

## Why do Animals Migrate?

In many parts of the world the temperature during winter regularly falls below freezing. Humans are able to wear thick coats and stay indoors to keep warm. But what do animals do? They migrate. Migration is the movement of animals from one place to another. It is purposeful movement driven by an animal's instinct, which can occur seasonally, annually or whenever the weather commands it.

Most animals migrate to warmer areas where food and daylight hours are plentiful. Some migrators travel short distances, others travel tens of thousands of kilometres. Below are some examples of animals that migrate.

### Animal

### The migration

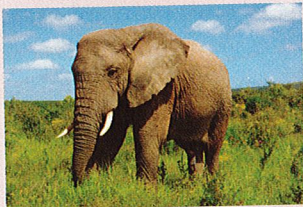
**Arctic tern**  
*Sterna paradisaea*



The Arctic tern migrates the furthest out of all of the migrators. Scientists believe they travel around 71 000 km per year!

Arctic terns fly between Antarctica and Greenland each year—one end of the world to the other. The Arctic tern migrates to Greenland in search of warmer conditions for breeding in the northern hemisphere.

**African elephant**  
*Loxodonta africana*



African elephants migrate annually, usually at the beginning of the dry season, in search of food. They follow a familiar path each year, which leads them to rivers and other water sources. When the wet season arrives they migrate back to their native regions to feed on the lush vegetation brought on by the rain.

**Gray whale**  
*Eschrichtius robustus*



Gray whales travel between their feeding and breeding grounds each year. This journey takes them along the west coast of North America.

During winter, ice forms in the Arctic region. This is a sign for the whales to travel south to the warm lagoon waters of Mexico. The lagoon provides shelter for the female whales to give birth to their calves. When the calves are ready to make the journey, they all return to their feeding grounds in the cold Arctic waters of the north.

**Canada goose**  
*Branta canadensis*



As seasons shift, so does a flock of Canada geese. Canada geese usually start migrating south when the ground begins to freeze in autumn. They seek warmer locations where food is plentiful.

Canada geese begin the return journey to their breeding grounds in late winter. Interestingly, the geese follow extremely strict paths stopping in the exact locations to rest and refuel year after year. They are known to travel up to 1000 km in one day!