

1 **Integrating genomics, machine learning, and computer**
2 **vision to understand growth traits in selectively bred**
3 **snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*)**
4

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24

25 **Abstract**

26 **Background:** Understanding the genetic basis of growth-related traits is essential for
27 optimising selective breeding programmes in aquaculture species. In this study, we analysed
28 phenotypic and genomic data from a selectively bred population of snapper (*Chrysophrys*
29 *auratus*) to identify genetic variants associated with key growth traits. We used a high-
30 throughput, image-based phenotyping pipeline to extract 13 measurements rapidly and with
31 minimal impact on the fish. These phenotypic measurements, together with manually
32 measured weight and fork length, were analysed for correlations and principal component
33 structure. Additionally, heritabilities were estimated for each trait. Then, genome-wide
34 association studies (GWAS) were performed to identify growth-associated SNPs. To trial
35 genomic prediction, we implemented machine learning (ML) models in XGBoost trained on
36 SNP genotypes, with relatedness-based clustering used to minimise data leakage.

37 **Results:** Via GWAS, we identifying 24 SNPs significantly associated with growth traits, with
38 several mapping to genes involved in metabolic and developmental pathways. Despite the
39 high-dimensionality of these data, the ML approach still achieved moderate levels of
40 predictability. The top ML growth SNPs showed some congruency with the GWAS growth
41 SNPs, and 75 % of the GWAS SNPs were used by the ML model to predict weight.
42 Functional annotation identified putative gene-level effects, providing insights into potential
43 biological mechanisms underlying growth variation.

44 **Conclusions:** Our findings contribute to the development of genomic selection tools for
45 snapper breeding and highlight the utility of integrating computer vision-based phenotyping
46 with GWAS and ML for trait prediction in aquaculture species.

47

48 **Background**

49 Aquaculture breeding programmes urgently need to be expanded to improve food production
50 for a growing global population [1-3]. Breeding can be used not only to enhance
51 economically important traits in existing commercial species, improving production
52 efficiency, but also to help develop new species for aquaculture [4-8]. This latter point is
53 particularly relevant, as new species may better utilize available ocean farming space and be
54 cultivated in regions where aquaculture currently plays a limited role [9]. These
55 advancements hold promise for adding resilience to the sector and creating new economic
56 opportunities in underserved regions.

57 The Australasian snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) has been the focus of research to diversify
58 the aquaculture sector in New Zealand [10-14], with a selective breeding programme initiated
59 in the 1990s [12]. This programme has produced an F₅ generation of selectively enhanced
60 fish that demonstrate superior growth rates, survival, and food conversion ratios compared
61 with wild snapper offspring. The first two selection rounds relied on domestication selection
62 [15], while the F₃, F₄, and F₅ generations were developed using genomics-informed selective
63 breeding to improve growth. An ongoing challenge is improving the selection of highly
64 polygenic traits, such as growth, which exhibit strong positive allometry with traits such as
65 length and weight [16, 17].

66 With the decreasing costs of genome-wide markers and the establishment of robust
67 workflows for managing genomic data and associated bioinformatics pipelines, genetic
68 improvement in aquaculture has advanced from conventional breeding to marker-assisted
69 selection, genomic selection, or a combination of both [16]. However, genomic data is no
70 longer the limiting resource in genetic improvement. Instead, the primary bottleneck lies in
71 the lack of high-throughput and accurate phenotyping methods for aquaculture species such

72 as fish. While some phenomics platforms have been developed for the precise, rapid, and
73 non-invasive measurement of growth traits, platforms for other critical traits—such as disease
74 resistance, stress tolerance, and behaviour—remain significantly underdeveloped [18, 19].

75 Recent advances in novel technologies, including automated imaging and computer vision,
76 diode frame measurements, and deep learning networks, hold promise for addressing this
77 limitation [20-22]. These innovations can facilitate the development of comprehensive
78 phenomics platforms, encompassing phenotyping, data acquisition, and processing, which are
79 critical for better selection of individuals with desirable traits in aquaculture breeding
80 programmes. These phenomics platforms have been integrated in some species [23], but these
81 methods are still under development, particularly for new aquaculture species. Notable
82 examples of automated phenotyping platforms that have been successfully integrated into
83 breeding programmes include rice [24] and bivalves [25]

84 In this study, we employ novel approaches integrating whole-genome information with
85 computer vision-assisted phenotyping to identify genomic markers that could predict growth
86 in future generations. To achieve this, we first develop a high-throughput phenotyping
87 pipeline using deep learning models trained on morphological traits captured via computer
88 vision. This allows for precise, automated measurements of growth dynamics across multiple
89 developmental stages. Next, we compare genome-wide association studies (GWAS) with
90 machine learning approaches to assess the predictive power of individual loci versus
91 polygenic models and identify important variants [26]. By combining these methodologies,
92 we aim to refine the selection process and accelerate genetic gains in snapper breeding,
93 ultimately improving aquaculture productivity and sustainability.

