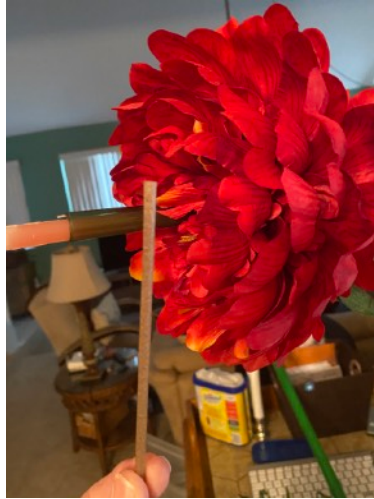


The Hummingbird Experience



Participants try to feed like a Hummingbird

Introduce people to the hummingbird flower.

Cut off the end of a wax candy and make sure the opening is round. It may get a little pinched when cutting.

Insert wax tube in florist tube in middle of flower.

Have participant take a straw and place it in their mouth.

Now fly - flap your wings like a hummingbird and without hands try to get the straw into the wax candy.

Reward with sticker in activity book, refer to next activity in area - plant game at Plants for Birds, Shell Game, migration game, duck toss

Remind participant about field note book

Hummingbird Facts

1. What Foods Are in the Hummingbird Diet?

You typically see hummingbirds at nectar blooms and sugar-water feeders, but they also eat tree sap and small insects when flowers are hard to find in the wild. Nectar is the high-octane nourishment that fuels hummingbirds, but they also need body-building protein. They spend considerable time hunting and eating the small insects, spiders and other arthropods that provide the vital compound. Thanks to the fliers' amazing agility and the special adaptation that essentially makes their bills spring-loaded sets of chopsticks, hummingbirds snatch insects out of the air. Hovering, they also glean earthbound prey from spiderwebs, vegetation and other places. Sweet oozing tree sap has a high sugar content, not unlike nectar, so it's also ideal for hummers—but they can't access it without a little help. Sapsuckers drill holes into trees for their food, creating rows of sap wells.



Some hummingbird species then readily feast on the sap from these wells.

2. Hummingbirds Lap Up Nectar and Sugar Water

A casual observer might suggest that hummingbirds use their long, thin, dainty beaks like straws. Their tongues function as a tiny pump to suck the sought-after sweet liquid from feeders and flowers. Each bird has a thin tongue that forks at the tip, springing open to gather fluid; then the tongue retracts as the bill squeezes shut, compressing the tongue and allowing the bird to lap up the nectar. Hummers repeat this 15 to 20 times per second.

3. Do Hummingbirds Return to the Same Place?

If you think the same hummingbirds come to your feeders and flowers every year, you might be right! Banding research shows they are likely to return to the area where they hatched.



4. Hummingbirds Are Long Distance Migrants

An interesting hummingbird fact: Rufous hummingbirds migrate farther than any other North American species. They travel 4,000 miles from Mexico to Alaska every spring. Most ruby-throats spend the cold

months between southern Mexico and northern Panama.



5. Hummingbirds Migrate Alone

Hummingbirds are solitary migrants, so you won't see them traveling in flocks. Wintering grounds vary by species. This is why you should keep feeders up for late migrating fall hummingbirds.



6. There Are Hundreds of Hummingbird Species

All of the approximately 340 living hummingbird species are entirely and uniquely North and South American. They live anywhere from Alaska to the southernmost tip of South America. They're so varied that adjectives from the expanse of the dictionary are insufficient to describe these bird species. However, only 15 types of hummingbirds are regularly spotted in the United States.

7. What Color Are Hummingbirds?

Hummers vary tremendously in the color and arrangement of their iridescent parts. Even among the handful of hummingbird species that are widespread in the United States, the array of colors is impressive. The male Allen's and rufous hummers have blazing red-orange throats. The beautiful male Anna's hummer has an incredible iridescent magenta throat, face and crown. And the closely related Costa's hummingbird, whose neck feathers taper into long mustache-like points on each side, has a head wrapped in royal purple.



8. What Are the Colorful Patches on Their Necks?

With just a turn of the head, a hummingbird explodes in iridescent radiance. Its gorget (the patch of colorful feathers covering its throat) instantly blazes in shades that span the color spectrum, depending on the species. These dazzling colors come from the feather structure rather than pigmentation. Each iridescent feather has tiny spikes that are densely packed with many layers of microscopic structures filled with air bubbles. These structures reflect light, says Bob Sundstrom, a science advisor for BirdNote, “creating color in the manner of sun glinting off an oily film on water.



9. Hummingbird Nests Are Tiny

Even if you know many hummingbird facts, it’s a special treat to find one of their nests. The average nest is about the size of a half-dollar coin. The eggs inside the tiny structure look like mini white jelly beans.



