

Feeding hummingbirds is a very enjoyable way to observe one of the smallest of the birds in the bird kingdom (their brains proportionately the largest). Fondly called "flying jewels of the sky", these feisty, miniture, iridescent feathered marvels of nature have energy requirements that are gargantuan. More maneuverable than a helicopter, they're suspected of reaching at least 50 miles per hour under full power but to do it they must consume about 50 percent of their weight in nectar every day.

Because so many of the native plants that provide the nectar for the migrating birds have been destroyed by development, humans have helped these facinating little birds a lot by providing feeders. Only those hummers who can meet their energy requirements survive. Biologists say a homemade sugar/water syrup most nearly approximates natural flower nectar. In nature, flower nectar contains between 21-25% sucrose, the same ingredient as white table sugar. So about 1/4 th of natural nectar is sugar.

### EASY HUMMINGBIRD NECTAR

Dissolve one part sugar and four parts warm water (that's a total of 5 parts) in a glass container, bring to a boil in a pot or in the microwave, cool. Fill feeder with only the amount you think they will use for a few days. The remainder of the solution may be kept several weeks in the refrigerator.

**NO SUBSTITUTES, please!** A Honey mixture is likely to be fatal. Non-caloric sweetners will fool the birds but with their energy reserves soon expended, starvation quickly ensues. No protein additives ( such as are sometimes provided in commercial mixes) are advised...gnats and other insects snatched in mid-air take care of any protein requirement for wild birds. **NO RED FOOD COLORING**, is necessary and is probably harmful to their health. Most all feeders have red on them and that is enough to attract the birds. If yours does not have red, then circle the opening with red finger nail polish.

Boiling the water is not absolutely necessary but it retards mildew growth and fermentation. **NECTAR MUST BE CHANGED FREQUENTLY...every 3-4 days** in the heat of summer. If you are not willing to make a committment to keep the syrup fresh, plant red tubular flowers in your yard instead! Wash feeders scrupulously , rinse with a weak solution of clorox or vinegar and water (to kill mildew spores that are harmful to the respiratory system of the hummers) and then rinse again thoroughly before refilling.

These fiesty little beggars will be choosers. Once they've staked a claim they'll defend a feeder with zeal. If this offends your sensibilities, put up two or three stations spaced 4 or 5 feet apart. Not matter how territorial any individual might be, he'll be unable to monopolize one feeder. You'll have more birds and witness some razzle dazzle miniaturized aerial displays that would make the Blue Angels blush!

**HUMMINGBIRD RESCUE CENTER**  
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