94 **Methods**

95 **Fish rearing and genotyping**

96 The F₄ snapper were generated in November 2021 from the third generation of selectively
97 bred snapper. Fertilized eggs were collected and incubated over a period of 5 days. Larval
98 rearing protocols followed standard methods developed for this species (Samuels et al. 2024).
99 Land-based on-growing of Australasian snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*) was conducted at The
100 New Zealand Institute for Plant and Food Research Limited's (PFR) Research Facility,
101 located in Nelson, New Zealand (41.2985° S, 173.2441° E). This facility is equipped with a
102 flow-through tank system, where water from the Nelson Haven is withdrawn from an
103 engineered aquifer in the intertidal zone filled with various hard substrates that provide
104 filtration. All work was done under the conditions of animal ethics application AEC-2021-
105 PFR-05, approved by the Animal Ethics Committee at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of
106 Technology (Te Pūkenga), along with fish-farm licence FW208.03.

107 Previous work [13] has reported the SNP data for this cohort of fish, where 1103 F₄
108 individuals were genotyped.

109 **Manual and image-based phenotyping**

110 Prior to any measurements, snapper were anaesthetised using AQUI-S® (15–20 ppm), a dose
111 that resulted in a loss of equilibrium and no reaction to net capture. Fish were manually
112 weighed (FX-300i WP scales from A&D Company Limited) and measured at three months of
113 age. Phenotypic measurements (Fig. 1) were made with an in-house computer vision pipeline
114 [12].

115 **[Figure 1 here]**

116 **Data processing and statistical analyses**

117 Phenotypic data were not available for 98 of the genotyped fish. In total, 1011 individual fish
118 were included in this study once the genotyping and phenotyping data were combined. The
119 measured phenotypes were assessed for correlation using the R package corrplot v 0.92. In
120 addition to the directly measured traits, derived phenotypes (condition factor (K) and
121 principal components (PCs)) were computed for inclusion in downstream analyses. K was
122 calculated using the Fulton formula ($K = 100 * \text{weight} / \text{length}^3$). PC analysis was completed
123 using the measured phenotypes and pcomp in R.

124 SNP genotype data were obtained as described in Montanari et al. [13]. SNP positions were
125 remapped from the original snapper reference genome to the updated snapper genome
126 assembly [27] using snplift v 1.0.4. SNPs that could not be lifted over were further processed
127 by extracting a genomic region of 70 bp surrounding each SNP from the original assembly
128 and performing a BLAST search against the new genome assembly. SNPs with multiple
129 mapping locations in the updated genome were excluded, as were SNPs that did not align to
130 the expected chromosome.

131 In order to stratify test and training groups based on genetic relatedness, relatedness clusters
132 were generated based on the similarity of SNP genotype data. Pairwise relatedness
133 coefficients were calculated in R by first centering the SNP matrix by subtracting the column-
134 wise mean genotype value for each SNP across all individuals. The resulting mean-centred
135 genotypes were used to compute the genomic related matrix (GRM) as the dot product of the
136 centred matrix and its transpose divided by the total number of SNPs. Clustering was then
137 performed using k-means clustering with $k = 19$. The resulting clusters were visualized using
138 principal component analysis (PCA) to confirm concordance between the k -means clusters
139 and the genetic structure inferred from PCA. Heritability estimates were calculated for each
140 measured trait using ASREML v4.2 (Butler, Cullis et al. 2023) using a mixed-effects model

141 with fish id as a random effect. Heritability and its standard error were obtained using the
142 vpredict function, based on the ratio of the variance components.

143 **GWAS and machine learning**

144 Three methods (general linear model or GLM, mixed linear model or MLM, and fixed and
145 random model circulating probability unification or FarmCPU) to perform a GWAS were
146 applied using rMVP v1.1.1 [28] for all traits, including condition factor (K) and the
147 phenotypic PC1 (explaining 96.96% of phenotypic variability), and the first two genomic PCs
148 were used as covariates. Downstream analyses were performed only using the SNPs
149 identified by the FarmCPU method, which improves power and reduces false positives by
150 iteratively applying a fixed-effect model to test SNPs while using a random-effect model to
151 control for confounding factors.

152 Genomic prediction analyses were performed using the *XGBoost* [29] algorithm in the R
153 package xgboost v1.7.8.1. Models were tuned using tidymodels v1.2.0 with 5-fold cross-
154 validation. Performance was evaluated using root mean square error (rmse) as a metric. To
155 minimise potential data leakage due to genetic relatedness, the dataset was partitioned into
156 training (80%) and testing (20%) subsets based on the relatedness clusters identified above.
157 Principal components 1 and 2 of the SNP dataset were included as covariates to account for
158 genetic relatedness in the predictive models. To avoid overfitting with too many features, a
159 model was also run for weight using a subset of the SNPs, namely the top 500 SNPs when
160 ranked using the p values from the FarmCPU GWAS. The *XGBoost* importance matrix was
161 extracted to assess the number of features used by each model and for comparison to the
162 SNPs identified as significantly associated with each trait. The top 10 SNPs in each XGBoost
163 model, as determined by gain, were extracted for further functional analyses.

164 SNP functional annotation was performed via snpEff v 5.2 [30] using the genome assembly
165 and snapper specific annotations from previous work [27]. Functional profiling was
166 performed with g:GOST on the g:profiler website [31]. Other functional information was
167 gathered from the Zebrafish Information Network (ZFIN) [32].

