



# A Year of Falmouth Birds

A look at local birds throughout the year!

# Falmouth Birds!

- Many thanks to the Quissett Harbor Preservation Trust for invitation to share with all of you
- The Wheeler Lecture has a long history of bringing
- Laura Morse, board member and friend
- Chip Morse, fmr QHPT board chair, friend, mentor
- Friends: Molly & Charles; Peg & Tim
- My wife, Nancy, full support and encouragement



# Quissett Harbor

- One of the nicest harbors in the NE U.S.
- QHPT has done an amazing job over past 20 years
- Excellent leadership & dedicated board: Dick & John
- Extraordinary support and involvement from many
- One of most popular scenic locations on the Cape
- We are all blessed to be part of the success of QHPT

# The Enterprise: Falmouth Birds!

- Thanks to Bill Hough, Editor & Publisher
- Falmouth Enterprise: award winning, 4<sup>th</sup> generation
- Birder's Corner every Friday
- Started with Snowy Owl photo
- Weekly offering in gratitude for beauty & grace of God's winged creatures



## *Birder's Corner*



CRAIG GIBSON

The common tern is seen all along the coast in Falmouth in late summer. They are busy feeding their young and preparing for southern migration. This medium-sized tern has gray upperparts, pale gray underparts, black cap and nape, black-tipped red bill, and red feet. They dive for small fish in both salt and fresh water. This common tern was recently seen in flight over Buzzards Bay. Go to [www.falmouthbirds.com](http://www.falmouthbirds.com) for more information.



# Local Conservation Groups!

- The 300 Committee: promoting open space and birds
- A Land Trust dedicated to protecting/preserving
- Amazing conservation work in Falmouth
- Land under protection: 1985, now 2,500+
- Outdoor recreation huge part of life in Falmouth
- Year of Falmouth Birds book
- Monthly Nature Calendar



# A YEAR OF FALMOUTH BIRDS

PRESENTED BY THE 300 COMMITTEE LAND TRUST





# September

September in Falmouth is a golden time, with the lingering warmth and lowering light angle; it is a great time to go for a walk after the throngs of summer have left. Consider walking around Long Pond\*, or to the marsh overlooks at Sea Farms\*. Here are some thoughts about what to expect in September:



**Poison Ivy** “Leaves of three, leave it be.” and **Virginia Creeper** vines turn red.

**Virgin’s Bower Clematis** blooms, covering its vines with five-petaled white flowers. The distinctive feathery seed heads persist into fall.

The **ocean water is warm** enough to support hurricanes, and the warm inshore waters gives us back the warmth we missed in the spring.

**Birds from the north** are to be found in thickets all over town. Look for them around the edges of Peterson Farm\* and along the Bike Path, but they can show up anywhere, especially after a north wind.

The **equinox** is around the 21<sup>st</sup>. Daylight and dark are of equal length, 12 hours—presaging the shorter days and longer hours of darkness ahead.

**Wild grapes** ripen. You often can smell the spicy, grapey fragrance before you spot them. Look for Catbirds, Cardinals and Robins feeding on grapes and other wild fruits.

Red hues dominate the wet woods and pond edges as **Tupelo and Red Maple** reach their peak of color ahead of the golden or russet oaks and hickories.

**Terns** have mostly left Falmouth by late summer, though a few return from their gatherings on the Lower Cape to fish. Now they leave the Cape entirely, not to return until April.

**Green Darner dragonflies** migrate through our area in late summer and can often be seen flying low above grasslands, especially near water.



*Greater Yellowlegs. Photo by Craig Gibson  
Calendar by Beth Schwarzman*

**Monarch butterflies** are common in gardens and on blooming asters as they pass though on their way south. These are the children and grandchildren of the ones we saw in June.

**Acorns and hickory nuts** ripen; squirrels collect them and store them for winter, often by burying them in the soil. Those that are forgotten may sprout next year, starting new trees.

**Salt marshes** turn golden as the grasses set seed and begin to die.

Flocks of **Goldfinches** feed on the seeds of Birch trees and tall seed-bearing plants like **Evening Primrose** in unmowed meadows.

\*Trail maps at [www.300committee.org](http://www.300committee.org)

