SPATIOTEMPORAL CHARACTERIZATION OF NON-BREEDING GREAT SHEARWATERS ARDENNA GRAVIS WITHIN THEIR WINTERING RANGE

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Received 22 January 2020, accepted 17 June 2020

ABSTRACT


Movements of Great Shearwaters Ardena gravis wintering in the Northwest Atlantic showed age-based spatial and temporal flexibility, with foraging tactics linked to a defined physical preference of their primary prey. From 2013 to 2018, we tracked 58 Great Shearwaters during their wintering season using platform terminal transmitters deployed in the same area of the southwest Gulf of Maine. Utilization distributions (UDs) for individual birds were created from convex hulls, which were then combined for spatial and temporal analyses. Of the 95% kernel UD, 55% were contained within the Gulf of Maine and the remainder extended to the Scotian Shelf off Nova Scotia and the Grand Banks off Newfoundland. Analysis of fecal DNA from tagged birds and others captured with them indicated that Northern sand lance Ammodytes dubius were the primary prey while in the Gulf of Maine. This relationship was supported by the overlap of UD and sand lance habitat. The spatial occurrence of sand lance from bottomfish trawl survey data demonstrated that these fish preferred shallow water (< 100 m) with substrates consisting of high sand content (> 50%) and grain sizes ranging from 0.35–2.00 mm in diameter. These same properties were associated and spatially aligned with the collective 25% kernel UD of Great Shearwaters. Necropsy of bycaught Great Shearwaters from an area that overlapped in space and time with tagged individuals and sand lance habitat demonstrated that most birds (89%) were young (0–2 years), based on gonadal development, molt score, and/or bursa of Fabricius. Coupling demographic information from necropsies with spatial habits and movement timing of tagged birds suggests this region serves as a winter “nursery” for Great Shearwaters.

Key words: Great Shearwaters, utilization distribution, wintering range, satellite tracking, fecal DNA analysis, sand lance, bycatch necropsies

INTRODUCTION

The distribution of marine vertebrates is the product of a hierarchical structure of processes driven at multiple spatiotemporal scales (Mannocci et al. 2017). Many of these driving processes are in flux due to human-induced or climatically mediated stress, resulting in changes in faunal distribution and abundance (Nye et al. 2009, Moore et al. 2018). In seabirds, shifting environmental conditions are implicated in precipitous declines across taxa and ecoregions (Croxall et al. 2012, Paleczny et al. 2015, Dias et al. 2019). Characterizing current distribution patterns of seabirds is critical to identifying and managing seabird and ecosystem responses to current and predicted environmental changes (González-Solís & Shaffer 2009, Paleczny et al. 2015), and there is a paucity of data for juvenile seabirds in particular (Hazen et al. 2012). However, in order to be rigorous tools for ecosystem management, descriptions of seabird distributions must be augmented with explanations of the physical and biological processes that contribute to the dynamic nature of such patterns (Faucauld et al. 2000, Faucauld 2009, Tremblay et al. 2009).

Seabirds may forage across vast coastal and pelagic areas during breeding phases (Weimerskirch et al. 1993, Weimerskirch et al. 1994, Jouventin et al. 1994), and many undertake trans-equatorial migrations between non-breeding and breeding locations (Schaffer et al. 2006, González-Solís et al. 2007, Hedd et al. 2012). Great Shearwaters Ardena gravis breed on islands in the South Atlantic and spend their wintering season in the North Atlantic, arriving in the western half in May. They return to the Southern Hemisphere passing down the east-central Atlantic starting in September (Brown 1986). Juveniles and sub-adults arrive in the western North Atlantic later (July) and are thought to return south in November, after breeding adults (Brown 1986, Powers et al. 2017). The boreal summer distribution of Great Shearwaters off the northeastern United States and Atlantic Canada has been examined in part by a series of loosely connected and spatially overlapping studies using shipboard and aerial observations (Powers 1983, Brown 1986, Winship et al. 2018, Wong et al. 2018, Carvalho & Davoren 2019). These studies indicate foraging flexibility of wintering shearwaters based on biophysical drivers. For example, Great Shearwaters exhibited inter-annual variability and dietary partitioning with Sooty Shearwaters A. grisea as prey availability shifted within the Bay of Fundy (Ronconi et al. 2010). Great Shearwater movements within the Gulf of Maine, more recently characterized with satellite tracking data (Powers et al. 2017), showed that birds preferred to forage in shallower waters (< 100 m), primarily over sloped rims fringing deeper central basins. However, this analysis of foraging habitat showed inconsistent relationships in terms
Here, we report results of Argos data from PTTs placed on 58 Great Shearwaters that were captured in the southwestern Gulf of Maine over six years (2013–2018). We used these results to characterize the spatial and temporal extent of a defined portion of their wintering range in the Northwest Atlantic over a timeframe that can accommodate cycles of seasonal and inter-annual variability. We explored differences in utilization distributions (UDs), estimating range sizes and interactions with other individuals on an annual basis. We derived behavioral traits from the aggregated spatial data to assess revisitation and flight patterns between areas of differing foraging intensity, in order to corroborate if foraging behaviors align with changes in bird density. Temporal shifts in overall distribution over the Northwest Atlantic were examined on a monthly basis to determine the timing of bird movement through the region and the extent of movement between and within areas in the study region. Characteristics of key foraging areas and the distributions of preferred prey were compared with information on prey selection, which was determined by fecal DNA analysis. Age demographics were determined from primary molt scores and the timing of departure, in comparison with a gonad and bursa analysis of fishery-related bycaught birds. We suggest that primarily young non-breeding Great Shearwaters utilize the southern Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank during their wintering period. This pattern of habitat utilization is associated with the distribution of a key prey of depth, chlorophyll $a$, and sea surface temperature between Georges Bank/the southern Gulf of Maine and the Bay of Fundy (Powers et al. 2017). The breeding biology of two closely related shearwaters, Short-tailed Shearwater $A. tenuirostris$ and Cory’s Shearwater $Calonectris borealis$ (Bradley et al. 1999, Campioni et al. 2020), indicates that age-specific demographics may also play an important role in Great Shearwater movement ecology in the Gulf of Maine, which is postulated as a wintering area for mostly non-breeding birds (Huettemann & Diamond 2000, Powers et al. 2017, Ronconi et al. 2018).

