

Abstracts



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Crossing the arid plains of central Eurasia from Europe to India by songbirds

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Abstract

The arid belt of Central Asia east of the Caspian Sea is a major barrier for many migrating songbirds. It has to be crossed by passerines that breed in Siberia and winter in Africa, but also by the species that breed in eastern Europe and winter in southern and south-eastern Asia. Many passerine migrants breeding in Siberia and wintering in Africa avoid crossing the deserts in autumn; instead, they make a detour to the north and northwest and fly north of the Caspian Sea. We have shown that some, but not all, European-Indian migrants (e.g. scarlet rosefinches *Carpodacus erythrinus* and western greenish warblers *Phylloscopus trochiloides viridanus*) in autumn also make a detour and travel towards the east north of the arid belt before crossing in its central or eastern part. Other species, which include e.g. red-breasted flycatchers *Ficedula parva*, Blyth's reed warblers *Acrocephalus dumetorum* and possibly booted warblers *Iduna caligata*, take the shortest route between their (north)east European breeding grounds and Indian winter quarters. These different migratory routes cannot easily be attributed to different foraging ecology and fattening strategies; they might rather be explained by the history of colonization of the forest belt of Eurasia after the most recent glacial event.

Synopsis

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