

HUMMINGBIRD SURVEY RESULTS - 2003

The Wildlife Diversity Program of the Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Conservation first began requesting hummingbird data from Oklahomans in the 1988 *Watchable Wildlife Newsletter*. In 1991, the brochure "Oklahoma's Hummingbirds" was published, complete with an Oklahoma Hummingbird Survey Form. Data gathered since that time are compiled and an annual summary of the results are prepared and sent to survey participants. The information provided through the survey allows the Wildlife Diversity Program to learn more about the state's hummingbird population and how long these migrants reside in Oklahoma each year.

Hummingbirds belong to a group of birds called neotropical migrants – birds that winter from northern Mexico to the tip of South America and migrate to North America to breed. Scientists in North and South America have initiated a partnership for the conservation of neotropical migrants called Partners in Flight/Aves de las Americanas. Efforts on behalf of neotropical migrants are currently focused on habitat preservation and restoration, monitoring of wintering and breeding populations, and promotion and public awareness. Oklahoma has 66 breeding songbird neotropical migrants, including the Ruby-throated Hummingbird. Your continued participation in the Oklahoma Hummingbird Survey will help the Wildlife Diversity Program develop a quality database that will further the conservation effort directed toward these neotropical migrants. We can't thank you enough!



2003 RESULTS

In 2003, **37 Oklahomans** from **24 counties** participated in the Oklahoma Hummingbird Survey, as opposed to 50 participants from 31 counties in 2002. This reflects a large decrease in the number of participants! The earliest Ruby-throated Hummingbird sighting reported statewide was on **March 22** from both **Pushmataha and Adair counties** and the latest sighting reported was on **October 15** from **Cleveland County**. A map is provided (Figure 1) showing earliest and latest recorded dates of hummingbird observations by county. The most frequently reported date for putting up hummingbird feeders was April 1. Eighty-four percent (84%) of participants put their feeders up before April 15th. The most frequently reported date for removing hummingbird feeders was November 1. Seventy-three percent (73%) of participants took their feeders down between October 15 and the end of November.

Participants were divided into western, central and eastern regions. Alfalfa County south to Cotton County defines the eastern boundary of the western region, and Osage County south to Bryan County defines the western boundary

of the eastern region. In 2003, the eastern region had the most participants with 20 followed by the central region with 10 and the western region with 7. Table 1 provides participant comparison. Regional results are presented in Table 2.

Region	# of Counties	# of Participants
Eastern	11	20
Central	6	10
Western	7	7

Region	# of Reports				Earliest Sighting				Latest Sighting			
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003	2000	2001	2002	2003
Eastern	26	18	24	20	03-07	04-03	04-04	03-22	10-15	10-12	10-30	10-13
Central	15	13	18	10	04-06	03-03	04-03	04-06	10-28	10-13	11-13	10-15
Western	7	6	8	7	04-18	04-02	04-02	03-29	10-07	10-10	10-12	10-06



The list of other wildlife species visiting hummingbird feeders continues to be quite diverse. Wildlife species reported are as follows:

BIRDS

- Baltimore Oriole
- Orchard Oriole
- House Finch
- Wren sp.
- Downy Woodpecker
- American Goldfinch
- Red-bellied Woodpecker
- Carolina Chickadee

INSECTS

- ants
- honeybees
- wasps
- bumblebee
- yellow jacket
- house fly
- moths
- praying mantis

MAMMALS

- squirrel
- raccoon
- opossum

OTHERS

- tree frog
- spider spp

grasshopper
mud daubers
Butterflies (Red Admiral)

Recorded observations of the use of plants by hummingbirds resulted in a diverse plant list. Below is the list in order of the most frequent.

Petunias
Salvia sp.
Honeysuckle
Morning Glory
Four 'o' clocks
Lantana sp.
Trumpet Vine
Cypress Vine
Impatiens sp.
Verbena sp.
Cannas
Crepe myrtle
Bee Balm (*Monarda*)
Roses
Columbine
Rose of Sharon
Geranium sp.
Cardinal climber
Mimosa Tree
Penta sp.
Indian paintbrush
Azaleas
Zinnias
Hibiscus
Begonias
Butterflybush
Cleome sp.
Hosta sp.
Phlox

Jewelweed
Larkspur
Wiegilia sp.
Daisy
Lilac
Moon Plant
Mints
Fushia
Coneflowers
Butterfly weed
Cardinal Flower
Scarlet gilia
Blazing star
Agastches
Marigold
Hyacinth bean vine
Nicotiana
Gladiolas
Hummingbird bush
Desert Willow tree
Lythrum
Penstemon
Dianthus
Lilies
Iris
Vinca
Wisteria
Hollyhocks

Comments

Comments that are provided by survey participants reflect a variety of sentiment ranging from joy to frustration.

