



Leave feeders out for migrating hummingbirds

Even though the weather is cooling down, homeowners should leave up their hummingbird feeders for a bit longer.

Oftentimes, homeowners believe by leaving the feeders out, hummingbirds are discouraged from migrating south. Fortunately, these feathered friends will migrate no matter what. But, leaving the feeders out will provide these fast-flying birds with a nectar source as they begin to migrate.

Not only is this good for the birds that have been found in the area all summer, any migrating bird that may come through the area on its way to a warmer climate can take advantage of this refueling spot. Also, homeowners may be lucky enough to spot a rare hummingbird not typically found in this area.

For those with flower gardens, place hummingbird feeders in those areas to encourage feeding from natural sources. For those who are interested in seeing these tiny birds more closely or trying to photograph them, place additional feeders near a window or porch.

Due to hummingbirds being territorial and sometimes aggressive when there is only one food source, consider hanging multiple feeders spaced far apart. It also is a good idea to use a feeder with a bee and wasp guard. This will help eliminate aggressive competition for nectar between the bees/wasps and the hummingbirds. Don't be concerned if you find small insects in the mouth of the feeder. They fulfill the protein requirements for hummingbirds. Don't remove them until you clean the feeder.

There are commercial nectars available at home and garden stores, but it's easy and economical to make your own with one part sugar and four parts hot water. Be sure to let the nectar cool before filling the feeders.

If you make your own nectar, don't use honey or sugar substitute. Honey attracts bees, as well as black fungus that will cause a fatal liver and tongue disease in hummingbirds. Years ago, it was common to see hummingbird feeders filled with red nectar. This not only is unnecessary, the use of red food coloring is unhealthy for the birds.

It's important to keep the feeders clean. Thoroughly wash them at least a couple of times per week with a solution of 1 tablespoon of white vinegar per 1 cup of water. Rinse them well before refilling with nectar.

Despite the cooler weather moving in, Oklahomans still have a few weeks to enjoy the wildlife in the landscape. Keeping the hummingbird feeders in the landscape will help you enjoy these bird sightings before they head south for the winter.

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