimal use of the subtle variations in data acquired by loggers that are mounted on  
97 the carapace rather than the head.

98 Further work is needed to validate the identification of sea turtle underwater behaviours  
99 by data acquired by animal-borne sensors. In particular, before attempting to provide new  
100 insights about the at-sea behaviours of sea turtles in natural conditions, one needs is to  
101 automatically and correctly identify these behaviours, including those that are hard to detect  
102 but play a key role such as feeding, from data acquired in a way that minimizes the  
103 disturbance of equipped animal. The aim of our study is therefore to develop a new approach  
104 fulfilling this need. In this framework, we will use the results we obtained about turtles'  
105 behaviours only to illustrate the output of our approach without giving them any biological  
106 significance. Although sea turtle behaviours have mainly been inferred from combined  
107 acceleration and depth data, the additional use of a gyroscope (which records angular  
108 velocity) can provide further relevant information in remote behavioural identification [29–  
109 31]. Thus, we deployed loggers combining an accelerometer, a gyroscope and a TDR on the  
110 carapace of free-ranging immature green turtles. This equipment was linked to a video-  
111 recorder that was mounted in the logger device to provide visual evidence that could validate  
112 logger interpretations of behaviours, given that our approach ultimately aims to infer  
113 behaviours solely through logger use. Surface behaviours were identified separately from  
114 depth data. The study tested a set of methods to infer diving behaviours from the signals  
115 provided by the accelerometer, gyroscope and TDR, including automatic segmentation and  
116 supervised learning algorithms. The validity of our approach was tested through the use of  
117 confusion matrices and by comparing the inferred activity budgets with those obtained from  
118 video recordings.

119

## 120 **2 Material and Methods**

### 121 **2.1 Ethics statements**

122 This study meets the legal requirements of the countries in which the work was carried out  
123 and follows all institutional guidelines. The protocol was approved by the “Conseil National  
124 de la Protection de la Nature” (<http://www.conservation-nature.fr/acteurs2.php?id=11>), and  
125 the French Ministry for Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy (permit number:

126 2013154-0037), which acts as an ethics committee in Martinique. The fieldwork was carried  
127 out in strict accordance with the recommendations of the Prefecture of Martinique in order to  
128 minimize the disturbance of animals (Authorisation n°201710-0005).  
129

## 130 **2.2 Data collection from free-ranging green turtles**

131 The field work was carried out from February 2018 to May 2019 in Grande Anse d'Arlet  
132 (14°50'N, 61°09'W), Martinique, France. We deployed CATS (Customized Animal Tracking  
133 Solutions, Germany) devices for periods ranging from several hours to several days on free-  
134 ranging immature green turtles. A CATS device is comprised of a video-recorder (1920 x  
135 1080 pixels at 30 FPS) combined with a tri-axial accelerometer, a tri-axial gyroscope and a  
136 TDR (Supplementary Material, Fig. 1). The maximum battery capacity was considered to  
137 provide a recording capacity of 18 h of video footage and 48 h for other data. These devices  
138 were programmed to record acceleration and angular velocity (gyroscope) at a frequency of  
139 20 or 50 Hz according to the recording capacity of the logger (the 50 Hz data were  
140 subsampled at 20 Hz using a linear interpolation to homogenise the sample). Depth was  
141 recorded at 1 Hz using a pressure sensor with a range from 0 to 2000 m and 0.2m accuracy.

142 The relatively shallow depths of the area allowed free divers to capture the turtles  
143 manually, as described in Nivière et al. (2018) [32]. Once an individual had been caught, it  
144 was placed on a boat and identified by scanning its PIT (Passive Integrated Transponder) or  
145 tagged with a new PIT if it was unknown. It was then weighed and its carapace length was  
146 measured (Supplementary Material, Table S1). The device was attached to the carapace using  
147 four suction cups. Air was manually expelled from the cups, which were held in place by the  
148 use of a galvanic timed release system. The eventual dissolving of these releases by sea water  
149 and the positive buoyancy of the device (23.3 x 13.5 x 4 cm for 0.785 kg) led to the remote  
150 release of the device several hours later. Devices were recovered by geolocation of their  
151 Argos SPOT-363A tag (MK10, Wildlife Computers Redmond, WA, USA) with a goniometer  
152 (RXG-134, CLS, France). Instruments were deployed on 37 individuals, but complete datasets  
153 including video, acceleration, gyroscope and depth values were only recovered for 13  
154 individuals (Supplementary Material, Table S1).

155

## 156 **2.3 Processing of video data and behavioural labelling**

157 The video footage was watched to identify the various behaviours and determine their starting  
158 and ending times to the closest 0.01 s. Acceleration, angular velocity and depth data  
159 corresponding to each behavioural phase were visualized using R software (version 3.5.3) and  
160 the package *rblt* (Fig 1 & 2; 33). The 46 resulting behaviours were clustered into categories  
161 according their similarities (the definition of the various behaviours is available in  
162 Supplementary Material, Table S2). We retained seven main expressed categories for the  
163 multi-sensor signals, namely “Breathing”, “Feeding”, “Gliding”, “Swimming”, “Resting”,  
164 “Scratching” and “Staying at the surface”. All other behaviours were very infrequent and  
165 were grouped in an eighth category labelled “Other”.

166

## 167 **2.4 Analysis of the angular velocity and acceleration data**

168 The device was installed on the carapace in a tilted position along a longitudinal axis to obtain  
169 video images of the head. This results in biased values of accelerations and angular speeds for  
170 the surge (i.e. back-to-front) and heave (bottom-to-top) body axes, which therefore had to be  
171 corrected (see R-script in Supplementary Material). The static acceleration vector (i.e. the  
172 component due to gravity)  $\bar{\mathbf{a}} = (\bar{a}_x, \bar{a}_y, \bar{a}_z)$  was obtained by separately averaging the  
173 acceleration values ( $a_x$ ,  $a_y$  and  $a_z$ ) on the surge, sway (right-to-left) and heave axes,  
174 respectively, over a centred running temporal window set to  $\Delta t = 2$  s. which was the smallest  
175 window resulting in a norm,  $\|\bar{\mathbf{a}}\|$  that remains close to 1 g (9.98 m/s<sup>2</sup>) for almost all measures.  
176 The Dynamic Body Acceleration was then computed as  $\text{DBA} = \sqrt{\mathbf{d}^2}$ , where  $\mathbf{d} = \mathbf{a} - \bar{\mathbf{a}}$  is the  
177 dynamic acceleration vector [34]. Similarly the Rotational Activity was computed as  $\text{RA} =$   
178  $\sqrt{\mathbf{g}^2}$ , where  $\mathbf{g} = (g_x, g_y, g_z)$  is the angular velocity ( $g_x$ ,  $g_y$ , and  $g_z$  correspond respectively to the  
179 values of roll, pitch and yaw per unit time provided by the gyroscope).

