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How climate change affects animal migration



This is not a word-for-word transcript.

Beth

Hello and welcome to 6 Minute English from BBC Learning English. I'm Beth.

Neil

And I'm Neil. You can find a transcript and worksheet for this podcast on our website bbclearningenglish.com.

Beth

So Neil, today we're talking about animal migration: that's the movement of animals from one place to another, usually because of the weather or temperature.

Neil

Yes. For example, wildebeest are famous for their migration. They travel around the Serengeti in Tanzania and the Maasai Mara in Kenya every year depending on the rain. It's often called The Great Migration.

Beth

Yes, and I have a question for you about this, Neil. How many animals are thought to take part in The Great Migration every year? Is it:

- a) 1 million
- b) 1.5 million
- c) 2.5 million

Neil

Well, I don't know... but I'm going to guess 2.5 million.

Beth

OK. I'll reveal the answer at the end of the programme. Now, wildebeest are not the only animals who travel large distances.

Neil

That's right. Many sharks also **migrate** – they move to a different place because of the weather or temperature.

Beth

Trisha Atwood researches sharks and their migration for Utah State University and explained more to BBC World Service programme, The Climate Question.

Trisha

Animals **migrate** for all types of reasons. So, some of them **migrate** for food resources, things like mating or for giving birth.

Neil

So, animals can **migrate** for food, mating and giving birth. Host of BBC World Service's The Climate Question, Sophie Eastaugh, wanted to know more.

Sophie

And **what kind of distances are we talking** with these migrations? Are they covering huge **swathes** of ocean?

Trisha

Some of these shark species can travel massive distances. We've seen great white sharks that have travelled from the coast off of Perth, Australia, all the way to South Africa.

Beth

Sophie asks, "**What kinds of distances are we talking** with these migrations?" This is an informal way to ask, "How far are the migrations?" We can rephrase lots of questions in this way. For example, you could ask "**What kind of price are we talking?**" to ask how much something costs.

Neil

Sophie goes on to ask whether sharks travel across huge **swathes** of ocean. **Swathes** of ocean means large areas of ocean.

Beth

Yes, and in fact, sharks do travel across large areas. For example, great white sharks can travel from Australia to South Africa. That is a long way to swim!

Neil

But, as climate change causes changes to the temperature of the ocean, it's changing the way that sharks **migrate**.

Beth

This is a problem; sharks scare away other creatures, such as sea turtles, and these creatures eat seagrass, which absorbs a lot of carbon from the atmosphere.

Neil

So, basically, when the sharks are around, there's more seagrass on the ocean floor and so more carbon is absorbed. So, sharks can actually help fight climate change.

Beth

Yes. In fact, lots of species that **migrate** are really important for fighting climate change. Let's hear more from BBC World Service programme, The Climate Question.

Sophie

Sharks aren't the only migratory animal that acts as a **secret weapon** against climate change.

Trisha

Research that we worked on shows that by just managing about 10 groups of animals we could be taking out or **sequestering** more CO₂ from the atmosphere by about six gigatonnes of carbon per year.

Sophie

So, **for perspective**, some experts say that we need to suck 10 gigatonnes of CO₂ a year out of the atmosphere to meet our climate goals.

Neil

Sophie says that many animals that **migrate**, like sharks, are a **secret weapon** against climate change. A **secret weapon** is something nobody knows about that will give you an advantage over a problem or enemy.

Beth

By protecting sharks and other animals that **migrate**, Trisha's research shows that we could be **sequestering** six gigatonnes of carbon dioxide, or CO₂, a year from the atmosphere. **Sequester** means remove and store the carbon, for example in plants like seagrass.

Neil

Six gigatonnes is a lot of carbon! Sophie says that, **for perspective**, it's about 60% of the amount of carbon dioxide that some scientists believe we need to remove from the atmosphere each year. We can use the phrase '**for perspective**' to explain the size or importance of something, particularly when it's difficult to imagine that thing.

Beth

Alongside sharks, another species that Trisha believes is important to helping remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere is the wildebeest.

Neil

Yes, and that reminds me of your question, Beth. You asked me how many animals take part in The Great Migration, and I think I went for option c) 2.5 million. Was I right?

Beth

You weren't, I'm afraid. The answer was b) 1.5 million, so still a lot of animals. OK. Let's recap the vocabulary we've learned, starting with **migrate**: move to a different place. For animals, this is usually because of the weather or temperature.

Neil

We can use the structure '**what kind of (something) are we talking?**' to rephrase a question more informally, particularly one about distance, cost or numbers. For example, "**What kind of distance are we talking?**"

Beth

Swathes means large areas of something.

Neil

A **secret weapon** is something nobody knows about that gives you an advantage over a problem or enemy.

Beth

If you **sequester** something, such as carbon dioxide, you remove it and store it.

Neil

And we can use the phrase '**for perspective**' to explain the size or importance of something, particularly if that thing is difficult to imagine.

Beth

Once again, our six minutes are up. Why not test what you've learned using the interactive quiz on our website? Bye for now!

Neil

Goodbye.

VOCABULARY

migrate

move to another place because of the weather or temperature

what kind of (something, e.g. price, distance) are we talking?

used to rephrase a question that starts with how much or how far

swathes

large areas of something

secret weapon

something nobody knows about that gives you an advantage over a problem or enemy

sequester

separate and store

for perspective

used to explain the size or importance of something, particularly when that thing is difficult to imagine

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