



Migrations That Make a Splash

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Dive in to learn about amazing animal migrations in the water.



All across the world, millions of animals migrate every year. Some travel thousands of miles. But what exactly does that mean? Migration is the regular movement of a group of animals, or an animal population, from one place to another. Some animals migrate to find food. Others migrate to find safe places to raise their young. And some even migrate to stay warm. Migration happens on land, in water, and even in the sky! Read on to discover the amazing migrations of some aquatic animals.

Super Sea Turtles

Turtles—even sea turtles—have a reputation for being slow. But that doesn't stop these amazing reptiles from making incredible long-distance migrations. Every year, sea turtles travel up to thousands of miles. In fact, some species, like the leatherback turtle, sometimes travel 10,000 miles in a year. That's like swimming the distance from New York to California more than three times!

But why go to such great lengths? Sea turtles travel between the places where they gather food, or forage, to the places where they lay their eggs.

FUN FACT

Some sea turtles return to the same beach where they were born to lay their own eggs.



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When it is time for sea turtles to lay eggs, they leave the places where they eat, called their foraging grounds. Then, they make the long journey to a warm, tropical beach that is a good place to lay eggs. This is known as their nesting ground. There, the mother sea turtle digs a hole in the sand and lays her eggs. Then she covers them up. When the eggs hatch, the babies dig themselves out of the sand and crawl to the sea. Many of them will go on to migrate, too.



Humpback whales traveling across the sea.

Wonderful Whales

Have you ever seen—or wanted to see—a whale at sea? People who hope to spot these majestic ocean mammals need to know the right times to look for them, and where. That’s because whales migrate.

Like sea turtles, whales travel great distances—even more than 10,000 miles in a year. And like sea turtles, some whales may migrate to find warm waters for their young. Unlike sea turtles, whales give live birth to baby whales, called calves. Experts think warm waters may make it easier for these calves to grow up. The waters help keep the calves warm and cozy.

DID YOU KNOW?

One gray whale holds the known record for the longest whale migration. She swam all the way to Mexico from Russia—and back!



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Scientists believe there may be other reasons whales migrate, too. Some whales may find more food in warmer waters during the winter seasons. And warmer waters might be good for the adult whales, too. Some scientists think that traveling to warm seas might be good for a whale's skin, helping to keep the whale healthy.



A group of salmon jumping upstream in a river.

Spectacular Salmon

Not all watery migrations happen in the ocean. But that doesn't mean these migrations are any less amazing. Just ask salmon! Each year, salmon swim from their winter homes in the sea into rivers and streams. To do this, they must swim upstream—meaning they have to swim against the current. This is so they can reach good locations to lay their eggs. Rivers and streams are much safer for salmon eggs than the wide ocean. But once the new salmon are born, they will head downstream and into the sea.

What a voyage!