180

## 181 **2.5 Segmentation of the multi-sensor dataset**

182 The automatic identification of the labelled behaviours from the multi-sensor signals required  
183 the segmentation of the dataset into homogenous behavioural bouts with respect to a given  
184 variable. We started by relying on the depth data to distinguish the dives, defined as depths  
185 exceeding 0.3 m for at least 5 s, from the surface periods. We attributed the surface periods to  
186 either “Breathing” or “Staying at the surface”, according to whether the turtle remained at the  
187 surface for less or more than 6 s, respectively. We then distinguished between the various

188 possible diving behaviours by using a changepoint algorithm, the Pruned Exact Linear Time  
189 (PELT) algorithm (R package *changepoint*; 35), in which the "pen.value" parameter, which  
190 corresponds to the additional penalty in the cost function for each additional partition of the  
191 data, can be manually adjusted. We tested different values and retained those which resulted  
192 in the best balance between obtaining homogenous behavioural bouts and limiting over-  
193 segmentation. We first detected depth changes over 3 s of each dive (function *cpt.mean*,  
194 penalty = "Manual", pen.value = 5) to obtain segments which were labelled as "ascending",  
195 "descending" or "flat" depending on whether the vertical speed was  $> 0.1 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$ ,  $< -0.1 \text{ m}\cdot\text{s}^{-1}$  or  
196 between these two values, respectively. These ascending and descending segments were  
197 further segmented based on the DBA mean and variance (function *cpt.meanvar*, penalty =  
198 "Manual", pen.value = 50) in order to distinguish between the swimming and gliding phases  
199 of these segments. The green turtle is a grazing herbivore which mainly feed on seagrass and  
200 algae [36]. The head movements occurring during feeding activities are easily detected by  
201 gyroscopes and/or accelerometers set directly on the head, but are rarely detected when these  
202 sensors are placed on the carapace. We did however note that the carapace tended to display  
203 pitch oscillations when the turtle pulled on the seagrass, an activity that we refer to hereafter  
204 as "Grabbing" (Fig 2). Accordingly, we further segmented the "flat" segments based on the  
205 variance of  $g_y$  (angular speed in the animal's sagittal plane; function *cpt.var*, penalty =  
206 "Manual", pen.value = 20) to pinpoint this behaviour. Each segment was then labelled as  
207 either the behavioural category that was expressed for at least 3/5 of its duration, or as  
208 "Transition" if several behaviours were involved with none of them occurring for 3/5 of the  
209 behavioural bout. Thus, the overall procedure classified multi-sensor signals into nine  
210 categories comprised of surface behaviours ("Breathing" and "Staying at the surface") which  
211 were identified using depth data alone, diving behaviours ("Feeding", "Gliding", "Resting",  
212 "Scratching" and "Swimming") and also "Other" and "Transition", for which supervised  
213 learning algorithms were required.

214

## 215 **2.6 Identification of the diving behaviours by supervised learning algorithms**

216 We trained five supervised machine learning algorithms – (1) Classification And Regression  
217 Trees (CART), (2) Random Forest (RF), (3) Extreme Gradient Boosting (EGB), (4) Support  
218 Vector Machine (SVM), and (5) Linear Discriminant Analysis (LDA) – to associate the eight  
219 diving behaviour categories with the corresponding patterns of different input variables. They  
220 are the most commonly used classifiers in behaviour recognition and are considered to be



221 relevant in ecology studies [17,37,38]. These algorithms were applied to our data using the R  
222 packages *rpart* [39] for CART, *randomForest* [40] for RF ( $n=300$ ,  $mtry=14$ ), *xgboost* [41] for  
223 EGB ( $num\_class=8$ ,  $eta=0.3$ ,  $max\_depth=3$ ), *e1071* [42] for SVM and *MASS* [43] for LDA.

224 For each segment, the algorithms were fed with four descriptive statistics (mean,  
225 minimum, maximum, and variance) computed for the three linear acceleration values ( $a_x$ ,  $a_y$   
226 and  $a_z$ ), for the three angular speeds values ( $g_x$ ,  $g_y$  and  $g_z$ ), and for DBA and RA. We also  
227 included the difference between the last and first depth values, and the duration of each  
228 segment. The fact that "Feeding" was characterised by high-frequency oscillations, in  
229 particular in terms of pitch speed (Fig 2), but also (although less obviously) in terms of roll  
230 speed and surge/sway accelerations, enabled us to distinguish this behaviour from the others.  
231 To do so, we filtered the raw values of  $g_x$ ,  $g_y$ ,  $a_x$  and  $a_y$  through a running window of 1 s and  
232 subtracted the obtained smoothed values from the respective raw values, then calculated the  
233 local mean of the obtained high frequency signals. We then computed the squared differences  
234 between the high frequency values and their respective local means in order to characterize  
235 these oscillations. The mean and the maximum value of these squared differences for each  
236 segment were then added to the list of variables used to feed the algorithms, i.e. 42 variables  
237 for each segment. Such a number of variables may be characterised numerous correlations.  
238 However, machine learning algorithms are less sensitive than classical regression methods to  
239 correlation in the explanatory variables. Nevertheless, for a simpler interpretation purpose, we  
240 looked for some possible reduced set of variables that may reach the same accuracy as the full  
241 data set, but we did not find any convincing one that had a close performance to the full data  
242 set. As the focus was more on predictability than interpretability (as is usual the case in  
243 machine learning), we kept all the 42 variables.

244

## 245 **2.7 Validation of the automatic behavioural inferences**

246 To estimate the ability of our procedure to correctly infer the behaviours of sea turtles based  
247 on acceleration, angular velocity and depth data, we repeatedly performed 2/3:1/3 splits of the  
248 sample of 13 individuals, with nine individuals retained for the learning phase and the  
249 remaining four individuals used to validate the outcome. From the 715 possible combinations,  
250 we retained the 358 combinations in which "Feeding" and "Scratching" were not under-  
251 represented in the training dataset (i.e. when more than 60% of total feeding and scratching  
252 segments were present, i.e. 1145 and 868, respectively). Nevertheless, the number of  
253 "Feeding" and "Scratching" segments was much lower than those attributed to "Resting" and

254 “Swimming” (17325 and 9795 segments, respectively). As an unbalanced training dataset can  
255 hinder the performance of supervised learning algorithms [44], we set an upper limit at 1000  
256 segments per behaviour for the training dataset. These segments were randomly selected for  
257 the over-expressed categories at each training trial.