10. Hummingbirds Build Nests With Spiderwebs

It takes less than a week (about five to seven days) for a hummingbird to build its nest. Built by females only, nests are made of lichen, moss, and spiderwebs.



11. Hummingbirds Are Territorial Birds

Hummingbirds can be very territorial and will try to protect their food sources: both flowers and feeders. They spend a lot of time chasing other birds away.



12. How Do Hummingbirds Choose Flowers?

Another fascinating hummingbirds fact—they have superb visual acuity. They see color even better than we do, with their vision extending into the ultraviolet spectrum. Their eyes are adapted to see warm shades better than cooler shades. This ability to easily pick out orange, yellow and red flowers amid a sea of cool green led to the long-held assumption that they prefer red over other colors. Scientists have since learned that the richness of the nectar matters more than the color of its source. The birds are quick learners, and it is nourishment they are after. With the right flowers and feeders, you can attract them to your yard, too.



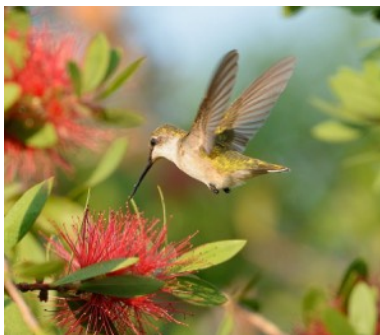
13. Hummingbirds Take Quick Breaths

While resting, the average 4-inch hummingbird takes about 150 breaths per minute.



14. Hummingbirds Can Hover and Fly Backward

No other bird can match the hummingbird for agility on the wing. They can hover in midair at flowers and feeders, and they're the only birds that can fly backward. Their wings move in a figure-eight pattern, which allows them to maneuver with ease. Other birds create the lift needed for flight with each downstroke of their wings. In other words, typical bird flight is achieved by flapping the wings up and down. Hummingbirds, however, rotate or twist their upper arm bones to invert their wings and gain lift from the upstroke as well as the downstroke. The result? It's a fact that hummingbirds are the most agile birds on the planet.



15. How Fast Do Hummingbirds Fly?

Known for erratic and agile movements, hummingbirds beat their wings more than 50 times per second, and even faster in extreme flight mode.



16. Some Hummingbirds Sing

Though not as vocal as songbirds, it's a hummingbird fact that some species, specifically male Anna's and Costa's, are regular singers. With other species, the most common sounds are aggressive calls, which resemble chattering or

squealing. You'll hear them when several



17. Hummingbirds Love Birdbaths

A birdbath with a small mister, bubbler, or sprayer attracts hummingbirds. It's a rare sight, but they might fly through the mist of a lawn sprinklers, too! Hummingbirds meticulously preen their feathers. In that respect, they are like race car drivers who take immense care to keep all parts of their automobiles in perfect working order. Hummers love to take a shower—or even a bath—using water to help clean their plumage, and they are attracted to gardens with water features, intentional or not. Of course, hummers visit birdbaths and other standing-water features as well.

Migration Myths

Hummingbird Myth: Hummingbirds hitch rides on the backs of geese as they migrate south.

Hummingbird Fact: This legend is entertaining, but untrue. Hummingbirds and Canada geese migrate at different times and to different destinations.

Hummingbird Myth: All hummingbirds migrate.

Hummingbird Fact: Most, but not all, hummingbirds migrate south for winter. The Anna's hummingbird stays along the west coast year-round.

Hummingbird Myth: Leaving hummingbird feeders up late into fall delays migration south.

Hummingbird Fact: You won't interfere with hummingbirds' migration. They know to fly south as the days get shorter.

Do Hummingbirds Sip Nectar?

Hummingbird Myth: Hummingbirds sip nectar through their bills like a straw.

Hummingbird Fact: Hummingbirds use their tongues to lap up nectar and sugar water at about 13 licks per second.

Should Sugar Water be Red?

Hummingbird Myth: Adding red dye to sugar water will attract more hummingbirds.

Hummingbird Fact: It isn't necessary to add dye to sugar water. Feeders with red parts do the trick to attract their attention.

Hummingbird Myth: Hummingbirds eat only nectar and sugar water.

Hummingbird Fact: Insects and small spiders are also an important part of a hummingbird's diet. Predators of Hummingbirds

Hummingbird Myth: Hummingbirds' only natural predators are other, larger birds.

Hummingbird Fact: Besides other birds like hawks, hummers have to watch out for cats, spiders, snakes and even frogs. Gardening for Hummingbirds

Myth: Hummingbirds feed only from red flowers.

Fact: While red blooms draw them in, these tiny fliers will gladly feed from any color flower that produces nectar.