

### Waiting to go South.

It's that time of year when a lot of people are waiting to go South. Normally, by now, we would have snow, lots of it, and icy roads. This year, however, has been very strange. We experience hard frosts at night, but sunny days. Everyone is talking about how strange the weather is. Children have their winter boots, gloves, and hats at the ready\*. At the first sign of snow, they will frantically get dressed, and run outside to play in the glorious white stuff. But, it's just not happening. By now, also, most migrating birds have left to go to either California, Florida, Mexico, or some other sunny destination. But, even some of *them* are hanging around\* the town still, waiting for the snow to come. I was coming out of Walmart the other day, when I saw a cloud of birds swirling around in the sky, 'practicing' moving as a group. They looked playful, and amazingly skilled\*. They moved to and fro\* effortlessly like hundreds of acrobats working in unison\*. As I got closer to my car, I saw that they had settled on a radio tower across the highway. I took out my new camera to zoom in and get a closer look. There were hundreds of them sitting on the metal poles. It was like a chatty, nervous group of people, waiting excitedly for something. I'm not surprised that they were excited. The thought of going somewhere sunny is very appealing right now. Many people I know have already made plans to spend a month or two in Arizona. They are usually retired, and therefore can afford to take off\* for a long time. Younger people can usually only go for a couple of weeks because they have to come back and work, of course. Golf or tennis are usually the planned activities for those Winter vacations. And, when the travelers come back, they show off their tans to the rest of us. I'm sure, even though the weather is strange this year, the migrating birds will soon be gone, and our retired family members and friends will have packed their bags and left too. Perhaps a heavy fall of snow will come a month late, so we can enjoy a little more sun for a little longer. Either way, we'll cheer up our long, dark nights with Christmas lights, and stay cozy by the fire.

Related vocabulary: at the ready, to hang around, skilled, to and fro.

1. Water pistols at the ready! The water fight is about to begin!
2. A group of suspicious young men were hanging around our neighborhood last night. We should find out who they were.
3. Look how skilled the potter is! The detail she puts on her ceramics are amazingly fine. She is excellent and exact at what she does.
4. I watched the bird go to and fro from its nest, bringing worms and bugs to feed to its babies.