



Research on spoonbill migration

Your help is needed!

Spoonbills that breed in The Netherlands spend the winter along the Atlantic coast between France and Senegal. But why do some spoonbills fly only a few hundred kilometres to spend the winter in France, whereas others continue their journey for more than 4,000 kilometres to go to Senegal?

We need your help to answer this question!

On the basis of 25 years of observations of colour-ringed spoonbills throughout their wintering range, we discovered that adult Spoonbills are very faithful to their wintering areas. Therefore, the decision where to migrate and to spend the winter must be made already early in life. To investigate the mechanisms driving this decision, a research team from the NIOZ Royal Netherlands Institute for Sea Research is equipping juvenile Spoonbills with GPS-GSM-transmitters. This allows us to track the birds in real-time and to actively search for the birds to collect information on their status (condition) and environment (habitat, food conditions, presence of conspecifics). We expect that both social information (from experienced adults) and habitat quality play an important role in driving stopover and winter site choice of young Spoonbills.

We need your help!

As Spoonbills are travelling along the East-Atlantic coast during migration and in winter, it is very difficult (often impossible) for us to be at the right place at the right time to collect information on the environment of the transmitted birds. This is where your help would be greatly appreciated!

How can you help?

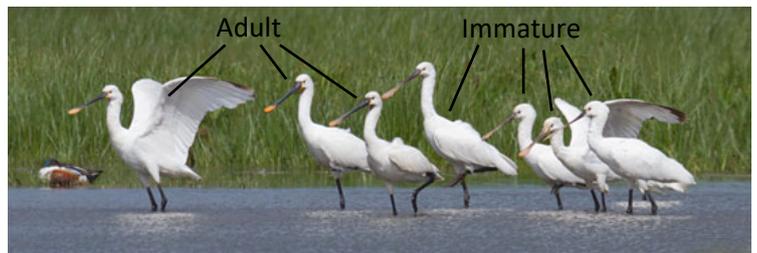
If you see a spoonbill with a transmitter on its back, we would be very happy if you could try to collect (some of) the following information:

- 🦅 Date place and time
- 🦅 Is the bird alone or in a group?
- 🦅 What is the bird doing? (foraging, walking, resting, flying...)
- 🦅 What is the colourcode of the transmitted bird (in case several transmitted birds are in the same area)?

- ❖ Does the bird appear “fit”? (a photo would really help, otherwise please try to describe whether the bird looks healthy or skinny)
- ❖ If the bird is foraging, it would be really useful to have an estimate of prey intake rate. To do so, please try to record the number of prey that the bird swallows during one minute. You can repeat this as often as you want (the more, the better 😊).

Group information:

- ❖ How many other spoonbills are present (approximately)?
- ❖ How many juvenile (1st year), subadult (2nd and 3rd year) and adult spoonbills are in the group? Juvenile spoonbills can be recognized by their pale greyish bill (first picture) and black wingtips (mainly visible in flight). Adult birds have no black wingtips and a black bill with a distinct yellow tip. Subadult birds (2nd and 3rd year birds) have a darker bill than the juveniles, with a yellowish (but still vague) tip of the bill and often still black wingtips. In case it is difficult to distinguish between juveniles (1st year) and subadults (2nd or 3rd year), then try to at least distinguish adults from immatures (as in the second picture).
- ❖ What are the colourcodes of other spoonbills in the group?



Habitat:

- What type of habitat is the spoonbill in? (again, a photo would be great)
- Is it a freshwater, brackish or marine habitat?
- If the spoonbills are foraging, what are they feeding upon?

You can send your observations, or any questions or remarks, to Tamar Lok (tamar.lok@nioz.nl).

Thanks a lot !!!