

Rufous Hummingbirds

Don't think just bees when it comes to pollinators! Some birds, such as hummingbirds, also help get the job done.

The Rufous Hummingbird is found along Alberta's western border and is instrumental in pollinating our wildflower alpine meadows. Paintbrush, lilies, columbines, wild mints and currants all benefit from the pollen it transfers from bloom to bloom.



Mary Anne Sharpe

Males are bright orange with iridescent orange throats; females are green and orange. But don't let their pretty appearance fool you. They are feisty and fierce in defending their foraging territory and attack other invaders much larger than themselves.

Males and females keep separate territories and it is the females who initiate visits to a male when mating time rolls around. Rufous "hummers" breed further north than any other hummingbird.

These tiny 3-gram birds are raging metabolic furnaces. Their tiny wings beat 50-to-60 times *per second* as they hover over a blossom or zoom backwards and forwards with equal ease. During migration they cover more than 2000 miles (3200 km). And despite myth to the contrary, they don't hitchhike on the backs of migrating geese.

In the last 50 years the population of these beautiful little pollinators has declined by more than 60%.

The world is a diminished place for this loss, not only for the work they do in maintaining our ecosystems but also for their jewel-like beauty.

Such losses are not unique to Rufous Hummingbirds. Legacy Land Trust is working to conserve and expand habitat for all wild pollinators.

*Bob Griebel
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