

RPBO Supplemental Hummingbird Project of BC News

Hummingbird Project of BC Fundraiser



Rufous Hummingbirds
Selasphorus rufus

The little male Rufous can be recognized by his shiny red throat and the constant buzz that accompanies his flight. Rufous hummingbirds are important pollinators. They transfer pollen from flower to flower as they collect their nectar reward from plants. Many animals in the ecosystem rely on the fruits of their pollination efforts. In summer, Rufous breed along the west coast and in the interior of BC, having travelled from wintering sites in Mexico and the US Gulf States. Unfortunately, the Rufous population is estimated to have declined by 65% in the last 40 years and they are now considered a species of continental concern. They are vulnerable to landscape and climate changes. These changes could eventually stop this important pollinator returning year after year.

Please consider planting hummingbird-friendly plants and if you have a feeder, provide boiled nectar made from 1 part white sugar and 4 parts water. Other sugars can harm the birds. It is also important to keep the feeder clean. If you wouldn't drink it, then it is not good for hummingbirds either.

The Hummingbird Project of BC (HPBC) is a citizen science based study dedicated to the conservation of hummingbird populations and their habitats throughout BC. HPBC is part of Rocky Point Bird Observatory, which is a volunteer run charitable organization. To learn more about hummingbirds in BC, please visit our website at <http://rpbo.org> or email us at hummingbird@rpbo.org Photo kindly provided by Michael Yip in support of the Hummingbird Project at RPBO.

Photo kindly provided by Michael Yip in support of the Hummingbird Project at RPBO.



Rufous Hummingbirds
Selasphorus rufus

The little female Rufous can be recognized by the small patch of shiny red feathers at her throat. Rufous hummingbirds are important pollinators. They transfer pollen from flower to flower as they collect their nectar reward from plants. Many animals in the ecosystem rely on the fruits of their pollination efforts. In summer, Rufous breed along the west coast and in the interior of BC, having travelled from wintering sites in Mexico and the US Gulf States. Unfortunately, the Rufous population is estimated to have declined by 65% in the last 40 years and they are now considered a species of continental concern. They are vulnerable to landscape and climate changes. These changes could eventually stop this important pollinator returning year after year.

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Photo kindly provided by Michael Yip in support of the Hummingbird Project at RPBO.



The Hummingbird Project of BC is selling the above Rufous Hummingbird (*Selasphorus rufus*) cards as a fundraiser. The cards are beautiful photos of a female and male Rufous Hummingbird, taken by Michael Yip, information about the species is provided on the back of the cards. Michael Yip, a local birder and photographer <http://www.vancouverislandbirds.com>, has kindly allowed the Hummingbird Project to use these photos for fundraising. The cost is **\$10 for 10 cards** (5 male, 5 female) plus shipping. Please contact the hummingbird@rpbo.org if you are interested in purchasing these cards and supporting the Hummingbird Project of BC.

Hummingbird Project News

July 2011

The hummingbird banding season on the coast is almost done, but banding in the interior will be busy well into August.

June 2011



The Princeton team visited Jura farm, which has hosted banding for a number of years.

This has been a very difficult year for the hummingbirds returning to BC to breed. After the short summer last year, they had to contend with an unusually cold spring and faced many storms. Sadly, this has affected their arrival. We saw the first influx of birds come through on their way north, but there was an absence of our usual returnees. Feeders were quiet across BC. However, it does look like a few birds have made it though at last. On the coast, they are two months late and in the interior, a mere 1 month late. They may not be returning to all their usual haunts this year and we will just have to wait and see how much this year's late arrival will affect the population in the long run.

Since the goal of our project is hummingbird conservation, it is clearly more important than ever to learn as much as we can about their migration patterns and habitat needs, in order to advocate appropriately for these birds. As part of that effort, we have been building teams across BC. It is with great pleasure that we can announce that a new team is fledging in Princeton, under their own bander, Sue Elwell. Congratulations Sue! We also thank Cam and Joy Finlay, and Heather Wylie, who helped with the final training session this year.



