



# THE PARK PRESS

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## Marvelous Migration

**Pied-billed Grebe****Staff Photo**

A sure sign that autumn is here has to be the migration of many of our birds. While some birds remain here during the winter, 90% of Canada's nearly 500 species of birds migrate.

This behaviour may have started after the end of the last Ice Age when more food and breeding space became available as the ice receded to the north. However, birds that spread to the north returned south to escape the harsh winter weather.

This semi-annual journey may have become instinctive due to environmental factors like changes in temperature and day length, which trigger restlessness and an increased appetite. Birds that migrate have developed sudden overeating tendencies and the resulting stored fat is used as energy during their long trip.

**Mallard****Staff Photo**

With an 80km/h tailwind, Mallards can fly over 1200km in 8 hours straight. It takes 3-7 days of rest and feeding for a Mallard to replenish the energy burned during such a flight.

## Migration Hazards

Most species of birds migrate at night when it's cooler and safer from predators. However, man-made dangers are rapidly increasing. Millions of migrating birds die each year from being struck by planes, trains and cars or flying into buildings, utility wires, bridges, and cell phone/radio towers. They also become disoriented by dazzling lights and lose resting grounds, like wetlands, to over-development.



Bar-headed Goose

Staff Photo

## How can people help?

- \* Keep your dog on a leash
- \* Keep your cat indoors
- \* Don't litter, especially plastics
- \* Don't feed birds old or mouldy bread. Stick to seeds and grains
- \* Grow native plants for cover/ nesting areas and provide a fresh water source in your garden
- \* Put stickers on your windows so birds won't fly into them
- \* Don't pollute: avoid using pesticides and herbicides

## Mighty Migrators

**Greatest Distance** - Arctic Tern  
from North to South Pole (70,900km)  
enjoying almost continuous summer

**Highest Altitude** - Bar-headed Goose  
flies over the Himalayas (including  
Mount Everest) reaching heights of  
6400-8900m (21,000-29,500ft)

**Fastest Migrator** - Great Snipe  
covers around 6760km  
at 97km/h in 3 days  
with no stopovers





## Featured Park Friend: Bald Eagle



Mature Bald Eagle

Staff Photo

**Name** – Bald Eagle

**Scientific Name** – *Haliaeetus leucocephalus*

**Size** – Body Length– 71 - 96cm

Wingspan – 1.8 - 2.4m (6 - 8 ft)

Weight – 3 - 6.5kg (6.5 - 14lbs)

**Colour** – Adults have a dark brown body with a bright white (not bald) head and tail. The beak, legs and eyes are bright yellow. Juveniles are dark overall with varied white mottling.

**Lifespan** – 20 - 30 years

**Habitat** – Forested areas near large bodies of water like lakes, rivers and wetlands, or on the ocean coast. They mostly avoid urbanized areas unless human activities provide them with easy food like at fish processing plants, dams, dumps and farms.

**Range** – They breed across Canada and winter across the US, although coastal populations (like in Alaska, BC and the Maritimes) don't usually migrate but group together instead.



Hunting Technique

Staff Photo

**Feeding** – They prefer fish but will also eat reptiles, amphibians, shellfish, small birds and mammals. They consume whatever food is available, often stealing from other birds of prey or scavenging dead animals.

**Breeding** – Mates perform aerobatic displays mid-air then build a large nest in a tall tree. Nests are often added to each year, becoming some of the largest bird nests in the world. The female lays 1-3 eggs and incubates them for 35 days while the male provides food. Once hatched, the stronger eaglets may prey on the weaker siblings.

**Fun Fact** – Ben Franklin reportedly said this of the national emblem of the USA: “I wish the Bald Eagle had not been chosen as the representative of our country. He is a bird of bad moral character. He does not get his living honestly...besides he is a rank coward.” (Speaking of their tendency to steal food from other birds.)



Juvenile Eagle  
Staff Photo

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<http://wildlifepark.gov.ns.ca>

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## Upcoming Events

*Migrating*

*Bird Watching*

**Sat Sept 29  
8 - 11am**

Join our expert for a great bird watching adventure on our wetland trail. The Atlantic Fly-way passes over NS so we could see some uncommon species. Dress for the weather and bring binoculars if you have them. Pre-registration with confirmation e-mail required.

**Mushroom Hunt**

**Sat Oct 6  
10:30am**

Join John Crabtree on our wetland trail and search high and low for mushrooms, learning to identify some of the multitude of fungi species in NS. Dress for the weather. Pre-registration with confirmation e-mail required.

**SPECIES AT  
RISK IN NS**

**Sat Oct 13  
1 - 4pm**

We will be drawing your attention to the many animals, birds, reptiles, plants and marine species that are at risk in this province. Find out about the threats to their survival and play our giant interactive dice game to see if you can help them. Discover the many ways these species have value.

Regular Park Admission Applies  
For more info call: (902) 758-7094  
e-mail: [legacycentre@gov.ns.ca](mailto:legacycentre@gov.ns.ca)



## Did you know?

- ♦ A group of **geese** is called a “gaggle” while on the ground but a “skein” while in the air.
- ♦ The highest altitude at which a bird has ever been recorded was a **Ruppell's Griffon Vulture** at 11,300m (37,000ft).
- ♦ The largest **Bald Eagle** nest ever recorded was 3m(9.5ft) wide, 6m(20ft) high and weighed over 2 tons (1810kg).
- ♦ The **Blackpoll Warbler** flies 3200km in 72hrs. This degree of exertion would be equivalent to a human running 24km/h for 80hrs.



**Just 4 Fun!!**

**Q: Why do hummingbirds hum?**

**A: Because they don't know the words to the song!**

## MIGRATION MAZE

Help the geese migrate South for the Winter

