



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Archilochus colubris

Legends say that hummingbirds float free of time, carrying our hopes for love, joy and celebration. The hummingbird's delicate grace reminds us that life is rich, beauty is everywhere, every personal connection has meaning and that laughter is life's sweetest creation.

~Papyrus

Hummer Tips:

- Smallest of all birds being 3.5 inches long and weigh 3.1-3.4 grams
- Avian precision fliers, masters at hovering and the only birds able to also fly backwards and upside down
- Have the fastest heart rate, the fastest wing beat (40-80 beats per second), the fastest metabolism and the largest heart, in proportion to body size of any bird
- Binocular vision to see your feeder from $\frac{3}{4}$ mile
- Cats are their main predator
- Generally in October they migrate to South America for winter taking 18-24 hours to fly across the Gulf, they are expected back to our area by early April
- Nest is the size of large thimble, built directly on top of a branch, made of thistle or dandelion down, held together with strands of spider silk and camouflaged with bits of lichen and moss
- Have one of the highest nesting success rates of any neotropical migrant, generally lay two eggs, each about the size of a small jelly bean or Tic Tac candy



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Feeders and flower gardens are great ways to attract these birds, as some people turn their yards into buzzing clouds of hummingbirds each summer.

~Cornell Lab

Hummer Diet:

- Feed on soft-bodied insects for half their diet
- Ingest up to eight times their weight in solid food and liquid every day
- Tongue is longer than their bill to lap nectar, 12 times a second

Nectar food for feeders:

- 4:1 ratio, Mix 4 parts water to 1 part table sugar
- Use common sugar (sucrose) without any other alternatives or substitutions like honey or sweeteners
- Do not use red dye
- Heat until sugar is melted, cool and refrigerate

Feeders:

- Place feeders out early (April 1) and continue feeding through November for the hungry migrants, this encourages them to migrate and will not make them stay
- Choose feeders that are easy to take apart for cleaning with hot soapy water to remove mold, rinse thoroughly
- Change the nectar and clean every 2-4 days before it grows cloudy or discolored, change more frequently in hot weather and discard unused nectar
- Feeder placement should be in the shade, being careful that cats cannot hide and stalk these birds

Ant guard at top of feeder which holds water to prevent ants from crossing to feeder

Bee guards on the feeding stations with perches for longer viewing



Roanoke Valley Bird Club

Photographers: Nesting (left) Mary Lou Barritt and (right) Diana Sissy Logan, Carol Whiteside

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www.roanokevalleybirdclub.com