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*Research Articles: Systems/Circuits*

**Gaze-stabilizing central vestibular neurons project asymmetrically to extraocular motoneuron pools**

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# 1 Gaze-stabilizing central vestibular neurons project 2 asymmetrically to extraocular motoneuron pools

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## 15 Abstract

16 Within reflex circuits, specific anatomical projections allow central neurons to relay  
17 sensations to effectors that generate movements. A major challenge is to relate  
18 anatomical features of central neural populations — such as asymmetric connectivity  
19 — to the computations the populations perform. To address this problem, we mapped  
20 the anatomy, modeled the function, and discovered a new behavioral role for a  
21 genetically-defined population of central vestibular neurons in rhombomeres 5-7 of  
22 larval zebrafish. First, we found that neurons within this central population project  
23 preferentially to motoneurons that move the eyes downward. Concordantly, when the  
24 entire population of asymmetrically-projecting neurons was stimulated collectively,  
25 only downward eye rotations were observed, demonstrating a functional correlate of  
26 the anatomical bias. When these neurons are ablated, fish failed to rotate their eyes  
27 following either nose-up or nose-down body tilts. This asymmetrically-projecting central  
28 population thus participates in both up and downward gaze stabilization. In addition to  
29 projecting to motoneurons, central vestibular neurons also receive direct sensory input  
30 from peripheral afferents. To infer whether asymmetric projections can facilitate sensory  
31 encoding or motor output, we modeled differentially-projecting sets of central vestibular  
32 neurons. Whereas motor command strength was independent of projection allocation,  
33 asymmetric projections enabled more accurate representation of nose-up stimuli.  
34 The model shows how asymmetric connectivity could enhance the representation of  
35 imbalance during nose-up postures while preserving gaze-stabilization performance.  
36 Finally, we found that central vestibular neurons were necessary for a vital behavior  
37 requiring maintenance of a nose-up posture: swim bladder inflation. These observations  
38 suggest that asymmetric connectivity in the vestibular system facilitates representation  
39 of ethologically-relevant stimuli without compromising reflexive behavior.  
40

## 41 Significance Statement

42 Interneuron populations use specific anatomical projections to transform sensations

43 into reflexive actions. Here we examined how the anatomical composition of a  
44 genetically-defined population of balance interneurons in the larval zebrafish relates to  
45 the computations it performs. First, we found that the population of interneurons that  
46 stabilize gaze preferentially project to motoneurons that move the eyes downward.  
47 Next, we discovered through modeling that such projection patterns can enhance the  
48 encoding of nose-up sensations without compromising gaze stabilization. Finally we  
49 found that loss of these interneurons impairs a vital behavior, swim bladder inflation, that  
50 relies on maintaining a nose-up posture. These observations suggest that anatomical  
51 specialization permits neural circuits to represent relevant features of the environment  
52 without compromising behavior.

53

## 54 Introduction

55 Neural circuits utilize populations of interneurons to relay sensation to downstream  
56 effectors that in turn generate behavior. The anatomical composition of interneuron  
57 populations has provided insight into its function. For example, interneuron populations  
58 are often organized into maps composed of non-uniformly sized sets of neurons  
59 similarly sensitive to particular features (Kaas, 1997). Such visual topography in the  
60 thalamus (Connolly and Essen, 1984) and cortex (Daniel and Whitteridge, 1961)  
61 magnifies the input from the central visual field. This magnification is thought to underlie  
62 enhanced perceptual acuity (Duncan and Boynton, 2003). Preferential anatomical  
63 organization is thought to facilitate adaptive olfactory (Hansson and Stensmyr,  
64 2011), visual (Barlow, 1981; Xu et al., 2006), somatosensory (Adrian, 1941; Catania  
65 and Remple, 2002), and auditory (Bendor and Wang, 2006; Knudsen et al., 1987)  
66 computations. However, little is known about how these anatomical asymmetries  
67 within populations of sensory interneurons determine the activity of their target motor  
68 effectors. Motor anatomy shares a similar uneven organization (Kuypers, 2011), but  
69 the complex spatiotemporal encoding of muscle synergies have made comparable  
70 dissection of motor circuits more challenging (Harrison and Murphy, 2014; Levine  
71 et al., 2012; Shenoy et al., 2013). Even where descending cortical (Lemon, 2008)  
72 or brainstem (Esposito et al., 2014) neurons synapse directly on motoneurons, the  
73 complexity of most behaviors make it difficult to relate anatomy to function. Data relating  
74 the anatomical projections of interneuron populations to their function is needed to  
75 address this problem.

76 By virtue of their defined connectivity, interneurons within central reflex circuits offer  
77 the opportunity to explore the relationship between population-level anatomical  
78 properties and function in a simpler framework. Vestibular interneurons, an ancient and  
79 highly conserved population, transform body/head destabilization into commands for  
80 compensatory behaviors such as posture and gaze stabilization (Straka and Baker,  
81 2013; Straka et al., 2014; Szentágothai, 1964). Gaze-stabilizing vestibular brainstem  
82 neurons receive innervation from peripheral balance afferents (Uchino et al., 2001) and  
83 use highly stereotyped axonal projections to particular extraocular motoneuron targets  
84 that produce directionally-specific eye movements (Iwamoto et al., 1990b; McCrea et  
85 al., 1987; Uchino et al., 1982). One anatomical and physiological characterization of  
86 up/down-sensitive vestibular neurons in the cat suggested a potential 3:1 bias towards

87 neurons responsible for downward eye movements (Iwamoto et al., 1990a) However,  
88 extracellular recording experiments may be subject to selection bias. Further, as  
89 selective activation has been impossible, whether there are functional correlates of  
90 putative anatomical specialization remains unknown.

91 To study the relationship between the anatomical specializations of interneuron  
92 populations and their functions, we investigated a genetically-defined population  
93 of vestibular brainstem neurons in a model vertebrate, the larval zebrafish. Larval  
94 zebrafish face well-defined challenges that necessitate control of body orientation in  
95 the vertical/pitch axis (i.e. nose-up/nose-down). First, larval zebrafish rely on vestibular  
96 sensation to guide upward swimming to the water's surface to gulp air and inflate their  
97 swim bladders, a vital organ necessary to maintain buoyancy (Goolish and Okutake,  
98 1999; Riley and Moorman, 2000). Further, fish actively maintain a nose-up posture  
99 (Ehrlich and Schoppik, 2017), permitting them to efficiently maintain their position in  
100 the water column despite being slightly denser than their surroundings (Aleyev, 1977;  
101 Stewart and McHenry, 2010). Larval zebrafish utilize vestibular brainstem neurons to  
102 stabilize gaze by performing torsional and vertical eye movements (Bianco et al., 2012).  
103 These same neurons project to nuclei responsible for movement initiation and pitch  
104 tilts (Pavlova and Deliagina, 2002; Severi et al., 2014; Thiele et al., 2014; Wang and  
105 McLean, 2014).

106 We leveraged known properties of the gaze-stabilization circuit to relate the anatomy of  
107 a genetically-defined population of vestibular brainstem neurons and their function. Our  
108 study reports three major findings. First, we discovered that central vestibular neurons in  
109 rhombomeres 5-7 (r5-r7) project preferentially to extraocular motoneurons that move the  
110 eyes down. Ablation of these neurons eliminates counter-rotation of the eyes following  
111 body tilts, establishing a role in gaze-stabilization. Second, modeling revealed that  
112 asymmetrically projecting neurons could enhance the capacity to represent nose-up  
113 stimuli without compromising gaze-stabilization. Third, we discovered that fish do not  
114 inflate their swim bladders following ablation of these interneurons. Taken together,  
115 our data suggest that the anatomical specialization we observe permits sensory  
116 specialization while maintaining reflexive capabilities.

117

## 118 **Methods**

### 119 **Fish Care**

120 All protocols and procedures involving zebrafish were approved by the Harvard  
121 University Faculty of Arts & Sciences Standing Committee on the Use of Animals in  
122 Research and Teaching (IACUC). All larvae were raised at 28.5° C, on a standard 14/10  
123 hour light/dark cycle at a density of no more than 20-50 fish in 25-40mL of buffered  
124 E3 (1mM HEPES added). When possible, experiments were done on the *mitfa*<sup>-/-</sup>  
125 background to remove pigment; alternatively, 0.003% phenylthiourea was added to  
126 the medium from 24hpf onwards and changed daily. Larvae were used from 2 days  
127 post-fertilization (dpf) to 11 dpf. During this time, zebrafish larvae have not determined  
128 their sex.

### 129 **Behavior**

130 Torsional eye movements were measured following step tilts delivered using an  
131 apparatus similar in design to (Bianco et al., 2012). All experiments took place in the  
132 dark. Larval fish were immobilized completely in 2% low-melting temperature agar  
133 (Thermo Fisher 16520), and the left eye was freed. The agar was then pinned (0.1mm  
134 stainless minuten pins, FST) to a 5mm<sup>2</sup> piece of Sylgard 184 (Dow Corning) which  
135 was itself pinned to Sylgard 184 at the bottom of a 10mm<sup>2</sup> optical glass cuvette (Azzota,  
136 via Amazon). The cuvette was filled with 1mL of E3 and placed in a custom holder on a  
137 5-axis (X,Y,Z,pitch,roll) manipulator (ThorLabs MT3 and GN2). The fish was aligned with  
138 the optical axes of two orthogonally placed cameras such that both the left utricle and  
139 two eyes were level with the horizon (front camera).

