

When does hummingbird season begin?

When does the hummingbird "season" begin in the Lafayette area? What are some general tips about attracting these unique birds to backyards, including information on feeding?

B.H. — Lafayette

According to Bill Fontenot, manager of Nature Station at the Lafayette Natural History Museum, hummingbird "season" begins in March when they migrate north from Mexico and South America. As they move north, the Lafayette area will see two months of activity. Then the birds will begin seeking suitable breeding sites near coulees, bayous, rivers and lakes. People who do not live near water will not see the birds during breeding season. However, once the babies leave the nests in mid-July, everyone will see hummingbirds again.

The time of greatest activity for the birds is from August to mid-October when birds moving south from the northern states meet with birds who were already in this area. They spend these months fattening up for the flight back south to Mexico and South America for the winter.

As far as attracting hummingbirds is concerned, Fontenot said the best way is to plant nectar-producing plants or put out artificial bird feeders. He suggests the best nectar is one part sugar and three to four parts water. Never use honey in artificial feeders because it can form mold and make the birds sick.

Fontenot also said it is important to not take down hummingbird feeders in the fall because the birds are depending on the nectar to make them fat so they can make the trip south. If they do not fatten up, they cannot make the trip and will die.

People who would like to have hummingbirds in their yards even during winter months should leave feeders out all year long, he said. There are about four western species that have been finding their way to this area in past winters.

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