

Five Amazing Facts About Hummingbirds

1. Hummingbird Brains

- a. A hummingbird's brain makes up a whopping 4.2 percent of its weight; proportionally, that's the largest of any birds. By comparison human brains are 2 percent of our body weight.
- b. Inside that big brain is a veritable encyclopedia of important information. Studies have shown that hummingbirds can remember every flower they've ever visited, including on migration routes.
- c. They can figure out how long to wait between visits so the flowers have time to generate more nectar and can recognize humans, and know which ones will refill empty hummingbird feeders.

2. Hummingbird Eyes

- a. Hummingbirds have terrific vision: they can see every color we can, and their eyes can process ultraviolet light, which means they can also see some colors we can't.
- b. On top of that, hummingbirds are among the many animals gifted with a third set of eyelids. These translucent flaps of skin known as nictitating membranes act like natural flight goggles.
- c. These eye lids provide the hummingbird with much needed protection as the little birds zoom through the air. Hummingbirds share this trait with owls, eagles, and camels.

3. Hummingbird Beaks

- a. Mating season can get a bit competitive for hummingbirds. Hummingbird males get mean. After a little bobbing and weaving, territorial males use their needle-like beaks to stab each other in the throat.
- b. They also use their face-knives for another kind of killing: hunting. Nectar is their favorite food source, but it's not the only one; hummingbirds also eat small flying insects.
- c. When they approach a bug, they stretch their beaks wide. When the beak reaches its maximum stretch, it snaps shut like a hair clip, trapping the hapless insect inside.

4. Stunt Flying

- a. No other bird on Earth can stunt-fly like a hummingbird. They can fly forward or backward, hover, and even fly upside-down, and they do all of this so fast we can't even see it.
- b. They beat their wings between 70 and 200 times per second. This power, precision and agility allows them to reach speeds of up to 30 miles per hour while flying and 60 miles per hour while diving.
- c. This, obviously, takes up a lot of energy, so like marathon runners or teenagers, hummingbirds have super-fast metabolisms and need to eat constantly—about every 10 minutes.

5. Hummingbird Feathers

- a. A hummingbird packs more feathers per inch than any other bird, with the possible exception of the penguin. And even if the penguin does win on feather count, the hummingbirds' (feathers) are far more festive.
- b. But they're not just for show. While courting females, hummingbirds make loud sounds with their tail feathers. They climb into the air and then dive past the females at speeds reaching 65 feet a second.
- c. As they swoop, the wind flutters through their tail feathers, causing squeaky sounds that are allegedly a huge turn-on for female hummingbirds. That's one way to get a girlfriend!