140 The eye-monitoring camera (Guppy Pro 2 F-031, Allied Vision Technologies) used a  
141 5x objective (Olympus MPLN, 0.1 NA) and custom image-forming optics to create a  
142 100x100 pixel image of the left eye of the fish (6  $\mu\text{m}/\text{pixel}$ ), acquired at 200Hz. The  
143 image was processed on-line by custom pattern matching software to derive an estimate  
144 of torsional angle (LabView, National Instruments), and data were analyzed using  
145 custom MATLAB scripts (Mathworks, Natick MA). A stepper motor (Oriental Motors  
146 AR98MA-N5-3) was used to rotate the platform holding the cameras and fish. The  
147 platform velocity and acceleration was measured using integrated circuits (IDG500,  
148 Invensense and ADXL335, Analog Devices) mounted together on a breakout board  
149 (Sparkfun SEN-09268). Fish were rotated stepwise for 10 cycles: from 0° to -60°,  
150 where positive values are nose-down, then from -60° to 60°, and then back to 0° in 10°  
151 increments, with a peak velocity of 35°/sec. The inter-step interval was 5 seconds, and  
152 the direction of rotation was then reversed for the next sequence of steps.

153 The eye's response across the experiment was first centered to remove any offset  
154 introduced by the pattern-matching algorithm. Data were then interpolated with a cubic  
155 spline interpolation to correct for occasional transient slowdowns (i.e. missed frames)  
156 introduced by the pattern-matching algorithm. The eye's velocity was estimated by  
157 differentiating the position trace; high-frequency noise was minimized using a 4-pole  
158 low-pass Butterworth filter (cutoff = 3Hz). Each step response was evaluated manually;  
159 trials with rapid deviations in eye position indicative of horizontal saccades or gross  
160 failure of the pattern-matching algorithm were excluded from analysis. The response  
161 to each step for a given fish was defined as the mean across all responses to that step  
162 across cycles. The gain was estimated by measuring the peak eye velocity occurring  
163 over the period 375-1000 ms after the start of the step. The steady-state response was  
164 estimated by measuring the mean eye position over the final 2 sec of the step; the range  
165 was the difference between the most eccentric nose-up and nose-down steady-state  
166 angles.

167 Gain was evaluated over the range from +30° to -30°, i.e. the first three steps away  
168 from the horizontal meridian. We chose this interval for three reasons: 1) Fish spend  
169 the overwhelming majority of their time with a body orientation in this range (Ehrlich and  
170 Schoppik, 2017) 2) The responses here were the strongest, allowing us confidence in  
171 the dynamic capacity of the system without encountering the biophysical limits imposed  
172 by orbital structure 3) Because the utricle conveys information both about static and  
173 dynamic changes in orientation, the eyes adopt an increasingly eccentric rotation as the  
174 stimulus progresses, potentially constraining dynamic range.

175

176

**Transgenic Lines**

177 Tg(-6.7FRhcrtrR:gal4VP16):-6.7FRhcrtrR was amplified the using a nested PCR  
 178 strategy. First, a 6775bp DNA fragment immediately upstream of the Fugu rubripes  
 179 hcrtr2 start site was amplified from genomic DNA, using a high-fidelity polymerase  
 180 (PfuUltra II Fusion, Stratagene) with primers 5'-AATCCAAATTCCCAGTGACG-3' and  
 181 5'-CCAGATACTCGGCAAACAAA-3', 56° C annealing temperature, 1:45 elongation  
 182 time. The PCR product was TOPO cloned into a TA vector (Thermo Fisher). Using  
 183 the resulting plasmid as a template, a 6732bp fragment was amplified using primers  
 184 5'-AATCCAAATTCCCAGTGACG-3' and 5'-CCAGATACTCGGCAAACAAA-3'  
 185 55° C annealing temperature, 1:45 elongation and similarly TOPO cloned into a  
 186 GATEWAY-compatible vector (PCR8/GW, Thermo Fisher). The resulting entry  
 187 vector was recombined into a destination vector upstream of gal4-VP16, between  
 188 Tol2 integration arms (Urasaki et al., 2006). Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t embryos  
 189 were injected at the one-cell stage with 0.5nL of 50ng/uL plasmid and 35ng/uL Tol2  
 190 transposase mRNA in water, and their progeny screened for fluorescence. One founder  
 191 produced three fluorescent progeny; one survived. To identify transgenic fish without  
 192 using a UAS reporter, potential carriers were genotyped using the following primers to  
 193 generate a 592bp product spanning the upstream Tol2 arm and the start of the Fugu  
 194 sequence: 5'-CAATCCTGCAGTGCTGAAAA-3' and 5'-TGATTCATCGTGGCACAAT-3'  
 195 57° C annealing temperature, 0:30 elongation time. The complete expression pattern  
 196 has been described elsewhere (Lacoste et al., 2015) and is part of the Z-brain atlas  
 197 (Randlett et al., 2015)

198 Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP):hChr2(H134R)-EYFP (Zhang et al., 2007) was  
 199 subcloned downstream of 14 copies of a UAS element and an E1b minimal promoter  
 200 in a vector containing an SV40 polyA sequence and Tol2 recognition arms (Urasaki  
 201 et al., 2006). This vector was co-injected with tol2 transposase mRNA into TLAB  
 202 embryos at the single cell stage. Potential founders were screened by crossing to  
 203 Tg(isl1:Gal4-VP16,14xUAS:Kaede)(Pan et al., 2011) and monitoring tail movements in  
 204 response to blue light from an arc lamp on a stereomicroscope (Leica MZ16) at 30hpf.

205 The following transgenic lines were used: Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t (Scott et al.,  
 206 2007), Tg(isl1:GFP) (Higashijima et al., 2000), Tg(UAS:KillerRed) (Bene et al., 2010),  
 207 Tg(UAS-E1b:Eco.NfsB-mCherry) (Pisharath et al., 2007), atoh7th241/th241 (Kay et al.,  
 208 2001); Tg(atoh7:gap43-RFP) (Zolessi et al., 2006), Tg(5xUAS:sypb-GCaMP3) (Nikolaou  
 209 et al., 2012) and Et(E1b:Gal4-VP16)s1101t (Scott et al., 2007).

210

211

**Anatomy**

212 To generate mosaically-labeled fish, 0.5nL of 30ng/ $\mu$ L plasmid DNA  
 213 (14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP (Douglass et al., 2008) or UAS-Zebrabow (Pan et  
 214 al., 2013)) was injected in water at the one-cell stage into Tg(-6.7FRhcrtrR:gal4VP16);  
 215 Tg(isl1:GFP) fish. Embryos were screened at 24-48hpf. The majority (80%) of injected  
 216 fish were excluded due to deformities or developmental arrest. The remaining fish were  
 217 screened at 72hpf under a fluorescent stereoscope (Leica MZ16) with a high-pass  
 218 GFP emission filter for YFP fluorescence or a Cy3 emission filter for dTomato. As

219 Tg(-6.7FRhcrT:gal4VP16) will label the skin and notochord early (36-48hpf) and  
220 fluorescence in either structure is relatively easy to visualize, embryos with mosaic  
221 labeling (usually 1-10 cells) in these structures were selected. On average, 1-2% of  
222 injected embryos were retained for high-resolution screening. Larvae were anesthetized  
223 (0.016% w/v tricaine methane sulfonate, Sigma A5040) mounted dorsally at 5-7dpf and  
224 imaged on a confocal microscope (Zeiss 510, 710, or 780, using either a 20x 1.0N.A., a  
225 40x 1.1 N.A. or a 63x 1.0 N.A. objective with Zen 2010, 8-bit acquisition) with excitation  
226 of 488nm (GFP) and 514nm (EYFP), and emission for the two channels was either  
227 separated at 550nm by a glass dichroic filters or a tunable filter. The two channels could  
228 reliably be separated provided the level of EYFP was strong relative to GFP.

229 Most of the fish selected for confocal imaging had some neurons labeled in the  
230 brain, but on average, only 0.5%-2% (i.e. 5-20 for every 1000) of injected embryos  
231 would have vestibular nucleus neurons that were both bright and sufficiently isolated  
232 enough to trace. Neurons were only included in the study if their axon could be traced  
233 unambiguously throughout its entirety to a distinct cell body; qualitatively, the asymmetry  
234 persisted among excluded fish. Neurons were traced manually with the assistance  
235 of the ImageJ plugin Simple Neurite Tracer (Longair et al., 2011). Cell bodies of the  
236 oculomotor and trochlear nuclei were localized manually using the Fiji/ImageJ ROI  
237 functionality (Schindelin et al., 2012). Superior oblique motoneurons were found in nIV  
238 and superior rectus motoneurons were the most ventral somata in nIII (Greaney et al.,  
239 2016). All images were adjusted linearly, using the Brightness & Contrast functionality  
240 in Fiji/ImageJ (Schindelin et al., 2012). For display purposes, a non-linear histogram  
241 adjustment (gamma = 0.5) was applied to the maximum intensity projection in Figure  
242 1b and 2a to increase the relative brightness of thin axonal arbors, and, for Figure 2a, to  
243 make clear the sparse nature of the label.

244 Retrograde labeling of the ocular motor nuclei was done as previously described  
245 (Greaney et al., 2016; Ma et al., 2010). In brief, crystals of fluorescently-conjugated  
246 dextrans (10,000 MW, Thermo Fisher D-1824 or D-22914) were placed in the left orbit  
247 of anesthetized 5-7dpf fish. In fish, the superior eye muscles receive projections from  
248 the contralateral motor nuclei, making the relevant neurons in nIV (superior oblique)  
249 and nIII (superior rectus) easy to discriminate, as they were exclusively labeled on the  
250 contralateral (right) side.