## Preserving Open Space for Falmouth

157 Locust Street • Falmouth, MA • 02540-2658 • Phone 508-540-0876 • [www.300committee.org](http://www.300committee.org)



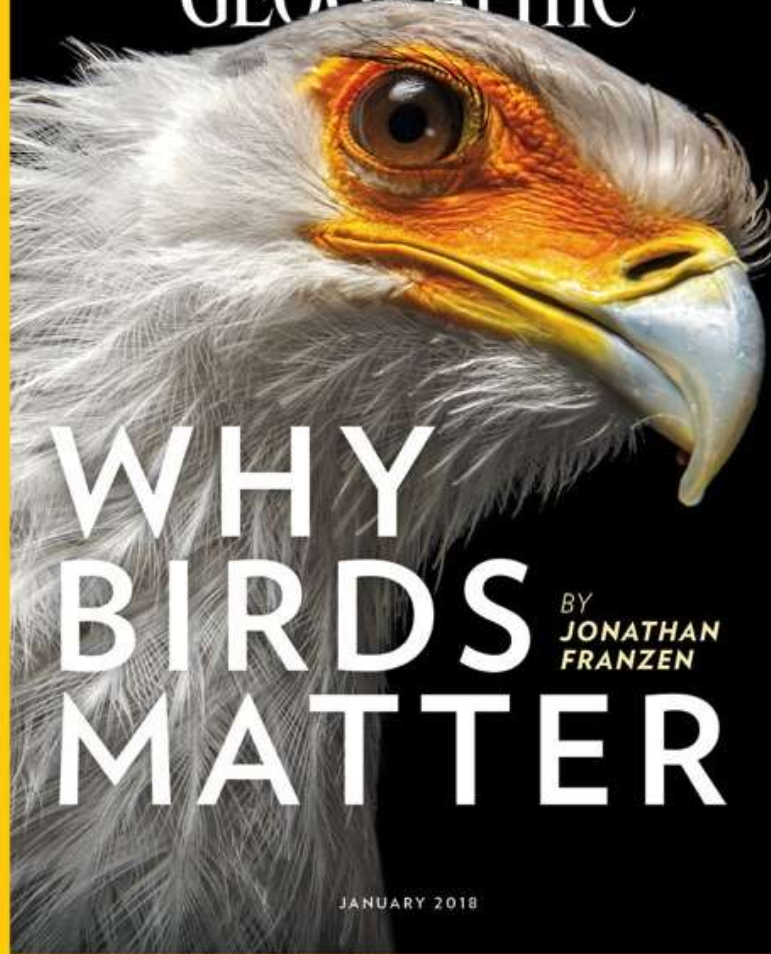


THE ARCTIC'S  
LAST SEA ICE

SCIENCE OF  
GOOD & EVIL

THE HEALING  
OF COLOMBIA

# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC



# WHY BIRDS MATTER

BY  
JONATHAN  
FRANZEN

JANUARY 2018

# Why Birds Matter!

- Jan. 2018 National Geographic Cover Article
- WHY BIRDS MATTER
- Launchpad for 12 month exploration
- Featured birds on cover more than other creatures
- At least 30X versus next closest species
- Why? Our best connection to the natural world!!



# Why Birds Matter!

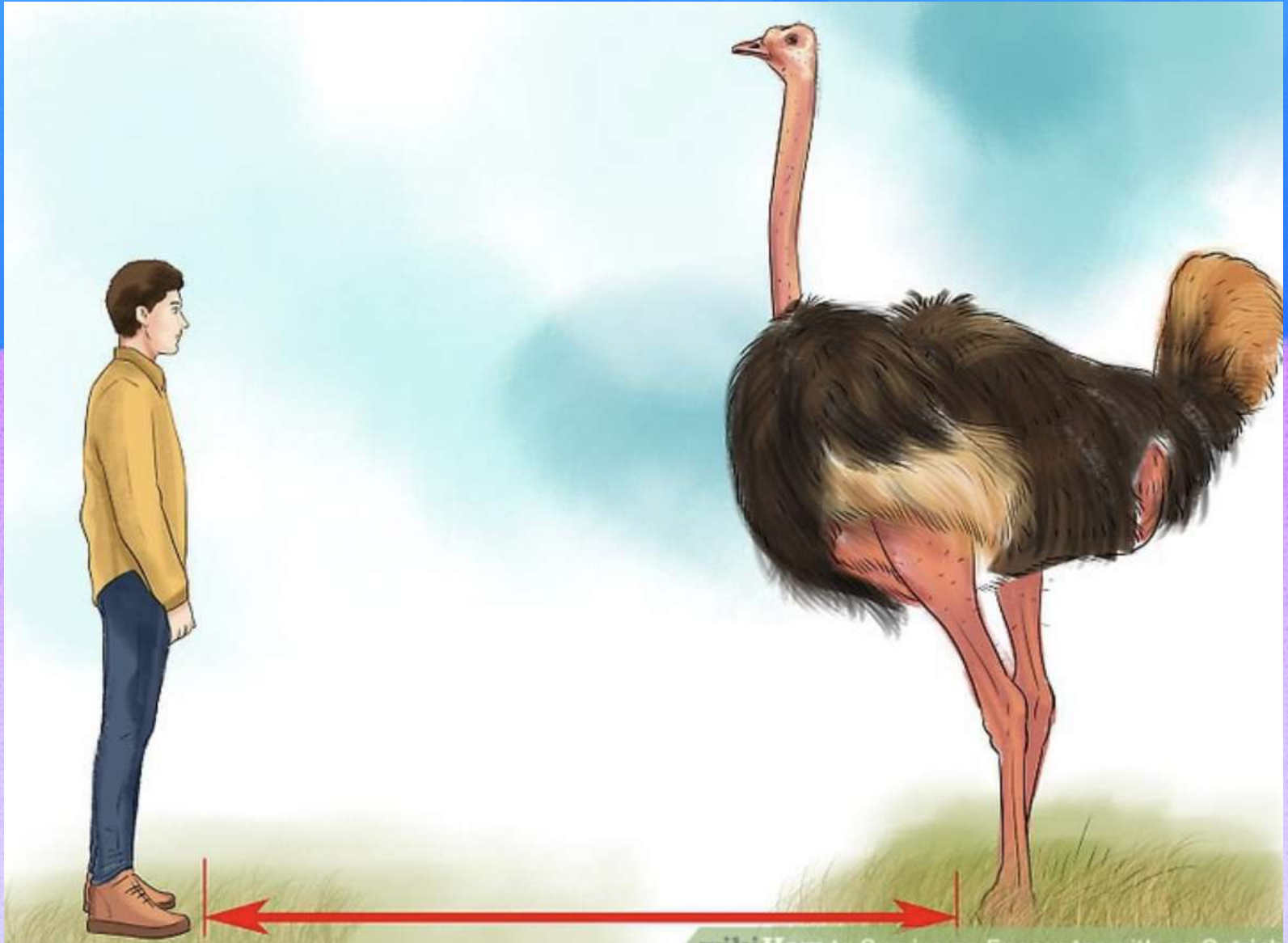
- WHY BIRDS MATTER!
- Essay by best selling author: Jonathan Franzen
- “It’s what they do for our souls!”
- Things with feathers in every corner of the globe!
- Most widely distributed of visible life forms

# Birds: Diversity of Forms



# Diversity

- Over 10,000 bird species around the world
- Spectacular diversity of forms
- From Ostrich at 9 feet - Bee Hummingbird at 2.2"
- Bills can be massive or tiny
- Plumage brightly colored or super dull
- Infinite shades of brown!





# Birds: Diverse Behavior

# Behavior

- No less diverse in terms of behavior
- Highly social to anti-social or secretive
- Friendly birds.....
- Large flocks....winter crow roosts
- Arctic Terns: R/T breeding grounds 44k mi GL/AN
- Albatross...10 foot wingspan....500 mile cruise
- Peregrine Falcon in a diving stoop at 240 MPH





# Chickadees:

Will eat seeds out of hand



# Fish Crows in flight

Staging late afternoon in large numbers along Surf Drive prior to overnight flight to winter roost on Martha's Vineyard!