258 For each trial, we evaluated the efficiency of the different methods by computing the  
259 number of well-identified behaviours (true positive, TP, and true negative, TN) and of  
260 behaviours considered to be misclassified (false negative, FN, and false positive, FP) into a  
261 confusion matrix. We calculated three indicators for each behaviour: (1) "Sensitivity" =  
262  $TP/(TP+FN)$ , also called *true positive rate*, *hit rate* or *recall*, measures the ability of a method  
263 to detect the target behaviour among other behaviours; (2) "Precision" =  $TP/(TP+FP)$ , also  
264 called *positive predictive value*, measures the ability of a method to correctly identify the  
265 target behaviour; and (3) "Specificity" =  $TN/(TN+FP)$ , also called *selectivity* or *true negative*  
266 *rate*, measures the ability of a method to avoid wrongly considering other behaviours as the  
267 target behaviour. We also computed "Accuracy" =  $(TP+TN)/(TP+TN+FP+FN)$ , which  
268 measures the ability of a method to correctly identify all behaviours as a whole.

269 Furthermore, to possibly improve the performance and/or minimise the variance of  
270 behavioural inferences, we also relied on the "Ensemble Methods" [45,46], which consisted of  
271 combining the results obtained with the five supervised machine learning algorithms. We  
272 tested two such methods. The first was the "Voting Ensemble" (VE), which retained the most  
273 frequently predicted behaviour. The second involved a "Weighted Sum" (WS), where weights  
274 were given to the different predicted behaviours, based on "Precision" (weighting based on  
275 Sensitivity and Specificity was also tested but gave poor results). In order to highlight the best  
276 method to automatically identify the diving behaviours and particularly the feeding  
277 behaviours, we used Anova to compare the mean global accuracy obtained for the 375  
278 combinations of the seven classifiers (CART, SVL, LDA, RF, EGB, VE and WE). As the  
279 result of the Anova showed significant effects, we ran pairwise comparisons of mean  
280 performance using the Tukey HSD test.

281 Finally, the individual activity budgets were inferred by computing the proportion of  
282 time involved in the various surface behaviours (“Breathing” and “Staying at the surface”)  
283 inferred from depth data, and the proportion of time dedicated to diving behaviours  
284 (“Feeding”, “Gliding”, “Other”, “Resting”, “Scratching”, and “Swimming”), inferred using  
285 the best classifier (Fig. 3). The inferred activity budgets were compared to those observed in  
286 video recordings.

287

### 288 3 Results

289 A total of 66.2 hours of video were recorded, with a maximum of 14.6 hours for one  
290 individual (Table 1). The seven specific behavioural categories retained for the analysis  
291 (“Breathing”, “Feeding”, “Gliding”, “Resting”, “Scratching”, “Staying at the surface” and  
292 “Swimming”) represented 99% of the total duration. Only the two shortest deployments were  
293 not associated with a feeding event while the maximum duration of feeding represented only  
294 8% of the recording time of the individual. The catching of jellyfish was observed only  
295 occasionally in three individuals. This behaviour represented only 0.1% of the total feeding  
296 duration of the thirteen individuals, whilst the rest of the feeding time for those individuals  
297 was used for grazing on seagrass. For the others, feeding consisted only of grazing on  
298 seagrass. “Scratching” was particularly expressed by one turtle, and represented 13% of its  
299 observed time.

300 The seven classifiers identified the five specific behavioural categories on which we  
301 focused (“Feeding”, “Gliding”, “Resting”, “Scratching” and “Swimming”) and two additional  
302 categories, “Transition” and “Other”, with an accuracy ranging from 0.91 to 0.95. The highest  
303 score was obtained with WS and the lowest one with SVM. The Tuckey HSD test indicated  
304 that the RF, VE and EGB outputs were not significantly different (0.935, 0.932 and 0.932,  
305 respectively). All classifiers identified the behavioural category with a low false positive rate  
306 ( $< 0.1$  for the best classifiers; Fig.4). Few segments were wrongly identified as “Feeding”  
307 with the WS method, which thus obtained the lowest false positive rate (with respect to other  
308 classifiers) for this behaviour. The best true positive rates, for the seven classifiers, were  
309 obtained in the “Scratching” category despite its low occurrence in the dataset, meaning that  
310 this behaviour was relatively well identified when it occurred.

311 The activity budget, representing the percentage of the total mean time allocated to each  
312 behavioural category, showed similar proportions between the predictions and the  
313 observations (Fig. 5 & 6). This result highlights the ability of our method and the WS model  
314 to predict the behaviours of immature green turtle in natural conditions. The main differences  
315 between the observed and predicted activity budgets were seen in the “Resting” and  
316 “Swimming” behaviours (Fig. 5 & 6). These differences were small and represented less than  
317 3% of the total observed time (Table 2). “Feeding” and “Scratching” were under-represented  
318 in our models and consequently their difference between predicted–actual time represent  
319 roughly 1% of the total observed time. Their low expression for some individuals led to an  
320 important percentage difference with respect to the observed time of the behaviour even if  
321 they were predicted in small proportion. The results obtained for each individual are available

322 in supplementary material (Supplementary Material, Table S3). With a very low true positive  
323 rate, the predicted time of “Transition” represented on average 0.2% of the total observation  
324 time. Thus the overall procedure was able to reliably infer the seven mainly expressed  
325 behaviours of the immature green turtles.

326

#### 327 **4 Discussion**

328 This is the first study to validate the use of acceleration, gyroscope and TDR signals for  
329 inferring free-ranging green turtle behaviours. In previous studies, carapace-mounted  
330 accelerometers were used to describe swimming behaviours and buoyancy regulation in sea  
331 turtles [19,20,47,48] in specific contexts where signals associated to “Swimming” and  
332 “Gliding” could be visually identified, or were used to estimate sea turtle activity levels in  
333 terms of DBA [18,49]. The possibility to rely on accelerometers and other carapace-mounted  
334 sensors such as TDRs and gyroscopes to infer behaviours of free-ranging sea turtles had not  
335 been explored in detail until now due to the lack of a validation process, which is critically  
336 important for this kind of approach [50]. The validation process described in the present study  
337 has enabled us to provide an overall procedure permitting the reliable inference of the seven  
338 most commonly expressed behaviours of the free-ranging green turtle (namely “Breathing”,  
339 “Feeding”, “Gliding”, “Resting”, “Scratching”, “Staying at the Surface” and “Swimming”),  
340 and thus inferring the fine-scale activity budgets of animals whose populations are currently  
341 under anthropogenic pressures which jeopardize their future [51,52]. This inference is  
342 essential if we wish to compare how these animals allocate their time between different  
343 activities according to natural and anthropogenic pressures such as available resources,  
344 environmental changes or tourism. When combined with GPS data, this protocol could  
345 identify the areas where sea turtles concentrate their activities and thus help to delineate  
346 protected areas in order to limit human disturbances.