251 Focal electroporations were done as detailed previously (Bianco et al., 2012; Tawk  
252 et al., 2009). Briefly, anesthetized larvae (2 dpf) were immobilized in low-melting  
253 temperature agarose. Micropipettes (tip diameter of 1-2 mm) were filled with a solution  
254 containing 1 mg/ml gap43-EGFP plasmid DNA in distilled water. To target the vestibular  
255 nucleus neurons, the pipette was placed at the lateral limit of rhombomere 5, using  
256 the decussation of the Mauthner axon midline crossing as a landmark. A Grass SD9  
257 stimulator (Grass Technologies) was used to deliver three trains of voltage pulses  
258 in succession, with 1 s interval between trains. Each train was delivered at 200Hz  
259 for 250ms, 2ms on time, with an amplitude of 30V. Larvae were imaged at 5dpf on a  
260 custom multi-photon microscope at 790 nm.

261

262 **Lesions**

263 Single-cell ablations were performed using a pulsed infrared laser (SpectraPhysics  
264 MaiTai HP) at 820nm (80MHz repetition rate, 80 fs pulse duration) at full power:  
265 200mW (2.5nJ) measured at the specimen with a power meter (ThorLabs S130C). Fish  
266 were mounted dorsally in 2% low-melt agarose in E3 under a 20x 0.95 NA objective  
267 (Olympus) and anesthetized as described above. Cell bodies were targeted for ablation  
268 based on anatomical location, starting with the most ventro-lateral neurons in the  
269 tangential nucleus and then moving dorso-medially through the tangential and medial  
270 vestibular nucleus. Each cell was exposed to the pulsed infrared laser light for a brief  
271 period of time (35-50ms) while the resulting fluorescent emissions were measured;  
272 usually, there was a brief pulse of light that saturated the detection optics which was  
273 used to shutter the laser. 5-10 neurons/plane were targeted bilaterally, resulting in  
274 either loss of fluorescence (Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t and Tg(isl1:GFP)) or increased  
275 diffuse fluorescence at the cell body (Tg(UAS-ChR2-E134R-EYFP)). Fish were imaged  
276 immediately and 24 hours after ablation to confirm the extent of the lesion. 15% of  
277 lesioned fish were excluded because they did not survive a full 24hrs after the lesion.  
278 Fish were observed under a stereomicroscope in a petri dish post-lesion to ensure  
279 the presence of spontaneous horizontal saccades and normal jaw movements; all  
280 lesioned fish showed both. Fish for lesions were 4-5 dpf, as preliminary experiments  
281 showed that plasma formation was more effective in younger fish, and were selected  
282 to be the brightest in the clutch (likely doubly homozygous for UAS-E1b:Kaede and  
283 6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16).

284 As previously described (Bianco et al., 2012), the eye movements in younger fish are  
285 of lower gain, and 3/17 fish were excluded from analysis because their total range  
286 was  $< 10^\circ$ . Behavior was always measured at least 4 hours and no more than 8 hours  
287 after lesions. The decrease in gain was reported as a percentage of pre-lesion gain,  
288 defined as the difference between the median pre-lesion gain and median post-lesion  
289 gain normalized by the median pre-lesion gain. To activate KillerRed, green light (Zeiss  
290 set 43, 545nm/25) from an arc lamp was focused through a 63x 1.0 NA objective  
291 stopped down to fill a 200  $\mu\text{m}$  diameter region for 15 minutes. Fish were mounted  
292 dorsally and anesthetized as described above. The focal plane was at the level of the  
293 decussation of the Mauthner axons, measured under brightfield illumination. Due to  
294 equipment replacement the precise power of the arc lamp could not be measured, but  
295 20 minutes of exposure under identical conditions was fatal to the fish. Post-lesion  
296 behavior was measured at least 4 hours after the light exposure. To induce apoptosis  
297 with nitroreductase, fish were placed in E3 with 7.5mM of metrodinazole (Sigma M1547)  
298 in 0.2% v/v DMSO and behavior was measured 24hrs later (Curado et al., 2007). The  
299 presence of mCherry fluorescence was assayed after behavior to determine genotype.

### 300 **Optical Activation and Analysis**

301 Channelrhodopsin-induced eye movements were monitored using the same apparatus  
302 used for measuring tilt-induced behavior, with the addition of a fiber-coupled laser on an  
303 independent micromanipulator (Arrenberg et al., 2009; Schoonheim et al., 2010). Fish  
304 were immobilized and mounted as before, and agar was removed above the head as  
305 well as the left eye. Stimulus was generated by a 100mW 473nm diode laser (Shanghai  
306 DreamLasers SDL-473-100MFL) coupled by the manufacturer to a 50  $\mu\text{m}$  inner diameter  
307 0.22 NA multimode fiber (ThorLabs AFS50/125Y) that itself was butt-coupled to a 10mm



308 cannula made from the same diameter fiber (ThorLabs AFS50/125YCANNULA). Power  
309 at the cannula tip was 30-60mW, measured with a power meter (ThorLabs S130C).  
310 The fiber tip was placed above the ear, evenly-centered between the eyes, and 1mm  
311 above the skin of the fish. Stimuli ranged in duration from 1  $\mu$ sec to 100 msec, and were  
312 presented every 5 seconds. Eye movements were tracked and processed as before,  
313 including manual analysis; only fish with at least 25 analyzable responses to a given  
314 stimulus were included in the analysis. The response to a given stimulus was quantified  
315 by taking the peak angular rotation reached over the first 2 sec.

316 By microinjecting plasmid DNA at the single-cell stage, we generated embryos as above  
317 with somatic expression of ChR2-EYFP in random subsets of vestibular neurons, on  
318 a blind background, *atoh7th241/atoh7th241* (Kay et al., 2001). As with anatomical  
319 experiments, between 5-20 fish for each 1000 injected had acceptable expression. Of  
320 these, only 1/4 were homozygous for *atoh7th241*, and only 1/4 of those expressed the  
321 allele necessary to confirm blindness by visualizing the absence of retinal ganglion cell  
322 axons *Tg(atoh7:gap43-RFP)*. The large number of alleles required and the low success  
323 rate limited the number of fish available to test. Tracing individual axonal projections  
324 to quantify the absolute number of VNs labeled in a given fish was not possible except  
325 in the most sparsely labeled fish. Further, as expected with somatic expression,  
326 ChR2-EYFP levels varied considerably across vestibular neurons. To measure the  
327 relationship between expression levels/number of labeled neurons and the magnitude  
328 of the evoked eye movement, we quantified EYFP fluorescence. Vestibular neurons are  
329 the only neurons with rostral MLF projections labeled in *Tg(-6.7FRhctR:gal4VP16)*. As  
330 such, the total intensity of the MLF projection for a given fish was measured from the  
331 rostral-most point behind nIV, stopping caudally where the projection narrows to the  
332 midline (rhombomere 4). A single image that summed the intensity of all slices in the  
333 confocal stack that contained the MLF projection was used for our measurements. To  
334 correct for differences in acquisition parameters, MLF fluorescence was normalized  
335 by a measure of acquisition noise. Noise was estimated by measuring the summed  
336 fluorescence of a region between the branches of the MLF, which did not contain any  
337 neuropil. A value of one indicates no MLF fluorescence differentiable from background  
338 noise, two indicates MLF fluorescence twice that of the background, etc.. Ocular  
339 responses to blue light were evaluated and reported as above. Responses were  
340 evaluated for significance by comparing the median activity 200 ms after the stimulus  
341 to the baseline (200 ms before the stimulus).

#### 342 **Model**

343 Our model estimated the collective activity of 80 post-synaptic neurons generated  
344 by integrating activity from a set of pre-synaptic neurons. We evaluated two free  
345 parameters: the number of pre-synaptic neurons in the set (30, 42, 70, 105, 140, 168,  
346 180) and the number of inputs on to a given post-synaptic neuron (2-30). Pre-synaptic  
347 activity was generated by translating a rate function, derived from the velocity profile  
348 of the steps used in the behavioral experiment, into a Poisson train of activity. Step  
349 velocity was scaled to match the reported velocity sensitivity (2 spikes/ $^\circ$ /sec) of  
350 second-order vestibular neurons (Iwamoto et al., 1990a) to generate a rate function for  
351 Poisson spikes. The velocity reached a peak of 35  $^\circ$ /sec and lasted 1sec; the model was  
352 run at 1kHz. Poisson trains were subjected to an imposed 2msec refractory period. The

353 spikes were then convolved with a decaying exponential with  $\tau = 1.5\text{sec}$  to represent  
354 an excitatory post-synaptic potential. A random subset of pre-synaptic neurons were  
355 selected from the set and summed together to create an input to a post-synaptic  
356 neuron. Post-synaptic activity was determined by thresholding the input, subject to a  
357 2msec refractory period. The threshold for the post-synaptic neuron was defined as  
358 the minimum of an input of 1.8 or 95% of the cumulative distribution of pre-synaptic  
359 input strength. One input spike had a value of 1; after convolution, a threshold of 1.8  
360 was reached if at least four spikes were present across all inputs over a 4ms period.  
361 Changing the threshold ensured that the post-synaptic response would not saturate as  
362 the number of inputs increased; the specific threshold did not change the relationships  
363 we observed and is expected from the basic properties of extraocular motoneurons  
364 (Torres-Torrel et al., 2012). We generated 80 distinct spike trains, reflecting the  
365 number of motoneurons in a given motoneuron pool (Greaney et al., 2016). The total  
366 post-synaptic response was defined as the average activity, evaluated where the rate  
367 function was positive. The strength of the relationship between the pre-synaptic rate  
368 function and the summed post-synaptic response was defined as the coefficient of  
369 determination.