168 **Results**

169 **Phenotypic and genotypic variation**

170 Summary statistics for each of the 15 measured phenotypes across the 1011 fish can be found
171 in Table 1. Weight ranged from 7.46g to 45.19g, while fork length ranged from 74.47mm to
172 123.03mm. Across the height measurements, the biggest variation was at 75% of the length
173 of the fish, with 24.25mm difference between the minimum and maximum. Overall, traits
174 were highly positively correlated with each other (Fig. 2), and 96.96% of the phenotypic
175 variance was explained by PC1 of the phenotypes. Correlation coefficients ranged from 0.27
176 (eye width vs. distance between the caudal peduncle and pectoral joint) to 1 (fork length
177 versus distances between each lip and the tail fork, and distance between top lip and tail and
178 distance between bottom lip and tail fork) (Fig. 2).

179 **[Figure 2 here]**

180 **Table 1.** Phenotypic measurements.

Measurement	Landmarks	min	mean	max	h^2	SE
weight_g	-	7.46	25.46	45.19	0.38	0.05
fork_length_mm	-	74.47	104.68	123.03	0.33	0.05
total_length_mm	1-11	80.10	112.61	132.73	0.34	0.05
standard_length_mm	2-9	66.93	95.31	112.27	0.33	0.05
eye_width_mm	3-5	5.83	7.66	9.16	0.20	0.05
top_lip_tail_fork_mm	2-10	73.50	103.60	121.70	0.34	0.05
bottom_lip_tail_fork_mm	1-10	73.40	103.55	122.03	0.34	0.05
eye_caudal_peduncle_mm	4-9	53.97	79.75	94.50	0.33	0.05
caudal_peduncle_pectoral_joint_mm	9-15	41.03	62.83	75.50	0.33	0.05

eye_pectoral_joint_mm	4-15	15.70	21.14	25.37	0.31	0.05
eye_top_lip_mm	2-4	8.87	12.04	15.77	0.24	0.05
pectoral_joint_top_lip_mm	2-15	20.83	27.60	33.87	0.25	0.05
height_0.25_mm	6-14	23.70	36.68	46.10	0.33	0.05
height_0.5_mm	7-13	25.53	37.56	46.77	0.38	0.05
height_0.75_mm	8-12	0.60	13.65	24.85	0.26	0.05

181 A summary of each measured phenotype including the landmarks the measurements were taken from in the
182 images as indicated in Figure 1, minimum, mean, maximum, estimated heritability (h^2), and standard error of the
183 estimated heritability (SE) of each measurement across the 1011 fish. Weight is in grams, and all other
184 measurements in mm. Weight and fork length were measured manually, and all other measurements from the
185 computer vision pipeline.

186 In total, after QC and SNP lift over, 11,006 SNPs were included in downstream analyses.

187 Genetic relatedness corresponded to the clusters on the PCA plot, and PC1 explained 7.55%

188 of the variance in the SNPs, while PC2 explained 5.63% (Fig. 3). Estimated heritabilities

189 ranged from 0.201 (eye_width_mm) to 0.3792 (height_0.5_mm). Notably, the estimated

190 heritability of weight was also moderately high at 0.3775 (Table 1).

191 **[Figure 3 here]**

192 **Identifying growth-related SNPs using GWAS**

193 **[Figure 4 here]**

194 Of the three GWAS methods included in rMVP, MLM identified no associated SNPs with

195 any phenotypes, GLM showed spurious p-value inflation for almost all p-values [See

196 Additional file 1, Figure S1], and the number of SNPs identified by FarmCPU (Fig. 4) as

197 being significantly associated with a trait ranged from two

198 (caudal_peduncle_pectoral_joint_mm) to eight (eye_top_lip_mm). For PC1 of the phenotype,

199 seven significant SNPs were identified. Across all phenotypes (including phenotypic PC1 and

200 K), 24 SNPs were found to be associated, with 16 being unique to the trait they were

201 identified in, and eight shared across at least two phenotypes [See Additional file 2, Table

202 S1]. Significant SNPs were distributed across 14 of the 24 chromosomes in the snapper

203 genome with the highest number of SNPs (three each) on chromosomes 2 and 3 where each

204 chromosome harboured three significant SNPs (Fig. 5). The 24 SNPs were found to affect 10
205 genes with modifier effects [See Additional file 2, Table S1]. Of these genes, four
206 (OSBPL3B, PDE4DIP, ZDHHC3A, LEAP2) were found to be targets of transcription factor
207 *p53*, and six (CLSTN2A, OSBPL3B, PDE4DIP, SOAT1, TPST1, ZDHHC3A) were found to
208 be targets of the transcription factor *Sox-10*. The two SNPs that were significant across the
209 most phenotypes were found to affect genes interacting with *Sox-10*. The other genes affected
210 by these SNPs were an ATP synthase (*atp5pf*), a glutamate receptor (*grik5*), and a potassium
211 voltage-gated channel (*kcna7*).

