

Searching for genetic evidence of demographic decline in an arctic seabird: beware of overlapping generations

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1 2	12/02/2022
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49 Abstract

50 Genetic data are useful for detecting sudden population declines in species that are 51 difficult to study in the field. Yet this indirect approach has its own drawbacks, 52 including population structure, mutation patterns, and generation overlap. The ivory 53 gull (Pagophila eburnea), a long-lived Arctic seabird, is currently suffering from rapid 54 alteration of its primary habitat (i.e., sea ice), and dramatic climatic events affecting 55 reproduction and recruitment. However, ivory gulls live in remote areas, and it is 56 difficult to assess the population trend of the species across its distribution. Here we 57 present complementary microsatellite- and SNP-based genetic analyses to test a 58 recent bottleneck genetic signal in ivory gulls over a large portion of their distribution. 59 With attention to the potential effects of population structure, mutation patterns, and 60 sample size, we found no significant signatures of population decline worldwide. At a 61 finer scale, we found a significant bottleneck signal at one location in Canada. These 62 results were compared with predictions from simulations showing how generation 63 time and generation overlap can delay and reduce the bottleneck microsatellite 64 heterozygosity excess signal. The consistency of the results obtained with independent 65 methods strongly indicates that the species shows no genetic evidence of an overall 66 decline in population size. However, drawing conclusions related to the species' 67 population trends will require a better understanding of the effect of age structure in 68 long-lived species. In addition, estimates of the effective global population size of ivory 69 gulls were surprisingly low (approximately 1000 ind.), suggesting that the evolutionary 70 potential of the species is not assured.

71

- **Keywords**: ivory gull, *Pagophila eburnea*, conservation, bottleneck, past population
- 73 size variation, coalescence, effective population size, microsatellites, SNPs.

75 **INTRODUCTION**

Unraveling the recent demographic trajectory of threatened species using genetic data may complement observational studies and help detect recent population declines, which is particularly useful when a species is hard to monitor in the field. In addition, the genetic data will also provide estimates of the current levels of genetic diversity and effective size of populations, which may alert us to changes in the adaptive evolvability of species facing rapid environmental change.

82 Environmental changes are particularly acute in the Arctic, a sensitive region that 83 experiences large, negative effects from climate change compared to elsewhere 84 globally, including cryosphere change, air and water temperatures increase, ocean 85 acidification, change in precipitation levels, and sea-level increase (ACIA, 2004; Box et 86 al., 2019; Meredith et al., 2020). Species might cope with these changes by shifting 87 their distribution to track suitable conditions, acclimating through phenotypic 88 plasticity, or evolving adaptations to the new local conditions (Parmesan, 2006; 89 Gienapp et al., 2008; Chen et al., 2011; Hoffmann and Sgrò, 2011). Depending on the 90 speed and extent of environmental changes, range shift can be accompanied by a 91 range contraction (Arenas et al., 2011). Such a contraction usually implies a decline in 92 population size that can be followed by an increased level of genetic drift that may 93 erode genetic diversity within populations (McInerny et al., 2009; Arenas et al., 2011; 94 Collevatti et al., 2011; Alsos et al., 2012; Rubidge et al., 2012; Garnier and Lewis, 2016). 95 Evaluating trends in population abundance is thus critical to understand how arctic 96 species are reacting to threats (McRae et al., 2012). This difficult task may benefit from

97 indirect genetic approaches, which will also provide information directly relevant to98 the evolutionary potential of populations.

99 Microsatellite markers have been widely used in conservation genetic studies 100 testing for recent bottlenecks, using a variety of methods (Nyström et al., 2006; Peery 101 et al., 2012; Xenikoudakis et al., 2015). One of the most widely used so far has been 102 the heterozygosity-excess test, which compares gene diversity (expected 103 heterozygosity, H_E) in a focal population to the heterozygosity expected (H_{Eq}) in a 104 population at mutation-drift equilibrium (Cornuet and Luikart, 1996). More detailed 105 information (e.g., strength and timing of the contraction) can be obtained by 106 calculating the likelihood of the observed genetic data given a coalescent model 107 allowing for variations in population size (Beaumont, 1999; Leblois et al., 2014; 108 Rousset et al., 2018). These methods, however, suffer from the limitations of 109 microsatellites (low number of markers and thus limited information in the genetic 110 data, and relatively complex mutation process). 111 New powerful tools have emerged following the next-generation sequencing 112 (NGS) technical revolution (Shafer et al., 2015; Andrews et al., 2016), including 113 methods designed to infer current and past population size (e.g., Li and Durbin, 2011; 114 Liu and Fu, 2015; Boitard et al., 2016). These methods aim to make the best of the 115 information contained in genome-wide data (e.g., genome-wide single nucleotide 116 polymorphism (SNP) variants or complete genomes) to infer complex demographic 117 histories.

All genetic inference methods make several simplifying assumptions. For
instance, the effects of mutation process (Williamson-Natesan, 2005; Peery *et al.*,

120	2012; Leblois <i>et al.</i> , 2014), extreme variance in reproductive success (Hoban <i>et al.</i> ,
121	2013), and internal population structure and connectivity (Broquet et al., 2010; Chikhi
122	et al., 2010) are important to take into account. The complexity induced by
123	overlapping generations in iteroparous species could also affect genetic signals of
124	bottleneck, but this effect has, to the best of our knowledge, never been specifically
125	examined - but see, e.g., Storz et al., (2002) for a relevant discussion and Parreira et
126	al., (2015; 2020) for an example of model including overlapping generations to
127	investigate the genetic consequences of social structure in mammals.
128	The effective size $N_{\rm E}$ of a population for an iteroparous species with overlapping
129	generations depends on generation time T_G and lifetime variance in reproductive
130	success among individuals $V_{k\bullet}$ (following notation from Waples, 2016). Assuming
131	constant population size and a stable age distribution, Hill (1972) obtained N_E =
132	$4N_1T_G/(V_{k\bullet}+2)$, where N_1 is the number of new individuals entering the population
133	at each time step. The parameters in this equation result from the variation in
134	individual survival and fertility among age classes (Felsenstein, 1971; Hill, 1972; see
135	also Rousset, 1999; Laporte and Charlesworth, 2002, and ; Yannic, Yearsley, et al., 2016
136	for models of structured populations). Although it was shown that the ratio of
137	effective to census population size is mainly determined by age at maturity and adult
138	lifespan (Waples et al., 2013) or adult survival (Waples, 2016), precisely predicting the
139	effective population size of a long-lived iteroparous species is difficult since it requires
140	detailed demographic data on the species' vital rates. Considering the simplest
141	situation where newborns become reproductively mature within one breeding cycle
142	(say one year) and adults have constant fecundity and survive to the next breeding

143	cycle with probability $ u$ (constant across age classes), then $T_G=1/(1- u)$ and $N_E=$
144	$N/(1 + \nu)$ or $N_E = N/(2 - 1/T_G)$ where N is the number of adults in the population
145	(Nunney, 1993; Nunney and Elam, 1994; Yannic, Yearsley, et al., 2016, and in
146	agreement with ; Felsenstein, 1971; Orive, 1993; Waples, 2016). With this simplistic
147	model (detailed in Yannic, Yearsley, et al., 2016), we see that iteroparity and
148	overlapping generations reduce effective population size by a factor that approaches 2
149	as adult survival increases. Regarding the heterozygosity-excess method to detect
150	bottlenecks mentioned above, the disequilibrium signal was found to peak around N_E
151	generations past population size reduction, with N_E the post-bottleneck effective
152	population size (Cornuet and Luikart, 1996). Hence, a demographic bottleneck in a
153	population with overlapping generations should produce a signal of heterozygosity
154	excess earlier (with time expressed in generations) than in a population with discrete
155	non-overlapping generations. Of course, in units of absolute time, the whole dynamics
156	of the bottleneck signature will appear scaled up by a factor equal to generation length
157	T_G .
158	Yet the intensity and temporal dynamics of bottleneck signatures are in fact
159	complex functions of the severity of the demographic decline, mutation models and

160 rates, and even sample size (Cornuet and Luikart, 1996). Moreover, more realistic age

161 structures (accounting for delayed maturity and variation in survival and fecundity

with age) will bring additional complexity that makes it difficult to obtain explicit
predictions about the behavior of bottleneck detection methods applied to long-lived

164 iteroparous species.