370

## 371 **Experimental Design and Statistical Analysis**

372 As data were not normally distributed, expected values are reported as the median,  
373 variability as the median absolute deviation (MAD), and non-parametric tests of  
374 significance were used. Potential differences between groups (e.g. up tilts vs. down)  
375 were evaluated using the Wilcoxon rank sum test, and the Wilcoxon signed rank test  
376 was used to test whether a distribution had a median different from zero (e.g. change in  
377 performance post-lesion). Significance was determined at  $p < 0.05$ .

## 378 **Results**

### 379 **A genetically-defined population of brainstem neurons projects** 380 **preferentially to extraocular motoneurons that move the eyes** 381 **downward**

382 We adopted a molecular approach to characterize a subset of vestibular  
383 brainstem neurons in the larval zebrafish. We used a transgenic line of zebrafish,  
384 Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16) that drives expression of a transcription factor (Gal4) in a  
385 restricted subset of neurons, including those in r5-r7 (Lacoste et al., 2015; Randlett et  
386 al., 2015). When crossed with other transgenic lines that contain an upstream activating  
387 sequence (UAS), Gal4 induces selective expression of particular genes useful for  
388 visualization, and for chemical or light-mediated manipulation. We first crossed the  
389 Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16) to the Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t line to selectively drive a  
390 red fluorescent protein. In addition, we performed these experiments on a transgenic  
391 background, Tg(isl1:GFP), that constitutively labeled cranial motoneurons, including  
392 extraocular motoneurons, with a green fluorescent protein.

393 Within r5-r7 (delineated by the rostro-caudal extent of the facial nucleus, Figure 1B),  
394 we observed expression in ~200 neurons that, in aggregate, comprise a subset of  
395 two bilateral vestibular nuclei. The first was the previously characterized utricle signal

396 recipient tangential nucleus (Bianco et al., 2012), located adjacent to the ear. The  
397 second was the medial vestibular nucleus (Highstein and Holstein, 2006) separated  
398 from the tangential nucleus by the lateral longitudinal fasciculus. Figure 1A-1C show the  
399 gross morphology of these neurons and their axonal projections to the extraocular motor  
400 nuclei. In aggregate, we observed that the axon bundle from these vestibular neurons  
401 crosses the midline, ascends rostrally along the medial longitudinal fasciculus (MLF),  
402 and projects to extraocular motor nuclei nIII and nIV (Figure 1D-1F).

403 The utricular vestibulo-ocular reflex utilizes two independent “channels,” or defined  
404 neural pathways from peripheral sensation to motor output, to stabilize gaze following  
405 pitch and roll tilts. At the level of the extraocular motoneurons, in the larval zebrafish  
406 the two channels are segregated along the dorso-ventral axis. First, the ventral-most  
407 extraocular motoneurons in nIII project to the inferior oblique (IO) and superior rectus  
408 (SR) motoneurons. Together, IO/SR move the eyes up following nose-down pitch tilts.  
409 Second, the dorsal-most extraocular motoneurons in nIII project to the inferior rectus  
410 (IR), and the dorsally-located nucleus nIV projects exclusively to the superior oblique  
411 (SO). Together, IR/SO move the eyes down following nose-up pitch tilts. The somatic  
412 organization of nIII and nIV is stable after 5 days post-fertilization (Greaney et al., 2016).  
413 Finally, previous electromyographic recordings demonstrates that the SR (nIII) and SO  
414 (nIV) muscles are exclusively active during either the nose-down or nose-up phase of  
415 pitch-tilts supporting the independence of the two channels (Favilla et al., 1983).

416 Complementarily, pitch-sensitive vestibular nucleus neurons split into two subtypes,  
417 each projecting to only one pair of extraocular motoneurons (Uchino et al., 1982). The  
418 first group arborizes exclusively in nIII, innervating IO/SR. The second arborizes in both  
419 nIII and nIV, innervating SO/IR. Since nIV is comprised only of extraocular motoneurons  
420 that innervate SO, a collateral projection to nIV differentiates vestibular interneurons that  
421 respond to nose-up pitch tilts from those that respond to nose-down.

422 To determine if vestibular neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhctR:gal4VP16) comprise  
423 both nose-up and nose-down subtypes, we examined their collective projections. We  
424 observed that their projection terminated near the ventral-most extraocular motoneurons  
425 in nIII (wide view in Figure 1G, close up Figure 1H-1I). The second prominent projection  
426 from vestibular neurons goes to extraocular motoneurons in nIV (wide view in Figure  
427 1J, close-up Figure 1K-1L). We conclude that the vestibular neurons labeled in r5-r7 in  
428 Tg(-6.7FRhctR:gal4VP16) are poised to respond during both nose-up and nose-down  
429 pitch tilts.

430 To test whether the vestibular neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhctR:gal4VP16) projected  
431 symmetrically to extraocular motoneurons, we examined the axon collaterals of  
432 singly-labeled neurons. To differentiate nose-up from nose-down vestibular neurons,  
433 we manually traced the axons of vestibular neurons and used the labeled cranial  
434 motor nuclei to categorize their projections, based on the presence/absence of a  
435 collateral projection to nIV. We labeled stochastic subsets of vestibular neurons  
436 by injecting a plasmid encoding a fluorescent protein into one-cell embryos,  
437 Tg(-6.7FRhctR:gal4VP16). Experiments were performed on the Tg(isl1:GFP)  
438 background to co-label extraocular motoneurons. The majority of labeled neurons  
439 (25/27) had only an ascending collateral; the remaining two had a bifurcated axon  
440 that both ascended and descended along the MLF. We found that the overwhelming

441 majority (23/27) of labeled vestibular neuron axons had a dorsal collateral projecting  
442 to nIV (i.e. nose-up/eyes-down vestibular neurons). One example neuron from the  
443 majority population is shown projecting to nIV in Figure 2A-2D and reconstructed as a  
444 schematic in Movie M1. In contrast, one example neuron from the minority population,  
445 projecting exclusively to nIII with a collateral to the superior rectus motoneurons, is  
446 shown in Figure 2E-2G, and reconstructed in Movie M2. Somata of neurons projecting  
447 exclusively to nIII were intermingled with those with projections to nIV. By examining  
448 labeled neurons at two time points (5 and 11 days post-fertilization) we found that the  
449 characteristic collateral projection to nIV in traced vestibular neurons remained unaltered  
450 (Figure 3).

451 Our genetically-based labeling technique is limited to neurons within the population  
452 labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16). To complement our initial characterization with  
453 an unbiased sample of vestibular neurons in r5-r7, we examined the projections of  
454 vestibular neurons that had been electroporated with a membrane-targeted fluorescent  
455 protein in wild-type animals. Of 20 electroporated animals with singly-labeled neurons in  
456 the vestibular nuclei, 15 neurons had an ascending branch along the medial longitudinal  
457 fasciculus. 12 of these (80%) had a prominent projection to nIV. Taken together, our  
458 data support the conclusion that vestibular neurons in the larval zebrafish project  
459 preferentially to extraocular motoneurons that move the eyes down.

460 To determine whether there was anatomical evidence that the axonal collaterals  
461 contained synapses, we labeled presynaptic puncta in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16)  
462 by crossing to Tg(5xUAS:syph-GCaMP3) to selectively express a fluorescent protein  
463 fused to the presynaptic protein synaptophysin (Nikolaou et al., 2012). We then labeled  
464 the extraocular motoneurons by retro-orbital dye fill. We confirmed the presence of  
465 presynaptic puncta proximal to the soma and dendrites of SO and SR motoneurons  
466 (Figure 4). Recent expansion microscopy work together with anti-synaptotagmin2b  
467 staining confirmed the presence of synaptic puncta between vestibular neurons labeled  
468 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16) and extraocular motoneuron somata and dendrites (L.  
469 Freifeld and E. Boyden, unpublished observations). These results suggest that the axon  
470 collaterals from vestibular neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16) likely contain  
471 functional synapses.

472

### 473 **Labeled vestibular neurons are collectively necessary for gaze** 474 **stabilization following both nose-up and nose-down body rotations**

475 To determine whether the transgenically-labeled vestibular neurons constitute a  
476 complete set necessary for both upwards and downwards eye movements following  
477 body tilts, we measured gaze stabilization (the vestibulo-ocular reflex) before  
478 and after their removal. We ablated single vestibular neurons individually with a  
479 pulsed infrared laser in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16). These fish had been crossed to  
480 Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t to express a fluorescent protein in vestibular neurons.  
481 Further, experiments were performed on the Tg(isl1:GFP) background that labeled  
482 adjacent motoneurons in nVII for control ablations (Figure 5A). Following ablation,  
483 qualitative observation revealed that horizontal eye saccades and spontaneous  
484 jaw movements were present as in normal fish. Ablations eliminated nearly the

485 entire response to body tilts (both nose-up and nose-down): the median decrease  
486 in vestibulo-ocular reflex gain was  $94.5\% \pm 3.5\%$  ( $n = 14$ ,  $p = 1.2 * 10^{-4}$  Figure 5B).  
487 We saw no difference ( $p = 0.77$ ) in the post-lesion gain for nose-up ( $0.0165 \pm 0.0135$ )  
488 and nose-down ( $0.02 \pm 0.0135$ ) body rotations. In contrast, control lesions of somata  
489 in the adjacent facial nucleus (nVII) produced no systematic change in the gain ( $n$   
490  $= 5$ ,  $38.5\% \pm 24.5\%$ ,  $p = 0.41$ ) or the range ( $31\% \pm 52\%$ ,  $p = 0.44$ , Figure 5C) of the  
491 vestibulo-ocular reflex.

