

A large flock of seabirds, likely terns, is captured in various stages of flight over a body of water. The birds are white with dark caps and wings, and some are landing or taking off from the water. In the background, there are large, white icebergs floating in the sea. The overall scene is dynamic and captures the essence of a migratory bird colony.

Soaring Migrations

 **beanstack originals**



Soaring Migrations

Find out how some animals reach amazing heights by migrating in the air.



Every day, airborne animals flitter and fly across the sky. But each year, something even more amazing happens: millions of animals fly together in enormous migrations. A migration is the regular movement of a group of animals, or an animal population, from one place to another. But why do they do it? Some animals migrate to find food. Others travel to find safe places to raise their young. And some animals even migrate to stay warm. Migration happens on land, in water, and even in the sky! Read on to discover the marvelous migrations of some flying animals.

Moving Monarchs

It doesn't take a large, tough animal to travel thousands of miles. In fact, tiny insects do it, too. Each year, monarch butterflies travel a whopping 3,000 miles or so. That is like traveling from Florida to

Oregon! Why are these little insects making such big moves? The answer has to do with a plant called milkweed.

Milkweed is a flowering plant that grows in the United States and Canada. It is very important to monarch butterflies.

DID YOU KNOW?

When a monarch caterpillar is ready for metamorphosis, it sheds its outer skin. Underneath is a new layer that hardens into a protective shell, called a chrysalis. Inside the chrysalis, the monarch regrows into a butterfly.



Soaring Migrations



This is because monarch butterflies start off life as monarch caterpillars. And monarch caterpillars eat only one food: milkweed. Talk about picky eaters! Mama monarch butterflies breed and lay their eggs on milkweed leaves in the United States and Canada. The eggs hatch into baby caterpillars, called larvae. Eventually, the caterpillars turn into butterflies in a transformation called metamorphosis.

But during the fall, it is too cold for monarch butterflies to survive. So as temperatures drop, they must travel south, where it is warmer. In fact, monarchs travel all the way to Mexico! When winter ends, they return north to lay eggs on the milkweed, and the whole process begins again.



An arctic tern soaring through the sky.

Birds on the Move

Some animals, like caribou, migrate hundreds of miles. Some, like some whales, migrate thousands of miles. But the animal that migrates the farthest of all is a bird: the arctic tern.

Not all birds migrate, but many do. And many of them migrate during the seasons to travel to warm places where there is more food. Arctic terns migrate to find food, too, but they don't follow the weather. Instead, they follow the patterns of the sun.

The arctic tern spends its summers in the Arctic. This is the region around the North Pole, the northernmost part of the planet.

FUN FACT

Arctic terns can live to be more than 30 years old.



Soaring Migrations



There, the arctic tern spends its time hunting fish and insects. It uses the bright sunlight to see its meals clearly before swooping in to catch them. However, during the winter, the Arctic is very dark. In fact, some days, the sun doesn't rise at all!

But luckily for the arctic tern, when it is winter at the North Pole, it is summer at the South Pole. This happens because of the way the Earth tilts toward and away from the Sun as it revolves around the Sun. To find food, the arctic tern travels all the way to the South Pole—the southernmost part of the planet. Round trip, this journey takes more than 25,000 miles!