# Peregrine Falcon

While in a downward stoop, may reach speeds in excess of 240 MPH!

# Behavior

- More similar to us than other mammals
- Build intricate homes
- Raise and care for families
- Long winter vacations to warm places
- Some solve puzzles and like to play









# Behavior

- Songs with which birds, like us, fill the world
- Chickadee: warning calls
- Osprey: series of loud sharp whistles
- Baltimore Oriole: series of clear whistles
- Laughing Gull: harsh nasal laughing call
- Common Loon: yodeling call that changes in pitch

# Birds: The One Thing



# Birds: The One Thing

- Birds do one thing, we all wish we could do: FLY!
- Eagles effortlessly ride thermals
- Hummingbirds pause dead stop in midair
- Quail burst into flight like a rocket launcher
- Young albatrosses spend 10 yrs. roving open ocean
- Flight paths of birds like 100 billion filaments











# Mastery of Environment

# Environment

- One critical ability humans have, birds don't:
- Mastery of their environment
- Birds can't protect wetlands
- Manage a fishery
- Air condition their nests
- Only have instinct and physical abilities
- Served them well: 150 million years longer humans





# Great Sippewissett Marsh

140 wetland acres protected by the Town of Falmouth, Salt Pond Areas  
Bird Sanctuaries, Inc. and the Mass. Audubon Society

# What Do Birds Indicate?



# Birds as Indicators

- Last best connection to natural world
- Most vivid & widespread representatives of earlier life before people arrived
- Radical otherness of birds integral to their beauty and their value
- Always among us but never of us
- Reminder that we're NOT the measure of all things!

## Northward Expansion of Blue Grosbeaks into Massachusetts

Christopher Neill



*Male Blue Grosbeak at the Crane Wildlife Management Area, June 3, 2017. Photograph by Craig Gibson.*

On July 18, 2017 Nate Marchessault and I found and photographed the nest of a Blue Grosbeak (*Passerina caerulea*) with four large young at the Frances Crane Wildlife Management Area (WMA) in Falmouth, Massachusetts. Five days later, Nate and Alan Kneidel photographed a fledged bird in the shrub-filled kettle hole near the nest. These observations for the first time documented successful breeding of Blue Grosbeaks in Massachusetts (Marchessault 2017).

Successful breeding by Blue Grosbeaks in Massachusetts is not by itself surprising. A nesting attempt was documented in 2016 at the Cumberland Farms Important Bird Area in the towns of Middleborough and Halifax. Also, Blue Grosbeak is one of a growing list of bird species with southerly distributions that are expanding northward in the eastern U.S., including into Massachusetts. The accompanying photo shows a Blue Grosbeak at the Crane WMA in the summer of 2017.

What is important, however, was that the 2017 successful nesting occurred at a site that the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) actively manages for sandplain grassland and shrubland habitat. The successful Blue Grosbeak nest was in the middle of a 48-acre area that DFW cleared in 2014 to expand grassland habitat. DFW cleared an additional 148 acres in 2015, and the Crane WMA now contains about 400 acres of unfragmented grassland habitat (Buelow 2017).





# Bird Migration

# How Birds Migrate

- Billions of birds migrate annually
- Crossing oceans, deserts, mountains, hemispheres
- In search of better weather and food
- Roughly half of all species migrate
- May last several months; time to rest/refuel

