



## **Birds Travel Far and Wide Over the Fall Migration Season**

*Each fall, migrating birds travel hundreds or even thousands of miles to places with plentiful food.*

Depending on where you live, the arrival of autumn may be heralded by flocks of geese flying in V-shaped formations overhead, or a sudden concentration of warblers in the trees beside a lake. You might spot species that come from far away, like whooping cranes of Saskatchewan or Arctic terns. The migration of birds is a signature event of fall, and it's an ideal time to observe and photograph a dazzling variety of bird species.

### **Bird Migration Patterns**

Some birds migrate just a short distance, while others may travel across the North American continent or even from one pole to the other. Contrary to popular belief, birds don't migrate to escape cold weather. They flock to places that have a plentiful supply of food, since insect activity dies down and water freezes over during the winter. Ornithologists believe that migration is triggered by a combination of factors including the number of daylight hours, temperature and amount of rainfall.

Each fall and spring in North America, a number of bird species move in defined corridors called 'flyways': Pacific, Central, Mississippi and Atlantic. As the birds make their way from one location to the other, they stop to rest and eat, attracted by large, open areas with ample food supplies. These natural 'staging areas' can attract large numbers of migrating birds, making them a perfect bird watching spot for enthusiasts, photographers and ornithologists.

### **Magee, Ohio: A Bird Migration Hotspot**

The Magee Marsh in northern Ohio is one of these such places, known as "The Warbler Capital of the World" between late April and late May of each year. Located along the shores of Lake Erie, Magee plays host to as many as 300 species of birds at a time including waterfowl, bald eagles, osprey and 150 species of migrating songbirds. Birders line up along a boardwalk to get a close look at warblers and other birds, listening to their songs and taking photos.

As migratory birds fly between Canada and Mexico's Yucatan Peninsula, they spread out across the continent. The Magee region offers a tempting place to stop and rest, with concentrated woodlots and plenty of food.

### **How to Attract Migrating Birds**

Migration can be tough on birds, with up to half of those heading south in the winter in North America falling prey to bad weather, predators, hunters, collisions with buildings and other dangers. You can aid in the success of bird migration by putting out food, and placing your bird feeders within a few feet of a window to help birds slow down and lower the chance of an accident.

"Feeding birds year-round is really important," says John Robinson, chief ornithologist for Scotts. "For example, in the winter, food may be difficult to find in northern climates. At other times of the year (and even in southern climates) birds need to have access to healthy food sources and water to aid in the laying of eggs, feather development, raising of young, or to help selected species prepare for the long flights of migration."

*Written by S.A. Rogers for Scotts*