



Some hummingbirds are so small, they have been known to be caught by dragonflies and praying mantis, trapped in spider's webs, snatched by frogs, and get stuck in thistles.

J&L Garden Center

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Hummingbirds and Feeders

Hummingbirds are perhaps the most unique and fascinating birds to watch. There are more than 320 species of hummingbirds but only a handful of species are found in North America. Hummingbirds will migrate from Southern Alaska to Mexico, a distance of 2000 miles. Other hummingbirds will migrate from Canada to Mexico, crossing the Gulf of Mexico - a nonstop flight of 500 miles. Hummingbirds are approximately 3.5 inches long and weigh about 1/9 of an ounce. Hummingbirds got their name from the humming noise their wings make in flight. Each species of hummingbird makes a different humming sound, determined by the number of wing beats per second. They are truly fascinating creatures.



Hummingbirds eat two types of food: nectar from flowers; and tiny insects and spiders.

A hummingbird's diet includes a wide variety of insects, they really are not picky eaters. Hummingbirds are very effective in helping to reduce insect populations naturally.



A hummingbird's diet also includes a variety of nectars from many different plants. Many of the flowers that attract hummingbirds are trumpet shaped, or tube shaped, and are in the red and orange shades. However, hummingbirds love pink bee balm blossoms and yellow honeysuckle flowers.

The sugar water you fill your hummingbird feeders should only be a supplement to the hummingbird's diet. Hummingbirds need to find and eat natural foods to obtain all the nutrients they need.



When buying a commercial hummingbird nectar mix you do not have to buy one with a red dye. The red color is supposed to attract hummingbirds more readily, but hummingbirds are smart birds and they will find your feeder on their own. Clear hummingbird nectars are just not as easy to find.

DO NOT use honey in your feeder! Honey ferments rapidly and can kill hummingbirds. It also contains a bacteria that can cause a fatal disease in birds. Red food coloring is not needed to attract hummingbirds. The red food coloring may actually coat the hummingbird's tongue and impede its ability to lap up nectar. Commercial nectars do not have a problem with the red dye.

Every time you re-fill your feeder, flush it with hot tap water. A bottle brush can be very useful to help keep your feeder clean. **Do not use soap.** Soap can remain in the feeder even



after rinsing and it can make the hummingbird sick, or even kill it. Discard any unused sugar water left in the feeder and refill it with fresh sugar water. When temperatures are over 80 degrees, clean and refill the feeder every three or four days.

At least once a month, clean each feeder thoroughly with a solution of bleach and water. Soak the feeder in this solution for about one hour, then clean it with a bottle brush. Rinse with water, and let it air dry completely before refilling.

Hummingbird feeders vary in size and shape but they should all provide the same thing. They should attract hummingbirds and provide a sugar-water solution for the hummingbird to drink. Put your hummingbird feeders in a shady place, where you can see them easily. Take your hummingbird feeder down mid-September, so you don't confuse hummingbirds into staying longer than they should. Hummingbirds need to migrate south for the winter. If they stay north too long they will not make it south soon enough and they may die.



Ants may be attracted to your feeder. To help avoid this, buy a dripless feeder. If your 'dripless' feeder drips anyway, try boiling your feeder in plain water for one or two minutes. The boiling water will sometimes stop the capillary action of the water; it will make it stop dripping. You can also make an ant repellent by using vegetable oil. Soak a pipe cleaner in vegetable oil and then wrap it around the wire attached to your feeder, or you can cover the entire wire in petroleum jelly. Ants do not like to cross oily or wet surfaces.

Bees, wasps, and yellow jackets are also attracted to hummingbird feeders. Try using a hummingbird feeder with a



bee guard.

It is best to get a feeder with a perch, so that the hummingbird can rest while eating. It requires a lot more energy for hummingbirds to hover than it does for them to fly. Also, it is fun to watch the hummingbirds sit still.



Feeders that can accommodate several birds at one time are best, even though hummingbirds can, at times, be very territorial. You may notice that one bird takes over the control of a feeder and chases all the other hummingbirds away. That hummingbird may spend all his time defending the hummingbird feeder and never take time to drink from it.

If that is the case in your yard, you may want to hang up another hummingbird feeder several feet away. One hummingbird cannot control two feeders at once, so, all the hummingbirds can eat freely without any one of them taking control.

Hummingbirds migrate in response to hormonal changes, which are triggered by decreasing length of daylight; nothing you can do will make them stay too long, so it's not necessary to stop feeding them to force them to go south. On the contrary: they will need to fatten up to nearly double normal body weight to survive the journey, and thus appreciate your feeder more than ever up until literally the last minute before they depart.

