

BIRDING

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fall when hummingbirds fatten themselves up for migration.

- Domestic and feral cats might consider hummingbirds as playful toys, especially with the birds' bright colors and glittering plumage.

- Large insects such as praying mantises and orb-weaver spiders, which may lay in wait for hummingbirds to come too close.

- Large snakes and lizards that can strike at hummingbirds or may also be visiting hummingbird feeders to sip on nectar.

- Large frogs and fish that may mistake low flying hummingbirds for insects, jumping out of the water to snare the birds.

- Avivorous birds such as the loggerhead shrike and greater roadrunner, which will eat any other birds they can catch, even tiny hummers.

- Small birds of prey like the American kestrel, merlin, or sharp-shinned hawk, which hunt large insects as well as small birds like hummingbirds.

- Owls that may spot roosting hummingbirds when the birds are more defenseless in torpor, making them an easy snack to catch.

These predators often stake out feeding areas,

such as hummingbird feeders or flowerbeds, and wait for a hummingbird to come within range before striking. When hummingbirds feed, they are focusing on the food source more than any surrounding threats, and those few moments of sipping can put them at great risk from savvy predators.

As April arrives, the hummingbird feeders can be placed for enticing a closer look at the intriguing bird as they migrate northward or set up housekeeping within your landscape area. Hummingbird Central offers a website with mapping of the migrations of hummingbird sightings in the springtime. Anyone can post their first sighting of a hummingbird on the map and review the progression northward of male or female, including at least 10 different species.

Hummingbirds, like other birds and other animals, need food, water, and shelter, the basic necessities of life. If you provide these, you will soon find hummingbirds in your garden!

Their diet includes small insects, spiders, sap and nectar. Insects are caught in mid-air or found on trees and foliage. Nectar provides the sugar needed to feed the hummingbird's constant energy consumption.

To satisfy the hummingbirds need for nectar,

landscapes can include several types of Lantana, Zinnias, Butterfly Bushes, Pentas, Milkweed, Salvia, Batface Cuphea, Nasturtiums, Coreopsis, and other hummingbird-friendly plants, annuals and perennials.

If you want to supplement by formulating your own hummingbird mixture recipe, remember that nectar found in nature is typically in the range of 12%-35% sugar (sucrose). The solution you prepare should be similar to that found in nature.

Start by using a recommended mix of four parts water to one part sugar, i.e., 20% sugar. You do not have to boil the water, but using warmer water helps dissolve the sugar quicker. Most feeders are approved by hummingbirds, if they can easily access the artificial nectar you are providing.

Other insects, which rely on nectar for their family, such as wasp, yellow jackets, and honey bees as well as ants can compete or overtake the feeders during dearth times. A simple remedy is using your finger and daub a little film of cooking oil around the feeder openings reducing the insect's ability to detect the sweet nectar. With ants the oil film on the hanger will camouflage the scent trail the ants leave for their sisters.

