

Title of Session: Nuts About Nature - Humm(bird)ing Around

Moderator: Bill Hilton Jr.

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BjB: Welcome to tonight's Nuts About Nature

TinaN: Hi everyone!

BjB: the topic is Humm(bird)ing Around

BjB: the discussion leader is Bill Hilton Jr. If you've never participated in one of Bill's sessions, you're in for a treat!

SrikrishnC: Hello all

BjB: let's start with brief introductions

BjB: I'm an art teacher in Pennsylvania

DavidWe joined the room.

SrikrishnC: I'm a 7th and 8th grade Science Teacher in Houston

GloriaMF: Hi, I am currently a student at the University of Houston. I live in Eagle Lake Texas

AmandaY: I'm a science teacher in Texas

TinaN: Hi ! I'm a preservice teacher at university of Houston, Texas.

BjB: Bill, looks like you have a great group tonight!

DavidWe: I'm David Weksler. I'm in New Jersey - I help teachers use technology in teaching and learning

BillHi: I'm Bill Hilton Jr., executive director of Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History in York, South Carolina. I taught high school and college biology for many years and now do a lot of preservice and inservice teacher training across the U.S.

GulbanuH joined the room.

DavidWe waves to Gulbanu

BillHi: Gulbanu, could you introduce yourself?

DavidWe: Gloria, I'm in Bergen County, up by NYC

BillHi: Our moderator is the famous BJ, Queen of Multitasking.

GulbanuH: Yes, David knows me I am a preservice science teacher

BjB hands the virtual floor over to Bill

GulbanuH: My major is Biology and I have done some things on birds

BillHi: Okay, greeting time is over. Let's get down to business. (-:

BillHi: I see that we have a large contingent from Texas, but what we're talking about pertains to all your regions.

SusanR joined the room.

BillHi: Here's how the discussion will go.

BillHi: Nuts About nature is intended to provide teachers with ideas and strategies for using natural history as a stimulus to excite kids about science learning.

BillHi: We also try to tie in the "unnatural" world of computers, the Internet, and electronic networking.

BillHi: As we roll along tonight, I'll ask some questions, and we'll see where the discussion leads us.

BillHi: I do have a few goals, but I'll let you figure out what those were when we finish!

BillHi: Okay, here goes.

BillHi: The topic tonight is "Humm(bird)ing Along." Any idea why I selected that for August?

DavidWe waits expectantly

GulbanuH: Maybe they migrate here in August

BillHi: What mean's "here."?

GulbanuH: I meant the birds are plenty in a region that you are talking about

BillHi: Other ideas?

AmandaY: Are they more active in the summer time in the US?

DavidWe: H-bird migration to an area near you, Bill?

GloriaMF: Bird season maybe

BillHi: Remember, I mentioned that the discussion pertains to everyone's region.

SrikrishnC: I go for heavy activity this time of year

BillHi: Okay, these are all good ideas.

GulbanuH: Some birds are endangered

AmandaY: Do they mate in the summer instead of spring?

BillHi: In actuality, August is "Nation Hummingbird Month" in the U.S.

GloriaMF: Learn something new everyday.

BillHi: The designation was created a few years ago by Nancy Newfield of Louisiana, a well-known hummingbird expert.

GulbanuH: Why do you lay so much emphasis on this particular one

BillHi: Stay with us Gulbanu. you'll understand in a minute.

BillHi: As someone mentioned, there are lots of hummingbirds around in August.

GulbanuH: Sure

BillHi: Any idea why there are so many?

DavidWe . o O (More nectar?)

GulbanuH: More food

GloriaMF: Flowers in bloom maybe

SusanR: abundance of flowers

SrikrishnC: Temps they like

DavidWe . o O (Because it's National Hummingbird Month?)

SrikrishnC: I like that

GloriaMF: Good one David.

BillHi: Don't encourage David.

DavidWe smiles

DavidWe sits in the corner

SrikrishnC: facing the wall?

GloriaMF: Duncce Cap on

BillHi: Nice pointed cap. (-:

DavidWe surrenders

BillHi: Back to the question.

BillHi: Do you think there are REALLY more flowers in August than in June or July?

