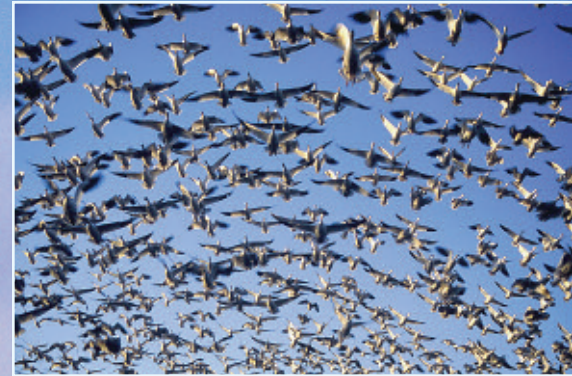


Make plans to stop by Dickson Mounds Museum to catch an exhibit on the migratory water birds of Illinois.



The annual spring and fall pilgrimage of migratory water birds along the Illinois River Valley is the subject of an exhibit at Dickson Mounds Museum.

Story By Julie Barr  
Photos By Michael Jeffords

**T**hey're heading back. Familiar V-formations of geese and nondescript, black clouds of songbirds fill the skies. Where have all these birds been and where are they going?

It's estimated some five hundred billion birds, comprising more than 9,000 species, inhabit the earth. Of them, 70 species of water birds make lengthy annual pilgrimages to Illinois each fall and spring, seeking places to rest, refuel and sometimes nest in the state's wetlands, including the habitat-rich Illinois River Valley.

With the exception of only a month or two

of decreased movement, bird migration never ends. One species may arrive in Illinois in mid-February, but another not until May. Similarly, fall departure may range from late July to late November.

This never-ending choreography of water bird migration is the subject of an exhibit at Dickson Mounds Museum, *Sky Dance: A Look at the Migratory Water Birds*

*Sky Dance: A Look at Migratory Water Birds of Illinois* will be on view through International Migratory Bird Week (May 9-15). Dickson Mounds Museum is located off Illinois Routes 78/97, 5 miles west of Havana and 5 miles east of Lewistown. The museum is free. Call (309) 547-3721 for program information.

The museum is adjacent to Emiquon National Wildlife Refuge and near Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, both offering outstanding bird-watching throughout the year. Dickson Mounds, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, The Nature Conservancy and the Emiquon Audubon Society have teamed up to offer a series of birding events in conjunction with the exhibition. Programs range from lectures on identifying birds and bird-watching field trips to bird films and a bird art and poetry contest. Further information about these programs can be obtained from the museum's website: [www.museum.state.il.us/ismsites/dickson](http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismsites/dickson).

of Illinois. The exhibition features photographs, maps, historic accounts and observations from more than 100 years of biological field work. Displays trace the history of birds, how their bodies are constructed for flight, and how they navigate using cues from magnetic receptors in their eyes and the locations of the sun, moon and constellations. Also on display are 100-plus bird specimens from the Illinois State Museum's Wade Bird Collection and selections from the collections of the Forbes Biological Research Station at Havana.

*Sky Dance: A Look at the Migratory Water Birds of Illinois* was inspired by the writings of conservationist Aldo Leopold and by the life's work of two distinguished Illinois ornithologists, Frank C. Bellrose and Steven P. Havera, both formerly of the Illinois Natural History Survey's Forbes Biological Research Station.

(Photo by Kelvin Sampson, Dickson Mounds Museum.)



Julie Barr is the public programs coordinator and principle educator at Dickson Mounds Museum. She develops, coordinates and presents a variety of interpretive programs on archaeology, Native American culture, natural history and folk culture.