165 A case in point, the ivory gull (Pagophila eburnea) is a long-lived high-arctic bird 166 that has delayed sexual maturity and high annual adult survival (estimated to 167 0.86±0.04, Stenhouse et al., 2004; and maximum observed life span of 28 years 168 Mallory et al., 2012). The ivory gull is closely associated with sea ice throughout the 169 year (Spencer et al., 2014; Gilg et al., 2016), and has a patchy breeding range at the 170 high latitudes of Atlantic Arctic, *i.e.*, in Canada, Greenland, Norway (Svalbard), and the 171 Western Russian Arctic. The global population size was estimated at 38,000-52,000 172 mature individuals (BirdLife International, 2018) and has been revised downward to 173 14,400-19,900 mature individuals by the most recent surveys (see Table 1). The Ivory 174 gull drew attention following reports suggesting that the species had declined by 70% 175 since the 1980s in Canada (Gilchrist and Mallory, 2005) and by 40% in Svalbard 176 (Norway) from 2009 to 2019 (Strøm et al., 2020). Now, the global population is 177 considered declining (BirdLife International, 2018), although trends are contrasted 178 across breeding regions. Populations are supposed to be stable in Greenland (Gilg et 179 al., 2009; Boertmann et al., 2020) and Russia (Gavrilo and Martynova, 2017). The three 180 main identified threats that support its "Near Threatened" status according to the 181 IUCN (BirdLife International, 2018) are: (i) global warming inducing sea ice decline, i.e. 182 decline of ivory gulls' main habitat; (ii) exposure to contaminants such as persistent 183 organic pollutants and heavy metals in the environment (Braune et al., 2006; Miljeteig 184 et al., 2009; Lucia et al., 2015); and (iii) extensive development of human activities, 185 e.g., resources exploitation (oil, gas, mineral), or shipping lanes (Gilg et al., 2012; Fort 186 et al., 2013; Yurkowski et al., 2019).

187 The primary objective of this study was to investigate the recent demographic 188 trajectory of ivory gull populations worldwide. To achieve this goal, we analyzed 189 microsatellite and SNP data obtained from a large part of the species' range, predicting 190 that a decline in population size should have produced a genetic bottleneck signature. 191 Before analyzing such signatures, we first explored population structure to check if the 192 genetic homogeneity reported by Yannic et al. (2016) using microsatellites would 193 withstand SNP examination. We then applied three bottleneck inference methods with 194 the microsatellites (heterozygosity-excess, M-ratio, and coalescent-based maximum 195 likelihood inference) and one Approximate Bayesian computation (ABC) method with 196 the SNPs. Our second objective was to explore the effect of age structure on genetic 197 signatures of a bottleneck. Focusing on the microsatellite heterozygosity excess 198 method (Cornuet and Luikart, 1996), we used stochastic simulations to look at the 199 dynamics of genetic signals in a long-lived species experiencing a demographic 200 bottleneck. Finally, our third objective was to evaluate the current effective size (N_e) of 201 the ivory gull, a key evolutionary parameter in conservation biology (Hohenlohe et al., 202 2021). We approached this objective using the linkage disequilibrium method (Waples 203 and Do, 2010), both with microsatellite and SNP data.

204

205 MATERIALS AND METHODS

206 Sample collection and genotyping

207 We analyzed genetic data obtained for individuals sampled from the global breeding

range of the species in summers 2006 to 2012 (Table 1, Fig. 1; Yannic, Yearsley, et al.,

209 2016). Full sampling protocols are described in Yannic et al. (2011; 2016). Three non-

210 destructive DNA sampling methods (buccal swabs, plucked feathers, and blood) and a 211 non-invasive sampling method (shed feathers) were used. Here we considered data 212 from adult birds only (n = 271), but we distinguished individuals that were seen to be 213 incubating eggs or feeding chicks (hereafter called "breeding" individuals) and 214 individuals for which we had no information on their breeding status (*i.e.*, "unknown 215 status", possibly including visiting breeding birds from other colonies, or prospectors, 216 Volkov and de Korte (2000)). Then, we characterized each sampling site by a single 217 type of birds (i.e., "breeding" or "unknown" status), except Station Nord, where both 218 categories of birds were sampled (Table 1). Thus, we considered 15 distinct samples, 219 which we hereafter consistently called "populations" for the sake of simplicity. 220 Our microsatellite dataset was a subset of the multilocus genotypes obtained 221 using 22 microsatellites previously published in Yannic et al. (2016). Because the 222 demographic inference methods that we use assume typical microsatellite mutation 223 models, we selected the 15 loci (4 dinucleotides: loci A111, A115, A129 and A132 and 224 11 tetranucleotides: loci B103, B125, C6, C7, D1, D103, D110, D126, D5, D6, and D9), 225 that presented allele size distribution expected for dinucleotides (i.e., multiple of 2-bp 226 units) or tetranucleotides (i.e., multiple of 4-bp units). The number of alleles observed 227 and heterozygosity for each of the 15-microsatellite loci are provided in Table S1. 228 We used a second set of data consisting of SNP genotypes obtained for a subset 229 of individuals, which were generated specifically for this study using a ddRAD-seq 230 approach (see Supplementary Materials). This method was used only with high quality 231 DNA extracts and thus limited to 6 of our populations (circled in red in Fig. 1).

232

233 SNPs genotyping

234 At the end of the de novo SNP calling and filtering procedure, the data set

- encompassed 5912 SNPs distributed over 3,490 RAD loci genotyped for 87 adult birds
- 236 (9-20 ind. per population, Table 1). We discarded 9 birds with > 10% of missing data.
- 237 Error rates estimated on the 5,912 SNPs obtained from replicated samples were 0.009
- +/- 0.003 and dropped to 0.001 +/- 0.003 when we considered a single SNP per locus
- 239 (n=3490 SNPs). The characteristics of this dataset (number of individuals, number of
- 240 SNPs, proportion of missing data, and error rates) should be well suited to analyze
- 241 variations in population size and current effective population size (Nunziata and
- 242 Weisrock, 2018; see e.g., Marandel *et al.*, 2020).

243

244 Genetic structure

245 We estimated the genetic differentiation among all populations by estimating global 246 and pairwise F_{ST} at two spatial scales: among populations (n = 15) or among regions 247 (see Fig. 1). We also estimated F_{ST} considering only the "breeding" birds to test 248 whether spatial genetic structure could have been affected by including "visiting" birds 249 (see Yannic, Yearsley, et al., 2016). For microsatellite loci, we used the online Genepop 250 v.4.7 software (Raymond and Rousset, 1995; Rousset, 2008) to estimate F_{ST} according 251 to Weir and Cockerham (1984), among all populations and regions. We tested 252 genotypic differentiation using Markov chain algorithms with default parameters in 253 Genepop. With the SNP data, the same analysis was performed on the subset of 254 populations for which SNPs were available (6 populations and 3 regions; Fig. 1, see also Table 1), using Genepop v.4.6 called through the R package strataG (Archer et al.,

256 2017).

257

258 Demographic inference

To test for a recent population genetic bottleneck we combined different approaches,
using three alternative methods for the microsatellite dataset and a single approach
for the SNP dataset.

262

263 Microsatellites: heterozygosity excess

264 First, we tested for a recent genetic bottleneck using the heterozygosity-excess 265 method presented in Luikart and Cornuet (1998), and implemented in the software 266 Bottleneck v.1.2.02 (Cornuet and Luikart, 1996; Piry et al., 1999). This method 267 compares expected heterozygosity $H_{\rm E}$ in an empirical sample to the heterozygosity $H_{\rm Eq}$ 268 that is expected in a population at mutation-drift equilibrium given the number of 269 alleles observed in the sample. Strong reductions in N_E are followed by a sharp 270 decrease in the number of alleles (rare alleles being quickly lost) while heterozygosity 271 $H_{\rm E}$ decreases less rapidly. A transitory excess in $H_{\rm E}$ (measured as $\Delta H = H_{\rm E} - H_{\rm Eq}$) is 272 therefore expected in recently bottlenecked populations (and a transitory deficit in H_E 273 is expected in case of population expansion). Microsatellites generally evolve under 274 the classic stepwise mutation model (SMM; by the gain or loss of a single repeat unit), 275 but mutations of several repeat units may occasionally occur. Therefore, we used a 276 mixed Two-Phase mutational Model (TPM), which fits best the mutation processes in 277 microsatellites (Di Rienzo et al., 1994). But because the heterozygosity-excess method

278 is very sensitive to mutation models, we ran the analyses assuming that the probability 279 of single-step mutations is 0.70 (TPM70) or 0.95 (TPM95), as suggested by Miller et al. 280 (2012) and Piry et al. (1999), respectively. The variance of the geometric distribution 281 for the multi-steps mutations was set to 12 in both cases. We used 1,000 coalescent 282 simulations and one-tailed Wilcoxon sign rank tests to test for an excess of 283 heterozygosity considering the whole population (n = 271 ind.), each region (n = 23-284 106 ind.) and each population (but only the 9 populations with $n \ge 10$ individuals, Table 285 1).

