

# Press Release



CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION

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## ***Follow the Red Knot's and Bobolink's Flight Migration Through New Jersey in New Exhibit at the Newark Museum***



**Newark** - Get a close up look of New Jersey's ecosystems through the eyes of a migrating bird at *Skies Alive: Bird Migration in the Garden State*, a new interactive exhibit at The Newark Museum that opened on April 22 during the 100-Hour Centennial Celebration Marathon.

The fascinating new exhibit follows the Red Knot, the Bobolink and other migrating birds as they make their unbelievable trek north passing through New Jersey. The two birds are among 320 species and millions of birds that pass through New Jersey as part of their migration along the Atlantic Flyway navigational route.

*Skies Alive* is part of a partnership with the New Jersey Audubon Society and NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife - Endangered and Non-game Species Program, and shows visitors the state's diverse environments and why it is important to preserve these natural resources to ensure the survival of these transient and resident birds.

"New Jersey is a wonderful place to witness bird migration," said Dale Rosselet, vice president for education for the New Jersey Audubon Society Center for Research and Education in Cape May Courthouse. "April is also the perfect time to open an exhibit on the subject with so many birds migrating."

"Right now is the beginning of our spring migration and birds are starting to show up...ospreys and tree swallows," Rosselet said. "Every single day there is a new bird that shows up in the backyard, or on your way to work."

The 500-square-foot *Skies Alive* exhibit features four colorful habitat dioramas with corresponding taxidermy birds including the Red, Knot, Bobolink, Red-Headed Woodpecker and the American Bittern.

When visitors enter *Skies Alive*, they will be greeted by a short introductory video with commentary from environmentalist, researchers, and bird watchers on the issues covered by the exhibit. The Museum exhibit features a bird diversity wall with photography of Kevin Karlson and Lloyd Spitalnick, two well-known wildlife photographers, illustrating the varied species of migrant birds that traverse the state.

*“Skies Alive* is also very interactive,” Rosselet observed. “It includes both the information for visitors to view...facts and figures and maps and photographs to try to teach some of the concepts and there will also be some taxidermy birds to bring that dimensionality to the exhibit.”

*Skies Alive* will also give visitors a bird’s perspective of earth as well as the planet’s depleting natural resources through a simulated journey from the sky. The exhibit also looks at species diversity, conservation and flight and migration adaptations.

*Skies Alive* shares the story of the amazing Red Knot, the bird that flies 9,300 miles each way for its migration, making the trip along the South American eastern coast from Tierra del Fuego, South America to the Canadian Arctic, said Ismael Calderon, the Museum’s director of science, as well as the developer, creator and curator of *Skies Alive*.

“The birds are like marathon runners, fattening up and using all of its energy before it fattens up and refuels along the way,” Calderon said. “The bird also synchronizes its migration so it can stop along the Delaware Bay when the horseshoe crabs are laying eggs and feast on the eggs. The bird will soon be declared endangered because of the over harvesting of horseshoe crabs has left the bird with little to eat during in its migration,” he noted.

Rosselet said she and Calderon identified the Red Knot and a few other endangered bird species to be featured in the exhibit because of their interesting conservation stories. The exhibit, which is located in the Museum’s Prudential Gallery in the Victoria Hall of Science, also tells the story of the Bobolink, a grassland species bird that migrates 12,000 miles round trip from Brazil, Paraguay and northern Argentina to North America. The loss of farmlands and grasslands has resulted in the loss of the environment for the bird. The Bobolink nests on the ground and as a result, mowers used to harvest hay kill many.

The Bobolink is also one of the birds featured in a fun computer game that lets visitors play the part of a bird as it migrates from south to north. Kids will no doubt have fun and learn while they play this game, facing and handling the many dangers birds encounter during migration like bad weather, pollution or flying into a window. The game will also teach kids to identify birds by their behavior, silhouettes and bird songs.

Other exhibit highlights include a section focusing on the daytime migratory patterns of birds that will intrigue visitors with facts like seabirds can learn to identify odors like salt marshes and food sources to recognize locations. Another area examines the evolution of birds from their extinct relatives, the dinosaurs, and notes that many birds

today have hollow bones filled with air sacs that can help them fly. Visitors to *Skies Alive* will be amazed at how many threats birds face during their migration including household cats, electric power lines and glass windows.

The city of Newark has become a common stop for birds along their migration routes because it has several parks that are attractive to birds, including the Museum's own beautiful sculpture garden. "These are little green oasis in the middle of an urban area," Calderon said. "When birds migrate, they are drawn to places where they can rest and find food."

Rosselet said she hopes *Skies Alive* will open up people's eyes to the beauty of birds and the enjoyment of bird-watching as a hobby as well as increase people's concern for the environment.

The Newark Museum "is a collection-based Museum that cares about the issues in New Jersey," Calderon said. "We want to be able to shed light on some of the conservation issues that we need to be focusing on that are crucial to survival of environments that we depend on."

The exhibit suggests New Jerseyans take action and do what they can to help birds by making their backyards bird friendly and reducing their carbon footprints.

#### **ABOUT THE NEWARK MUSEUM**

The Newark Museum is located at 49 Washington Street in the Downtown/Arts District of Newark, New Jersey, just 3 blocks from NJPAC and 10 miles west of New York City. The Museum is open all year round: Wednesdays through Fridays, from Noon - 5 p.m.; Saturdays and Sundays, from 10 a.m. – 5 p.m., October 1 – June 30; and Saturdays and Sundays, from Noon – 5 p.m., July 1 – September 30. Suggested Museum admission: Adults, \$10.00; Children, Seniors and Students with valid I.D., \$6.00. Members and Newark residents are admitted free. The Museum Café is open for lunches Wednesday through Sunday. Convenient parking is available for a fee. For general information, call 973-596-6550 or visit our web site, <http://www.NewarkMuseum.org>. The Newark Museum, a not-for-profit museum of art, science and education, receives operating support from the City of Newark, the State of New Jersey, the New Jersey State Council on the Arts/Department of State—a partner agency of the National Endowment for the Arts, the New Jersey Cultural Trust, the Prudential Foundation, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, the Victoria Foundation, the Wallace Foundation, and other corporations, foundations and individuals. Funds for acquisitions and activities other than operations are provided by members and other contributors.

**The Newark Museum is just a few steps from the NJTransit Light Rail Washington Park Station. Direct connection with the Light Rail at the Broad Street Station and through Penn Station makes the Museum a convenient ride from all points in the region.**

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#### **For Images and More Information, Contact:**

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