GloriaMF: No

SrikrishnC: I wouldn't think so

GulbanuH: No, I don't think so

BillHi: Then, how do we account for large numbers of hummers in August?

DavidWe . o O (hatching young?)

BillHi: Right, David, you can come back out of the corner.

GulbanuH: Maybe they had stored food and are ready for breeding

BillHi: Nope, they don't store food.

GloriaMF: Mating season

DavidWe thanks Bill for his tolerance and understanding as a teacher

BillHi: It's over, but it was the cause.

SrikrishnC: Precipitation amounts

BillHi: Not rainfall.

BillHi: For the sake of tonight's discussion, I'd like to concentrate on just one species of hummer--the Ruby-throated hummingbird.

BillHi: The abbreviation for that species is RTHU.

SusanR . o O (maybe they need to gather nectar to gain as much weight as possible before they migrate)

BillHi: That doesn't explain why the population is so big.

TinaN: It's the end of summer?

JeffC joined the room.

BillHi: RTHUs spend the winter in Mexico and Central America. they migrate to 38 U.S. states and southern Canada to breed, starting in late March.

BillHi: They're found east of the Great Plains, including eastern Texas.

GulbanuH: High rate of breeding might be due to some favourable conditions

BillHi: But even in normal years there are lots more birds in August.

GulbanuH: So, you mean migration is the cause

SrikrishnC: So David wasn't correct

DavidWe heads back to the corner

BillHi: No, David WAS correct. After mating, the female lays two eggs that hatch. The chicks start fledging in about mid-June, and the numbers continue to build until late summer.

DavidWe sighs

BillHi: This is because the adults are still around AND the young birds of the year are still here also.

GloriaMF: David pat yourself on your back good job

DavidWe listens attentively to Bill

GulbanuH: great job! David

GloriaMF: waiting patiently

BillHi: So the population is at its largest during August, because by the end of the month many RTHUs are already starting to migrate south.

BillHi: Nearly all are gone by September's end.

DavidWe wonders what kind of numbers we are talking about

BillHi: So it wouldn't be very wise to call October "National Hummingbird Month," unless you happen to live in Coast Rica!

GulbanuH: So we celebrate their abundance in August

BillHi: You got it, Gulbanu.

BillHi: The numbers are all relative; I can't give you actual populations sizes because the hummers are too small to count!

GulbanuH: And too cute too

BillHi: Which is one reason why I trap and band RTHUs--to try to get an idea of local population sizes.

GloriaMF: How did you do that?

BillHi: I'll explain that shortly.

BillHi: A question first.

BillHi: Any idea why we don't call it "International Hummingbird Month."

GulbanuH: Because it pertains to our region

SrikrishnC: They are mostly in the US

JeffC: Because talking about hummers for that long would cause outrageous laughter in the classrooms.

BillHi: Define "region."

GloriaMF: Maybe because it does not pertain to other regions

AmandaY: The h-birds are mostly in the US in August

TinaN: Because throughout the year, hummingbirds migrate to different parts of the world

BillHi: Define "world."

GloriaMF: Countries

GulbanuH: They migrate north in winter

BjB: north and central America, Tina

BillHi: Here's a hint. Where do hummingbirds occur?

BillHi: Not just RTHUs.

SrikrishnC: In the Americas

BillHi: Anyone else?

GloriaMF: I agree with Srikrishn.

GulbanuH: You just said they are migrating from Mexico

BillHi: That's just the RTHUs we were talking about.

BillHi: Anyone else?

SrikrishnC: The highest abundance in the US is August

BjB searches the hummingbird page

SrikrishnC: Higher other places at other times

BillHi: NO CHEATING, BJ!

BjB laughs

BillHi: I'm trying to be Socratic here and draw knowledge from within--not from the Internet.

BjB: ahhhh...good point.

GulbanuH: There, I like that

BillHi: Well, Srikrishn is correct.

BillHi: Hummingbirds occur only in the Americas--North, Central, and South.

BillHi: There are none in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, or the Polar Regions.

GloriaMF: Interesting!

SrikrishnC: Lucky guess

TinaN: I never knew that.

GulbanuH: Thank you for the information

DavidWe: Anyone speculate on why?

