

Our Migrating Neighbors

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HAWKS, FALCONS, DUCKS, SWANS, SHOREBIRDS, SONGBIRDS...

Fall skies, shorter days, cooling temperatures and winds from the north trigger the ongoing life drama of fall bird migrations. Although bird populations are in movement year-round, changing seasons alert us to the passage of many species on their southbound journey.

During the late summer and fall, many bird species that nested and raised young in the green spaces of New England and Canada travel to warmer climates where food is abundant. Some songbirds, waterfowl shorebirds and raptors navigate along Lake Erie's coast, some even fly non-stop out and over Lake Erie's open water. Some rely on elevation changes and updrafts along coastlines, river valleys or ridges where rising warm air provides a boost for soaring.

Of the nearly 800 birds species known to occur in the United States, approximately 500 species migrate across borders; their amazing final destinations are wintering grounds from the Atlantic coast to the southern United States, Mexico, Central America or South America.

As we are learning, many of these birds will not survive the perils of the journey to return north in the spring. Declining populations of migratory songbirds and other species is a cause for serious concern. The house wren that sang so sweetly from your backyard, the hummingbird that squeaked at you from the feeder, or the Baltimore oriole that returned to nest in the maple trees on your street—these and all migratory birds encounter many hazards during their annual journey.



Baltimore Oriole



Black-bellied Plover



Red-tailed Hawk



Gray Catbird

TOP 3 HAZARDS FOR MIGRATING BIRDS

(AND WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP)



Palm Warbler

1. Windows

Collisions with windows, cars and trucks, tall buildings, communication towers, and transmission lines take their toll on millions of birds annually. Some researchers believe that more birds are killed by collisions with windows every year than any other single cause. Every year, the Lake Metroparks Kevin P. Clinton Wildlife Center cares for a variety of species with collision injuries, including goldfinches, robins, chickadees, jays, juncos, hawks, woodpeckers, cardinals, doves, hummingbirds and warblers.

We can help by being smart about windows and the hazards they present to a bird in flight. Often, the bird does not recognize a window as a transparent object. Sometimes, they see their reflection as another bird infringing on their territory. Brightly colored plants or feeders near windows can make matters worse by drawing birds closer and providing more opportunity for injury. Instead, silhouettes that disrupt the invisibility of the panes of the glass, installed closely together, both inside and out, can often be successful. Even more successful are moving objects, wind chimes, hanging mobiles, old CDs or other objects hung on the outside to cause movement. At Penitentiary Glen Nature Center, we use long chicken feathers tied to a string as a natural mobile outside our wildlife observation windows. For more ideas, visit www.flap.org.

New to the mix of obstacles for birds in flight are power generating wind turbines. The ideal location for wind power turbines are the same ridgelines and coastlines that have been followed by migratory birds for centuries.

2. Cat attacks

Nationwide, cats kill hundreds of millions of birds a year; common backyard birds, rare birds, and endangered birds. In addition, cats kill more than one billion small animals each year. According to the Humane Society of the United States, there are at least 77 million cats as pets in the United States and roughly 35% are exclusively indoor. This leaves a huge number of cats outside hunting. Cats are not a natural part of our ecosystem and they compete with natural predators such as hawks and owls for prey items for food. Well fed cats still kill birds; they are skilled hunters and their instincts remain strong. Birds that escape cat attacks usually die shortly after due to trauma, internal injuries and/or infections.

We can help by keeping cats indoors where they lead healthier, longer lives. Free roaming cats are at risk for injury through being hit by cars, fights with other cats, disease and parasites.

For more information on the benefits of keeping cats indoors, visit www.abcbirds.org and www.hsus.org.

3. Unfriendly stopover sites

As birds make their way south, we have great opportunities to see them and support them

on their journeys. Fields, forests, wetlands and other preserved natural areas provide valuable stopover sites for resting and refueling, generally for one to five days, depending on the quality of the habitat, the weather and the condition of the bird upon arrival.

But imagine if you were on a long trip and couldn't find anywhere to get food or fuel? What if the kitchen was closed for the season? What if the guest room was closed too? Since birds spend as much as half of the year moving between breeding grounds and wintering areas, the habitats available to them during migration as well as at trip beginning and end are critical to survival.

We can help by planting native plants and fruit and berry producing shrubs. We can provide clean water sources. We can reduce pesticide use and allow the production of insects that feed these birds as they build up necessary fat reserves. We can protect edge habitats, cover and brushy areas to provide shelter. Many of our parks and other natural areas provide stopover feeding and resting spots. Your support for conservation efforts benefits birds and humans, too.

Visit www.audubon.org for more information.

SO CHOOSE A DAY WITH GOOD WINDS FROM THE NORTH and watch the skies over our lakeshore and river parks for hawks and falcons in flight! Visit one of Lake Metroparks' designated Important Bird Areas including Chagrin River Park, Girdled Road Reservation or Hell Hollow Wilderness Area to enjoy bird friendly habitats. View ducks in migration, check out flooded fields and small ponds for

shorebirds, or a woodland trail for warblers dressed in discrete fall colors.

Join one of our naturalist guided birdwatching programs or hikes that are offered year-round; turn to page 12 for this season's offerings.