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## Habitat and Hospitality:

# Telling Migration Stories of Butterflies, Birds, and Us

### Introduction

Migration stories—of cultures, people, and animals, particularly butterflies and birds—are emerging as an effective tool for helping people relate to, understand, and take action on climate change. They are powerful because as stories, they incorporate climate change into our shared narratives, which are based on values and worldviews that shape our interpretations of the world. Their power is further strengthened through the focus on migration—a theme that has been central to all human experience. We have all migrated, whether across long distances, from neighborhood to neighborhood, across the street, or just into new situations, as when we go to a new school or a new job.

Wild animals migrate, too. Many of us have seen films of the great seasonal migrations of zebras, wildebeests, and other large mammals in Africa. In North America, we have the amazing story of the Monarch butterfly migrating between the mountains in Mexico and the fields of Canada, and we can see this migration happening every year in much of the United States. These animals travel long distances to make use of resources that are available in different places during different seasons. As the climate changes, animals are migrating to try to find the resources and climate conditions they need to survive.

We see this happening all over the world. Songbirds are flying north earlier in spring—many of them arriving in their summer ranges two weeks earlier than they used to arrive. Red foxes are expanding their ranges northward towards the North Pole. And people are migrating because of climate change, too. They're being called climate refugees because they are forced to leave their homes as the climate rapidly changes and creates hazardous or unlivable conditions. In Alaska, tribal councils are working to relocate entire villages that are sinking as permafrost melts or literally losing ground to erosion. In coastal areas from Louisiana to the Maldives, residents are losing their homes as water levels rise and severe storms cause more destruction. In arid regions in Africa and California, farmers struggle to stay and continue growing food when water supplies evaporate because of climate change.

**Objective:** Connect human and animal migration stories to help communities relate to climate action and develop create climate action strategies  
**Audience:** Middle school and up  
**Materials:** Depending on workshop, poem copies and worksheet (included), pencils, name table-tents, a big post-it pad, markers, 6-10 objects, a microphone and digital recorder  
**Time Needed:** 1.5-2 hours per workshop.

Telling and connecting human migration stories to the migration stories of animals helps people better understand and relate to climate change and its effects. This activity also provides impetus for taking climate action in creative ways that link community concerns to climate change mitigation and adaptation.

## About this Tool

This tool has three parts:

- Part 1: Examples of migration story programs developed by organizations in the Midwest, with resource links for learning more. These programs are connecting human, butterfly, and bird migration stories to spur community-based climate action—and advance other social change goals at the same time.
- Part 2: Some ideas for developing your own migration story activities or programs.
- Part 3: An appendix with two Migration Story Workshop Guides.

You can build on these materials to develop your own migration story activities or programs tailored to the cultures and concerns of the populations you work with.

## Helpful Links

- Climate Change Tree Atlas: <http://www.fs.fed.us/nrs/atlas/>
- Trees on the Move: [http://changingclimate.osu.edu/assets/docs/2012edu\\_CurriculaTreesV6.pdf](http://changingclimate.osu.edu/assets/docs/2012edu_CurriculaTreesV6.pdf)
- Project BudBurst: <http://budburst.org/>
- *Climate Refugees* documentary (available on amazon.com for instant streaming) [https://www.amazon.com/Climate-Refugees-Lester-Brown/dp/B0089PE6GC/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1472468074&sr=8-1&keywords=climate+refugees](https://www.amazon.com/Climate-Refugees-Lester-Brown/dp/B0089PE6GC/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1472468074&sr=8-1&keywords=climate+refugees)
- George Marshall, *Don't Even Think About It: Why Our Brains Are Wired to Ignore Climate Change* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014). Available on amazon.com at [https://www.amazon.com/Dont-Even-Think-About-Climate/dp/163286102X/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1472468112&sr=8-1&keywords=don%27t+even+think+about+it](https://www.amazon.com/Dont-Even-Think-About-Climate/dp/163286102X/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&qid=1472468112&sr=8-1&keywords=don%27t+even+think+about+it) —also, see Marshall talking about his book at a Harvard book store on this youtube video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RelADP17zK8>

### Plants Migrate, Too!

This tool focuses on animals and people, but even plants are migrating to try to find the resources and climate conditions they need to survive. While individual plants don't move—they can't run in big herds like zebras or fly like Monarchs—they can shift their ranges over the course of several generations. They do this by spreading seeds; the seeds that find favorable conditions will survive and perhaps reproduce, expanding the territory of the plant species.

There is evidence from around the world that plants are migrating in response to changes in the climate. Some plants are moving away from the equator (further north in the Northern Hemisphere and further south in the Southern Hemisphere); other plants are moving to higher elevations, for example, moving up a mountainside. Plants don't often migrate quickly, since it takes generations, and scientists are concerned that some species may not be able to move to suitable places as the climate changes more rapidly than it has in the past.

Learn more about where trees may move in response to climate change by using the [Climate Change Tree Atlas](#). Educators can use resources from Ohio Sea Grant to explore the shifting ranges of maples and buckeyes using the "[Trees on the Move](#)" four-lesson guide. If you focus on plant