

Malady In The Sky

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Birds migrating across national and intercontinental borders can play a role in the spread of infectious diseases. Their capability to travel over long distances and through a diversity of habitats exposes them to a wide range of microorganisms such as bacteria, virus, parasite or drug-resistant organisms. Similar to wild birds, these migratory birds are hosts or natural reservoirs for many zoonotic diseases. Without showing any clinical signs, they act as a silent disease carrier by possessing pathogens that can threaten the well-being of other animals and humans, hence, raising concern on public confidence in health care, food safety, and security. Examples of high-profile diseases that are associated with transmission by migratory birds include avian influenza and West Nile fever. Migration of birds is a natural phenomenon for the instinct of survival. However, over the years, human activities like deforestation for intensive industrial development and rehabilitation, and global warming have disturbed the rate and pattern of bird migration in search for food supply and breeding habitats. In addition, the increase in world population has resulted in human encroachment by contaminating the environment, e.g. water, and jeopardizing the safety of ecological systems. Therefore, active surveillance of terrestrial and wild birds should be conducted in order to understand migratory connectivity between wildlife, domestic animals, and humans. It is hoped that future spread of diseases by migratory birds and other species can be predicted and contained.



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