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Different foraging activities of the Common Tern along the eastern and western flyways

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Abstract

Long-distance migration can potentially have strong carryover effects, which may vary among populations using different flyways. This study aims to shed light on the migration patterns of the Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*), a seabird that is common along coastlines all over the globe. Using light-level geolocation and immersion data, we compared the migration patterns of two populations of terns breeding in Croatia, one coastal and one inland. We analyzed their use of stopover sites during migration and foraging activities during the migration and wintering period. Monthly marine productivity data for stopovers and wintering areas were downloaded from the Ocean productivity webpage. Terns from the coastal colonies used the west African migration route with wintering areas between Mauritania and Nigeria, while terns from the inland colonies used the east African migration route, wintering between Tanzania and south Mozambique Channel. The primary production in wintering areas was higher along the western African coast, compared to the eastern African coast, and terns wintering along western African coasts spent less time foraging during winter. During autumn migration, birds from both populations spent more time foraging at stopover sites than while travelling, but the same was not observed for the spring migration. Compared to autumn migration, spring migration stopover periods were significantly shorter. The difference in primary production between the two wintering areas was compensated by longer foraging time in eastern wintering areas, and spring migration did not show the difference between the two populations in the stopovers duration or the length of total migration.

Synopsis

NA