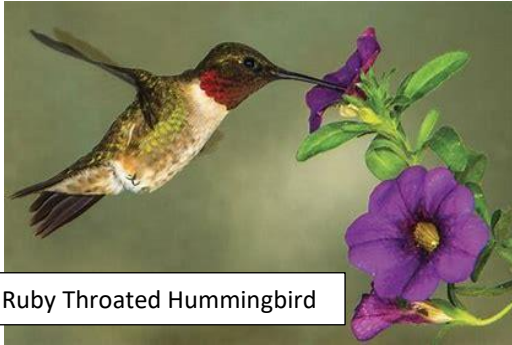


School-to-Nature



Male Ruby Throated Hummingbird



Ruby Throated nest size

Hummingbird

The Ruby-throated Hummingbird is the only species out of 330 that has a migration and nesting range in Wisconsin. However, 5 other hummingbird species have been documented in Wisconsin as rare sightings, most likely blown off-course in storms. They are named for the humming sound made by their



wings, flapping as much as 53 times per second. The average weight of a hummingbird is less than a nickel, and wing performance allows them to move quickly in any direction, including backwards. Their tiny feet are made for perching only and for moving side to side, on twigs or on feeders; they can't hop or walk. Male Ruby-throats have a bright red throat and a black chin and

mask. The top of the head and back are iridescent green. The belly is grey. Female and juvenile Ruby-throats are pale green above and grayish-white below.

Ruby-throated Hummingbirds migrate thousands of miles each year, following sources of flower nectar. In migration, they can travel 500 miles in one day if the wind and weather cooperate. They will swarm at feeders along their route to gain strength; but hummers are solitary birds, in migration and otherwise—they do not form flocks.



In this area, hummingbirds appear as early as late April but usually at some time in May. Hummingbirds feed on nectar, their tongues moving at 13 times per second; and they also feed on small insects, larvae, and insect eggs. They appreciate sugar-water feeders placed in open areas; but sugar-water nectar must be kept fresh; it spoils very quickly, and feeders must also be cleaned often. Note: sugar-water nectar is one part sugar to four parts water, with sugar fully dissolved.



After mating, the female hummingbird builds a tiny nest cup for two eggs, in a protected area of a tree or shrub. The nest cup is lined with plant down, and the outer surface is camouflaged with bits of leaf and lichen, as you can see in the photos. The female may build her second nest on top of the first. There are usually two nests per season.

Ruby-throats are hunted by praying mantises, snakes and lizards, raptors and owls, and by feral and domestic cats. Some hummingbirds get caught in orb-weaver spider webs.

March 2022 BH / DL

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