



# HUMMINGBIRD FEEDERS 101

**SETTING UP, CLEANING, REFILLING,  
MAINTAINING, AND ENJOYING A  
HUMMINGBIRD FEEDER**



# FILLING THE FEEDER

Hummingbirds may be some of the smallest birds in the world, but fluttering those tiny wings can be quite a workout. Flapping away at up to 90 beats per second burns up calories fast; to maintain their momentum, hummingbirds need to eat—a lot! To satisfy their speedy metabolisms, these busy birds consume half their body weight in bugs and nectar, feeding every 10-15 minutes and visiting 1,000-2,000 flowers per day.

You can help these hardworking foragers get the nutrients they need by providing them with their favorite post-workout meal—nectar. This hummingbird sweet treat can be made right at home with a few simple ingredients. By filling your feeder with this DIY delight, you can complement nectar-rich plants and watch these beautiful little birds feed and flitter all day.



# NECTAR RECIPE

## Materials:

¼ cup refined white sugar \*

1 cup boiling water

Bowl

Spoon

**\*NOTE:** only use refined white sugar! Plain white table sugar is sucrose, which, when mixed with water, very closely mimics the chemical composition of natural nectar. Honey can promote dangerous fungal growth, while organic, natural, and raw sugars contain levels of iron that could be harmful.

## Steps:

1. Mix sugar and boiling water until sugar is dissolved.
2. Cool and fill feeder.

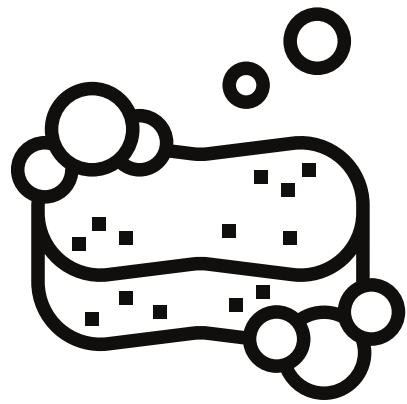
You can make a large batch and refrigerate the extra solution, just make sure to bring it up to room temperature before you re-fill the feeder.





# FEEDER MAINTENANCE

In hot weather, the feeder should be emptied and cleaned twice per week. In cooler weather, once per week is enough. If your hummingbirds empty the feeder with greater frequency, clean it every time it's empty.

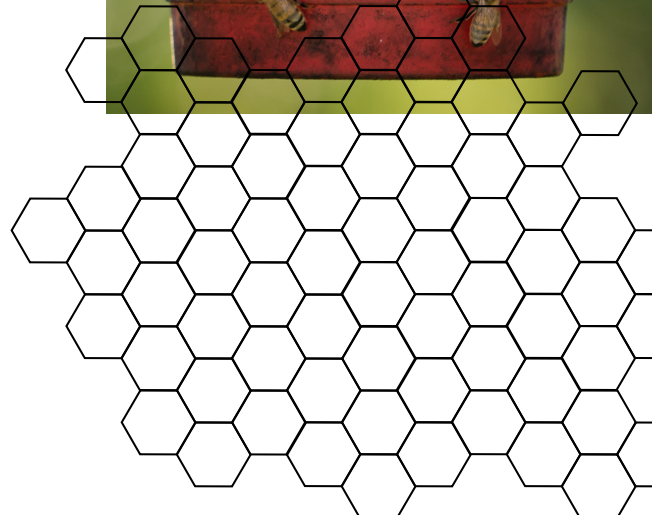


Cleaning with hot tap water works fine, or use a weak vinegar solution. Avoid using dish soaps, as this can leave harmful residue in the feeder.



# FEEDER PESTS

The sugar water in the feeders can also attract some unwanted visitors, mainly ants, bees, and wasps. These uninvited guests can be both bothersome and sometimes dangerous to hummingbirds and people. If an ant colony discovers your feeder, you will have to move it to a new location because ants are known to completely take over the feeder and can bring disease and contamination. While bees do not pose as much of an issue, hummingbirds and bees do not like to feed alongside one another. It's important to keep wasps away from the feeder as well because they can be very aggressive and have been reported to go as far as aggressively chasing and stinging hummingbirds.