BillHi: If you go to see a move about Tarzan, Lord of the Apes, and there's a hummingbird hovering over his shoulder, what can you conclude?

SrikrishnC: Can't travel those distances

JeffC: They're in Hollywood?

TinaN: it was filmed in America

BillHi: Cool, Jeff.

GulbanuH: I agree with Tina

GloriaMF: Filmed in the US

AmandaY: Interesting

SrikrishnC: Poor editing

BillHi: Perhaps it was filmed in the Amazon jungle rather than in an African one.

AmandaY: So why are h-birds in other parts of the world? Did they die of extinction in those areas?

BillHi: I just returned from an international conference in Boulder that was attended by folks from places like Thailand, Germany, India, etc.

DavidWe . o O (cool!)

BillHi: All of them were astounded when I showed them some Colorado hummingbirds at a feeder in the Rocky mountains.

BillHi: Most of them don't even have words for "hummingbird."

GloriaMF: They've never seen one before.

SrikrishnC: neat

GloriaMF: Even in pictures.

GulbanuH: I am from Pakistan, and I only read about them in books

BillHi: Correct. It was their first encounter. Their countries may host nectar-eating birds that fill a similar niche, but none of those other species can hover like hummingbirds.

SrikrishnC: Are they similar size wise

BillHi: No, larger. Hummers are pretty small.

BillHi: Let's go back to Amanda's question.

GulbanuH: Can you tell us more about the behaviour

BillHi: How can we explain the absence of hummers elsewhere in the world?

SrikrishnC: They couldn't travel those distances

BillHi: From where?

GloriaMF: Too small for travel

AmandaY: Died off, wrong climate (temp, moisture, food sources)

SrikrishnC: From the Americas?

BillHi: There are 338 species of hummingbirds in the Western Hemisphere.

GulbanuH: May be the conditions are so good for them they don't need to migrate

BillHi: It's not migration if you go elsewhere and stay; it's dispersal.

BillHi: Actually, those of you who say it's "too far" are correct.

GloriaMF: Maybe they need a certain type of atmosphere to survive.

GulbanuH: But you leave your native place if you have some problems

DavidWe . o O (predators)

BillHi: Hummingbirds apparently arose in the New World tropics and radiated into North and South America.

BillHi: They couldn't go any further north or south because (your guess?)

TinaN: the weather

SrikrishnC: They can't fly long distances without land to stop on
BillHi: I'm asking about north and south.
AmandaY: too cold
SrikrishnC: sorry
SrikrishnC: weather
BillHi: Tina's at least partly right.
BillHi: Too cold for what?
AmandaY: No food
BillHi: What food?
SrikrishnC: incubating
GulbanuH: Maybe their young die on the way
BjB chuckles...this guy is tough!
AmandaY: plants and insects
AmandaY: insects
DavidWe . o O (nectar)
BillHi: We already established that hummingbirds are nectar eaters.
JeffC: maybe they're a delicacy... and it takes quite a few to make hummingbird pie.
BillHi: Are there any flowers in the polar regions? (-:
DavidWe pokes Jeff
BillHi: I'll ignore Jeff; you should, too.
GulbanuH: Oh No
SrikrishnC: no
JeffC ignores himself
AmandaY: Do they [like] all flowers or only certain kinds of flowers?
BillHi: Curiously, those of you who said insects are also correct.
BjB . o O (as pollinators?)
BillHi: Any idea of why hummers might need to eat tiny insects?
SrikrishnC: protein
AmandaY: protein
BillHi: And.
GulbanuH: It is high protein and small
BillHi: Protein and . . .
SrikrishnC: feed their young
DavidWe . o O (other essential nutrients)
JeffC: their beaks are too small for big ones?
GloriaMF: Not enough nectar
BillHi: Protein and . . .
AmandaY: easy to find near flowers
BjB: do hummers have gullets?
BillHi: Insects contain protein and . . .?
DavidWe . o O (fat)
BillHi: FAT!
BillHi: Every squish a bug on the pavement?
SrikrishnC: David...David
JeffC: ding ding ding! we have a winner!
DavidWe grins