347 We tested seven classifiers (LDA, SVM, CART, RF, EGB, VE and WS) to compare  
348 their strengths and weaknesses in automatic behavioural identification based on TDR,  
349 acceleration and gyroscopic data. The classifiers identified the seven behavioural classes with  
350 a global accuracy ranging from 0.91 to 0.95, which is comparable to the accuracy reached in  
351 other similar studies [17,53,54]. The WS classifier performed better than the base and VE  
352 classifiers: clearly, assigning precision-based weights to the base classifier’ predictions  
353 improved the behavioural classification. The decrease we observed in the false positive rate  
354 for rare behaviours through the use an ensemble method for "Feeding" in this study has also

355 been highlighted by Brewster et al. (2018) [37]. Ensemble methods are mainly used because  
356 they reduce the variance of behaviour classification [53,55] and thus increase the global  
357 accuracy. However, they involve a higher computational cost and require a reliable setting up  
358 of base learners.

359 The use of supervised machine-learning has become common to automatically identify  
360 behaviours from data provided by animal-borne loggers [17,50,56]. Indeed, the development  
361 of fast personal computers and of free user-friendly computing libraries made it possible to  
362 easily apply these ‘black box’ algorithms to huge amounts of data. The machine-learning  
363 approach has thus turned out to be a very powerful tool for identifying well-characterized  
364 behaviours (in terms of signal) such as locomotion [56–58] and resting [59–61]. However, it  
365 appears to be rather inefficient when seeking to identify behaviours with confusing signal  
366 characteristics. Examples include feeding and grooming in pumas [62], pecking in plovers  
367 [63] or foraging in fur seals [64]. Although one could expect that feeding machine-learning  
368 algorithms with big data should provide the most accurate predictive rules [16,65,66], Wilson  
369 et al. (2018) [67] showed that a classification method based on a good understanding and  
370 careful examination of the acceleration signal actually gives better results in terms of  
371 computational time and of accuracy than non-optimized machine learning. Accordingly, the  
372 mixed approach developed in this study fed machine-learning algorithms with a number of  
373 derived signals which were specifically elaborated to pinpoint specific hard-to-detect  
374 behaviours when alternative simpler means based on a single or a few parameters appeared to  
375 be effective. This method allowed us to identify key behaviours such as feeding and  
376 scratching, which had previously been either misidentified or not identified at all due to the  
377 lack of discriminative signals in the raw data obtained from raw acceleration and/or  
378 gyroscopic data obtained with loggers fixed to the carapace of the turtle. Although our choice  
379 of derived signals makes our approach specific to sea turtles, this principle can be applied to  
380 numerous species if the different signals are considered with care before the study.

381 When carrying out automatic behavioural identification from multi-sensor data using  
382 supervised learning algorithms, one of the main difficulties is the segmentation of the multi-  
383 sensor data to obtain homogeneous segments that are representative of the various  
384 behavioural categories. To date, most studies divided the multi-sensor data into segments  
385 using fixed-time segments [68–70] or a sliding sample window with a fixed length [38,71].  
386 However, several studies testing the size of the window showed that it influences  
387 classification accuracy and the identification of short behaviours [53,72–74]. Indeed, an  
388 individual can express both short and long behaviours, such as burst swimming in lemon

389 sharks or a prey capture in Adélie penguins compared to normal swimming behaviour [37,75].  
390 Whilst the use of long fixed segments dramatically increases the proportion of  
391 inhomogeneous segments, using short segments may prevent the detection of certain key  
392 signals such as low-frequency oscillations. A hierarchical, adapted segmentation procedure  
393 therefore seems to be a more judicious choice. This consists of splitting behaviours into  
394 groups based on signals that are easily interpretable in a dichotomic way (variables such as  
395 depth were used to attain this in our study). A change-point algorithm can be used to achieve  
396 a more specific segmentation based on other signals, with a possible *ad hoc* adjustment of the  
397 contrast is required to evaluate whether two successive values do or do not belong to the same  
398 segment (such as the manual penalty of the PELT algorithm). In this paper, we demonstrate  
399 this approach for the green turtle (Fig. 3, R-script in Supplementary Material), but there is no  
400 reason it could not be easily adapted for other species. This will certainly necessitate the  
401 identification of the optimal hyper-parameters as well as the informative signals for the  
402 segmentation according to the species, but the approach of combining automated  
403 segmentation and machine learning methods with well thought out descriptive variables  
404 should apply as well.

405 The approach we proposed thus offers promising perspectives for inferring behaviours  
406 of animals that cannot be easily observed in the wild though the automatic analysis of large  
407 amounts of raw data acquired over long periods by miniaturised (low disturbance) loggers  
408 such as high-frequency tri-axial accelerometers and gyroscopes. It provides a number of  
409 adaptable principles that enable the efficient use of machine learning algorithms to  
410 automatically identify fine-scale behaviours in sea turtles, and may be used for a wide range  
411 of species. The automated and reliable identification of the various behaviours permits a rapid  
412 inference of the time budget of the animals under study. Identifying how much time the  
413 studied animals dedicate to activities such as feeding, travelling and resting can be of  
414 relevance when seeking to understand how individuals attempt to maximise their fitness in a  
415 given environment. This approach could therefore be a key tool in understanding the ecology  
416 of endangered species and make a significant contribution to their conservation.

417

## 418 **5 Data accessibility statement**

419 The R-script to visualize the raw acceleration, gyroscope and depth profile associated with the  
420 observed behaviours of the immature green turtles have been uploaded as part of the  
421 supplementary material. The same is true for the R-script to automatically identify sea turtle

422 behaviour from the labelled data. The datasets containing the acceleration, gyroscope and  
423 depth recordings of the 13 immature green turtles as well as their observed behaviours are  
424 available within the Dryad Digital Repository: <https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.hhmgqknd9>.

