



Cape May Warbler, by Jennifer Beebe on Pixabay

HELPING AMAZING MIGRATORY BIRDS RIGHT AROUND US

Have you ever made a journey, either short or long? To Media for tasty food? The Shore? Florida? Jamaica? Brazil? What did you need, and assume would be there, along the way and when you arrived? Possibly food, water and shelter? And how did you find your way? A map or app? We humans depend upon these essentials.

Arctic tern birds journey over 37,000 miles each year! Birds right around us that we treasure, such as insect-eating warblers (some weighing only as much as a dime!), wood thrushes, other songbirds, hummingbirds and birds of prey (“raptors”) such as hawks, each may journey thousands of miles every year. These natural cycles have repeated for many thousands of years, as numerous familiar bird species raise their young in North America, but winter in warmer territories. How can they possibly survive this? Bird migration has been described as ‘arguably the world’s greatest natural spectacle’, by expert Scott Weidensaul, best-selling author of several books, including [Living on the Wind](#), [A World on the Wing](#) and [A Warbler’s Journey](#) (children’s book). How each bird succeeds and survives such long-distance migration truly is a miracle. Weidensaul tells us about a recent discovery that birds have a unique “ability to use the planetary magnetic field” by navigating with an astonishing fine-tuned quantum vision feature. Amazing! And beyond finding their way, these birds depend upon locating water, safe resting areas and food along the way, including in our yards, in order to survive.

You can see some of these flight paths at the Motus Wildlife Tracking System at www.motus.org (look for the 'Data Dashboard', and then chose a species), or at www.birdcast.info .

These days, there are many hazards along their exhausting flights that cause migration disorientation, confusion and death to birds, such as bright night lights and window glass. Lack of safe stopover habitat and water also reduce survival of these birds. Sadly, since around a 1970 baseline, bird populations have been reduced by almost a third.

Actions we can take at our own homes and yards to help reduce more loss of these miraculous travelers include: reducing glass window strikes (with decals or bird-safe glass); providing safe stopover habitat by keeping domestic cats indoors (cats outdoors kill thousands of birds every year); and providing clean water sources. Reducing un-needed night light from midnight to six a.m. during the peak migration season of April 1 through May 31 is also a key measure. Simple steps, as appropriate, such as using motion sensor lighting instead of floodlights, ensuring that lights do not shine skyward, and dimming lights, can make a difference. Resources and links below have key information about these measures. You can help the survival of these wonderful avian neighbors around us.

www.anasp.org/get-involved/small-actions-spark-big-changes/

www.birdtownpa.org/bird-collisions-practical-steps/

www.fws.gov/story/migration-its-risky-journey