212 **[Figure 5 here]**

213 **Identifying growth-related SNPs using machine learning**

214 The machine learning (ML) approach to identifying growth-related SNPs was limited to five
215 traits (weight, fork length, condition factor, distance between eye and top lip, and PC1 of all
216 measured phenotypes). Weight and fork length were included as common production targets
217 for breeding programmes, condition factor was included as a derived trait combining weight
218 and length information, and distance between the eye and top lip was also included since this
219 had the most SNPs significantly associated in the GWAS, and PC1 of the phenotypes as a
220 combined metric of all measured phenotypes. R^2 values of the training data (80%) ranged
221 from 0.671 to 0.975, while the same measure in test data (20%) ranged between 0.0675 and
222 0.283 (Table 2). In total, 29 different SNPs were identified in the top 10 of each of the three
223 directly measured traits, and one SNP was shared between the models for weight and
224 condition factor. These 29 SNPs were distributed across 18 chromosomes and 1 scaffold, with
225 the most SNPs per chromosome being four each on chromosomes 2 and 12 (Fig. 5). These 29
226 SNPs were found to impact 24 genes, but no significant Gene Ontology (GO) terms or other
227 interactions were identified [See Additional file 2, Table S1]. There was no direct overlap

228 between the SNPs identified via GWAS and those identified here, however one GWAS SNP
229 and one machine learning SNP were within 0.5 Mbp of each other on chromosome 2, and
230 another ML SNP on chromosome 3 was within 0.5 Mbp of a QTL identified as being
231 involved in weight in previous work [27]. Additionally, another ML SNP on chromosome 6
232 was within 1 Mbp of a QTL identified in previous work. Additional clusters of 3 ML only
233 SNPs were within 1Mbp of each other on chromosome 12 (Fig. 5). However, of the 24
234 growth-associated GWAS SNPs, four were used directly by the ML model for weight, nine
235 were directly neighbouring SNPs used by the same ML model, and a further five were within
236 five SNPs of one used by the weight ML model. The remainder (six SNPs) were further than
237 five SNPs away from any SNP in the weight model feature list.

238 **Table 2.** Machine learning summary statistics.

Trait	Root mean squared error (test)	R ² test	Root mean squared error (train)	R ² train	Features used by model
K	0.132	0.241	0.1	0.671	2607
weight	5.97	0.146	3.94	0.71	2739
eye_top_lip	0.965	0.0675	0.221	0.975	5103
weight*	5.46	0.283	1.85	0.930	394

239 Summary statistics and number of features used by the XGBoost model in training (80%) and testing (20%) data
240 for condition factor (K), weight, and distance between the eye and top lip. The weight* represents an XGBoost
241 model using only the top 500 most significant SNPs as identified by a GWAS for weight.

242 Discussion

243 Selecting individuals for breeding programmes to enhance food production sustainability and
244 improve animal welfare is a global priority [2, 33]. Traditionally, selection has relied solely
245 on phenotypic data to identify desirable individuals carrying traits of interest. However, the
246 advent of molecular tools, and more recently, genomic technologies, has significantly
247 improved the ability to capture the genetic basis of selection traits [16]. This has enhanced the
248 precision of selection and enabled genetic improvement before animals reach maturity or
249 express the target traits [7, 34]. In parallel, advances in machine learning computer vision and

250 AI technology have facilitated the digital extraction of phenotypic data from animals and
251 plants, improving the accuracy of measuring economically important production and welfare
252 traits [18, 19]. Integrating these high-dimensional datasets remains a complex challenge, and
253 recent efforts have focused on combining dense genomic datasets with multiple phenotypic
254 traits to optimize breeding selection, with some notable examples [24, 35]. In this study, we
255 apply computer vision techniques to extract individual trait information from images of an
256 F₄-selected line of Australasian snapper (*Chrysophrys auratus*). We integrate this phenotypic
257 data with genome-wide SNP chip data to identify genomic regions associated with growth,
258 thereby improving selection accuracy in breeding programmes. Our study highlights the
259 relatively high heritability of growth traits, strong correlations among measured phenotypes,
260 and the significant genetic components underlying these traits. The high phenotypic variance
261 explained by PC1 underscores the interconnectedness of growth-related traits, while the
262 identification of 24 significant SNPs, many of which were significant for multiple traits,
263 across multiple chromosomes emphasizes the polygenic nature of these growth-related traits.
264 Notably, the overlap of SNPs with genes linked to metabolic pathways and appetite signalling
265 suggests a biological basis for growth differences that could inform future breeding
266 strategies.

267 This work highlights the predicted impact that high throughput phenotyping can have on
268 breeding programmes [19]. If the GWAS could only focus on weight and fork length as
269 measured manually, only six SNPs would be identified as being important in growth traits.
270 However, when all traits were analysed, 22 SNPs could be identified. Additionally, when all
271 traits were combined into a single trait via a PCA approach, two additional growth associated
272 SNPs could be identified, bringing the total to 24 associated SNPs. Improved digital
273 phenotyping via computer vision enables the inclusion of more traits, while also requiring
274 less handling effort from staff and less stress for the fish being measured [18]. There is strong

275 potential for this method to be expanded to underwater phenotyping, rather than relying on
276 benchtop images. Additionally, other approaches to reducing phenotypic dimensionality, such
277 as clustering by overall body shape, could be explored in future. Doing so would lead to
278 greater understanding of commercially important fish phenotypes beyond growth directly.
279 This could be linked to other phenotypes, such as fillet size and fat composition, and would
280 further increase the understanding of the genetic architecture underlying fish phenotypes
281 independently of their relationship to fish size.

