

HIS

# Nature

"If you have faith . . . you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

MATTHEW 17:20 (NIV)

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## FLYING HIGH

You're a mountain climber, and you have just scaled the highest peak in the world—Mount Everest. The air is so thin that you need an oxygen tank to breathe. You look out over the panorama beneath you—and you realize that no living creature, under its own power, can be higher than you are at this moment. But suddenly you hear a honking—and a flock of bar-headed geese fly over your head on their annual migration.

What? There are birds flying over Mount Everest?

It's true. An ordinary-looking goose lays claim to the title "Highest-Flying Animal." This tenacious bird actually migrates over the Himalayan mountains! The birds carry no food or water, no oxygen, no winter survival gear—yet there they are, higher than any creature should be. Some of our Creator's most incredible skills are displayed in the bar-headed goose.



*Bar-headed Goose*

The dapper bar-headed goose (*Anser indicus*) navigates the air over the Himalayas at 30,000 to 33,000 feet (9 to 10 kilometers). The oxygen concentration at this height is a little more than one-quarter that of sea level—not enough air for kerosene lanterns to burn, helicopters to hover, or people to breathe. Yet this goose remains fully conscious and faithfully flies over the Himalayas twice each year, a journey which takes hours.

The bar-headed goose is a migratory bird that breeds in Central Asia (southeast Russia and western

*continued...*





China) but travels to India and northern Burma for the winter. Why doesn't it just fly around the mountains or snake its way through them using river valleys, like the majority of the other migratory birds in the Himal region? I am convinced this goose has been given the titanic task to show us, in a visible way, that Christ can, and will, sustain his creatures through all difficulties—his hand leads and upholds this bird.

Christ's construction of the bar-headed goose includes larger-than-normal wings, lungs that inhale greater-than-normal amounts of air, and blood containing a special type of hemoglobin that carries higher-than-normal levels of oxygen to its tissues and organs.

God also designed this bird to produce a lot of heat when it flies. This constant radiation of body warmth and the goose's down feathers prevent ice from forming on the bird's wings, potentially grounding it.

The bar-headed goose is a master of rarified air, reminding us that its creator, Jesus Christ, makes all things possible (Matthew 19:26). God shines his glory in the farthest reaches of the earth—even where life's presence seems utterly impossible.

I quoted Matthew 17:20 at the beginning of this article—a passage

that admittedly speaks of faith, not geese. It is Christ, however, who is the author of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) and the author of creation (Hebrews 1:10)—he alone is the one who moves mountains, not us. So, whether Jesus moves a mountain for someone or moves something—like a goose—over a mountain, he is the God who sustains and guides us all in incredible ways.

#### DIGGING DEEPER

With a little help from tailwinds, the bar-headed geese make the trip from Tibet to India—more than 1,000 miles—in a *single* day. By using tailwinds, the geese capitalize on weather that would pulverize lesser creatures. These geese are powerful flappers, with huge wings, pointed to reduce wind resistance. They can fly over 50 miles an hour on their own power, and they really move if they can add the thrust of 100-mile-per-hour tailwinds. Able to gauge and correct for drift, bar-headed geese can even fly in crosswinds without being blown off course.

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*"I will go before you  
and will level the mountains . . .  
so that you may know that I am the LORD."*

ISAIAH 45:2-3 (NIV)