

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (RTHU)

Flower Visit Protocol Field Guide

(for Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean)

Task

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

What You Need

- [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Flower Visit Data Sheet](#)
- Pencil or pen
- Bird identification guide
- Camera (optional)
- Schoolyard Hummingbird Habitat, flower garden, or wildflower patch
- Binoculars (optional)
- Clipboard

In the Field

1. Fill out the top of the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird 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 flowers on the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird 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 several flowers—even different flower species—it counts as only one visit. If a bird perches within view and returns to the flowers, it still counts as one visit. Only if the bird leaves the field of view and returns can it be counted again, and then it should be counted again even if you think it may be the same bird.

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.