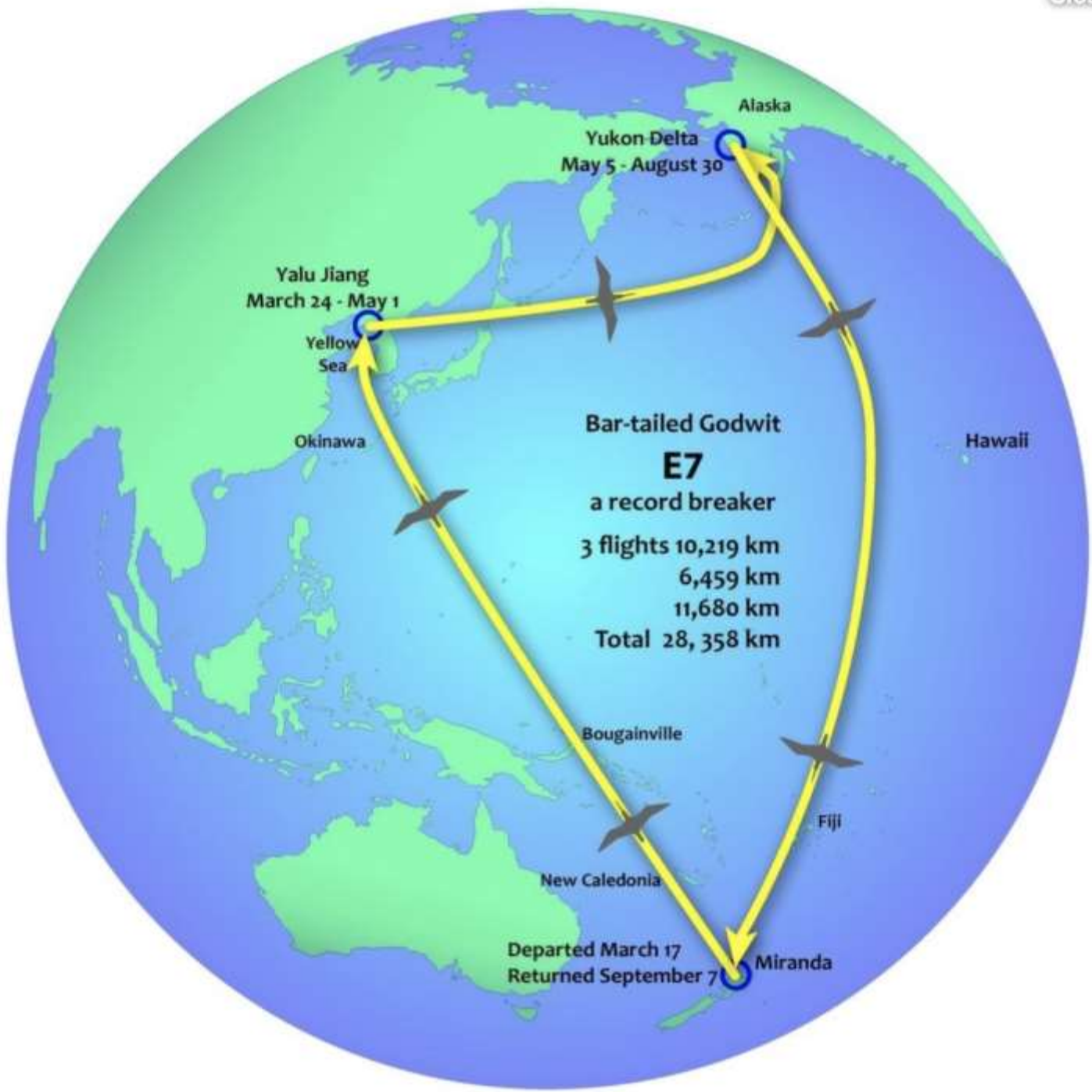
# Navigating by Nature

- Migration: length & timing vary greatly
- Requires energy reserves & navigational abilities
- Migratory patterns often ingrained
- Triggered by seasonal shifts day length, temp, food



# Bird Migration

- Migration of birds a source of wonder for centuries
- New scientific findings helping to demystify
- Adding to our appreciation of incredible feats
- Human activity is disrupting these journeys
- 2007 scientists determined route of BT Godwits
- E7 Aug. 2007, from Alaska/Hawaii/Fiji/NZ
- 8 days, 8 nights, 7150 miles; longest ever recorded!





# Bird Migration

- Big progress in ability to track bird migrations
- Aristotle believed birds hibernated or transformed
- English minister theorized in the 17<sup>th</sup> century that birds flew to the moon
- In 1822, German hunter shot stork with arrow impaled in neck; from central Africa!
- In 1906, leg rings White Storks – sub-Saharan Africa

# Bird Migration

- Two centuries later, much has been learned
- Nearly half of known bird species migratory
- No matter distance, escape conditions that threaten their survival
- Both escaping and then returning
- Migration routes form over thousands of years
- In genes or learn how? Field still in infancy



# Bird Migration

- What triggers: day length, temps, food supply
- How do they navigate: sun, stars, magnetic field
- Hazards: stress, food, bad weather, predators
- Studying migrations patterns: banding, satellite tracking, geolocators
- Migrant trap: weather, food topography
- Range maps: often very helpful: breed/migrate