492 To confirm the finding that the labeled neurons in Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16) were  
493 necessary for the normal vestibulo-ocular reflex following pitch tilts, we used two  
494 additional ablation techniques to target neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16).  
495 First, by crossing to Tg(UAS-E1b:Eco.NfsB-mCherry) we selectively expressed a  
496 protein, nitroreductase (nfsb) that caused neurons to die on exposure to a prodrug,  
497 metronidazole (Curado et al., 2007; Pisharath et al., 2007). After exposure to  
498 metronidazole, the vestibulo-ocular reflex was significantly impaired in larvae that  
499 expressed nfsb compared to their siblings that did not ( $n=5$ ,  $p = 0.008$ , Figure 5C). Next,  
500 we crossed Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16) to Tg(UAS-KillerRed) to selectively express  
501 a protein, Killer Red, that causes neurons to die on exposure to green light (Bene et  
502 al., 2010). After exposing the hindbrain to green light, the vestibulo-ocular reflex was  
503 significantly impaired in larvae that expressed Killer Red compared to similarly exposed  
504 siblings ( $n=5$ ,  $p = 0.008$ , Figure 5C). We conclude that vestibular neurons labeled in  
505 Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16) are necessary for compensatory eye movements following  
506 either nose-up or nose-down body pitch tilts.

### 507 **Labeled vestibular neurons, collectively activated, rotate the eyes** 508 **down**

509 The circuit that enables correct gaze stabilization following pitch and roll body tilts  
510 (Figure 6) permits a specific prediction about the eye movements that might follow  
511 collective activation. Three key features of this circuit enable this prediction: 1. two  
512 distinct channels selectively sensitive to nose-up and nose-down rotations, 2. excitatory  
513 central neurons that all cross the midline, and 3. superior extraocular motoneurons  
514 that cross back. Figure 6C-6D show the torsional response to nose-up and nose-down  
515 body tilts. There, utricular hair cells in both the left and right ear sense the same pitch  
516 tilts. The projection patterns ensure that inputs from a given ear contacts the correct  
517 superior eye muscle on the ipsilateral side, and the correct inferior eye muscle on  
518 the contralateral side. In contrast, when the fish rolls, both nose-up and nose-down  
519 channels ipsilateral to the roll are activated. The two superior muscles are then  
520 activated ipsilaterally, while the two inferior muscles are activated contralaterally. In  
521 this way, a single circuit can respond appropriately to the two cardinal directions of body  
522 rotation sensed by the utricle, the sole source of vestibular sensation in young zebrafish  
523 (Beck et al., 2004; Bianco et al., 2012; Mo et al., 2010; Roberts et al., 2017).

524 Collectively activating all utricle signal recipient vestibular neurons is therefore  
525 equivalent to the fish rolling both leftward and rightward simultaneously.  
526 Consequentially, all four eye muscles on both sides would be expected to contract  
527 together. If no eye movement were to result, we would conclude that despite the  
528 anatomical asymmetry, the nose-up and nose-down vestibular neuron pools were  
529 functionally equivalent. In contrast, a net downward rotation reflects stronger  
530 activation of the SO/IR motoneurons (nose-up, Figure 6C) and weaker activation of

531 the SR/IO motoneurons (nose-down, Figure 6D). A net upward rotation reflects  
532 the opposite. Any vertical component (SO/SR vs IO/IR) to the eye movement would  
533 reflect uneven activation of neurons in the left vs. right hemisphere (Figure 6B),  
534 and would be dissociable from the torsional component. We hypothesized that the  
535 gaze-stabilization circuit predicts that any systematic eye movement observed along the  
536 nose-up/nose-down axis following collective activation of vestibular brainstem neurons  
537 must reflect a functional bias in the set of activated neurons.

538 To determine whether the asymmetry among the population of neurons we observed  
539 is functional, we measured eye rotations following collective activation of brainstem  
540 neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16). We expressed the light-sensitive cation  
541 channel, channelrhodopsin-2 (ChR2) and used a fiber-optic cannula (Arrenberg et al.,  
542 2009) to target blue light to labeled vestibular neurons in Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16);  
543 Tg(UAS:ChR2(H134R)-EYFP) fish. Since blue light evoked eye movements in  
544 wild-type fish (Movie M3), we performed all activation experiments using a blind mutant  
545 lacking retinal ganglion cells: *atoh7<sup>th241/th241</sup>*; Tg(*atoh7:gap43-RFP*) (Kay et al., 2001).  
546 Strikingly, in every transgenic fish tested, the eyes rotated downward in response to  
547 blue light flashes, as if the nose of the fish had moved up. We observed no systematic  
548 vertical component to the eye's rotation. Across fish (n = 10) the amplitude of eye  
549 rotation (Figure 7a, black line) scaled with the duration of the light flash, with a peak  
550 response of 45°/sec. Crucially, control siblings (n = 3) not expressing ChR2 did not  
551 respond to light flashes (Figure 7A, gray line). Laser-mediated ablation of vestibular  
552 neurons abolished the light-evoked eye rotation (n=10, Figure 7B). Activation of the  
553 population of vestibular neurons is therefore sufficient to rotate the eyes downward,  
554 consistent with the asymmetric distribution of anatomical projections.

555 We extended our test of sufficiency by activating all of the neurons in the region of the  
556 vestibular nucleus using a line reported (Scott et al., 2007) to drive expression in all  
557 neurons, Et(E1b:Gal4-VP16)s1101t. In all fish tested (n=6), we evoked downward eye  
558 rotations in the torsional plane corresponding to nose-up tilts (Figure 7C, Movie M4, note  
559 the corruptive horizontal component present in one trace). Both genetically restricted  
560 and unbiased activation of vestibular neurons produced net downward eye rotations,  
561 and thus the gaze-stabilizing population of vestibular neurons is functionally asymmetric.

562 To test whether selective activation of vestibular neurons is sufficient to rotate the eyes,  
563 and to estimate the variability across neurons, we expressed ChR2 stochastically  
564 in subsets of neurons in Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16) fish on a blind background  
565 (*atoh7<sup>th241/th241</sup>*; Tg(*atoh7:gap43-RFP*). Of 27 sparsely labeled fish, 12 had  
566 expression in vestibular neurons. As expected from the uneven anatomy, all 12 had  
567 neurons with axon collaterals to nIV. Consistent with our categorization of nIV-projecting  
568 neurons as “nose-up/eyes-down” we could evoke significant downward eye movements  
569 in 10/12 fish ( $0.23^\circ \pm 0.16^\circ$ ,  $p < 0.05$  relative to baseline for each fish, Figure 7D). Across  
570 all fish, the intensity of the projection in the MLF, an estimate of ChR2 expression,  
571 predicted the magnitude of the evoked response (Spearman's rank correlation  
572 coefficient = 0.45,  $p = 0.02$ ,  $n = 27$ ). These results reveal that subsets of nIV-projecting  
573 vestibular neurons are sufficient, but vary in their ability to generate downward eye  
574 rotations.

575

576 **A simple model shows how biased vestibular populations can**  
577 **better represent nose-up sensations without compromising motor**  
578 **performance**

579 Our data support the hypothesis that labeled premotor vestibular neurons are  
580 asymmetrically distributed, over-representing nose-up body tilts, and capable of  
581 producing downward eye rotations. To infer whether such an asymmetry might impact  
582 motor output and/or sensory encoding, we built a simple model of the synapse between  
583 vestibular and extraocular motoneurons. We simulated the ability of differently-sized  
584 populations to relay a step in body tilt (encoded by vestibular neuron activity) across  
585 a single synapse to produce an eye movement command (encoded by extraocular  
586 motoneuron activity). We constrained model parameters and assumptions to reflect  
587 known anatomical and electrophysiological properties (Methods). For this model,  
588 we assume that the activity of the vestibular neurons is a function of body tilt. We  
589 systematically varied two free parameters: the size of the vestibular population, and  
590 the number of vestibular neurons that contact a single extraocular motoneuron. As  
591 nose-up and nose-down neurons function during distinct phases of pitch tilts (Figure  
592 6) we simulated a single generic population. We evaluated two features of simulated  
593 motoneuron activity. First, as a measure of output strength, we report the average  
594 activity (reflecting the strength of ocular muscular contraction). Next, as a measure of  
595 encoding fidelity, we report the correlation between vestibular input and motoneuron  
596 output.

597 We observed that the magnitude of motoneuron activity could be independent of the  
598 number of vestibular neurons upstream (vertical axis in Figure 8C). This dissociation  
599 derives from the fact that vestibular neurons encoding nose-up and nose-down body  
600 rotations converge on to distinct pools of motoneurons. Consequentially, the key  
601 variable that determines the magnitude of motoneuron activity is the number of inputs  
602 per motoneuron, not the size of the vestibular population from which it is derived.  
603 As expected, increasing the number of vestibular inputs onto a single motoneuron  
604 increased its firing rate asymptotically (horizontal axis in Figure 8C). We conclude  
605 that when downstream effectors are distinct, as for eye movements, a larger pool  
606 of premotor neurons does not necessarily predict differences in the magnitude of  
607 motoneuron output. For our system, an asymmetric vestibular circuit could maintain  
608 comparable behavioral responses along the eyes-up/eyes-down axis.