Platform terminal transmitters (PTTs) provide geographical information that is tracked by Argos, an international satellite system. Using this information, researchers can describe foraging and wintering ranges, migration corridors, and seasonal movements of seabirds (e.g., Pinet et al. 2011, Jodice et al. 2015). Such information allows mapping of the broad-scale distribution of a population, which is often related to oceanographic variables. Spatial data can also provide insight into fine-scale distribution, which is mostly influenced by prey distribution (Schneider & Piatt 1986, Fauchald et al. 2000, Davoren et al. 2003, Suryan et al. 2016). However, exploration into the role of prey in seabird distributions requires further examination of seabird diet in tandem with tracking data.

Fig. 1. Map of study area in the northwestern Atlantic Ocean. The shearwater capture area is noted by the green polygon in the southwestern Gulf of Maine. Bycatch specimens were collected in NOAA/NEFOP Statistical Area 521, which is noted by white dashed line east of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, USA.
species that has distinct biological, physical, and geographical habitat preferences.

STUDY AREA AND METHODS

Data collection

We tagged Great Shearwaters from 2013 to 2018 off the coast of Massachusetts in the southwestern Gulf of Maine, from the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary to the coastal waters east of Cape Cod (41.3° to 43.0° latitude, −70.5° to −69.5° longitude; Fig. 1). We used small vessels to access birds at known foraging areas and attracted birds to the vessel using cut fish and squid. Once they were close enough to the vessel, birds were caught with handled landing nets.

Over six consecutive years, we placed PTTs on 58 shearwaters (ca. 10 yr−1; Table 1). Solar PTT-100 tags (15 g, Microwave Telemetry, 8835 Columbia 100 Parkway, Suites K & L, Columbia, MD 21045, USA) were used with duty cycles of 24 hours on (i.e., continuous). Tags were attached dorsally, central to the body mass of the bird below the nape and between the wings, using four subcutaneous sutures (Prolene suture 4.0 Ethicon) as per MacLeod et al. (2008). All tags eventually stopped transmitting, and we expected that they fell off when the Prolene sutures degraded. Tags represented less than 3% of body mass for all tagged birds to minimize effects on flight efficiency (see Phillips et al. 2003). Tags were typically deployed in July, except for 2017, when poor weather conditions delayed tagging until early August, and a single bird in September 2016. Body weight and primary molt were scored using the BTO method (Ginn & Melville 1983) for each tagged bird. Sex was identified genetically from blood or feather samples provided (see Acknowledgements).

Data analysis

Range estimation using kernel density

We used the Time Local Convex Hull (T-LoCoH, http://tilcoh.r-forge.r-project.org) method (Lyons et al. 2013) in R version 3.4.0 (R Development Core Team 2018) to analyze our Argos location dataset. T-LoCoH generalizes the non-parametric UD construction method LoCoH (Getz et al. 2007) and integrates time with space in the construction of local hulls through a scaling that relates distance and time to the individual’s characteristic velocity (Lyons et al. 2013). A hull is defined as a minimum convex polygon constructed with time, they are localized in space and time (Lyons et al. 2007); thus, it provides good results in both dense and sparse areas of use. In this study, UDs were created from density isopleths of hull parent points (i.e., centroid locations) for 95%, 50%, and 25% kernel densities, with the 25% kernel UD representing areas of greatest bird concentration and 95% kernel UD areas of the largest spatial extent. We then determined the amount of overlap or individual interactions within these UDs, both among individuals in the same year and among all individuals during the entire study. Physical covariates (depth and substrate properties) were assigned according to the parent point of each hull (centroid) using available data layers. Substrate properties included sediment sand content (%) and mean grain size (mm) for the United States northeast continental shelf (NOAA/NCCOS unpubl. data).

Correlation of individual range size and PTT duration was determined statistically using Pearson’s product moment test. If a correlation was found, we then examined whether assumptions of homogeneity of variance differed in individual tag duration by year and number of tags by year using Bartlett’s test before proceeding to ANOVA. ANOVA (F-statistic) was used to determine whether UD groups (by year) or behavioral groups were different, using Tukey’s test in post-hoc analyses. We also used the Kruskal-Wallis test to determine whether characteristics (e.g., tag days, range size, body weight, molt scores, sex ratio) of population distributions were identical when we could not assume a normal distribution.

Time-use and behavioral characteristics

Time-use metrics were used as another line of evidence to examine spatial use (Lyons et al. 2013). We used an inter visita gap (IVG) period of 24 h to understand daily movements. IVG is a unit of time that must pass before another occurrence in a hull is considered a separate visit. So, for daily foraging behavior, we did not want two locations that were a day apart to be considered nearest neighbors, even if they were close in space. To explore the relationships among the distribution of hulls in time-use space, we examined duration...
Chord_16S_R_Short (reverse) primers from Deagle
110–130 bp long. We used the Chord_16S_F_TagA (forward) and
incubation. We employed polymerase chain reaction (PCR) to
(McMurdie & Holmes 2013) in R version 3.2.5 (R Development
OTUs with < 2 reads were trimmed using the “phyloseq” package, and those identified as
obviously not prey (e.g., human, shearwater) were removed as contaminants.

**Fecal DNA analysis**

For food habits analysis, birds were captured in 2017–2018 and
temporarily placed into individual pet carriers on mesh netting
suspended over an aluminum foil covered floor. Fecal material
on the foil was collected for each individual and frozen
either dry or in ethanol. Fecal samples were transported to a
genetics lab and stored at ~20°C until processing. Frozen samples
were scraped into 2.0-mL tubes using flame-sterilized forceps
and frequent glove changes. Genomic DNA was extracted from
each sample using a Qiagen (Valencia, California, USA) stool
mini-kit following manufacturer protocols, with the following
modifications: samples were incubated at 60°C overnight in the
first buffer and we added 1 μL of carrier RNA after the second
incubation. We employed polymerase chain reaction (PCR) to
target a fragment of the mitochondrial 16S gene that is about
110–130 bp long. We used the Chord_16S_F_TagA (forward) and
Chord_16S_R_Short (reverse) primers from Deagle et al. (2009),
standard PCR conditions, and a blocking primer (GrSh-block1:
5’-TGTGGAACTTAAAAATCAACGA-3’) that we designed for
this study to terminate in a C3 spacer, which would limit predator
reads. Previous work demonstrated that this primer set (forward,
reverse, and blocking) could reconstruct vertebrate prey items
from seal fecal samples collected from the Gulf of Maine, with
species-level taxonomic resolution for most individuals (K. Flanders pers.
comm.). Pre-PCR and PCR workflows took place in dedicated labs in
separate buildings to minimize the potential for contamination.

