

Fun Family Activity-Attracting Hummingbirds

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Hummingbirds are the [smallest birds](#) in the world, and they're quite an impressive sight when they flock to your backyard. If you're looking for ways to get your children, nephews, or grandchildren interested in learning more about these birds, it's easy to attract them to your own yard for a fun family activity. With the right food, feeder, and setup, attracting hummingbirds is easy. Let's discover together some awesome tips that will make your family activity fun and successful. We will also learn some basic information about these incredibly fascinating birds and how to attract them. Before you know it, you'll have a fabulous flock that will make bird watching a favorite pastime for the entire family.

What You Need to Know Before You Get Started



Before you begin attracting hummingbirds as a fun family activity, it's essential to ensure that you have the right food and feeder for these delicate birds. While a feeder is a great way to bring these tiny birds to you, native plants and flowers are also wonderful attractants. In fact, hummingbirds get most of their energy and nutrition from the sweet nectar of native plants with colorful blooms. Make sure you have lots of flowers in your garden, which will keep the hummingbirds interested in hanging around your home. It's important to know when to expect these tiny birds to [arrive in your area](#). Different species migrate at different times of the year, but most hummingbirds should appear in early spring. They may hang around until mid to late autumn, depending on your specific location and climate.

Using the Color Red to Attract Hummingbirds

When you're attracting hummingbirds to your yard, try to incorporate the [color red](#) into your backyard using native plants or flowers. This bright, lively color signals to the birds that there is sweet nectar nearby. But why do hummingbirds

see red? It's due to a dense concentration of cones in the bird's retina that contain pigments and oil droplets that range in shades of yellow to bright red. These cones act as filters that heighten the bird's sensitivity to color between the red and yellow range. The brighter and bolder the red color in your yard, the better chances you'll have at attracting hummingbirds.

Choosing the Right Feeders



One key element to attracting hummingbirds is to make sure you choose the right feeder. Here are some tips for feeders so you can enjoy this fun family activity together while keeping the birds safe.

Buying a Feeder

Where can you buy them? You can buy hummingbird feeders at many home improvement stores, plant nurseries, and garden stores. Look for quality, durable feeders that feature a bright red color or a combination of yellow and red.

Buy a feeder that's easy to clean. Hummingbird feeders should be easy to assemble and disassemble for quick cleaning. Look for feeders that are easy to clean thoroughly and regularly to keep the birds safe. Dirty hummingbird

feeders can spread disease and cause various [ailments](#) in these tiny birds, so make sure you wash yours daily or at least every other day when possible.

Make a feeder with your kids. If you'd rather [make your own feeder](#), it's a fun family activity that everyone can share. One easy and fun way is to make a shallow plastic dish into a feeder. You purchase or use an old shallow plastic dish. Just make sure you choose one with a red top. You can safely make holes with a hole puncher if the lid is a thin plastic or a screw and screwdriver, so you don't use sharp objects. Then you can use fishing string, Christmas ornament hanging string, or even light wire that is used to hang picture frames to hang the feeder. Salt shakers with the right dimensions can become perfect containers. Always make sure to clean the containers or dishes before adding the nectar properly. There is plenty of fun, creative ideas online.

Where are the best places for hummingbird feeders? Once you have your feeder ready, it's important to hang it where you'll get the most birds. You can hang the feeder from your back porch, front porch, under a tree, or a garden post. Make sure the feeder is located in a shady area so the nectar stays cool. If you have more than one feeder, place them far apart from one another since hummingbirds can be quite territorial. Multiple feeders are a smart method for attracting hummingbirds in higher numbers, too.

Make Your Nectar



After you choose your feeder and location, it's time to make some nectar. Here are some tips to make sure you make the best nectar possible for these tiny, beautiful birds.

Don't use red dye. Never buy hummingbird food that's colored red, and never add [red dye](#) to your nectar. This dye can contain harmful chemicals that may cause dangerous tumors and death in hummingbirds. Always use clear nectar or make it yourself to ensure that it's safe for the birds to consume.

Don't put honey or artificial sweeteners in your nectar. Never add anything to your homemade nectar other than pure white cane sugar and water. Adding extra ingredients like honey or artificial sweeteners can be extremely dangerous and deadly.

Use the right sugar. Tania Homayoun, Ph.D. Explained to me that it's important to note that there are many types of sugar. Pure white cane sugar is recommended because some organic, turbinado, or raw sugars contain too much iron, which can be toxic to hummingbirds.

Follow the ethical hummingbird guidelines. The best way to make nectar is to follow these guidelines. Boil water for about two minutes, then add one part white sugar (pure cane sugar is best) to four parts water. Mix everything thoroughly until the sugar is dissolved, then allow it to cool completely before you fill your feeder.

Proper Maintenance to Protect the Hummingbirds

To protect these precious birds, there are a few things to keep in mind.

Don't let your feeders run out of nectar. Keep your feeders full and never let them run out of nectar. Hummingbirds have an extremely high metabolism, and they rely on having plenty of fuel and nutritious resources near them to survive. It might be a good idea to have 2 feeders so when it's time to clean one, you can hang a fresh and clean feeder to replace it.

Replacing water, nectar, or things that can harm your little visitors. If you have a birdbath or outdoor fountain, keep the water clean and change it regularly. Replace any container, including your feeders, regularly so that your little visitors have a safe and clean source of food and water.

