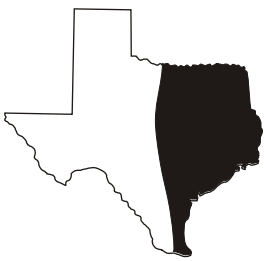


# RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD

*Archilochus colubris*



Range

Ruby-throated hummingbirds vigorously defend a feeder or a group of flowers from other hummingbirds, hawk moths and butterflies. Ruby-throats migrate through Texas in large numbers in the fall and mass along the coast, gaining critical bodyweight before attempting to cross the Gulf of Mexico.



Birds

# RUBY-THROATED HUMMINGBIRD



## *Archilochus colubris*

### Appearance

**Length:** 4 inches  
**Wing span:** 4 inches  
**Weight:** 1/10 ounce

Ruby-throated males have metallic green backs, black chins, metallic red throats and white underparts. Females lack the black chins and red throats.

### Behavior

**Habit:** Diurnal, altricial, nectar feeder  
**Diet:** Flower nectar and small insects  
**Breeding territory:** 1 pair per 26 acres

Male hummingbirds arrive first and establish a territory that they vigorously defend. Females are courted by the males flying in a u-shaped pattern in front of them. Nests are made from lichens and spiderwebs and lined with plant down.

### Habitat

Ruby-throated hummingbirds are found throughout the eastern part of Texas and the U.S. and southern Canada. They migrate to Mexico south through Costa Rica for the winter.

### Now You Know!

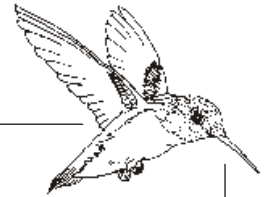
- › Hummingbirds are the only birds able to fly backwards!
- › Hummingbirds often eat their own weight in food each day.
- › Hummingbirds can drop their body temperature and become dormant during times of low food or cold weather. This process is called **torpor**.
- › Hummingbirds received their name from the sound that their wings make.
- › Hummingbirds get the protein they need in their diet by eating the small insects and spiders they find in flowers.
- › The smallest bird in the world is the 22 inch long Scintillant Hummingbird found in Costa Rica and Panama.

### Life Cycle

**Mating season:** Spring and summer. Ruby-throats usually nest 2 or 3 times a season

**Gestation:** Eggs hatch in 11-14 days, young fledged 14-28 days after that.

**No. of young:** Usually 2. Eggs are a ½ inch long, round and white.



### Legend Has It ...

*Even Christopher Columbus was astonished at the site of these brilliant birds as he wrote in his journal about "little birds...so different from ours it is a marvel." Because of this beauty and their tiny size "hummers" have figured prominently in myths and legends. One such myth is the idea that hummingbirds must "hitchhike" on the back of migrating geese to make the long journey across the Gulf of Mexico.*

### Hummingbirds & Man

Few birds give more enjoyment to backyard birdwatchers than hummingbirds. Here in Texas we have seen at least 17 different species. Most are found in far west or south Texas or along the coast during the winter.

All hummingbirds are attracted to red, tubular flowers. Planting these flowers and hanging a hummingbird feeder full of sugar water are good ways to attract them to your area.

Our greatest concentration of hummers occurs during the fall migration, when northern migrants gather along the Gulf Coast and feed voraciously before making the nonstop flight across the Gulf of Mexico.