



Nature At Home

We hope to inspire kids of all ages to learn about the natural world and discover new connections to nature.



Nature Challenge: Hummingbird Behavior

View the video at DishmanHills.org/Nature-At-Home

While visiting Goldback Springs, I saw an array of hummingbirds. They were doing what I'd call "typical" hummingbird behaviors: Perching, sipping nectar, rising high in the air and diving.



I observed a hummingbird perched high in a tree, suddenly fly from its perch, dart out several feet and then return to where it started. The bird did this several times. I wondered what it was up to.



What do you think this bird is doing? Have you seen other birds act this way?



The hummingbird was fly catching! It turns out that insects are a significant part of a hummingbird’s diet and provide much needed protein. They also eat a variety of other things I didn’t expect. My research showed me that nectar and bugs were once believed to be the hummingbird’s only sources of nutrition. Scientists have discovered that secretions from insects, pollen, the fluids of fruits and other plant parts, tree sap, ashes, sand, and seawater are also consumed by various species of hummingbirds!

<https://www.birdwatchersdigest.com/bwdsite/learn/hummingbirds/what-do-hummingbirds-eat.php>

Scientists are learning more about them all the time. “Hummingbirds can keep track of particularly juicy flowers depending on where they appear—first, second, or even fourth—in a line-up of blooms. Although this understanding of “numerical order” may sound simple, it’s a complex skill that may help hummingbirds remember the easiest routes between nectar-rich flowers. It’s also the first time researchers have seen the ability in a wild vertebrate.”

<https://www.sciencemag.org/news/2020/07/hummingbirds-can-count-their-way-food>

You might be surprised to discover the large and varied menu of these amazing birds!

If you have any questions, or have observed what you think is an interesting bird behavior, e-mail us at Education@DishmanHills.org