609 In contrast, we observed that the size of the vestibular neuron pool could impact the  
610 ability of motoneurons to represent the dynamics of a step in body position. Temporal  
611 structure emerges in the activity patterns of post-synaptic neurons derived from small  
612 population sizes (Figure 8b). This similarity across motoneuron activity patterns  
613 reflected the coincidence of a limited set of inputs sufficient for a motoneuron spike at a  
614 particular time. To test if this limitation constrains the ability of motoneurons to represent  
615 the input function, we measured the variance in the input rate function explained by  
616 the summed motoneuron activity ( $R^2$ ). Larger populations were indeed better than  
617 smaller populations, and performance varied with the precise number of pre-synaptic  
618 inputs (Figure 8D). Adding a basal level of activity equal to 15% of the peak response  
619  
620

621 decreased  $R^2$  but did not change the finding that larger populations were better at  
622 representing the input function. We infer from our model that the anatomical asymmetry  
623 we observe could permit better encoding of nose-up sensations without compromising  
624 gaze-stabilization. If sensory statistics were similarly biased, asymmetric projections  
625 from vestibular neurons might therefore be adaptive.

626

## 627 **Premotor vestibular neurons are necessary for a vital and** 628 **asymmetric postural behavior**

629 To maintain buoyancy, larval zebrafish, whose gills do not yet function (Rombough,  
630 2007), must swim to and maintain a nose-up posture at the water's surface, where they  
631 gulp air, inflating their swim bladder (Goolish and Okutake, 1999). Vestibular sensation  
632 is necessary: larval zebrafish without functional utricles fail to inflate their swim bladder  
633 and die (Riley and Moorman, 2000). In contrast, vision is not required for this behavior,  
634 as blind fish develop normal swim bladders. Gaze-stabilizing vestibular neurons send  
635 a second projection to a spinal premotor nucleus, the nucleus of the MLF (nucMLF)  
636 (Figure 1), indicating a potential postural role (Bianco et al., 2012).

637 To test if vestibular neurons are necessary for swim-bladder inflation, we focally  
638 ablated vestibular neurons at 72hpf, before fish had inflated their swim bladder, in  
639 Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16);Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP) fish. We evaluated  
640 the fish at 144hpf (Figure 9). Only 1/9 lesioned fish (example in Movie M6) had an  
641 inflated swim bladder, compared with 40/42 control siblings (example in Movie M7).  
642 To confirm these results, we chemogenetically ablated vestibular neurons at 72 hpf  
643 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16);Tg(UAS-E1b:Eco.NfsB-mCherry) fish. As with the  
644 targeted lesions, only 1/36 double-transgenic fish inflated their swim bladder and  
645 survived, while 36/36 of their non-expressing siblings did. We note that in contrast,  
646 fish with post-inflation loss of vestibular neurons (e.g. Figure 5) maintain normal  
647 swim bladders. These results define a novel role for vestibular neurons labeled in  
648 Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16) in swim-bladder inflation.

649

## 650 **Discussion**

651 We investigated how the anatomical composition of a genetically-defined population  
652 of vestibular interneurons in the larval zebrafish could constrain its function. We first  
653 discovered that genetically-labeled neurons project preferentially to motoneurons that  
654 move the eyes downward. Ablation of these neurons eliminated the eye movements  
655 normally observed following nose-up/nose-down body tilts, establishing their necessity  
656 for gaze stabilization. Next, we found that activation produced downward eye rotations,  
657 establishing a functional correlate of the anatomical asymmetry. We modeled similar  
658 populations with asymmetric projections, and inferred that such architecture could  
659 permit better representation of nose-up stimuli while maintaining gaze stabilization  
660 performance. Finally, we discovered that early ablation of these neurons impaired swim  
661 bladder inflation, a vital postural task requiring nose-up stabilization. Taken together,  
662 we propose that preferential allocation of vestibular resources may improve sensory  
663 encoding, potentially enabling larval zebrafish to meet ethologically-relevant challenges



664 without compromising behavior.

665 Our study used a transgenic line, Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) to reliably access a  
666 genetically defined set of neurons in rhombomeres 5-7 in the medial and tangential  
667 vestibular nuclei. The rhombomeric and medio-lateral location of these neurons is  
668 consistent with the neurons that receive utricular input in the adult frog (Straka, 2003)  
669 and chick (Popratiloff and Peusner, 2007) and comprises a subset of neurons that  
670 project to extraocular motoneurons in the larval frog (Straka et al., 2001), juvenile  
671 zebrafish/goldfish (Suwa et al., 1996) and chick (Gottesman-Davis and Peusner,  
672 2010). Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) does not label neurons within the superior vestibular  
673 nucleus in the rostral hindbrain (Cambronero and Puelles, 2000). This absence is  
674 notable in light of our ablation experiments that implicate only the neurons labeled  
675 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) as necessary for the torsional vestibulo-ocular reflex.  
676 Neurons in the superior vestibular nucleus receive input predominantly from the anterior  
677 canal and the lagena (Straka, 2003), and from the anterior canal in monkeys (Yamamoto  
678 et al., 1978). Larval zebrafish do not have functional semicircular canals (Beck et al.,  
679 2004) nor has the lagena developed (Bever and Fekete, 2002) at the ages we studied  
680 here. Therefore, superior vestibular nucleus neurons would not be expected to respond  
681 to body rotations, consistent with our observation that the eyes no longer counter-rotate  
682 after lesions of Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) positive neurons. Further, the superior  
683 vestibular nucleus contains predominantly ipsilaterally-projecting, likely inhibitory inputs  
684 in adult rays (Puzdrowski and Leonard, 1994), goldfish (Torres et al., 2008, 1992), frog  
685 (Montgomery, 1988), rabbit (Wentzel et al., 1995), cat (Carpenter and Cowie, 1985)  
686 and monkey (Steiger and Büttner-Ennever, 1979). In the adult goldfish, such inhibitory inputs  
687 to extraocular motoneurons were found to be less effective relative to their excitatory  
688 counterparts. If the vestibular circuit were similarly constrained in larval zebrafish, it  
689 could explain the smaller downward eye movement we saw after collective activation  
690 of all neurons. There, the normal downward eye rotation would be compromised,  
691 though not eliminated, by inhibition derived from superior vestibular nucleus neurons not  
692 labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) but activated in a pan-neuronal line. We therefore  
693 propose that the inputs and output of superior vestibular nucleus neurons not labeled  
694 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) render them unlikely to play a major role in the larval  
695 zebrafish torsional vestibulo-ocular reflex.

696 Previous work in larval zebrafish identified the tangential nucleus as the locus of  
697 neurons responsible for the utricle-dependent torsional vestibulo-ocular reflex (Bianco et  
698 al., 2012). Here, we show similarly profound impairment of the torsional vestibulo-ocular  
699 reflex after targeted ablation of a subset of vestibular interneurons in the tangential  
700 and medial vestibular nuclei that are labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) larvae.  
701 Therefore, we propose that the set of tangential nucleus neurons labeled in labeled  
702 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) are responsible for the utricle signal mediated torsional  
703 vestibulo-ocular reflex, as those were ablated both here and in Bianco et al. (2012).  
704 Similarly, previous single-cell fills of tangential nucleus neurons revealed three classes  
705 of projection neurons: those projecting to the contralateral tangential nucleus, those with  
706 a single ascending collateral to nIII/nIV and the nucleus of the MLF and those with both  
707 an ascending and descending branch. Ascending and ascending/descending neurons  
708 were represented roughly equally (7/16 and 6/16) in the tangential nucleus (Bianco et

709 al., 2012). However, we found that the labeled neurons in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16)  
710 were almost exclusively of the ascending type (25/27). We therefore propose a further  
711 refinement: the neurons responsible for the utricle-mediated torsional vestibulo-ocular  
712 reflex are likely the subpopulation of ascending neurons within the tangential nucleus  
713 labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16). This proposal is consistent with anatomical and  
714 functional work in juvenile and adult goldfish, where tangential nucleus neurons with  
715 ascending processes were shown to respond to nose-up/nose-down tilts (Suwa et al.,  
716 1999) Taken together, our molecular approach permits strong hypotheses that define the  
717 essential subset of vestibular neurons responsible for a particular behavior.

718 The muscles that generate torsional eye movements in fish are responsible for vertical  
719 eye movements in frontal-eyed animals (Simpson and Graf, 1981). The behavioral  
720 literature is unclear with respect to whether nose-up/nose down gaze-stabilization is  
721 asymmetric. Cats may produce stronger downward eye rotations (Darlot et al., 1981;  
722 Maruyama et al., 2004; Tomko et al., 1988), but the literature is conflicted as to whether  
723 or not such an asymmetry exists in primates: downward (Baloh et al., 1983; Benson  
724 and Guedry, 1971; Matsuo and Cohen, 1984) or no biases (Baloh et al., 1986; Demer,  
725 1992; Marti et al., 2006) have both been reported. In foveate vertebrates, the vestibular  
726 brainstem contains the final premotor nuclei for smooth pursuit eye movements. Despite  
727 similar abilities to perceive both directions of vertical motion (Churchland et al., 2003),  
728 both juvenile and mature monkeys (Akao et al., 2007; Grasse and Lisberger, 1992)  
729 and humans (Ke et al., 2013) show a stronger downward response. Our model points  
730 a way forward: while common laboratory stimuli may elicit largely similar vertical eye  
731 movements, an asymmetric population should better encode dynamic variability, such  
732 as experienced in natural settings (Carriot et al., 2014). We propose that characterizing  
733 the variation in response to more complex body rotations and target tracking paradigms  
734 could uncover behavioral signatures of an anatomically biased circuit.