Amplicons were cleaned and sent to a genomics facility, where they
were indexed and sequenced on 1/8th of a flow cell on an Illumina
(San Diego, California, USA) MiSeq using 2×300 bp chemistry
(ca. two million reads). Forward and reverse reads were assembled
in PANDAseq (Masella et al. 2012) using the default primer-match
threshold. After trimming adapters and primers, de novo operational
taxonomic units (OTUs) were picked using a threshold of 97%
sequence similarity using QIME2 (Caporaso et al. 2010).

OTUs with < 2 reads were trimmed using the “phyloseq” package
(McMurdie & Holmes 2013) in R version 3.2.5 (R Development
Core Team 2018). Remaining OTUs above the 1% threshold
of Deagle et al. (2009) were identified to the lowest possible
taxonomic resolution with NCBI Blast+ in the Cloud software
accessed through Amazon Web Services Marketplace (Seattle,
Washington, USA), which queried OTUs against a server copy
of the nucleotide database. Taxonomy was assigned to each OTU
based on the lowest expect value (e-value), with a maximum
threshold of 1e−20 (see Thomas et al. 2014). If multiple
database matches shared the same lowest e-value, we selected
the match whose species is known to occur in the study area.
If the OTU matched best (i.e., lowest e-value) to more than one
geographically appropriate species, the OTU was assigned to the
lowest taxonomy shared between the matches (e.g., family or
genus instead of species). OTUs with identical taxonomy were
combined using the “phyloseq” package, and the resulting dataset
was used to examine distributions of Northern sand lance
Ammodytes dubius, Atlantic mackerel Scomber scombrus, and Atlantic herring Clupea harengus.
Mackerel feed throughout the water column, so bottomfish
surveys may be inconclusive in mackerel stock assessments.
Atlantic menhaden Brevoortia tyrannus is a mid-water fish, so
it was not represented in these bottom trawl surveys. While sand
lance is not specifically targeted in trawl surveys, it is caught as
bycatch and is included in trawl survey datasets. We examined
spring (April–May) and fall (October–November) logs of trawls
from 2013 to 2017 covering the northeastern US continental
shelf (east of ~73°) including Georges Bank. These surveys did
not include the Scotian Shelf in Canada. We identified all trawl
stations as spatial points to define the scope of bottom trawl
sampling, and we characterized bathymetry, substrate, surface
temperatures, and bottom temperatures at locations where targeted
fish were caught. Sampling of fish was uniform across the
northeastern US continental shelf for each spring and fall survey
(Politis et al. 2014), so we summed the locations of fish caught
over the entire period.

**Age analysis using bycatch birds**

Data from bycaught individuals was used to examine age and
sex demographics in the southwestern Gulf of Maine. Bycaught
shearwaters were obtained from the US NOAA Northeast Fisheries
Observer Program (NEFOP) in the Gulf of Maine (Northeast
Statistical Area 521 in Appendix A of NEFSC FSB 2016) and from
scientific longline surveys around Gough Island in the Tristan da
Cunha archipelago in the South Atlantic. Individuals were frozen
upon collection and necropsied as part of a larger study following
the methods of van Franeker (2004). Morphometric data were
collected on live birds captured in the southwestern Gulf of Maine
(see Fig. 1) in July 2019 for comparison to bycaught specimens.
Within this study, we relied upon gonad development, molt score, and the presence/size of the bursa of Fabricius to gauge sex and likely age. Based on visual assessment of gonad color and quantitative measurement of gonad size, gonad development was scored as one of four classes: hatch year, immature, sub-adult/non-breeder, or breeding bird. As noted in previous studies incorporating necropsy data, the sub-adult category (Class 3) includes both immature birds close to maturity and non-breeding adults, since gonadal development of these two stages is very similar (Cortes et al. 2018, Hector et al. 1986). Molt score was examined following BTO methods, and each specimen was assigned a score from 0 to 50. Bursa presence and size was also noted when possible because these can be used as non-plumage-based evidence to estimate the age of procellariform seabirds (Broughton 1994) instead of the nape plumage characteristics noted by Pyle (2008). The bursa begins to enlarge shortly after hatching and reaches its maximum size in four to six months (Broughton 1994). Involucrion is typically complete by the end of a bird’s first year of life, and the bursa is absent in adult birds (Glick 1983, Mase & Oishi 1991). Vestigial bursas have internal walls that cannot be visibly differentiated from the cloacal wall (Broughton 1994).

Gonad development, molt score, and bursa presence/size were assessed together for each bird to assign a likely age class: young or mature. Collected measurements were compared between Cape Cod (Northwest Atlantic as assumed non-breeders) and Gough Island (South Atlantic as suspected or confirmed breeders). The Wilcoxon test was used to compare parameter means as we could not assume that the measurements were normally distributed.

RESULTS

PTTs provided an average of 19.1 Argos locations per day per tag. These were used to create TSD hulls for individual Great Shearwaters with an IVG of 24 hours. A total of 73 302 convex hulls were determined for 4 477.5 days (Table 1).

Annual ranges, expressed in TSD units, were calculated per bird (Table 1). The 50% kernel UD in any year typically represented 21.8% of an individual’s 95% kernel UD. The number of range intersections among individual birds in any year increased proportionately with range size: 32.3% in the 25% kernel UD and 62.3% in the 50% kernel UD, relative to total intersections within the 95% kernel UD. But, the area of intersection was disproportionately larger in the 95% kernel UD, and 83.6% of the overlap occurred outside of the 50% kernel UD (Table 1).