425 URL for reviewer:

426 <https://datadryad.org/stash/share/j3x2UusNTI1OWqLsJ1mUOq7wMm3t3PAGMzwAMuYM>  
427 FO0

428

## 429 **6 Author contributions**

430 DC, HD and SR contributed conception and design of the study. LJ, DC, JM, FS, JG, DE,  
431 GH, AA, YLM, PL, SR, FL, NL, NA, CF, FV, ES, MB, FF, AB, CM, TM, MD, CG, SB and  
432 AB contributed to data acquisition. LJ, SG and SB performed the data acceleration analysis  
433 and LJ and VPB the statistical analysis. LJ wrote the first draft of the manuscript and SB,  
434 VPB, FS and DC contributed critically to subsequent versions.

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459  
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690 **10 Tables**

691

692 **Table 1: Total duration (seconds) of the observed sequences of behavioural categories for the thirteen free-ranging immature green**  
693 **turtles**

<b>Behaviour</b>	<b>#1</b>	<b>#2</b>	<b>#3</b>	<b>#4</b>	<b>#5</b>	<b>#6</b>	<b>#7</b>	<b>#8</b>	<b>#9</b>	<b>#10</b>	<b>#11</b>	<b>#12</b>	<b>#13</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Relative Importance (%)</b>
Breathing	36	301	37	20	66	87	89	6	57	27	132	75	293	1226	0.51
Feeding	-	1499	162	540	152	1955	70	-	1030	661	6	28	178	6281	2.64
Gliding	-	896	366	524	211	284	1054	102	1257	129	609	372	2271	8075	3.39
Resting	-	10134	7747	4760	5807	11302	19502	711	7190	602	17579	3814	27441	116590	48.95
Scratching	-	512	574	1789	8	903	136	-	64	21	177	94	218	4496	1.89
Staying at the surface	-	898	1396	1546	1394	2541	2955	573	1032	818	1485	582	3246	18465	7.75
Swimming	5279	6522	3801	4082	6421	6005	4800	2026	6354	5493	7739	2760	18895	80178	33.66
Other	-	258	169	283	148	818	136	45	261	209	233	140	188	2887	1.21

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695 **Table 2: Average duration of each behaviour shown by the 13 immature green turtles)**  
 696 **predicted time vs. observed time.** The percentages are expressed with respect to the total  
 697 individual recorded video duration or to the time the behaviour in question was expressed.  
 698 The predicted durations of the diving behaviours were obtained using the WS method, and the  
 699 surfacing behaviours were predicted using depth values.  
 700

Behaviour					
	predicted (s)	observed (s)	difference (s)	%_total	%_behaviour
Breathing	99	94	<b>32*</b>	<b>0.2*</b>	46.9
Feeding	432	497	207	1,1	180.1
Gliding	936	651	326	1.0	39.1
Other	92	235	143	0.8	60.2
Resting	9175	9640	<b>747**</b>	<b>2.7**</b>	6.6
Scratching	437	354	118	0.7	<b>311.8**</b>
Staying at the surface	1435	1477	151	0.8	10.8
Swimming	6206	6256	441	2.4	<b>6.9*</b>
Transition	48	-	48	<b>0.2*</b>	-

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702 \* The lowest difference obtained among the nine behavioural categories

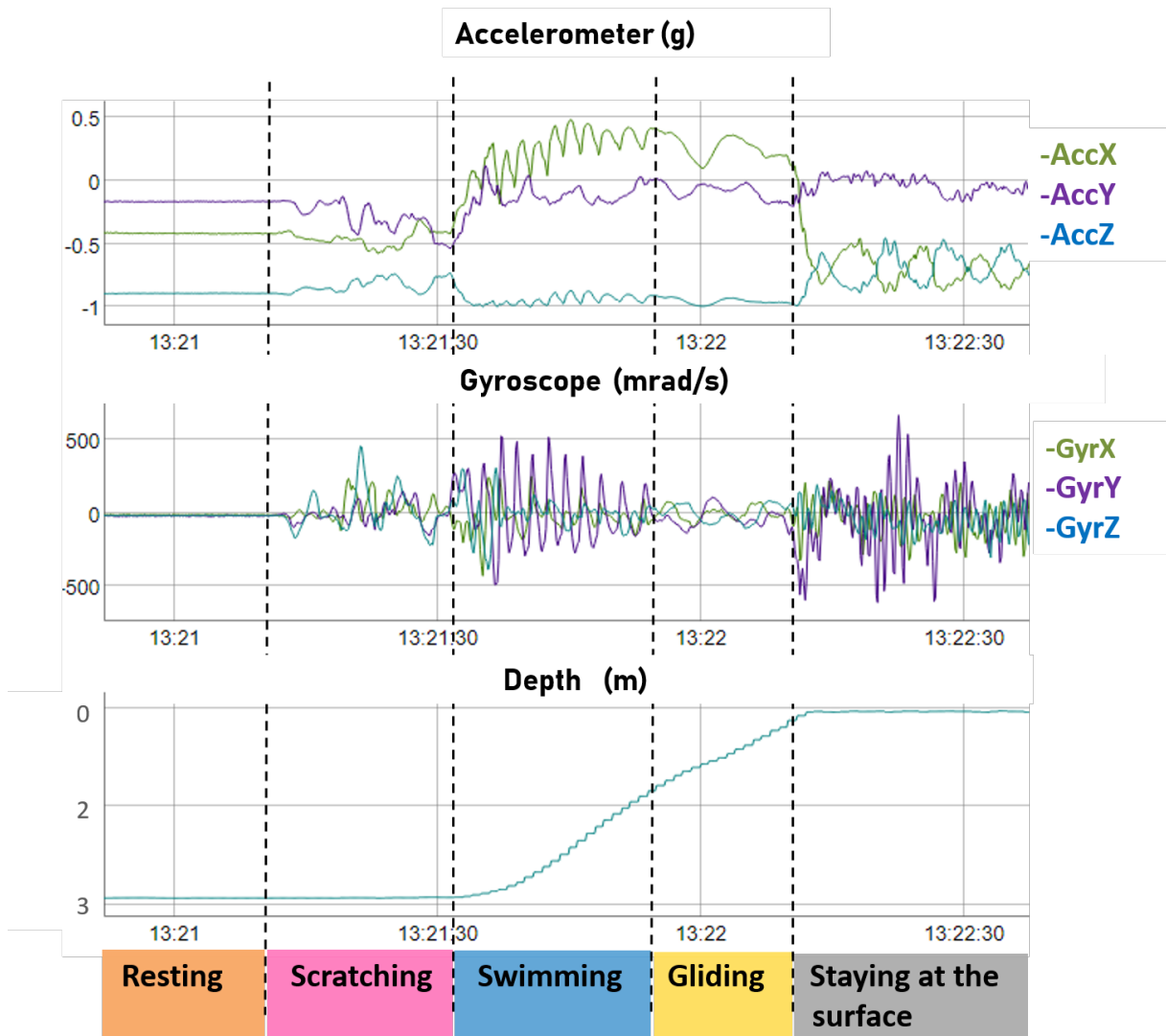
703 \*\* The highest difference obtained among the nine behavioural categories

