



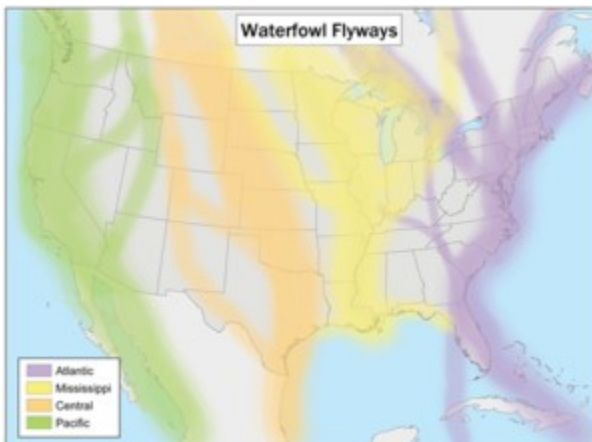
Branching Out

Fall 2015

The Great Bird Migrations

Why Do Birds Migrate?

- Simply put, to follow the food
- breeding, competition for mates, nest building, all take energy
- our lush forests provide abundant food in summer, but little in fall and winter
- Mexican monsoons provide the lush autumn growth to lure songbirds and waterfowl to forests lush with flowers, fruit and foliage and, most of all, insects to replenish tired migrants



As the northern summer breeding grounds dry and food becomes scarcer in late summer, songbirds and waterfowl prepare for long annual migrations to winter havens like Mexico and the Caribbean which offer lush foliage for protection from predators and abundance of fruit and insects to replenish bodies exhausted by long flights. Many different species share the same skies as they funnel their way to the same overwintering habitats year after year. As these pathways are altered by the impact of human behaviour on the environment, the dangers to migrating birds increase and bird deaths mount.

How Do They Find Their Way? Feed by Day and Fly by Night

- equipped with a magnetic compass, birds follow traditional migratory flight paths by instinct inherited from ancestors who successfully found pathways to lush winter food resources
- birds migrate at night using the light from the stars and moon to guide them, light often reflected in rivers and streams along the way; they rest and feed close to the ground by day and fall prey to cats and other predators

Why Do Songbirds Change Their Plumage?



American Goldfinch in Summer

As songbirds migrate south and feed on lush tropical fruits and insects, they acquire the energy to molt, changing vibrant summer colourations that attract mates for muted shades that camouflage migrants from the sharp eyes of predators.



American Goldfinch in Winter

The Changing Migration Landscape- the modern world is a dangerous place

- birds migrate at night so the moon and stars can guide them but they have poor night vision
- bright lights from city buildings attract and confuse them
- reflections of trees in windows cause fatal collisions - one building in Chicago causes 1500 bird deaths every year from this one structure alone
- communication towers and wind turbines are difficult for birds to see at night and take their toll
- forests have been fragmented leaving diminishing food sources for hungry migrants-the famous **Passenger Pigeon extinction**, supposedly due to overhunting, was actually caused by forests becoming so fragmented that they no longer supported the huge flocks of pigeons - without habitat to feed and shelter them, they died
- pesticides, herbicides and neonicotinoids poison food crops that used to nourish birds along the traditional migratory routes
- approximately half of all songbirds have been lost over the past 40 years

Good News for a Change

- “Lights Out Toronto” encourages business owners to turn off lights at night, spring and fall
- the Audubon Society supports “Project Safe Flight” to raise awareness of migration threats
- FLAP, the “Fatal Light Awareness Program” encourages building design that lowers bird fatalities caused by over abundance of glass and night lighting on high rises
- many neighbourhoods, like Huron Woods, use subtle, low to the ground lighting to minimize threats to insects and birds

Aps Of Interest courtesy of Melissa Prout, guest speaker for “Walk on the Wild Side”

Leaf Snap-to identify native trees and shrubs

iBird Canada, Merlin, Sibley-bird identification information

Trees Pro for tree identification

Florafolio for wildflower identification

Treebook for tree facts and identification

Guest Speaker Event

Please join us

Friday, Sept 4th 7 p.m. At HW Clubhouse **Paul Nicholson**, **London Fress Press Nature Columnist** will speak on “The Great Fall Migrations”

St. Williams Fall Public Sale

September 26 and 27

Call 1-866-640-8733 for information or go to

www.stwilliamsnursery.com

Plant a Butterfly Garden

Those sunlit areas of your woodland property, created by the tornado, provide excellent spaces for milkweed, butterflyweed, phlox, asters, goldenrod, brown-eyed Susans, yarrow and many other native wild flowers that support pollinators like bees, monarchs and other butterflies, hummingbirds and moths.

Why Plant Native?

Create a food web that increases wildlife

- Cool local climate through transpiration
- Deflect weeds and invasive plants
- Conserve water
- Increase success of hardwood plantings
- Provide ecological services such as crop pollination, pest control, water filtering, and water conservation
- Prevent run off, pollution, and erosion
- Provide pleasing low-maintenance surroundings