282 Growth-related traits are typically considered highly-polygenic, and even in studies with
283 large sample size and high SNP numbers, these traits are often still poorly predicted [36]. The
284 identification, however, of SNPs with impacts on genes involved in *p53* and *Sox10* pathways
285 does suggest plausible biological mechanisms for these SNPs to influence growth traits in
286 snapper. Although *p53* has mostly been examined in a stress response role in species relevant
287 to aquaculture [37, 38], it has been successfully targeted for knockout in pig myoblasts for
288 cultured meat [39] and has also been implicated in muscle development in quail [40]. Despite
289 the broad cellular functions of *p53*, it is therefore plausible that it is involved in snapper
290 growth via indirect routes related to stress response, or more directly involved in muscle cell
291 growth. Meanwhile, *Sox10* also has broad biological activity across the neural crest [41], but
292 could influence snapper growth through its involvement in the enteric nervous system [42,
293 43]. Similarly, some of the genes impacted by growth-associated SNPs identified via ML
294 approaches have plausible biological links to growth, despite the lack of significant GO
295 terms. Of note, *coll1a1b* encodes for a subunit of collagen, an essential component of animal
296 tissues that has been found to be highly expressed in zebrafish muscle [44]. Additionally,
297 *mad211bp* is involved in regulating mitosis and has also been found to be in the *p53* network
298 as well [45]. Several genes (e.g. *nos1*, *csf3r*, *cst*, *mad211bp*, *gimap4*, *mrps15*) are implicated
299 in stress and immune responses in fish and other species [46-52]. While the involvement of

300 these two pathways and other biological mechanisms in growth directly cannot be confirmed
301 with our current data, this highlights the complex and polygenic nature of growth related
302 traits [17] and provides further candidate genes and variants for functional studies
303 investigating growth in snapper or related species. This complex and multi-pathway
304 architecture of growth-related traits is consistent with studies of similar traits, with thousands
305 of SNPs implicated to explain similar levels of heritability of height in humans in even the
306 most powerful of studies [36].

307 This work has deepened our understanding of growth-related traits in snapper. The
308 heritabilities reported here are comparable to, but slightly higher than those previously
309 reported in this species [11]. The increased estimates could be explained by a number of
310 factors, including the generation of the fish included, the age at which the measurements were
311 taken, and the changes in phenotypic and genetic diversity through the breeding programme
312 [12].

313 While machine learning approaches such as XGBoost demonstrated strong predictive ability
314 in the training dataset, the lower R^2 values observed in the test dataset highlight challenges in
315 accurately capturing complex phenotypic traits. These limitations may stem from factors such
316 as sample size constraints and the inherent complexity of the traits under selection. Despite
317 this, we did see concordance between the regions identified in machine learning approaches,
318 the GWAS herein, and previous studies in snapper [10, 27, 53]. Additionally, other studies
319 have noted marked improvement in understanding the genetic basis of complex traits by
320 increasing genomic marker panels included in these types of analyses [54]. Future studies
321 should aim to expand sample sizes, and the number of genetic markers analysed to enhance
322 model robustness and improve predictive accuracy. Despite these challenges, our findings
323 provide a foundation for refining genomic prediction models and incorporating novel
324 phenotypic datasets to improve trait predictability and selection efficiency in breeding

325 programmes. We suggest that future work should also continue to focus on the integration of
326 multiple approaches—including computer vision, traditional genetic analyses, and machine
327 learning for genomic prediction—to explore additional avenues of improving selection
328 strategies. However, in all of this, overcoming the high dimensionality of genomic and
329 phenomic data remains a key obstacle.

330 **Conclusions**

331 In conclusion, our study demonstrates that even with relatively small sample sizes,
332 meaningful insights can be gained to support decision-making in breeding programmes.
333 Growth is a well-known polygenic trait, and even though genomic dissections have been
334 challenging because of the low effect sizes of most genetic variants [17], our study is in line
335 with other work showing that careful design allows the discovery of novel polygenic variants
336 [55, 56]. Future research may explore deep learning methods, such as neural networks, which
337 have shown improved predictive power. However, their application must be balanced against
338 the need for interpretability, as these models often lack transparency in identifying causal
339 genetic relationships.

340 **Declarations**

341 **Ethics approval and consent to participate**

342 All work was done under the conditions of animal ethics application AEC-2021-PFR-05,
343 approved by the Animal Ethics Committee at the Nelson Marlborough Institute of
344 Technology (Te Pūkenga), along with fish-farm licence FW208.03.

345 **Consent for publication**

346 Not applicable

347 **Availability of data and materials**

348 The genotyping data used in this work are already published [13] as is the genome assembly
349 [27]. Both these datasets are available with permission from representatives of Māori iwi
350 (tribes). Guardianship of these datasets are managed by the Aotearoa Genomic Data
351 Repository [57].

352 **Competing Interests**

353 The authors declare they have no competing interests.

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361 **Authors’ contributions**

362 JB analysed and interpreted the data and was a major contributor to writing the manuscript.
363 PEB analysed and interpreted the data and contributed to writing the manuscript. DA and GS
364 provided the pipeline for analysing the phenotypic data. LJ contributed to data analysis. MW
365 was a major contributor to writing the manuscript. All authors read and approved the final
366 manuscript.

