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Conference abstracts

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Forage availability during spring migration is crucial for the survival and successful reproduction of many migratory species. With careful timing in relation to spring growth and small-scale selection of suitable food sites, many geese and swans are known to maximise their foraging rate. However, especially for Arctic breeders, recent levels of climate, habitat and management change alter the conditions that they meet at spring stopovers. Using high resolution GPS tracks of >150 greater white-fronted geese (Anser a. albifrons) during 2006-2017 and optical and SAR time series data from Sentinel 1 & 2 (20x20m) and MODIS (500x500m) we determined and compared habitat preferences according to vegetation and land-use intensity. Most notably, we found large differences between individuals and stopover sites within years. Furthermore, our data indicate that the selection of stopover sites has changed between the years, possibly also altering migration routes and timing. We will further examine how habitat characteristics of previous and new key stopovers have changed and how that might relate to recent climate and habitat changes. This will allow us to conclude if the apparent differences in migration routes and stopover usage is due to individual variability or consistent, adaptational change.