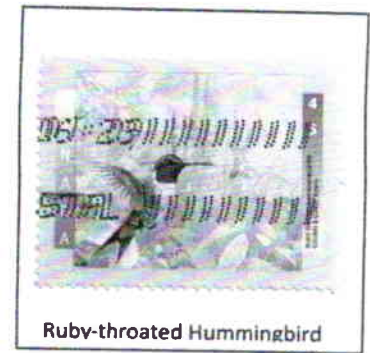


Hummingbirds

I love hummingbirds. Small and swift, they fascinate me. The colour on an individual bird can change instantly depending on the light: much of their colouring is structural, based on the light refracting from their feather structure. A black throat can suddenly become a vibrant red as the bird turns in the sunlight. You can see this in the Ruby-Throated Hummingbird, the only hummer regularly found in Atlantic Canada.



Hummingbirds are the smallest of all birds. The tiniest, the Bee Hummingbird found in Cuba, measures only 6 cm. in length and weighs a mere 2 grams. Hummingbirds get their name from the characteristic humming sound made by their incredibly rapid wingbeats, ranging from 12 up to 80 beats per second.



Members of the family Trochilidae, these birds have received intriguing and colorful names. Some of the more endearing names of the bird shown in the following pages include White-tipped Sicklebill, Long-billed Starthroat, Sparkling Violetear, Tufted Coquette, White-throated Mountaingem, Rainbow-bearded Thorntail, Bronze-tailed Plumeleteer, and Buff-wing Starfrontlet.

These exotic little birds are unique to the New World. They are found only in the Western Hemisphere, from Alaska down to Tierra del Fuego, with the greatest number of species found in Central and South America and the Caribbean. More than 365 species of hummingbirds have been identified: the number changes annually as taxonomic reorganization occurs. Personally, I have seen 99 species in the wild, and hope to see more.

Here is my collection of stamps of the hummingbirds that I've seen. Each page features the English name, the scientific name, and the place(s) where I have seen the birds. I'm still looking for stamps that depict species not shown here. You'll notice something interesting: although the birds are only found in the Americas, the stamps depicting them come from many places. African countries apparently find these Western Hemisphere birds a boon to philatelic revenue. Consequently, don't be surprised to see stamps from Niger, or Chad, or Uganada or other African states here, even though the birds themselves have never graced those places.

