

Ruby-throated Hummingbird

(Archilochus colubris)



DID YOU KNOW:

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only species of hummingbird that breeds east of the Rocky Mountains.

EATING HABITS:

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds eat floral nectar and small insects; they often come to feeders filled with nectar-mix. When nectar is scarce, they will also consume tree sap. They consume twice their body weight each day. While eating, they hover above the plant, using their long tongues to lap up the nectar. Hummingbirds feed almost constantly, at least every ten minutes.

THE YOUNG:

A hummingbird mom lays two to three eggs in the spring. Mom is solely responsible for the chicks - she incubates the eggs and feeds the babies when they hatch. The chicks stay in the nest for about three weeks, though Mom keeps feeding them for a few days more.



HABITAT (HOME):

These hummingbirds are 'neo-tropical migrants'; they spend their summers east of the Rocky Mountains and their winters in Southern Mexico, Central America and the West Indies. They are found in deciduous and pine forests, orchards and gardens.

DEFENSIVE HABITS:

Hummingbirds are extremely aggressive and have been known to attack cats and other birds. They also fly extremely fast (up to 50 miles an hour) and can maneuver forward, backward, up or down.

UNUSUAL FACTS:

- Hummingbirds fly non-stop across the Gulf of Mexico. They cover nearly two thousand miles in a few days traveling to and from their breeding areas.
- Hummingbirds are found only in the Western hemisphere and most spend their entire lives in the tropics. There are about 320 species and only a few (about 16) migrate to North America.
- Ruby-throated Hummingbirds are the smallest birds in our area. They are about 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and weigh about .1 ounce (less than a penny).
- During regular flight, females beat their wings about 53 times a second; for males the rate rises to 200 during courtship displays.
- The colors of their feathers is due to crystalline structures that refract sunlight, not to pigment.