Comparing range size by year, we found a positive correlation between tag days and the estimated 95% kernel UD ($P = 3.578e^{-06}$, $R^2 = 0.552$). As a result we examined, but found no difference in, both the length of individual tag duration (variance) by year (Bartlett’s $K^2 = 2.1842$, $df = 5$, $P = 0.8231$) and the number of tag days (sampling effort) by year ($F = 1.0712$, $df = 5$ and 52, $P = 0.3871$). However, the 95% kernel UD size by year was significantly different ($F = 3.162$, $df = 5$ and 52, $P = 0.0144$) between 2013 and 2015 (Tukey’s test, $P = 0.028$) and between 2015 and 2018 (Tukey’s test, $P = 0.035$; Table 1). Plotting 95% kernel UDs by year (Fig. 2) showed that most individuals in 2013 and 2018 stayed within the Gulf of Maine, as opposed to 2015, when

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic Density</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
<th>2017</th>
<th>2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total tags (PTT)</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mean tag duration (day)</td>
<td>59.2</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>96.2</td>
<td>69.3</td>
<td>79.7</td>
<td>72.1</td>
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<td>Total tag days</td>
<td>591.8</td>
<td>936.4</td>
<td>962.0</td>
<td>693.3</td>
<td>717.6</td>
<td>576.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total convex hulls</td>
<td>10878</td>
<td>14037</td>
<td>12981</td>
<td>13079</td>
<td>11889</td>
<td>10438</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean range by density (TSD*1e−6) 0.25</td>
<td>2319</td>
<td>6160</td>
<td>8655</td>
<td>2806</td>
<td>1251</td>
<td>2212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>9144</td>
<td>11256</td>
<td>21399</td>
<td>13222</td>
<td>11777</td>
<td>6879</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>33457</td>
<td>74914</td>
<td>98053</td>
<td>48388</td>
<td>44160</td>
<td>31434</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean tag intersections by density 0.25</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean intersection area by density (TSD*1e−6) 0.25</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>982</td>
<td>1275</td>
<td>950</td>
<td>774</td>
<td>617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>594</td>
<td>2990</td>
<td>2845</td>
<td>1842</td>
<td>1545</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>3742</td>
<td>17685</td>
<td>21935</td>
<td>8417</td>
<td>8863</td>
<td>4939</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean body weight per bird (g)</td>
<td>754</td>
<td>940</td>
<td>874</td>
<td>859</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean primary molt score (0–50)</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>35.8</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>48.9</td>
<td>47.6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range primary molt score</td>
<td>41–50</td>
<td>6–50</td>
<td>45–50</td>
<td>44–50</td>
<td>41–50</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender (M/F)</td>
<td>5/4</td>
<td>4/6</td>
<td>2/6</td>
<td>5/3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tagging date (dd-mmm)</td>
<td>12-Jul</td>
<td>20-Jul</td>
<td>09-Jul</td>
<td>12-Jul</td>
<td>04-Aug</td>
<td>9-Jul</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the UDs of half of the individuals extended east to the Scotian Shelf and north to the Grand Banks. The breadth of the 95% kernel UD in 2018 was also underrepresented, as two individuals (ID numbers: 112710 and 112717), within three weeks of capture, moved east of the study area (< −50° longitude): one to the Flemish Cap (47°, −44°) and the other to the mid-Atlantic Ridge (41°, −30.5°). Thus, the overall wintering range of Great Shearwaters extends east of Atlantic Canada (−50° longitude) and beyond the longitudinal boundary used in this study.

In the context of UD size, we rearranged metrics by individual to derive a table showing birds that primarily used the Gulf of Maine compared to those that also extended to the Scotian Shelf or the Grand Banks (Table 2). In this configuration, there was a significant difference in tag days per range group (Kruskal-Wallis \( \chi^2 = 7.3174, df = 2, P = 0.02577 \)), so we could not statistically compare UD sizes. Birds restricted to the Gulf of Maine had the smallest 95% kernel UD compared to those that also used the Scotian Shelf (median 20250 vs. 87000 TSD*1e−6) or the Grand Banks (median 115500 TSD*1e−6). Body weight was significantly different among these range groups (Kruskal-Wallis \( \chi^2 = 8.671, df = 2, P = 0.0131 \) and increased with larger UDs (Table 2). Primary molt score was not statistically different between groups (Kruskal-Wallis \( \chi^2 = 3.7689, df = 2, P = 0.1519 \)). However, all birds in the Grand Banks group were in active molt, whereas most of the Gulf of Maine group were not in molt when tagged. There was no significant difference in sex between these regional groups (Kruskal-Wallis \( \chi^2 = 1.1681, df = 2, P = 0.5576 \)).

In a spatial context, individual 50% kernel UDs of Great Shearwaters intersected each year along the 100-m isobath east of Cape Cod and south to the Great South Channel. In several years, this area extended north to include the Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary (2014–2017) or east along the same isobath across northern Georges Bank (2013–2016). Multiple individuals had 50% kernel UDs in the Bay of Fundy in 2014 and 2018, and on

![Fig. 2. Plots of Great Shearwater 95% kernel utilization distributions (UDs) derived from convex hulls of individual birds tagged per year (2013–2018). Individual UDs are filled in green. Red borders denote intersections of individuals within that year. In 2018, two UDs extended east of −45° longitude outside of the study area.](image-url)
the southern New England shelf west of Nantucket Shoals in 2017. Thus, the majority of 50% kernel UDs were in tangential areas across the southwestern Gulf of Maine, but the 25% kernel UDs shifted from year to year.

The UDs of all individuals tagged in 2013–2018 were collectively plotted to show individual boundaries with aggregated 95%, 50%, and 25% kernel density isopleths (Fig. 3). Isolated from an annual perspective, 25% kernel UDs became contiguous within the southwestern Gulf of Maine, along with separate isolated pockets in the northern Gulf of Maine (including Bay of Fundy and the northeastern corner of the Scotian Shelf (Banquereau)). The centralized 25% kernel UDs within the Gulf of Maine were connected by the 50% kernel UDs, which also encapsulated those 25% kernel UDs on the Scotian Shelf (Fig. 3).

In the aggregate view, more hulls from between the annual 25%–50% kernel density isopleths collapsed into a single 25% kernel UD, and the overall number of hulls between the aggregate 50%–95% isopleths were disproportionately reduced. A comparison of behavioral characteristics by density groups (Table 3) showed significant differences in revisitation ($F = 3347$, $df = 2$ and 71 623, $P < 2.2e−16$), duration ($F = 622$, $df = 2$ and 71 623, $P < 2.2e−16$), and eccentricity ($F = 497$, $df = 2$ and 71 623, $P < 2.2e−16$ (Table 3).