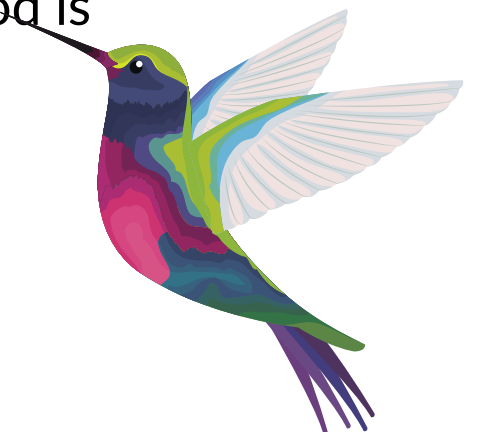


To avoid these pests, place your feeder away from garbage cans and make sure the feeder is not leaking. Bees and wasps are attracted to the color yellow, so try to use a feeder that does not have any yellow. Finally, if pests do discover the feeder, moving it just a few feet away also works really well. You can also try taking it down for a couple of days and put it up again once you notice the wasps have stopped coming by to look for it.



# HUMMINGBIRDS

Hummingbirds are birds native to the Americas and make up the biological family *Trochillidae*. There are about 360 different species of hummingbird that are found all the way from Alaska to the southern tip of Chile in Tierra del Fuego. However, the vast majority of the species are found in the tropics. Their tiny body size and long, skinny beaks are specialized for feeding on nectar, but all species also consume insects or spiders. Hummingbirds have the highest mass-specific metabolic rate (rate of energy expenditure per unit of time) of any homeothermic animal (meaning animals that maintain stable internal body temperatures regardless of external influences). To conserve energy when food is scarce and every night when they're not foraging, they can go into torpor (a state similar to hibernation) and slow their metabolic rate to 1/15 of its normal rate.

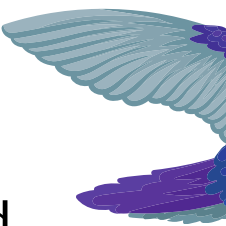
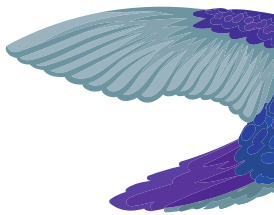
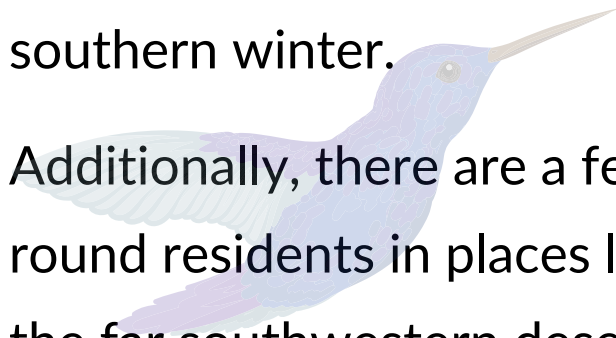
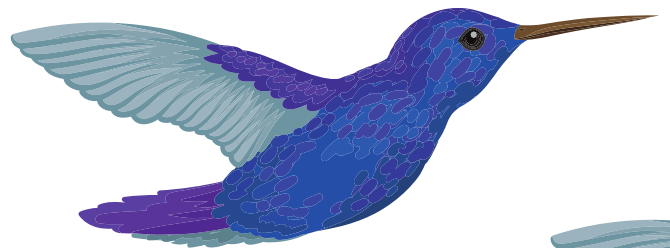
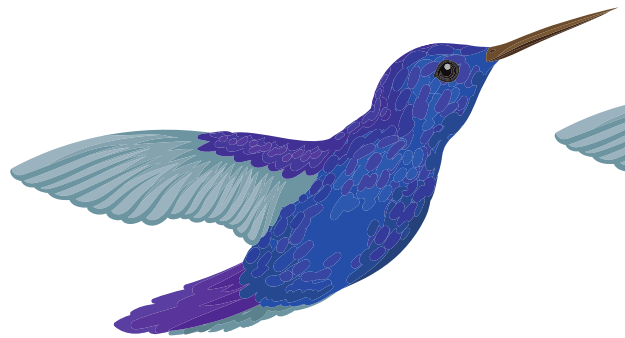




# MIGRATION

Most North American hummingbirds breed in the spring and summertime then migrate southward in fall to winter in Mexico, the Caribbean, or Central America. A few southern South American species also move north to the tropics during the southern winter.

Additionally, there are a few species that are year-round residents in places like Florida, California, and the far southwestern desert regions of the US. Every species's migration timeline and route is different, so read about each species you may see in Colorado Springs below to learn more about when they'll be arriving!



# BREEDING, BEHAVIOR, AND TERRITORIALITY



Hummingbirds live very solitary lives and only come together to mate (or occasionally grudgingly share a hummingbird feeder). So, you will not see flocks of hummingbirds migrate or flock in groups. They are territorial birds, and both male and female hummingbirds will fiercely protect their areas. Each territory is chosen based on the abundance of food, nectar, and water, and many territories are about a quarter of an acre large. Females define their territories by the tiny cup-shaped nests they build.

