

Impact of a recently created wetland on spoonbills stopping over at Urdaibai marshes (N Iberia)

Juan Arizaga, Ainara Azkona, Xarles Cepeda, Jon Maguregi, Edorta Unamuno, Jose Mari Unamuno
 Address: Urdaibai Bird Center-Aranzadi Society of Science, Orueta 7, 48314 Gauegiz Arteaga, Bizkaia, Spain.
 Email: jarizaga@aranzadi-zientziak.org

INTRODUCTION

Urdaibai is one of the main coastal marshes from northern Iberia. Besides Santoña, it is well known for being one of the chief stopover sites along the coast of northern Iberia for the spoonbill population moving from the Wadden sea to southern Iberia or Africa (Galarza, 1986; Del Villar et al., 2007;). Spoonbills have traditionally used Urdaibai as a refuelling site where birds stay for less than one day until resuming their journey towards further south regions (Del Villar et al., 2007).

In October of 2009, a new lagoon was created in a zone of Urdaibai (funding: Basque Government) which was until then largely covered by an exotic bush, *Baccharis halimifolia*. The lagoon was soon observed to be used by several waterbird species, including spoonbills, which until then used to stop over mostly in an intertidal area some kilometers away from the lagoon within the lower marsh areas of Urdaibai. This poster aims to describe the use of the lagoon by the spoonbills and to asses its impact on spoonbills stopping over at Urdaibai.

SAMPLING SITE, COUNTING PROTOCOL

The data analyzed here were obtained during 2010 and 2011 at the new lagoon (Gauegiz marshlands, Urdaibai, 43°21'N 02°40'W). Spoonbills were counted from a single site (Urdaibai Bird Center), just in front of such lagoon. Counting was carried out with a sampling effort that ranged from 1 (August 2010) to 27 survey days/month (November 2011; mean: 15.2 days/month) .



RESULTS

Spoonbills were detected for the entire year, with a mean of 10 or <10 ex/d, except in September, (Fig. 1). Using data on ringed birds we found that the mean stopover duration varied across the year and that, overall, this mean was >1 day (Fig. 2).

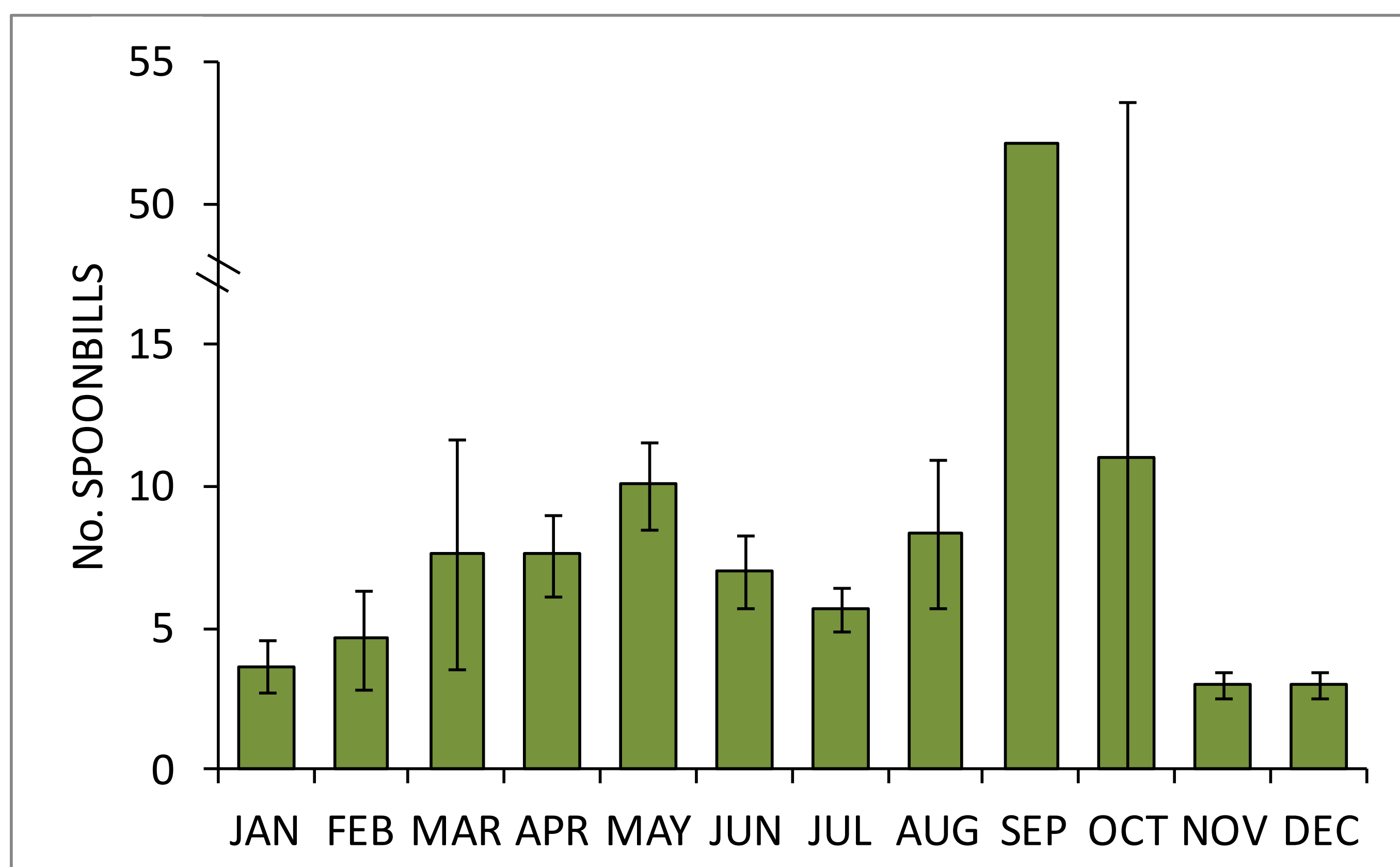


Fig. 1. Mean ($\pm 95\%CI$) number of spoonbills seen per day at the Orueta lagoon (data from 2010 and 2011 have been pooled). The 95%CI for September was ± 57.6 spoonbills.