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519 **Figures**

520 **Figure 1** An example output of the computer vision phenotyping.

521 The contours of fish body parts (orange) and landmarks (white points) used for each of the 13
522 measurements gathered by this pipeline (purple). The white line indicates a scale bar of
523 50mm. The labelled points indicate landmarks used for measurements from the computer
524 vision pipeline. Landmarks are 1- bottom lip, 2- top lip, 3 and 5- the left and right edges of
525 the eye respectively, 4- centre of the eye, 6 and 14- top and bottom of the fish at 25% of its
526 total length respectively, 7 and 13- top and bottom of the fish at 50% of its total length
527 respectively, 8 and 12- top and bottom of the fish at 75% of its total length respectively, 9-
528 peduncle, 10- tail fork, 11- total length end point.

529 **Figure 2** Correlation matrix of all 15 measured traits in this study.

530 The colour and shape of each ellipse represents the R^2 value for that correlation (written in
531 the corresponding box for each correlation). R^2 values were only included where p-values
532 were < 0.05 .

533 **Figure 3** Principal component (PC) clustering based on the SNP chip genotypes.

534 Each point represents an individual fish (n=1011). Clusters are coloured based on relatedness
535 clusters determined by *k*-means clustering (k=19) of a genetic relatedness matrix.

536 **Figure 4** GWAS results from FarmCPU within rMVP for weight at 3 months of age.

537 Chromosomes shown on the y-axis, with SNP density in a heat map below the Manhattan
538 plot of $\log(p)$ values). The significance threshold ($\log(p) = 5.34$) is shown as a red dashed line.

539 **Figure 5** The distribution of SNPs and QTLs across the snapper genome involved in growth
540 phenotypes.

541 QTLs identified in previous work are shown in teal, and SNPs identified in this study via
542 GWAS in purple and machine learning in red.

