

Ruby-throated Hummingbird (RTHU)

Flower Species Visit Protocol Field Guide

(for Mexico, Central America, and Caribbean)

Task

To count the number of times RTHUs visit different flower species during 45 minutes. Observations may be continued during consecutive and/or subsequent hours to see if hummingbird flower selection changes throughout the day.)

What You Need

- Schoolyard Hummingbird Habitat, flower garden, or wildflower patch
- [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Flower Species Visit Data Sheet](#)
- Bird identification guide
- Local wildflower and cultivated flower identification guides
- Clipboard
- Pencil or pen
- Camera (optional)
- Binoculars (optional)

In the Field

1. Fill out the top of the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird Flower Species Visit Data Sheet*. Record date and time period when observations are made.
2. Identify the different flower species at site. Record flower species on the *Ruby-throated Hummingbird Flower Species Visit Data Sheet*. If you are unable to identify the flower to species, at least take it to genus level.
3. Submit a close-up photograph of any flower species that is visited by a hummingbird on your study site. This will allow verification of the identification to species.
4. For each RTHU seen during the 45 minutes, identify its sex and age if possible.
5. For each flower species, record by the following categories:
 - Red-throated adult male
 - Adult female (white-throated, January through April only)
 - Undetermined sex (if throat is not observed)
 - Undetermined sex (possible adult female/young female/young male, August through December, if throat is white)
 - Young male (if throat is heavily streaked in green or black and/or has one or more red feathers; nearly all develop a full red throat sometime before departing north in spring)

Note 1: When an individual bird enters a habitat, tally each time the bird feeds on a DIFFERENT flower or flower stalk for EACH species. For example, if a bird visits a Cardinal Flower stalk, then a Trumpet Creeper, and returns to the Cardinal Flower, this is two visits for Cardinal Flower and one for Trumpet Creeper. If it feeds from the same flower or flower stalk several times in succession, it counts as only one visit.

Note 2: If you see a color-marked RTHU, describe the color markings and attempt to observe whether the bird is banded and on which leg. If you see a RTHU with unusual colors (albinism, leucism, etc.) make note of the colors and patterns and get a photo if possible. Record your observations on the [Ruby-throated Hummingbird Sighting Data Sheet](#). Contact Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History at research@hiltonpond.org or (803) 684-5852 as soon as possible.