



Bird Notes

From Northeast Kingdom Audubon
1302 Main Street, Saint Johnsbury, Vermont 05819

For Immediate Release

Summer Hummers

Some may think of an enormous vehicle, most think of the incredible strength and beauty of the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds (*Archilochus colubris*) of our region. Arriving in May to what may be very adverse conditions, these lightweight (0.11 oz), long-distance travelers return from Latin America with a voracious appetite. With your feeders in place by May 1st, a hummer can keep its metabolism going until summer provides the warmth, food supply and opportunities required for reproduction. For the food, stick to a strict four to one rule (water to white sugar, boiled 2-3 minutes) without coloring. The second rule is cleanliness, which keeps them coming back for more –empty, clean and add fresh food every few days especially in warm weather. Hummers combine the many tiny insects around your yard with flower nectar as well.

I read Alexander F. Skutch's book, "The Life of the Hummingbird", every spring for the sheer amazement of it all. He explains, for example, that a hummingbird has the greatest energy output, ounce for ounce, of any known warm-blooded animal – apparently of any animals except insects in flight. It's because they are so darn small, have a high body temperature (102-108 degrees F), and must provide all those wingbeats to maneuver as they do. Fortunately, they do save energy at night when their body temperature may drop 4-7 degrees, or even lower. With some red tubular flowers in your garden such as Bee balm (*Monarda*), and a fresh feeder full of sugar water, ruby throats will delight you all summer long.

Watching these acrobats gives me endless pleasure, whether it is the early courtship dancing, territorial chasing, or high pitch twittering. They provide endless enjoyment. Beware of attracting them to a feeder close to a window through which they can see trees/shrubs in the distance, for they may lose their life trying to reach them.

To learn much more about hummers and to participate in hummingbird monitoring for research purposes, log on to <http://www.nehummers.com>. The site contains many wonderful photographs of hummers of all ages and stages, as well as, all sorts of information. Become a monitor.

If you have any questions about hummers or any other birds in our great Northeast Kingdom, come to the NEK Audubon Annual Meeting on Sunday, July 30th, from 3:00-6:00 p.m. at the Hardwick Trail, the new trail system behind the Hazen Union School in Hardwick, VT. Norma and Ron Wiesen will speak and lead a walk on the history, terrain and plant life of the Hardwick Trails. A potluck supper will follow. (Directions: In Hardwick (by the Village Laundromat), turn right on N. Main Street. At .2 mile, see Hazen Union school on the left. We'll meet in the library.

Happy Humming!

Carolyn E. Boardman is a member of NEK Audubon living in Brownington, Vermont. NEK Audubon is one of 8 chapters of Audubon Vermont and part of the National Audubon Society. NEK Audubon is a non-profit organization that encourages people's enjoyment of birds, wildlife and natural habitats through field trips, programs and publications. For more information about meetings, field trips and special events visit www.nekaudubon.org. Art work by Robin Rothman.