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Abstracts

SHORT COMMUNICATIONS

PATCH CHOICE AND FORAGING BEHAVIOR OF NONBREEDING AMERICAN FLAMINGOS IN YUCATÁN, MEXICO

FELICITY ARENGO^{1,3} AND GUY A. BALDASSARRE²

¹*Wildlife Conservation Society, 2300 Southern Boulevard, Bronx, NY 10460*

²*Faculty of Environmental and Forest Biology, State University of New York, College of Environmental Science and Forestry, Syracuse, NY 13210*

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³E-mail: farengo@wcs.org

Abstract. We studied nonbreeding American Flamingos (*Phoenicopterus ruber ruber*) using the Celestún Lagoon, Yucatán, Mexico, to characterize feeding patches and to describe factors influencing patch choice. Four invertebrate taxa (polychaetes, molluscs, chironomids, crustaceans) and two plant foods (seeds of widgeongrass [*Ruppia maritima*] and tubercles of muskgrass [*Chara fibrosa*]) comprised 99% of potential food items in 76 patches we sampled. Patches tended to be dominated either by invertebrates or plant foods; only 12% of patches had 50:50 ratios of plant and invertebrate foods. Food was more abundant in invertebrate versus plant-dominated patches (157 vs. 67 items patch⁻¹), but flamingo flock size was smaller in invertebrate-dominated patches (60 vs. 147 birds patch⁻¹). More individuals walk-fed as invertebrates increased in the patch, and more birds stamp-fed as plant foods increased. We argue that groups of foraging flamingos apparently indicate location of food for conspecifics (local enhancement), and may also provide information about patch quality through feeding behavior.

Key words: flamingos, foraging, Mexico, patch choice, *Phoenicopterus ruber ruber*.