

Hummingbirds

Hummingbirds are called hummingbirds for the whirring or humming sound their wings make. They are among the smallest of birds, most species measuring in the 7.5–13 cm (3–5 in) range. The smallest is the bee hummingbird from Cuba, and the largest is the giant hummingbird from South America.

Hummingbirds are colourful birds that can fly right, left, up, down, backwards, and even upside down. They also hover in mid-air and can fly at speeds of 34 mph. The hummingbird's feet are used for perching only, and are not used for hopping or walking.

The female hummingbird builds a tiny nest high up in a tree and lays between 1-3 eggs. The young start to fly in 18 to 30 days.

Hummingbirds eat flower nectar, tree sap, pollen and insects. A hummingbird "hawks" insects by flying and diving to snap them up out of the air. They must eat an enormous amount of food each day because of their fast breathing rate, fast heartbeat and high body temperature.

To conserve energy overnight a hummingbird enters a hibernation-like sleep state called torpor. Animals that enter a state of torpor slow their heart rate, breathing, and lower their body temperature.

Hummingbirds are found in deserts, mountains, and plains, but most live in tropical rain forests. Habitat loss and destruction are the hummingbird's main threats.



Quick facts

Diet: Omnivore

Life span: 5 to 9 years

Size: 7.5 - 13 cm

Weight: 2 - 20 grams

Did You Know?



- There are more than 340 species of hummingbirds.

Name: _____

Subject: Themes - Birds

Date: _____

Sheet: Hummingbirds

Read the information sheet about hummingbirds on the previous page and then answer the questions below.

1. How did hummingbirds get their name?

2. What is the smallest species of hummingbird?

3. Where does the giant hummingbird come from?

4. What do hummingbirds use their feet for?

5. What is the average clutch size for a female hummingbird?

6. How much do hummingbirds weigh?

7. Why must hummingbirds eat a large amount of food each day?

8. Describe the word 'torpor' in your own words.

9. Why are hummingbirds an endangered species?
