

# NATURE DETECTIVES

Spring 2025

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## Spring Bird Migration and Nest Building in Colorado

Every year, as the weather begins to warm up, we can see the signs of spring all around us. One of the most exciting things to watch for is the arrival of birds back to their homes. Birds travel long distances to find food, warmer weather, and places to raise their young. This is called bird migration, and it happens twice a year. Birds fly south to escape the cold in the fall and return to their breeding grounds in the spring.

Pull Out and Save

### What is Bird Migration?

Bird migration is when birds move from one place to another at certain times of the year. Birds migrate for several reasons. The main reason is to find food. When the cold winter comes, many places have very little food for birds. There are fewer insects, berries, and seeds to eat. So, birds leave their homes in search of warmer places where they can find plenty of food to eat and stay healthy.

But how do birds know where to go? Birds have special instincts, which means they know what to do without having to be taught. They also use the sun, stars, and even the Earth's magnetic field to guide them on their journey. Some birds fly as far as thousands of miles during migration! Some birds migrate from Canada to the southern United States. Some birds travel even farther to places like Central America or South America.

Not all birds migrate in the same way. Some birds fly in big groups, called flocks. Some birds travel together in a V-shaped pattern, which helps them save energy. Some birds, like swallows and warblers, fly alone. No matter how they travel, all birds know the importance of traveling safely.

Once the weather warms up and food is more plentiful, the birds begin to head back to the places where they came from. These birds return to their homes in the spring, where they can start the next part of their journey: nest building.



# The Importance of Nesting

When birds return to their summer homes, their main goal is to find a safe place to build a nest and raise their babies. Nesting is a very important part of a bird's life cycle. A nest is not just a cozy home — it is a safe place where eggs can be laid, kept warm, and protected. It's also where baby birds will be raised until they are strong enough to leave the nest and fly on their own.

In Colorado, many species of birds migrate to the state in the spring to build their nests. Colorado's mountains, forests, wetlands, and grasslands offer a variety of places for birds to nest. Whether you live in the city or out in the country, you might spot some of these amazing birds preparing for their new families.

## Birds of Colorado that Migrate and Build Nests

Colorado is home to many different species of birds, some of which are migratory. These birds travel back and forth every year, coming to Colorado in the spring to build nests and lay eggs. Let's take a look at some of the most common birds you might see migrating and nesting in Colorado.

### 1. Barn Swallow

The barn swallow is a beautiful, long-tailed bird that migrates to Colorado in the spring. These swallows build their nests in barns, sheds, or under eaves of buildings. Their nests are made of mud and grass, and they often return to the same spot each year. Barn swallows are insect eaters. They are helpful for controlling bugs in gardens and fields. Once their nests are built, the female lays her eggs, and both parents take turns feeding the young.



### 2. Western Meadowlark

The western meadowlark is a songbird found in the grasslands and open fields of Colorado. In the spring, these birds build their nests on the ground, hidden among tall grasses or in low bushes. The nests are made of grass and leaves, and the birds use their strong beaks to weave everything together. Western meadowlarks have beautiful, melodic songs. They can be heard in the early mornings and late afternoons.



### 3. Broad-tailed Hummingbird

The broad-tailed hummingbird is another migratory bird that comes to Colorado in the spring. These birds are strong fliers and can cover long distances, even flying nonstop for hours! They must find flowers along the way so they can drink nectar to keep their energy up. The female hummingbird builds a tiny nest. They make it out of soft materials like spider silk, plant fibers, and tiny feathers. The nest is so small it can fit in the palm of your hand!



# How Do Birds Build Their Nests?

Building a nest is hard work for birds. They start by finding a good location. It's important that the nest is in a place that is safe from predators. Animals such as house cats, raccoons, and other birds might try to harm their eggs or babies. Some birds like to build their nests high up in trees, where they are harder to reach. Other birds might choose to nest in the branches of a large shrub, where they can hide the nest and keep it protected.

Once they have chosen a safe spot, the birds begin to gather materials. They collect twigs, leaves, grass, feathers, and sometimes even things like string or bits of fabric. Some birds even gather mud and use it to help stick their nests together. They carefully weave or arrange these materials to create a strong and safe home for their eggs.

## The Circle of Life

Bird migration and nest building are important parts of a bird's life cycle. Migration helps birds find food and safe places to live. Nest building is the way they create homes for their eggs and raise their babies. Without migration and nests, many birds would not survive.

In Colorado, when we see birds returning and building nests in the spring, we know that the circle of life is continuing. The birds are raising the next generation, and soon there will be even more birds flying through the sky. Whether they are migrating, building nests, or raising their chicks, birds are always busy in the spring. The next time you see a bird building a nest or flying overhead, you'll know that they are part of the circle of life.



**To learn more about bird migration visit, the National Audubon Society's Bird Migration Explorer website: [explorer.audubon.org](http://explorer.audubon.org)**

# SPRING BIRD QUEST

Keep a record!

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

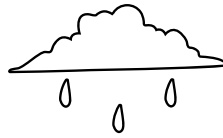
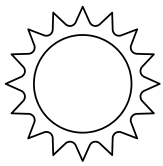
Helpful things to take:

Field guide to birds

Binoculars

Color the weather today.

Temperature: \_\_\_\_\_



Close your eyes and listen. Describe any bird sounds you hear:

What are the birds doing? For each bird you see, make a check mark in the box or boxes that best describe its behavior.

Singing

Flying

Eating food

Making a nest

Tending chicks

Resting