286 Although we observed a genetic homogeneity across the species distribution 287 range (see Yannic, Yearsley, et al., 2016 and the results below), we considered that the 288 observed disparity in demographic trends among regions called for an investigation of 289 genetic bottleneck inference at the regional and population scales too. However, to 290 ensure the detection of genetic bottlenecks is not sensitive to sample size according to 291 the spatial scale considered, we randomly generated sets of individuals of various size 292 $(11 \le n \le 250)$, sampled among the 271 ivory gull genotypes. These sample sizes 293 roughly correspond to the size of the different sets of individuals considered in this 294 study at different spatial scales (i.e., populations, regions, and whole population). 295 Sampling was replicated 10 times for each sample size to estimate standard errors (se) 296 around ΔH . The effect of sample size on bottleneck detection was then estimated with 297 the software *Bottleneck* considering the two mutation models: A) TPM70 and B) 298 TPM95. We report mean ΔH +/- se as well as the probability (*p*-value for one tailed 299 Wilcoxon test) of detecting an excess in $H_{\rm E}$ for each sample size and each mutation 300 model.

301 Because we tested the same hypothesis several times on different data sets (*i.e.*, 302 at different scales) and using different mutation models (TPM70 et TPM95), we also 303 provided in addition of the original *p*-values, the adjusted *p*-values for multiple 304 comparisons obtained using the Benjamini and Hochberg (1995) false discovery rate 305 procedure with initial $\alpha = 0.05$ (later denoted fdr.*p*-values). 306 307 *Microsatellites: M-ratio*

308 Second, we used an alternative method based on the ratio (*M*) of the number of

309 microsatellite alleles (k) to the range in allelic size (r) (Garza and Williamson, 2001). It is

310 expected that *M* is smaller in populations that have experienced a reduction in size (M

311 < 0.68; Garza and Williamson, 2001). We ran this analysis in R using the *mRatio*

312 function implemented in the package *strataG* (Archer *et al.*, 2017). The method was

313 applied to the same sets of individuals and spatial scales as described above.

314

315 Microsatellites: Migraine

316 Third, we used a more general method described in Leblois et al. (2014), that aims to 317 detect and date past changes in population size. This method implemented in the 318 software Migraine (Leblois et al., 2014; Rousset et al., 2018) uses simulations to 319 estimate the likelihood of demographic parameters given observed genetic data. We 320 used the demographic model considering one population with a single past variation in 321 population size (OnePopVarSize), which considers a single population of ancestral size 322 $N_{E,past}$ that instantly changed to the current size N_E some T generations in the past. The 323 population may have experienced a bottleneck ($N_{ratio} = N_{E,past}/N_E < 1$) or an expansion

324	($N_{ratio} > 1$). Contrary to the two methods presented above, <i>Migraine</i> allows
325	microsatellites to be characterized by different mutation models within the same
326	dataset. In addition, it considers a generalized stepwise mutation model (GSM) where
327	the number of repeats added or removed by a mutation follows a geometric
328	distribution with parameter p_{GSM} , which is estimated by the method. We ran
329	preliminary analyses where we allowed dinucleotides ($n=4$) and tetranucleotides
330	($n=11$) to follow either one of two models (SMM or GSM). We concluded that the
331	method gave the most reliable results when considering only the tetranucleotides,
332	under GSM (see discussion). We then ran <i>Migraine</i> using 4 iterations of 10 000 points
333	and 10 000 trees per point (detailed settings in supplementary materials) to infer
334	parameters $4N_{E}\mu$, $4N_{E,past}\mu$ and the composite parameter N_{ratio} . Migraine also
335	estimated p_{GSM} and T_{μ} (noted $T_{g\mu}$ in <i>Migraine</i>).
336	
337	SNPs: Demographic Inference with Linked Selection (DILS)
338	Finally, we analyzed our ddRAD-seq genotypes (filtered dataset: 3490 loci) with a

339 general method (DILS: Demographic Inferences with Linked Selection) newly 340 developed by Fraïsse et al. (2021) that compares the genetic properties of the data at 341 hand to that of a large number of simulated demographic scenarios to identify what 342 historical scenario is most likely to have produced the observed data (ABC framework). 343 We considered a single population of ancestral size N_{E,past} that is allowed to vary in size 344 instantaneously at some time T in the past to reach its current size $N_{\rm E}$. We ran three 345 runs where we allowed $N_{E,past}$ and N_E to take any value from 0 to 10⁵ individuals, and 346 population size change could have happened at any time between 0 (i.e. present) to

347 10⁵ generations in the past. The three runs differed only in the minimum allelic 348 frequency (maf) used to generate the dataset used in DILS (no maf, maf= 0.01, and 349 *maf* = 0.02). Other parameters followed the authors' recommendations: mutation rate 350 set to 10⁻⁸, ratio of recombination (intra-RAD locus) and mutation set to 0.8 (Fraïsse et 351 al., 2021). Since our filtered dataset contained at least 77 out of 87 individuals 352 genotyped per SNP, we set the minimum number of haploid copies required to process 353 a locus (Nmin) to 154. Similarly, since our smallest RAD sequence was 150 bp long, we 354 set the minimum sequence length to Lmin = 150 bp (complete settings file in 355 supplementary material). We retained results from the optimized posterior and using 356 the random-forest method implemented in DILS.

357

358 Simulation of microsatellite heterozygosity excess when generations overlap

359 We used simulations to explore the effect of age structure on genetic signatures of a

360 demographic decline. With the ivory gull case in mind, we designed simplified

361 simulations that would help us interpret the signal of heterozygosity excess observed362 with our microsatellite dataset.

363 We used a modified version of *Nemo* (Guillaume and Rougemont, 2006), called 364 *Nemo-age* (Cotto *et al.*, 2020), an individual-based, genetically explicit and stochastic 365 population computer program where populations are age-structured. This tool creates 366 stochastic forward-in-time simulations of population demography and genetic 367 markers. We designed a life cycle where chicks become adults after one-time unit 368 (year) and adults survive from one year to the next with probability *v*. We simulated 369 two bottleneck scenarios for a population that took one of three age structures.

Simulation parameters were chosen so that diversity $\theta = 4N_{\rm E}\mu$ would be not too small even at the new equilibrium after bottleneck (so that microsatellite $H_{\rm E}$ and k remain meaningful) and not too large ($\theta \le 1$) so that analytical expressions for ΔH are not biased (especially under SMM, see below).

374 In the first scenario, the population was reduced from 1000 to 250 individuals 375 within a single time unit (and then remained at that size), while it was reduced from 376 1000 to 500 in our second scenario. In each case we ran simulations with adult survival 377 v set to 0 (no overlapping generations), 0.8 (*i.e.*, a value like that expected for ivory 378 gull) or 0.95 (allowing us to look at the effect of a very pronounced age structure, see 379 Fig. S3 for an example of resulting age distributions). Increasing adult survival has two 380 consequences. First, it will increase generation time (T_G) , defined as the mean age of 381 adults (given that all adults have the same fecundity and there is no sex-biased survival 382 in the simulations). We obtained $T_G = 1$ year when v = 0, $T_G = 4.5$ years when v = 0.8, 383 and T_G =13.4 years with v = 0.95 (these values estimated empirically from the 384 simulations agreed with theoretical predictions, see supplementary material). Second, 385 increasing v also means that generations will be overlapping.

We simulated 20 microsatellite markers neutrally evolving under the conditions of IAM or SMM with mutation rate $\mu = 2.5.10^{-4}$ per locus per generation (Estoup and Angers, 1998). Using these markers, we estimated heterozygosity excess ΔH every 10 years and we averaged these values over 100 simulation replicates. To produce as many ΔH estimates, we used the number of alleles *k* and gene diversity $H_{\rm E}$ reported by *Nemo-age* and estimated $H_{\rm Eq}$ analytically from the number of alleles *k* observed in a sample of size *n* (number of gene copies sampled). Under IAM, the relationship is k =

393 $\sum_{i=0}^{n=1} \theta / (\theta + i)$ with $\theta = H_{Eq} / 1 - H_{Eq}$ (Ewens, 1972), and for SMM it is (Kimura and

394 Ohta, 1978):
$$k = (\theta + \beta)/\beta [1 - \prod_{i=0}^{n-1} (\theta + i)/(\theta + \beta + i)]$$
, where $\beta =$

395
$$\theta (1 - H_{Eq})/H_{Eq} - 1 \text{ and } \theta = 1/2 [1/(1 - H_{Eq})^2 - 1].$$

Because these relationships may be slightly biased in some conditions, for 10 additional replicates, we also asked *Nemo-age* to create *Genepop* files from the simulated markers 20 years before the bottleneck (*i.e.*, at mutation-drift equilibrium) and 20 years after the bottleneck (*i.e.*, imitating the situation suspected for the ivory gull). These files were then used to estimate ΔH and test for its significance in the software *Bottleneck*. Additional technical details for the simulation settings are given in supplementary material.

