Optic flow and energy invariants combined may explain gulls’ altitude profiles during offshore takeoff
Julien Serres, Thomas Evans, Susanne Åkesson, Olivier Duriez, Judy Shamoun-Baranes, Franck Ruffier, Anders Hedenström

To cite this version:
Julien Serres, Thomas Evans, Susanne Åkesson, Olivier Duriez, Judy Shamoun-Baranes, et al.. Optic flow and energy invariants combined may explain gulls’ altitude profiles during offshore takeoff. The 6th International Bio-logging Science Symposium (BLS6), Sep 2017, Lake Constance, Germany. hal-02078084

HAL Id: hal-02078084
https://hal-amu.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-02078084
Submitted on 25 Mar 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L’archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire HAL, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d’enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.
Optic flow and energy invariants combined may explain gulls’ altitude profiles during offshore takeoff

J. Serres(1), T. Evans(2), S. Åkesson(2), O. Duriez(3), J. Shamoun-Baranes(4), F. Ruffier(1), A. Hedenström(2)

(1) Aix Marseille Univ, CNRS, ISM, Marseille, France. julien.serres@univ-amu.fr
(2) CAnMove centre, Department of Biology, Lund University, Box 117, SE-221 00 Lund, Sweden
(3) CEFE UMR 5175, CNRS - Université de Montpellier, 34293 Montpellier cedex 5, France
(4) Theoretical & Computational Ecology, Inst. of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics, Univ. of Amsterdam, 1090GE Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Aim: To investigate which cues are used by Gulls to control their altitude during takeoff by testing the constant optic flow hypothesis

Results: Altitude Control Model parameterized using individual bird metrics (mass, wingspan, ...)

- We used high time resolution (10-15sec) GPS tracking of lesser black backed gull from off-shore takeoff towards their breeding colony.
- The altitude control model is based on (i) the bird elevation dynamics and (ii) the “constant optic flow” hypothesis using individual bird metrics.

“Preferred ventral optic flow” Hypothesis

- When gulls are flying forward, the image of the sea sweeps backward across their ventral viewfield and forms an “optic flow”, which depends on both the groundspeed and the groundheight.
- The “ventral optic flow” perceived by the gull, i.e., the apparent angular velocity \( \omega \) created by a point directly below on the flight track, is simply equal to the ratio \( V_x/h \), between groundspeed, \( V_x \) and the groundheight, \( h \).

Are gulls controlling their altitude by keeping this ratio constant? (as flying insects are doing. Franceschini, Serres, Ruffier, 2007)

Conclusion

- A linear 1st order parametric model on gulls’ data (18 trajectories) gives a fit factor value of 37.6% on average (range: 10 – 80%).
- By introducing a ceiling in the climbing rate according to Hedenström et al., 2003, in: Avian Migration (prediction 10), the non-linear parametric model on 18 trajectories gives a fit factor value of 57.1% on average (range 15 – 80%).
- For GPS-tracked offshore takeoffs by gulls, the normalized altitude computed with the mathematical model using GPS derived horizontal groundspeed data predicts altitudes close to actual GPS recorded altitude, thus suggesting gulls use an optic flow-based system for control of takeoff flight.