### TABLE 2

Platform terminal transmitter metrics related to sampling effort, area of 95% kernel utilization distribution (UD) as scaled by time-scaled distance (TSD), and morphological measurements by inclusive regions of the continental shelf in the Northwest Atlantic for Great Shearwaters ($n = 58$) tagged in 2013–2018 (median, 1st–3rd quartiles)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Gulf of Maine</th>
<th>Scotian Shelf</th>
<th>Grand Banks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total individuals</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tag days</td>
<td>59.2 (29.9–97.2)</td>
<td>85.1 (98.0–119.7)</td>
<td>96.2 (46.8–188.3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of 95% kernel UD (TSD*1e−6)</td>
<td>20 250 (6 395–38 150)</td>
<td>87 000 (60 525–112 250)</td>
<td>115 500 (61 075–138 500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body weight (g)</td>
<td>758 (699–853)</td>
<td>858 (793–885)</td>
<td>898 (826–943)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary molt score</td>
<td>50 (45–50)</td>
<td>49 (46–50)</td>
<td>46 (43–48)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total male</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total female</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### TABLE 3

Physical properties and behavioral characteristics of convex hull locations for Great Shearwaters ($n = 58$) tracked in 2013–2018, as summarized by three density groupings with median, 1st–3rd quartiles of each group. Substrate properties represent locations within only the Gulf of Maine and on the western Scotian Shelf.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>&lt; 25%</th>
<th>25%–50%</th>
<th>50%–95%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Convex hulls¹</td>
<td>41 637</td>
<td>17 007</td>
<td>12 982</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth (m)²</td>
<td>64 (43–103)</td>
<td>108 (57–171)</td>
<td>102 (65–174)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eccentricity (0–1)³</td>
<td>0.82 (0.71–0.90)</td>
<td>0.85 (0.74–0.93)</td>
<td>0.87 (0.76–0.94)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Revisitation⁴</td>
<td>5 (2–8)</td>
<td>3 (2–5)</td>
<td>2 (1–4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration⁵</td>
<td>16.8 (10.9–27.0)</td>
<td>14.0 (9.7–22.0)</td>
<td>15.0 (10.0–22.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sand content of sediment (%)⁶</td>
<td>61.9 (45.7–77.4)</td>
<td>37.1 (13.8–75.0)</td>
<td>44.5 (28.9–82.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean grain size of sediment (mm)⁷</td>
<td>0.577 (0.206–0.961)</td>
<td>0.202 (0.044–0.531)</td>
<td>0.287 (0.084–0.457)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Hulls are minimum convex polygons constructed around each location point (Argos) from a set of nearest neighbors (other locations).
² Water depth determined at the centroid of each convex hull.
³ Eccentricity is the degree of elongation of each individual hull and indicates directionality of movement.
⁴ Revisitation is the number of daily visits to the same hull.
⁵ Duration is the number of locations counted at each hull when it was visited.
⁶ Sand content is percent amount of sand in the sediment per hull.
⁷ Mean grain size is the predicted diameter of sediment grain structure.
Revisitation significantly increased from 2 to 5 visits per hull as kernel density decreased (i.e., 95%–25% density), indicating that birds went back to the same hulls on more different days in the < 25% kernel band. Regarding revisitation, each of the density bands was statistically different (Tukey’s test, \( P = 0.00 \)). As expected, duration was significantly higher in the collective < 25% kernel density band, indicating that birds stayed in those hulls for longer periods during each daily visit: 16.8 locations hull\(^{-1} \) vs. 14–15 locations hull\(^{-1} \) when kernel density was 25%–95% (Table 3). Outside of the < 25% kernel density band, there was no significant difference in duration between the 25%–50% or the 50%–95% kernel density groups (Tukey’s test, \( P = 0.775 \)).

Since birds were tagged near Cape Cod, all individual movements across all years emanated from the same general area starting in July, except for 2017 when birds were tagged in early August (Fig. 4). Birds in the < 25% density group consistently stayed in the same general area centered at 42°, −70° (southwest Gulf of Maine).
Maine) from July through November. Birds in the 25%–50% and 50%–95% density groups showed northward progressions from July through September, a pattern that then shifted southward from October through December (Fig. 4A). Their monthly longitudinal progression was increasingly eastward while in the study area (Fig. 4B). The majority of the 25%–50% group was contained within the Gulf of Maine, with some reaching the Bay of Fundy to the north in September while staying west of Nova Scotia (<−65° longitude) through October. In November there was considerable movement east of Nova Scotia (>−65° longitude) as tagged birds left the study area (Fig. 4B). The 50%–95% group showed the largest latitudinal and longitudinal expansions over time. The northernmost points reached 48° in August to September, after which the birds progressively moved southward to 41° by December (Fig. 4A, also Fig. 2 for years 2014 and 2015). By September most of this group was east of Nova Scotia (>−65°), extending to the Grand Banks (<−55°) (Fig. 4B). In 2018, individuals (ID number: 112710 and 112717) moved east of the Grand Banks to −30° in August. The eastward trend continued into December while average latitude was decreasing southward. Thus, eastward movement out of the study area occurred over a wide latitudinal band (40° to 47°) and was most pronounced in the outer parts of their collective UD (50%–95% kernel density) after September. Of the 58 birds in this study, 18 were tracked south of the Equator, 3 by the end of September and the remaining 15 in November and December. Only two of the birds tracked south of the Equator visited the Tristan da Cunha archipelago and neither stayed more than a single day before returning to the Patagonian Shelf.

Fecal DNA analysis

Prey sequences were successfully obtained for 35 of the 47 fecal samples. Samples were collected in August and September 2017 and in July and November 2018. Average prey diversity was 2.11 ± 0.28 (mean ± 1 SE, min = 1, max = 7). Most samples (71.4%) contained sand lance; the next most frequent prey item was menhaden (48.6%, Table 4). Only 14.3% (5 of 35) of samples lacked sand lance or menhaden. Mackerel, Atlantic butterfish Peprilus triacanthus, and herring were also identified in Great Shearwater diets at lower frequencies. Sand lance, menhaden, and mackerel were consumed in both years sampled (2017 and 2018).

