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## **Fall Bird Migration**

**By Gayle Olson**

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Fall is the time of the year when many birds are busy preparing for the long journey to their winter homes. Migration is the movement of birds and other animals from one home to another. Some birds will fly thousands of miles to reach their winter homes!

Birds begin the journey to their winter homes before the food supply in the north runs out. Day length and temperature plays a part in triggering the birds' internal seasonal clocks. Shorter and cooler days means that the food supply is running out. When the water in ponds and lakes begin to freeze over, waterfowl cannot get at food easily and it is time to fly south where it is warmer and open water and food can be found.

In the fall birds begin to flock together getting ready for the big trip south. This is the time of the year when you will see flocks of blackbirds feeding on berries or the V-formation of flocks of geese in flight. It is an important time to build up strength and fuel up for the dangerous voyage.

Birds use fat as fuel for their journey. It is important that they have enough to eat before they leave so they are able to store enough fat for the long distance they must travel. Some birds make many stops, filling up with enough food to make it to the next stage of their journey.

Birds face many hazards during migration. Some may get blown off course or get caught in a storm. Some birds don't have enough food or fat stored to complete the trip. Hunters claim thousands of ducks and geese each year during fall hunting season. Changes in forestry, agriculture and urban expansion are difficult for birds. These changes affect the habitats of birds and other wildlife. Migrating birds depend on the forests and wetlands and sometimes cannot adapt to the changes.

Related Internet Resources:

<http://scienceforfamilies.allinfo-about.com/features/birdmigration.html>

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### **We're Flying!**

**By Jean Woods**

This is the fourth summer that the same flock of grosbeaks has visited my yard. They don't move into the decorative bird houses because they live 200ft up in the pine trees and I don't have a ladder that tall. They do however, come several times daily (read constantly) to feed at the wooden birdfeeders and to drink and swim in the garden birdbath fountain. This little flock was about 22 strong when they came back this spring, I am guessing we have more than 40 now. There about 12 individual fledglings that I can recognize at the birdfeeders.

Most of them are "evening" grosbeaks colored with bright white, black and yellow chevrons but a couple are some strange mix. I get a great chance to observe them as they come in for meals at the windmill bird feeder, they love the wide platform since they are fairly large and sturdy birds. The babies are almost full grown and eating up a storm getting ready for their migration to Mexico (I think). The funny colored mama has hatched 3 kids and I can tell they are hers by their odd feather patterns.

I have to take the time to bring in all the bird feeders every night. Whether it is decorative bird feeders or the wooden bird feeders they are at risk from the bears and raccoons. I have probably replaced over \$100 of birdfeeders this year alone (due to my own forgetfulness). I finally have pictures of those rascally raccoons on the deck trying to get into the seed can.

If I don't get up early enough I hear all about it from the whole flock. They send out spotters to prod me into action and then report back when I rehang the birdfeeders. They will sit by my front door on a decorative bird house with no tenants and chirp at me until I get breakfast out. They also let me know if the birdfeeders are empty at any time during the day. I work at home and leave the front door open, they definitely know where to find me if they want something. They are so amusing I will miss them in the winter and always look forward to their return. They show up a few weeks after the robins get back.

After working for over 20 years in an office, I decided to work at home and sell something I really like. To me there is nothing like the sound of birds chirping in the morning. So after lots of pondering I chose to help them out and provide them with their own home at



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