

From the DPPHOA Environmental Committee:



Point Outlook: Feeding Hummingbirds: Helping Nature's Tiny Marvels

Hummingbirds are among the most extraordinary birds in the world. Weighing little more than a penny, these tiny aerial acrobats can hover like helicopters, fly backward, and even upside down for brief moments. Their wings beat 50–80 times per second, and their hearts can race at more than 1,200 beats per minute during flight. To fuel this incredible lifestyle, hummingbirds visit hundreds of flowers each day, drinking nectar and catching tiny insects for protein.

Offering a hummingbird feeder during summer and fall is a wonderful way to support these amazing birds. Contrary to a common myth, leaving feeders up into the fall does not delay migration. Hummingbirds migrate because of changing daylight, not because food is available. In fact, feeders provide much-needed energy for birds preparing for their long journey south and for late migrants passing through the area.

The best hummingbird food is also the simplest. Mix one part ordinary white granulated sugar with four parts water (1 cup of sugar to 4 cups of water). Stir until the sugar dissolves. Boiling the water is optional but helps dissolve the sugar more quickly. Once cooled, extra syrup can be stored in a clean container in the refrigerator for up to two weeks, making refilling feeders quick and easy.

Skip the commercial hummingbird foods and red dyes. Homemade sugar water closely matches the sweetness of natural flower nectar, and the red parts of most feeders are enough to attract hummingbirds. Artificial colors provide no benefit and can be harmful.

The most important part of feeding hummingbirds is keeping feeders clean. Warm weather allows mold, yeast, and bacteria to grow quickly in old nectar, which can make hummingbirds seriously ill. Wash feeders every two to three days during hot weather and at least once a week when temperatures are cooler. Clean them with hot water and a bottle brush; a mild vinegar solution can help remove stubborn residue. Avoid soap unless it is rinsed away completely.

With fresh nectar, clean feeders, and a garden filled with flowers, you can enjoy one of nature's greatest spectacles while helping these tiny marvels thrive throughout the summer and into the fall.