

Migrating geese sure sign that winter is on its way

By: Jerry Apps (found on internet)



You could usually hear them before you saw them. The Canada goose call is very distinctive, as are the Vs of them winging south each fall to return again in the spring. It's a sure sign of seasonal change – fall to winter, winter to spring, when the Canada geese are flying.

As a kid, on cool, clear fall days, I remember seeing long V's of Canada geese stretching from one horizon to another. Always curious, I did some checking as to why the Canada geese flew in long V's while other migrating song birds did not.

By following closely behind each other, the leading goose creates a slipstream, which helps pull the trailing birds forward. The lead goose also creates little pockets of spinning air, which helps provide lift. Of course, the first goose in line benefits not at all from this, and has to work much harder than those coming behind.

When the lead goose gets tired, it falls back and another takes its place, and the flock continues on, honking happily as they look forward to a warm winter in the south. Geese prefer flying when the wind is down—understandable. It takes a lot of energy when there is no wind. It takes much more if the flock has fly into a brisk wind.

On a windy day, the migrating flock will “layover” on an available body of water until the wind dies down. The pond at our farm is sometimes a layover place. One day I stopped by and saw the pond nearly filled with resting geese. Each talking in its own way—no doubt grumbling that they had to interrupt their travels because of the wind. Geese that migrate over our farm follow the same “flyway” year after year. The route is familiar to them and they don’t get lost in their migration.

THE OLD TIMER SAYS: Everything seems right with the world when I see a flock of migrating Canada Geese.