In the remaining six prey groups, it is unclear whether shearwaters were taking juvenile fish directly (which might explain the occurrence of striped bass Morone saxatilis, white hake Merluccius bilinearis, cunner Tautogolabrus adspersus, and a pleuronectiform flatfish) or whether birds were scavenging chum or bait from fishing vessels (which might explain the occurrence of little skate Leucoraja erinacea and spiny dogfish Squalus acanthus). Alternatively, primary prey may have contained bait or chum that we detected indirectly (Sheppard et al. 2005).

Depth, substrate, and prey distribution

Foraging in 25% kernel UD was linked to shallow depths and substrates with high sand content of coarse grain sizes (Table 3). During the 2013–2017 period, 88 of 2319 trawls conducted by NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS) captured sand lance, while 67% of trawls with sand lance were over the aggregate 25% kernel UD of Great Shearwaters (Fig. 5). The physical properties of these sand lance locations were similar to those hulls in the shearwater 25% kernel UD having a mean depth of 61.6 m (± 48.5 m) with 71.1% (± 22.7%) sand content of relatively coarse grain size (median 0.685 mm). In addition, 89% (78 of 88) of the NMFS trawls with sand lance also occurred within the 100-m isobath. Of these 88 sand lance locations for which we could extract sand content and grain size information, we found that 64% (56 of 88) were found over substrates with >50% sand and grain sizes in the range of 0.35–2.00 mm. This range of grain sizes encompasses coarse to very coarse sand (Krumbein & Sloss 1963; Fig. 5). Of the Great Shearwater locations in the 25% kernel UD, 63% (26 355 of 41 637) were within the 100-m isobath with >50% sand content; 49% (20 562) were also coincident within this inclusive range of sediment grain sizes.

Mackerel were caught at 688 locations on the northeastern US continental shelf, with greatest abundance near Race Point off Cape Cod, eastward along the 100-m isobath to northern Georges Bank. Among trawls with mackerel, 38% (259 of 688) occurred within the shearwater 25% kernel UD, and the fish were caught at an average depth of 111.1 ± 68.2 m over substrate with 51.4% ± 30.1% sand content and a median grain size of 0.238 mm. Herring were caught in 1 225 locations, with highest abundance over western Nantucket Shoals, northern Georges Bank, and in Cape Cod Bay north to Jeffreys Ledge. Among trawls with herring, 36% (447 of 1225) occurred within the shearwater 25% kernel UD, and the fish were caught at an average depth of 125.7 ± 72.1 m over substrate with 44.6% ± 29.0% sand content and a median grain size of 0.174 mm.

Age analysis using bycatch

Necropsies were performed on Great Shearwaters caught as bycatch near Gough Island in the Tristan da Cunha archipelago and near Cape Cod. South Atlantic specimens were landed in April 2018 (n = 23, 16 male and 7 female), December 2012 (n = 1, male), and October 2018 (n = 1, female). Northwest Atlantic specimens were landed in August 2017 (n = 71, 27 male and 44 female).

The median gonad area in males was 8 mm² for Northwest Atlantic birds and 32 mm² for South Atlantic birds. In females, median gonad area was 33 mm² for Northwest Atlantic birds and 100 mm² for South Atlantic birds. Gonad size was significantly different in both sexes between regions (males: W = 429, P = 1.248e−06; females: W = 327, P = 0.000136). A truth table was developed to sort age categories and determine maturity (Table 5). All birds from the South Atlantic were mature, but only two males and six females from the Northwest Atlantic region were mature. We then compared gonad size of young vs. mature birds for both sexes between the Northwest Atlantic and the South Atlantic groups. In terms of gonad size, young birds from the Northwest Atlantic were significantly different (smaller) from the South Atlantic birds (males: W = 424, P = 4.411e−06; females: W = 301, P = 1.648e−05), whereas there was no significant difference for mature birds (males: W = 5, P = 0.1404; females: W = 26, P = 0.8461). Thus, 11% (8 of 71) of the Northwest Atlantic bycatch specimens were sub-adults or adults who may have been possible breeders, while 89% (63 of 71) were juvenile or immature individuals considered to be pre-breeders.

We analyzed 53 of the 71 Northwest Atlantic birds and all 25 South Atlantic individuals for bursas. For the Northwest Atlantic specimens, bursas were identified in 13 males and 24 females and deemed absent (involved) in 7 males and 9 females. Bursas were not found in any South Atlantic individuals, as they were all mature. Thus, of those
birds examined for bursa, 70% of the pre-breeders from the Northwest Atlantic specimens were juvenile or hatch-year individuals.

We also compared primary molt score and head-bill length (mm) between the regional necropsy samples (Northwest vs. South Atlantic) and 18 live shearwaters caught in July 2019 within the tagging area. The median primary molt scores among these areas (NwAtl-necropsy, NwAtl-live, SAtl-necropsy) were 50, 46.5, and 0, respectively. The average head-bill lengths for the same areas were 101.4 ± 3.0 mm, 103.5 ± 4.5 mm, and

### TABLE 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameter</th>
<th>Distinguishing features between ages</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Molt score</td>
<td>HY(^1) = 50, non-HY = &lt; 50</td>
<td>HY birds typically complete primary molt before arriving in the southwestern Gulf of Maine; immature and sub-adult individuals complete molt following migration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonad class</td>
<td>Classes 1 &amp; 2 = young, Classes 3 &amp; 4 = mature</td>
<td>Visual assessment of color and gonad size were used to define gonad class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gonad size comparison</td>
<td>Within min-max range of suspected post-breeding birds</td>
<td>Birds considered “mature” if gonad area overlapped the range of gonad area observed in suspected post-breeding adult/sub-adult individuals from Gough Island</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bursa presence/size</td>
<td>Present, bulbous = HY</td>
<td>Bursa present in only HY individuals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^1\) HY = Hatch year

---

Fig. 5. Plot of aggregate 25% kernel utilization distributions (UDs) of Great Shearwaters, sand lance trawl captures, and substrate properties common to both species in the southwestern Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank. Most sand lance (at least 64%) caught in US NOAA/NMFS bottomfish trawl samples (2013–2017) occurred within the 100 m isobath over sediment with > 50% sand content and grain sizes ranging from 0.35–2.00 mm in diameter. Within the 25% kernel UD, 67% of sand lance captures occurred and 49% of shearwater hull locations intersected with these sediment properties.
105.3 ± 2.5 mm, respectively. The necropsied birds from the Northwest Atlantic had the smallest head-bill lengths and had predominantly completed molt, suggesting young individuals. The live birds from the Northwest Atlantic showed a mixture of younger and older birds, with most in active molt and larger head-bill lengths. The necropsied birds from the South Atlantic (April 2018 samples) were all older with the largest head-bill lengths and old primary feathers (molt score = 0).

