

SPRING MIGRATION – A DIFFICULT JOURNEY FOR BIRDS!

Grades 3 to 8 - Large group / class

This activity works best with a large group (e.g. 10+ students) and requires space - such as a gymnasium or outdoor field. Students will be assigned a species of migratory bird. They will complete various actions at a series of stations that outline threats faced by wild birds as they migrate north to their breeding grounds each spring. The activity is experiential and is intended to help students understand the natural and human-made risks birds face as they migrate. Students will track how many birds arrive at their final destination (spring breeding grounds) and how many do not.

PRE-ACTIVITY: Begin with an introduction to migration (more information on this can be found at www.allaboutbirds.org/news/the-basics-how-why-and-where-of-bird-migration/). As a class or individually, create a list of bird species that migrate to or through the area where you are located. You can show a map to help students visualize the great distance travelled by long-distance migrants. Explain that just like people, there are limits as to how far a bird can go without food and rest.

ITEMS NEEDED:

- ▶ 10+ dice (have extras in case any are lost during play)
- ▶ 10+ rubber bands (or more depending on number of participants)
- ▶ 10+ tags/ties (e.g. strips of material long enough to tie around your ankle)
- ▶ Bite-sized snacks (optional for station 12)
- ▶ Printed activity station posters and migration game results chart
- ▶ Pens/pencils
- ▶ Names of migratory birds on small pieces of paper to assign to participants

ACTIVITY PROCESS:

Post activity station posters around the room / outdoor space. Try to space them well apart from one another so that participants don't bump into each other. Explain how many stations there are and where they are located. Assign participants a migratory species – they can fly solo or in a small flock (keep track of the number of each species you assign so you can compare how many made it to their breeding grounds to those that did not). The participant(s) are given dice that they use at select stations. They throw their die at the start of their migration and the number they get is where they start their migration. Then they “fly” off. When they return (either they died en route or completed their migration) they record on a group tracking sheet what they were and if they survived or not. Then they can try again!

Debrief after everyone has had a chance to make it through the game at least once or twice, then ask the participants to share their experiences, relate these to a real life example or species. Maybe when they next see a migratory bird they look at them differently! (“You’ve come along way!”). You could discuss the importance of having places where the birds can rest and feed on their way (marshes, wetland, etc.). You can also discuss the role of wildlife rehabilitation in helping sick and injured wild animals.

Tips for Teachers:

- ▶ If you have a mixed age group, try to pair younger and older participants together (in a flock) as there is a lot of reading in this activity. Alternatively, younger participants could be paired with a leader to play this game.
- ▶ This is an active game (most participants run between stations)!
- ▶ Save enough time to allow all participants to get through the game twice. They seem to just get the idea the first time around, so having them go twice or even three times really helps to cement the concept.



GOOD NEWS! Food is plentiful.
Many berries, seeds,
and insects are available in a
backyard garden containing native
plants, trees and shrubs!
Smack your lips 10 times and
move ahead 6 stations.



STRONG WINDS blow you off course. Blow back 1 station.



3

YOU JUST FLEW INTO
the glass windows of a high-rise
building in a downtown area.

Sit down,
hold your head,
count to 60, and
move to station 10.



BAD STORM!

No flying today.

BRRR!

You are cold and hungry.

Shiver for a count
of 10, hold your belly,
and go back 1 station.

5



YOU ARRIVE AT A LARGE LAKE,
where there is plenty of clean
water, food, and shelter. Lie down,
close your eyes and relax for a
count of 20. Roll the dice then move
ahead that number of stations.



YOU GOT TANGLED UP

in fishing line and hooks while swimming in a pond. Wrap a rubber band around your fingers and wiggle them. It's hard to move!

Count to 20 and then move to station 10.



A LATE BLIZZARD BLOWS

you off course. You land exhausted on the ground. You are tired and have no food. You don't recover. SORRY! You are dead. Lie down and count to 30. Go back to the beginning and mark the chart.

8



SCIENTISTS CATCH YOU

for research. They put a metal band on your leg and set you free. Tie a tag around your ankle. Move ahead 4 stations.



YOU TOOK A BREAK FROM FLYING

in a backyard where a cat lives.

The cat attacked you and gave you a very serious injury. Lie down on your side and count to 15.

Then move to station 11.



YOU ARE SAVED

by a wildlife rehabilitator!
You are healing. Fly in circles to build
up your strength for a count of 60.
Then move ahead 4 stations.



YOU WERE FOUND AND TAKEN

to a wildlife rehabilitator. Sadly, your injuries were too serious and they could not save you. SORRY! You are dead. Lie down and count to 30. Then go back to the beginning and mark the chart.





AFTER FLYING FOR SEVERAL DAYS,
you land in a protected wildlife
reserve . Spend time resting and
eating the abundance of food.
Have a snack, take a rest, then
move ahead 4 stations.

13

YOU FLY THROUGH A CITY AT NIGHT.

The lights are confusing – they look like stars. You fly toward them and collide with a window and fall to the ground. Spin around for a count of 10 and then move back to station 11.



14

IT'S RAINING, IT'S POURING,
and you don't want to fly in this
rainstorm. Count to 50 while you
wait for the storm to stop, roll the
dice, and then move ahead that
number of stations.

15



YOU CLEAN YOURSELF

in an oily puddle which ruins
the weather-proofing in your feathers.
You are wet and cold. You can't fly.
Hop to station 10.



YOU CAN'T FIND THE RESTING SPOT
you came to last year, because a new shopping mall has been built on the site. Walk around in 3 wide circles searching for a place to rest and feed. Because you are still hungry, you only have enough strength to move ahead 1 station.

17



YOU ARE ABLE TO FLY

a long distance in one day because of good winds. Roll the dice and move ahead that number of stations.



YOU GOT CAUGHT IN KITE STRING

left in a tree. You hurt your wing trying to escape.
Crawl back to station 10.



YOU ARE HIT BY A CAR
as you fly across a busy road.
Luckily, it only stuns you. Lie on
your back and count to 60.
Move forward 1 station.



SPEND 5 DAYS RESTING
and feeding in a wildlife
conservation area. Count to 40.
Because you are strong,
you can fly to the finish!

**CONGRATULATIONS!
YOU MADE IT TO YOUR
BREEDING GROUNDS!**



MIGRATION GAME

RESULTS CHART

Write the name of your bird. Check if you were successful or not successful in your migration.

BIRD SPECIES	SUCCESSFUL	NOT SUCCESSFUL