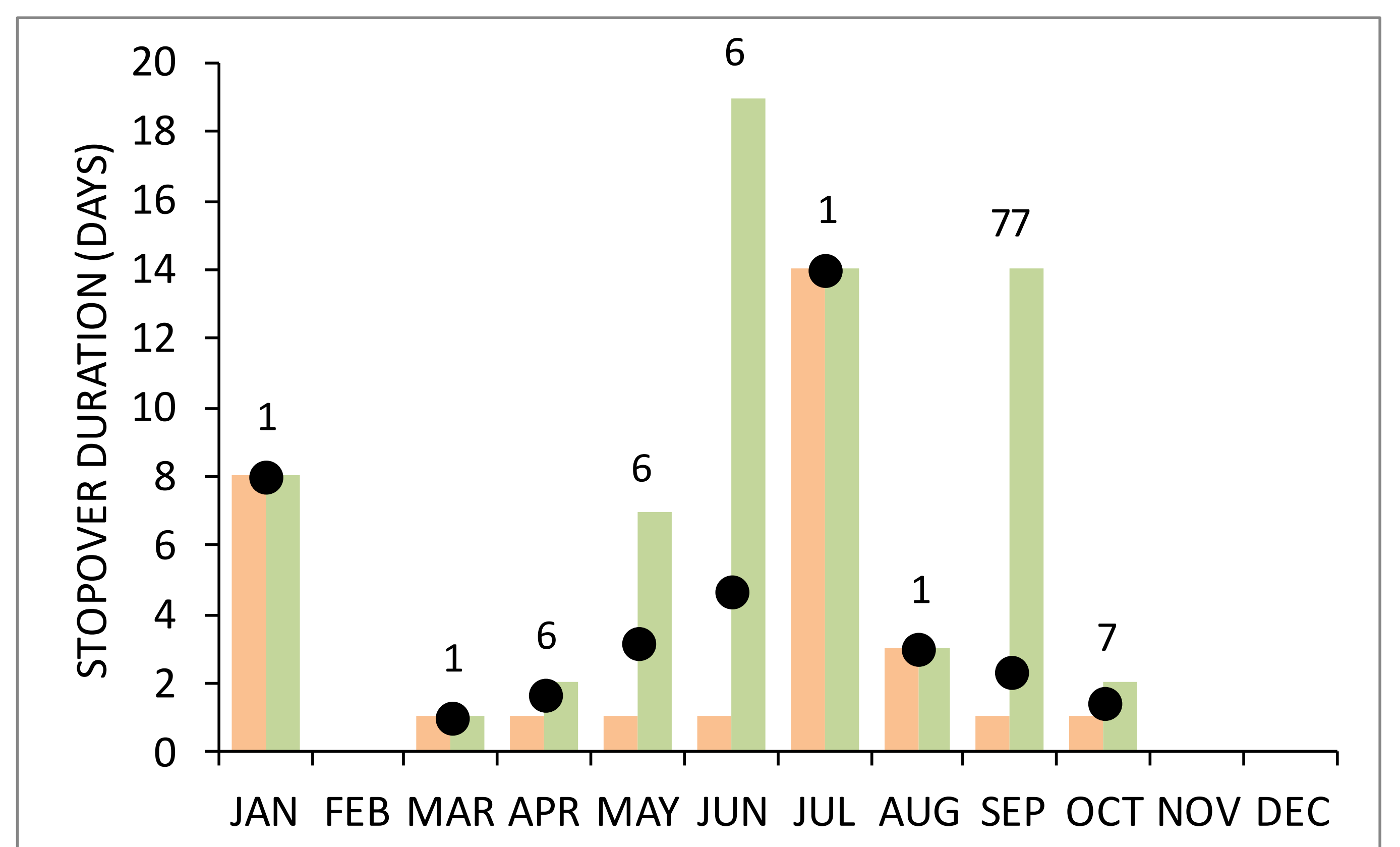


Fig. 2. Mean (dots) stopover duration (sample size above bars; data from 2010 and 2011 have been pooled) of individually ringed spoonbills. Bars show the minimum and maximum stopover durations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Until 2009, the spoonbill was a bird occurring at Urdaibai only during the autumn migration period and, to a lesser extent, the spring one (Del Villar et al., 2007; R. Garaita, pers. Com.). After the creation of the new lagoon in Gauegiz Arteaga, the species was detected for the entire year, with a residual population in winter and summer, i.e. outside peak periods of passage in autumn and spring. This is a new behavior for the spoonbill at Urdaibai. The lagoon also seemed to create an area with no or marginal disturbance, thus allowing spoonbills to stay at Urdaibai longer than one day. Therefore, it can be concluded that the new lagoon has had a positive impact on spoonbills stopping over at Urdaibai.

REFERENCES

Del Villar, J., Garaita, R., Prieto, A. 2007. La espátula en la Reserva de la Biosfera de Urdaibai: diez años de seguimiento. Gobierno Vasco. Vitoria.
 Galarza, A. 1986. Migración de la Espátula (*Platalea leucorodia* (Linn.)) por la Península Ibérica. Ardeola 33: 195-201.

