

TIPS FOR A GREENER LIFESTYLE!

How can we live sustainably?

IN THIS SERIES WE EXPLORE HOW WE CAN BE SUSTAINABLE TOGETHER,
RIGHT HERE IN ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY!



THIS MONTH'S TOPIC:

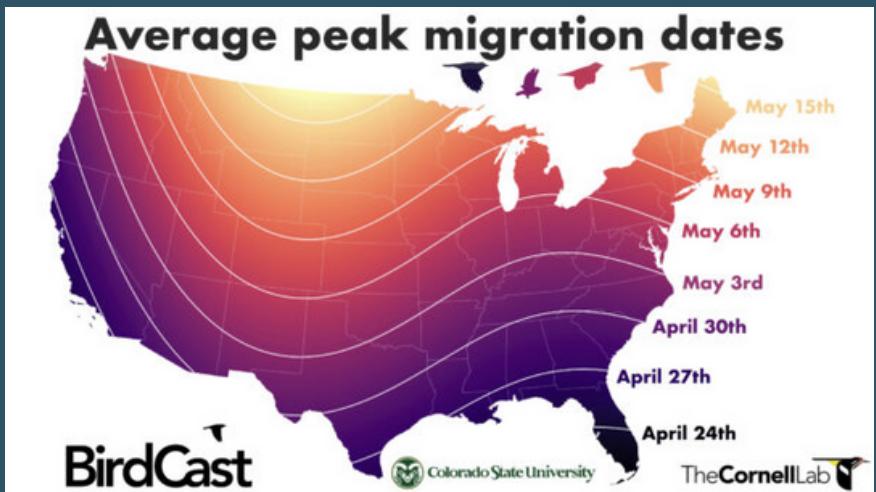
THE MAGIC OF MIGRATION

STEPHANIE GREEN



What were you doing on the night of April 25, 2024? If you were a Cape May Warbler, you might have been flying at about 20 mph looking down on Athens from 2,000 ft. On that night last year, an estimated 914,400 birds winged their way over Clarke County while you slept. They were one nights' worth of the over 17,200,000 birds that crossed over us on their way North last spring (check out [Birdcast](#) for statistics).

More than half of our North American bird species are migratory. That means they breed in one location and then spend the remainder of the year in another place -often thousands of miles away. Birds migrate in response to availability and timing of resources, especially food and nesting habitat. In the Northern Hemisphere birds move north following the budding trees and flowers and the flush of



SOURCES AND TO LEARN MORE
ABOUT MIGRATION [CLICK HERE!](#)

MAP SOURCE: [BIRD CAST](#)

insects that go along with increased daylight and warming temperatures. They take advantage of plentiful food and shelter over the summer to raise their babies and then when fall comes, they head back south where resources are plentiful during winter.

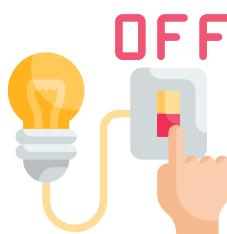
While there are some notable exceptions (Ruby-throated hummingbirds and Raptors), most birds migrate at night. This allows them to take advantage of more stable atmosphere and smoother flight conditions, as well as fewer predators. Nocturnal travel also means stars and the moon can serve as navigational aids.

Migration is risky business. Not only do birds face natural hazards such as predation, exhaustion, and unpredictable spring weather, they also have to navigate increasing amounts of light pollution, the risks of colliding with buildings, and habitat loss.

As we fly toward peak spring migration here in Athens (April 21st-May 10th, generally), here are some ways to help our feathered sojourners complete their travels:



PHOTO CREDIT: JAY MCGOWAN,
MACAULAY LIBRARY



1). TURN OFF OR DIM ALL NON-ESSENTIAL LIGHTS BETWEEN 11 PM AND 6AM.

Light pollution can disorient birds, causing them to be drawn off course and placed at higher risk of colliding with buildings.

3). GO NATIVE IN YOUR YARD.

Gardening and landscaping with native plants provides healthy habitat for migrating birds to use as resting and refueling stops. Native trees are especially important shelter and food sources for birds.



2). KEEP YOUR CATS INDOORS.

Outdoor cats kill millions of birds and small mammals every year. Hunting might be a natural instinct for them, but they aren't native predators here in Georgia.



4). STEP AWAY FROM THE BUG SPRAY AND OTHER PESTICIDES!

Those bugs are gourmet bird food and we all know good food can make or break a road-trip!

What about that Cape May warbler that might have flown over your house last April? He's finishing up his winter stay in the Caribbean, enjoying the tropical flowers and insects. In a few weeks, he might flyover again on his way to a spruce-fir forest somewhere in Canada. But if you are lucky and he decides to make a pit-stop, you could catch a glimpse of him feeding in the tree tops of your favorite Athens park one morning in late April.

Want to try spying on some spring migrants this year, but not sure where to start? The Oconee Rivers Audubon Chapter leads Bird Walks throughout April and May. Check out their schedule [here!](#)

Need to stock up your bird buffet with some native plants, shrubs and trees? There are several plant sales happening in April and May that will have plenty of native choices. Check out our events section to see which one might work best for your gardening schedule.