

# Winged Migration

Carolyn Swicegood, Hollywood, Florida

Rarely are avian enthusiasts treated to a documentary or movie devoted entirely to birds but *Winged Migration* is a stunning film that documents the trials and triumphs of countless birds as they heed Mother Nature's call and follow their migratory instincts. For a total of 89 spectacular minutes, the viewer is treated to breathtaking cinematography of birds in flight. The French film was three years in the making and it opened in America in April, 2003.

Over 400 hours of footage were filmed to create this documentary of one hour and nineteen minutes. Each minute of this celebration of flight was edited from 225 minutes of footage. The ratio of 225:1 is extraordinary in itself but it is only one of many impressive statistics that apply to this Sony film that brings the viewer eye to eye with flocks of birds on the move. Traveling Swans, Geese, Cranes, Seagulls, songbirds, Penguins, Albatross, Whooping Cranes and other migrating birds. The production of *Winged Migration* required the services of over 450 people, including 14 cinematographers, 17 pilots who used four different types of aircraft to film the migration of birds through forty countries and seven continents from 1999-2002.

From the Amazon Jungle to the Great Wall of China, a great diversity of locations were filmed on all seven continents by the five film crews who used planes, gliders, helicopters and balloons to give us an amazingly intimate view of migrating birds. This film creates the illusion that the viewer is gliding wingtip-to-wingtip with numerous flocks of flying birds. Ironically, the twin towers of the World Trade Center were captured for posterity in this 1999 visual extravaganza.

Written and directed by Academy Award-nominated director, Jacques Perrin, with the help of Jacques Cluzaud and Michel Debats, *Winged Migration* opened with the following narrative:

*"For eighty million years, birds have ruled the skies, seas, and earth. Each spring, they fly vast distances. Each fall, they fly the same route back. This film is the result of four years of following their amazing odysseys, in the Northern Hemisphere and then the South, species by species, flying over seas and continents."*

Otherwise, this film was refreshingly short on verbiage but rich with the sheer visual impact of nature's beauty. Except for a few subtitles that impress the viewer with the extremely long distances that migrating birds following

nature's timetable travel season after season, the message of the film is imparted to the viewer entirely by the birds.

The hazards of migratory flight are addressed in *Winged Migration* but fortunately for the sensitive viewer, the director does not dwell on the negative happenings along the way. In spite of civilization's destruction of vegetation and wetlands all along the birds' migratory routes, the positive events of migration are given equal time which gives the film a balance that is naturally missing in true-to-life nature films today. The disturbing reality of habitat loss is not diminished but the director of *Winged Migration* gives equal time to both the trials and triumphs of migrating birds.

The problems that challenge and sometimes decimate the numbers of migrating flocks were covered by footage covering an avalanche that almost overcame a flock of mountain birds, a factory with toxic chemicals that threatened to cut short the lives of several migrating birds that stopped over and got stuck in the toxic sludge on the ground, as well as the ever-present hunters and "bird dogs" who take a very small toll on migrating populations of geese and other migrating birds. One disturbing scene in the movie was that of a starving bird with a broken wing trying to escape the claws of a horde of hungry sand crabs. According to the production notes, the crew rescued the bird after the scene was shot but the message was unmistakable — without the interference of the film crew, the bird would have been eaten alive by the hungry crabs.

The director of *Winged Migration* thoughtfully provided an antidote to the perils of migration. From a goose whose foot was caught in webbing and then set free by a kind young boy who took pity on the bird's plight, to an elderly woman shown feeding hungry migrating birds in her field, the effect on migration of the positive side of human nature is recognized. There is another touching scene of a tired bird accompanied by its loyal mate taking refuge on the deck of a ship for a brief respite and recuperation from an over-water migration. There are several light-hearted moments to delight the audience, such as the comical, awkward descent of huge Pelicans plunging headfirst into the ocean on a fishing mission and wide-eyed Grebes skimming the surface of a pond, apparently walking on water.