**DISCUSSION**

We used individual tracks from 58 Great Shearwaters over a six-year period (2013–2018) to characterize the spatiotemporal utilization of Great Shearwaters over a large portion of their wintering range in the Northwest Atlantic. This study improves our understanding of Great Shearwater use of the Gulf of Maine and Atlantic Canada by providing temporal and behavioral dynamics across the entire region, along with a more comprehensive examination than available previously of how age is integrated into spatial use. In general, Great Shearwaters begin to arrive on Georges Bank in late May (Powers 1983) and are abundant across the southern Gulf of Maine in June and July (Powers et al. 2017). They undergo a rapid molt upon arrival, which does not render them flightless (Brown 1986, Brown 1988). Molt scores of birds in this study showed that primary molt was > 90% complete (average score 45.4 of possible 50) in July (Table 1). Molt should have been completed in August, as has been noted in the Bay of Fundy (Powers et al. 2017), yet we found a preponderance of completed primary molt in July (20 of 48 scored). This indicated that many of our captures were hatch-year or, less likely, immature pre-breeders that molted in the South Atlantic prior to coming north (Watson 1971, Bugoni et al. 2015).

Our molt data were supported by our necropsy data on gonad size, which showed that only 11% had gonad sizes comparable to that of individuals from the Gough Island breeding colony and that 89% were non-adults. The presence of visually prominent bursa indicates that 70% of non-adult birds in the study area may be hatch-year birds. The non-breeding status of the birds was further supported by our tracking data. No birds that we tracked into the South Atlantic for this study spent any significant time near the breeding islands of Tristan da Cunha. As characterized by nape plumage, 89% of Great Shearwaters in the Gulf of Maine were thought to be less than three years of age (Powers et al. 2017). However, that methodology was derived from Pyle (2008) and has not been thoroughly vetted in the literature. In addition, birds tagged in the Bay of Fundy by Powers et al. (2017) were confirmed as non-breeders (Ronconi et al. 2018). An evaluation of mass strandings of Great Shearwaters along the eastern coast of the United States noted that birds stranded in the southeastern US were primarily juveniles while those in the northeast were a mix of adults and juveniles (Haman et al. 2013). The breeding population of Great Shearwaters has been estimated at 5–6 million pairs (10–12 million birds) (Ryan 2007) and the global population (inclusive of pre-breeding birds) is thought to be around 16.5 million (Fishpool & Evans 2001), as noted by Ronconi et al. (2018). These population estimates indicate that 27%–40% of the world population may be non-breeding. So, if our Gulf of Maine sample consists of 89% non-breeders, it may be an important area used primarily by younger non-breeding birds. Most adult birds may be wintering in areas further north on the Grand Banks, as suggested by Brown (1986).

The 95% kernel UD of birds in this study indicated that Great Shearwaters utilized much of the continental shelf from southern New England across the Scotian Shelf to the Grand Banks after their initial arrival to the southwestern Gulf of Maine and Georges Bank. Nearly half (45%) of the birds moved to Atlantic Canada by August, while the remainder (55%) stayed within the Gulf of Maine until November. Wong et al. (2018) noted the highest densities of Great Shearwaters in the Bay of Fundy in early September, which is coincident with the start of southern migration for ‘early’ migrants (Powers et al. 2017). The spatial spread over time was generally northward until October and eastward into November. The frequency of birds staying in the Gulf of Maine was consistent from year to year, but the number of birds with ranges that extended to Atlantic Canada varied annually.

It’s not entirely clear why some birds stayed in the Gulf of Maine and others undertook more extensive travelling, but it may be related to age and experience. With increasing maturity, individuals identify new resources across their wintering range. Cory’s Shearwaters do not become familiar with main migratory routes until they reach four years of age, when they broadly use the same routes as older immatures and adults (Campioni et al. 2020). Beyond this age their migratory behavior becomes progressively adult-like until time of first breeding (Campioni et al. 2020). This observation of older Great Shearwaters expanding their UD on the wintering range is supported by our data showing heavier birds tending to move out of the Gulf of Maine before lighter birds. While age at first breeding is unknown for Great Shearwaters, the related Short-tailed Shearwater breeds at six or seven years old (Bradley et al. 1999) and Cory’s Shearwater at nine years (Campioni et al. 2020); Great Shearwaters might be similar. The long duration of immaturity in Wandering Albatross Diomedea exulans relates to a long period of experiential learning about spatial, behavioral, and resource constraints (Riotte-Lambert & Weimerskirch 2013). The ontogeny of long-distance migratory strategies and related patterns of spatial distribution in young Cory’s Shearwaters progressively changes with age (Campioni et al. 2020).

Thus, most Great Shearwaters (55%) stayed within the Gulf of Maine from July to November instead of moving to Atlantic Canada. Individual 50% kernel UD sizes typically represented 22% of a bird’s 95% kernel UD, and 84% of individual range interactions occurred outside of the 50% kernel UD, indicating that foraging occurs over wide areas each year. When we aggregated all individuals across all years into a single dataset, the contrast of utilization reversed, and 82% of the hulls were within the 50% kernel UD. The merge of all tangential 50% kernel UDs from each year created a singular 25% kernel UD, which included 58% of all hulls. Thus, birds were foraging in similar areas each year with significant overlap among years. Behavioral traits in the high-density region supported more intense daily foraging activity as birds remained in hulls for longer periods of time (duration), revisited the same hulls on different days more often (revisitation), and showed more area-restricted search behavior (eccentricity). The aggregate 25% kernel UD also had commonality in its physical characteristics, as it was shallow (median 64 m) with high sand content (median 62%) of coarser grains (median 0.58 mm) than the more peripheral bands of the 50% or 95% kernel UDs.