403

404 Effective population size

405 Effective population size (N_E) was estimated with microsatellites for each population (n 406 = 15), each region (Canada, Greenland, Norway and Russia), and the whole population, 407 using NeEstimator v.2.1 software (Do et al., 2014). We used the linkage disequilibrium 408 method considering a random mating model. Following Waples and Do (2010), we 409 excluded rare alleles to limit estimation bias. To do so, we used two methods, first 410 excluding singletons only (i.e., alleles represented by a single copy in the population), 411 and second excluding alleles with a frequency ≤ 0.02 (*maf*, called *Pcrit* in *NeEstimator*). 412 We assumed that all loci are physically unlinked (as verified in Yannic et al. 2016). The 413 same analyses were performed using SNP data but considering only the 6 populations 414 or 3 regions for which we had such data (Table 1) and using *maf* = 0.05 (Nunziata and 415 Weisrock, 2018; see Marandel et al., 2020).

417	RESULTS
418	Genetic structure
419	A low level of genetic differentiation was observed among populations, both with
420	microsatellites (15 populations, $F_{ST,\mu sat}$ = 0.0044, $p < 0.05$) and SNPs (6 populations,
421	$F_{ST,snp} = 0.0043$; $p < 0.001$). These results confirm the findings of Yannic <i>et al.</i> (2016)
422	and suggest that bottleneck analyses can be run considering a single global population
423	of ivory gulls. Similar conclusions were obtained when measuring the differentiation
424	using breeding individuals only ($F_{ST,\mu sat}$ = 0.0006, NS ; $F_{ST,snp}$ = 0.0024, NS) or at the scale
425	of regions ($F_{ST,\mu sat} = 0.0035$, $p < 0.001$; $F_{ST,snp} = 0.0057$, $p < 0.001$). Pairwise F_{ST} between
426	populations or regions varied between -0.0036 and 0.0092 (Tables S2 and S3).
427	
428	Demographic inference
429	Microsatellites: heterozygosity excess
430	Assuming a TPM95 model, we did not detect any departure from mutation-drift
431	equilibrium in the whole ivory gull population (ΔH = -0.016; one-tailed Wilcoxon text, p

432 = 0.93 and fdr-p = 0.97; Fig. 2 and Table S4). If we considered a TPM70 model, we

433 found a significant but slight excess of H_E (H = 0.027; one-tailed Wilcoxon text, p =

- 434 0.04), which became non-significant after correction for multiple tests (fdr-p = 0.13;
- 435 Table S4).

436 At the scale of regions (Fig. 3), we did not detect any excess of heterozygosity
437 under TPM95 (all one-tailed Wilcoxon tests, *p* > 0.05 and fdr-*p* > 0.05; Table S4). Using

438 TPM70, Greenland was the only region with a significant signal of bottleneck (ΔH = 439 0.021; one-tailed Wilcoxon test, p = 0.01, but fdr-p = 0.07; Table S4). 440 At the population scale, we found a significant heterozygosity excess under 441 TPM70 in four populations (1 StNo, 2 StBr, 8 Rudo and 15 AlEl, $\Delta H > 0$; one-tailed 442 Wilcoxon tests, p < 0.05; Fig. S1), but this signal was significant with TPM95 for the 443 population of Alert on Ellesmere Island, Canada only (15 AlEl, $\Delta H = 0.015$; one-tailed 444 Wilcoxon test, p = 0.001). After correction for multiple tests, a significant excess of 445 heterozygosity was still observed in the Alert population with TPM70 (fdr-p = 0.02) but 446 not with TPM95 (fdr-p = 0.13). 447 Resampling analyses indicated that ΔH estimates and associated *p*-values are 448 sensitive to sample size. Under TPM70, ΔH estimates became slightly underestimated 449 as sample sizes decreased (Fig. 4A). The estimates also became more variable for the 450 smallest sample sizes (e.g., $n \le 25$) but remain underestimated in all cases. Under 451 TPM95, sample size had essentially no impact on ΔH estimates (Fig. 4A). Sub-sampling 452 had more contrasted effects on the results of the Wilcoxon test used by *Bottleneck* 453 (Fig. 4B). Increasing sample size increased power under the TPM70 but we see in Fig. 454 4B that increasing sample size moved the *p*-value away from significance under 455 TPM95.

456

457 Microsatellites: M-ratio

458 *M*-ratio was 0.956 for the whole population, and regardless of the scale of analysis, *M*459 values were always higher than the critical value defined by Garza and Williamson

460 (2001), i.e., *M* = 0.68 (Fig. S2), suggesting no genetic bottleneck at the considered
461 scales for ivory gull.

462

	463	Microsatellites:	Migraine
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464 *Migraine* estimated *Nratio* at 3.45 (95%CI [1.88- 6.17]), with current effective

465 population size $4N_{E}\mu$ = 50.92 (95%CI [35.76-94.47]), about three times larger than

466 ancestral population size $4N_{E,past}\mu = 14.76$ (95%CI [7.64-25.37]) (see Fig. 5). The value

467 of $T\mu$ was estimated to 0.76 (95%CI [0.21-2.21]), suggesting that the expansion

468 occurred a very long time ago (even considering high microsatellite mutation rates, see

discussion).

470 Finally, p_{GSM} was estimated at 0.0319 (95%CI [0.00- 0.129]), indicating that the

471 mutation process of the microsatellites is very close to SMM and TPM95 (with this

472 parameter value, the probability of a single-step mutation is $g(1) \approx 0.968$, while a two-

473 step mutation will happen with probability $g(2) \approx 0.031$, and $g(3) \approx 0.001$).

474

475 SNPs: DILS

The analysis of SNP data with *DILS* consistently found that the most likely demographic scenario was an ancient expansion, regardless of the *maf* used in the analysis. While *DILS* provides absolute values for each demographic parameter (N_E , $N_{E,past}$, T), these values depend directly on the mutation rate assumed. Hence here we report the ratio of $N_E/N_{E,past}$, which was found to be 6.13 (95%CI [4.16-8.76]) with *maf* = 0, 3.67 (95%CI [2.56-5.60]) with *maf* = 0.01, and 10.60 (95%CI [6.76-19]) with *maf* = 0.02. The lower limit for this ratio (estimated from 95% highest posterior density intervals) was never

483	below 3. These results, obtained with the optimized posterior, random forest options
484	of <i>DILS</i> , did not differ much when using alternative computation methods ($N_E/N_{E,past}$)
485	for each <i>maf</i> was always in [3.63-8.80] when using non-optimized posterior, and/or
486	neural network estimation).
487	The timing of the change in population size was very sensitive to the choice of
488	maf(T = 7290 generations with maf = 0, T = 20338 gen. with maf = 0.01, and T = 67601
489	gen. with $maf = 0.02$). Moreover, these estimates are directly impacted by the value
490	chosen for mutation rate (here 10 ⁻⁸). But even if this value is over- or underestimated
491	10 times, all results from <i>DILS</i> point to an ancient population expansion (>900
492	generations ago).
493	
494	Simulation of microsatellite heterozygosity excess when generations overlap
495	The dynamics of ΔH obtained from simulations are presented in Figure 6 (strong
496	bottleneck scenario, 1000> 250) and Figure S4 (mild bottleneck 1000> 500). To
497	understand the effect of age structure, the results are presented with time expressed
498	in years (top panels in Figs. 6 and S4) and generations (bottom panels).
499	Increasing adult survival resulted in a delayed genetic bottleneck signal (in
500	absolute time units), but the delay was not simply proportional to the increase in
501	generation time. For instance, under IAM in the strong bottleneck scenario (Figs. 6A
502	and C), the maximum ΔH value was observed 80 years after the bottleneck in the case
503	of a semelparous, annual species (<i>i.e.</i> , $v = 0$, max signal 80 generations post-
504	bottleneck), while it was 220 years post-bottleneck (49 generations) with $ u$ = 0.8, and
505	670 years (50 generations) with $ u$ = 0.95. Hence in a long-lived species with

506 overlapping generations, the signal peaked later in absolute time, but still much 507 sooner than predicted by generation time alone. This is at least in part because the 508 dynamics of the heterozygosity excess depends on the post-bottleneck N_E , which is 509 reduced in case of an iteroparous life cycle where generations overlap. Although our 510 stochastic simulations depart slightly from the simplistic conditions where $N_E =$ 511 N/(1 + v) (see introduction and supplementary material), in the example above the 512 difference in the timing of the ΔH peak (80 / 49 = 1.6) appears relatively well predicted 513 by the difference in post-bottleneck N_E predicted by $N/(2 - 1/T_G)$: with N = 250, ν = 514 0.8 and T_G =4.5, we have $N_E \approx$ 140, that is, 1.8 times smaller than the post-bottleneck 515 N_E when $\nu = 0$ and $T_G = 1$. Increasing ν to 0.95 had, as it should, not a strong effect on this timing since it the effect on N_E is asymptotic (with ν = 0.95 and T_G = 13.4, N_E \approx 516 517 130).