BillHi: It's pretty greasy, which means it's fat.
BillHi: So hummers get carbs from nectar and fats and proteins from insects.
DavidWe . o O (a well-balanced diet)
GloriaMF: Interesting!
GulbanuH: That is a neat point
BillHi: Neither insects or flowers occur in the polar regions.
GloriaMF: They also need their protein, carbs, and fats.
BillHi: And, as someone has said, the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans are too wide for hummers to fly across.
DavidWe . o O (southern Alaska, Aleutians, Bering Strait?)
BillHi: Thus, they're pretty much isolated to where they originated--tropical and temperate America.
DavidWe: Do they get to Alaska?
GulbanuH: So we have the glory of them
BillHi: So, if you were BJ and liked to cheat during the discussion, where could you go for these kinds of answers?
SrikrishnC: Hilton Pond website
BillHi: The answer is, the Web site for "Operation RubyThroat: The Hummingbird Project" at <http://www.rubythroat.org>
BillHi: Let's go there now!
GulbanuH: Well right now internet is my only source
BillHi: Click on the hyperlink above and WAIT for me on the homepage.
BillHi: WAIT!
BillHi: ON THE HOMEPAGE!
BillHi: Everybody there?
BjB Nods
SrikrishnC: yes
DavidWe nods
GulbanuH: yes
BjB: we only have a few more minutes, Bill...don't want to take advantage of your generosity
BillHi: This is the world's biggest and most comprehensive hummingbird Web site.
TinaN: I am
SusanR . o O (wants to click on Ruby Throated Hummers in Canada)
BillHi: Scroll down the main page to the "on-l
BillHi: "on-line search engine" box.
BillHi: Type in the word "migration"
SrikrishnC: on-line or on-site
BillHi: On-site. We're interested in the Operation RubyThroat offerings.
BillHi: Hit "GO."
SrikrishnC: thanks
BillHi: As you can see, there are lots of entries. Click on one that looks interesting.
BillHi: Any comments about what you found?
GloriaMF: Interesting website.
BillHi: Thanks.
SrikrishnC: lots of info

GloriaMF: Have to go. Had fun.

BillHi: My point is that I hope you will bookmark <http://www.rubythroat.org> and go back and visit it between now and Labor day as you celebrate NATIONAL HUMMINGBIRD MONTH!

GloriaMF: I will.

DavidWe thanks Bill for a great presentation

BillHi: There's also hummingbird info on my site for Hilton Pond Center for Piedmont Natural History at <http://www.hiltonpond.org>

BjB . o O (which includes a marvelous newsletter!)

SrikrishnC: can do...thanks for the information and time

BillHi: Thaks for your input. The evening went VERY fast--almost as fast as a hummingbird flies.

BjB hugs Bill. Get some rest....see you on Saturday

GloriaMF left the room (signed off).

BjB hopes everyone is jealous

SrikrishnC: it did go really quickly

TinaN: Thanks Bill.. It was interesting..

AmandaY: Thanks Bill

SrikrishnC: Thanks again

SusanR: Thanks Bill! Hope to see some in my neck of the woods,Ontario.

BillHi: You find a sponsor, and I will come.

BillHi: Any closing questions?

DavidWe: Do hummingbirds get to Alaska?

BillHi: Jeff, hummers actually do make good hors d'oeuvres. They come with a built-in toothpick. (-:

DavidWe smiles

BjB groans

SusanR grins

DavidWe . o O (more than four and twenty, right Jeff?)

BillHi: David, Rufous hummingbirds do breed in extreme southern Alaska and in western Canada and the NW U.S.

DavidWe wonders if anyone has though about introducing hummingbirds to places like Thailand

SusanR: Why does a hummingbird hum?

SusanR: Because it doesn't know the words!

DavidWe: ba-doom, chsh!

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

BillHi: There's a search engine box on every page of the Operation RubyThroat web site.

DavidWe nods

SusanR . o O (glad you pointed out the search engine)

BillHi: I hope no one ever seriously thinks about exporting hummingbirds. No sense upsetting someone else's ecological balance.

BjB sends Bill off to get some rest

BjB: thanks, Bill, for a great discussion

BillHi: Night, all.

BillHi left the room (signed off).

