

# Finding the Way

**EVERY YEAR, BILLIONS OF BIRDS** fly south from Canada and the United States. There is much more to migration than robins disappearing and honking flocks of geese flying in V's. Migration is mysterious and amazing. Many birds migrate under cover of darkness while we are sleeping. If you listen, you might hear their peeping flight calls. These calls might let other birds know where they are so they don't crash into each other.

## The Amazing

Many birds gather into huge flocks to migrate. Flocks that look like rivers of blackbirds in the sky have been estimated to hold millions of birds.

Flocks of migrating birds can be detected by weather radar! Check out [birdcast.info](http://birdcast.info) for bird migration "forecasts."

The tiny ruby-throated hummingbird (weighing less than a nickel) flies solo across the Gulf of Mexico in a nonstop 500-mile flight.

The arctic tern travels about 25,000 miles every year, from Antarctica to the Arctic and back again.

## The Mysterious

How do birds find their way? We don't exactly know.

Birds use many of their senses to navigate. They might recognize landmarks and use the sun and stars to help orient themselves. A bird's sense of smell also seems to be important; researchers think birds can create a "smell map" of the landscape. Finally, birds are able to detect the earth's magnetic field and seem to have a built-in compass.

You can visit [nps.gov/articles/compass.htm](https://www.nps.gov/articles/compass.htm) to learn how to make your own compass at home. A compass can't help you, though, if you don't know where you are going! One of the amazing mysteries about bird migration is that young birds that never have migrated before know where to go, often migrating apart from their parents and sometimes even taking different routes. There is something inside them that knows where to go.

## God Is Our Guide

While we might never fully understand migration, we do know that God made birds, and it is God who enables them to find their way. In finding our own ways in this world, we should always be looking to God to be our guide. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight." **B**



Rachel Lancashire is a freelance writer with an educational background in wildlife. She grew up in the Christian Reformed Church and currently attends Gilmour Memorial Baptist Church in Selwyn, Ont.