518 The strength of the bottleneck signal was also affected by age structure. Using 519 the same example as above (strong bottleneck, IAM, Figs. 6A and C), the maximum 520 values for ΔH were 0.12, 0.10, and 0.09 with $\nu = 0$, $\nu = 0.8$, and $\nu = 0.95$, respectively. 521 The same consequences were observed under SMM, although the effect of age 522 structure on heterozygosity excess was less visible because the analytical estimation of 523 ΔH was slightly biased (see discussion, $\Delta H \neq 0$ even when gene diversity and the number 524 of alleles are at mutation-drift equilibrium in our simulations, Figs. 6B and D, and 525 S4B,D).

526 These simulations also showed that the maximum signal of bottleneck was 527 rather low (between 0.045 and 0.12 depending on simulation scenario) and took time 528 to be reached (80 to 1040 years after bottleneck). Using the software *Bottleneck* to

529	analyze simulated datasets, we found that a significant signal of bottleneck was
530	correctly detected 20 years after the decline in 0 to 9 replicates out of 10, depending
531	on the simulation scenario, <i>i.e.</i> , the combined effect of mutation, survival, and
532	strength of bottleneck (Fig. S4 and Table S5). In particular, the probability to detect a
533	significant genetic bottleneck 20 years after the simulated decline with Bottleneck was
534	globally higher under IAM than under SMM, and was also higher for a strong
535	bottleneck, <i>i.e.</i> , 75% of decline (1000 -> 250) than for a lower bottleneck, <i>i.e.</i> , 50% of
536	decline (1000 -> 500). In addition, these analyses also allowed us to compare our
537	analytical estimates of ΔH against the values estimated by <i>Bottleneck</i> . These two
538	methods produced identical values under IAM, but the analytical estimates appeared
539	slightly overestimated under SMM (Fig. S6).
540	
541	Effective nervelation size

541 Effective population size

542 With microsatellite markers, the effective size of the whole population was estimated

543 to N_E = 1138.6 individuals (95%CI [754.0-2204.3]) with *maf* set to 0.02. When

544 considering all alleles but singletons, N_E was estimated to 1487.9 individuals (95%CI

545 [990.5-2871.4]). With SNPs we obtained $N_E = 729.5$ (95%CI [689.4-774.3]) and 861

546 (95%CI [828.9-895.6]) individuals, considering a minimum allele frequency of 0.05 and

547 no singleton, respectively.

548 At the regional scale, estimates ranged from 250.6 individuals in Canada to

- 549 3288.5 individuals in Norway (microsatellites, Table 2A) with *maf* set to 0.02, and
- 550 similar results were obtained when removing only the singletons from the calculations
- 551 (Table 2A). However, at that scale, precise confidence intervals could not be obtained

- 552 with the microsatellites. The SNPs again returned lower $N_{\rm E}$ estimates (from 191.0 in
- 553 Greenland to 368.9 in Norway with *maf* = 0.05) with narrower confidence intervals
- 554 (Table 2B). At the population scale, estimates of $N_{\rm E}$ are imprecise, for both
- 555 microsatellites and SNPs, with large confidence intervals that span to infinity.
- 556

557 **DISCUSSION**

558 No genetic signature of demographic decline globally

559 We found no genetic signature of a recent population decline in the ivory gull

- 560 population as a whole. This result was consistent across three independent methods
- 561 using microsatellites and one method using SNPs. According to the heterozygosity-
- 562 excess approach, we did not find a departure from mutation-drift that would indicate a
- 563 recent genetic bottleneck in the ivory gull population at the global scale. The
- heterozygosity excess was globally close to zero (Fig. 2) and only significant before
- 565 correction for multiple tests under the two-phase mutational model TPM70 (p = 0.036;

566 Table S4), which as discussed further below, is not an appropriate model in this case.

567 We therefore conclude that there was no evidence for biologically relevant

568 heterozygosity excess that would indicate that the population has suffered a recent

- 569 genetic bottleneck (but see below for some limitations associated with this
- 570 conclusion). Results from the *M*-ratio approach led to the same conclusion. There was
- 571 no loss of rare alleles in ivory gull populations, because *M* was always much larger than
- 572 critical value 0.68 (Fig. S2).

573 The two methods that yield quantitative parameter estimates (*Migraine* and 574 *DILS*) even found that the ivory gull population has experienced an ancient expansion,

575	but not a recent decline. The $N_{\rm E}/N_{\rm E,past}$ ratios estimated by these two methods were
576	remarkably similar given that they used independent datasets (microsatellites with
577	Migraine : $N_E/N_{E,past}$ = 3.45; SNPs with DILS: $N_E/N_{E,past}$ between 3.67 and 10.60
578	depending on the minimum allelic frequency retained for data filtering). Estimates of
579	the timing of the past changes in population size are more elusive because they are
580	directly proportional to mutation rates, but all results point towards an ancient
581	expansion event even considering conservative mutation rates (e.g., $T \ge 757$
582	generations if $\mu_{\text{microsat}} \le 10^{-3}$, $T \ge 927$ gen. if $\mu_{\text{SNP}} \le 10^{-7}$). We cannot date that expansion
583	more precisely because the number of generations since the expansion varies widely
584	depending on the data set (microsatellites or SNPs), choice of minimum allele
585	frequency, mutation rate, and adult annual survival ($v = 0.86 \pm 0.04$; Stenhouse <i>et al.</i> ,
586	2004).
587	The heterozygosity-excess method is known to be highly sensitive to the choice
588	of mutation model. The TPM is thought to provide a better approximation of
589	microsatellite mutation than either a strict IAM or strict SMM (Di Rienzo et al., 1994)
590	but the expected number of alleles at mutation-drift equilibrium still depends directly
591	on two unknown parameters that define the proportion and distribution of multi-steps
592	mutations within the TPM. The <i>Migraine</i> method uses a slightly simpler model (GSM),
593	where a geometric distribution alone defines the number of repeats that each
594	mutation removes or adds to the ancestral state of the allele. Importantly, Migraine
595	infers this distribution from the data by estimating the geometric distribution
596	parameter p_{GSM} . Here we found that <i>Migraine</i> could not correctly infer p_{GSM} when

parameter p_{GSM} . Here we found that *Migraine* could not correctly infer p_{GSM} when

597 using the mixture of di- and tetra-nucleotides composing our original dataset (flat

598	likelihood profiles even when we allowed di- and tetra-nucleotides to follow different
599	mutation models, data not shown). Using only tetranucleotides, p_{GSM} was estimated to
600	0.0319 (95%CI [0.00 - 0.129]), indicating that the mutation process of the
601	microsatellites is very close to TPM95 and SMM (probability of a single-step mutation
602	$g(1) \approx 0.968$). This means that the results obtained from software <i>Bottleneck</i> with
603	TPM95 (no bottleneck signal) are more relevant than that obtained with TPM70
604	(contrary to Ellegren, 2004; Engler, Secondi, Dawson, Elle, & Hochkirch, 2016; Peery et
605	al., 2012; Wogan, Voelker, Oatley, & Bowie, 2020). We can also parameterize a TPM in
606	<i>Bottleneck</i> that follows exactly the GSM inferred by <i>Migraine</i> (0% SMM and variance =
607	$p_{\rm GSM}/(1-p_{\rm GSM}^2)=0.0319$). Using these parameters with the tetranucleotides, we
608	found no heterozygosity excess, and even a significant heterozygosity deficit (one-
609	tailed Wilcoxon test, $p = 0.034$, indicating a possible expansion). All things considered,
610	our analyses using alternative approaches based on microsatellites (Bottleneck,
611	Migraine and M-ratio) and SNPs (DILS) converged towards an absence of recent
612	genetic bottleneck in the global ivory gull population.
613	
614	Local signature of population declines in Canada?
615	To search for genetic evidence of population decline, we focused primarily on global

