

Migration information



Migration is the movement of birds and animals from one place to another. Lots of birds that arrive in the UK and Isle of Man come from Africa. They travel thousands of miles and cross lots of different countries and oceans and face many dangers along the way.

Coming from Africa, many birds fly over the Sahara Desert, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, flying over the Pyrenees mountain range between Spain and France before flying over the English Channel to end in the UK. If they then go on to travel to the Isle of Man they have to fly over more sea!

Hazards along the way include, changing weather, storms, pollution, man made changes to habitats and resting places where the birds feed. Domestic and feral cats find exhausted birds easy prey. The most dangerous threat to birds is humans. Humans hunt and trap migrating birds for sport, killing millions of birds every year. Wind turbines, oil rigs and high-rise buildings can all be dangerous for migrating birds. Many birds don't see glass buildings until it is too late. The biggest problem caused by humans that the birds face is habitat destruction. If the birds resting place changes or disappears this means birds have to travel further without food, water and rest.

Over half the world's population of birds migrate. In the spring many set off from Africa to visit the UK and Isle of Man to give them the best possible chance of nesting and raising their chicks. The amount of nesting space in the UK and Isle of Man is greater than the nesting space in Africa. There is also much more food available in the UK and Isle of Man in the summer months than there is in Africa. There are lots of insects to eat and the temperature is much more suitable for raising their chicks. The daylight hours are long in the UK and Isle of Man in the summer; it starts getting light at 4am and doesn't get dark sometimes until gone 11pm.

When autumn arrives, the daylight hours are shorter, temperatures drop and the insects disappear. There is a change in air pressure and birds are able to sense incoming weather. Their internal clocks tell them that it is time to depart and head back to Africa. Before they go, they might spend weeks fattening up and getting into the best condition they can so they have a better chance of surviving such a long journey. Once they are ready and in peak condition many birds set off at night and use the wind to help them along the way. To help them navigate birds use their senses, sight, smell and hearing being extremely important. They can see landmarks, such as the White Cliffs of Dover, they can see the patterns of the land against the sea; they can see mountain ranges and the deserts. By using their senses along with the earth's magnetic field birds can complete their migration.

When they get to their final stop migrating birds spend the next few months feeding and resting before making the long, dangerous journey back to the UK and Isle of Man.

Migration

Questions



Question 1: What do you think migration is?

Question 2: Can you name any countries where birds migrate to?

Question 3: Why do you think birds migrate?

Question 4: What time of year do you think birds migrate? (There are two different times)

Question 5: What problems do you think birds might encounter?

Migration

Tasks

Look at the map on the next page.



The Arctic Tern



travels all the way from the Antarctic to the Arctic, finally stopping in Greenland. Which oceans will it fly over?

The Cuckoo



starts its journey in Africa. Which continent would it fly over to get to the Isle of Man?

The Manx Shearwater



spends its winter in Argentina, South America. When it returns to the Isle of Man in spring which ocean does it fly over?

The Chiffchaff



spends its winter in Spain. Which continent is Spain in?

Migration

Countries, Continents and Oceans





Question 1: What do you think migration is?

The movement of birds from one place to another

Question 2: Can you name any countries where birds migrate to?

The migrate to the UK and Isle of Man from Africa

Question 3: Why do you think birds migrate?

There is more food available in the UK and Isle of Man. There are more nesting spaces, there is longer daylight hours and the temperature is better.

Question 4: What time of year do you think birds migrate? (There are two different times)

Birds migrate in spring and autumn

Question 5: What problems do you think birds might encounter?

Hazards include habitat loss, hunting and killing by humans, becoming prey to cats, getting caught in storms

Answers

The Arctic Tern flies over the Southern Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean.

The Cuckoo flies over Europe

The Manx Shearwater flies over the Atlantic Ocean

The continent that Spain is in is Europe.