



Attracting Birds and Butterflies

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It is important to provide Food, Shelter, and Water for both birds and butterflies.



Flowers should be chosen for their ability to produce nectar, to grow well in your particular area, and to be in bloom when the Birds and Butterflies need them. This includes both mature and larvae stages of Butterflies.

Hummingbirds weigh 2 to 20 grams. They feed on nectar and insects (as well as tiny spiders). Hummers must consume enormous amounts of food each day, with nectar often amounting to twice their body weight. Insects provide protein for their diet.

It is estimated that the species of hummingbirds is over 300, making them the second largest family of birds after flycatchers. They are found only in the New World, from Alaska in the north to Tierra del Fuego on the Argentina/Chile border in the south. Most species are found in the tropics.

FOOD FACTORS

Color is important to a hummingbird's search for flowers containing nectar. The majority of plant species that are known to attract hummingbirds have blossoms that are red to orange in color. Hummingbirds are not that restrictive, however, and will regularly visit blossoms of any color, which they learn contain sufficient nectar to make it worth their time.

Sight: Most insects see the visible and near ultraviolet but poorly in the red end of the spectrum. A red blossom may appear nearly black and unattractive to some insects--but hummers see not only the full visible spectrum but also some in the ultraviolet (they have a 4th cone in the retina).

Therefore red flowers are less likely to attract insects, and increases the odds of nectar for the hummers. Red flowers are more visible from a distance against greens, Hummingbirds learn quickly.

In addition to hummers, I have Baltimore Orioles, and a variety of woodpeckers at my sugar feeders beginning in early April including the larger red-bellied and redheaded woodpecker. We also have a pair of Pileated Woodpecker in the woods around us.

Blossom shape of flowers is factors for hummers and butterflies. Long, tubular blossoms are easily extracted by a hummingbird, whose tongue can extend a distance equal to its beak length and reach where most insects cannot. Downward-hanging blossoms with no "landing" platform are also less attractive to insects so often contain more nectar for the hummers. Butterflies "land" to extract their nectar. *Lonicera sempervirens* (Trumpet Honeysuckle) is a favorite of hummingbirds. It has larger blossoms (more nectar) as compared to those of a Butterfly Bush (*Buddleia*) or *Lantana* with small blossoms, which require many visits to gather enough nectar. Columbines (*Aquilegia spp.*), which produce nectar, are less attractive to hummingbird than the larger common Trumpet Creeper (*Campsis radicans*), which produces one of the highest known volumes of nectar per blossom.

Fragrance: Most flowers that have no fragrance are favorites of hummers, since insects are attracted to both sight and smell, and hummingbirds have little or no sense of smell.

Humming bird feeders: When a hummingbird awakens from sleep or torpor, it is ravenously hungry, able to consume 25% of its body weight in the first feeding of the day. You don't want to make your birds wait until 9 a.m. if they've been up since 5:30 a.m. The standard recipe is for 4 cups of water and 1 cup of sugar (4:1). I make up a double strength syrup (2:1) and keep a container ready to use on my counter then I dilute again (2:1) when I put it in the feeder.

Keeping the feeder clean: Ants, bees and wasps can quickly contaminate a feeder solution and make difficult for hummers to feed. Bees and wasps can be very competitive and keep hummingbirds from feeding. There are also documented cases of hummingbirds being stung and even killed by the stings.

For ants you can buy an "ant moat" at most bird supply stores. The conventional use of the moat is to insert it between feeder and hanging hook, and then fill it with water. Alternatively you can smear oil or grease on the inside moat surface. The moat works by having a surface ants will not walk across. The easiest technique, though not always the most effective, is to coat the hanging wire or pole with a spray (such as Pam®) or oil. This takes advantage of ants' aversion to walking on certain substances, including oils and water. You can construct a home-made ant moat by using the plastic cap from a spray can, punching a hole in it to allow it to slide on the hanging rod for the feeder, and smearing it with oil or grease.

For Bees and Wasps make up two feeders. Make up a 5:1 ratio in one of the feeders (this one is for the hummingbirds). The other feeder should contain a mixture with a 3:1 (or if necessary, 2:1) ratio, and this is for the bees and wasps. Insects prefer high-sugar mixtures and will quickly find the stronger solution in the second feeder. The hummers will be happy with a 5:1 ratio. ***A single sting from a bee or wasp may be fatal to a hummingbird, because there is so little body mass to absorb the venom.***

Predators: For tiny hummingbirds predators are a significant source of risk.

Cats, both domestic and feral, are the most common predators. Tailless hummingbirds are likely to indicate a hummingbird in molt than one that narrowly escaped being caught by a cat. To reduce the risks from cats, feeders should be hung high: at least five feet above ground, and preferably positioned so that a stalking cat will be quite visible. If you have a cat and love hummingbirds--or any other birds--keep the cat inside!

