

World Migratory Bird Day: Migration Challenge

In this activity, you and your family will race other “birds” through an in-home obstacle course to better feeding grounds.

Age: Families with children 6 years old or older

Get Ready *You can help your child make connections by thinking about concepts before the activity.*

An estimated 40% of all bird species migrate. They migrate for resources, the main drivers are food and nesting habitat. Some birds will migrate short distances, to a lower elevation on a mountain, for example, while others may migrate thousands of miles, from one continent to another. It is not fully understood how birds navigate during migrations; however, they do use the sun, stars, Earth’s magnetic fields, and landmarks to orient. Here in Georgia, peak migration time in the spring is April and May. In the fall, it is September and October. Many birds will look more colorful when migrating in the spring in North America as they are sporting their breeding plumages. In the fall they are often a more drab color, as they are more interested in blending in than standing out.

Gather Your Gear

- Preferred and non-preferred snack items (you can also use remote control, prime sofa spot, whatever incentives are rewarding to your family)
- Storage bins or boxes
- Towels
- Stuffed animals
- Saran wrap
- Tape
- Box or stand fan
- Ribbon/light string
- Tweezers
- Dried beans or pasta
- Rice
- Water bottle/glass of water
- Bowl
- Empty cup

Do the Activity *Migration Challenge*

Set-up In order of obstacles:

- Start line – back wall of one bedroom
- Plastic wrap the middle of the bedroom doorway (this makes a “window”)
- Scatter stuffed animals (these are both natural predators, and invasive species such as pet cats and dogs)
- Taped-off floor square (this represents a lawn or park where pesticides have been used)
- Fan with ribbons tied to it (this represents wind farms, power lines and weather)
- Water and foraging station (allow the birds to rest and refuel for the next leg of their migration). To forage, place some dry pasta or beans and rice into a bowl. The bird will

then use tweezers to pick eight beans or pieces of pasta out of the rice and place them in the cup)

- Towels laid end to end (towels represent the road)
- Storage bins or boxes (these are buildings)
- Finish line – kitchen counter

Pre-game Discussion & Rules

Birds migrate for a number of reasons, with breeding grounds and food availability being two of them. Today, you will be birds migrating for food. As birds migrate for food, among other reasons, they encounter many obstacles. Just as birds face obstacles in the wild, you have obstacles to pass in order to get first pick of the snacks laid out in the kitchen. Your goal is to safely migrate from the bedroom to the kitchen without touching or messing up any of the obstacle materials along the way.

Things to remember

1. You may NOT skip any of the obstacles by leaving the course to go through a different room.
2. You may not lay hands on your co-competitors; be kind to one another.
3. If you touch or mess up one of the obstacles, you must wait five seconds before proceeding. If you touch or mess up two obstacles, you must go back to the last successful obstacle, and begin the course again from there.
4. If you touch or mess up three or more obstacles, the winning bird chooses your snack for you.
5. First person to the kitchen gets their first choice of snack. The second person must choose from whatever snacks remain.

Game Play

To fly **under** an obstacle – run, walk, or crawl

To fly **around** an obstacle – run or walk

To fly **over** an obstacle – jump

- All birds must begin at the selected back wall of the bedroom, and will be navigating the course at the same time.
- The birds must cross the bedroom without touching any of the furniture, and fly under the plastic wrap window.
- Now you have to dodge the predators. Fly above and around the pets and wild predators.
- Fly **OVER** the pesticide field(s), as these are not safe places to land, nor is there time to fly around them.
- Just past the pesticide field is a windmill farm. As you fly past it, be careful not to get caught in the turbines (ribbons).
- Now that the bird is a little over halfway to the new feeding grounds, take a rest and grab some clean water, and forage for food at a safe resting spot.
- Time to cross the road. Walk slowly along the towels to cross the road. If the ends of the towels separate, you've been hit by a car.

- All you have left to do is navigate the city. Fly over and around the buildings to new feeding grounds!
- First come, first served! The winning bird chooses their preferred snack, and waits for the other birds to arrive.

Use what you have. You can set up inside, or modify it to play outside. You can also use fewer, or create more obstacles depending on the ages of your “birds” and the size of your space.

For alternative rewards, they can win first choice of a movie or show to watch together, the best seat on the couch, choose a game to play, etc.

If this needs to be a single-player game, shake up the course in between runs, and time the “bird” to see how fast they can run the course.

Recap *Have a conversation about what you did and questions your child may have.*

Questions you might ask...

Think about the obstacles we faced and what they represented (roadways, other animals, pollution). In what ways do all of these obstacles impact migrating birds? You knew you were guaranteed a snack, and that you would make it across the obstacle course, but do all birds survive migration?

Other than the obstacles we’ve mimicked in our home, what are some other challenges birds would face in the wild while migrating? (You might prompt your child to think about how they feel physically, whether or not they got their preferred snack or had to eat one that is not as favored; how might those feelings relate to migrating birds?)

Relate *Create connections to the idea through activities.*

What kinds of obstacles did we face that we as humans created for birds in the wild?

Which of those man-made obstacles are things that we as a family contribute to? What could we do to help lessen our impact on migratory birds as a family?

It takes a team.... join ours

Help us save species by joining the “Zoo Conservation Corps” and raise awareness about wild animals, their habitats and why conserving both is so important. If your family members are on social media, post to show what you have learned, and use the hashtag #OnlyZooATL so that we can see all your great work!

Want to know more....

Want to know more about World Migratory Bird Day:

<https://www.migratorybirdday.org>

Want to take a look at Zoo Atlanta’s connection with migratory birds:

<https://zooatlanta.org/magnificent-migration/>

<https://zooatlanta.org/teaming-up-for-native-birds/>

Want to know how you can be more bird friendly:

<https://zooatlanta.org/be-bird-friendly/>