



Fun Facts

- Of 340 hummingbird species known to exist, none are found outside of North and South America.
- Ruby-throated hummingbirds may migrate more than 2,000 miles per year. Many cross the Gulf of Mexico (550 miles) nonstop.
- Hummingbirds take several baths per day. They fly through fountains or sit in water, then shake all over and preen themselves.
- Hummingbirds beat their wings between 50 and 200 times per second.
- Hummingbirds draw nectar out of flowers with a tongue that can lick 13 times per second.
- More than 160 types of plants depend exclusively on hummingbirds for pollination.
- Hummingbirds are one of the only birds that are hunted by an insect – the preying mantis.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird



Keeping the Natural State natural.

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The ruby-throated hummingbird weighs 3.5 grams, slightly more than a penny, but makes up for its size in character. It is the only hummingbird species that nests in Arkansas and is most often seen in the state from April through October, when nectar-bearing flowers are blooming. Winter sightings near feeders occasionally occur during mild weather.

Male ruby-throated hummingbirds are identified by their fiery red throat patch, iridescent green back and forked tail. Female rubythroats lack the red patch, sport a blunt tail with white spots. Immature rubythroats resemble the adult female, but young males have a small red dot on their throat.

Male



Aerial Acrobatics

Hummingbirds can fly forward, backward, up, down and even upside down. They can fly up to 60 mph, then abruptly stop and hover like a helicopter. Their wings tread the air in a figure-8 pattern so rapidly they emit the loud hum for which hummingbirds are named. Hummingbirds use a lot of energy, so they are constantly on the lookout for food. One hummingbird may visit as many as 2,000 flowers and drink up to half its body weight in nectar per day. They also eat small spiders, aphids and other tiny insects for protein and vitamins.



Female

The Hummingbird's Home

Ruby-throated hummingbirds often are found near abundant nectar-producing flowers and water. They also frequent swamps, feeding from buttonbush flowers. They nest in wetlands, often building their walnut-sized baskets on a downward-sloping limb near or over water. The nest is made of moss and plant fibers held together with silk from spider webs. Rubythroat females build the nest, lay two tiny white eggs and incubate them for about two weeks. The chicks stay in the nest about 14 days.

Flower Power

Hummingbirds are easy to attract and revisit feeding sites often. Many backyard flowers are on their dinner menu. Here are a few popular plants that flower from spring to fall and have the tubular flowers hummingbirds prefer:



Cardinal Flower



Butterfly Weed



Gladioli



Petunia



Trumpet Creeper



Morning Glory

Feeder Friendly

Feeders are a great way to attract hummingbirds for people who don't have the space or green thumb needed to plant nectar-bearing flowers. They offer an easy meal most hummers won't pass up and help some hummingbirds when most flowers have died back for winter. Feeders with glass jars and few moving parts are easier to clean and maintain. Large decorative flowers are not necessary, nor is red food coloring in the sugar water.

- Dissolve one part table sugar in four parts hot tap water to make nectar. More sugar will attract bees and won't be used by the birds.
- Change nectar once every three days to prevent mold.
- Hang at least three feeders and keep them 10 feet from each other. Hummingbirds will defend a food source. Multiple feeders will attract many more birds because one or two will not be able to defend all of them at once.
- Never use insect sprays, bleach or petroleum-based products on or near feeders.
- If your hummingbird feeder is troubled by bees, set out a feeder with $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar per cup of water in an out-of-the-way spot. Take down your other feeders until the bees find the heavy syrup feeder. Bees will stick to the heavy syrup while the hummingbirds use the regular sugar water.