

# Frequent Flier Miles

## The story of migration in the Central Flyway

**C**heyenne Bottoms is an extraordinary avian rest stop. Like all travelers, migrating birds must stop for rest and food. But their travels make your journey to Cheyenne Bottoms seem like a trip around the block.

Some birds travel for days, covering thousands of miles without stopping to rest. To accomplish this amazing feat, migratory birds must pack on fat. Some birds store from 10 percent to 50 percent of their body weight in extra fat to use as fuel during migration. When they stop at the Bottoms, they feed voraciously to fuel up for the next leg of their journey. Cheyenne Bottoms is an important stop for the migrants because of the rich and diverse supply of high-energy food it provides. Shorebirds probe the mud with long, needle-like bills to feed on the abundant midge larvae. Herons and egrets pluck crayfish, frogs and minnows from the marsh. The ibis use their long curved bills to catch and eat snails, worms and leeches. Ducks and geese feed on the rich aquatic vegetation, taking seeds, roots and shoots.



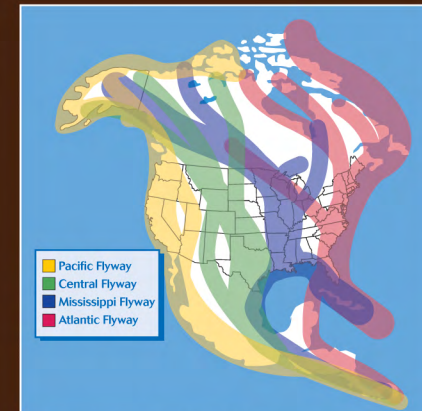
Yellowlegs Searching for Food  
KDWPT Photo

### Migration Routes

Banding efforts and research helped waterfowl managers map the major migration corridors followed by ducks and geese in North America. These corridors today are known as flyways. For management purposes, North America is divided into four flyways: the Atlantic, Mississippi, Central and Pacific.



Goose Banding, KDWPT



General Waterfowl Migration Map, KDWPT

### Motion and Change

Ducks and geese, as well as the shorebirds and other migrants stopping at Cheyenne Bottoms, follow ancient pathways from their nesting areas to their wintering areas. Each fall, millions of waterbirds migrate south to warmer regions in search of food and habitat. The trek is repeated in reverse in the spring as they move north to take advantage of the spring emergence of insects and plants for nesting. It is still unclear how these birds navigate during migration. Some scientists believe they take cues from the position of the sun, moon, and stars. Geographic landmarks such as rivers and mountains and the earth's magnetic field are also possible aids to their navigation.