# Summer Birds

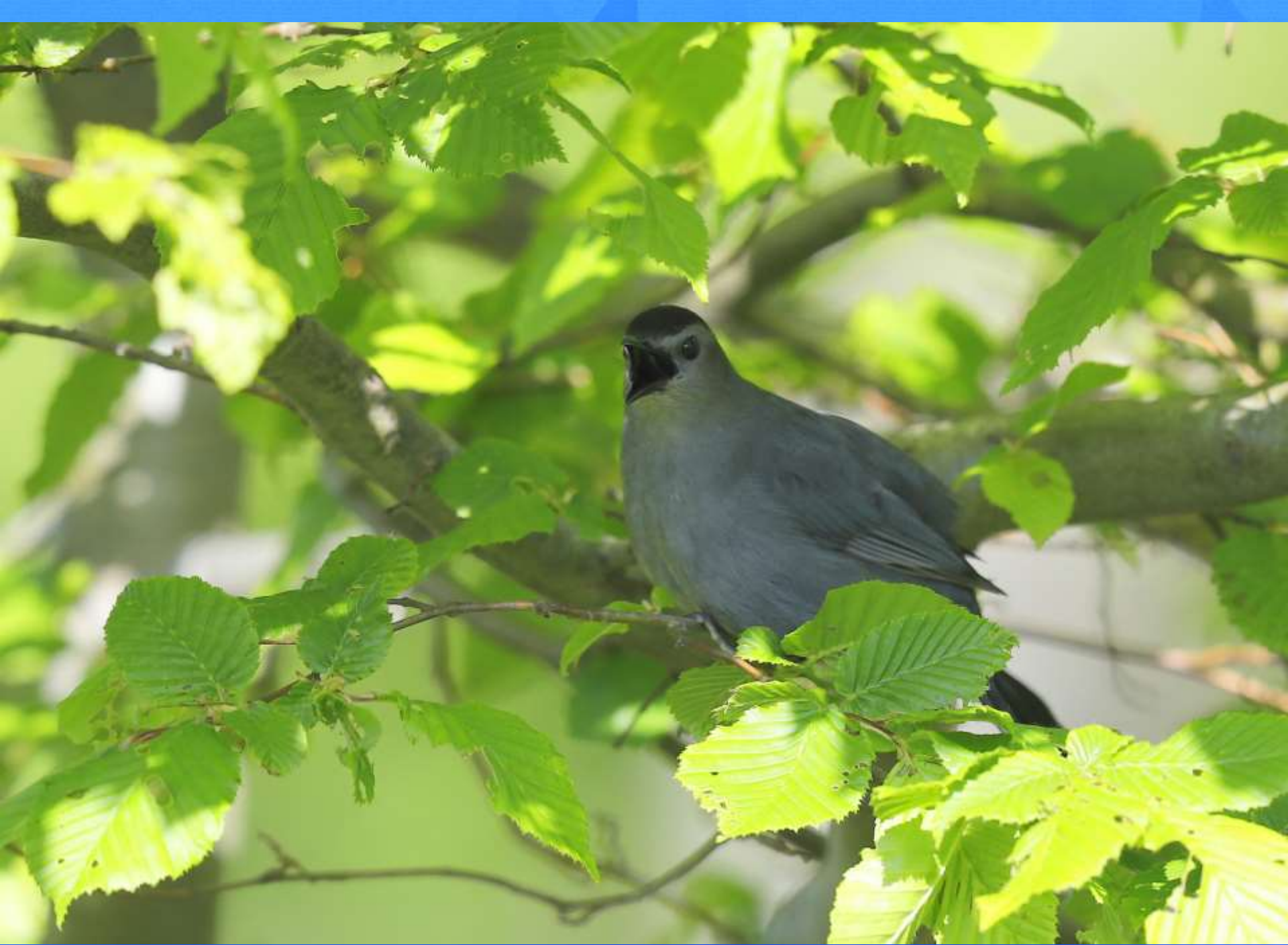








































































# Fall Birds