616 analyses, considering all ivory gulls as belonging to a single Arctic-wide population. We

617 did so because the large-scale genetic homogeneity reported in Yannic et al. (2016)

618 was essentially confirmed by the new analyses presented here either with a subset of

619 microsatellites (n = 15, $F_{ST} = 0.0044$, p < 0.05) or a new SNP dataset (n = 3490, $F_{ST} =$

620 0.0043; *p* < 0.001). Using a general model for coalescence times where age structure is

621 entirely defined by a constant rate of adult survival and dispersal rates may differ in 622 juveniles and adults, we suggested in Yannic et al. (2016) that the large-scale genetic 623 homogeneity found in ivory gulls most likely implies massive movements of individuals 624 among colonies, occurring possibly both at the juvenile and adult stages. However, 625 although we did find genetic differentiation to be low, it was not strictly as low as 626 reported previously: F_{ST} = 0.001, 95%CI [-0.002- 0.005] (Yannic, Yearsley, et al., 2016). 627 The difference may come from the selection of a slightly different marker set (see 628 methods, but 11 markers were common to the two studies), and the previous inclusion 629 of markers that presented complex mutation patterns (*i.e.*, involving insertions or 630 deletions of some base pair numbers that are not multiples of the repeated motif 631 length). Some slight differentiation was also detected using SNPs, leading to the 632 question of sensitivity of our bottleneck detection results to sampling scale. Moreover, 633 the disparity in demographic trends reported across regions (declines were reported 634 especially in Canada and in Norway) prompted us to examine genetic signals at 635 different spatial scales. Looking at the scale of regions or populations, we found no 636 signature of demographic decline except in one case: in the population of Alert (site 15 637 in Fig. 1), the hypothesis of a local decline cannot be excluded, in line with field 638 observations in Canada (Gilchrist and Mallory, 2005). Bottleneck analyses concluded to 639 a significant or nearly significant excess of heterozygosity for this population 640 considering the most relevant (and conservative) mutation model tested (TPM95; p= 641 0.032, fdr-p =0.132, see Fig. S1). This result was also supported when reanalyzing the 642 data with TPM parameters designed to follow the GSM inferred by Migraine (with

tetranucleotides only, noted TPM00 in Table S4) as explained above (*p*=0.006, and still
marginally significant after correction for multiple tests, fdr-*p*=0.059).

645 However, this Canadian population showed no clear sign of disconnection from 646 any other population (all pairwise $F_{ST} \le 0.007$ with microsatellites or SNPs). It is 647 therefore not trivial to understand why a single sample could show a different genetic 648 signal of population decline. One possibility is the presence in this sample of recent 649 immigrants, but again this hypothesis seems at odds with the low genetic 650 differentiation among populations. Another possibility is that it could be an artifact 651 due to the small size of the sample used (n = 12 individuals). To test this idea, we 652 investigated the sensitivity of *Bottleneck* to sampling size. A resampling analysis 653 showed that small sample sizes did not result in overestimated heterozygosity excess 654 (Fig. 4A) using either model (although we note a strong difference in behavior between 655 TPM70 and TPM95). Moreover, as expected, small sample size did not produce any 656 false positive result (Fig. 4B), although here again with a notable difference between 657 models. We conclude that the result observed for the Canadian population at Alert is 658 unlikely to be an artifact and thus indicates a significant heterozygosity excess, 659 signature of genetic bottleneck and thus demographic decline. We note, however, that 660 the ΔH value for that population is low ($\Delta H = 0.015$) and that *M*-ratio analysis did not 661 detect any signature of bottleneck. We suggest that it would be interesting to have 662 more samples from Alert population and perhaps, if at all feasible, from other 663 Canadian sites to test the hypothesis of a local bottleneck (but see below for 664 methodological limits linked with the lifespan of the species). Increasing sample size 665 can improve Bottleneck's analytical power and make accessible the genetic dataset to

other methods of genetic decline inference like *Migraine* or *DILS* (which were not
employed in this case because we had only 12 individuals from this population). It
would also be useful to investigate what local bottleneck signatures are theoretically
expected in strongly connected metapopulations.

- 670
- 671 Life-history and signature of bottleneck

672 One important aspect of our work was to evaluate the impact of life-history on the 673 genetic inference of demographic declines. This is not an easy task, as it requires to 674 run complex simulations and analyze multiple datasets with resource-demanding 675 inference methods. To tackle this problem, we focused here on the heterozygosity 676 excess method, which we could investigate using analytical approximations on many 677 microsatellite datasets simulated with two extreme mutation models. Although we 678 view this analysis as a first step toward understanding the applicability of genetic 679 bottleneck inference in long-lived species (in particular, pending the development and 680 testing of methods specifically designed to study recent demography using genome-681 wide data), the simulations provided useful observations. Most importantly, we found 682 that increasing adult survival (and thus introducing longer generation time and 683 generation overlap) resulted in a decreased and delayed signal of genetic bottleneck 684 (Figs. 6 and S4). The ΔH estimates under SMM appeared to be overestimated in the 685 conditions of our simulations (Fig. S6), meaning that the effect of age structure on the 686 intensity of the bottleneck signature was less easily examined under SMM vs IAM (Fig. 687 6). Under IAM, the peak ΔH in a population where adults breed once a year and 688 survive to the next year with a probability v = 0.8 was ca. 17% lower than in a

689 population with a semelparous and annual life-history subject to the same

690 demographic decline (1000 --> 250). The decrease was 11% in the less severe

691 bottleneck scenario (1000 --> 500, Figs. S4A,C).

692 The temporal effect was clear regardless of mutation models and corresponded 693 relatively well to what would be expected from the consequences of adult survival on 694 generation time and N_E (Figs. 6 and S4). According to our stochastic simulations, a 695 population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals with adult survival v = 0.8 would 696 show a maximum ΔH only ca. 50 generations (220 years) after the event, as compared 697 to 80 generations when v = 0. This effect on the timing of the bottleneck signal roughly 698 corresponded to the ratio of post-bottleneck N_E estimated with vs without generation 699 overlap.

700 The question of practical importance is thus, how many generations of drift are 701 required before the ΔH signal starts being detectable? Of course, we cannot answer 702 that question precisely for the ivory gull case (which would require the simulation of 703 larger metapopulations and less caricatured life-cycle and demographic scenarios), but 704 applying the Bottleneck software on simulated datasets, we found that genetic 705 bottlenecks were almost never detected in any SMM model regardless of the strength 706 of the bottleneck, even when the peak of Δ H has been reached (1000 \rightarrow 250 or 1000 707 \rightarrow 500; Table S5 and Fig. S4). The results obtained in IAM are more contrasted. Genetic 708 bottlenecks were significantly detected by Bottleneck in several simulation scenarios, 709 but this is highly dependent on the strength of the decline and the adult survival rate 710 (Table S5 and Fig. S5).

711 If ivory gulls begin breeding at two years old and adult survival is ca. 0.86 (Stenhouse *et al.*, 2004), generation time for the species can be approximated by T_G = 712 $a + \left(\frac{v}{1-v}\right) = 8.1$ years (see supplementary material), meaning that a 20-year-old 713 714 decline corresponds to only 2 to 3 generations. Although our simulations were 715 simplistic, they suggest that it is potentially difficult to detect such a recent event. For 716 example, in the strong bottleneck scenario under TPM and v = 0.8 (Fig. 1B and D, pale 717 blue curve), the bottleneck signal after 20 years (2.2 generations in this scenario) was 718 half its maximum value (which is seen after generation 55). The difficulty could even 719 be increased if ivory gulls start breeding at a later age than what is currently thought 720 based on plumage color (because T_G would then be higher). 721 The agreement between the different independent methods used here compels 722 us to conclude that there is no genetic bottleneck signal in ivory gulls, but this 723 conclusion has some limitations. First, according to the simulations, the heterozygosity 724 excess method may not be able to detect a signal of recent genetic bottleneck that is 725 reduced and delayed for long-lived species with overlapping generations and not very 726 powerful with microsatellite loci evolving under SMM (or nearly so). Second, there is 727 also some uncertainty in the capacity of the other methods used here to detect 728 bottleneck events that recent (2-3 generations).

