



Promoting Hummingbirds

How You Can Help Them

Why are hummingbirds important?

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. Some tropical hummingbirds are at risk, like other pollinators, due to habitat loss and changes in the distribution and abundance of nectar plants.

Where are they found?

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. 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 grounds and overwintering areas.



Photo Michael Duncan



Photo Hugh Vandever

6 things you can do for hummingbirds

1. Provide food by planting nectar plants or with careful use of feeder
2. Join a citizen science project
 - www.hummingbirdsathome.org
 - www.ebird.org
 - www.rubythroat.org
 - www.feederwatch.org
3. Provide a water source (e.g. fountain, sprinkler, or birdbath with a mister)
4. Donate to organizations that support hummingbird and pollinator conservation
5. Join the Million Pollinator Garden Challenge at www.pollinator.org/million
6. Learn more at www.pollinator.org/hummingbirds



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What do they need?

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

Native Nectar Plants – The best way to support hummingbirds and other pollinators in your area is to plant native nectar plants.

For planting recommendations, check out the regional land management guides at www.pollinator.org/hummingbirds.

Hummingbird Feeders – Consider putting out hummingbird feeders in order to attract and support resident and migrating hummingbird populations.

- Red colored feeders typically are the most attractive to hummingbirds.
- Place the feeder in a shady spot at least a few feet off the ground
- There is no need to use colored nectar; it is unnecessary to attract hummingbirds and its health effects are unknown.
- Fill with purified water and 20-30% refined (white) sugar (never saccharine, artificial sweeteners, honey, or brown sugar).
- Clean frequently to prevent fermentation or proliferation of fungi and bacteria.

Water Hummingbirds get adequate water from the nectar and insects they consume. However, they are attracted to running water, such as a fountain, sprinkler, birdbath with a mister, or waterfall.

What are the hummingbird's challenges?

Habitat Loss

Hummingbirds are often specially adapted to their particular environment and food sources.

As a result, many hummingbird species are incredibly sensitive to environmental change and dependent on the continued availability of their preferred habitat. While none of the hummingbird species in the U.S. are currently of conservation concern, some in Mexico and in Central and South America are at risk due mainly to conversion of their native habitats to agriculture.

Climate Change

Climate change will likely have major impacts on hummingbirds through rapid alterations of natural landscapes, especially for tropical species that have small, specialized ranges. Climate change is also predicted to enhance pressures from invasive species.

Invasive Plant Species

People often plant nonnative plants for their ornamental value, but some exotics can become invasive and rapidly crowd out local native species. Planting nonnatives to attract hummingbirds can disrupt ecosystems and should be avoided.

Maintaining and improving habitat for hummingbirds in the United States

The Pollinator Partnership teamed up with the U.S. Forest Service to develop regional



Photo Dan Garber

land manager's guides for maintaining and improving hummingbird habitat. The guides provide general information and native plant lists for 6 regions of the western U.S., as well as the eastern U.S. While the guides were intended for use by restoration managers, the concepts and planting recommendations apply to anyone who wishes to improve habitat for hummingbirds. Visit www.pollinator.org/hummingbirds to download your regional land management guide.



Photo David Inouye

You may also be interested in the following brochures available at www.pollinator.org

- Protecting Monarchs
- Solving Your Pest Problems Without Harming Pollinators
- Your School and Pollinators

The North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC) is a collaborative body of over 140 organizations that work for the protection of pollinators across Mexico, Canada and the United States.

For more information please contact info@pollinator.org or 415-362-1137 or visit www.pollinator.org.