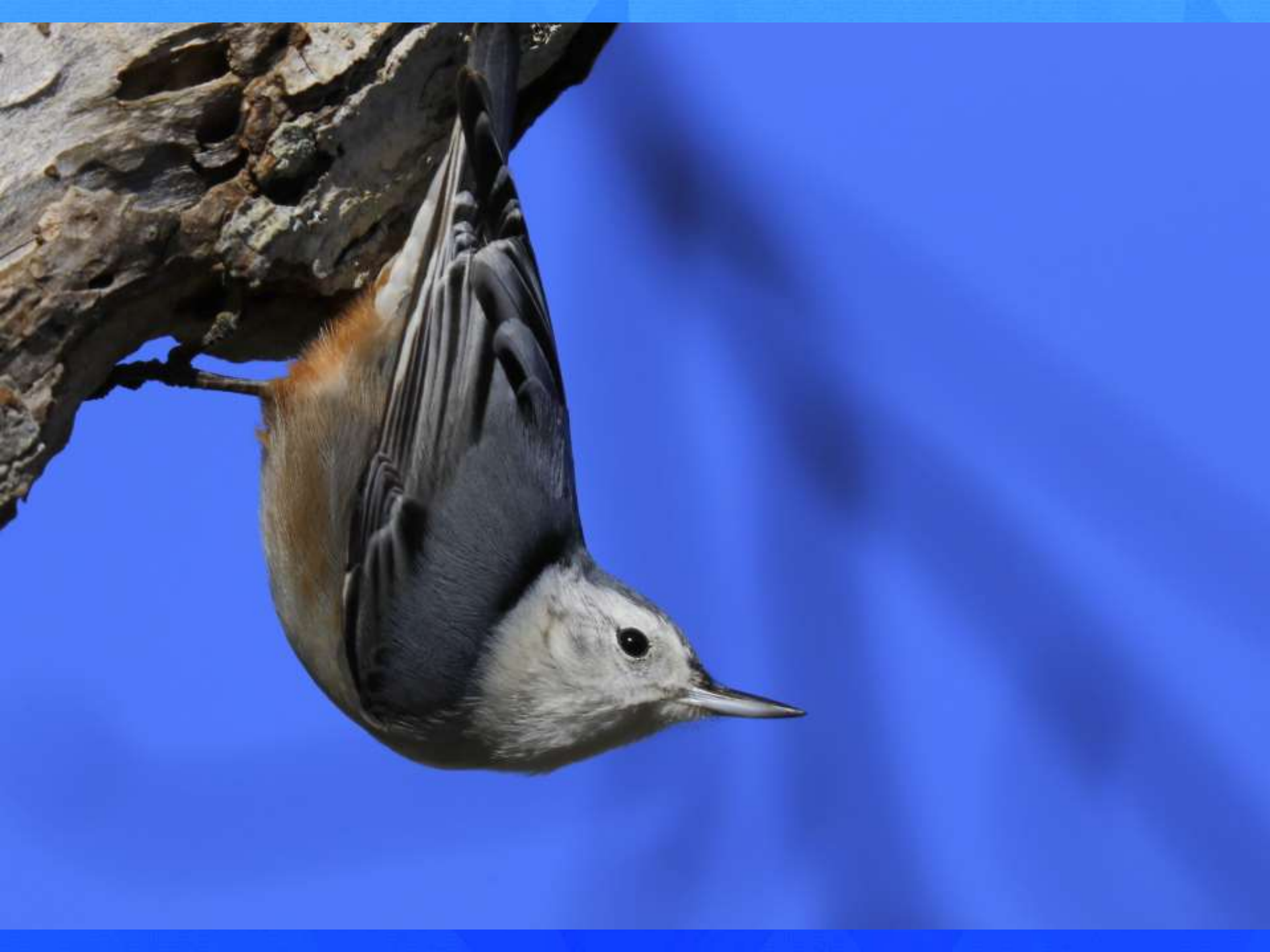






























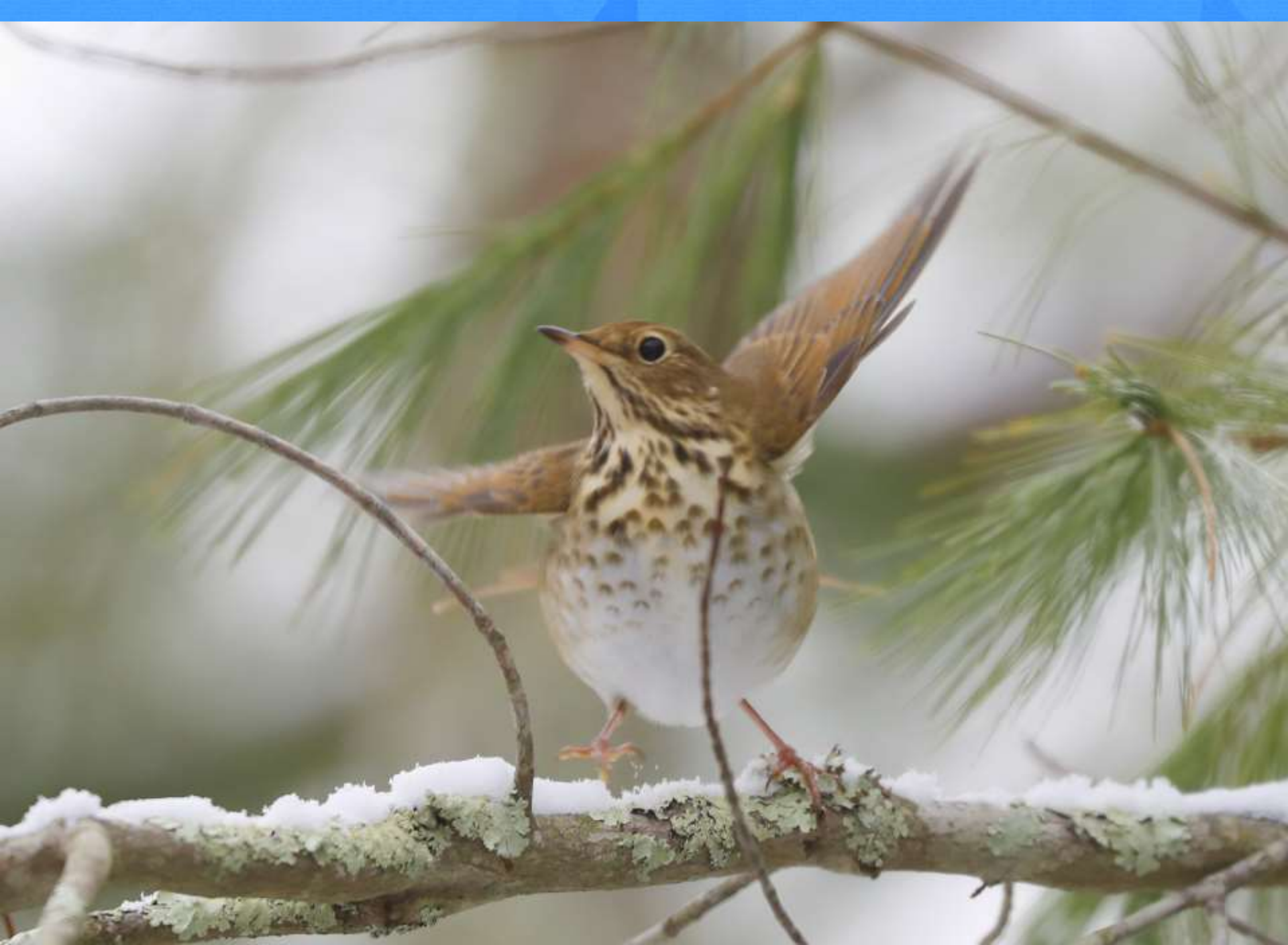


# Winter Birds











