



How to Help

Black-chinned Hummingbirds

Black-chinned Hummingbirds are fairly common summer residents of the lowlands and low mountains in the Intermountain West and Central Valley of California, from southern British Columbia through western Texas and northern Mexico. They frequent a wide range of habitats from deserts to suburban yards. They can be attracted to yards by planting hummingbird gardens and maintaining hummingbird feeders.

What Black-chinned Hummingbirds Need

Food: Black-chinned Hummingbirds spend most of their foraging time seeking nectar from more than 90 species of flowering plants, including beardtongue (*Penstemon* sp.), century-plants (*Agave* sp.), desert honeysuckle (*Anisacanthus* sp.), larkspur (*Delphinium* sp.), Indian paintbrush (*Castilleja* sp.), bush sage (*Salvia* sp.), skyrockets (*Ipomopsis* sp.), thistle (*Cirsium* sp.), and vines (*Campsis* sp., *Lonicera* sp.). "Black-chins" also visit and feed on firecracker bush (*Bouvardia glaberrima*), hummingbird bush (*Justicia californica*), ocotillo (*Fouquieria splendens*), and tree tobacco (*Nicotiana glauca*). They eat insects to supplement their diet of nectar.

Nesting: Females build their nest on horizontal twigs or branches an average of 6-15 feet up in a deciduous tree. They adapt well to suburban environments, nesting in yards that provide foraging areas and nesting sites in shade trees. Males monitor and defend breeding and feeding territories from perches in tall trees. Breeding territories do not need to include feeding areas as long as adequate feeding areas are nearby.

Shelter: Is believed to roost and sleep on tree branches, but this behavior needs more study.

Other: Cats can pose a serious threat to hummingbirds. Birds may also collide with picture windows.

How You Can Help

- Put up and maintain a hummingbird feeder filled with fresh sugar water (one part sugar to four parts water), which can spoil rapidly in hot weather. Feeders should be cleaned thoroughly (without soap, which can sicken birds) and refilled every two days in hot weather.
- Plant a hummingbird garden with native and non-invasive flowering plants including beardtongue (*Penstemon* sp.), bush sage (*Salvia* sp.) and some of their other favorite plants.
- Avoid using pesticides in your flower garden, as this depletes the insect supply for hummingbirds and other birds, and can lead to direct poisoning of birds.
- Plan to include landscape trees—preferably native drought tolerant species—on your property. If you already have them, plan your hummingbird garden in proximity to the trees.
- Plant sycamores or cottonwoods which provide cotton nesting material (unbleached cotton can also be provided as an artificial substitute).
- Include native trees in your landscaping.
- Keep cats indoors to protect them from the elements, and to protect hummingbirds and other native birds from their hunting activities.
- Screen windows or make them visible so hummingbirds can avoid colliding with them.