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Why falling birds put humans on alert

by Rich Heffern

Eco Catholic

In the final moments of 2010, thousands of dead birds fell from the sky over Beebe, Arkansas, frightening the town's residents and turning the world's eyes once again to birds. Read David Yarnold's commentary. Yarnold is president of the National Audubon Society.

"Why do birds -- and their struggles -- matter so much to people? They fly, and we dream about flying. We look to birds' migratory and nesting cycles to mark the passage of time and the change of seasons. Their bright plumage and beautiful songs delight us.

When birds stop flying, an essential piece of hope falls away from people as well. "Hope is the thing with feathers," mused the great American poet Emily Dickinson more than a century ago. For her and for many of us, birds have come to represent something much larger than themselves."

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