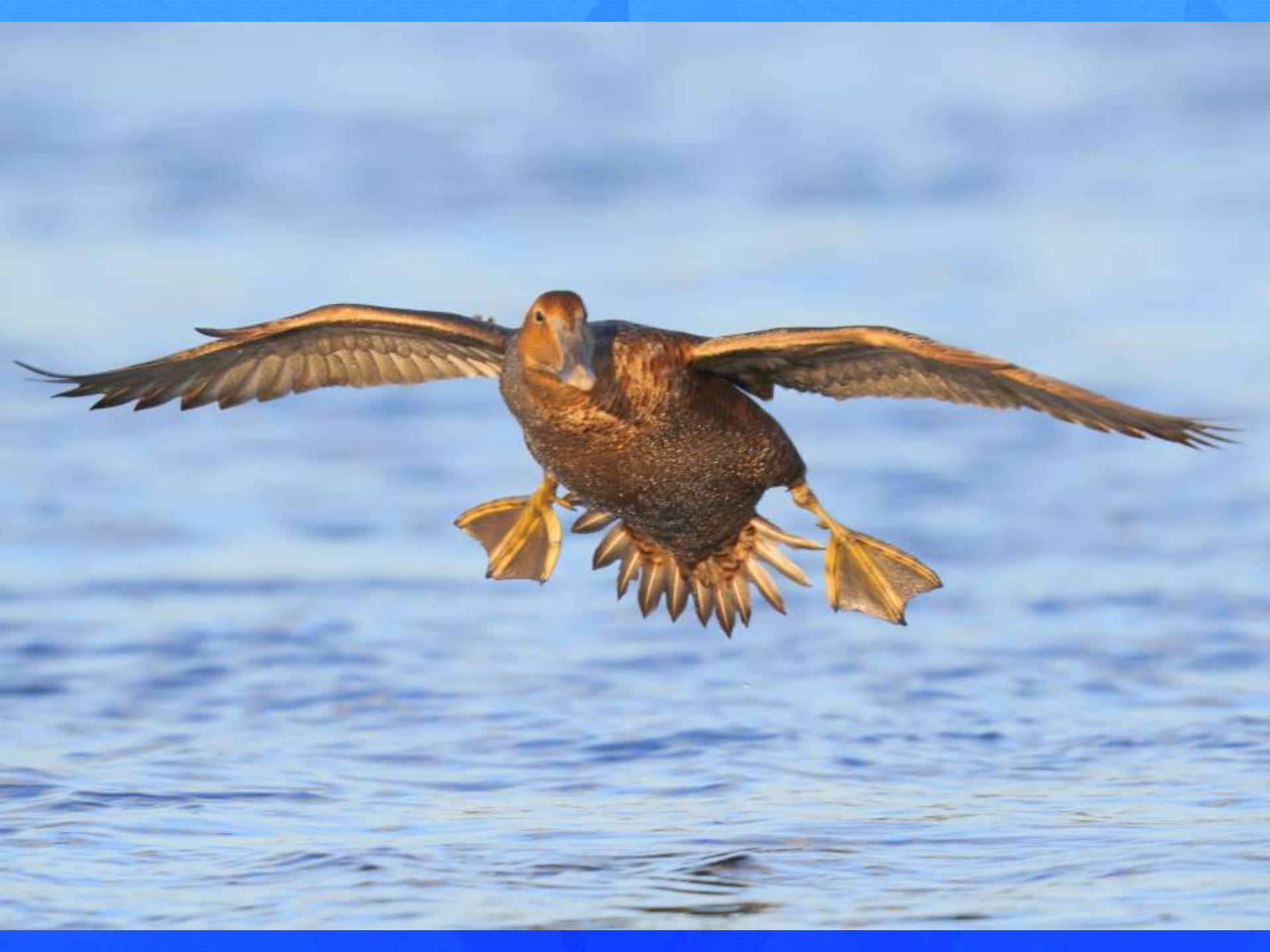










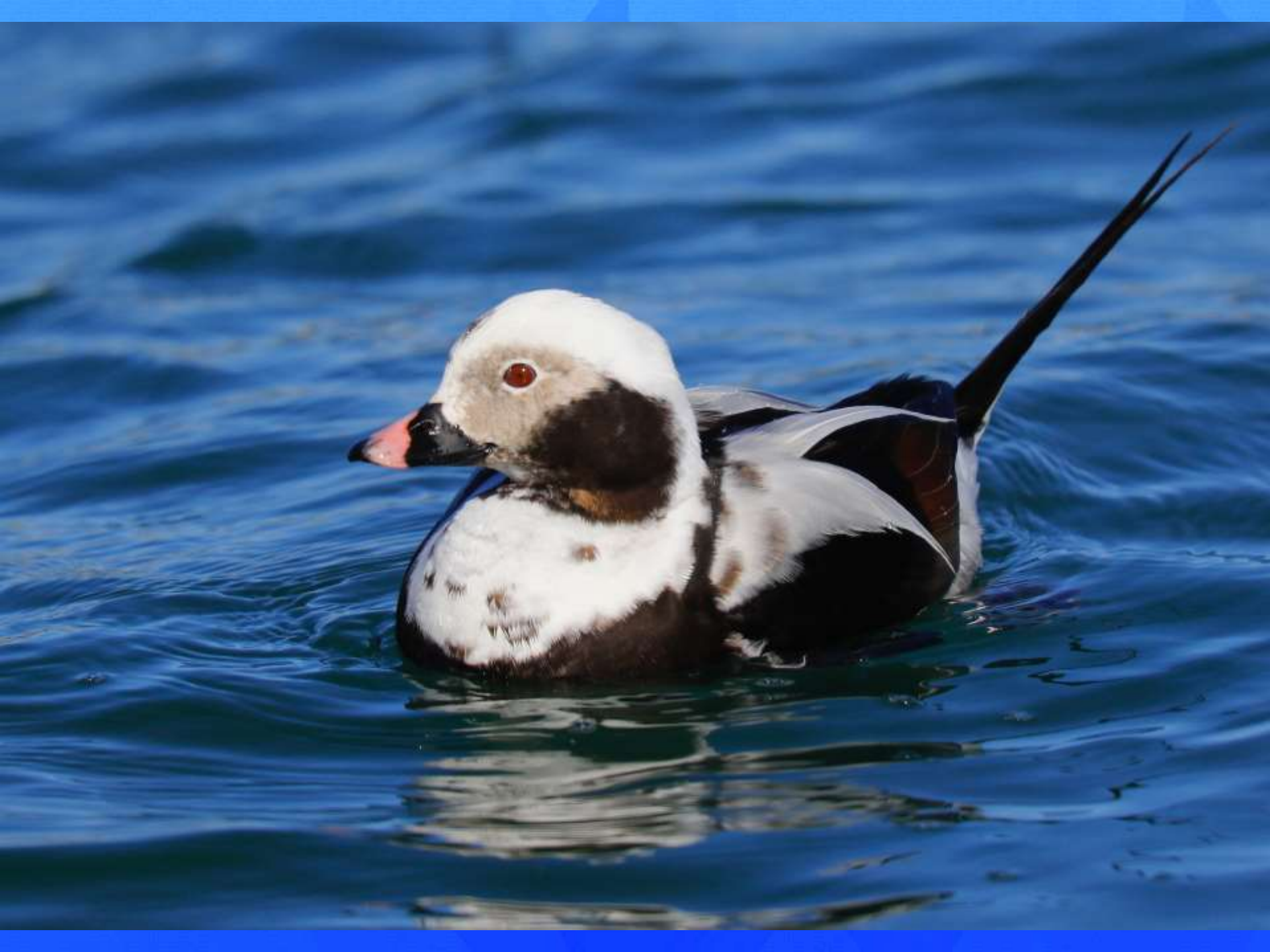












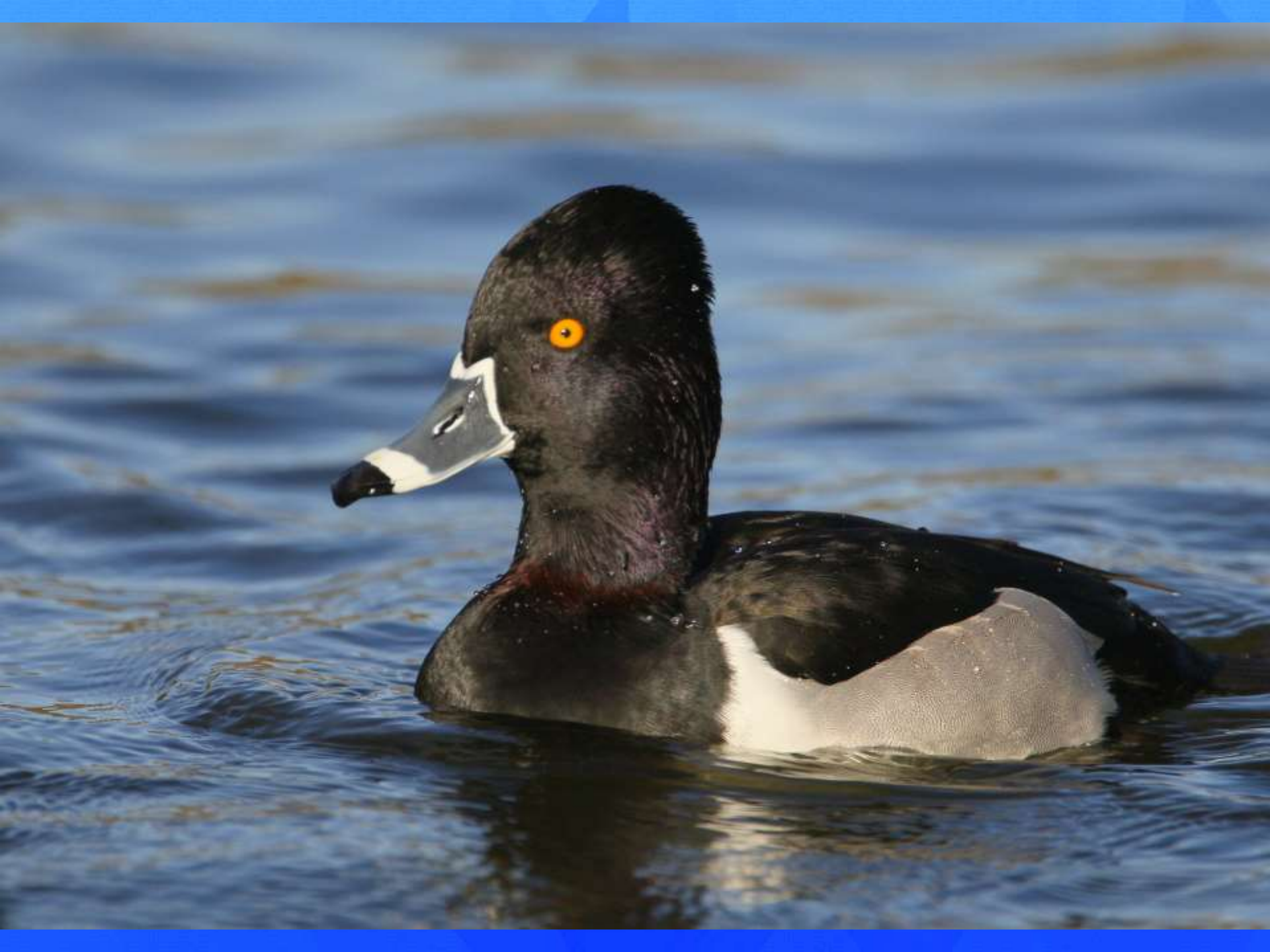














