



DEPARTMENT OF INLAND FISHERIES & WILDLIFE
WILDLIFE DIVISION
PENOBSCOT VALLEY REGIONAL OFFICE
73 COBB ROAD, ENFIELD, MAINE 04493
PHONE (207) 732 – 4132 FAX (207) 732 - 4405
Email : mark.caron@maine.gov

With the fall upon us once again, we begin to see changes in behavior or activity of our wildlife. One such example is our winged-wildlife, and in particular our waterfowl. A familiar sight and sound over our autumn skies are waterfowl and geese heading too many different destinations. Why do waterfowl migrate? The simple answer is survival. The last of their reasons for migrating is the impending cold temperatures. The primary reason is because of a lack of food due to the snow and ice that will cover or eliminate their food sources.

For the most part, waterfowl make extremely long flights. However, individuals of many species may only migrate as short a distance as possible to find open water and food. And even some of our local mallards as we know stay right here in the Lincoln area.



20,000 feet (3.78 miles). In general, the longer the flight the higher the altitude. It should be noted that yearly variations in both weather and food availability will affect these various migratory patterns.

Research that started in the 1930's has shown that waterfowl use four main migration corridors as they move south to their wintering grounds (or north in the spring). The flyways are the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central, and Pacific. The flyway boundaries are not always sharply defined and there is much overlapping for a wide variety of reasons including distance traveled, time of starting, speed of flight, and farming practices. However, for North America, these somewhat general flyway boundaries work well due to our coastline, mountain chains, and major river systems. Our Atlantic Flyway embraces several primary migration routes, and many more that are considered tributaries. These tributaries are important because they are also branches from primary routes in other flyways. Consider all of this the next time you look up to the skies and see a flock of our feathered friends heading for parts unknown (at least to us).



Mark A. Caron
Regional Wildlife Biologist