There is a special treat for parrot lovers near the end of *Winged Migration*. A primitive looking river barge carrying a variety of captured Amazon jungle creatures, including several large parrots, is shown gliding through the water, obviously on the way to the pet trade market. I won't spoil the surprise for you but a beautiful cobalt-blue

Hyacinth Macaw provides a happy ending that you must see. I have never been in a movie theater audience that broke into applause at the end of the film, but that is exactly what happened in the theater where I first saw this film, and I have heard that this phenomenon happens happen more often than not in theaters across the country.

*Winged Migration* is that rare film that defies a critic to find anything negative. If one must point out a shortcoming, perhaps the lack of in-depth information about migration could be criticized. Subtitles give the viewer only the species identity of the migrating birds, as well as the distances that they cover annually. However, I enjoyed the lack of narration during the film so I must admit that my opinion of *Winged Migration* is much like that of everyone I know — all positive!

Catherine Stiteler, wildlife artist from Hilton Head, South Carolina, expresses the feelings of many bird lovers after seeing *Winged Migration*. She shares, "*When I sat down to watch Winged Migration, I had no idea that such an amazing experience awaited me. I watched in total awe and rapture, and at times was brought to tears by the overwhelming beauty of the film. Not only are the migrating birds spectacular but the scenery transports one to another world. This film has some of the most spectacular photography that I have ever seen.*"

*Winged Migration* was nominated for Best Documentary Feature in English at the Academy Awards this year. It lost to Michael Moore's timely social commentary on guns in America, *Bowling for Columbine*. The two films represent two distinctively different worlds, but for those of us who love birds, there is no question about which film won our hearts in 2003. *Winged Migration* is poignant, touching, hauntingly beautiful, and wonderful viewing for bird lovers of all ages. The only downside of this amazing film is that it ends all too soon.

*Winged Migration* is now available on DVD for less than \$20. It is also available in VHS format for about \$55. If you missed the movie, it is well worth the price of your own copy which you are sure to view again and again.

Winged Migration online:

<http://www.sonyclassics.com/wingedmigration/home.html>

Winged Migration DVD and VHS

<http://makeashorterlink.com/?X1B2615B6>



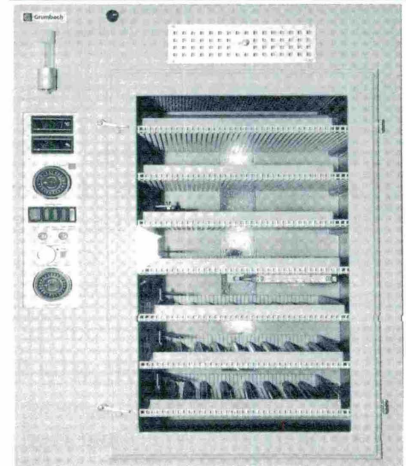
## GRUMBACH INCUBATORS OF GERMANY

WHEN ONLY THE BEST WILL DO



Item shown Compact S84  
Larger units available

Item shown 8203/01/02-Incubator BSS300, includes programmable motor turning, 7 egg trays, each with 8 turnable rollers, adjustable to the size of the egg, directly adjustable automatic humidification system, cool down timer, digital thermometer and humidity readouts.



- Electronic regulation of temperature for maximum precision.
- Egg tray with rollers, adjustable to each size egg.
- Automatic humidity control, adjustable from 40% to 99%, water reservoir 4.5 liters. It can add humidity only.
- Automatic turning, determination of turning intervals and degree by pressing tabs on timer.
- Circulation air system for optimum distribution of temperature.



LYON ELECTRIC COMPANY INC. IS NOW THE EXCLUSIVE DISTRIBUTOR FOR  
GRUMBACH INCUBATORS OF GERMANY FOR THE U.S.A. AND CANADA  
1690 BRANDYWINE AVENUE  
CHULA VISTA, CA 91911 U.S.A.  
TEL (619) 216-3400, FAX (619) 216-3434  
EMAIL: LYONELEC@CTS.COM, WWW.LYONELECTRIC.COM