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706 **11 Figures**

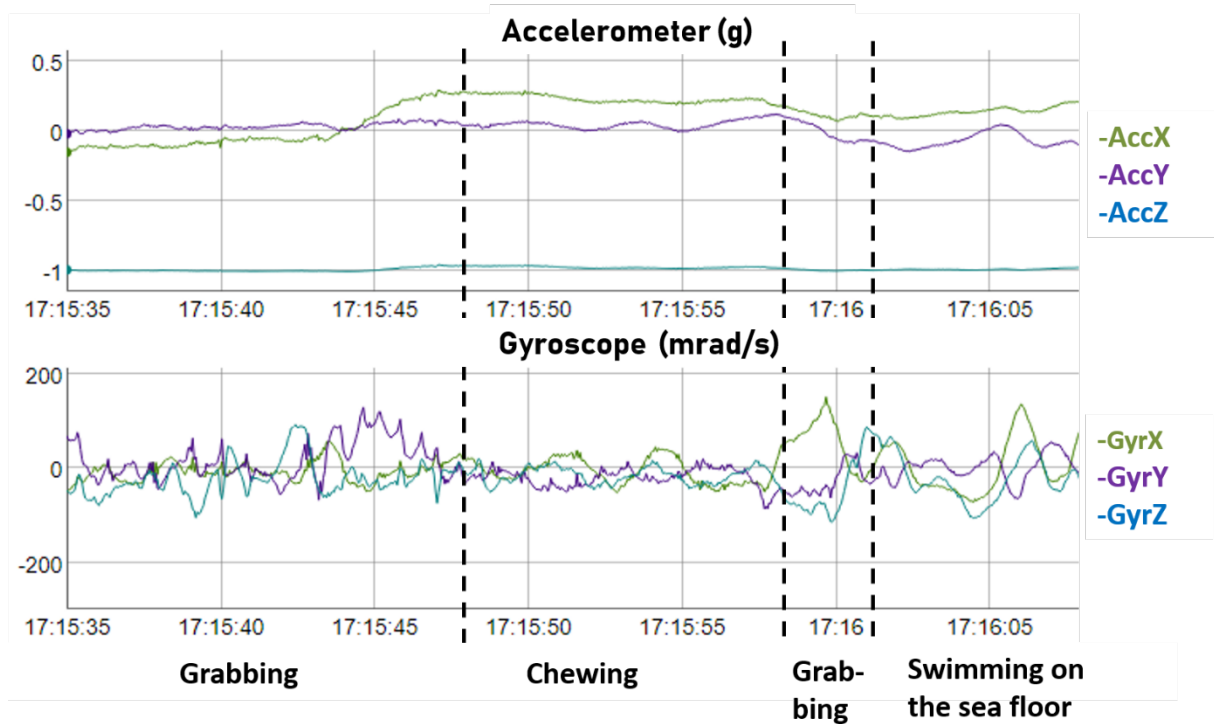


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709 **Figure 1. Raw acceleration, gyroscope and depth profiles for several behaviours**  
710 **expressed by turtle #12.**

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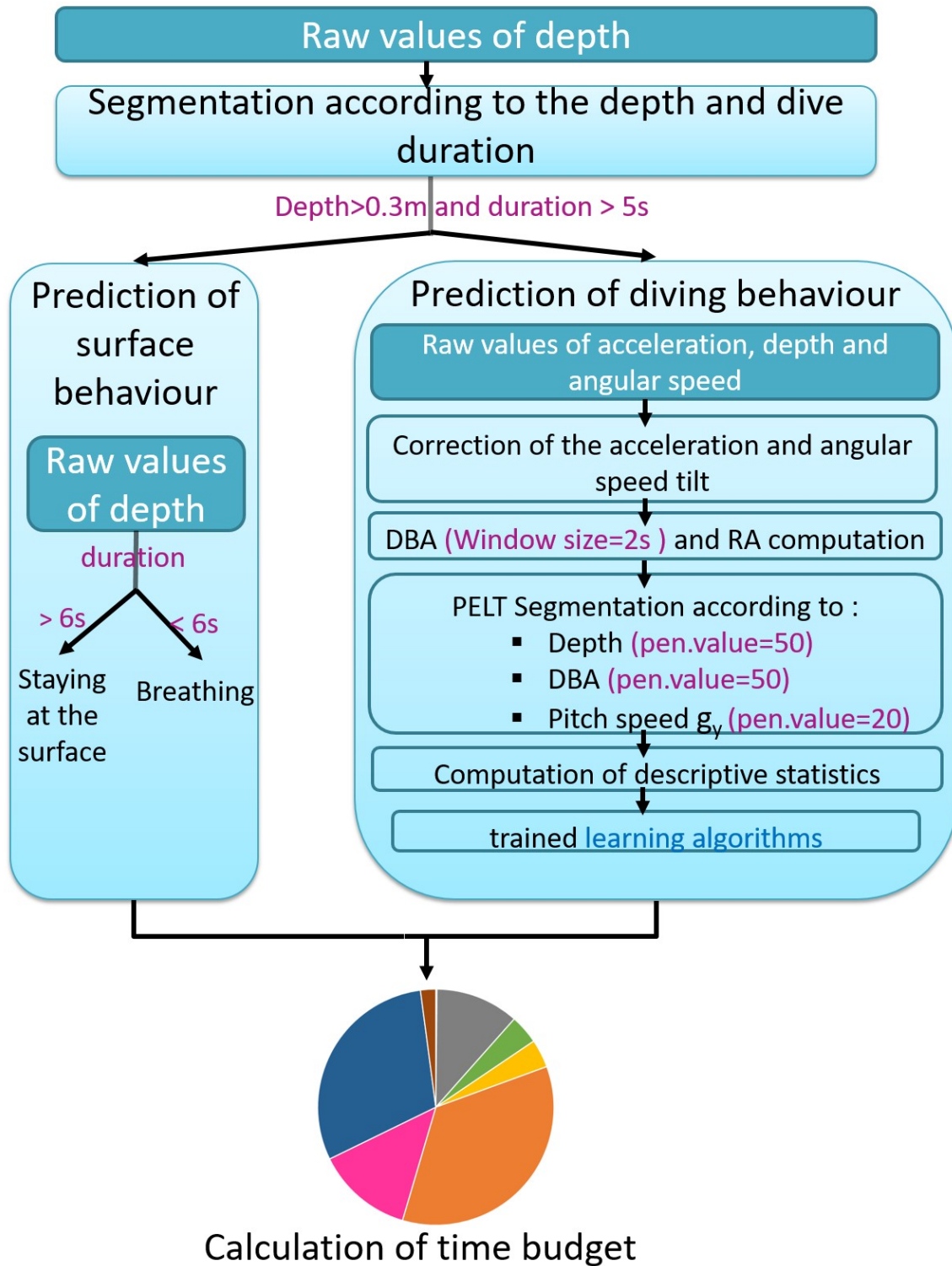