735 We found that larval zebrafish do not inflate their swim bladders after early but not  
736 late ablation of vestibular neurons. As autonomic neurons are thought to determine  
737 swim bladder volume (Smith and Croll, 2011), we propose that the failure to inflate  
738 the swim bladder is secondary to postural impairments that follow loss of vestibular  
739 neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16). In addition to extraocular motor nuclei,  
740 these neurons project to the nucleus of the medial longitudinal fasciculus (nMLF)  
741 (Bianco et al., 2012). Recent work has established the necessity and sufficiency  
742 of spinal-projecting neurons in the larval zebrafish nMLF for postural control and  
743 swim initiation (Severi et al., 2014; Thiele et al., 2014; Wang and McLean, 2014).  
744 By virtue of their direct projections, and their necessity for swim bladder inflation, we  
745 propose that neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16) may affect posture by  
746 modulating activity of neurons in the nMLF. As such, our work thus establishes a new  
747 molecularly-accessible avenue to explore neural mechanisms underlying postural  
748 stabilization.

749 Zebrafish engage in postural behaviors across their lifespan that are well-suited to  
750 nose-up sensory specialization. First, as larvae, they swim along a trajectory dictated  
751 by the long axis of their body (Aleyev, 1977). Their bodies are denser than water  
752 (Stewart and McHenry, 2010), which ought cause them to sink. Instead, they adopt a  
753 nose-up bias to their posture (Ehrlich and Schoppik, 2017), which introduces a vertical

754 component to their swims, enabling them to maintain elevation. Second, larval zebrafish  
755 must swim to the surface to gulp air necessary to inflate their swim bladder (Goolish  
756 and Okutake, 1999). Finally, most adult teleosts engage in aquatic surface respiration  
757 throughout life (Kramer and McClure, 1982), a response to low oxygen saturation that  
758 necessitates a continuous nose-up posture at the water's surface. Our model shows  
759 how the anatomical makeup of the vestibular circuits could better encode the nose-up  
760 bias in the statistics of behavior. Our findings thus provide a premotor complement to  
761 the "efficient coding" framework used to relate the makeup of sensory systems to the  
762 statistics of the environment (Simoncelli, 2003).

763 Asymmetrically organized populations of interneurons are common throughout nervous  
764 systems. Asymmetric organization within sensory areas is thought to reflect afferent  
765 adaptations (Adrian, 1941; Barlow, 1981; Bendor and Wang, 2006; Catania and  
766 Remple, 2002; Hansson and Stensmyr, 2011; Knudsen et al., 1987; Simoncelli, 2003;  
767 Xu et al., 2006) but the complexity of most neural circuits makes it challenging to link  
768 encoding capacity to adaptive behavior. For asymmetric motor populations, links to  
769 behavior are more direct (Esposito et al., 2014; Lemon, 2008; Pasqualetti et al., 2007;  
770 Rathelot and Strick, 2009) but the natural sensations that drive these areas are often  
771 difficult to define. Our study of vestibular interneurons that play both sensory and  
772 premotor roles illustrates how the asymmetric anatomy could better encode nose-up  
773 sensations, while maintaining the ability to stabilize gaze. As asymmetric populations  
774 of interneurons are common, we propose that other circuits may use similar strategies to  
775 meet ethological demands without compromising motor control.

776  
777

### Author Contributions

778 Author contributions: DS conceived the study in discussions with IHB, FE and AFS.  
779 DS generated the Tg(-6.7FRhrtR:gal4VP16) line, designed and built the behavioral  
780 apparatus/software, collected, analyzed and modeled data and discussed them with  
781 IHB, FE and AFS. IHB performed the focal electroporation and imaging used in Figure  
782 1a. DP and ADD generated the 14xUAS-E1b:hChR2(H134R)-EYFP construct and  
783 line. JG and ES helped design, prototype, assemble, troubleshoot and optimize all  
784 hardware. DR and JL designed, built, and maintained the 2-photon microscope and  
785 control software; DS and DR developed and optimized the lesion protocol. JL and DR  
786 made the gal4-VP16 destination vector. DS and AFS wrote the paper.

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788

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1077 **Figure 1:** Vestibular nucleus neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16). A, The expression  
1078 pattern of Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16); Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t (purple) is shown as a  
1079 horizontal maximum intensity projection (MIP), with one vestibular neuron,  
1080 co-labeled by focal electroporation of gap43-EGFP (white). Arrows point to the tangential ( $T$   
1081 VN) and medial vestibular nuclei ( $M$ VN) and the medial longitudinal fasciculus (MLF).  
1082 Inset schematic of a dorsal view of a larval zebrafish, with a magenta rectangle indicating  
1083 the location of the image. Scale 50  $\mu$ m B-C, Horizontal (B) and sagittal (C) MIP of vestibular  
1084 neurons in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16);Tg(UAS-KillerRed) (purple);Tg(isl1:GFP) (green, image  
1085 gamma = 0.5) showing cranial motoneuron somata from nIII/nIV, nV, and nVII (green text).  
1086 Arrows highlight neurons in the vestibular nuclei (VN) and the MLF. Scale 50  $\mu$ m. D-F, Close-up  
1087 of white boxed region in 1C, showing major branch patterns of vestibular neuron axon fascicle  
1088 (purple) relative to extraocular motoneurons (green). 1D shows motoneurons from Tg(isl1:GFP)  
1089 (green) in nIV (magenta arrow), superior rectus motoneurons of nIII  
1090 (cyan arrow) and the midbrain/hindbrain boundary (white dotted line). 1E shows branches of  
1091 the vestibular neuron axon fascicle (purple), emerging from the MLF (white arrow) in  
1092 Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16);Tg(UAS-KillerRed), projecting to nIV (magenta arrow) and nIII  
1093 (cyan arrow). F, merge of 1D-1E. Scale 20  $\mu$ m. G-I, Broad and close-up views of vestibular  
1094 neuron axonal projection (purple) to nIII cell bodies (green), taken at the horizontal plane  
1095 delineated by the cyan dotted line in 1F, superior rectus (SR) motoneurons (nIII) encircled in  
1096 cyan. Cyan arrows in 1G localize close-ups in 1H and 1I. Scale 10  $\mu$ m J-L, Broad and close-up  
1097 view of vestibular neuron axonal projection (purple) to nIV cell bodies (green), taken at the  
1098 horizontal plane delineated by the magenta dotted line in 1F, superior oblique (SO)  
1099 motoneurons (nIV, green) encircled in magenta. Arrows in 1J point to close-up in 1K and 1L.  
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1118 **Figure 2:** Projections from singly labeled vestibular nucleus neurons. A, Horizontal MIP  
1119 of a single vestibular neuron labeled with UAS-Chr2(H134R)-EYFP (purple) in  
1120 Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16);Tg(isl:GFP) (green). Gamma = 0.5 to highlight the sparse  
1121 label. Scale 100  $\mu$ m. Pink triangle refers to the data in Figure 7D. 23/27 neurons studied  
1122 projected similarly. B, Sagittal MIP of the neuron in Figure 2A highlighting nIII (cyan arrow), nIV  
1123 (magenta arrow), and projection to nIV (white arrow). Scale 20  $\mu$ m. C, Horizontal MIP of nIV  
1124 (green cell bodies in dotted magenta outline) from 2A, Vestibular neuron projection (purple,  
1125 white arrow) Scale 10  $\mu$ m. D, Horizontal MIP of nIII (green cell bodies in dotted cyan outline)

1126 with no proximal vestibular neuron projection (purple) . E, Sagittal MIP of a single axon  
1127 expressing 14xUAS-E1b:hChR2(H134R)-EYFP (purple)  
1128 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrR:gal4VP16);Tg(isl1:GFP) (green); Tg(atoh7:gap43-RFP)(cyan) fish. Expression  
1129 of bright EGFP bleeds into the purple channel, making the cell bodies white. nIV (magenta  
1130 arrow) nIII (cyan arrow) and the vestibular neuron projection to SR motoneurons in nIII (white  
1131 arrow). Scale 20  $\mu\text{m}$ . 4/27 neurons projected similarly, exclusively to nIII.  
1132 F, Horizontal MIP of nIII (cells in blue outline) from 2e, purple projections from vestibular neuron  
1133 (white arrow). Scale 10  $\mu\text{m}$  G, Horizontal MIP of nIV (cells in magenta outline) from 2e with no  
1134 purple vestibular neuron projection. Scale 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .

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1158 **Figure 3:** Tracings of two vestibular nucleus neurons from a single fish at two developmental  
1159 timepoints. A, Horizontal (top) and sagittal (bottom) projections of two traced neurons taken from  
1160 the same fish imaged at 5 days post-fertilization. The magenta trace shows the characteristic  
1161 projection to the nIV motoneuron pool (magenta arrows) while the green neuron does not. B,  
1162 Same two neurons traced in the same fish, at 11 days post-fertilization. The same projection to  
1163 nIV is visible in the magenta tracing (magenta arrow). Scale bars are 100  $\mu\text{m}$ .

