

Title of Session: Nuts About Nature - International Hummingbird Month

Moderator: Bill Hilton Jr.

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Room: Tree House Conference Room

BJ: while we wait for Bill, let's do introductions

SueGst2: I am an elementary principal in St. Louis, MO

DoloresGst1: I am the technology coordinator at a Catholic school in St. Louis, MO.

MarkAH: Hi, I'm Mark from the University of Oregon. I'm working on a Environmental Education web site related to wetlands. I'm also representing Hermmie the Hummer who visits me every morning... so long as I feed him.

BJ: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania and a helpdesk volunteer for Tapped In

RosemaryEH: I'm a tech teach in Detroit and The Frugal Educator here at Tapped In

BJ: before we continue, a suggestion...

BJ: click on the Actions drop down menu in the upper right of your chat window...

BJ: and scroll down to the bottom and click on DETACH

BJ: this will make your text window larger and easier to read

BJ: I'm going to show you the main Hilton Pond webpage that Bill runs

BJ: <http://www.hiltonpond.org>

BJ: click on that hyperlink to open a new page

BJ: Bill leads the monthly Nuts About Nature group and, as you can see, he is involved in several projects

BJ: scroll down and click on Hummingbirds Operation Rubythroat

BJ: I am saved! Bill just logged in...he's having severe weather.

BillHi joined the room.

BillHi: Nothing like being late for your own party. :-)

BJ cheers...you're here!!!

MarkAH . o O (better late than never)

BJ: I figured you were having severe weather, Bill

BillHi: We've just been through some very severe thunderstorms resulting in loss of electrical service.

BJ: I just had everyone go to your hummingbird page, Bill

BillHi: Well, now that I'm here, let me wish everyone "Happy International Hummingbird Month"!

BillHi: Well, I guess everyone is immersed in Operation RubyThroat now?

SueGst2: Same to you

RosemaryEH: Do we toast with nectar?

BJ blows red bubbles in honor of the hummers

BJ: Bill, you're welcome to start over.

BillHi: Toast with nectar would be good; everyone fill up your blossoms and let's clink our corollas together.

BillHi: Okay., I think i will start over.

BillHi: Anyone care to speculate on why August is International Hummingbird Month?

DoloresGst1: Is this the time they start to migrate south?

MarkAH: Beginning of the migration season?

RosemaryEH: More food....more sightings

BJ: what about a combination of the two? The hummers are storing up food in preparation for migrating?

RosemaryEH: Good answer BJ.....Survey says???

BJ . o O (although where they would store anything in those tiny bodies is beyond me!)

BillHi: Well, none of the answers you gave are wrong, but the best answer is probably is that August is when we have the most hummers in North America. The nesting season is over so all the juveniles have fledged, and the adults are still around because migration doesn't really kick off until about the middle of August.

MarkAH nods

BillHi: If you're a hummingbird enthusiast or bander, this is the time of year you're in "hummingbird heaven."

BJ listens to Bill humming happily

BillHi: In a week or so, the adult male Ruby-throated Hummingbirds will begin leaving the eastern U.S. and migrating toward Mexico and Central America.

MarkAH wonders what they do in Mexico

BillHi: Adult females leave a bit later, and some juveniles are here until mid-October. After that, it's a very sad time.

BillHi: Good question Mark. We don't know!

RosemaryEH: Corona on CanCun?

BillHi: Very little work has been done on RTHUs on the wintering ground, and none of the 75,000 RTHUs that have been banded in Canada or the U.S. have ever been found or recaptured south of the Rio Grande.

RosemaryEH: Wow, that is interesting.

BillHi: Back to BJ's question about storing fat: look at <http://www.rubythroat.org/images/RTHUFatFurcula.jpg>

RosemaryEH: So do they store it in their throats?

BJ: Bill is an outstanding photographer too, in case you haven't noticed

BillHi: You're looking at the wishbone (furcula) of a hummingbird. I've parted the neck feathers in this photo so you can see a deposit of yellow fat.

BillHi: You have a depression there, too, just below your adam's apple--although you don't have a wishbone.

BillHi: They also store some fat along their sides and on their upper legs.

BillHi: Anyone care to guess how much a Ruby-throated Hummingbird normally weighs?

RosemaryEH: 4 oz

MarkAH: grams

BillHi: How many, Mark?

BillHi: (No fair doing a quick Internet search!)

MarkAH: few

BJ chuckles

BillHi: Rosemary, 4 ounces would be what a Quarter Pounder would weigh. Care to re-estimate. :-)

RosemaryEH: less than an ounce

BillHi: You're right, and I won't tease further by asking how much less

BillHi: An adult female RTHU weighs about 3.5 grams.

