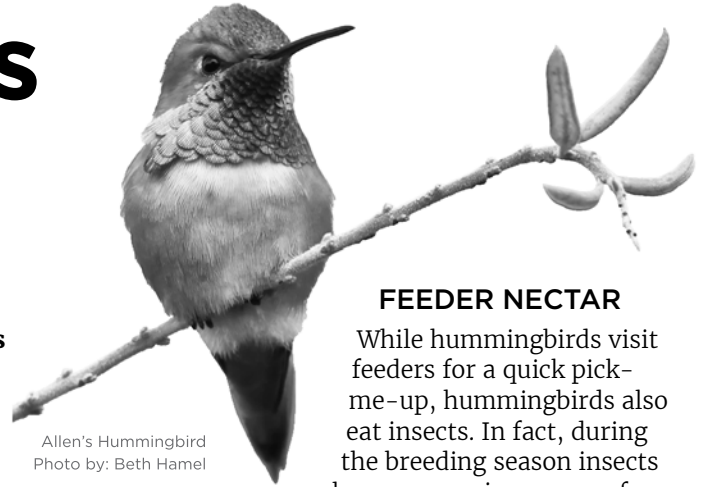




Hummingbirds and Orioles



Allen's Hummingbird
Photo by: Beth Hamel

The smallest of birds in the world, hummingbirds are found only in the Americas. While the Anna's, Allen's and Black-chinned hummingbirds nest in our Bay Area, we can also observe Rufous, Costa's and Calliope passing through during migration. The Anna's Hummingbird is the species we most often see in our Santa Clara County gardens.

Hanging feeders and planting flowers that hummingbirds love are two good ways to attract these feisty flyers to your yard. Hummingbirds, like all birds, see in color and are attracted to the color red. The tongue of a hummingbird helps in the drinking of nectar as it extends beyond the tip of the bill, providing a greater reach for food whether in a feeder or a flower. Nature's perfect little pollinators visit flower after flower drinking nectar from each bloom. Hummingbirds are unique in that they have the ability to hover and fly backwards, making them so much fun to watch.

MALE HUMMINGBIRDS

A male Anna's Hummingbird may claim your feeder as his own, guarding it fiercely. This is normal behavior. The males are more colorful than females with a magenta throat and head. If you want to attract more hummingbirds to your yard we recommend hanging your feeders out of view of each other.

FEEDER SIZE

An 8-ounce feeder is our most popular size because it holds just the right amount of sugar water for most people's backyard hummingbirds for at least three days. If your home is situated in a migration path and you have so many hummingbirds you cannot keep your feeders filled, then a larger size feeder may work for you.

FEEDER STYLE

- The *saucer style* has a dish with a lid containing the openings where the hummer will insert its tongue to drink nectar. We find this to be a good design as they are easy to clean.
- The *bottle with reservoir style* has worked well for generations. Choose a style with a base you can take apart for cleaning. Have a bottlebrush handy so you can clean the bottle.
- The *glass ball with a spigot style* are problematic due to their propensity to leak so we don't carry them in our store.

FEEDER PLACEMENT

Feeder can be hung by a hook at the edge of a tree and bush, eave or a shepherd's hook, but most people want to be able to see it from the house. Window mount feeders are also popular. Place the feeder in a shady area with preferably only morning sun during the day.

FEEDER NECTAR

While hummingbirds visit feeders for a quick pick-me-up, hummingbirds also eat insects. In fact, during the breeding season insects become a major source of food, so hummingbirds are seen less often coming to hummingbird feeders. If you have salt-softened water, we advise using filtered water. Ideally, make your nectar fresh every time or make some up ahead of time and keep in the refrigerator. Sugar water ferments and bacteria develops

HUMMINGBIRD NECTAR RECIPE

1-part granulated sugar to 4-parts water shaken or stirred until dissolved. We sell pre-packaged fine granulated sugar in the store.

quickly, so your pre-made nectar's shelf life in the refrigerator is two weeks maximum. As for the nectar in your feeders, if your hummingbird feeder is hanging in direct sunlight, the sugar water will start to ferment quickly. When the nectar gets cloudy, change it. If you see black mold, clean it thoroughly.

