



**GOING HOME,
THE MYSTERY OF ANIMAL MIGRATION**

Readers' Theater

CAST OF CHARACTERS

NARRATOR

LOGGERHEAD TURTLE

MONARCH BUTTERFLY

MANATEE

HUMMINGBIRD

PACIFIC SALMON

CANADA GOOSE

CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE

CARIBOU

ARCTIC TERN

EMPEROR PENGUIN



THE SCRIPT

NARRATOR: By land, sea and air, many animals migrate “home.”
Twice a year they make their way, sometimes over very long
distances. They have no maps. They may skip many meals. Why
do they do it, and how do they find their way?

ALL (except for Narrator)

Going home, going home,
We feel the urge to go.
It’s time for us to travel on,
It’s something we just *know*.

Many of us look for food,
Others find a mate.
And when the weather starts to change,
There is no time to wait.

LOGGERHEAD TURTLE:
Going home, going home,
Where I need to be.
Somehow I will paddle on,
Swimming endlessly.

From the ocean I will crawl,
Up onto the shore.
Laying eggs on a beach
Where I’ve been before.

NARRATOR:

*Loggerhead turtles hatch from eggs that the mother buries
on a sandy beach. They scurry into the ocean where they live
for many years. When the female is ready to lay eggs, she
usually swims back to the same beach where she was born.*

MONARCH BUTTERFLY:

Going home, going home,
Dancing in the sky.
Waking from our winter sleep,
It's time for us to fly.

We rested in our "family tree,"
Filling every space.
But now it's time to travel on
And find another place.

NARRATOR:

Monarch butterflies migrate south to keep warm when winter approaches. They rest closely together in a semi-dormant state, often on the very same trees their ancestors occupied the year before. In spring, they fly north.

MANATEE:

Going home, going home,
I can find my way.
Navigating toward the coast
Where I used to stay.

When it was cold I had to move.
I floated near the shore,
Until I found a warm lagoon
Where I could eat some more.

NARRATOR:

Manatees migrate as water temperatures change. If the water is too cold, they will die. They often follow the same routes that their parents did, chewing on vegetation along the way.

HUMMINGBIRD:

Going home, going home,
I feel the time is near.
I'm heading where I lay my eggs,
I do it every year.

I need to cross the wide blue sea
And then I'll eat my fill.
Rapidly I beat my wings
And use my slender bill.

NARRATOR:

Ruby-throated hummingbirds traveling between their winter and summer homes make an amazing non-stop crossing over the Gulf Mexico. When they reach land, they eagerly drink the sweet nectar from flowers for the energy they need to continue their journey.

PACIFIC SALMON:

Going home, going home,
Swimming wild and free,
To rivers that are cool and clear,
From the salty sea.

I leap! I splash! I charge upstream!
Swimming on and on.
I have to reach my place of birth—
It's where I go to spawn.

NARRATOR:

Pacific salmon lay eggs in fresh water streams. The tiny fish swim toward the salty ocean, where they live for a few years until fully grown. Then they find the same river, and battle their way upstream to their place of birth, to lay their eggs (spawn).

CANADA GOOSE:

Going home, going home,
Looking down below.
The season's here, the path is clear,
And we're all set to go.

Honking high in the sky
Flying in a "V."
We soar together in a flock,
Saving energy.

NARRATOR:

Canada geese fly together in a V formation which creates a current of air that makes it easier for them to fly. They "honk" loudly to each other—kind of like a buddy system. That way they keep track of each other without looking around.

CALIFORNIA GRAY WHALE:

Going home, going home,
Moving on our way,
Heading for some icy seas
From a nice warm bay.

Our babies swim beside us,
Staying close to shore,
Traveling up the coastline
Five thousand miles or more!

NARRATOR:

California gray whales spend the winter near California and northern Mexico. In spring they start the long journey to cold northern waters where there is plenty to eat. The mothers stay close to the coast to protect their babies from killer whales.

CARIBOU:

Going home, going home,
Listen to the sounds!
Our thundering herd is setting out
To our vast calving grounds.

The journey spans two thousand miles,
But we were born to run!
We're on the treeless tundra now
And feel the Arctic sun.

NARRATOR:

Caribou gather in huge herds in winter in evergreen forests, where there is some protection from the cold. In spring they move northward to the tundra to feed on lichens and other low-growing plants and to give birth to their young.

ARCTIC TERN:

Going home, going home,
I have the longest way.
I travel all around the globe
To see the light of day!

I'm always moving north and south.
I really love to fly.
I nest up in the Arctic,
And dive for food supply.

NARRATOR:

The Arctic tern is the world's champion migrator. It travels over 20,000 miles every year to live in sunshine. In June and July it enjoys almost constant sunshine in the Arctic summer; in December and January almost constant sunshine in the Antarctic summer.

EMPEROR PENGUIN:

Going home, going home,
I never use the sky.
I flap my wings in water—
And that is how I “fly!”

My mate will keep our baby warm
While I feed in the sea.
And then I’ll waddle miles on ice
To find my family.

NARRATOR:

Emperor penguins “fly” through the water, propelled by their flippers. They live mostly in water, but in winter migrate inland onto ice, where the female lays a single egg. Then she goes back to the ocean to feed, while the egg is kept warm by the male.

ALL (except for Narrator)

Going home, going home,
By land, by sky, by sea.
Our journey back from “here” to “there”
Is still a mystery.

We *have* to move from place to place—
You know the reasons now.
Our genius is to know the way,
And yours to wonder, “HOW”?

ALL: The end.

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