

The Migration Challenge

Activities for children aged 5–7 years

WWT has a well-established and well-loved education programme that we run across the UK at our ten wetland sites. We've designed these short activities based on one of our school activities. We've made it to connect you and your family to the natural world and help you to work with your children to feel great about nature and understand some of the things that WWT love and care about.

Why wetlands?

WWT works across the UK to save, conserve and build wetlands for wildlife and people. Wetlands are one of the most important habitats on earth – storing huge amounts of CO₂, providing a natural way of stopping flooding and serving as a home for huge numbers of different creatures.

This activity will help you and your children to learn about the amazing travels of some key wetland birds.

These activities link to the National Curricula for science and geography in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Stuff you need:

- **Migration Map (see final page of this document)**
- **Ruler**
- **Pencils or pens (red and blue if you have them)**

Note: Where you see a  this indicates a question to ask your child

Indoor activities

(30 minutes)

Many animals travel long distances to find food or better living conditions as the seasons change – this is called migration.

Key word: MIGRATION

When an animal travels to find food or better living conditions, usually as the seasons change.

In this activity you'll find out about the amazing migration of wetland birds.

- Take the Migration Map. Together with your child, label the seven continents and five oceans.

- Look at the following information together with your child:



Bewick's swan

Location during UK summer:

Ust-Kara, Arctic Russia

Location during UK winter:

WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre, Gloucestershire

Migration dates:

Oct / Nov and Feb / March

Route:

via Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Germany and the Netherlands



Whooper swan

Location during UK summer:

Iceland

Location during UK winter:

WWT Martin Mere Wetland Centre, Lancashire

Migration dates:

Oct / Nov and Feb / March

Route:

via Scotland



Light-bellied brent goose

Location during UK summer:

Ellesmere, Arctic Canada

Location during UK winter:

WWT Castle Espie Wetland Centre, Northern Ireland

Migration dates:

Sept / Oct and Feb / March

Route:

via Greenland and Iceland



Osprey

Location during UK summer:

near WWT Caerlaverock Wetland Centre, Scotland

Location during UK winter:

Senegal / Gambia border, Africa

Migration dates:

March / April and August / Sept

Route:

via France, Spain, Morocco, Western Sahara and Mauritania



Sand Martin

Location during UK summer:

London Wetland Centre, Barnes

Location during UK winter:

Niger, Africa

Migration dates:

March and October

Route:

via France and Algeria

- Choose one of the birds above and on the previous page. You may want to choose the bird whose UK location is closest to you or according to difficulty (Bewick's swan and osprey are more difficult than the others).
- Ask your child to look at the information for that bird.

Q Where does the bird spend our summer?

- Get your child to mark this with a red dot on their map.

Q Where does the bird spend our winter?

- Get your child to mark this with a blue dot on their map.
- Ask your child to look at the route listed on the card. Get them to use this to plot the bird's migration journey, linking the different countries listed with straight lines using a ruler.
- Get them to mark on their map the continents and oceans over which the bird travels.
- Get them to mark on their map the countries over which the bird travels (including countries within the UK).
- Get them to mark on their map the direction the bird flies (either N / S or E /W).

- Talk to your child about the area where the bird spends our summer and the area where it spends our winter. How do these two areas compare? How does the weather compare in these two different areas? Which is colder? What is it about these areas that provides the things these birds need to survive?

Q Why do you think these birds go to the trouble of migrating? Why do they migrate when they do?

- Birds usually migrate to find a more suitable climate and better supplies of food.

If you enjoyed these activities, you could repeat them with another bird.

Nature Connection

- These birds face lots of challenges on their migrations. There is a risk of starvation if they can't find enough food and many birds become exhausted. There is also a danger that they fly into tall objects such as pylons and telephone masts. Some of these birds are even hunted.

Q Can you imagine what the journey must be like for these amazing animals? What might they have seen and experienced? What would it have felt like?

Q Imagine if you were one of the birds – what would you think when you first took off? What would it feel like when you arrived after such a long journey? You might want to think about any long journeys you've taken.

Take it outdoors:

(15 minutes)

- Take another copy of the Migration Map.
- Cut out each continent separately.
- Take this outside along with the bird migration information.
- Pin up each continent in a different location.
- Call out a bird, the time of year and which continent it travels from and to (e.g. 'in March and April, ospreys travel from Africa to Europe').
- Children should run from the appropriate continent to the other.

NOTE: Iceland is in Europe so whooper swans travel from one country in Europe to another also in Europe - see if the children can work this out. Russia is in both Europe and Asia so either is correct.

- This activity can then be extended by simply calling out the bird and time of year - can the children remember its journey?



@WWTWorldwide



Have fun and do share your work to our social media accounts – we'd absolutely love to see it!

Migration Map

