



HCTF Education Habitats at Home

Learn how to create habitats that bring nature into your own backyard!

How to.. Attract Hummingbirds



Vibrant Visitors

What hummingbirds may lack in size, they make up for in feistiness! With bright flashes of colour, loud chirps, and acrobatic displays, they're exciting visitors to any garden. They are known as *hummingbirds* because of the humming sounds made by their wings while in flight. They beat their wings so rapidly in a figure-eight motion (up to over 80 beats per second in some species) that they are able to hover and maneuver like no other bird!

Most North American hummingbirds migrate south for the winter and north for the summer. The Rufous hummingbird flies an amazing 6,300kms between Mexico and Alaska! Four species are the most common visitors to British Columbia: Anna's, Rufous, Calliope, and Black-chinned. Read on to learn how to encourage them to visit you!

Planting for Hummingbirds

In planning a hummingbird garden, diversity is key. A wide variety of flowers, shrubs, and vines will provide feeding options over a longer period of the year. Native plants are excellent options as they require less care and watering to thrive. A good nursery can tell you what will grow best in your area.

Some hummingbird favourites include: (clockwise from top left) Trumpet Honeysuckle (*Lonicera ciliosa*), Nodding Onion (*Allium cernuum*), Wild Bergamot (*Monarda fistulosa*), and Red-flowering Currant (*Ribes sanguineum*).



Feeders

Weighing only a few grams, hummingbirds power their impressive flights with a diet of small insects and flower nectar. Hummingbirds will gratefully supplement with sugar nectar, especially in cold weather when insects and flowers are scarce.

Choosing a feeder: There are many designs of feeders to choose from. The most important thing is that they are easy to keep clean. Look for designs with clear reservoirs that assemble easily.

Placement: Choose an open area where predators such as cats can't sneak up on the feeder. On, or within 30cm of a window is a good place, as diners will be flying at lower speeds close to the feeder and are likelier to avoid a window collision. Alternately, a feeder can safely be placed 4m or more away from a window. The location you choose should be easy to reach for cleaning and refilling.

Cleaning: Hummingbird feeders should be cleaned frequently — at least once a week, more often in hot weather. Nectar allowed to sit in a feeder can grow mould and bacteria, so regular washing is essential for hummingbird health.

Feeding in winter: Anna's hummingbirds are known to over-winter on Southern Vancouver Island, the Gulf Islands, and the Lower Mainland. Feeders help them survive through snow and frosty weather, but be aware of your commitment. Hummingbirds relying on your feeder can suffer if it goes empty or freezes. Do not put out a feeder in the fall if you are unable to maintain it through the winter.

When temperatures drop below zero, sugar nectar can freeze. Some people put a heat lamp nearby to warm the area, but be careful not to let surfaces get too hot. Otherwise, the feeder can be brought in overnight. Make sure to put it out early the next morning, hummingbirds will be up and hungry at first light!



Recipe for sugar nectar

The closest thing to flower nectar is a mixture of white granulated sugar and water. **DO NOT USE** brown sugar, honey, agave, stevia, molasses, commercial hummingbird mixes, or other sweeteners. They all contain additives that can harm hummingbirds, including red dye.

1 part white granulated sugar

4 parts water

Add ingredients to a pot on the stove. Stir at medium heat until sugar is fully dissolved. Allow mixture to cool to room temperature before filling feeder. Sugar nectar can be kept in the fridge for later use.



Hummingbirds of British Columbia

Rufous Hummingbird *Selasphorus rufus*

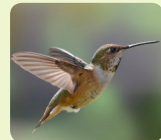
Rufous hummingbirds are known for their extraordinary flight skills, flying up to 3,200 km during their migratory transits. In spring they travel north throughout BC and nest as far north as Alaska. In fall, they head south and spend winter in Mexico.

This species has a reputation for territorial aggression despite being only around 7-9cm long. Adult males are a bright rusty-orange with a white chest and a metallic red throat. Females are greenish above with pale rusty flanks and a white chest. They may have a small patch of metallic red on the throat.

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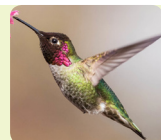


Anna's Hummingbird *Calypte anna*

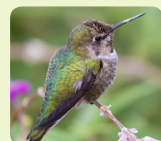
Annas' hummingbirds live year-round on the southern end of Vancouver Island, the Southern Gulf Islands, and on the Lower Mainland around Vancouver. After breeding, they can be found throughout much of the southern and central parts of BC. Occasionally they can be seen as far north as Prince George and Haida Gwaii.

At 9-13cm in length, Anna's are relatively large hummingbirds. Both sexes are metallic green above with light greyish bellies. Adult males display a bright metallic pink "gorget" of feathers around the throat and face, while the females may have only a few pink feathers on the throat.

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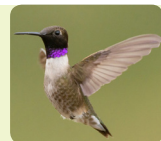


Black-chinned Hummingbird *Archilochus alexandri*

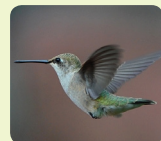
Black-chinned hummingbirds visit and breed in the Kootnays and Southern Interior of BC as far north as the Kamloops area. Winters are spent as far south as Mexico.

The Black-chinned hummingbird is approximately 8.25 cm long with metallic green above, green flanks, and a white chest. Adult males have a black face and chin and a metallic purple throat band. Females have white to buff throats.

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Calliope Hummingbird *Stellula calliope*

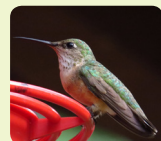
The Calliope hummingbird visits the southern interior of BC where it nests at higher altitudes in mountainous areas. It has been sighted as far north as Williston Lake, north of Prince George. In fall, it travels as far south as Mexico.

The Calliope is the smallest bird found in Canada. It measures 7-10cm in length and weighs only 2-3g, about the same as a ping pong ball. Both sexes have metallic green on the back and crown with white underparts. Adult males have metallic magenta rays on the throat.

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Did You Know?

- The Rufous hummingbird makes one of the longest migratory journeys of any bird in the world, as measured by body size. It's migration from Alaska to Mexico is equivalent to 78,470,000 body lengths.
- During their courtship displays, male Anna's hummingbirds climb up to 40 metres in the air and then swoop down close to a female with a burst of noise produced through their tail feathers.
- Hummingbirds have the highest metabolism of any vertebrate. Metabolism is the process of turning food into energy. They need this energy to fuel their high-powered flight. At night when they are resting, or when food is scarce, they can go into a torpor, a state similar to hibernation to conserve energy.
- Female hummingbirds build a cup-shaped nest on the branch of a tree or shrub. Spiderwebs are used to bind the nest together, making it both strong and able to stretch as the chicks grow.
- There are over 325 species of hummingbirds in the world, all of which are only found in the Americas.
- Hummingbirds have tiny legs and can neither hop nor walk, though they can sort of scoot sideways while perched.