Is refined white sugar healthy for hummingbirds? Scientifically, sugar water is the closest to the nectar found in flowers and preferred by

hummingbirds. Experts discourage use of brown or raw sugar because there are too many impurities in these types of sugars. Honey, artificial sweeteners, preservatives and red food coloring are dangerous for the birds. Do not use liquid concentrate nectar (usually artificially red in color) which contains the preservative sodium benzoate and has long term negative effects on hummingbirds

FEEDER CLEANING

Use white vinegar to clean feeder parts. For stubborn mold, briefly heat up the vinegar and soak the parts. Bleach is too strong for hummingbirds and dishwashing detergent leaves a residue. Bottlebrushes, foam mops and port brushes are excellent tools to make cleaning easier, all of which are available in our store.

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As a general rule: change your feeder once a week when it is cool and two to three times a week when it is warm.
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FEEDER PESTS — ANTS, BEES, WASPS

Ants emit formic acid, which is very unpleasant tasting to the hummingbirds. Some saucer style feeders come with a built in ant moat. There are also add-on water ant traps. Some feeders have add-on bee guards and some feeders have tricks to keeping the sugar water out of reach of wasps by limiting the amount of nectar into the base. Quick trick: try putting Vick's Vapo-Rub around each port. While it does not harm the birds, bees and wasps don't like the taste or the feel of the ointment on their feet.



FEEDER PROTECTION AND ATTRACTANT

Red baffles and weather guards are available to protect your feeder from the sun, rain and the droppings of other birds and serves as an attractant.

NESTING

Female Anna's Hummingbirds may start building their nests as early as December. They are all single moms and by putting out Songbird Essentials hummingbird nesting material you can make her gathering chores a little easier. She will also collect spider webs, bits of moss and lichen and plant down to line her nest where she will lay two tiny eggs. Since she will start nesting as early as December and as late as July, it is important to delay tree trimming and to discontinue use of pesticides so that she and her babies are unharmed during this critical time.

OTHER FEEDER VISITORS

Unlike hummingbirds, orioles are songbirds. Included in the Icteridae (blackbird) family, there are roughly ten different kinds of orioles in North America. Here in the west we get only two species: the Bullock's and the Hooded. The males of both species are beautifully colored birds with bright yellow, orange and black with white feathers. The females are softer yellow with gray to olive backs. After spending the winter in Central America, they migrate north each spring to nest and raise young. They start to arrive as early as March and are gone by mid-September. Hooded Orioles weave their nests out of plant fibers stripped from the Mexican Fan



Orioles on feeder.
Photo by: Tony Woo

Palm and have expanded their range northward because of the proliferation of Mexican Fan Palms used in landscaping.

Bullock's Orioles also build hanging nests, but they weave various materials including horsehair, grasses, wool, and twine. Their nests can be found in different types of trees in both populated urban parks and isolated rural settings. Both oriole species are shy and often heard before seen, chattering and whistling as they move about the treetops.

While they are insectivores and spend a lot of time looking for bugs, they also sip nectar from flowers and have learned to drink sugar water from hummingbird feeders. Orioles are attracted to citrus, so manufacturers have incorporated the color orange into oriole nectar feeders. Oriole feeders are hummingbird feeders on steroids to accommodate the eight-inch bird more comfortably than the four-inch hummingbird.

We hope to see you at the Los Gatos Birdwatcher where our staff will be glad to help you select your next feeder.

LOS GATOS BIRDWATCHER

King's Court Shopping Center | 792 Blossom Hill Road, Los Gatos, CA 95032

HOURS: Monday-Saturday, 10am-6pm; Sunday 12pm-5pm

408-358-9453 | FAX: 408-358-4673 | info@losgatosbirdwatcher.com | losgatosbirdwatcher.com | 

Our mission at Los Gatos Birdwatcher is to educate, share adventures, and have fun through the love and experience of birds and nature.