

Mighty Migrators



Objectives

Students will explore the migration strategies of various animals, comparing the advantages and disadvantages of each.

Materials

- paper
- pen/pencil
- access to library or internet

Background

From lightweight insects to ten-ton whales, many animals use migration as a survival strategy. Animals may be motivated to move for many reasons: escaping cold weather, finding better food sources, finding better breeding habitat to promote survival of young, and/or escaping predators. Animals appear to migrate more often in temperate climates (temperature differences between seasons) than in tropical climates (temperature remains fairly constant all year long). Here are just a few animals that migrate: caribou, Monarch butterfly, arctic tern, Canada goose, humpback whale, gray whale, Pacific salmon, and wildebeast.

Action

1. Begin a class discussion by asking students to name animals that they think migrate. Make a list on the board. What makes this yearly travel so advantageous? What hazards do these animals face?
2. Divide the class into cooperative learning groups of five or less. Ask each group to pick one or two animals from the board.
3. Allow time for students to research their animals. Information on each animal should cover a picture of the animal, its common name and scientific name, general size, winter location, summer location, distance traveled, general diet, predators, and, if possible, a map showing migration pattern. Presentations may be a written or poster board report. If resources are available, consider video or computer presentations too.
4. Student groups may then present animal information to class. Compare and contrast animals as they are presented. List animals on board with columns for “distance traveled” “to _____ from _____” “time of year” and “unique facts”.
5. After the presentations, ask students to evaluate information. Are there some common trends (animals moving from cold weather to warm)? Some unique situations? (For example, arctic terns migrate from pole to pole and never experience a winter