

Get to know the Ruby-throated Hummingbird

Bees and butterflies are not our only important pollinators — hummingbirds play an essential role in dispersing pollen, as well.

The Ruby-throated hummingbird is native and the most common of its species in the Eastern United States and Florida. It is attracted to orange or red tubular flowers such as native red salvia as well as other salvias that might be easier to find in “big box” stores. These flowers have nectar deep inside their tubes, encouraging hummingbirds to plunge into the flower. The flowers' stamens deposit pollen onto the hummingbird's head and back as it brushes against them while sipping nectar. They are also fond of mosquitoes and spiders.



Ruby-throated hummingbirds are the only hummingbirds that breed on the eastern coast of North America. They arrive in Florida from further south in late February or early March. Some will only pass through on their way to breeding grounds further north, and others will remain to nest in FL in early April. They weigh less than a slice of bread and can migrate across the Gulf of Mexico in less than a day. Hummingbirds in general can fly backwards and even upside down! Its habitat is mostly forests and forest edges that provide enough food. Ruby-throated hummingbirds build tiny nests for their even tinier eggs. They may produce up to three broods in a single year! Also, they have feet - some people think they don't, but they definitely do!

They weigh 0.1oz and have a 4” wingspan. Their diet is nectar from tubular flowers as well as arthropods like mosquitoes and spiders. Their predators are larger birds such as kite and kestrels, domestic cats, lizards, snakes, and nest invaders like blue jays, squirrels, and chipmunks. Females can live up to nine years longer than males.

A hummingbird's favorite time of day to visit the gardens and feed on nectar is usually dawn and dusk, or early in the morning and late in the afternoon before sunset. But even though those two times seem to be their favorite time to eat, hummingbirds can be seen feeding at various times throughout the day.

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are unique and beautiful, but they are so tiny and rapid in flight, that you'll need patience and awareness to spot them.