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Interactive comment on “Biogeography of jellyfish in the North Atlantic, by traditional and genomic methods” by P. Licandro et al.

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The scope of this paper is to illustrate in a detailed manner new data on jellyfish produced within the EU project EUROBASIN, now available to the wide community through the PANGEA database. As stated on the web-site of the Earth System Science Data (ESSD) journal (http://www.earth-system-science-data.net/about/aims_and_scope.html), any data interpretation is outside the scope of regular ESSD articles. Our paper thus, does not intend to provide a comprehensive review on jellyfish in the North Atlantic, or compare present and previous observations in order to verify whether jellyfish have indeed increased in that region. A paper that will discuss such issues using these newly produced data will follow.

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To avoid any confusion, we have now modified the first paragraph in the abstract to make clear that our aim is to present sampling and analysis methods that can be used to broaden the currently limited baseline of available jellyfish data so as to enable better monitoring of these taxa in the next decades and help answer the remaining question of whether jellyfish really are on the rise or not. We thank the reviewer for pointing out a list of publications relevant to the above-mentioned debate. We intend to cite them in the ‘ecological’ paper (at present in preparation) that will compare this jellyfish dataset with previous observations.

We do agree with the reviewer that the literature useful for the taxonomic identification of jellyfish represents a very important piece of information. Therefore the main references that we have used for this scope, i.e. the monograph on Hydrozoa of Bouillon et al., 2006 as well as other key taxonomic references [Russel, 1953; Kramp, 1959; Mianzan & Cornelius, 1999; Pugh, 1999; Kirkpatrick & Pugh, 1984; Wrobel & Mills, 1998; Haddock et al., 2005; Carré and Carré, 1993; Licandro & Carré, 2006; Mills & Haddock, 2007; Collins et al., 2008; Mapstone, 2009; Schuchert, 2012] are now included in the list of references.

Finally we do agree with the reviewer that citizen science data provide a valuable contribution to fill the gap of information on jellyfish abundance and diversity, as virtually everywhere jellyfish have been understudied for many years. Though we shouldn't forget that citizen science data are mainly limited to relatively large jellyfish species, detectable to the naked eye, generally of simple taxonomic identification. A proper evaluation of jellyfish abundance and diversity does still require an integration of citizen science data with quantitative information collected in different ways (e.g. nets, video systems) within regular monitoring programs.

Interactive comment on Earth Syst. Sci. Data Discuss., 7, 629, 2014.

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