MarkAH shucks, that's what I was going to say

BillHi: (An ounce is 28 grams.)

BJ: is that about the weight of a nickel?

BillHi: BJ, you're cheating!

BJ: nah...I wouldn't do that!

BillHi: Actually a nickel weighs five paper clips.

BillHi: And a paper clip weighs one gram.

BillHi: So BJ is almost right; that female RTHU actually weighs significantly less than a nickel.

MarkAH: Very hard to hold safely, as in your pictures

RosemaryEH: How do you band them?

BillHi: The interesting thing is that an adult male RTHU can weigh as little as 2.5 grams, which means he weighs HALF a nickel.

BillHi: Or, to look at it another way, a nickel weighs TWO hummingbirds.

BJ: hard to imagine that such tiny things are so full of life!

BillHi: Now to get back to the migration/fat concept, when a RTHU gets ready to migrate, it stores fat in the furcula and can almost double its weight; the female would go from 3.5g to 5.5g and the male from 2.5 to 4.5!

BillHi: The fat is necessary because there are no stops along the way when RTHUs fly across the Gulf of Mexico, and it's all gone by the time they get to the Yucatan Peninsula.

BillHi: BJ's right. It's hard to imagine that something weighing less than a nickel can do all the hummingbirds do.

MarkAH: I imagine many are lost on the journey

BillHi: Mark, probably 50-60% of them don't make it.

BillHi: Rosemary, banding hummingbirds isn't easy. Only about 75 of us are authorized by the federal government to do it.

BJ: oh, no!

RosemaryEH: Where are they found when they "don't make it"?

MarkAH . o O (this is a strong evolutionary pressure)

BJ: I think we should all go to the Gulf and cruise around saving hummers

BillHi: Very strong. But interestingly, about 13.5% of the hummingbirds I band at Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History in York SC return in at least one later year!

BJ . o O (I know, I know...it's a human value judgment, Bill!)

BillHi: BJ, what I really want is a grant so I can go to the Yucatan and catch them as they arrive so I can check for bands.

MarkAH: Do they tend to return to the same place year after year, or move around?

BillHi: Look at <http://www.rubythroat.org/HummerBandingMain.html>

BillHi: Strong site fidelity, Mark. 13.5% is VERY high when you subtract out the non-survivors.

BillHi: This link shows how I hold RTHUs in a paper tube and apply the band with special pliers.

MarkAH nods

MarkAH: Bet they don't like that

BillHi: Well, they come back after banding

BillHi: Now look at <http://www.rubythroat.org/HummerBandsMain.html>

BillHi: The next to bottom photo gives you an idea of the size of the band.

RosemaryEH: What is the oldest hummingbird that has returned?

BillHi: I have two females at Hilton Pond that have come back for five years in a row after banding.

MarkAH: Average life span?

BillHi: The oldest banded RTHU on record is NINE years!

BJ thinks Bill has left us all speechless!

MarkAH: Given the culling rate, 9 years is incredible

BillHi: Average life span--because of all the losses of young birds during first migration--is less than a year. But if a RTHU makes it through that first year, it will likely live 3-4 years on average.

MarkAH: Where do west coast hummers go?

SueGst2: Fascinating! I must drop out now, but thanks!

BillHi: So, we've got things thing that weighs less than a nickel AND migrates back and forth 400 miles round trip AND lives up to nine years. Shazaaam!

BillHi: Sue, bookmark <http://www.rubythroat.org> :-)

SueGst2: Thanks, I will

BJ: thanks for joining us, Sue. There is a weekly newsletter Bill sends out

SueGst2 left the room (signed off).

BillHi: There are a dozen or so hummer species west of the Rockies. A few of those are sedentary; the rest also go to Mexico or Central America.

BillHi: It gets crowded down there in winter.

MarkAH: I should think they have better odds not having to cross the gulf

BillHi: It's too cold in North America to stay, and flying overland through Mexico might be just as dangerous because of unknown food sources, predators, etc.

BillHi: Here's an interesting RTHU that showed up last week in Chapel Hill NC:

MarkAH: I have heard that on a given date we should stop feeding so they will leave on time.... I've also heard that Hummers aren't that dumb and not to worry

BillHi: Oops. let me paste the URL.

BillHi: <http://www.rubythroat.org/GalleryRoom20.html>

BillHi: Whatcha think?

BJ: Mark had a question about when to stop feeding the hummers, Bill

BillHi: Where are those oohs and ahhs for the albino RTHU?

MarkAH: I have heard that on a given date we should stop feeding so they will leave on time.... I've also heard that hummers aren't that dumb

BJ ooooooohhhhhssssssss

BillHi: Thank you, BJ.

