

Monitoring of woodpigeon *Columba palumbus* migrations and their spatial and temporal evolution. Results induced by new technologies.



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Introduction & Objectives

The woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*) is one of the most widely spread and abundant birds in western Europe. It is also the most important European game bird in terms of numbers harvested. During autumn, innumerable birds cross our country (France). Some of them winter in South western Europe from France to Portugal and Spain. Despite the economical importance of the woodpigeon hunting, stopover and over-wintering sites and habitats are not well known. Also, more « technological » methods, which combine localization and data acquisition through the installation of Argos transmitters sending tags about the equipped birds through satellites (CLS, Toulouse). It possible to improve the understanding of feeding strategies, breeding process, surrounding migrations and adaptation ; all this is made at the individual scale.

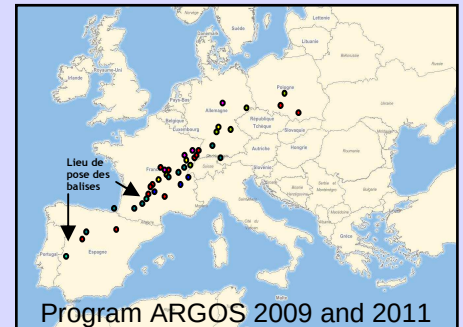
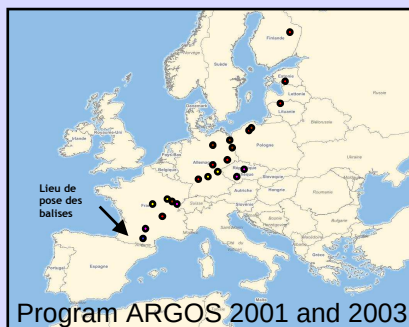


Radio-Tracking Data



Between 2001 and 2003, 8 wood pigeons were equipped with Argos transmitters of 20 grams, whose life expectancy did not exceed one year. Bird capture and installation of Argos transmitters were carried out in February in Bourdalat (Landes, France). In 2009 and 2011, the GIFS France equipped 18 birds with new Argos solar powered transmitters whose life expectancy is several years. The wood pigeons were captured in the southwest of the Iberian peninsula (Grandola, Portugal), France (Landes) and one is captured in the Nord area in France to be acquainted with its migratory phenology.

Among the wood pigeons which have provided indications, like their localization, most of them followed a major highway SW/ NE during the spring migration, to arrive to Germany, Czech Republic, Poland and Finland ; 2 birds stopped near Toulouse, in France (one is coming from Portugal and the other from southwestern France).



Conclusion

Even if the Argos transmitters suffer seasonal falls of output, in particular during the summer, the results are very encouraging and instructive.

The spring migration is characterized by more or less important trips (from 600 to 3 600 km) with migratory halts of a few days (from 3 to 19 days). If the two birds followed nearly 2,5 years were faithful to their breeding grounds, this is not the same for their over-wintering sites. One of these birds did not even migrate during winter, remaining all winter in its breeding ground.

The confinement on the site of reproduction could also be observed for 14 birds between on March 23rd and on June 26th. The data's exploitation collected will provide essential information on the precise timing of departures and arrivals, the distances covered, the exploited biotopes, etc. It will be consequently possible to raise many issues remaining about birds' behaviour.



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