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1186 **Figure 4:** Vestibular nucleus neurons show synaptophysin-positive puncta on their  
1187 motoneuron targets. A, Sagittal MIP of a labeled SO motoneuron (magenta arrow) in  
1188 green and the purple synaptic puncta labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16);  
1189 Tg(5xUAS:syph-GCaMP3). Dotted lines indicate the planes in 4B-4C, scale 20  $\mu\text{m}$ . B,C,  
1190 Close-up slice of the motoneuron somata in 4A with puncta (magenta arrow), scale 10  
1191  $\mu\text{m}$ . D, Close-up of a retrogradely labeled SR motoneuron soma (green) with visible purple  
1192 puncta (cyan arrow), Scale 10  $\mu\text{m}$ . E, Close-up of the dendrites of SR motoneurons (green) with  
1193 visible purple puncta (cyan arrow). Scale 10  $\mu\text{m}$ .

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1214 **Figure 5:** Vestibular nucleus neurons labeled in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16) are necessary for  
1215 both nose-up and nose-down gaze stabilization. A, Horizontal MIP of vestibular and control  
1216 neurons (nVII) in rhombomeres 4-8 in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16); Tg(UAS-E1b:Kaede)s1999t;  
1217 Tg(isl1:GFP) fish before and after targeted photo-ablation of vestibular neuron cell bodies.  
1218 Gamma = 0.5 to highlight dim signal, colors indicates depth  
1219 over  $\sim 150\mu\text{m}$ , white arrows point to the general region of targeted cell bodies in either the  
1220 vestibular nuclei (top row) or the facial nucleus (nVII), scale bar = 150  $\mu\text{m}$ . For anatomical  
1221 localization compare to the right side of Figure 1B. B, Vestibulo-ocular reflex gain pre- and  
1222 post-ablation of vestibular neurons. C, Vestibulo-ocular reflex gain pre- and post-ablation of  
1223 facial nucleus neurons. D, Vestibulo-ocular reflex gain wild-type siblings (WT) and fish  
1224 with pharmacogenetic (nitroreductase, "nfsb") and optogenetic ablation (Killer-Red, "KR") of  
1225 neurons in Tg(-6.7FRhcrtr:gal4VP16)

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1246 **Figure 6:** The simplified neural circuit underlying the ocular response to pitch and roll tilts.  
1247 Cyan = nose down, magenta = nose up channels. A, Wiring diagram of one hemisphere of  
1248 the excitatory vestibulo-ocular circuit showing utricular hair cells (cyan/magenta),  
1249 stato-acoustic ganglion (SAG), central vestibular neurons (VN, cyan and magenta),  
1250 extraocular motoneuron pools in nIII (SR, IR, IO) and nIV (SO). B, During a roll tilt to the fish's  
1251 left, the left utricle hair cells (cyan/magenta) are activated, causing co-contraction of superior  
1252 (SO/SR) eye muscles ipsilateral to the activated utricle, and inferior (IO/IR) muscles  
1253 contralateral to the activated utricle. C, Utricular hair cells sensitive to nose-up  
1254 pitch tilts (magenta) ultimately activate only vestibular neurons that project to both nIII and nIV,  
1255 activating SO (contralateral) and IR (ipsilateral). D, Utricular hair cells sensitive to  
1256 nose-down pitch tilts (cyan) ultimately activate vestibular neurons that project to exclusively to nIII,  
1257 activating SR (contralateral) and IO (ipsilateral).

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1278 **Figure 7:** Activating vestibular nucleus neurons generates downward eye rotations. A, Peak  
1279 eye rotation as a function of blue light duration. Positive values indicate eyes-down rotations  
1280 (magenta arrow), negative values are eyes-up (cyan arrow). ChR2+ fish in black,  
1281 ChR2- siblings in gray. Points are median  $\pm$  median absolute deviation. B, Evoked eye  
1282 rotation in time. Gray lines are individual fish, black lines the median of pre-lesion data,  
1283 red lines are the same fish after photoablation of ChR2+ vestibular neurons. Stimulus (100 ms) in  
1284 blue. C, Gray lines are the average responses from individual fish with pan-neuronal expression.  
1285 Black is the median across fish, stimulus (100 ms) in blue. The trace with a downward lobe  
1286 reflects a non-torsional component; video of this fish is shown as Movie M4. D, Evoked ocular

1287 rotations from sparsely labeled fish as a function of ChR2+ expression (MLF fluorescence). Fish  
1288 with discriminable vestibular neurons shown as black dots, without in green. The pink triangle  
1289 corresponds to the fish in Figure 2A  
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1312 **Figure 8:** A, Model schematic B, One simulation of the model for two different population sizes,  
1313 180 neurons (magenta) and 30 neurons (cyan). The first column shows the vestibular neuron  
1314 activity as a spike raster plot and the input function (black). The second column shows the  
1315 motoneuron spikes. For display, half the generated spikes are shown in each raster. C, The  
1316 “Output strength” (average firing rate) of the post-synaptic neurons as a function of the  
1317 population size (rows) and number of inputs per motoneuron (columns). D, The “Encoding  
1318 fidelity” (variance explained,  $R^2$ ) in the input rate function by the summed post-synaptic output.  
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1343 **Figure 9:** Early ablations of vestibular neurons leave fish unable to inflate their swim bladders.  
1344 a) Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16); Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChR2(H134R)-EYFP); mitfa *-/-* fish swimming  
1345 in a cuvette in the dark at 144hpf. Red arrows point to swim bladders. b) Sibling fish where the  
1346 vestibular neurons in these fish were photoablated at 72hpf, before swim bladder inflation. Note  
1347 the absence of a swim bladder, evaluated here at 144hpf.  
1348 Images are taken from Movies M6-M7.  
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## 1364 **Movie Legends**

### 1365 **Movie M1: Reconstruction of an nIV-projecting neuron.**

1366 Data is taken from the same confocal stack shown in Figure 2A-2D. The neuron  
1367 is shown in black, colored spheres represent the center locus of cell bodies of nIV  
1368 (magenta) and nIII (cyan) cranial motoneurons. The movie begins with the neuron in  
1369 a horizontal orientation, rotates 90° along the x axis until it is sagittal, and then rotates  
1370 90° along the y axis such that the viewer looks caudally down the long axis of the fish  
1371 towards the tail. The large projection to nIV is clearly visible. Scale bar is 25  $\mu\text{m}$  for all  
1372 three axes.  
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### 1374 **Movie M2: Reconstruction of an nIII-projecting neuron.**

1375 Data is taken from the same confocal stack shown in Figure 2E-2G. The neuron  
1376 is shown in black, colored spheres represent the center locus of cell bodies of nIV  
1377 (magenta) and nIII (cyan) cranial motoneurons. The movie begins with the neuron in a  
1378 horizontal orientation, rotates 90° along the x axis until it is sagittal, and then rotates 90°  
1379 along the y axis such that the viewer looks caudally down the long axis of the fish  
1380 towards the tail. The terminal arbors of this neuron are considerably more restricted  
1381 than the neuron in M2, and bypass nIV, terminating in nIII. Scale bar is 25  $\mu\text{m}$  for all  
1382 three axes.

### 1383 **Movie M3: A sample eye movement evoked by a blue light flash in** 1384 **wild-type fish.**

1385 The left eye of a wild-type fish responding to a flash of blue light. Green box reflects  
1386 the realtime estimate of the eye's rotation. Movie is 4 sec, with a 100msec flash after 2  
1387 sec. For clarity, the original video was enlarged 4x and slowed down 4-fold (200Hz  
1388 acquisition, 50Hz playback).  
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1390 **Movie M4: A sample eye movement evoked by a blue light flash in**  
1391 **fish expressing channelrhodopsin in vestibular neurons.**

1392 The left eye of a Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16); Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP);  
1393 atoh7th241/th241; Tg(atoh7:gap43-RFP) fish responding to a flash of blue light. Gray  
1394 box reflects the realtime estimate of the eye's rotation. Movie is 3.6sec long, with a  
1395 100msec flash at 1.2sec indicated by a cyan circle.  
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1398 **Movie M5: A sample eye movement evoked in a fish with**  
1399 **pan-neuronal channelrhodopsin.**

1400 The left eye of a Tg(s1101t:gal4); Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP);  
1401 atoh7th241/th241; Tg(atoh7:gap43-RFP) fish responding to a flash of blue light. Green  
1402 box reflects the realtime estimate of the eye's rotation. Movie is 4 sec, with a 100ms flash  
1403 after 2 sec. For clarity, the original video was enlarged 4x and slowed down 4-fold  
1404 (200Hz acquisition, 50Hz playback). Note the rapid and transient change in the angle of  
1405 the green square at the initiation of the evoked eye movement. This reflects the tracker  
1406 failing due to the nasal-ward component of the eye's contraction. After the brief failure  
1407 of the tracker, it recovers, and the downward torsional component of the eye movement  
1408 becomes visible.  
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1410 **Movie M6: Fish without vestibular neurons swimming in a cuvette.**

1411 Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16); Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP); mitfa -/- fish  
1412 swimming in a cuvette. Vestibular neurons in these fish were photoablated at 72hpf,  
1413 before swim bladder inflation. Note the absence of a swim bladder, evaluated here at  
1414 144hpf. These fish are siblings of the fish in Movie M7.  
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1416 **Movie M7: Fish swimming in a cuvette.**

1417 Tg(-6.7FRhcrTR:gal4VP16); Tg(14xUAS-E1b:hChr2(H134R)-EYFP); mitfa -/- fish filmed  
1418 at 144hpf. Note the presence of a swim bladder. These fish are siblings of the fish in  
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