



SNR FACT SHEET

MIGRANT BIRDS RETURN

When?

From late September to October look out for birds returning from their breeding grounds in the Northern Hemisphere to the rich feeding grounds of the Knysna estuary.

Which birds?

Waders – e.g. Whimbrels, Greenshanks, Grey and Ringed Plovers and Curlew Sandpipers

Insect-eaters – e.g. Swallows



Whimbrels, Greenshanks and Curlew Sandpipers feeding

Why?

The waders breed in Siberia and Russia where food is abundant in the long daylight hours of the northern summer. Few large permanent predators can survive the harsh winters to threaten the young birds. As the days shorten and become colder and food becomes scarce – the birds fly south.

How?

Scientists believe that birds use the stars or sun to navigate, as well as geographical features like rivers or mountains, and are also guided by the earth's magnetic field.

Some fly at night as they can stop to eat during the day and avoid predators. Some eat more before migration and store a special high-energy fat in their bodies so they can fly for several weeks without eating.