Hummingbirds in defense of a nest sometimes chase other birds, such as hawks. This fearless behavior against overwhelming odds is but one of the reasons that hummingbirds evoke our admiration. In the nest, eggs and chicks represent an easy target for a variety of predators other birds, such as blue jays and crows in the U.S., and snakes, particularly in the tropics

Praying mantids will successfully capture, kill, and eat a hummingbird. The mantid will position itself on a plant or a hummingbird feeder. Its lightning-fast strike often assures it of success. Because of the relative size difference, it may take over a day for the bird to be consumed. While praying mantids are very beneficial insects in a garden, they should not be allowed on hummingbird feeders.

Spiders: Hummingbirds use spider webs as a source of spider's silk in nest construction; it binds the nest to the tree branch or other surface and to hold the nest together. Even so, the hummingbird must be careful when removing the pieces of webbing, for it may become entangled and be trapped there. Spider's silk has a tensile strength comparable to steel on a weight basis.

10 best plant species recommended by the Hummingbird Society

Mint Family: *Salvias (Salvia spp.)*, Bee Balm (*Monarda spp.*), Giant Hyssop (*Agastache spp*)

Honeysuckles: *Lonicera spp.*, esp. Trumpet Honeysuckle, (*L. sempervirens*),

Penstemons *Penstemon spp.*

Mallow Family: Turk's Cap, Flowering Maple (*Abutilon pictus*), Hollyhock (as *Alcea rosea*), Hardy Hibiscus, Rose of Sharon

Morning Glories: *Ipomoea spp.*, esp. Cypress Vine, Red Morning Glory, Scarlet Creeper, Bush Morning Glory

Columbines: *Aquilegia spp.*, Bignonia Family, Trumpet Creeper, Cross Vine, Desert Willow, Yellow Bells,

Lobelias: *Lobelia spp.*, esp. Cardinal Flower (*L. cardinalis*), *L. laxiflora*

Evening Primrose Family: Fireweed (*Epilobium angustifolium*), California fuchsia (*Zauschneria californica*), Fuchsias (*Fuchsia spp.*)

Acanthus Family: Desert Honeysuckle, Flame Acanthus, Chuparosa (*Justicia californica*), Mexican Honeysuckle (*J. spicigera*), Shrimp Plant (*J. brandegeana*)

See also the Hummingbird Society at <http://www.hummingbirdsociety.org/indexnew.asp>



BUTTERFLIES

It is easy to increase **the number and variety of butterflies in your yard. Simply grow the plants the caterpillars like to eat, and plants that adult butterflies feed on!**

Different species of butterflies have different preferences of nectar, in both colors and tastes. Try staggering wild and cultivated plants, as well as blooming times of the day and year. Groups of the same plants will be easier for butterflies to see than singly planted flowers

To attract adult butterflies to your yard is to offer places (food plants) for females to lay their eggs. Some females are pickier about which host to lay their eggs on than others.

All insects are cold-blooded and cannot internally regulate their body temperature. Butterflies will readily bask in the sun when it is warm out, but few are seen on cloudy days. It is a good idea to leave open areas in a yard for butterflies to sun themselves, as well as partly shady areas like trees or shrubs, so they can hide when it's cloudy or cool off if it is very hot.

Butterflies like puddles. Males of several species congregate at small rain pools, forming puddle clubs. They obtain dissolved salts and minerals in moist earth around the water puddle. They usually gather during the heat of the day

You can create a puddle or add a shallow bowl of sugar water, with an "island of rotting sweet fruit" for the butterfly to perch on. Once they pick up the smell of the fruit they will find their way and return.

Butterfly Nectar Preferences and Larval Food Plants

Buckeye Butterfly

- Larval food plant: snapdragon
- Nectar: aster, milkweed chicory, coreopsis

Comma

- Larval food plant: nettle, elm
- Nectar: rotting fruit & sap, butterfly bush, dandelion

Great Swallowtail

- Larval food plant: citrus trees, prickly ash
- Nectar: lantana, Japanese honeysuckle, milkweed, lilac, goldenrod, azalea

Great Spangled Fritillary

- Larval food plant: violet
- Nectar: ironweed, milkweed, black-eyed susan, verbena

Monarch

- Larval food plant: milkweed
- Nectar: milkweed, butterfly bush, goldenrod, thistle, ironweed, mints

Mourning Cloak

- Larval food plant: willow, elm, poplar, aspen, birch, hackberry
- Nectar: rotting fruit & sap, butterfly bush, milkweed, Shasta daisy

Painted Lady

- Larval food plant: daisy, hollyhock
- Nectar: goldenrod, aster, zinnia, butterfly bush, milkweed

Red Admiral

- Larval food plant: nettle
- Nectar: rotting fruit and sap, daisy, aster, goldenrod, butterfly bush,
- Milkweed

Tiger Swallowtail

- Larval food plant: cherry, ash, birch, tulip tree, lilac
- Nectar: butterfly bush, milkweed, Japanese honeysuckle, phlox, lilac, ironweed

Viceroy

- Larval food plant: willow, poplar, apple
- Nectar: rotting fruit, sap, aster, goldenrod, milkweed