

Helping Hummingbirds:

Here's how to help hummingbirds
in your own yard.

—Plant flowers hummingbirds enjoy. Bee balm, cardinal flower, and salvia are a few. They especially love bright red tubular flowers. A hummingbird typically visits 1,500 flowers every day.

—Keep a compost pile. In addition to nectar, hummingbirds need the protein they get from eating 600–700 little insects a day. Your compost pile is a great way to attract yummy bugs.

—Offer fresh nectar in feeders every day. Be sure it's fresh, and never dye it red; spoiled nectar can make hummers sick, and red dye can hurt their feathers.

—Keep your cats indoors. Rehabilitators report that being caught by cats is the top reason most species of wild birds come to rehabilitators needing care. Most hummingbirds caught by cats die because they are so small and fragile.

—Don't use pesticides or insecticides on your lawn or flowers. This can poison hummingbirds.

—If a baby hummingbird falls from a nest, put it back. The mother won't reject it because you have handled it.

—If you see hummingbird babies alone in a nest, they probably are not orphans. The mother leaves the nest up to 100 times a day to search for nectar and bugs to feed the nestlings, and may spend only three to five seconds with the babies each time she returns to feed them. Watch the nest—without looking away—for an entire hour for the mother's return to be sure that the mother is really gone.

—No mom? Immediately call your local wildlife rehabilitator. To find one in your area, contact the National Wildlife Rehabilitators Association here: ahnow.org.

Many organizations are working hard to learn more about hummingbirds so they can protect them. Here are some that would appreciate your support:

The International Hummingbird Society provides hummingbird information and endangered species protection: hummingbirdsociety.org.

The Hummingbird Monitoring Society combines scientific research with community involvement to create projects and services that benefit hummingbirds: hummonnet.org.

Operation Ruby Throat offers information about attracting and studying hummingbirds, feeding, banding, and student projects: rubythroat.org.