John Berry's photo of a female rufous collecting nesting material at his home.

Around BC, our teams have been working hard. At our mid-island sites, Stan and Diane Acton have kindly maintained Franklin Mill (and they are still hoping for a successor to volunteer), while Shirley Prince has put together a great group at the Evans site and that team is doing very well. In the south, we have had huge support from the Goldstream hatchery volunteers and Ben McKinnon is having good success with the Francis King site. The Saltspring sites have been hit very hard by the poor return and it is with great relief that we are finally hearing that bird numbers are starting to rise. Galiano also hit a slow down and as they are also involved in nectar monitoring at Betty Kennedy's site, Mike Hoebel has a fairly clear picture of bird numbers across the season so far. On the mainland, Roy Teo has had a slower than usual start at Widgeon Marsh, but Brackendale has had relatively good numbers. Certainly, when we visited John and Lloyd at Paradise, there were many females actively collecting nesting materials and so we do expect a good crop of juveniles from that area.

The high elevation (Grouse) and interior sites have only just started monitoring. Devin Manky managed to have a session at Grouse (despite the snow!) and Gail Loughridge's team have been out to Lumby a few times, but banding at the north Okanagan Lake site has not been successful so far. Linda Szymkowiak's site in Rossland has also had one session, and we were pleased to hear that despite the slow start to the season, they had returns for all three of the interior species (BCHU, RUHU and CAHU). The star of the long-distance recaps (so far) is again Curtis Culp, our bander in Dunster, who has been busily sharing birds again with his fellow bander Kelly Bryan in West Texas. News from east of the Rockies is that they have also had a late start to the season, but that the birds have returned in good numbers to the Kananskis region.



Expert BBQ'ing by Jessie!

The annual team meeting was held on South Vancouver Island. It was a huge success and we were very pleased to see representatives from so many groups there, including members from the North Okanagan, Galiano, Widgeon and one attendee even coming from Saskatchewan (way to go Ron!). It was a great chance for everyone to get to know each other and talk hummingbirds! We had the get together BBQ at Beaver lake on the Friday night. It was finally warm and a delightful start to proceedings.



A great turn out on the Saturday.

Saturday was filled with talks/workshops at Royal Roads University. A huge thank you to our speakers, who gave interesting and informative talks - thanks to Mike Hoebel (our Galiano team leader), Ann Nightingale, Jessie Fanucchi, Christina Lam, Sue Askew, Wade Kennedy and Jon

Moran. We heard about many things, from hummingbird banding issues, to what could be done with the data we and others are collecting. We also enjoyed great array of work stations for hands-on practice. Thanks to Mickie Noble for lending us all those microscopes, to Christina and Caralyn for making all the informational posters, to Ann for the carved practice birds (great for wrapping, banding and measuring practice), to Sue for running the pollen station, to Heather and Janice for general

backup, and to Cam for bringing a very strange specimen! Marion Favor kindly hosted the Saturday evening potluck and the food was scrummy!

The last main day of the meeting was up at Shawnigan and it was arranged fabulously by Lynn Courville (who also put on lunch!!!). We visited two new banding sites (thanks also to our new hosts for accepting such a large crowd to their homes) and attendees had a chance to get some hands-on experience, despite the unusually low bird numbers that we have been having this year.



Afternoon banding brought all 4 possibilities, males and females of both rufous and Anna's.

Some of the team were also able to attend a hands-on day at Saltspring and had another opportunity to practice working with different people. Thanks to Barb and Colin Harris, who kindly provided the transport!



Margie, Andrea and Barb are working on birds, with Tiffany and Wade scribing very quickly!

As always, we have to thank the many volunteers, be they hosts, trappers, scribes, data entry aficionados or banders. This project is a team effort and we could not do it without you all. Thank you and happy banding!

Alison

Alison Moran, Ph.D.
Coordinator of the Hummingbird Project of BC
Rocky Point Bird Observatory

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