

Migratory Birds (Secret Solution)

Jay Qi, Zach Zagorski, Eshan Mitra, Alex Walker, Sara Walker, Chris Yu

The secret half of this puzzle starts with the speech bubble in the EAGLE KONUNDRUM cell. This cell references ["The Duck Konundrum"](#), a famous MIT Mystery Hunt 2000 puzzle by Dan Katz that requires following a long series of complicated instructions (and has since become its own [archetype of puzzle](#)). The konundrum text in the speech bubble is an alternate extraction procedure to the secret answer.

First, the konundrum states: "The duck points the way." The DUCK DIRECTIONS cell has a speech bubble with four cardinal directions: South, West, North, and East. Next, it says to "Start here" and then gives a sequence of four movement distances with extraction instructions. Combining these movements with the duck's directions gives the following sequence of steps:

1. Start at EAGLE KONUNDRUM
2. Move 2 blocks south to ROBIN PARADOX; extract the 7th letter (**X**)
3. Move 3 blocks west to OWL SCOUT; extract the 2nd letter thrice (**CCC**) and 3rd letter twice (**OO**)
4. Move 1 block north to FALCON CITY; extract the 4th letter (**Y**)
5. Move 2 blocks east to HUMMINGBIRD GAME; extract the 1st letter (**G**) and 4th letter (**E**)
6. Now anagram for a scientific name: XCCCOOYGE -> **GEOCOCCYX** (final answer)

Construction Notes

This puzzle was the first secret answer in the hunt that we wrote. We were initially excited that "Duck Konundrum" was a fun bird phrase to include in the puzzle since it's a nice cultural reference for MIT Mystery Hunt veterans. Then, we had a mildly unhinged laugh when we realized we could hide a secret answer in the konundrum.

We thought for sure that this secret answer would be very easy to find, and we were quite wrong! It turns out that hiding in plain sight is very effective. Only about 10% of people who solved this puzzle on its first day found the secret answer. Over the course of the hunt, many people who had already gotten other secret answers kept missing this one. We even saw quite a few people chatting *about* the konundrum on Discord without discovering the secret answer. We had a prediction that veteran solvers familiar with Duck Konundrums would be more likely to breeze past it, and anecdotally, that seems to have borne out. You're all in good company—our first testsolver within the writing team also didn't find the secret until prompted, despite knowing about the existence of secret answers in general.