



photo by Dan Garber

As the weather turns colder, do you sometimes wish you could just fly away to somewhere warm and sunny? That’s exactly what many species of birds do every fall.

You may have noticed **waterfowl**, such as geese, ducks and cranes, flying overhead in large groups. Did you notice which direction they were going? Birds that fly south for the winter are called **migratory** birds.

### Long-distance travel

Some migrating birds fly amazing distances on their seasonal journeys. Those that spend the summer in the south of North America don’t have as far to go — maybe only 300 miles or so.

But birds that summer in the northern United States and Canada might travel as far as 10,000 miles! Most of them fly during the night and rest and feed during the day. At night, temperatures are cooler, and the air is calmer.

### Looking for food

We may think that birds are trying to avoid the cold weather when they migrate. In

fact, they’re moving to areas with more food.

Many migratory birds eat insects, which are a great source of the protein they need when raising their young. During the summer in the U.S. and Canada, where the birds breed, there are many insects. But when the weather turns cold, this food source disappears. The birds must then fly south to find the food they need until it’s time to return the following spring.

### Dangers

Birds may be **vulnerable**, or open to harm, during their migration. For example, after a whole night of flying, a tired bird may alight in a backyard, only to be spotted by a house cat. Some cats hunt and kill birds.

In large cities, tall lighted buildings can confuse birds flying at night. They can fly into the buildings, or the lights can make them disoriented so that they keep flying until they’re exhausted and fall to the ground.

Birds also can fly into power lines, or, when flying low, they can collide with moving cars. Even wind turbines can be a hazard for migrating birds.



photo by Jon Nelson  
The Swainson’s hawk flies up to 7,500 miles during its migration from the western U.S. and Canada to Brazil and Argentina.



photo by Gerhard Hofmann

The blackpoll warbler spends its summers in Alaska and Canada. When it’s time to move south, it first heads east toward New England and the eastern coast of Canada. Then it flies south over the Atlantic Ocean toward South America. Its migration of up to 2,500 miles includes about 90 hours over water, without stops for rest or food.

## Try ‘n’ Find

Words that remind us of bird migration are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:

BIRDS, DANGER, DISTANCE, FALCULTATIVE, FOOD, HAWK, HUMMINGBIRD, INSECTS, LIGHTS, MIGRATION, OBLIGATE, OSPREY, PECTORAL, SOUTH, VULNERABLE, WARBLER, WATERFOWL, WINTER.

Y E R P S O B L I G A T E W S  
D S R V U L N E R A B L E I T  
A T H A W K I N S E C T S N J  
N H E N O I T A R G I M O T B  
G G L A R O T C E P E J U E I  
E I O F W A R B L E R R T R R  
R L E C N A T S I D R U H J D  
A V I D R I B G N I M M U H S  
R E K F A L C U L T A T I V E  
U W A T E R F O W L D O O F O



## Mini Spy Classics

Mini Spy and Rookie Cookie are giving the migrating birds a good meal. See if you can find the hidden pictures. Then color the picture.



Based on materials originally produced and/or created by Betty Debnam.

- lips
  - dog
  - coffee pot
  - sailboat
- number 3
  - needle
  - sea horse
  - dolphin
- letter D
  - ladder
  - strawberry
  - dragon
- swan
  - butterfly
  - burger
  - bell
- question mark
  - word MINI

## How do they know?

Birds fall into two types of migrants. Some birds are **obligate** migrants. This means they are genetically programmed to migrate — they are obligated to fly south.

Others are **facultative** migrants. This means they migrate only if the weather makes it hard for them to find food.

For instance, you may see Canada geese all year long. They would migrate if necessary, but in many areas they find plenty to eat in fields where crops have been harvested or in city parks.

## Bulking up

Before they leave for their winter homes, birds’ behavior changes. “They



After breeding, a ruby-throated hummingbird weighs about the same as one penny. But before it flies south for some 24 hours over the Gulf of Mexico, it doubles its weight.

transform into superbirds,” an expert said. This begins with putting on a lot of fat. Fat is used for energy during the long trip. Their **pectoral**, or chest, muscles become larger. They eat more fruit.

Some species will flock together or fly in formation to make the journey easier.

## Resources



**On the Web:**  
• [bit.ly/1rzhjpS](https://bit.ly/1rzhjpS)

**At the library:**  
• “Arctic Terns: A Migration Story” by Lisa Amstutz  
• “Migration” by Gail Gibbons

## Mini Jokes



**Benji:** Why do birds fly south every year?  
**Beth:** It’s too far to walk!

## Eco Note



Seven volcanoes have begun erupting at the same time on Russia’s Kamchatka Peninsula, in a “parade” of eruptions not seen in almost 300 years. Bezymianny, Kambalny, Karymsky, Klyuchevskoy, Krasheninnikov, Mutnovsky and Avachinsky volcanoes began to spew lava and ash following the massive earthquake off southern Kamchatka during the previous week. Six of the eruptions followed the surprise awakening of the Krasheninnikov volcano, which saw lava flow for the first time in nearly 600 years.

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## For later:

Look in your newspaper for articles about bird migrations.

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