



Bird Flyways

Ever notice that some birds seem to always be around all year long, yet some birds are only in our neighborhood at certain times of the year? Do you ever get a feeling that some birds are just passing through? Well, many birds migrate, going north or south with the change of the seasons. Even better, these birds use special aerial highways called flyways, which they use to travel north or south.

This Spring, we were lucky to see many birds that we normally do not get to see in our neighborhoods. This year's Spring was colder than usual and the caterpillars that feed on the treetops were not numerous. The migratory birds that usually only feed on these caterpillars so high up had to come down to our yard level to find the energy they needed to continue their long journey. If you were lucky enough to see a Scarlet Tanager, now you know why.

Waterfowl, like ducks and geese, follow ancient flyways from their breeding grounds to wintering areas, an epic journey that has amazed mankind for millennia. Each fall, millions of waterfowl migrate south to warmer regions in search of food and habitat. We don't know for certain how ducks and geese navigate during migration, but scientists believe the birds take cues from the position of the sun, moon, and stars in the sky; geographic landmarks like rivers and mountains; and magnetic fields invisible to the human eye. Scientific studies show most birds eat and rest by day and travel by night. Many more birds other than waterfowl migrate and use these flyways.

Do you leave your outside house lights on all night? Studies show that leaving these bright lights on all night may interfere with bird navigation. Towns and cities are changing streetlights from the old super bright fixtures to newer fixtures that focus the light downward where we need it for safety.

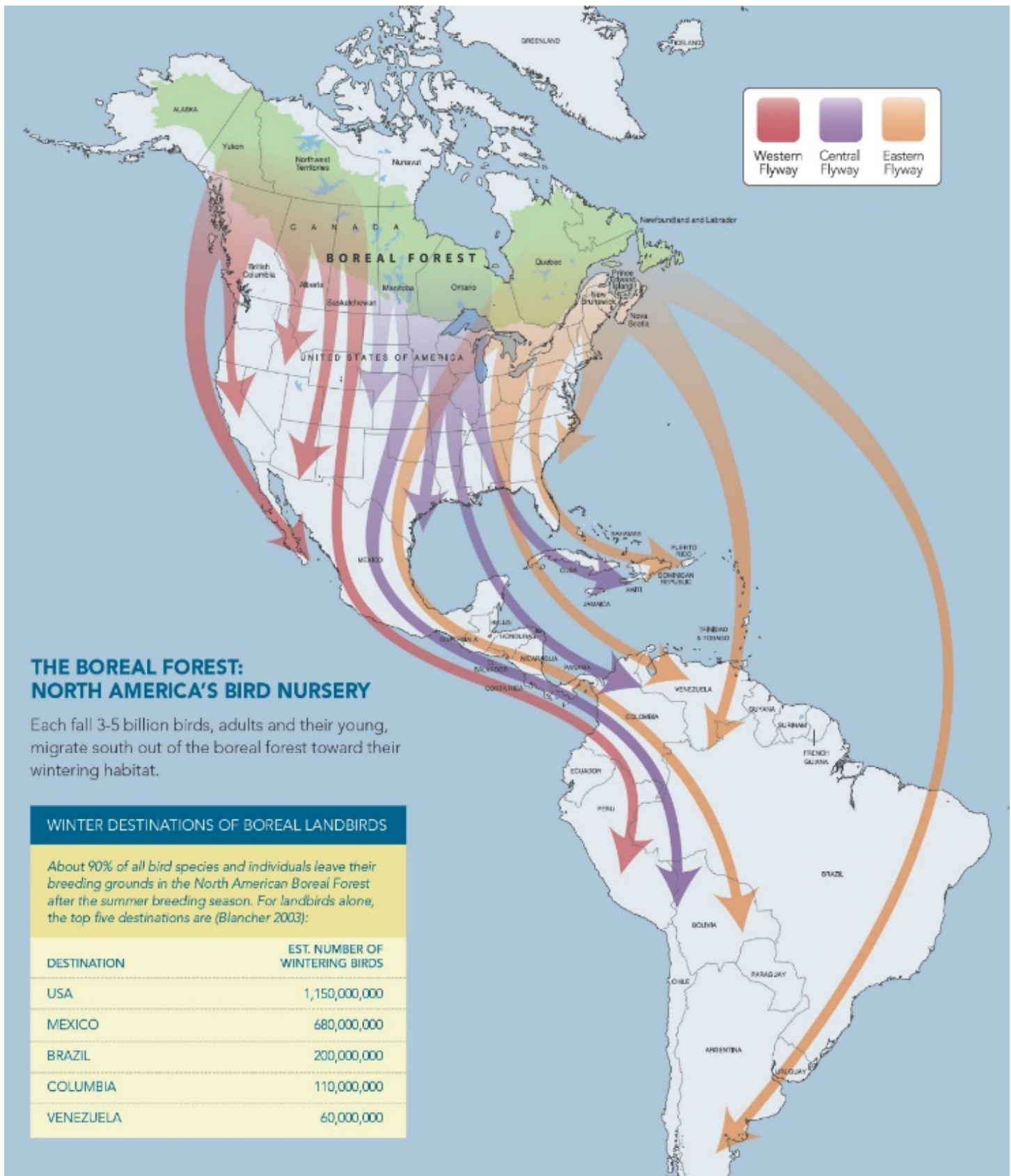
Would it be better to have more trees in our yards, communities, and cities to help these birds be able to find food on their way?

Why do you think these migratory birds travel so far and so often? **Food, habitat, reproduction, warmth.**

Do the same animals live all over our country or just in specific areas? **Some local, regional, continental.**

Is there a special bird you have noticed that is only in your neighborhood for a short amount of time?

Look at the map on the next page and give your thoughts. **Have your Scout discuss this map.**



Did any Scout notice this map only shows one direction? So, what season is changing up north that makes the birds want to fly south? (“**Fall into Winter**”) What season is starting in the south? (“**Spring into Summer**”)

Next time you see a bird flying north or south, remember they are on a mission. A mission of survival.