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713 **Figure 2: Raw acceleration and gyroscope signals obtained for the feeding behaviours**

714 **expressed by turtle #6.** The definitions of the behaviours are available in Supplementary

715 Material (Table S2).



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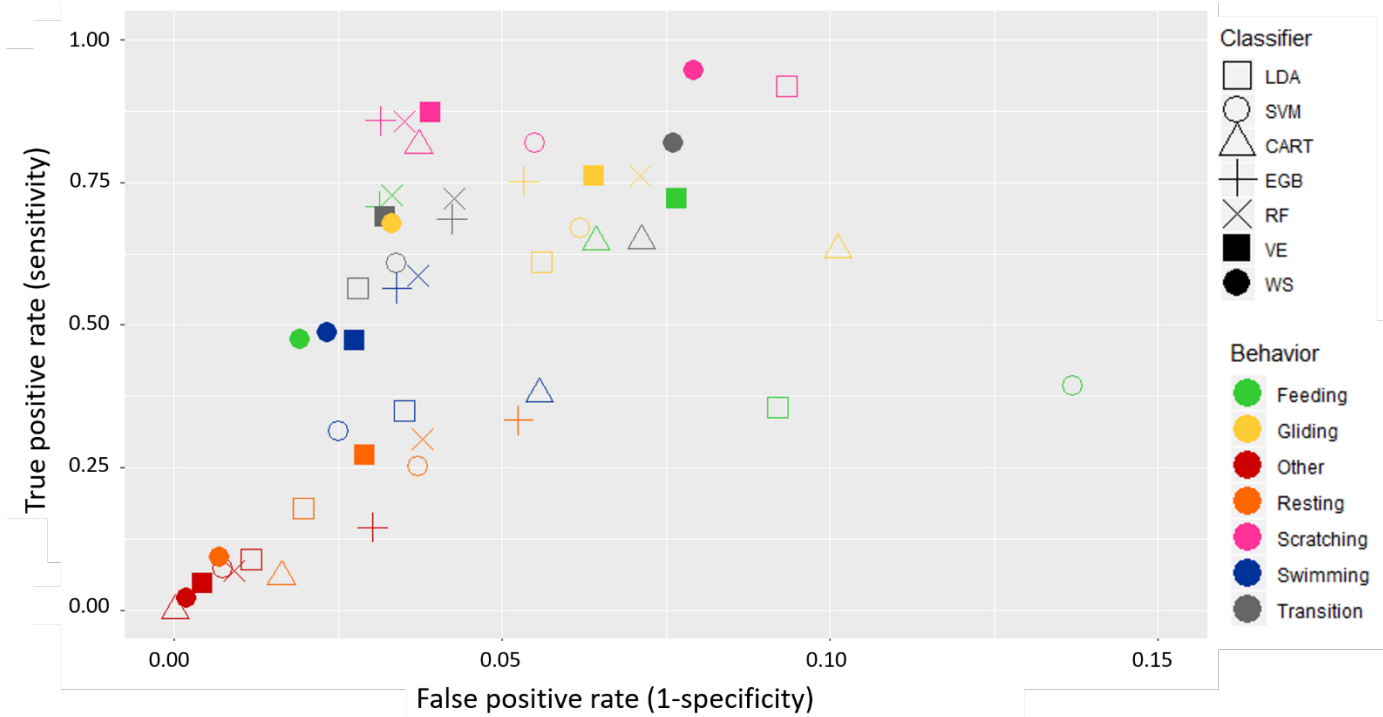
717 **Figure 3. Workflow of automatic behavioural identification using acceleration, angular**

718 **speed and depth data, as adapted to the green turtle.** The hyper-parameters set up

719 specifically for green turtle data are highlighted in purple. The application of this workflow

720 for other marine species would necessitate the identification of the optimal hyper-parameter  
721 values for each species.