729

730 Genetic diversity and effective population size

731 Estimates of effective size of the ivory gull meta-population were around 1,000

individuals, according to the results obtained on the two sets of genetic markers: N_E

733 ranged from 729.5 (95%CI [689.4-774.3], with SNPS, maf = 0.05) to 1487.9 (95%CI

734 [990.5-2871.4], with microsatellites, no singleton).

735 When we consider a finer scale (e.g., at the population level), confidence 736 intervals increase dramatically, spanning orders of magnitude, up to infinity. Such 737 uncertainties probably stem from the low sample size used to infer local $N_{\rm E}$ (England et al., 2006; Nunziata and Weisrock, 2018). However, because we found an extremely 738 739 low genetic differentiation among sampling sites (*i.e.*, implying a homogenization of 740 allele frequencies), we would expect similar estimates of $N_{\rm E}$ at regional and global 741 scales. On the contrary, we observed at least for SNP data a global estimation of N_E 742 being the sum of regional estimates (Table 2). In line with the previous discussion on 743 the "local signature of population decline in Canada", the observed discrepancies in N_E 744 estimated at global and regional scales suggests that high connectivity among samples 745 sites does not necessarily imply a common demographic trajectory as inferred with 746 genetic information.

An effective worldwide population size of 1,000 individuals remains extremely low in comparison to the number of individuals estimated for the species. This result suggests that genetic drift can occur, decreasing the adaptive evolvability of the species, which can lead to an increased risk of extinction.

The low $N_{\rm E}$ estimated for ivory gull may result in part from the effect of this species' life cycle. As explained in the introduction, with constant adult survival, generation overlap reduces $N_{\rm E}$ following $N_E = N/(1 + \nu)$. Yet this effect will be partially compensated in ivory gulls because juveniles do not reproduce until they are 2 years old. Following Nunney (1993, equation 22), we find that delayed maturity will

756 increase N_E by a factor equal to 1 + (a - 1)(1 - v). Taking a = 2 and v = 0.86, we find 757 $N_E/N = (2 - v)/(1 + v) \approx 0.6$.

758 Moreover, this estimate assumes an even sex ratio, while the ivory gull 759 population is known to be strongly male-biased (67.8 % males, Yannic, Broquet, et al., 760 2016). The origin of this bias is unknown, but its effect on N_E will be different if it 761 stems from uneven primary sex ratio or reduced male survival at the juvenile or adult 762 stage (Nunney, 1993). Details of sex-specific life history traits are required to precisely 763 estimate the effect of this bias in sex ratio, but it will only reduce further the effective 764 population size of the ivory gull population. Finally, all the above calculations disregard 765 variations in fecundity across age classes. Yet intermittent breeding (i.e. the non-766 reproduction of individuals that have already reproduced) is regularly observed in 767 ivory gulls. In seabirds, age appears to be the key to skipped breeding, as this behavior 768 is usually observed in the youngest and in the oldest adult birds (Cubaynes et al., 2011; 769 Goutte et al., 2011) as an adaptive response of birds to the trade-off between survival 770 and future reproduction considering environmental constraints. Skipped reproduction 771 as a response to harsh conditions of breeding in the Arctic might in turn markedly 772 reduce $N_{\rm E}$ in ivory gull and further decrease the $N_{\rm E}/N$ ratio.

773From estimation of effective population size, we deduced a mean N_E/N ratio774value of ~ 0.022 [0.019-0.026] considering a worldwide population of 38,000-52,000775mature individuals (BirdLife International, 2018) and N_E of 1,000. Estimations of census776populations size for ivory gull remain however relatively uncertain, and N_E/N ratio will777be around 0.12 [0.087-0.158], considering 6,325-11,500 breeding pairs (Gilchrist *et al.*,7782008), and N_E of 1,000. In the case of ivory gull, it is particularly low in comparison with

779 N_E/N ratio generally observed in birds (Frankham, 1995). The 100/1000 rule, formerly 780 50/500, postulates that at least $N_{\rm E}$ = 100 is required to avoid inbreeding depression, 781 and $N_{\rm E}$ = 1,000 is necessary to maintain evolutionary potential in population 782 (Frankham et al., 2014). This rule is often used in conservation biology to evaluate the 783 risk of extinction of the concerned species (e.g., Jamieson and Allendorf, 2012). Based 784 on these estimates, the global ivory gull population does not appear to be at imminent 785 risk of inbreeding depression, but $N_{\rm E}$ closed to 1,000 should be of concern for the long-786 term adaptability of the species. This is particularly problematic for species living in a 787 rapidly changing environment. However, it would be necessary to make a correction in 788 estimation (e.g., regarding confidence in N, or life-cycle characteristics) in $N_{\rm E}$, N and 789 $N_{\rm E}/N$ ratio. Some assumptions underlying the LD method we used to estimate Ne were 790 not fulfilled here. First, while the method assumes discrete generations, it can still be 791 applied to age-structured species provided that the number of cohorts represented in 792 the sampling is close to the generation time (Waples *et al.*, 2014). Here, we randomly 793 sampled adult birds on colonies, without any indication on their specific age or cohort, 794 and for some colonies, sampled over a few consecutive breeding seasons. However, a 795 random sample of adults consistently underestimates the true $N_{\rm E}$ (Waples *et al.*, 2014). 796 Thus, our estimates of N_E close to 1,000 may be a slight underestimation of the true N_E 797 (depending on species life-history traits; Waples et al., 2014). Second, the LD method 798 assumes the population is at the mutation-drift equilibrium (Waples and Do, 2010). 799 This is, however, precisely the hypothesis we want to test in this study, when inferring 800 the signature of genetic bottlenecks based on an excess of heterozygosity. 801

802 Conclusion

803 The ivory gull presents no signature of recent genetic bottleneck across its circumpolar 804 breeding range, while the hypothesis of a local decline cannot be definitively ruled out. 805 Our results, indeed, contradict field observations showing that the number of ivory 806 gulls has been severely declining at least in Canada (70% decline between 1970-early 807 1980 and 2004-2006; Gilchrist et al., 2008) and Svalbard (40% of decline between 2009 808 and 2019; Strøm et al., 2020). Two factors may contribute to this discrepancy between 809 bottleneck genetic inferences and regional demographic trends obtained from field 810 surveys: 1) a lowered and delayed response of genetic signal due to life-history 811 features (generation time and overlapping generations), and 2) differences among 812 regions in demographic trends, with a potential strong impact of larger colonies (e.g., 813 in Russia) to maintain worldwide genetic diversity. Uncertainties on local demography 814 are related to the difficulties to obtain larger sample sizes from such remote areas that 815 would allow more accurate demographic reconstruction. These difficulties could be 816 circumvented by the use of complete genome -now accessible for several bird species 817 (i.e., the Bird 10,000 Genomes (B10K) Project)- and individual resequencing to 818 reconstruct past demographic history (e.g., PSMC; Li and Durbin, 2011), see for some 819 notable examples, on pinnipeds (Peart et al., 2020) or birds (Nadachowska-Brzyska et 820 al., 2015). In addition, comparative genomic analyses studying simultaneously several 821 Arctic seabird species, coupled with species distribution modelling, could be highly 822 informative. Finally, we found a strong effect of age structure on the detection of 823 genetic bottleneck with a decreased and delayed signal of decline of several years, 824 even for a strong decline (i.e., 75% decrease). This effect should not be overlooked in

- 825 the search for signals of population decline, particularly for long-lived species, because
- 826 a species could experience an even strong demographic decline, without being
- 827 genetically detectable.
- 828

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1094	

1096 Figure legends

1097

1098	Figure 1. Map of the study area illustrating the high-Arctic distribution of ivory gull
1099	(Pagophila eburnea) colonies. Sampling localities are indicated by the numbers given in
1100	Table 1. Small orange dots depict known breeding sites (Gilchrist et al., 2008). Dashed lines
1101	show wintering grounds (variable during the winter and among years according to the
1102	extension of the sea ice). The background map represents the maximum sea ice extent in
1103	July between 1979 and 2013 (light blue) and the sea ice extent in July 2013 (dark blue) (data
1104	from the National Snow and Ice Data Centre, Boulder, Colorado; http://nsidc.org/).
1105	
1106	Figure 2. Pairwise comparison of expected heterozygosity (H_E) versus expected
1107	heterozygosity at mutation-drift equilibrium (H_{Eq}) in the whole ivory gull population
1108	obtained with <i>Bottleneck</i> using 15 microsatellites and considering two mutational models:
1109	A) TPM70 and B) TPM95. The diagonal represents $H_{\rm E}$ - $H_{\rm Eq}$, equality, <i>i.e.</i> , population at
1110	mutation-drift equilibrium. Above the diagonal the population experiences a heterozygosity
1111	excess, <i>i.e.</i> , a signature of demographic decline, below a heterozygosity deficit, signature of
1112	demographic expansion. Grey dots represent each locus (n = 15) and the black dot is the
1113	mean +/- se over loci.

