

The Woodpigeon in the face of climate change

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Background

At the end of the last century, the decline in the number of woodpigeons crossing the Pyrenees mountain range had alerted part of the scientific community. Hunting federations in south-western France then deployed a network of observers to quantify the contingents of birds arriving in the region and then crossing the Pyrenees mountain range towards the Iberian Peninsula. It quickly became apparent that the number of migrating woodpigeons was not decreasing at all, but was actually increasing. The migration had simply shifted westward, towards the Atlantic coast.

What about today ?

Over the past five years, while record numbers of birds have been broken, two years have been significantly in deficit. These are not the result of a decline in the number of migrating birds, but rather a time lag in migration¹.

Global warming, the obvious culprit!

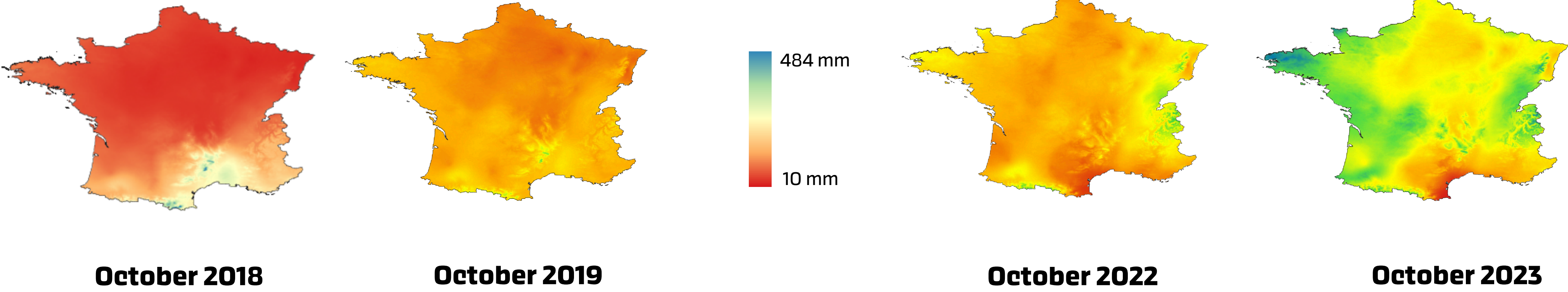
This possibility seems logical. If this is the case, the migration of woodpigeons nesting in high latitudes², where the effects of global warming are exacerbated, must also be delayed. Likewise, in places of passage such as Belgium³ ...

First lessons : No time lag observed! The responsible for the eight-day time lag observed at the crossing of the Pyrenees is elsewhere.

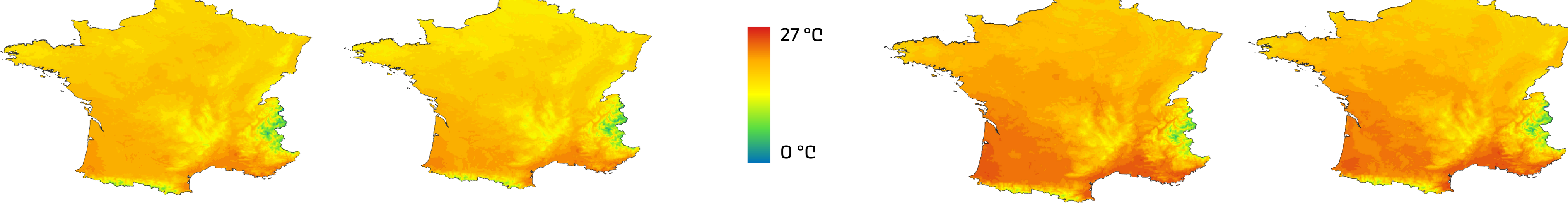
Climate change and its multiple effects

Rising temperatures aren't the only consequence of current climate change. Rainfall patterns are also being affected, and hunters know that woodpigeons don't like rain.

Precipitations



Temperature max



Take-home message

The regional climate plays a significant role in the phenology of the woodpigeon's migration during its annual journey to spend the winter in Spain. Rainy autumns hamper the crossing of the Pyrenees, as the birds prefer a clear horizon. Other factors will also need to be taken into consideration in the future, such as the early or late dates of the corn harvest in the plains or wind conditions (strength and direction)^{4,5}.

Literature cited

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