

# How to care for hummingbird feeders

## *(Please don't kill with kindness)*



**Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center**  
21900 Pacific Coast Highway  
Huntington Beach, CA 92646  
(714) 374-5587

Proper care of Hummingbird feeders takes a significant commitment on your part, so please consider this before you start. **Please Note:** If you do not follow these instructions, you could be responsible for giving Hummingbirds a **serious and deadly fungus infection**. This fungus condition causes their tongues to swell, making it impossible for the Hummingbird to eat. Ultimately, they die of starvation, a slow and painful death. **Please do it right or don't do it at all.**

### WHAT DO HUMMINGBIRDS EAT?

The Hummingbird diet consists of small soft body insects (aphids, gnats, small spiders, small fruit flies that feed on rotten fruit, etc.) and nectar from flowers which is mostly sucrose. When you put up a feeder, you are providing them an easy access to only the sucrose part of their diet. This is very important when flower nectar is in short supply.

### SELECTION OF FEEDER

Purchase a feeder that has no hidden areas. Be sure all the inside surfaces can be reached and cleaned with a bottle brush (this will eliminate many types).

### Feeder Food: Sugar water prepared as below:

**One (1) Part White Sugar**

*Do not boil sugar*

**Four (4) Parts Boiled Water**

*Re-measure after boiling*

**Cool to room temperature and then fill feeder**

The above ratio approximates the sugar to water ratio present in the nectar of Hummingbird flowers. Too much sugar is hard on their liver and kidneys. Too little sugar will not provide the needed calories and may cause them to lose interest in your feeder.

### Do not use:

- Red Dye
- Commercial Hummingbird food
- Honey or artificial sweeteners
- Anything other than the one to four sugar water mixture described above.

### Hanging the feeder:

You can use a piece of coat hanger to hang the feeder. Apply Vaseline to the hanger if you have an ant problem. Hang the feeder in the shade where the Hummingbirds are safe from cats.

### Maintain feeder cleanliness

You will need to wash the feeder out in very hot water every two to three days. Use a bottle brush to scrub all surfaces then rinse well. In hot weather, above 60 degrees, clean and change feeder every 2 days. Hummingbirds put their tongues into the feeder to drink and sugar water is a good medium for the growth of pathogens. If you see any mold in the feeder or the mixture becomes cloudy, then it was left up too long (you blew it). Remember, if it is not clean enough for you to drink from then your feeder is not fit for these delicate little Hummingbirds. **Proper maintenance of feeders needs to be strongly emphasized.** The Wetlands & Wildlife Care Center's Hummingbird rescue team rehabilitates hundreds of hummingbirds of which 10% or more of those received have fungus infections from improperly maintained feeders. These include sick adults or the sick babies of dead or about to die mother Hummingbirds. Unfortunately, not all of them make it. Because of their diet, treatment of *candidiasis* in Hummingbirds is extremely difficult.

### Fruit and flowers

You can put out spoiled fruit in a plastic bucket, which will draw small gnat and fruit flies. You can get Hummingbird flowers and/or seed mixture from your nursery. Always consider the cat problem and hang where cats can't pick off the Hummingbirds (they get very good at doing that).

### You found a hummingbird

Put it in a shoebox on crumpled Kleenex. Put a pencil size hole in the cover, cover the box and keep it warm and quiet. Specialized care and diet is required for captive Hummingbirds. Please call (714) 374-5587 option 5, then option 9 for detailed information and get it to one of our Hummingbird Rehab Team members as soon as possible. Lisa (714) 381-3385 Melissa (714) 713-1149 Helen (714) 635-3368 Amanda (714) 376-1894 All Creatures Care Cottage (949) 642-7151