

Great Migrations

Animal migration, however it is defined, is far more than just the movement of animals. It can loosely be described as travel that takes place at regular intervals - often in an annual cycle - that may involve many members of a species, and is rewarded only after a long journey. It suggests inherited instinct. The biologist Hugh Dingle has identified five characteristics that apply, in varying degrees and combinations, to all migrations. They are prolonged movements that carry animals outside familiar habitats; they tend to be linear, not zigzaggy; they involve special behaviours concerning preparation (such as overfeeding) and arrival; they demand special allocations of energy. And one more: migrating animals maintain an intense attentiveness to the greater mission, which keeps them undistracted by temptations and undeterred by challenges that would turn other animals aside.

An arctic tern, on its 20,000 km flight from the extreme south of South America to the Arctic circle, will take no notice of a nice smelly herring offered from a bird-watcher's boat along the way. While local gulls will dive voraciously for such handouts, the tern flies on. Why? The arctic tern resists distraction because it is driven at that moment by an instinctive sense of something we humans find admirable: larger purpose. In other words, it is determined to reach its destination. The bird senses that it can eat, rest and mate later. Right now it is totally focused on the journey; its undivided intent is arrival.

Reaching some gravelly coastline in the Arctic, upon which other arctic terns have converged, will serve its larger purpose as shaped by evolution: finding a place, a time, and a set of circumstances in which it can successfully hatch and rear offspring.

But migration is a complex issue, and biologists define it differently, depending in part on what sorts of animals they study. Joe! Berger, of the University of Montana, who works on the American pronghorn and other large terrestrial mammals, prefers what he calls a simple, practical definition suited to his beasts: 'movements from a seasonal home area away to another home area and back again'. Generally the reason for such seasonal back-and-forth movement is to seek resources that aren't available within a single area year-round.

But daily vertical movements by zooplankton in the ocean - upward by night to seek food, downward by day to escape predators - can also be considered migration. So can the movement of aphids when, having depleted the young leaves on one food plant, their offspring then fly onward to a different host plant, with no one aphid ever returning to where it started.

Dingle is an evolutionary biologist who studies insects. His definition is more intricate than Berger's, citing those five features that distinguish migration from other forms of movement. They allow for the fact that, for example, aphids will become sensitive to blue light (from the sky) when it's time for takeoff on their big journey, and sensitive to yellow light (reflected from tender young leaves) when it's appropriate to land. Birds will fatten themselves with heavy feeding in advance of a long migrational flight. The value of his definition, Dingle argues, is that it focuses attention on what the phenomenon of wildebeest migration shares with the phenomenon of the aphids, and therefore helps guide researchers towards understanding how evolution has produced them all.

Human behaviour, however, is having a detrimental impact on animal migration.

The pronghorn, which resembles an antelope, though they are unrelated, is the fastest land mammal of the New World. One population, which spends the summer in the mountainous Grand Teton National Park of the western USA, follows a narrow route from its summer range in the mountains, across a river, and down onto the plains. Here they wait out the frozen months, feeding mainly on sagebrush blown clear of snow. These pronghorn are notable for the invariance of their migration route and the severity of its constriction at three bottlenecks. If they can't pass through each of the three during their spring migration, they can't reach their bounty of summer grazing; if they can't pass through again in autumn, escaping south onto those windblown plains, they are likely to die trying to overwinter in the deep snow. Pronghorn, dependent on distance vision and speed to keep safe from predators, traverse high, open shoulders of land, where they can see and run. At one of the bottlenecks, forested hills rise to form a V, leaving a corridor of open ground only about 150 metres wide, filled with private homes. Increasing development is leading toward a crisis for the pronghorn, threatening to choke off their passageway.

Conservation scientists, along with some biologists and land managers within the USA's National Park Service and other agencies, are now working to preserve migrational behaviours, not just species and habitats. A National Forest has recognised the path of the pronghorn, much of which passes across its land, as a protected migration corridor. But neither the Forest Service nor the Park Service can control what happens on private land at a bottleneck. And with certain other migrating species, the challenge is complicated further - by vastly greater distances traversed, more jurisdictions, more borders, more dangers along the way. We will require wisdom and resoluteness to ensure that migrating species can continue their journeying a while longer.

Questions 1-5

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage?

In boxes **1-5** on your answer sheet, write

TRUE if the statement agrees with the information

FALSE if the statement contradicts the information

NOT GIVEN if there is no information on this

- 1..... Local gulls and migrating arctic terns behave in the same way when offered food.
- 2..... Experts' definitions of migration tend to vary according to their area of study.
- 3..... Very few experts agree that the movement of aphids can be considered migration.
- 4..... Aphids' journeys are affected by changes in the light that they perceive.
- 5..... Dingles aim is to distinguish between the migratory behaviours of different species.

Questions 6-9

Complete each sentence with the correct ending, **A-G**, below.

Write the correct letter, **A-G**, in boxes **6-9** on your answer sheet

- A** be discouraged by difficulties.
- B** travel on open land where they can look out for predators.
- C** eat more than they need for immediate purposes.
- D** be repeated daily. '
- E** ignore distractions.
- F** be governed by the availability of water.
- G** follow a straight line.

- 6 According to Dingle, migratory routes are likely to **6**.....
- 7 To prepare for migration, animals are likely to **7**.....
- 8 During migration, animals are unlikely to **8**.....
- 9 Arctic terns illustrate migrating animals' ability to **9**.....

Questions 10-13

Complete the summary below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

Write your answers in boxes **10-13** on your answer sheet.

The migration of pronghorns

Pronghorns rely on their eyesight and **10**..... to avoid predators. One particular population's summer habitat is a national park, and their winter home is on the **11**..... where they go to avoid the danger presented by the snow at that time of year

However, their route between these two areas contains three **12**.....

One problem is the construction of new homes in a narrow **13**..... of land on the pronghorns' route.

Solution:

- | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|
| 1. FALSE | 8. A |
| 2. TRUE | 9. E |
| 3. NOT GIVEN | 10. speed |
| 4. TRUE | 11. plains |
| 5. FALSE | 12. bottlenecks |
| 6. G | 13. corridor/passageway |
| 7. C | |