Long-distance migratory birds are citizens of continents or hemispheres. Not countries or states. They know nothing of political boundaries or politics, human industry or culture. Most of what they do know is hard-wired within their deoxyribo nucleic acid. Their instincts tell them when to on load fuel, when to journey, where to replenish, how far to go, where to shelter, on what to feed, and how to keep from being killed. They are perfect travelers—never carrying the baggage of self-pity or pride.

Townsend’s Warbler, arrived from the north.

Warbling Vireo, gone south.

**Moving South.** Except for some seabirds (like Pigeon Guillemot and Sooty Shearwater), birds’ fall migration along the northern half of Earth is southbound.

Just as our migratory nesting birds go to or toward the tropics in autumn, some species of high-latitude breeders come to or toward temperate realms. By the end of September, most Wilson’s and Black-throated Gray Warblers, Cassin’s and Warbling Vireos, Ash-throated and Olive-sided Flycatchers, pewees, and Swainson’s Thrushes (to name a few) are gone. But Townsend’s and Yellow-rumped Warblers, Ruby- and Golden-crowned Kinglets, juncos, Varied Thrushes, and Winter Wrens are arriving to winter here. Some are still on the move in early December.

**Understanding and Rebuilding.** Because a large chunk of Earth’s avifauna is migratory, and because birds need natural habitat at both ends of their travels (and in between), international understanding by humans all up and down the map is necessary in order for us to intervene on the birds’ behalf.

Understanding comes from education and observation. Education is the transfer of knowledge, which comes from research in the field. Partnering with scientists and their governments throughout the Americas is how to ensure the security of migratory bird populations.

Where natural habitats have been altered, they can be rebuilt or replaced. Restoration is possible if humans allow or encourage it. This is a matter of education—and also responsibility. We are the ones who broke it; we must fix it.

Birds are beautiful, exuberant, and wonderful free spirits that bring wildness, color, and music with them wherever they travel. We humans should not only provide for their survival but should welcome them to our properties and honor them within our hearts.

Rich Stallcup is PRBO’s Naturalist in our Education and Outreach Program.

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**Please Join Us**

Mark your calendar for PRBO’s annual *Bird-A-Thon Dinner and Celebration*!

Saturday, December 3, 2005
5:00 to 8:00 PM
Romberg Tiburon Center
3152 Paradise Drive, Tiburon

Watch for your invitation and directions in the mail. We hope to see you there!