

Cool Facts About Migratory Birds!

Migratory birds are among nature's most ambitious, long-distance migrants. Their journeys are truly awe-inspiring! That's why it's so exciting to welcome them back each spring.

The ruby-throated hummingbird is so tiny that it is sometimes mistaken for a moth. In earlier times people could not believe that a bird so small could travel all the way to South America and back every year, giving rise to the myth that hummingbirds travel on the wings of Canada Geese flying South. [Find out more.](#)



Purple Martin

Purple Martins nest throughout North America in apartment-like birdhouses made by humans. They have been relying on human structures for years. Before European arrival, First Nations people would hang empty gourds for Purple Martins to nest in.

As Purple Martins prepare to migrate to Brazil for the winter, they gather in flocks ('roosts') so big that they can be seen on the weather radar!



Whooping crane

The whooping crane was almost extinct in the 1930s. In one population the young birds released into the wild had no wild adults to show them where to migrate, so they learned the route by following their human parents dressed as cranes flying an ultra light plane.



Red knot

The red knot makes one of the longest yearly migrations of any bird from its Arctic breeding grounds in Northern Canada to Argentina, a distance of 15,000km. A Red Knot may fly the same distance as the Earth to the Moon before its 13th birthday.



Western sandpiper

Spectacular flocks of western sandpiper, estimated at 6,500,000 individuals in some places, migrate along Canada's west coast on their journey from Central and South American wintering grounds to Alaska and eastern Siberia every spring. [Find out more.](#)



Whimbrel

The whimbrel breeds in the Arctic in Alaska and along Hudson's Bay. These distinct populations each migrate along the Canadian coastline on their way to South America. Some whimbrels travel 4,000km non-stop while migrating.



Peregrine falcon

"Peregrine" means wanderer, an apt name since the population that winters in South America typically summer in the tundra - one of the longest migrations of any North American bird.



Cedar waxwing

Cedar waxwings usually have a yellow tail tip, but some have been appearing in southeastern Canada since the 1960s with orange colouration instead. This is caused by the birds eating an introduced species of honeysuckle with red pigment as their tail feathers are growing.



Mallard duck

With the distinctive green head of the male and the recognizable "quack" of the female the mallard duck is perhaps the most familiar of all ducks. Often found in city ponds or parks as well as other wetlands, Mallards are "dabbling ducks" and feed by tipping forward to graze on underwater plants.