

Male rufous hummingbird (Paul Jeffrey)



by Paul Jeffrey

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September 4, 2020

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Editor's note: *This Season of Creation, join award-winning photographer Paul Jeffrey for "Lens on Creation" as he examines the world through the lens of his camera and his faith. Sign up here to receive Jeffrey's reflections in your inbox every Monday, Wednesday and Friday from Aug. 31 to Oct. 4.*

I get excited when the hummingbirds arrive in the springtime. Back from their long migration south, all of a sudden they're buzzing through the native plants that fill my backyard in Oregon, sucking up nectar like there's no tomorrow.

For some of the hummers, like this male rufous, tomorrow will be troubled.

Climate change is making life tough for hummingbirds. Nectar makes up 90% of their diet, and their migration patterns closely match the blooming of certain plants. As the climate warms, nectar blooms are occurring earlier, forcing the birds to alter their journeys. And because they need to feed almost constantly to keep their little hearts beating, they have no time to sit out the increasingly hot afternoons in parts of their range. If they can't keep feeding, they'll die. And the plants they pollinate will suffer, as well.

Many of us have been blessed to observe hummingbirds through our windows or as we've walked through a forest or meadow, so news of the threats to their existence alarms us. They are simply unforgettable, both to us and to God. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus says of birds that "not one of them is forgotten before God."

Hummingbirds are a "cute species," and thus get special attention. Most of us would reject the idea of harming them. Yet I believe God loves all of creation equally, and that the same marvel we feel when we observe a hummingbird should characterize our response to snakes, spiders, bees and poison ivy. Climate change, however, is expected to doom one in three species of plants and animals to extinction in the next 50 years.

How would we act differently if we responded to all of creation the way we marvel at hummingbirds?

For reflection and action:

Take a walk outdoors, in a park or just around the block. What is the smallest natural thing you see? A bird? A leaf? A blade of grass? Although tiny, these things are important to God. What is one thing you can do to honor the small things?

[Paul Jeffrey is a founder of Life on Earth Pictures and lives in Oregon. You can follow him on Instagram.]

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