543 **Additional files**

544 **Additional file 1 Figure S1**

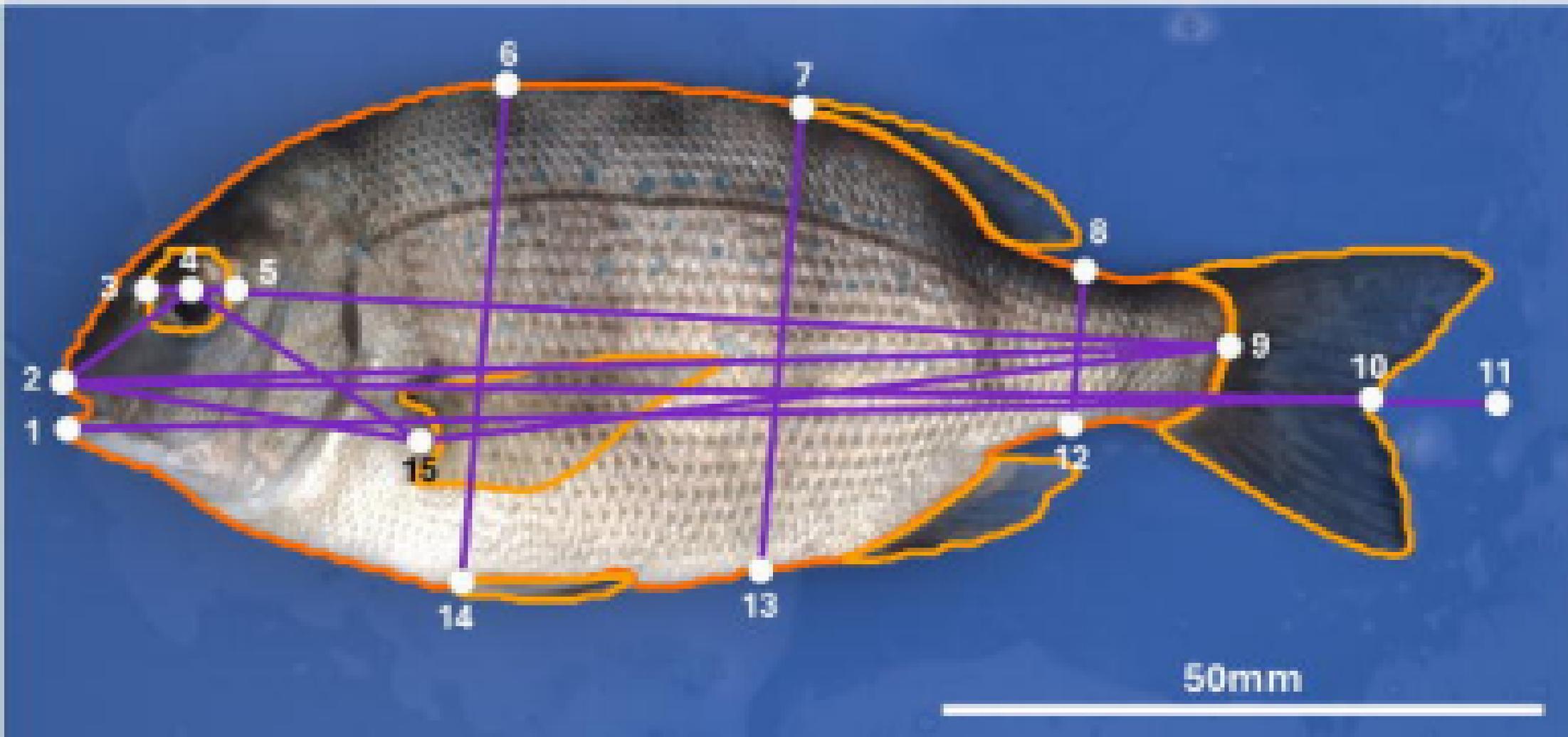
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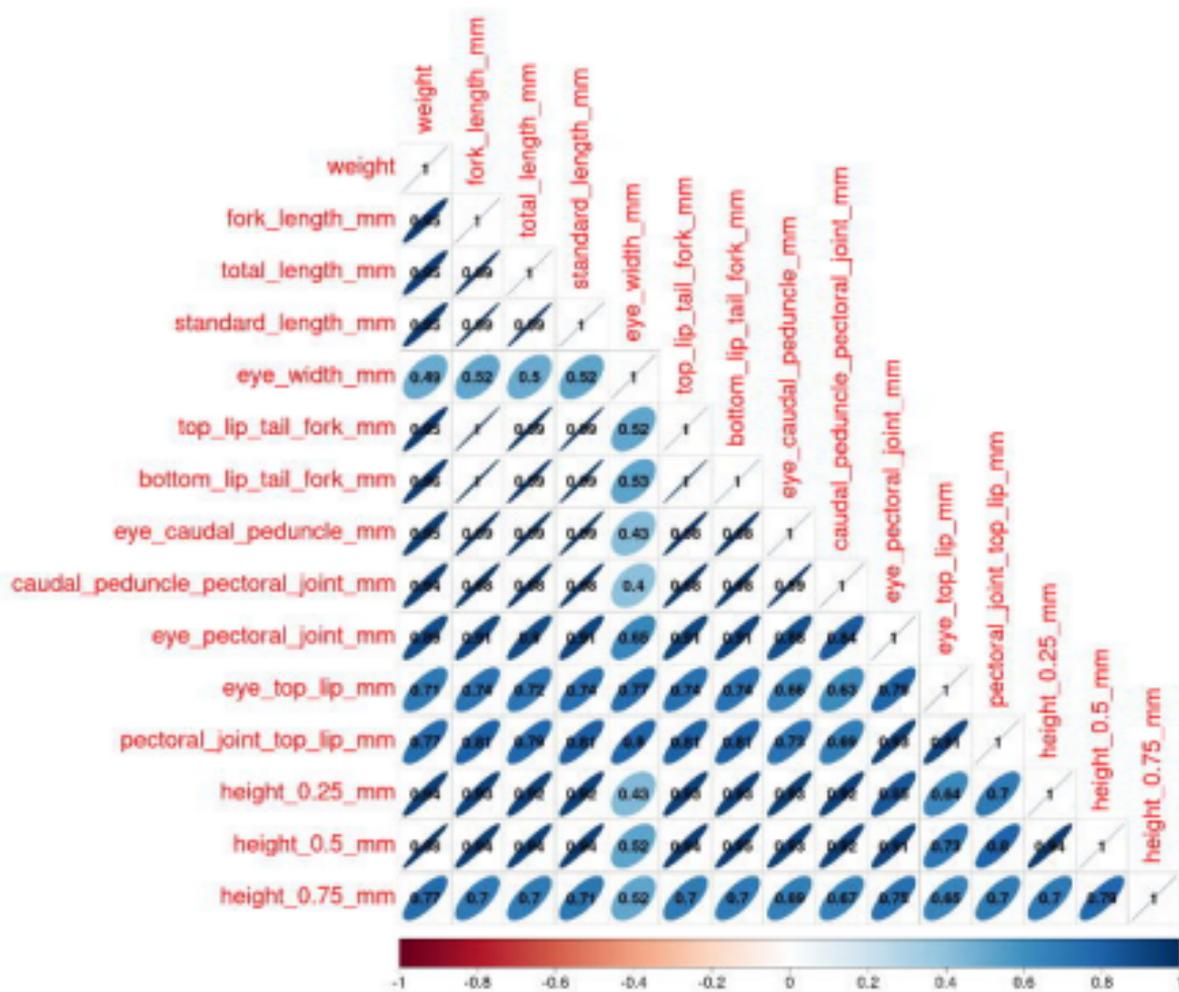
546 Title: A Quantile-quantile plot showing the observed versus expected $-\log_{10}(p)$ values for the
547 GWAS for weight using three different methods

