

When Sammy, a young Wilson's warbler, wakes up one fall day, he realizes it's time to find his winter home. Along the way, he encounters many other animals getting ready for the changing season. Compare the route he takes to the one his fellow Wilson's warblers usually take.

A great introduction to migration in North America.

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Reprinted from *Is This Panama? A Migration Story* • Owlkids Books 2013

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Some of the animals Sammy met:



Wilson's Warblers

Some Wilson's warblers nest as far north as the Arctic Ocean! Like other songbirds, Wilson's warblers know it's time to migrate south when days shorten, temperatures drop, and their food supply changes.



Ptarmigans

Ptarmigans are some of the only birds that can live year-round in the far north. Along with their white winter camouflage, they grow a thick undercoat of down and "boots" of feathers to keep their toes cozy. To stay warm at night and during snowstorms, they dig "snow caves" for shelter.



Caribou

Young caribou become fast runners just hours after birth. They stay close to their mothers, but if they get separated they can still recognize each other by their calls and smells. Caribou calves learn the routes they will use their whole lives by following their mothers during their first migration. Some caribou herds migrate farther than any other land mammals.



Sandhill Cranes

Because sandhill cranes travel in family groups, the young are shown the way to migrate by their parents. Following the adults, the young learn to recognize landmarks along their migration routes as well as the best places to rest and feed.



Garter Snakes

Garter snakes are cold-blooded reptiles, so the ones that live in the north have to hibernate in underground caves so they won't freeze. Some of these caves, or hibernacula, can shelter up to ten thousand snakes! Snakes use their flicking tongues, not their noses, to capture scents. These scents, or chemical signals, are then "read" by the Jacobson's organ on the roofs of their mouths.



Green Darner Dragonflies

Though we don't know why some green darners migrate, we do know they only migrate during daylight hours. Since they often follow shorelines or long hilly ridges, they might look for unique landforms to figure out which way to go.



Warblers

All fifty species of North American warblers are migratory. They often migrate in mixed flocks, which makes them a favorite of birdwatchers since many are very colorful. Each species has its own preference of habitat for nesting in the summer and for wintering. Some fly all the way to Chile in South America for the winter, while others, like Sammy, only go as far as Panama.



Monarchs

Like many other butterflies, most monarchs have short lives; they grow, reproduce, and then die. But some monarchs are special. These ones—the last generation of the season—migrate. Millions fly all the way to Mexico, where they spend the winter hibernating in mountain forests. Sometimes there are so many roosting monarchs in the trees that branches break from the weight.



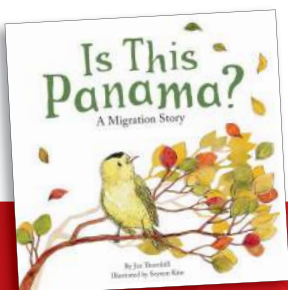
Hudsonian Godwits

Godwits have the longest nonstop migration of any bird in the world and can fly almost ten thousand kilometers (six thousand miles) in one go. They don't have to stop to eat because they eat so much before migration that their weight doubles before they take off!



Humpback Whales

Humpback whales feed in cold waters and migrate to warm waters to calve. Some fatten up in the North Atlantic in the summer, then make their way south to the Caribbean for the winter. Though humpbacks migrate slowly, they're very good at staying on course, probably using a combination of the Earth's magnetic field and the position of the Sun to guide them.



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