



# The wonder of bird migration



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Bird migration is one of the most remarkable natural phenomena on Earth. Each year, billions of birds travel thousands of miles from their wintering grounds to their breeding grounds. And back again.



Common tern

Here in the Netherlands, you have a front row seat.

# The wonder of bird migration

The flight paths of migrating birds tend to follow continental coastlines, as these are routes where they can find plenty of food. One major route runs along the west coast of Africa and Europe, taking in the Dutch coast. Some birds follow only a short section of this route, while others fly all the way from the Arctic Circle to Antarctica. They fly south in autumn and in spring, they return along the same route. In the Netherlands, you are ideally placed to witness the wonder of migration. The Dutch countryside is a rich source of food and tens of millions of migrating birds stop here to rest. Over 300 different species pass through each year. The national parks of the Netherlands are a great place to see them: Schiermonnikoog, Lauwersmeer, Dunes of Texel, Nieuw Land, Oosterschelde, and more, and of course the Wadden Sea World Heritage Site. This poster tells you more about the extraordinary feat that these birds perform twice a year!

Sanderlings can often be seen running to and fro in the surf on the beach.

An oystercatcher's beak can grow up to three times its normal length in one year if it isn't used.

The wheatear lives on the ground and often nests in a rabbit hole.

Ospreys are migrating birds. In De Biesbosch NP, where they have been breeding since 2016, you can spot them all summer.

Male ruffs stage fights just for show to impress the females.

Savi's warbler makes a sound like a whirring wheel. Large banks of reeds are its habitat of choice.

The Kentish plover is a rare summer bird found mostly in coastal areas.

DUNES OF TEXEL NP

WADDEN SEA WORLD HERITAGE SITE

NIEUW LAND NP

DE BIESBOSCH NP

OOSTERSHELDE NP

SCHIERMONNIKOOG NP

LAUWERSMEER NP

Spoonbill

Barnacle goose

Western marsh harrier

Black-tailed godwit

## Safe service stations

If you travel the astounding distances that migrating birds do, it's essential to have safe places to eat and rest along the way. Only then can you find enough energy for the next leg of your journey. Every spring and autumn, millions of migrating birds make a stopover in the Netherlands. The Dutch wetlands offer a safe haven and rich pickings – their very own service stations! This makes the Netherlands a real hotspot for migrating birds. Ringed plover coming from the polar regions like to refuel in the Wadden islands or the Delta before flying on to Africa.

And a large proportion of Dutch avocets flock to the mudflats of Friesland where they eat their fill before starting their long journey. In other places too, migrating birds can stop along the way to rest and recuperate. For example, wigeons first make a stopover at a quiet place to shed their plumage. With a new set of feathers, they are ready to fly on to the Netherlands where they spend

the winter, often in flocks of up to a few thousand. Common terns follow the African coastline during their migration, but at river estuaries, they head inland for a while to catch fish and rest. For the sake of all of these visitors, it is hugely important to protect our national parks and the other unspoiled areas where birds can come to refuel.

## Journeys fraught with danger

It seems like an impossible feat, but barn swallows, bluethroats, nightingales and other small birds – some weighing less than 20 grams – have to fly over the Sahara when they migrate south. Since there is no food or water in the desert, they have to cross this vast expanse in one continuous flight: a distance of two thousand kilometres! A strong headwind or a sandstorm can be life-threatening. The effects of climate change mean that their trek across the desert – and therefore the distance they have to fly without refuelling – is getting longer and longer. And as if they didn't have enough to contend with, there is an added danger from humans: hunting small birds is common practice in Southern Europe and North Africa.



Barn swallow

Nightingale

Bluethroat



Pied avocet



Eurasian wigeon

Common ringed plover



Do you want to experience migratory birds? Then scan this QR code!



Nationale Parken Bureau