

HUMMINGBIRD GARDEN

Our Future Flies on the Wings of Pollinators

Hummingbirds play an important role in the food web, pollinating a variety of flowering plants, some of which are specifically adapted to pollination by hummingbirds.

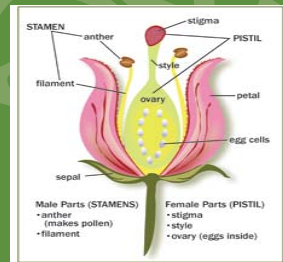
There are more than 300 species of hummingbirds in the world, all of which are found only in the western hemisphere, from southeastern Alaska to southern Chile. While hummingbirds exist in a wide range of climates and environments, many more species can be found in the tropics than in temperate zones.

Many North American hummingbird species are migratory, covering enormous distances each year as they journey between summer breeding ground in the north and overwintering areas in the south.

Hummingbirds feed by day on nectar from flowers, including annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs, and vines. They feed while hovering or, if possible, while perched. They also eat insects, such as fruit-flies and gnats, and will consume tree sap, when it is available.

What is pollination?

Pollination is the process of moving a pollen grain from the anther (male part) of a flower to the stigma (female part). This can happen through wind and water pollination or through the work of animals (pollinators) that move pollen within the flower and from bloom to bloom. This is the first step in a process that produces seeds, fruits, and the next generation of plants.



Who are the pollinators?

Birds, bats, butterflies, moths, flies, beetles, wasps, small mammals, and most importantly, bees are pollinators. Pollinators visit flowers to feed on nectar, pollen or both. When moving from flower to flower, they transfer pollen. Bees gather pollen to feed their larvae.



Hummingbird Facts:

At about 2.25 inches (5 centimeters) long and weighing 0.07 ounces (2 grams), the Bee Hummingbird (*Mellisuga helenae*) is the smallest living bird in the world.

A hummingbird's heart beats up to 1,260 beats per minute (a resting human heart beats 60-100 beats per minute!). When sleeping, a hummingbird can enter a state of torpor where its heartrate drops to as low as 50 beats per minute in order to slow its metabolism and conserve energy.

Hummingbirds flap their wings around 20-80 times per second, allowing them to hover in midair and making them the only bird that can fly backwards.

Hummingbirds lap up nectar with their tongues rather than use their beak as a straw and can lick 10-15 times per second while feeding.



Ruby-throated Hummingbird

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) is the only hummingbird found in the eastern U.S., crossing the Gulf of Mexico each year as it migrates between overwintering sites in Central Mexico and summer breeding grounds in the eastern U.S. and Canada.

