

# Get Wild: Celebrating World Migratory Bird Day

*Susan Bonfield*



**Wilson's warblers are arriving in Summit County from wintering sites in Mexico and Central America. You can find them in willow habitats, where they nest and forage for insects.**

*David A. Hofmann/Get Wild*

As Colorado welcomes the onset of spring, a spectacular event is taking place in our skies. Millions of birds are soaring across the state. Some are en route to nesting sites farther north, while others are returning to local habitats from our high peaks to the prairies. Estimates show that on Saturday, May 6, over 2 million birds crossed the state.

Many of these birds will have journeyed thousands of miles. The killdeer, known for its unmistakable vocalization, winters as far south as Colombia and breeds throughout the United States on its return. A striking migratory bird is the Wilson's warbler — the males of which are brilliant yellow from chin to belly and sport a small, black cap of feathers. Though Wilson's warblers breed across Canada, they are more particular in Colorado, and are often found nesting in wetland willows and along streams at higher elevations. We all await the arrival of broad-tailed hummingbirds, Summit County's tiniest migratory bird, weighing just less than a nickel. This species migrates between wintering sites in Mexico and Central America and nesting sites in the Western U.S.

As migratory birds begin to arrive in the High Country, it is critical to remember the obstacles they encounter on their journeys. A growing number of threats, from collisions with pane glass to free-roaming cats, puts their survival at risk as they navigate the airways and when they stop to rest and refuel. World Migratory Bird Day is Saturday, May 13, a global celebration of migratory birds, serves as a powerful reminder of the spectacular phenomenon of migration, while also encouraging people to take simple actions that can make a significant difference to the protection of these birds.

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In 2023, the World Migratory Bird Day conservation theme highlights the importance of water to migratory birds. The slogan is Water: sustaining bird life. Migratory birds rely on water and its associated habitats — lakes, rivers, streams and ponds — for nesting, drinking and even bathing. Yet, increasing human demand for water, along with climate change, pollution and other factors, are threatening these precious ecosystems.

Global headlines are sounding alarm: 35% of the world's wetlands, critical to migratory birds, have been lost in the last 50 years. Utah's Great Salt Lake, the largest saltwater lake in the Western Hemisphere, and used by more than a million shorebirds, is in danger of disappearing within five years. Climate change is depleting natural water systems, depriving migratory birds of vital stopover sites around the world. These sobering statistics go hand in hand with recent reports that reveal that 48% of bird species worldwide are undergoing population declines.

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By taking simple steps at home and in your community, we can work together to conserve water and preserve our earth's most precious resource. Choosing water-efficient grass species and low-water plants can reduce your water use by up to 60%. Turning off the faucet while brushing teeth, shaving or washing dishes, and limiting time in the shower can make a big difference in conserving water. Join us



this year and every year in taking action to promote the protection of water. For more information about World Migratory Bird Day and

to take part in an event near you, visit [MigratoryBirdDay.org](http://MigratoryBirdDay.org)



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