

**Birds
prove:
Spring
is just
around
the
corner**

by **ARLIN
HACKMAN**

Federation of Ontario Naturalists
The February snow lies deep. In the midst of one of the coldest winters in recent years, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that spring, really and truly, is just around the corner.

One of the most obvious signs of spring is the return of the birds. Most of us watch for the first robin sometime in late March and take that as a harbinger of better things to come. But migration, that mysterious, almost magical compulsion that moves tiny creatures over incredible routes, begins in February.

The first migrants to return to Ontario are horned larks, small birds with the colouring of sparrows, highlighted by bright yellow throats and devilish little ear tufts that look like horns. Watch for them on weed stalks that poke up through the snow on the verges of country roads. They will be followed by flocks of crows and, wherever there is open water, by pairs of adventurous ducks.

By mid-March tundra swans, bound for the shores of the Arctic Ocean, arrive in the thousands for a brief stopover along the north shore of Lakes Erie and Ontario. As March gives way to April and April to May, the songbirds follow, first in a trickle, then in a flood.

If you would like more information on this or any of the many other nature tours offered across Canada, contact FON Trips, 355 Lesmill Road, Don Mills, Ontario, M3B 2W8, telephone (416) 444-8419.

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