Protect the birds from cats and other dangers. Protect hummingbirds from [cats and other predators](#) by making sure you hang the feeder at least four feet or higher from the ground. If you have a cat, keep them inside. Install a motion-detecting light to scare off other neighborhood cats, and if possible, install a fence that's at least six feet tall to deter predators from coming into your yard.

Window Dangers. Pam and Jack Stewart, Arkansas Audubon Society, Bird-Friendly Yard Committee, shared some essential information about this subject. They mentioned that recent studies have shown that all the good done by planting native plants and putting up clean bird feeders is basically canceled out if steps are not taken to protect birds from windows! Birds can not detect glass, and often they see the reflection from trees and the sky. If a bird hits a window, even if it flies away, 70% of those birds do not survive the encounter with glass.

- **DIY:** They explained that an inexpensive way to make windows visible is to hang parachute cords so that cords hang down every 4 inches across the outside of the window. Four inches is about the wingspan of small birds, and seeing the strands, will slow them down enough to avoid hitting the glass usually. Surprisingly, the strands do not disturb the view out from the inside. After a day, one hardly notices them. You can buy parachute cords at many sports stores.
- **Professional Installation:** Another way to help hummingbirds and all birds, in general, is to install bird-friendly glass.



Contributed by Pam Stewart



Contributed by Rebecca Hardin

Planting Native Plants for Native Hummingbirds



While making feeders is a fun family activity, planting native plants and flowers is the best way to keep these birds healthy and return year after year. Native plants are important for Hummingbirds for their nectar, but did you know that they actually eat lots of small Spiders and insects. All the native plants you help to plant help provide habitats for invertebrates, which can help provide food for hummingbirds in multiple ways.

When choosing native [flowers and plants](#) for your garden, make sure you select species that will thrive in your zone and do not affect the natural ecosystem. The Audubon site has a great tool to find native plants by [zip code](#). Use organic fertilizers and avoid using pesticides or other chemicals when planting and growing your garden. Keep the selection of native plants diverse to attract various hummingbird species and different types of birds.

Always follow ethical guidelines set forth by organizations like the National Audubon Society and others to ensure that you follow the best practices to protect these precious birds. They can also help you determine which native plants and flowers are best suited for your specific area.

You can support hummingbirds by joining a local hummingbird association or supporting your state and local conservation organizations. These groups are dedicated to the [preservation and protection](#) of hummingbirds as well as other birds and animals.

Having Fun When the Hummingbirds Start to Visit



When hummingbird season arrives, it's a perfect time for some fun education and family time with your kids and other family members.

Take pictures. Practice your photography skills by [taking pictures](#) of the hummingbirds you see. These fast-moving birds can be tough to photograph, so it's a perfect opportunity for you to try your hand at shooting some pretty amazing photos with a bit of patience and lots of clicking.

Bird watching. Spend some time relaxing and [bird watching](#) as you observe the hummingbirds enjoying the nectar and interacting with each other. You can watch them from your windows or sit down on the front porch and observe them as they speedily fly by to take a sip. This is a perfect time to relax and enjoy nature and the outdoors.

Draw and paint them with your kids. Schedule a time to sit down and draw the hummingbirds you see with your kids. This is a fun family activity that everyone can participate in, including the grandparents, aunts, and uncles.



Invite friends over to see the hummingbirds. Once you get a good number of hummingbirds to feed in your yard, invite your friends over to take a look. Schedule a nice afternoon lunch where you can sit outside, conversate, and observe these fascinating birds together. This is a great way to have playdates with your kid’s best friends or neighborhood friends.

Get scientific. An amazing Biologist Tania Homayoun, Ph.D., shared some great information about how your kids and teens can get scientific at home. She said, “As an advocate for community science, I always encourage people to put their nature observations to work for research and conservation! There are lots of great bird-related community science projects out there, including:”

[eBird](#): This has become the world’s largest community science project dedicated to tracking wildlife distribution and abundance. Every single observation feeds into data and models used in critical bird research and conservation around the world.

[Project FeederWatch](#): A project run by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology that collects observations made at bird feeders of all types. Since this project runs from November through April, for hummingbirds, it's best suited to places that host them year-round (along the west coast) or during the winter (along the Gulf Coast).

[iNaturalist](#): This is a global project that tracks observations of all types of wild biodiversity. It relies on users uploading photos or sound files that enable the community to assist with identifications. It's a great tool for people to learn more about all the wild plants and animals in their yard and how they come together in a backyard habitat.

Attracting hummingbirds to your yard is a fun family activity that has so many positive attributes. It will inspire creativity, form a sense of appreciation for nature, and build on your family bonding. The ideas in this article can be applied to educational settings; a few ideas can become school projects or classroom activities. This activity is a wonderful way to learn more about these truly amazing feathered friends. With the right feeder, healthy nectar, and some native plants, you can easily encourage these tiny birds to make your backyard their home.

One last important note; always follow ethical guidelines when attracting hummingbirds or any [other species](#). Help protect these incredibly tiny and awe-inspiring animals so that future generations can try these activities themselves one day.

Authors Note:

While I researched, I noticed that so many beautiful places in the U.S. are conservations, resorts, and vacation spots that offer you great opportunities to see hummingbirds. So if you are out and about, make sure to ask the tourist desks or helpdesk about where you can do some fun birding with the family.

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