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Abstract

The Wood Sandpiper is a common passage migrant in Israel. However, the relative importance of this flyway remains unknown. Here, we present a general overview of Wood Sandpiper migration at Eilat (Israel). A total of 214 Wood Sandpipers were caught, ringed and measured at the IBRCE ringing station in years 1984-2001. Most of Wood Sandpipers were caught in spring (195 indiv. - 91%) and rarely in autumn (19 indiv. - 9%). Retrap analysis confirms that the region offers good foraging conditions for this species and the median body mass gain in Eilat was 2.0 g/day. The extreme gain of 5.5 g/day noted in Eilat exceeds the extremes reached by birds at other sites. The median length of stay of the birds was 4 days and the mean body mass of spring migrants in Eilat was distinctly lower than found in other sites both in northern Africa and in the Mediterranean region of Europe. The data suggest that in spring Eilat is probably the first site for Wood Sandpiper to restore energetic reserves after an exhausting crossing of the deserts. Low weight and occurrence of the extremely lean birds suggest that Eilat is used by Wood Sandpipers as an emergency stopover site primarily for disadvantaged birds.

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