The physical characteristics of shallow habitat with coarsely grained sand selected by Great Shearwaters was also spatially aligned with that of sand lance, which our fecal samples identified as their main
Shearwater diets in the Bay of Fundy (Brown mackerel, and short-finned squid Illex illecebrosus) assessments of Great Shearwater diets in the southwestern Gulf of Maine and in the shallower areas of the Grand Banks, particularly in areas where the bottom consists of sand or fine gravel (Scott 1982), associated with banks having shallow waters and high sand content. Shearwater utilization of the eastern Scotian Shelf was also associated with banks having shallow waters and high sand content. Sand lance on the Scotian Shelf occur on most of the major banks, where the bottom consists of sand or fine gravel (Scott 1982), and in the shallower areas of the Grand Banks, particularly in the northeastern and southeastern areas (Winters 1983). Previous assessments of Great Shearwater diets in the southwestern Gulf of Maine noted sand lance as a common food item (Powers & Backus 1987), while euphausiids Meganyctiphanes norvegica, herring, mackerel, and short-finned squid Illex illecebrosus dominate shearwater diets in the Bay of Fundy (Brown et al. 1981, Ronconi et al. 2010). Around Newfoundland, spawning aggregations of capelin Mallotus villosus and immature short-finned squid attract shearwaters (Brown et al. 1981, Davoren et al. 2012).

Sand lance distributions are patchy with considerable annual fluctuations in abundance, and larval forms are prey to both herring and mackerel (Staudinger et al. 2020). Populations increased 5- to 10-fold in the Gulf of Maine from 1976 to 1981, but abundance subsequently dropped between 1982 and 1987 (Nelson & Ross 1991). 2016 to 2018 were poor years for herring (and likely mackerel), which may have contributed to the high frequency of occurrence of sand lance found in shearwater fecal samples. Age-1 recruitment of herring in the northeastern US has been below average since 2013, and four of the six lowest annual recruitment estimates have occurred since that year (NEFSC 2018b). Since 2005, diets of Atlantic Puffins Fratercula arctica and Razorbills Alca torda in the Gulf of Maine switched from herring to sand lance due to the decline in herring (Scopel et al. 2019). Based on fisheries model results and sensitivity, the mackerel stock in the northeastern US was estimated to be at an all-time low in 2012, having experienced increasing exploitation (overfishing) through the early 2000s to a high in 2010 (NEFSC 2018a). We note that concurrent with obtaining some fecal samples, there was an unusual event of mackerel driving yearling menhaden into the shoreline at Race Point on Cape Cod, Massachusetts in August 2017. Menhaden were taken by shearwaters in both 2017 and 2018, but in 2017 we observed hundreds of Great Shearwaters feeding on beached menhaden along the shoreline. Menhaden nursery grounds in New England have become significant contributors of age-1 fish (Anstead et al. 2016). Since 2015, abundance of both adult and juvenile menhaden has increased in the Gulf of Maine (ASMFC 2017). Menhaden and mackerel were previously unknown in diets of Great Shearwaters in the northeastern US, so their importance as prey may be increasing in this region. The availability of any suitable prey is important, but Great Shearwaters in the southwestern Gulf of Maine in 2013–2018 foraged most intensively over the same habitat used by sand lance.

Latitudinal differences in trophic levels of Great Shearwaters, as measured by stable isotopes (feathers and blood) between populations in Newfoundland, the Bay of Fundy, and southwestern Gulf of Maine, could be attributable to preferences in primary prey (Ronconi et al. 2010, Gulkca et al. 2017, Hong et al. 2019). The dietary niche of shearwaters in coastal Newfoundland was found to narrow with increased availability of capelin, and shearwaters were uniquely qualified to forage over broader scales to continuously maintain contact with capelin patches (Gulkca et al. 2017). Similarly, Great Shearwaters in the southwestern Gulf of Maine and northern Georges Bank showed selectivity for habitats with higher availability of preferred prey (sand lance).

In summary, a combination of PTT tracking and necropsy data indicate that the Gulf of Maine is a key wintering area for young (0–2 years) Great Shearwaters. The characteristics of identified foraging areas and DNA from fecal samples from birds indicate that shallow, sandy-bottomed marine habitat and sand lance are important aspects of their habitat use and survival. Since juveniles represent an important demographic in the viability of any species (Hazen et al. 2012), we suggest that management actions in the Gulf of Maine that would impact their preferred habitat and prey should consider Great Shearwaters in their decision-making.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank Peter Hong, Tammy Silva, Kent Hatch, Sara Williams, students from the Boston University Marine Program (especially Megan Feddern, Lindsay Smith, Montana Airey, and Lucy McGinnis), and the crew of NOAA R/V Auk for assistance in collecting shearwater data. Laboratory work was contributed by J. Biagini of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of New England. We are grateful to Peter Ryan and Monica Perold at the Fitzpatrick Institute of African Ornithology and Maëlle Connan from Nelson Mandela University for sample collection in the South Atlantic, collaboration, and necropsy assistance. We thank Justin Suca for his critical review of an earlier version of the manuscript. NOAA’s Northeast Fisheries Science Center provided bottom fish trawl information. NOAA’s National Centers for Coastal Ocean Science (NCCOS) provided surficial sediment datasets for the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic areas of the US continental shelf. Genetic analyses of blood and feather samples were done by Animal Genetics, Inc., 1336 Timberlane Rd., Tallahassee, FL 32312-1766, USA. All applicable international, national, and institutional guidelines for the care and use of animals were followed. Permits to capture, handle, and tag birds were obtained from the US Department of the Interior (permit #21963). Permits to handle birds were obtained from the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (permit #202-17SCB).

Funding was provided by the Volgenau Foundation, Bureau of Ocean Energy Management, Stellwagen Bank National Marine Sanctuary, National Marine Sanctuary Foundation, Mudge Foundation, Boston University Marine Program, and Pew Charitable Trusts. The NOAA Nancy Foster Scholarship provided support to A. Robuck. Laboratory work was supported by a Summer Undergraduate Research Experience fellowship through the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of New England through the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of New England.

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England. The comments of two anonymous reviewers greatly helped us to improve the clarity of this paper.

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REFERENCES