You can maintain a feeder for a week or two after seeing your last hummingbird of the season. Sometimes an individual bird can't migrate on schedule, due to illness or injury: these late migrants in particular will appreciate having a reliable source of food at a time when few natural flowers are still in bloom.

If you want to learn more about hummingbirds, you may want to buy a book and a hummingbird feeder, you'll be amazed by these little birds.



More Resources:

<http://www.worldofhummingbirds.com/facts.php>

<http://www.hummingworlds.com/>

<http://www.hummingbirds.net/feeders.html>

<http://www.birdfeeders.com/advice/bird-library/hummingbird>

<http://www.hummingbirdsociety.org/hummingbird-flowers/>



Recipe For Artificial Nectar

Use one part ordinary

White Sugar to four parts water.

Boil the water for several minutes.

Boiling kills and deters

many pathogens from growing in the feeder.

Measure the water after boiling. If you measure first, before you boil, some of the water will boil away. The proportions may not be correct.

Stir in the sugar while the water is still hot.

Let the water cool before filling the feeder.

Store unused nectar in the refrigerator.

This mixture closely matches the sucrose content (about 21%) of the flowers Hummingbirds are attracted to.



Plants that Attract Hummingbirds

Trumpet Vines, Morning Glory

Vines, Japanese Honeysuckle

Vines, Flowering Quince,

Weigela Shrubs, Butterfly

Bush, Mimosa Trees, Alyssum,

Bee Balm, Candytuft, Canna,

Catnip, Chrysanthemums,

Columbine, Coneflower, Coreopsis, Corn, Daisies,

Dandelions, Daylilies, Four-O-Clocks, Foxglove,

Fuchsia, Heliotrope, Hosta, Impatiens, Indian Blanket

Flower, Lupine, Mint, Penstemon, Pincushion

Flower, Petunias, Red Salvia, Scabiosa, Snapdragons,

Sunflowers, Sage, Thyme, Valerian, Verbena, Violets,

Veronica, Yarrow, Yucca, Zinnia



Fun Facts

1. There are more than 325 hummingbird species in the world.
2. Hummingbirds cannot walk or hop, though their feet can be used to scoot sideways while they are perched
3. The average ruby-throated hummingbird weighs 3 grams. In comparison, a nickel weighs 4.5 grams.
4. A hummingbird's maximum forward flight speed is 30 miles per hour. These birds can reach up to 60 miles per hour in a dive.
5. Hummingbirds can fly sideways, backwards, up and down and even hover in midair.
6. Hummingbirds lay the smallest eggs of all birds. They measure less than 1/2 inch long but may represent as much as 10 percent of the mother's weight at the time the eggs are laid. A hummingbird egg is smaller than a jelly bean.
7. A hummingbird must consume approximately 1/2 of its weight in sugar daily, and the average hummingbird feeds 5-8 times per hour. In addition to nectar, these birds also eat many small insects and spiders, and may also sip tree sap or juice from broken fruits.
8. A hummingbird's wings beat between 50 and 200 flaps per second depending on the direction of flight and air conditions.
9. An average hummingbird's heart rate is more than 1,200 beats per minute.
10. At rest, a hummingbird takes an average of 250 breaths per minute. Their breathing pace will increase when they are in flight.
11. Most hummingbirds die in the first year of their life. The average lifespan of a wild hummingbird is 3-12 years.
12. Hummingbirds have no sense of smell but have very keen eyesight.
13. Despite their small size, hummingbirds are one of the most aggressive bird species. They will regularly attack jays, crows and hawks that infringe on their territory.
14. Hummingbirds must eat constantly to fuel their active bodies. Hummingbirds can eat almost twice their body weight in one day! That's like eating around 400 hamburgers each day.



15. When hummingbirds migrate to the United States in the springtime, they cover 500 miles across the Gulf of Mexico, flying for 20 hours without stopping.
16. In preparation for migration, a hummingbird will store half its body weight worth of fat.
17. Hummingbirds migrate alone and not in flocks. Very commonly the males migrate first followed by the females.
18. Only female hummingbirds build nests. Female hummingbirds lay only two eggs. The male hummingbird is not involved in raising young, and will often find another mate after the young are hatched. Hummingbirds tend to return to the area where they were hatched. After hatching, baby hummingbirds will stay in the nest for approximately three weeks.