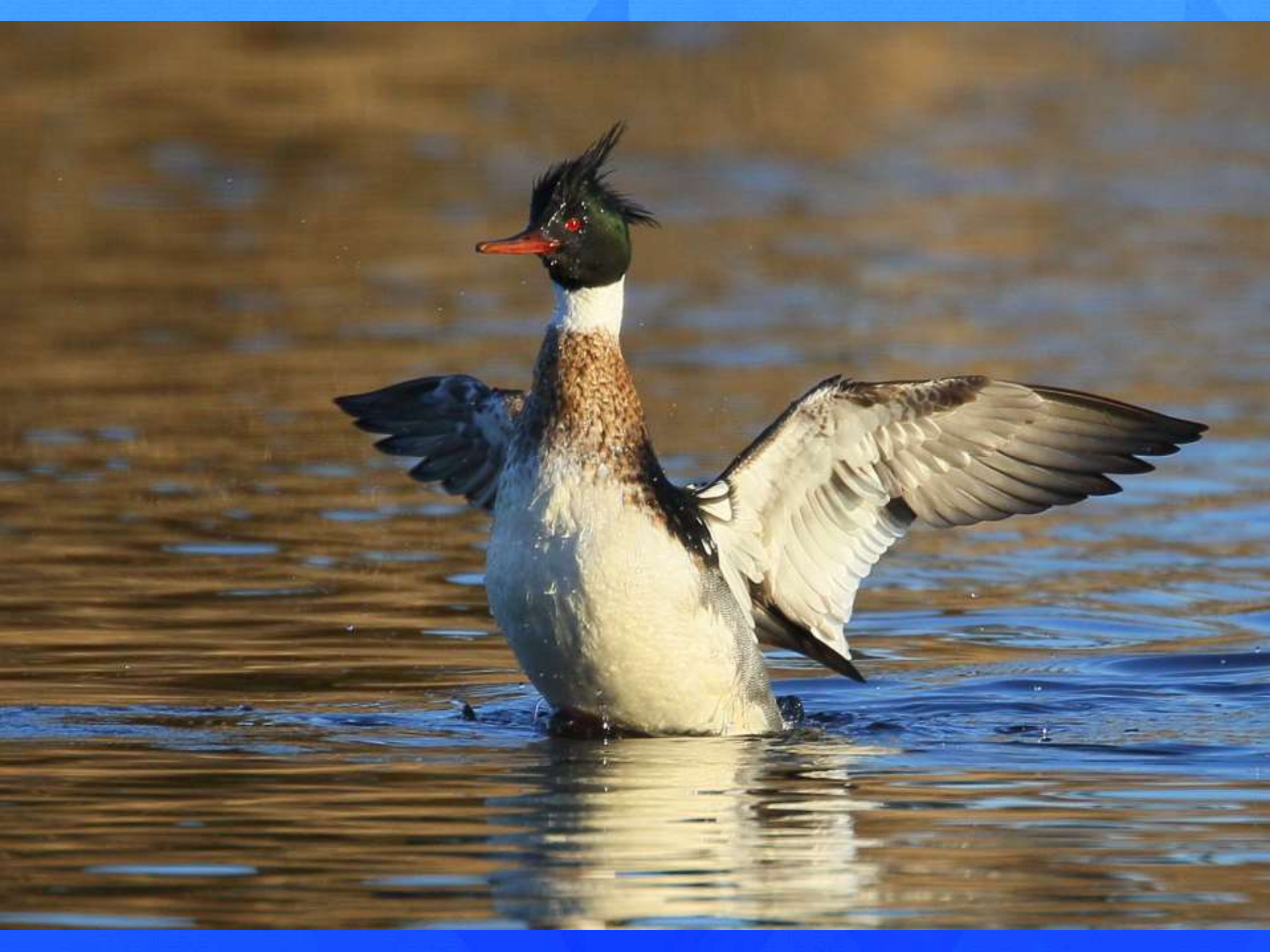


































# Spring Birds

















































Thank you!!

Questions!!!