

Reading/Pattern Recognition **INTERESTING HUMMINGBIRD FACTS**

Hummingbirds are part of the Trochilidae family found only in the Americas. They are unknown in the Eastern Hemisphere. With 343 species, hummingbirds make up the Western Hemisphere's second largest family of birds.

Hummingbirds are built for power and dazzle, hummingbirds are little more than flight muscles covered with feathers. 30% of a hummingbird's weight consists of flight muscles. A Hummingbird's flight speed can average 25-30 mph, and can dive up to 60 mph. The hummingbird's tiny brain, 4.2% of its body weight, is proportionately the largest in the bird kingdom.

Hummingbirds feed through a long, tube-like tongue that darts into the flower's corolla for nectar. The tongue, shaped like a "W", uses capillary action to absorb the nectar much like a paper towel absorbs water. The tongue's brushy tip also traps insects on their own quest for nectar.

Many species that migrate to the U.S. travel impressive distances. Many ruby-throats make a 2,000 mile journey between Canada and Panama. The trip includes a non-stop, 500 mile flight over the Gulf of Mexico.

Hummingbirds are very territorial and will aggressively protect nectar sources especially when migrating. It is important to have several feeders, out of sight of each other, to prevent one hummingbird from dominating your feeders.

Hummingbirds have a unique way of keeping warm or conserving their energy - at night, or any time they cannot get enough food to fuel themselves - they go into torpor - a state in which their metabolic rate is only one-fifteenth that of normal sleep.

A hummingbird can rotate each of its wings in a circle, allowing them to be the only bird which can fly forwards, backwards, up, down, sideways or sit in sheer space. To hover, hummingbirds move their wings forward and backward in a repeated figure eight, much like the arms of a swimmer treading water. Hummingbirds can move instantaneously in any direction, start from its perch at full speed, and doesn't necessarily slow up to land. Hummingbirds can even fly short distances upside down, a trick rollover they employ when being attacked by another bird.

Hummingbirds have weak feet and are more at ease using their wings even to shift in the nest or on a perch.

Hummingbirds do not mate for life - the female raises the young on her own. The male hummingbird is not involved with raising the young. The female does all the work of raising her young alone! Females will lay a clutch of only two white eggs and will produce only one brood per season. The hatchlings will remain in the nest for three weeks.

Hummingbirds can live a decade or more in the wild.

Hummingbirds do not make good songbirds. Most of them manage no more than a few mouse-like chirps, squeaks and twitters, though they deliver them dramatically with quick turns of the head. Hummingbirds do make distinctive "zinging" noises with their wings.

The Spanish names for Hummingbirds are very descriptive of their behavior:

Chupaflor - which means flower-sucker

Picaflor - which means flower nibbler

As well as the more romantic Portuguese Beija-flor or Flower-kisser.

Plants that depend on the hummingbird for pollination do all they can to please. Their blossoms project into the open, where the bird won't get caught in foliage. Their trumpet shapes accommodate the long bills. Their long tubes, lacking perches at the lip, also discourage bees, butterflies and other non-pollinating insects. Hummingbirds have no ability to smell, therefore these flowers do not need to be scented.

Excerpt from [Hummingbirds Forever](#)