

ATLANTIC FLYWAY

Each spring and fall, hundreds of species of birds embark on long migrations, using a route known as the Atlantic Flyway. Birds leave their tropical wintering grounds each spring and head north, as far as the Arctic, to take advantage of abundant food and nesting sites, both essential elements for breeding success. As fall approaches, these same birds and their newly hatched young reverse direction to escape diminishing food supplies (insects and plants) and return to Central and South America.

Migration is one of the great bird mysteries that we are still learning about today. It is thought to have evolved over thousands of years and navigation cues come from a variety of sources including the sun, stars, landmarks, and earth's magnetic field. Many birds travel non-stop for hundreds or even thousands of miles during their migration; the ability to land on an island like Prudence where they can safely rest and re-fuel is essential to their survival. Some of the most vibrantly colored songbirds like warblers, tanagers, and orioles will end their spring migration journey right here on Prudence, spending the summer raising multiple clutches of young birds.



■ Prudence Island, RI



The Red Knot (*Calidris canutus*), a robin-sized bird weighing less than a cup of coffee, has one of the longest known migrations in the animal kingdom: more than 9,000 miles each spring from South America to the Arctic, and then back again in the fall. One record-breaking bird was recorded flying 5,000 miles over six days on a non-stop flight!