BJ grins...any time, Bill.

MarkAH: Yes, beautiful

BillHi: You're right, Mark, hummers aren't that dumb. You're not going to undo hundreds of thousands of years of adaptive behavior by putting out a feeder. They leave according to day length, not food supply.

BillHi: Thus, no need to bring in all your feeders in winter.

BillHi: Mark, take a look at a page on my other site for Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History (the main link is <http://www.hiltonpond.org--bookmark> please--but the

page you want is <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ResearchHummerVagrantMain.html>

MarkAH got the Quick time movie to run

BillHi: Good, Mark.

BillHi: The bookmark should be: <http://www.hiltonpond.org>

MarkAH loading

BJ: that's the site I first showed everyone

BillHi: This page is all about the unusual winter hummingbirds that I have banded when they have showed up in the Carolinas. Most are species that breed in the western U.S.

BillHi: Thanks BJ.

MarkAH: Swept east on a storm???

BillHi: You'll need to read the whole page for my lengthy answer to that question. :-)

MarkAH: I've bookmarked it for later consumption

BillHi: Mark, I didn't get your introduction at the beginning.

MarkAH: I'm from the University of Oregon. I'm working on a website related to wetlands here. I'm also interested in how to use Tapped In with my pre-service teachers. Finally, I represent Hermmie the Hummer who visits everyday.... so long as I feed him.

BillHi: Excellent.

MarkAH: I'm studying how you organize your website

BillHi: BJ mentioned my newsletter earlier. It's called "This Week at Hilton Pond." In honor of International hummingbird Month, the current installment is about hummers.

Let's go to <http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek030722.html>

BJ: I really recommend the newsletter, Mark

MarkAH loading

BillHi: If you want a free on-line subscription just send a blank e-mail to thisweek@hiltonpond with SUBSCRIBE in the subject line. Get your teachers to do it, too. :-)

MarkAH: Super picture on the top page.

MarkAH: I will subscribe and will pass this along to my science folks

BillHi: Thanks. There's one of those every week. :-)

BJ: the photography and the text are always excellent

BJ: and Bill leads Nuts About Nature every month here in TI

MarkAH: I'm taking pictures every month at our wetlands and am learning to get those super closeups

BillHi: Mark, here's BJ's favorite installment:

<http://www.hiltonpond.org/ThisWeek030308.html>

MarkAH loading

BillHi: Rosemary, how 'bout you. Do you teach?

BJ laughs...it's amazing is right!

RosemaryEH: I'm a technology teacher for two schools in Detroit. My kids have tongues like that too.

MarkAH: Incredible

BillHi: Rosemary, please use you power to steer your teachers woodpecker-tongued students toward my Web sites. Maybe some of the teachers would also like to be involved in "Operation RubyThroat: The Hummingbird Project" since RTHUs breed in Michigan.

RosemaryEH: Detroit Zoo has a butterfly/hummingbird room but I have never been there

when the hummingbirds have.

BillHi: That's teacher AND students.

BillHi: Yeah, hummers don't do all that well in captivity.

MarkAH Mark's wife Sharon arrives and loves the pictures too!

RosemaryEH: I saw one in Oscoda about 15 years or more ago for a brief second.

BillHi: Hi, Sharon!

BillHi: Well, thanks for participating tonight. Anyone have any closing questions?

MarkAH Sharon waves and runs to put dinner on hold

BJ: Bill, I know you got a late start, but I don't want to keep you too late. Thanks for a great discussion....always learn lots of new things during your sessions

RosemaryEH: Thanks Bill I'll explore your site more.

BillHi: Next time I'll try to divert the thunderstorm.

MarkAH: Thanks Bill, I'll be passing all this good stuff off to my students. Perhaps they'll start coming to your meetings.

BJ cheers for Mark

BillHi: Hooray!

BillHi: What will really make me happy is those "This Week" subscriptions. :-)

BJ: The next Nuts About Nature is September 16?

MarkAH: Topic?

BJ: the topic will be on the Sept. Calendar, Mark

BillHi: It's the day after my birthday.

MarkAH: I'll look for it

BJ: Oh, we'll have to have a party!

MarkAH: Virtual cake

BillHi: Real presents?

BJ: what would you like?

BillHi: I'll e-mail you a list of all my sizes. :-)

BJ chuckles...ok

MarkAH Ok, gotta go. Thanks again Bill, and thanks to BJ too

MarkAH waves bye

RosemaryEH: bye

BillHi: Me, too. thanks to BJ, the Queen of Multitasking.

BillHi: That's all for tonight. Bye.