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To cite this version:

HAL Id: hal-02733925
https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-02733925
Submitted on 2 Jun 2020

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AquaPony: visualization and interpretation of phylogeographic information on phylogenetic trees

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Introduction

• Visualization and interpretation of phylogeographical scenarios is increasingly used in many biological fields.

• Several tools can infer ancestral traits for internal nodes in a phylogeny. Visualizing such information and its uncertainty remains tedious with current tools. Comparing alternative scenarios is even more complicated.

• We present AquaPony (AP, for « Annotation QUick Analysis on PhyloGeNY »), a web-based tool that facilitates such operations.

Implementation

• AP can be used on the ATGC web platform.
• AP is implemented in JavaScript language, its code source is freely available under Cecill Licence.
• AP is fast enough for displaying very large trees.
• AP can be easily incorporated in other web-based applications.

Software description and main features

• AP takes as input an evolutionary tree, whose nodes are annotated with some inferred traits.

• The input file is parsed to extract annotations that can be drag & dropped from the List of Annotations and the Annotation panel (Fig 1).

• AP displays the tree (Main tree panel), and some chosen subtree (subtree panel) (Fig 2).

• Probabilities of trait states for a node are shown as a piechart, materializing the uncertainty of ancestral annotations (Fig 2).

• Branch supports are represented by color points (given a chosen threshold) (Fig 3).

• The Scenarios panel (Fig 4) displays two alternatives scenarios upon selection of a leaf or node. They are shown as multi-color horizontal bars with the associated time scale.

• To help comparing scenarios, a score that combines the probabilities of their trait states, is computed and displayed right of them.

Conclusions and perspectives

• AP eases some manipulations that remain tedious with other tools as the gestion of the uncertainty and the comparison of alternative phylogeographical scenarios along a branch in the tree.

• AP provides a dynamic interface implemented as a lightweight web-browser, platform independent, application. Its open source code allows for future extensions and new features.

• Extension to visualize evolutionary networks and study of pertinent scenarios’ scores belong to future work.

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