

## Hummingbird Fun Facts By Kay Lookingbill

Gulf Coast Bird Observatory Note: We asked expert bird bander, Kay Lookingbill, if we could compile some of her wonderful fun hummer facts from her Facebook posts and pass them on to all of you, and she happily agreed! So here is a collection of fun facts... in no particular order. Thank you Kay! Watch for more next week!  
-Martin Hagne, Executive Director, GCBO



### Fall migration:

Ruby-throated Hummingbird fall migration along the Upper Texas Gulf Coast begins around the first of August at just a trickle. Numbers ramp up to peak in mid-September, then taper off in early October. Adult males are the first to move through, followed by females and juveniles of both sexes, and finishing with a final flourish of juvenile males (with lots of overlap).

They move through the area by the thousands and stack up along the coast to feed and fatten up. Then, when a good north wind blows in, they will take advantage of the good tail wind and all leave at once to continue their south-bound journey along the coast. Even though they are all moving in the same general direction at the same time, they are not traveling together as a flock. In fact, they are very anti-social, always fighting and chasing each other. Think of it as rush-hour traffic, where the cars are all going downtown, with lots of road rage going on!

### The largest and smallest hummingbird:

The smallest hummingbird is the Bee Hummingbird, found only in Cuba. Not only is it the smallest bird in the world, it is the smallest warm-blooded vertebrate in the world. A Bee hummingbird weighs 1.8 grams (less than a dime), and is only 2.2" long (slightly longer than a AA battery).

The largest hummingbird in the world is the Giant Hummingbird, found in the Andes Mountains. A Giant Hummingbird weighs 18 - 24 grams (the same as a AA battery), and is 9" long (roughly the same as a Gray Catbird). The Ruby-throated Hummingbird pictured here weighs 3.7 grams.

### Predators:

Unfortunately, hummingbirds are at the low end of the food chain, and become a food source for other species. Large insects, such as praying mantis, dragonflies, and spiders are among their main predators. We have personally seen a Ruby-throated hummingbird that was caught in the web of a golden-orb weaver spider. Fortunately for the hummingbird (and unfortunately for the spider), we rescued it before the spider got to it! Also, frogs and snakes will catch them if the opportunity arises. Even some birds like shrikes and jays prey on hummingbirds.

Eggs and nestlings are especially vulnerable to predation by other animals, including crows, jays, squirrels and chipmunks. And of course, we have to mention cats that like to lie in wait under flowers or

accessible feeders. (A side note - you can help by placing your feeders high enough out of range of cats! And always keep your cats indoors) As tough and feisty as hummingbirds can be, it is still a very dangerous world for them, full of peril.