- I did not seem to have as many hummingbirds this year – 5 at the most – but really enjoy sitting on my front porch and watching them chase each other away from the feeders. I have come to recognize the sound they make. I have a feeder hanging near my picture window and once in a while I will hear a thud when they fly into it. I guess they see their reflection and think its another bird. They are usually okay after being stunned, has worn off. (Cleveland)
- Never saw more than two around this year. (Muskogee)
- At the peak (June – August) we had approximately 25 birds. We used approximately 30 lbs of sugar. (Pushmataha)
- We had close to 40 birds sharing the feeders. So much entertainment. They ate more sugar than we did. We used the tip of Q-tip brushing cooking oil on the base of the feeder to keep the bees from drinking from the feeder. It worked so well. (Washington)
- Thought last little hummer would never leave. I kept telling him he had to go south. (LeFlore)
- This year I saw 5 birds around my feeder at the same time. I only saw 5 birds one time. I usually only see two or three at a time. (Ellis)
- We just moved from Lincoln Co. and left 100's of hummers there. Was surprised to see how many we had in our new location. We couldn't keep up filling the feeders. (Oklahoma)
- I had a great year. I have relocated to a rural location and I believe I probably have more birds than I realized. I am in an area that is full of eastern redcedar and I think the hummers are staying in the trees. I only noticed the Ruby-throated this year. My plans fro next year are to plant a wider variety of "hummer" friendly plants and to put up several more feeders. I also hope to have the feeders up by March 15th. I was thrilled with this year's numbers and looking forward to next year! (Woods)
- We don't see hummers at the feeders much when the trumpet vines are in full bloom but we do see them in the vines – we have several vines and one goes up an antenna tower nearly to the top. (Alfalfa)

- My husband nicknamed our birds "little sugar birds". (Payne)
- Did not have trouble with bees or ants this year. September 10 -24, had to fill every other day. This is 7th survey for us. (Pushmataha)
- I usually have about 75+ birds each year. My feeders are 12 cup, 8 cup & 2-4 cup and I fill them every day when their babies hatch. (Adair)
- Most hummers left Sept. 5, a noticeable difference. (Payne)
- We had lots of hummers, 10 at a time, until August when we left home for a week. After we only had 3 Or 4 at a time. (Osage)
- 20 birds at one time was the most I saw. 7 birds were feeding on a 4-seater feeder. More hummers this year than last year. I saw a hummer fight a downy woodpecker off his suet feeder. It was a black-chinned male. What joy it is to watch these little birds. (Garvin)
- This was our best summer for ruby-throated hummers since we began feeding at this location in 1995. (Washington)
- On Sept 1st 8 hummers were on feeder and 2 circling it. Feeder emptied quickly. I wait until the crowd dispersed then went to refill it. Holding the feeder in my left hand and pouring sugar water into the feeder with a measuring cup in my right, had 3 hummers fly up in front of me. 2 stayed in front and one landed on my left index finger that was just below a feeding port! He took a good drink from the feeder then flew off with the other two. I could see this little specked throated hummer up close but could feel no weight on my finger. I am very sorry I do not have a picture of this. (Cleveland)
- We had a large number of hummers this year. We used 132 lbs sugar. The birds were constant all summer. (Cherokee)
- The most birds on or around the feeders at one time was 36. There were large numbers of birds feeding throughout the day (14 – 20). The peak number of birds came the second week of August. The number of birds tapered off quick from then until the first week of October There were three males that stayed until Oct. 12. (Pushmataha)
- We have really enjoyed the birds. Each year we get more and have to hang more feeders. This is our 4th year to have out feeders. (Dewey)

- We had 4 this year but lost 1. It got into Ted's workshop unbeknown to us and killed itself by flying into the window trying to get out. Ted found it on the window sill. (Tulsa)
- They show up the same day every year. (Texas)
- I used 169 cups sugar. I never let the water get stale. (Creek)
- First hummer on 4/5 – outside temperature dropped April 7-8-9 Next sighting 4/12. Saw first female 4/30. (Muskogee)
- I put feeders up by my pond this year. I had a lot of birds come to them. I used Vick's mentholatum rub on cord holding my feeders to keep away ants. It worked. (Sequoyah)
- Had one Ruby-throated female hanging upside – down; thought it was dead, but later just flew off. (Oklahoma)
- I continued to see black-chinned hummers all season. We had 2 juvenile males until Oct. 9th, not sure what species they were but suspect black-chinned, due to the distinct sound of their wings. They are much louder than Ruby-throats. (Grady)
- I have been concerned for years that the large female praying mantis that get on my feeders in late Sept. might be able to kill a hummingbird. Do you know if this has ever happened? (Comanche)
- We have had a lack of rain the past two years and especially this past year (we have lost many flowering shrubs & flowers& many trees). We hope to replace many of these this spring – we have had a lot of trouble with hawks catching & killing our feeding birds. Is there any way to stop this – we are surrounded on 3 sides by Nat'l Forest. (LeFlore)

Again, we would like to thank all the participants for your contribution to the hummingbird database. All of the information you provide is beneficial to understanding the habitat requirements of the Ruby-throated Hummingbird.