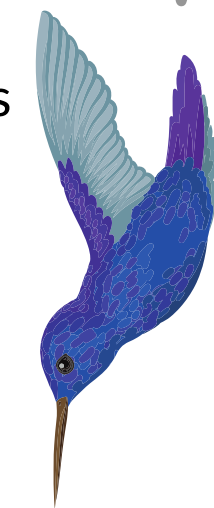


Male hummingbirds are particularly aggressive. They set up their territory and will chase off any male that comes near, which helps them eliminate the competition for the female hummingbirds in the area.

Female hummingbirds do not let male hummingbirds near a nest because the male hummingbird's bright colors might alert predators in the area to the nest location, so if there is only one male hummingbird in the area, the female will only have to worry about chasing away one male hummingbird. So to avoid hummingbirds from being too aggressive with one another, it's important to put out a lot of hummingbird feeders spaced far apart.



When hummingbirds are ready to mate, the male hummingbird will puff out his chest and throat to show off his beautiful colored feathers and toss his head from side to side so the feathers will flash in the light. They also will do a mating dance for the females to attract their attention and rapidly fly back and forth in front of them. Lastly, male hummingbirds also perform courtship dives in front of females. In this demonstration, a male will fly about 60 feet into the air then turn right around and dive as fast as possible toward the ground. While diving, he will make various buzzing, popping, and whistling sounds. Then, when he's in front of the female, he arcs his flight straight up in the air about 60 feet above the ground and does it all again several times. When female hummingbirds are ready to mate and have accepted a partner, the female will perch on a branch while spreading out her tail feathers to signal she is ready to mate. Mating lasts about four seconds, and afterwards, both the male and female leave each other. The female will build a nest, lay eggs (usually two), and raise the young, while the male will start to look for another



# COMMON SPECIES

## BROAD-TAILED HUMMINGBIRD

### Appearance:

The most common species of hummingbird in the Springs. They usually arrive in Colorado in late April-late May and stay until September when they migrate back to Mexico and Central America. Broad-tailed Hummingbirds, though tiny, are medium-sized for a North American hummingbird. They have a slender body, a big head, and a long straight bill. Its tail is relatively long for a hummingbird, extending beyond the wingtips when perched. The Broad-tailed Hummingbird is iridescent green above with greenish or buffy flanks and a white chest and line down the belly. Adult males have a rose-magenta throat patch (gorget). Females and juveniles have green spots on their throats and cheeks and a pale eyering. When they spread their tail in flight, they flash white tail tips.



### Behavior:

Broad-tailed Hummingbirds zip from flower to flower, hovering above flowers to drink nectar. When males are zipping around they make a loud metallic-sounding trill with their wings. Males also perform aerial displays, flying high into the sky and rapidly diving towards the ground making a shrill metallic trill with their wings.

# RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD

## Appearance:

In July and August, you may see Rufous Hummingbirds, which pass through Colorado on their migration route on their way back to Mexico. A fairly small hummingbird with a slender, nearly straight bill, a tail that tapers to a point when folded, and fairly short wings that don't reach the end of the tail when the bird is perched. In good light, male Rufous Hummingbirds glow like coals: bright orange on the back and belly, with a vivid iridescent-red throat. Females are green above with rufous-washed flanks, rufous patches in the green tail, and often a spot of orange in the throat.



**MALE**



**FEMALE**

## Behavior:

Rufous Hummingbirds have the hummingbird gift for fast, darting flight and pinpoint maneuverability. They are pugnacious birds that tirelessly chase away other hummingbirds, even in places they're only visiting on migration. Like other hummers, they eat insects as well as nectar, taking them from spider webs or catching them in midair.



# BLACK-CHINNED HUMMINGBIRD

## Appearance:

Black-chinned Hummingbirds arrive in Colorado in late May-mid June and stay until September before migrating back to Mexico for the winter. They are small and fairly slender with a relatively straight bill. Dull metallic green above and dull grayish-white below. Males have a velvety black throat with a thin, iridescent purple base. Females have a pale throat. In both sexes, the flanks are glossed with dull metallic green. Female's three outer tail feathers have broad white tips. The bill is black.



## Behavior:

Hovers at flowers and feeders, darts erratically to take tiny swarming insects, perches atop high snags to survey its territory, watching for competitors to chase off and for flying insects to eat. During courtship and territorial defense, males display by diving 66-100 feet.

# LESS COMMON SPECIES



**RIVOLI**



**RUBY-THROATED**



**COSTA'S**



**ANNA'S**



**CALLIOPE**



**BROAD-BILLED**

These species aren't seen often in Colorado Springs, but they can pop up from time to time, especially during migration from March to May. These pictures represent male plumage for each species.

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