1114

1115Figure 3. Heterozygosity-excess (ΔH) at 15 microsatellite loci in four breeding regions of1116ivory gull, obtained with *Bottleneck* software for two mutational models (A) TPM70 and B)1117TPM95). The average ΔH over all loci is represented by a black dot, and locus-specific values1118are represented by smaller grey dots. The dashed line represents equality between1119observed and expected heterozygosity, *i.e.*, $\Delta H = H_E - H_{Eq} = 0$. Symbols (*) and (NS) indicate

1120	that the one tail probability of $H_E > H_{Eq}$, <i>i.e.</i> , heterozygosity-excess, is significant (p-value <
1121	0.05) or not significant, using Wilcoxon's test. The p-values obtained after correction for
1122	multiple tests are provided in Table S4.
1123	
1124	Figure 4. Effects of sample size on A) the estimation of ΔH (mean +/- standard error) and B)
1125	one-tailed Wilcoxon test p -values obtained with 2 different mutation models (TPM70 and
1126	TPM95), estimated with the software <i>Bottleneck</i> . On panels A) and B), dashed lines
1127	correspond to $H_E = H_{Eq}$ and <i>p</i> -value = 0.05, respectively.
1128	
1129	Figure 5. Likelihood profile of parameters $4N_{E\mu}$ and $4N_{E,past}\mu$ estimated by <i>Migraine</i> (note
1130	the log scale on both axes). The color bar represents the likelihood of parameter values. The
1131	estimates that have the highest likelihood suggest that the ivory gull population has been
1132	increasing.
1133	
1133 1134	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of ΔH calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite
1133 1134 1135	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of Δ H calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population
1133113411351136	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of ΔH calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom
11331134113511361137	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of ΔH calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom figures show the same data with time expressed either in years (A and B) or generations (C
 1133 1134 1135 1136 1137 1138 	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of ΔH calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom figures show the same data with time expressed either in years (A and B) or generations (C and D). The dark blue curve corresponds to a population without overlapping generations
 1133 1134 1135 1136 1137 1138 1139 	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of Δ H calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom figures show the same data with time expressed either in years (A and B) or generations (C and D). The dark blue curve corresponds to a population without overlapping generations (adult survival $v = 0$, generation time $T = 1$ year), while the light blue and grey curves
 1133 1134 1135 1136 1137 1138 1139 1140 	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of Δ H calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom figures show the same data with time expressed either in years (A and B) or generations (C and D). The dark blue curve corresponds to a population without overlapping generations (adult survival $v = 0$, generation time $T = 1$ year), while the light blue and grey curves correspond to adult survival $v = 0.8$ ($T = 4.5$ years) and $v = 0.95$ ($T = 13.4$ years). Increased
 1133 1134 1135 1136 1137 1138 1139 1140 1141 	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of Δ H calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom figures show the same data with time expressed either in years (A and B) or generations (C and D). The dark blue curve corresponds to a population without overlapping generations (adult survival $v = 0$, generation time $T = 1$ year), while the light blue and grey curves correspond to adult survival $v = 0.8$ ($T = 4.5$ years) and $v = 0.95$ ($T = 13.4$ years). Increased generation time logically resulted in a delayed signal of genetic bottleneck (panels A, B). In
 1133 1134 1135 1136 1137 1138 1139 1140 1141 1142 	Figure 6. Temporal dynamics of Δ H calculated from stochastic simulations of microsatellite markers evolving under IAM (panels A and C) or SMM (panels B and D) in a single population that went from 1000 to 250 individuals within a single generation at time 0. Top and bottom figures show the same data with time expressed either in years (A and B) or generations (C and D). The dark blue curve corresponds to a population without overlapping generations (adult survival $v = 0$, generation time $T = 1$ year), while the light blue and grey curves correspond to adult survival $v = 0.8$ ($T = 4.5$ years) and $v = 0.95$ ($T = 13.4$ years). Increased generation time logically resulted in a delayed signal of genetic bottleneck (panels A, B). In addition to that effect, in the IAM case, age structure and overlapping generations also

- 1143 resulted in a reduced bottleneck signal and additional delay not explained by changes in
- 1144 generation time (panel C).

- 1146 Table legends
- 1147
- 1148 **Table 1.** Sampling of ivory gull. $N_{\mu sat}$. and N_{SNP} give the number of sampled individuals used
- 1149 for microsatellites and SNPs analyses, respectively.
- 1150 **Table 2.** Estimates of effective size *N*_E and 95% confidence interval for regional and global
- 1151 populations using the linkage disequilibrium method, based on A) 15 microsatellites and B)
- 1152 3,490 SNPs, considering a maf of 0.02 and 0.05 for microsatellites and SNPs, respectively,
- 1153 and no singleton (No S*).
- 1154
- 1155

- **Table 1.** Sampling of ivory gull. $N_{\mu sat}$. and N_{SNP} give the number of sampled individuals used
- 1157 for microsatellites and SNPs analyses, respectively.

Breeding region	Nb pairs estimated	Location	Site	Abbr.	Status	N _{µsat.}	N _{SNP}
Greenland	2000-2500 ¹	National Park	Station Nord	1_StNo	Unknown	81	11
				2_StBr	Breeding	25	17
Norway	1500-2000 ²	Svalbard	Svenskoya	3_Sven	Breeding	9	9
			Auga	4_Auga	Breeding	18	18
			Hübnerbreen	5_Hubn	Breeding	7	-
			Freemanbreen	6_Free	Breeding	36	20
Russia	10500-15000 ³	Franz Josef Land	Nagurskoje	7_Nagu	Unknown	5	-
			Rudolf Island	8_Rudo	Unknown	17	-
			Eva-Liv Island	9_EvLi	Unknown	5	-
		Severnaya Zemlya	Schmidt Island	10_Schl	Unknown	12	-
			Domashny Island	11_Doma	Unknown	23	-
			Komsomalets Island	12_Koms	Unknown	6	-
		Kara Sea Islands	Heiberg Islands	13_Heil	Unknown	4	-
Canada	400 ⁴	Nunavut	Seymour Island	14_Seyl	Breeding	11	-
			Alert (Ellesmere Island)	15_Alei	Unknown	12	12
Total	14400-19900					271	87

¹ Boertmann *et al.,* (2020), ² Strøm *et al.,* (2020), ³ Gavrilo and Martynova (2017), ⁴ Environment Canada (2014).

- 1162 **Table 2.** Estimates of effective size *N*_E and 95% confidence interval for regional and global
- 1163 populations using the linkage disequilibrium method, based on A) 15 microsatellites and B)

1164 3,490 SNPs, considering a maf of 0.02 and 0.05 for microsatellites and SNPs, respectively,

1165 and no singleton (No S*).

A) Microsatellites								
		0.02			No S*			
	Ν	NE	95% Cls		NE	95% Cls		
Greenland	106	815.2	423.2	6479.9	845.8	460.7	4119.6	
Norway	70	3288 5	196.2	Infinit	<u>801 9</u>	355.0	Infinit	
NOTWAY	70	5200.5	490.2	е	801.9	333.0	е	
Russia	72	728.2	313 1	Infinit	1128.0	398.0	Infinit	
Russia	, 2	720.2	515.1	е	1120.0	350.0	е	
Canada	23	250.6	91 0	Infinit	102 7	51 5	946 5	
cunuuu	25	230.0	51.0	е	102.7	51.5	540.5	
World	271	1138.6	754.0	2204.3	1487.9	990.5	2871.4	

B) SNPs

		0.05			No S*		
	Ν	NE	95% Cls		NE	95% Cls	
Greenland	28	191.0	181.1	201.9	221.8	210.9	233.8
Norway	47	368.9	349.6	390.4	420.1	403.0	438.7
Canada	12	210.6	179.3	254.8	200.2	171.5	240.2
World	87	729.5	689.4	774.3	861.0	828.9	895.6

1166

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1192	COMPETING INTERESTS
1193	The authors declare that they do not have any competing financial interests in relation to
1194	the work described.
1195	
1196	ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
1197	Supplementary information The online version contains supplementary material available
1198	at XXXXXX
1199	
1200	Correspondence should be addressed to Glenn Yannic
1201	
1202	Data availability
1203	Genotypic data are deposited in DRYAD : https://doi.org/10.5061/dryad.j0zpc86gk
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1205	
1206	