

# Nat Theo Club

## FIELD NOTES

ISSUE #100



## Bird Murmuration

### ANIMAL BEHAVIOR

Have you played Follow the Leader? A bird murmuration is kind of like that—but in the sky...and with many leaders! Individual birds follow and match the movements of 6-7 other birds closest to them. A bird murmuration can be hundreds to even thousands of birds. One recorded murmuration had around 6 million birds. Another was estimated at 10 million. That's one big performance! While murmurations are a bit of a mystery in science, they are a spectacular display, bringing glory to our Creator. God designed these birds to watch and rapidly react to their neighbors, like a massive choreographed ballet.



### HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A BIRD BALLET?

My family and I were recently driving through Nebraska when we saw a ballet of birds. What looked like a dark cloud of thousands of birds danced across the sky, swirling, twirling, swooping, and ribboning. There was no way of counting how many birds we were watching. They kept changing direction and speed. And yet, even with countless individual birds, they all moved together in a highly coordinated manner, like one big sky dance. What we were watching was a bird murmuration.

A bird murmuration looks like a rapid shape-shifting cloud as the birds swivel and swoop right next to each other. A mass of birds twists and turns without any birds smashing into each other. The type of bird most famous for murmurations is the European Starling. It's a bit of a mystery in science why starlings fly in murmurations, but it's believed that a main reason is safety in numbers. It's harder for predators like a falcon to target an individual bird if it's flying in a constantly changing pattern next to thousands of others. But how do they fly so close to each other without colliding? Each bird watches the movements of the 6-7 birds closest to it. If a nearby bird shifts direction, others follow suit, matching direction and speed. That's an impressive ballet in the sky!

A dancing cloud of European Starlings can remind us of Hebrews 12:1 (NIV), which says, "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."

Right before this in chapter 11, we read about many people who had great faith in God. Great faith doesn't come from ourselves. Instead, God grows our faith as we spend time in Scripture, prayer, and with other believers. How can you surround yourself with a great cloud of witnesses today? Consider reading Hebrews 11, stories in the Bible of people with bold faith, and missionary stories. Spending time with other believers also helps build our faith. We can watch out for each other and spur one another on to good works (Hebrews 10:24–25).