Phenological synchrony of bird migration with tree flowering at desert riparian stopover sites

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Abstract

Small-bodied songbirds replenish fat reserves during migration at stopover sites where they continually encounter novel and often unpredictable environmental conditions. The ability to select and utilize high quality habitats is critical to survival and fitness. Vegetation phenology is closely linked with emergence of insect prey and may provide valid cues of food availability for stopover habitat selection. Climate change is disrupting phenological synchrony across trophic levels with negative impacts on bird populations. However, whether synchrony or mismatch indicates historic or disrupted systems remains unclear. Many Neotropical migratory songbirds of western North America must cross arid regions where drought conditions related to climate change and human water use are expected to increase. We studied migrant abundance and the diversity (niche breadth) and proportional use of vegetation species as foraging substrates and

their synchrony with vegetation flowering during spring migration along the lower Colorado River in the Sonoran Desert of the U.S. and Mexico.

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