

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (RTHU)

Feeder vs. Flower Visit Protocol Field Guide

(for Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean)

Task

To count and compare the number of times RTHUs visit flowers and feeders in 45 minutes

What You Need

- Hummingbird feeder
- Food for feeder (fresh sugar water mix)
- [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Feeder Vs. Flower Visit Data Sheet](#)
- Schoolyard Hummingbird Habitat, flower garden, or wildflower patch
- Bird identification guide
- Clipboard
- Pencil or pen
- Camera (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)

In the Field

1. Fill out the top of the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird Feeder Vs. Flower Visit Data Sheet*. Record date and time period that observations are made.
2. For each RTHU seen, identify its sex and age if possible.
3. Record each visit to the feeder and flowers on the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird Feeder Vs. Flower Visit Data Sheet* during the 45 minutes. Record by the following categories:
 - Red-throated adult male
 - Adult female (white-throated, January through April only)
 - Undetermined sex (if throat is not observed)
 - Undetermined sex (possible adult female/young female/young male, August through December, if throat is unmarked)
 - Young male (if throat is heavily streaked in green or black and/or has one or more red feathers; nearly all develop a full red throat sometime before departing north in spring)

Note 1: If an individual bird enters the garden and feeds on a flower, then at a feeder, then on a flower, it counts as two flower visits and one feeder visit. Every separate visit to a flower or feeder is counted. If a bird feeds on the same flower or flower stalk several times in succession, it counts as only one flower visit. If a bird feeds on Flower A, then on Flower B, and again on Flower A, it counts as three visits. This procedure is different from the observations made when you are looking only at feeder visits or only at flower visits.

Note 2: If you see a color-marked RTHU, describe the color markings and attempt to observe whether the bird is banded and on which leg. If you see a RTHU with unusual colors (albinism, leucism, etc.) make note of the colors and patterns and get a photo if possible. Record your observations on the [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Sighting Data Sheet](#). Contact Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History at research@hiltonpond.org or (803) 684-5852 as soon as possible.