

Read the following article. Then answer Numbers 1 through 10.

# The Ruby-Throated Hummingbird

When it comes to flying, good things really do come in small packages. The world's smallest bird, the hummingbird, is amazing. From the hummingbird's delicate beauty to its daring stunts, it is a bird like no other.

One of the most common hummingbirds in the eastern part of the United States is the ruby-throated hummingbird. It is only about three inches long and weighs one-quarter of an ounce. You can put a penny in your palm to see how heavy that is.

The ruby-throated hummingbird has very special feathers. The feathers contain air bubbles. These bubbles give the bird its iridescence, or shimmering colors. The bird is named for the male's throat color. The female's throat is white. The other parts of the bird are just as beautiful. Its back is a bright metallic green. Its tail feathers are tipped with white.

The hummingbird's wings are constantly in motion. They flap 50 to 200 times per second. The speedy flapping creates the bird's famous humming sound. The hummingbird's wings are a blur of constant motion. They allow hummingbirds to suspend themselves in one spot, like tiny helicopters.

Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards, sideways, and upside down. Their wings rotate in a circular motion. This lets hummingbirds move in any direction.

Some ruby-throated hummingbirds stay in Florida year round. Most spend their winters in

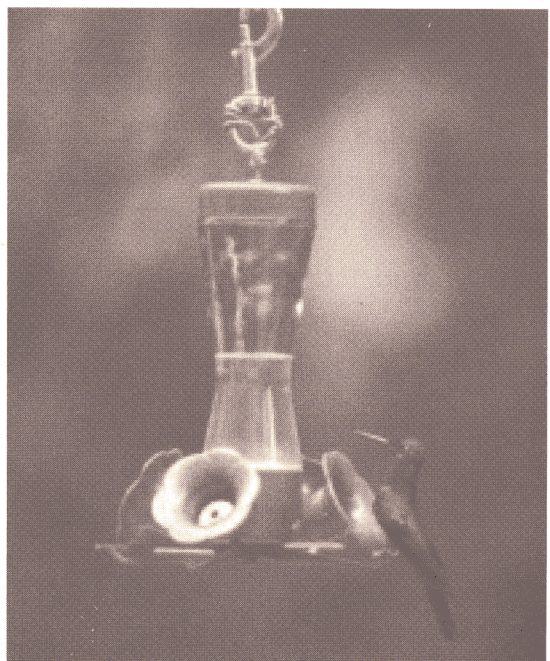


Mexico. They return in March and begin building their nests in April. A hummingbird's nest is almost as beautiful as the bird itself. The nest is about the size of a walnut. It is built of grasses, soft moss, cattail fluff, and spider webs. Most ruby-throated hummingbird nests are built on high branches.

It is no surprise that the world's tiniest bird lays the world's smallest eggs. They are about a quarter of an inch long. Hummingbirds usually lay two eggs. The baby hummingbird grows inside the egg for two weeks. When the birds hatch, they have no feathers and cannot see. Three weeks later, however, they are ready to leave the nest.

Hummingbirds may be small, but their appetites are not. These birds have a meal every 10 to 15 minutes! If you moved as quickly as the hummingbird, you might need to eat that often, too. The birds' main food source is nectar. This is a high-energy juice found in flowers. A hummingbird's needle-like bill is perfect for reaching deep into flowers. The bird's tongue works like a thin straw. It makes sucking out the nectar quite easy. Hummingbirds also eat tiny insects. Sometimes they find them in the flowers or pick them out of the air. They even steal insects from spiders' webs.

If you enjoy watching hummingbirds, plant a garden for the tiny birds. Hummingbirds love red, orange, and pink flowers. These flowers usually have the most nectar. Hummingbirds aren't born knowing about these flowers. They learn it as they go about their business. You can also put out a hummingbird feeder. Many stores sell them. Follow the directions on the box and hang the feeder in a place that is easy to see from your house. It won't take long for the hungry little hummers to find it.



NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**1** Which of these is a FACT in the passage?

- A. When it comes to flying, good things really do come in small packages.
- B. Hummingbirds are the only birds that can fly backwards, sideways, and upside down.
- C. The ruby-throated hummingbird has very special feathers.
- D. The hummingbird's wings are a blur of constant motion.

**2** BOTH male and female ruby-throated hummingbirds have

- A. green backs.
- B. white necks.
- C. white bellies.
- D. ruby throats.

**3** The hummingbird's humming sound is caused by its

- A. beak.
- B. wings.
- C. tongue.
- D. throat.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

4 Read this sentence from the story.

**They learn it as they go about their business.**

What does *go about their business* mean in the sentence?

- A. follow their parents
- B. go from flower to flower
- C. watch other birds
- D. become better flyers

5 Explain how hummingbirds are like tiny helicopters. Use information and details provided in the article to help you write your answer.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**6** What was the author's main purpose for writing this article?

- A. to show how to create a garden for hummingbirds
- B. to tell a story about how the hummingbird got a ruby throat
- C. to explain how a hummingbird is like a helicopter
- D. to tell about a particular kind of hummingbird

**7** The ruby-throated hummingbird builds its nests

- A. in the soft marsh grass.
- B. in clumps of dried moss.
- C. in high branches.
- D. inside walnut shells.

**8** What is NOT tiny about a hummingbird?

- A. its nest
- B. its noise
- C. its eggs
- D. its hunger

**9** You can attract hummingbirds to a garden by

- A. planting large trees.
- B. spraying perfume.
- C. growing certain flowers.
- D. making nests.



NAME

Date

**10** If a ruby-throated hummingbird visited your yard, how would you recognize it? What would it look like, and how would it behave? Use information and details provided in the article to help you write your answer.

**Writing Tip:** Find the part of the article that tells what a hummingbird looks like and how it acts. Use a variety of words. Don't use the same adjective or adverb more than once in a paragraph.