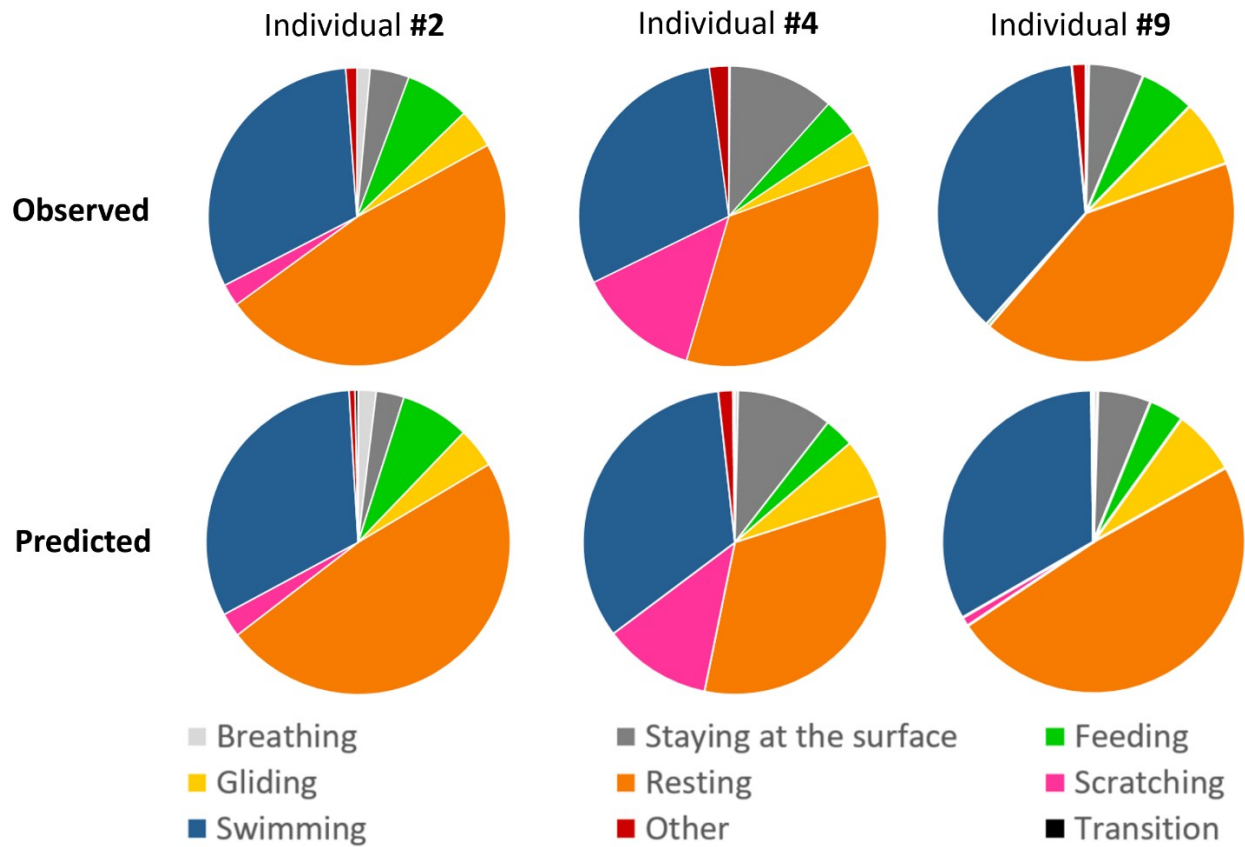
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726 **Figure 4. True positive rate vs. the false positive rate obtained with the seven classifiers**  
727 **for the seven diving categories.** The symbols show the mean values obtained from 371  
728 combinations of splitting the sample of thirteen individuals into two sub-groups (one of nine  
729 individuals for learning and one of four individuals for testing).

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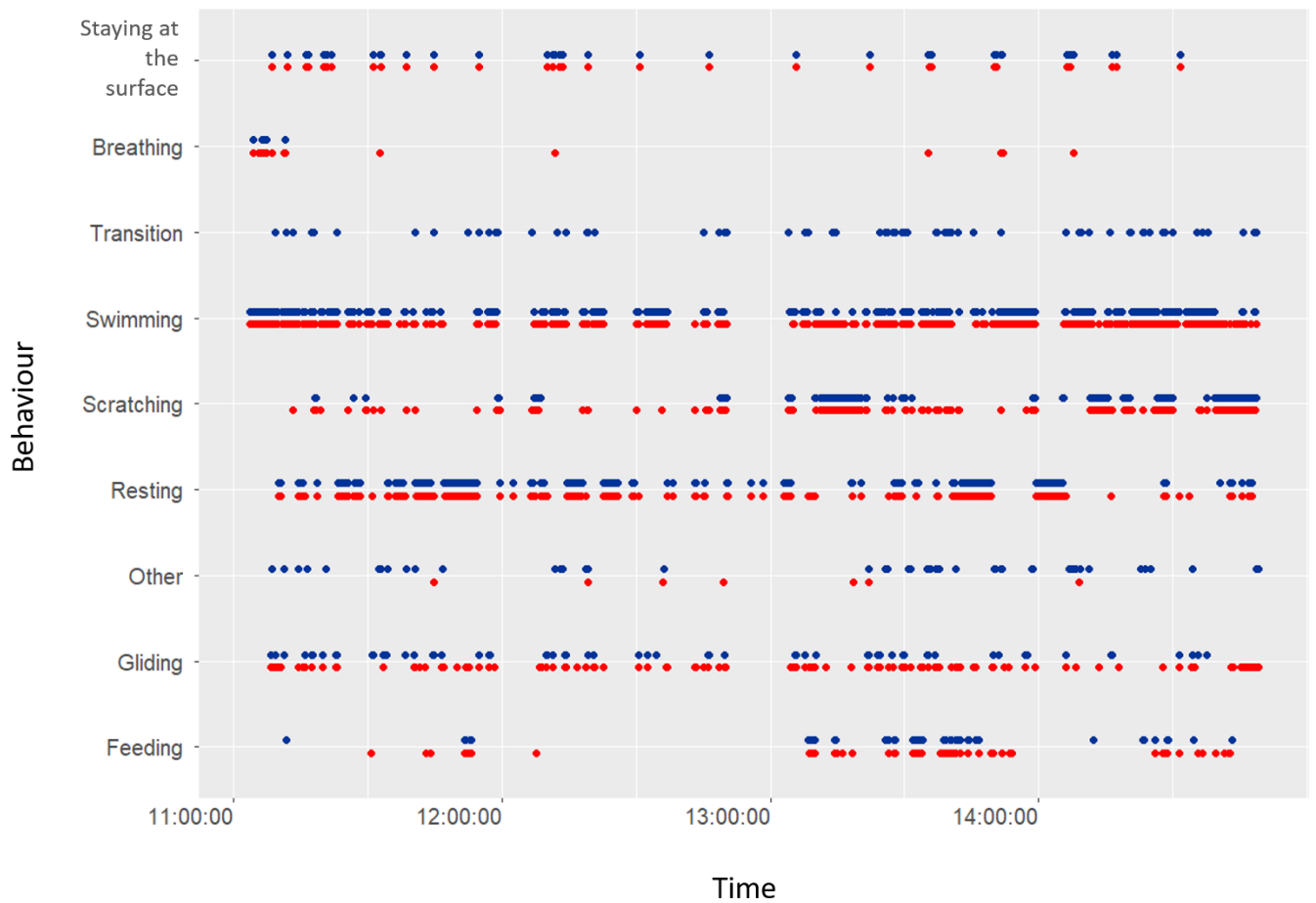
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**Figure 5. Pie chart of the observed (determined from the video) vs. predicted mean durations of the various behaviours displayed by three free-ranging immature green turtles.** The predicted durations of the diving behaviours were obtained using the WS classifier.



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739 **Figure 6. Comparison of the nine main inferred behavioural categories (in red) and of**

740 **the actually observed ones (in blue) for a few hours for immature green turtle #1. The**

741 **predicted occurrences of the diving behaviours were obtained using the WS classifier.**

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