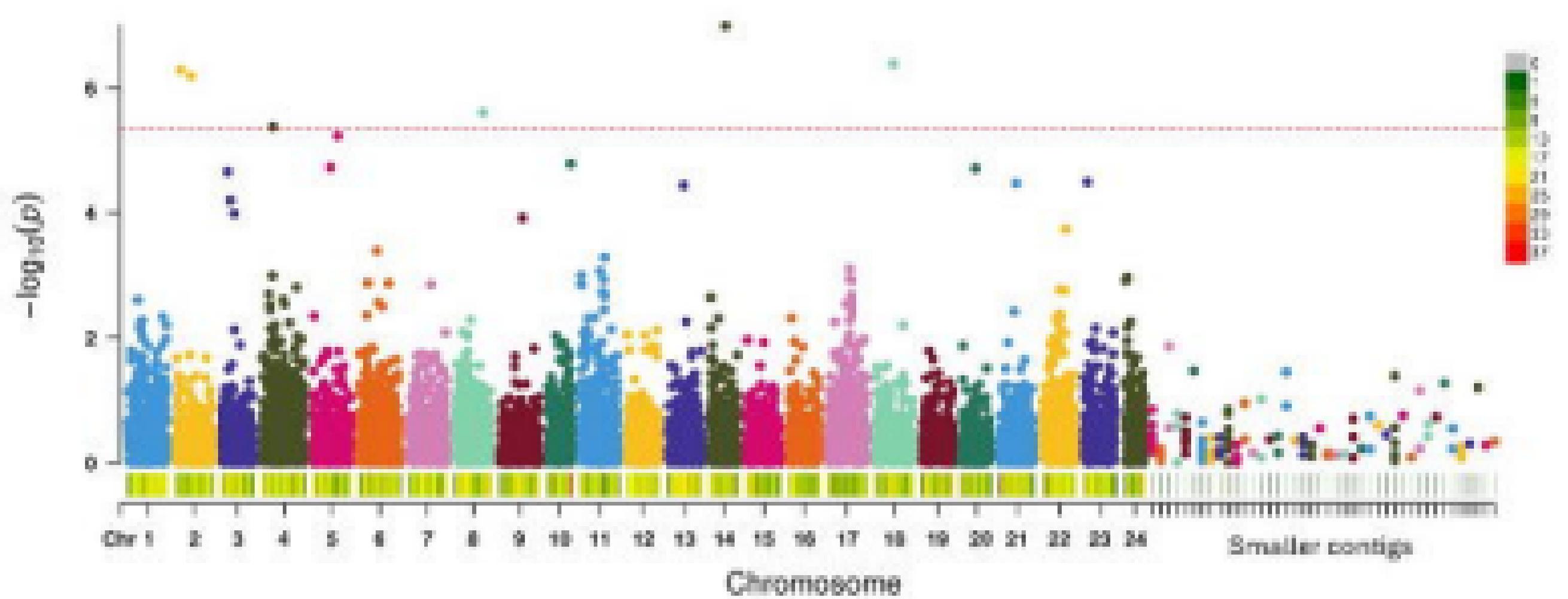
548 **Additional file 2 Table S1**

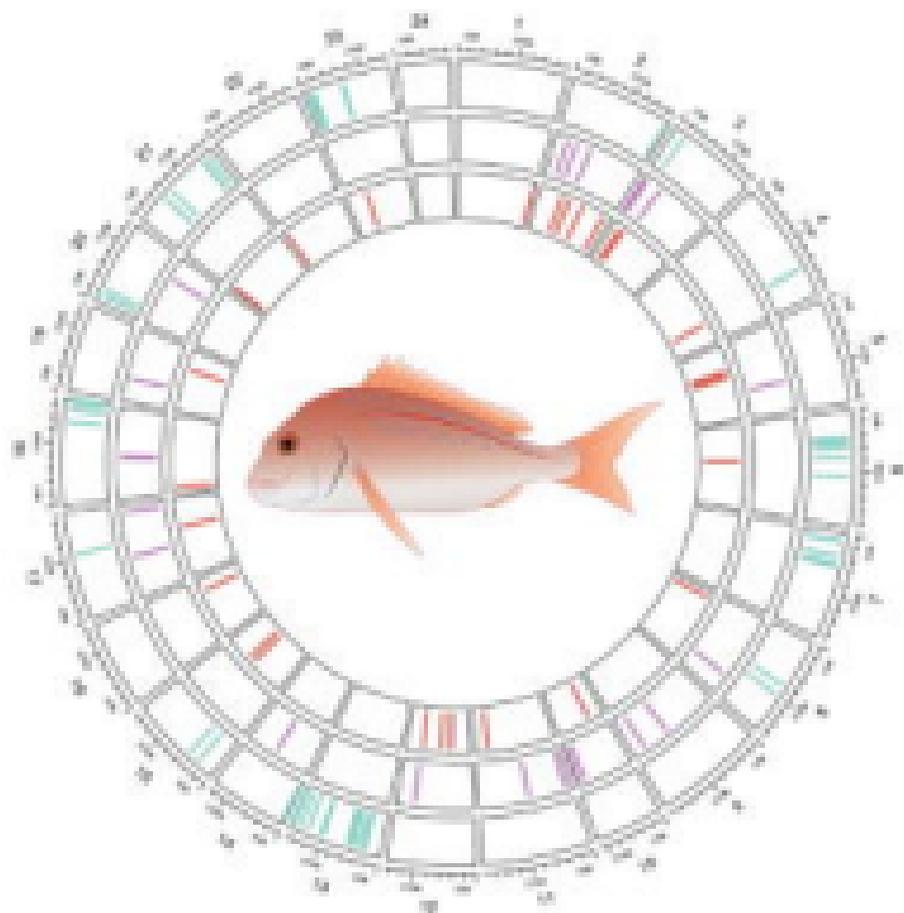
549 Format: XLSX

550 Title: SNPs identified as being significant across all GWAS tests performed









— Previous growth markers — Significant SNPs (GWAS) — Top SNPs (ML)